

Dorothy Mary Kettle

Saturday 29th November, 2003.

Interviewed by Jess Jephcott at Ditchling, Quilters Green, Fordham.

Marlene Boyle and Theresa Jephcott in attendance.

A Fordham Local History Society project.

(JJ) We are going to be talking to Dorothy about her memories, her life but, specifically, memories in Fordham. Could we start with your full name, how were you christened?

My maiden name was Dorothy Mary Cresswell. I was born on the 4th October, 1913 and I was born in Ford Street. I can't remember the name of the house but, at that time, it was next door to the blacksmiths, and the blacksmiths name was Tweed. I moved from there, with my parents, to Fordham Heath, when I was about 13 months old and the house we moved into was one of three red brick cottages, which are still standing. And when my parents moved in, it was a new house. And my sister was born in January, the 11th. The address of that house was, Fordham Heath, by Lexden, Colchester.

(JJ) No name, no number of the house?

No, there was no number or name. Well, I stayed there with my parents, obviously, until I left school, which I left at 14.

(JJ) Which school was it?

Eight Ash Green.

(JJ) Although, was it called Eight Ash Green in those days?

Yes, Eight Ash Green Church of England Primary School and the headmistress tried to persuade my parents that I was capable of being a school teacher but, unfortunately, my parents just couldn't afford it. So, when I left school, at 14, I applied for a job at Copford Rectory as an in-between maid. Well, that meant I had to help the cook and help the parlour maid. The day I went, which was 24th January 1927, and I arrived about 2.30pm and the housemaid, it was her half day off, so it was just the cook, who happened to be a cousin of mine. I hadn't been there long when the telephone rang. Well, I knew nothing about telephones, I hadn't even seen one, and she wouldn't answer it. So, in the end, I picked it up and made an awful fuss about it. But any way, I got the gist of it that it was the police, and I went through, and I hung up, and he said "I think I'd better pay a visit." In the mean time, the chauffeur had gone to Marks Tey station to pick up Doctor Rosedale and he wasn't on the train. Well he came in just as I was relating about the policeman, to my cousin, the cook, and he said "Doctor Rosedale's not on the train". Well there was another one later, an hour later, and he said he would go and meet that. But in the meantime the police arrived to say that Doctor Rosedale had been found, he'd had a heart attack, he'd left the station, Liverpool Street Station, and he was on the train going to Aldwick and he had a heart attack and died. Well of course that changed and as it was a rectory Mrs Rosedale, you see, had to leave and in the March I went up to London, 32 Sumner Place, West Kensington, sorry, South Kensington. And my cousin, who was cook, came with me, but as she was on her own, she only required both of us, plus, the housemaid was getting married in the July, so she was quite happy to stay behind. Well, I'd never been to London in my life.

(JJ) This was on the train?

No, when I went up to the, I went by car, because the chauffeur, the furniture went first, Mrs Rosedale went and stayed with one of her sons in London. And I went - the chauffeur took the cook and myself in the car.

(JJ) So you were to stay with the Rosedale family?

I was working for them, yes, in this house, Sumner Place, and I stayed there two and a half years. It was quite an experience. Opposite was the Brompton, chest hospital. Mrs Rosedale was stone deaf and she had to wear two of the very old fashioned hearing aids. Well, she wouldn't put them on first thing in the morning. Well, this puzzled me, how was I going to, if I wanted to say something to her, how was I going to get it over to her? But I suddenly realised, I used to touch her hand and she would look straight in my face and I would talk quite loudly and she would understand me. As soon as she'd had breakfast she'd take the two dogs into gardens nearby, which was locked, and we had the key, it was just for the local residents. And the noise of those two dogs, I think they must have heard them all over London. But of course by that time she hadn't switched her hearing aid on so she didn't hear half of it. Plus, they used to get her in such a state, I'm sure by the time she got to the garden, she'd got hardly any food to feed the birds, because you could see it all down the front steps and all along the street. It was quite an easy place and I was very, very happy there, but the time came when my cousin left to come back to get married and I stayed on. We had a bedroom that we could have our friends or parents come up and stay, which was rather nice. We were not overworked, we were well fed and my only regret, that I haven't written a book about it. I think my memory wouldn't be quite so good now.

(JJ) Have you been back to the house, to have a look at it?

No. I worked there two and a half years, as I say, my cousin left to get married and, after the new cook settled in, I thought it was time for me to move on, which I did. I moved to Wimbledon. I got a temporary position, because it was more money. There again, there was one small child there, had a nurse, she was taken ill, she died, and they had a governess, a Miss Bagnall, a little tiny, very awesome person. I don't know what she used to do to the child but she scared the life out of me, sometimes, the way she spoke. She'd spent her time in Canada. When she came, she didn't want any time off, but eventually she demanded a day off on the Wednesday. Well, one day, I was called into the little sitting room and I was asked if I'd be prepared to look after Robin on the Wednesday afternoon. His mother would have him in the morning if I would have him in the afternoon and I said "yes, I would like that." We lived quite near the common and I thought well we could go and take the dog and it would be quite nice. Now, I must finish with Miss Bagnall, the teacher, the governess. I used to have to take the food up to the nursery and I had an idea that Robin, there was something in the vegetable line, which was dished up on a Wednesday and a Friday, that he didn't like. But it took me a week or two to discover, and it turned out to be spinach, and she used to make him eat it. Well, I didn't say anything about it, I didn't say to the cook and she wasn't in a position to say no, she wouldn't send it up and nothing was said. But the first day when I was going to look after Robin, in the afternoon, I was asked to go into the dining room and have lunch with her and Robin. Well, of course, it was Wednesday and in came the spinach. And I can remember, like it was only yesterday, Robin said "oh mummy, don't make me have spinach, please don't make me have spinach." And she said "why not dear?" And he said "well Miss Bagnall makes me have it and it makes me feel sick and I cry." Well, nothing was said and after we'd finished the lunch he was asked to leave the table and go and she asked me if that was right and I said "yes, but I didn't think it was my place to tell you." So, after that spinach was banned from the nursery.

(MB) What age was robin?

Robin was about three and, of course, on the Friday, when it was spinach day, I took the lunch up and I said to the cook "well, I'm sure I shall have a buzz before I get half way down the stairs," which I did. So, I went back and I said "yes" so she said "we have no spinach" so I said "spinach has been banned from the nursery." "Who said that?" I said "that was the order that was given the cook." So, that was the end of Robin's worry about spinach. But if I can just say now, Robin was the father of David Sheepshanks, who is manager of Ipswich football.

(JJ) Well I never, the first connection with football!

Yes, but their country home was at Melton, you see, but they took this house at Wimbledon.

(JJ) So the family name was Sheepshanks?

Well the child had a bit of chest problem and the doctor said that he should go somewhere, to sea air. They had a bungalow in Cornwall and I went with the child and the cook and they employed two other people and I stayed in the bungalow in Cornwall, North Polzeath, and I had a wonderful time, because it was the late spring and we were there until the winter. We had an old fisherman who had been on the tea cargo boats all his life and he used to take us out in the rowing boat. It was a wonderful time, swimming, and I didn't have anything to do, only look after the child.

(JJ) You were about 18, 17 or 18?

Yes, and when I look at him on the television, I think of his father. Well then, I came back to London and they were going to move back, no, they should have been moving back to Suffolk then, but they were going to stay on another year, but I somehow wanted to come home. So, I left and I had a, quite a large sum of money, I've never had such a big tip in all my life but anyway it just shows they appreciated what I did. Well, I came back home.

(JJ) To Fordham Heath?

To Fordham Heath, yes, my parents were still living there.

(MB) Where did your father work?

He worked at Great Porters, for Mr Cooper Bland. He was the one, he used to breed Suffolk horses and dad was the one that was in charge of them, so when I saw those in the paper, I thought about dad and what a pride he took in them.

(JJ) Could you talk a little bit about mother and father? Fathers name to start?

Yes, my dad was Charles Henry Cresswell, of course, and mum was Agnes Mary.

(MB) What was her maiden name?

Mums maiden name was Sparrow and she lived at Wetherden in Suffolk, that's where she was born and that's where we used to go for holidays. Dad was born at Aldham, at the top of Aldham hill, Ford Street hill, on the left there's two cottages, the last two before the new ones, as you're coming to Colchester, and he lived in the first one.

(JJ) Do you know when he was born, the date, and mother for that matter?

Now, you've asked me something.

(JJ) No, it's no worry, if you knew.

(MB) Do you know how they met, with living so far, been born so far away from Fordham and Aldham?

Well, mum was in service you see and she was working, at that time, at Holmwood House, where the school is now. She was always cook. She was trained, I mean when she first went, she was scullery maid, kitchen maid and she worked her way up to cook.

(JJ) And what was father doing when they met.

Father was working on the land.

(JJ) In Aldham or that area?

No, when they first married they lived at a house called Frogs Hall. You know where that is, just round Garrows Green and on the right there used to be a little shop before you got round the corner and that was a relative of dad's that kept it. Mum, of course, was born in Wetherden, now isn't it stupid, I can't remember.

(JJ) Well, we can do a little family tree later, but father was on the land?

Yes he was.

(JJ) An agricultural labourer? What, working with horses?

Yes, horses, yes, he was head horseman and the man he worked for, they used to breed Suffolk horses.

(JJ) Suffolk Punches?

Yes, and my dad used to go to the various shows about showing them and I remember when his mother died, in 1921, he was at York, somewhere in that area.

(MB) So when these people left Porters did the Chamleys buy it off them. Did the Chamleys then buy the farm?

Yes, when Cooper Bland sold, Chamleys bought it and dad worked for them for a little while, but then he had a massive heart attack, so he couldn't go back to work.

(MB) I've got a picture of your dad. I think Rhoda gave it to me, ploughing, somewhere where Eight Ash Green school is now, with a horse.

Oh, ploughing, yes, because where those houses are, well, I mean, that was just a field.

(JJ) So how many children were there? You were the oldest?

No, my brother was the oldest, my brother was born in the August.

(JJ) What is his name?

Frederick Charles.

(JJ) So he was born 1912 or.....

He was born 4th August 1911.

(JJ) Well, of course this was just before the First World War, so it troubled times, generally. So, Frederick Charles was the eldest?

Yes, and then I'm next and then my sister, she was born, she's 89.

(JJ) What is your sister's name?

Rhoda Emma, she was named after her two grandmothers.

(JJ) Any other children?

No, just the three.

(JJ) Do you remember grandparents?

Not my grandfather, not my dad's father, because he died in 1911. He was a military man and when he died, he was buried in Aldham churchyard and he had a military funeral. And you know in The Standard they go 25 years back to 50 years, and up to 50 years, there was always a mention about him in there.

(JJ) So, he was a military man, he was a regular army man?

Yes, he was.

(JJ) So, what memory do you have of the First World War? What do you remember being a young girl growing up?

I can remember seeing a Zeppelin go over. I can remember gathering acorns for the pigs.

(MB) I used to do that as well.

We used to gather the, no I don't think we gathered hips and haws, well I suppose being in the country we weren't quite so involved as people in the town.

(JJ) No real war effort, as far as it's concerned.

No, I can't remember that but I can remember the day that war was declared (*she possibly meant 'ended' here*), because my dad always kept chickens and we used to go down to the mill, where the Pulfords lived, that would be West Bergholt, to get the food for the chickens and we were on Fordham Heath and we'd, why we weren't at school I don't know, I can't remember which day the war ended but we were not at school, unless of course it was after school, that I'm not sure, Rhoda might remember, but I can't remember. But I do know we were going to the mill which we used to do on a Saturday and we heard someone in the distance said "the war is over hip hip hooray" and we took up the chanting of that. There were two others with us but I can't remember who they were so there were five of us all together and I can remember shouting this "hip hip hooray the war is over today."

(JJ) 1918.

Yes.

(JJ) Course you were only five anyway.

Yes but I do remember this Zeppelin going over.

(JJ) It must have been quite a sight. So the house that you lived in was a modern house?

Oh yes, because it was new when my parents moved into it.

(JJ) So how was it built? It had electricity presumably.

No.

(JJ) Did it have running water, no electricity, where did the water come from?

The well, a pump.

(JJ) So, there was a well somewhere in the garden?

At the back there were three buildings. That was our wash house and toilet at the back of that, but then, the second house, there was a recess, her toilet was one side and her coal place was the other, but then, the third one was exactly the same as us. And we lived at this end and our coal place was on the end of the house. We had to pass the next door's house to get to the pump which was at the end of this building, the '.

(JJ) So it was shared. These were tied cottages presumably where they?

Yes, they belonged to the farmer.

(JJ) What was the farmers name?

(MB) Porters?

Cooper Bland. I don't remember him working for anyone else.

(MB) Are they the houses on the corner? Doesn't Bullbanks own them now?

They did afterwards

(JJ) So how many bedrooms would you have had there?

We had 3 bedrooms.

(JJ) So the two girls were together and was there a bathroom?

No, just a tin bath in front of the fire.

(JJ) And cooking?

The cooking was a range in the living room. We had a sitting room and a living room and there was a big range but, which I always thought was rather nice, in the wash house, there was not only the copper, but there was also a fireplace, not an oven but just a fireplace, where you could boil your saucepans on, which of course in the summertime if you only wanted to boil vegetables you could do that, which I thought, even at that, I'm not saying when I was 5 years old, but at a later time, I did think that was rather a good idea.

(JJ) You could keep water warm, and whatever. So what about lighting then you say there was no electricity.

Oh, it was paraffin oil lamps and candles, Toby lamps you know the ones you could, they had little round bottoms to them and, you could move them and they'd always come up, you know, they would never fall over, they were called Toby lamps.

(JJ) So, work around the house, you had set jobs given to you, I suppose?

Well yes I was always one I wanted to dust but at first mum wouldn't in case I broke something I wasn't quite high enough to reach it but I did and I also, the person who lived at the other end, Mrs Morgan, she used to take in laundry and, of course, for the big houses on the Lexden Road. Well, of course, she was always busy, so when I was old enough I used to go up and ask if I could do anything and I was allowed to do the dusting and various jobs. Well, in those days the pillow slips had to be gophered and that is, you know how they used to use the curling irons?, and you had to use those and they were all, you know, up and down, it was called gophering. I dearly wanted to do that but she was afraid that I was going to scorch them but at a later date I was allowed to do it and I was thrilled.

(JJ) So what about pocket-money, was there such a thing?

Oh well yes, about a halfpenny.

(JJ) And what did you do with that pocket-money?

Oh dear, you could buy quite a handful of sweets with that in those days.

(JJ) And mother, was she a seamstress, did she do much sewing?

Yes, she didn't make anything but there was never a button off, there was never a sock to be darned, she would always make sure, and I must admit, I can never ever remember seeing my mum do anything on a Sunday, apart from cook the lunch and make the beds, you know, bare essentials, and the same with my dad, although we had a terrific garden, but he never worked on a Sunday and we weren't allowed to have a ball or anything we could have our books and our crayons.

(JJ) So the Lords day was kept. Did you go to church?

Yes, Eight Ash Green. We used to go to Sunday school at 10 o'clock in the morning and I can remember the little magazine we used to have. It was about that wide and it got a blue edge and it was called The African Tidings. I can remember it as though it was yesterday.

(JJ) How about callers to the house for instance did the doctor come, coalman, milkman?

Yes, we had the milkman, the doctor would come, but if it was just you want cough mixture or something, somebody used to get it.

(JJ) What about coal, you had coal delivered?

Yes, coal was delivered.

(JJ) You would surely have got milk from the farm would you not? Though the milkman did call.

No, that was delivered because they didn't have cattle on the farm. They had a large area of farmland that they had to plough and I think they used to grow crops. I don't remember them having cattle.

(JJ) What about baker and butcher.

Yes, the baker came round, he came from Stanway. The butcher? No I can't remember the butcher coming, I think my mother used to go into Colchester on Saturday morning.

(JJ) On the bus or walk?

No, I think it was the bus. That was my earliest remembrance.

(JJ) What about the insurance man?

I don't know anything about him.

(JJ) He wasn't a visitor?

I suppose he did, but I don't remember anything about him.

(JJ) So, you came back to Fordham Heath from London, at the age of 18 or 19. What did you do?

No, I was 20. There again, I took jobs in domestic service. Temporary jobs, more or less. The first place I went to was a place in The Avenue in Colchester, but I was not very happy there, I didn't stay there very long.

(JJ) Did you live in or did you travel each day.

No, I lived in, yes. Just a half day a week and every other Sunday and from there I went to another rectory, Marks Tey Rectory this time, and I was there for some time. But, unfortunately, Mrs Rosedale, no not Rosedale, Steel, Canon Steel. Mrs Steel, what's the name of, Marks Hall, she was one of the main, I can't think of the name, but she was one of the daughters and she had a very bad accident in the hunting field and that left her to act rather strangely at times and I think that rather worried me at times. Well, then I left there and I went a little further down, I went to Rye House which is in Aldham. And fortunately, I got on there very well. I was the only one working there but I was very, very happy. There was three daughters and I had lots of time off because in the summer time they were always down at Mersea on the boat and she used to say to me "hurry up Dorothy, wash up, lock up, we are having dinner out tonight so you come home when you like." And I was very happy there. Well then, they had to go to London. Well, they begged me to go but, by that time, I had met my husband to be, so I said "no." So, then I went to, strange enough, to the Cooper Blands, that my dad worked for.

(MB) What down at Porters?

Down at Cooks Mill, Fordham Heath, that's where I finished. I used to go back for dinner parties and I used to make jam for them, because her parents got a huge garden out at White Colne with fruits and Mrs Cooper Bland wasn't domesticated, and the cook that took over, she didn't know much about it, so I did that for them for some time.

(JJ) So you started to be courted then?

Yes.

(JJ) And your husband to be, what was his name?

Charles Henry Bullock.

(JJ) And how did you meet?

Well it was strange really. I spoke to him up at a gathering at The Old Rectory. It was a fete or something, I can't quite remember. And it was just a casual conversation. Well, occasionally, I used to see him. Well, then one night, I was going back to Colchester and he was with the Playles, at the post office, talking, and I walked past, you see. And, he spoke then, so did one of the Playles. Did I want a lift and I said "no thank you, I can walk". So one of them said well the bus has gone, 'cause I fell for it, 'cause I thought then, afterwards I thought, well how did they know 'cause the bus didn't come past here did it, it was on the Halstead Road. But any way - Oh no no no I'm wrong. He said could he give me a lift to the bus. And I said "Oh, no thanks, I like walking", and I marched off. Well he overtook me and when he got down to the corner you see he said the bus had gone, which of course it hadn't, but I fell for it and he took me back to The Avenue, that was when I was working there. And that was how it started.

(JJ) And when was that, what year would that have been? It was in the 1930's.

In 1930 I think?

(JJ) So you were 17?

No, I've got that wrong, haven't I? No I was 21 when I met him and we married in the January, 1936, and I was 22.

(MB) He lived in Fordham, as a young man?

Yes, he lived with his grandmother, next to where Ivor and Olive live.

(JJ) So you were married in Eight Ash Green church?

No, Fordham.

(JJ) Fordham All Saints, that was by then your parish church was it?

Yes, because, in 1932, my dad moved up into Fordham. No, prior to that, the foreman from the farm, where my father worked, left, and Mr Cooper Bland asked my dad if they would move down into the farm, which they did. Well then in 1932, when it was sold, to Mr Chamley, my mum and dad moved up into Fordham, into the council house opposite the post office. That was in 1932 and I married in 1936.

(JJ) So where did you go to live in 1936?

Where I am now, just down Church road.

(JJ) So you have been there since, a Fordham resident in all that time.

(MB) Charlie had connections with the Vulcan, hadn't he?

Oh, yes well Charlie, his grandfather kept the Vulcan for 48 years.

(JJ) Do you know his name, the grandfather?

Henry Bullock.

(JJ) So, he was publican at the Vulcan.

Well, Charlie lived there with his grandparents, until he had to give up, Henry Bullock, and I think that was in 1927, because he had to have two or three very serious operations and, of course, in those days, you had to pay for them, didn't you? but anyway he wasn't well enough to carry on

(MB) Was there a blacksmiths there as well?

Yes, there used to be a blacksmith and either side of the Vulcan, as you went up to the Vulcan, there were stables.

(JJ) Of course, the Vulcan is the god of the forge, which is a good name for a pub with a blacksmith. What characters were about in those days, local characters?

Oh dear I wish I had brought the photographs I've got some of the old cronies.

(JJ) But you were quite close to the Vulcan so you used to see a fair bit of coming and going with the post office there as well.

Well, I wasn't living there you see. No, in 1932, when my parents came up here, because I was away in service, you see, I only used to come home for half days. But I used to see them, and of course, Charlie used to talk about the different ones, and they'd nearly all got nicknames. And I can remember him saying, with Mr Playle, who used to keep the shop and post office.

(JJ) Where it is today?

No, down in Ponders Road. He was friendly with a Mr Tolvon at Eight Ash Green and they used to go out and enjoy themselves. Well as a peace offering, Mr Playle used to perhaps bring his wife a piece of bacon home. They sold bacon in the shop, but that was one of the things.

(JJ) Men behaving badly!

Well, over drinking, I think

(MB) Was there two blacksmiths in Fordham then?

No, oh yes there was, I don't know whether I've got much information about the blacksmith, I think I probably have.

(JJ) But was Charlie a drinking man, did he enjoy a pint?

No, no, he lived in the pub, but he never drank.

(JJ) Really, teetotal or just occasional?

Well you could almost say teetotal. The only time he would have anything, which was rare, he didn't get a cold very often, if he did I used to give him, you know, a hot whiskey, under protest really, no he wasn't a drinking man. And the strange thing is I always said that I'd

never marry anyone who went to a pub or smoked. Well he lived at the pub all those years but he didn't drink and he didn't smoke. But I did catch him out. We were at some friends and the friend said would you like a drink, so I said "yes." and he used to make home-made wine. So he started reeling off what he'd got and I said "oh I'll come out and see." And I can't even remember the name of the fruit that he used but there was a certain amount of beer put in it, well I tasted it and I thought it was lovely and I said "I think Charlie will like this." So I went through and sung the praises of this wine I said "it's really lovely, you'll like it, I'm sure you will." Well he did. So Eric gave him a little more. So I said "ha-ha!" So he said "what's the matter." I said "you cannot now say honestly that you have not drunk beer." Well, he said "I haven't." So I said "well there was some beer in that wine." That's the only time.

(JJ) So you converted him. So what did you do, before we start talking about children and family and whatever what used to go on in Fordham for fun you had the village hall across the road what were you in any associations.

Well they did have a social club. Table tennis, they used to play didn't they?, and billiards and then they used to have a special evening once a month when they would ask females.

(MB) That was going on 40 years ago, wasn't it, I remember that yes it was a men's club they had it in the village hall.

(JJ) What did you do for fun?

Well, you see, I married in 1936 well we had the war in '38 didn't we? Well we used to run certain weeks for certain charities, you know.

(JJ) Always something to do.

(MB) Did you belong to the WI?

Not then, I can't remember a WI existing then, but there must have been. If there was one, I can't think why I didn't join it. And then, during the war, of course, I worked. I had to go to work, I had no children, and I chose to do something. So, I worked in a clothing factory, in the trouser department.

(JJ) In Colchester?

Yes, in Colchester.

(JJ) What did Charlie do during the war?

Oh, he was, by that time, when I first met him, he had just his grandfather's horses and everything had been sold and he was working for a farmer, a Scotsman, at Rochfords, further up the road. Well, they moved and we decided that we would go, there was a new bungalow for us at..., where was the airfield?

(MB & JJ) Wormingford, Halstead, Earls Colne, Birch, Langham?

No, further than that. Colne way. Anyway I can't quite remember, the name has forgotten me, but anyway, in the end, we didn't move, we stayed where we were. He took a job with Keydar at Fordham Place, but.... I went to London with my sister because she used to have dreadful migraines and she had an appointment to go to a hospital in London. When I came back he was dressed, you know he wasn't in his working clothes. And I said "oh, you look as though you've been out." So he said "I have." So I said "oh, where have you been?". So he said "when I came home to breakfast I realised that I ought to be giving Mr Keydar the

goodbye,” and he went into Colchester, this was 1937, and he said “I’ve got a job with Joseph Moss and Sons, the builders, and I can start when I like,” and that was in 1937. He died in 1969 and he was still working for them. But he started making breeze blocks and then he got out, he was working on heavy machinery, excavating. That was the firm that put the water through Ford Street and I know they had to have extra, a bigger machine, to go down the depth and that’s what he was still doing when he had the heart attack.

(JJ) And how old was he when he died?

He was 64.

(JJ) Born in 1905, then, so what are your memories of the war?

Oh, my memories.

(JJ) In Colchester, where you bombed at all at any time?

Yes, I was in the clothing factory and when they bombed Chapel Street, which was no distance as the crow flies.

(JJ) ‘44 or ‘43 was that?

That would be, I think that was ‘43.

(JJ) You were in that general area, the clothing factory.

Yes, we were quite close.

(JJ) Was that Stanwell Street? Where was the clothing factory?

The clothing factory was in, was it Stanwell Street? We went to the old bus station.

(MB) I’ve got a book with a lot of places that were bombed.

(JJ) So you were very close to the bombing then. You were working when the bombs dropped?

No, we were in the shelter. There were shelters down underneath and there were shelters above. And I can remember, there was one young girl, she was, she used to annoy me at times because, of course, she was young, well I wasn’t old, but to me she seemed a bit stupid, you know. Two or three times, she’d gone all hysterical when we’d gone up, because I used to take my knitting. I always had my knitting bag at the side and when we went to the shelter I used to take it. And this particular day she was absolutely awful and I put my knitting down and I got up, she was two seats away from me, and I just got a hold of her shoulders and she wasn’t very big and I just shook her and I shouted at her and I said “sit down and don’t disrupt everyone you are just acting stupidly” and I couldn’t calm her so I smacked her both sides of her face. This is the training we’d had ‘cause I did my first stage of home nursing and I got those certificates and that’s what we were told to do if anyone was getting hysterical. But, of course, then the bombs dropped and she was silent. They were good times, we used to have various weeks, war weapons week, warship week and you name it, we always had celebrations, you remember those don’t you Marlene? Oh, you don’t, oh we used to have dances on the meadow.

(MB) I wasn’t very old, I was born in 1944.

(JJ) While the bombs were dropping?

And, of course, we had the Americans at the airfield and we had soldiers in Penlan Hall. Well, of course, the Americans, if we had any function, I mean, offers of drink, they came, you know, there was no, they were very, very generous, children, sweets.

(JJ) Well they were up and down past your house, I suppose, every day?

Yes, they used to frequent the Horseshoes public house. No, they were very generous and we had quite a lot of functions to raise money.

(JJ) So, what about Doodlebugs, did you see many aircraft going over?

Well, I was at a Whist Drive at Eight Ash Green and we were absolutely packed in that hall. Anyway, we had two or three men outside, you know, and if the warning had gone. And the warning hadn't been gone, many minutes, and we heard this thud and it had dropped at Earls Colne. But it came over Fordham because Charlie said that he came out and he said if he'd have had a long pole he could almost have touched it. That was one of the scarey, and then another afternoon, I had just put the, can't remember the material we used to put on the windows to stop them splintering, and there was a bomb that came along this area from Earls Colne to the direction of Langham and it dropped little incendiary bombs on its way. But I don't think there was, the only disaster, I heard, was the poor old boy at Langham who was on the toilet down the bottom of his garden and that blew the toilet down with that on top of him, but he wasn't hurt.

(MB) Probably blew his paper away as well. Would that be the one you were reading?

(JJ) So, wars over then. How did life change for you, where you still working at the clothing factory?

Well, I said, I kept saying, "as soon as the wars over, I'm going to leave," all day long. And they said "oh no, you've got to wait 'cause they're bound to have a celebration." Well, of course, this was everyday conversation. And I said "look, I want an end to this. As long as the weather keeps fine," because I used to cycle you see, "as long as the weather keeps good I'll come but if it starts being icy and snowy then I shall finish." Well, luckily that year, we had a good autumn and early winter so I stayed and it was the most magnificent party that I shall ever remember. It really was, they'd really gone to town - they did us proud. And the strange thing is, I met a young couple a couple of years ago, at Barbara Carters, and I was introduced to them, and it was his mother, cause I was on a special machine, it was his mother that I trained to use the machine before I left. So, of course, we've carried on with our friendship, so we are still in contact now, which is rather nice. No, I must have enjoyed it.

(MB) What did your brother do in the war? Was he in the home guard?

No, he was on the Ack Acks.

(JJ) So, he didn't go overseas?

Yes, he did.

(JJ) On board ship? What force was he?

I think he went on the Ack Ack's at first because he was over in Germany, because he came back with a watch. And he said that was when he put the search lights on them and this

chap was getting over the fence and they saw him throw something down and, of course, they went and looked and they found this watch.

(JJ) So, you left work, working in Colchester.

Yes, just before the Christmas.

(JJ) And then came home to be a housewife.

Yes, well I was a housewife as well, because my husband didn't have to go, his eyesight wasn't very good.

(JJ) So, there were no children?

No.

(JJ) And Charlie died in 1969.

Yes.

(JJ) When did you meet Digger and how did you meet Digger? Tell us about Digger.

Tell you about Digger, well, I can tell you how we met, when did we marry, that's the thing. I didn't think you were going to ask me these questions, but still, I don't mind.

(JJ) Well, you are Dorothy Kettle, you have the surname.

(MB) I can remember you getting married, but don't ask me when it was. I haven't got a clue.

Well, how we met. I had had work done on the cottage. I'd been on holiday in the spring with Kings from Stanway and it was Ivy Ralph who used to drive the coach then and she said to me, she said, "we are going to do a holiday in the autumn. I don't know whether you'd be interested," I can't remember where we were going now. "Well" I said "I'm not going to commit myself Ivy because," I said, "I've got work to be done on the cottage and I don't know what it's going to cost," I said "but if at the end of the day there's a vacancy," you know, according to how things go. Well the time came that I'd had the work done and my brother called in and he said "I've seen ivy," he said, "and she's got a single room vacant, are you interested?" So, I said, I hesitated, so my brother said "if it's the money," he said, "I will pay for you to go," and I said "no, no, it isn't that Fred." So he said "if you decide, ring her" and I did and she said "don't worry about the money," we were going in a fortnight's time. "Don't bother to bring it up," she said, "bring it with you." Well on the Saturday I thought, well I don't know, I think I'll go up for a ride, so I got the car out and was having a chat with her and she said "I've had another single room been cancelled but" she said "I've got someone for it" and I said "oh yes" so she said "Digger Kettle". "Digger Kettle?" She said "well you must know him." I said "I don't." She said "well he only used to live at Eight Ash Green." So I said, "well I don't remember him." So we met on that holiday and we went to, was it North Wales.

(JJ) And the end story is, you got married.

That was in the autumn, well the following year, destination doesn't matter. The following year, Ivy had arranged this holiday. I booked it up, two singles. So she said, "I don't know," she said, "I've got a feeling you might cancel that." "Oh well," I said "I won't cancel unless something drastic happens." She said "no I've got a feeling you might want a double room," she said to me and I said "whatever give you that idea." And she said "well, I'm a bit psychic

sometimes." And, of course she was, because we were not going to that holiday, we were going for that holiday in July, end of July. Well, when we start talking about things, Digger's girls, they were all going on different holidays. They wouldn't have been here and I think it would have been a bit difficult for (Teath & Elaine?), because I think they were going away, so we brought it forwards to June, and that was '87, I'm sure.

(JJ) Well, I think we've run out of time now, the tape is almost done, you've spoken for almost an hour.

(MB) Told you it soon goes, doesn't it?

(JJ) Very interesting, and I think we'll probably get some questions out of that and perhaps well have another go at some stage.

So that's how we met, at Barmouth. I knew I should remember.

(JJ) This is Saturday 22nd October, 2005, at Ditchling and we are having a second interview with Dorothy Kettle from Fordham, who we've done a session with before and we are coming back to do a more complete picture of Dorothy's life. So, thank you Dorothy for coming along, and I think you have a bit of a prepared talk to give to us. So, what have you got to tell us?

Well, I married in 1936, January, at Fordham Church. Moved in the cottage where I still live.

In 1938, I joined the St John's Ambulance Brigade and trained for my home nursing and first aid certificates, which I passed.

In 1940, I volunteered to be a collector for the war saving certificates in the village. This I did on Friday evenings in the summer. During the winter, I did it in the afternoon.

People paid what they wanted or what they could afford. But when they had fifteen shillings saved they had a certificate. But I can't remember how much the stamps were. But at the end of it, I was presented with a certificate, for the work I did. I used to get the stamps from the post office, which was a general stores, in Ponders Road, owned by the Playle brothers. In 1940, a local committee was formed to raise money for the armed services to support the war effort. I went on the committee and helped to organise functions, which were held in the village hall during the winter. In the summer they were held on the playing field, next to the shop and post office.

In 1940, the Americans were stationed at the Wormingford Airfield. They were very good supporters, came and joined in all the events, also supplying raffle prizes. Soldiers were also billeted in Penlan Hall. They too used to come along and join in. In 1940, I also joined the ART, meeting at St Albergs Hospital, [does she mean St Albright's?], usually one night a week. Meetings were held weekly. Mock air raids were held occasionally at weekends. These operated from Fordham school. In 1940, in June, I started work at the Colchester Manufacturing Clothing Company, making army uniforms. This was part time from 8.00am until 1.00pm. I left home about 7.20am and home by 1.30pm. I cycled the whole time. I stayed on until December 1945, so I could attend the party which the firm gave us as an appreciation for our work.

Parties

I also helped with the various functions which were held at the end of the war to celebrate peace. In '47, I went on the fete committee and stayed on almost until it finished. My main job was in charge of the raffle, selling tickets to each house in the village, also on the day. We had coffee evenings, also a tramps supper, at the old rectory. I supplied the fruit cakes. This was to finance the fete funds.

WI, 1954

I was a founder member, stayed on until 1988, when I re-married and as my husband was a keen bowler, he persuaded me to play. During the time, when I was a WI member, I was treasurer from 1965 until 1973.

1965, the Fordham Senior Citizens Club was formed. A gentleman in the village volunteered to be secretary, when he retired in 3 months time. At the formation meeting, I was asked if I would stand in, I agreed, but it was a very long 3 months - I had the job for over 20 years. The club folded because members were leaving to go to relatives to live, or in homes. We were left with only 6 members. We carried on meeting in each other's homes but finally we had to call it a day. I had, with three others, from different clubs, an invitation to lunch with the Lord Lieutenant of Essex. This was held in Chelmsford, and he presented us with a certificate for our work for the community.

Church work

1958, I went on the Parochial Church Council. I wrote an article in the monthly magazine for some time. This I gave up, but carried on with the rota of the church cleaning and flower arranging, which I also took my turn. I gave that up in 1988.

In 1980, the first flower festival was held, July, in the church, I was secretary. The theme of the festival was a poem written by the Reverend Hugh Barber. We held various events to raise money to buy flowers etc. The event was a great success and it was agreed that we would hold another one in July 1982.

In 1968, a few members from the fete committee, decided to form a small committee to organise social evenings in the village hall, so that the people moving into the new houses, were able to get to know each other. It was very successful. But after quite a long while the landlord at the Horseshoes began to run dances in the hall and at that time we felt our functions had served their purpose and the club was called 2190. I suggested that. Someone said "what does it mean." I said "well you can have members 21 to 90."

Fordham Horticultural Show

This was held on the meadow next to the village shop. I have no idea when it first started but I can remember, after the war, my dad putting fruit and vegetables in the show. In 1955, I went on the committee and in 1956 stayed on until it folded about 1969. It was revived in 1978 and was held on the present playing field, it was there we had country dancing in the marquee after the show.

Fordham Post Office

About 1965, I was asked if I could do stock taking at the village shop, by the owner, who was Kelse Mason. After a little while, this became odd days, helping in the shop. Eventually, I learnt about the post office, serving in the shop and post office 3 days a week, later on. Eventually it changed hands. I left and went to the school some time later. Mr and Mrs Evans bought the business. I used to go, then, at weekends and take charge of the post office and shop so that they could have a weekend away.

I collected for many charities in the village, all on my bicycle. I did not learn to drive until 1970.

Parish Council

1970, I was co-opted onto the parish council and retired in 1983, having been vice-president for three years. It was a very interesting time. I got invited to some very good, interesting events and I was also on the sub-committee with members of other clubs etc. to commemorate the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer. I was in charge of the notice board for many years after I left the council

Fordham School

In 1971, I went to work at Fordham School, known as a dinner lady, then, playground assistant. During that time, I got permission from the headmistress to run a raffle at the games afternoon, this was a great success. And I also ran a raffle to raise money for tops and shorts for the football team and also skirts for the girl's netball team. I went on outings with the teacher in charge and helped, wherever I could. I really enjoyed being there, it was a very happy time. 28th of May was the day I had to retire. I had a really lovely afternoon with gifts, letters etc., a good send off from the children, but for me, I saw sad, I had to leave, I felt I could have gone on a lot longer. I enjoyed being there. While I was there, the headmistress, Mrs Dogman, asked me if I could talk to the fourth year pupils for their project for the Doomsday Book, 1935 'til '85. I had 12 booklets printed.

Flower Festival

1980, the first flower festival was held in Fordham church, a committee was formed, I took the secretary's job. Functions were held to buy flowers etc., the theme was a poem written by the Reverend Hugh Barber.

Brrr brrr (telephone ringing) ***(JJ) Can you excuse us a minute, we've got the phone. We're going to start again, we just got interrupted by the telephone, cold callers that we are plagued with, all of us, in our lives nowadays. I should have mentioned that, of course, we've got Marlene Boyle with us today, as well, to jog a few memories and whatever. So, sorry for the interruption, Dorothy, please continue.***

The theme was a poem written by the Reverend Hugh Barber called 'The Heart of Love.' This was held in September, it was agreed to organise a festival every two years. The following one was in July 1982. I think the last one was in 1990.

My other activities were: babysitting, collecting for charity, knitting blankets and tops for Oxfam - no longer required, and still knitting blankets for the homes for the elderly, also hats and mittens for Christmas boxes for abroad. I cycled everywhere. In September '84, I took part in the East of England, church sponsored, bicycle ride, with a friend. We visited 10 churches, cycling 25 miles. The next year, we did it again and our mileage had gone up to 30 miles. Of course, different churches, a different route. But I can't remember how much we raised.

My cottage

I also decorated my cottage all my married life, but the last time was about 1970. I also did dressmaking for many years but I think my main achievement was preventing the GPO from erecting a phone box on the grass, adjoining my garden, in 1987.

(JJ) Trying to think where that is.

(MB) There was a picture of her in the paper. On the corner of Sunnyside, on the left.

(JJ) We have one across the road now in Ponders Road

Oh yes, I fought hard for that. Now, that's all I've got in this book.

(JJ) Well, that's quite an extensive list isn't it? You've covered everything there, I think, all duties, very well done.

(MB) You said something about the school and the mock air raids what did that entail, what happened there then?

Would you like me to enlarge on that?

(JJ) Yes, just a little bit.

Is it on?

(JJ) Yes, it's running.

Actually, we had a, I think it was an ambulance, probably an old one, and what we had people came, they volunteered to be victims. The chap with the ambulance, he would go out and drop them off at various points and, then, they had to bandage them according to their, if they were injured. They had various things in the ambulance to bandage them if they needed it.

Well, I've got to tell you this because I've always remembered it. It was getting on well in the afternoon and we thought the ambulance should have been back. Well, the person that was dropped off first, on the church bank, was Laurie White. Well, this of course, before he went into the forces. Well, he eventually came into the school and I was at this end of the school and I said "what are you doing back?" "Oh well" he said "I couldn't stay there any longer." I said "But they'll be looking for you." He said "Oh no, they won't." "I've left a note. Bled to death and gone home." I thought that was hilarious.

(JJ) And they found the note, hopefully?

They found the note, yes.

(JJ) So, the delay was for some other reason.

(MB) Were the White family living at the school at the time?

Yes, and it was just a practice, you know, in case anything did happen.

(JJ) And when was this?

This was during the war in 194?

(MB) What was the nearest, was there any bombs dropped anywhere round here you can remember. What was the nearest, biggest tragedy you can think of just in this area. Was there anything, any near misses or anything like that, at all, during the war, with the Americans being so near, although they didn't come till near the end did they?

Well, I think as far as I can remember, the nearest thing was Fordham Heath, when The Star was, I went through into the front bedroom, and I looked out because we'd heard noises and that was cause it was a thatch roof, 'cause they had a direct hit.

(MB) Was that still part of Fordham then?

Yes, because the boundaries were changed in 1950, I think, sometime in 1950.

(JJ) When Eight Ash Green was created. The other thing we were going to talk about, recently, you mentioned in your first interview, the Sheepshanks family, now what have you got to tell us, developments in that direction.

Well, the developments. I, never, ever thought I would meet him again, personally. Although.....

In about the early fifties my husband and I were staying with an aunt at Melton and an uncle of mine who had been in the army all his life, practically. When he came out, he was abroad a lot, when he came out, he was the recruiting officer at Newport in Wales. Well, him and his wife were staying with auntie as well. And he suggested we went along, about two or three miles from where auntie lived, at Melton, to the polo match, Sunday afternoon. Well, while we were there, we looked along and some little way on the left, were three men, standing, and I don't know, in conversation, auntie Gert happened to raise her hand, and one of the men did the same. I didn't take any notice but then a little later, while...do they call them chuckas? You go on the pitch and tread the turf back, if you want to. She turned to me and she said "I think you might know one of those men along there Dorry," "The one I put my hand up to." So I said "why?" Well, she said "I seem to remember you worked for a Sheepshanks in London" and I said "yes, that's right," she said "well that's him." She said "why don't you go along" but I didn't really want to but Uncle Alec he said "well I'll go along" and I remember auntie Gert saying "no, you mustn't go Alec, Dorothy doesn't want to go that's her decision."

Well, I have met him personally since, only recently, about a week ago. And it was through my last video with Mr Jess Jephcott, and I was talking about my life, and I mentioned that I looked after a child by the name of Robin Sheepshanks in London, and took him to Cornwall, because he was having chest problems, just for his health. Well, through David Sheepshanks, Robins' father, Jess, I think I've got this right, contacted David and he contacted his father and he was delighted and he contacted me and I had an interview with him. We were talking about when he was a child, because I used to look after him. I wasn't in sole charge, because there was a governess. I only looked after him when she had time off, which was mostly weekly, and we had quite a lot to talk about, but the most important, towards the end, I suppose my brain was getting a bit stale, he asked me if I ever had tea in the nursery, and I said no. Well, I said it was a completely bare faced lie, you might call it. Because after we'd been out on a Wednesday afternoon, if it was fine, or played in if it was wet, I used to have tea with him. It was brought up to the nursery and afterwards I used to play with him, with his toys, read to him and I think, I'm almost sure, he had to be in bed by 7 o'clock and that was when my duties finished for the day.

(MB) You say he was about six years old wasn't he, didn't you say?

About five or six, yes. However, I've had a conversation on the phone since then because after I'd got to bed at night I was re-capping and I thought well when I said no I didn't have tea with him, it was a deliberate lie. So I said I had to do something about it so I phoned him and he phoned me back. And he was so pleased to think, I'd not only remembered that, I remembered how I used to take him to see his grandma. We used to go by taxi, couldn't

remember the name but Green Park was in my mind. Well it turned out to be, she lived in Eaton Square. We went two or three times and had tea with her in the drawing room, but one day we went and she'd got an unexpected visitor, so we had tea with Lady Margaret in her room and then we were taken up to the drawing room to see his grandma before we left.

I told him that and then I told him about the little white dog, "do you remember?", he said "yes, Judy," I said "that's right." I said very often I used to have to go down to the shop to get something for the cook, fruit, vegetables or something and I always took the dog with me. Well, it was allowed to run about the house but if it was wet I used to wipe its paws. Well, according to the time of the day I probably hadn't made the beds. Well, I'd go up to the bedroom and make the beds and the dog used to be hiding under the beds and that would jump out and nip my ankles. So, that was the gratitude for me taking it for a walk. And I can remember it was a Sealyham, but I was so thrilled to see him because I never, ever thought it would happen.

(MB) How did you get the job?

Well, thank you Jess, anyway, for contacting him.

(JJ) Well, it was my pleasure, it was a loose end that should have been sorted out.

(MB) How did a sixteen year old from here get a job in London, how was it advertised?

I think I said on my film, on the first one, that the school governess at Eight Ash Green said that it was a pity that I couldn't take up school teaching. I got the makings for one because in my last class, class six, I was hardly in it. I used to do my work so quickly and I used to go in the infant room and help the infant teacher, with the ones that come to school last. Well the only other thing was service so, of course, I don't know how I got to know or what proceeds happened. I got this job at Copford Rectory, 24th January 1927, and there was a cook and the parlour maid and I was in-between maid. I'd got to help the cook and help the parlour maid. The chauffeur had taken Dr Rosedale, doctor of divinity, of course, to the station at Marks Tey to go to London, something to do with the church, and he was supposed to meet him from the 4 o'clock train. Well, he went and he wasn't on there. Later on, the phone went. Well I don't think I'd ever seen a phone, leave alone hear a phone ring. And my cousin said "you go, I don't answer it." And Mrs Rosedale was stone deaf so she couldn't. So I went and I just said "hello" and this man's voice said "could I speak to the lady of the house" and I said "I'm sorry, she doesn't answer the phone." "Well, I'd better come and see her." That was all the conversation was. Well, of course, when he turned up. Oh, the chauffeur went to the station again and when he came back the police he was already there so he went in with Mrs Rosedale and they did the talking and he had a heart attack on the underground from Liverpool Street to Aldwich. Well, of course, it was the rectory that they lived in, obviously, and Mrs Rosedale, she chose to go back to London in Sumner place, South Kensington. Well, I went with her and my cousin, who was cook, but the parlour maid didn't come. Well, they didn't want a parlour maid 'cause there was only her to look after. But anyway, eventually, about a year afterwards my cousin got married, we had someone from outside Birmingham, she was very nice, but it didn't seem to be the same and I felt I wanted to move on, so I applied for this, it was a temporary job for a year, and I got it.

(JJ) So there's a conclusion to an interesting story from 80 odd years ago. Meeting up with Robin again and sharing those memories.

Yes, but I really. He was such a lovely child, you know?

(MB) Is he a widower, now?

No

(MB) He's still got a wife?

Yes. He had four sons

(JJ) Well the other topic we were going to talk about. You mentioned it, is motorcycling. You became a motorcyclist at some point in your life. Now, what were the circumstances that brought that about?

Well, that was in 1946. I suppose it was a relief from the war, I don't know. We joined the, my husband and I, joined the Colchester Castle Motorcycling Club in 1946, which met on Friday evenings. Not competing, but helping and supporting at all the events. Also attending and supporting other clubs events. Such as scrambles, grass track, racing, hill climbs, trials, treasure hunts. Well now, this is a piece, a few notes I've written, to carry on with this. The club, we met at the Colchester Angling Club at the bottom of St Botolph's Street, but after a while the club moved to The Albert on the bypass. We knew it was the Angling Club, at least I did, because there was all pictures of fish on the wall. The club held scrambles which were held in Friday Woods, usually at holiday weekends. No meeting on the Friday prior to the event. Members turned up on the course to prepare putting up safety barriers etc. but, of course, we weren't involved in that but we used to go and have a chat and walk. One thing I can always remember. That was quite early on in my days in the club. We were walking around Friday Woods and the treasurer's wife was with us and she was expecting and we had a lovely girl, she came from Somerset, she'd married a Colchester chap, and someone asked Margaret when she was really expecting her baby and she said "August." Well, this Eileen was so laid back, if that's the right word, I don't actually know what it means but it's used a lot....

(JJ) Relax

She said "what, this August?" and Margaret said "I hope so." I've never forgotten that.

(JJ) Which August did you have in mind? So, did you scramble yourself?

No, no. I didn't take part in anything, physically, only when, I suppose, we were selling programmes or giving out leaflets there was one chap, he'd got a small motorbike and he'd had a pillion fitted, he wasn't very big, he was a trainee carpenter and we were down at Lexden Springs, on the meadow there, a grass track. And there was a policeman, you know the laughing policeman, the song many years ago. He looked a bit like him, in my imagination, he was such a jolly chap. Well, this particular time, this young chap came in with this motorbike and he said, he'd kept talking about having one. So I said "I don't think you'll ever have one Derek," he said "yes I will Dot," he came with it. So he said "you can't take her for a ride." "Come on" he said "before I go in." So, I said to the policeman, "take these programmes." Well, he did take them and off I went and we had a ride round the village and then we got back. And, of course, what should happen, while I'd gone, Charlie came, he wanted me for something, he came and he said "where is she?" So Jersey Cant said "she's gone off with some young man on the back of a motorbike." But he was a nice chap and I was pleased, he worked hard and he was able to get a bigger machine and he did well and he used to take part, eventually. And, as I say, any other club could enter, it was open to anyone. No I think, my husband, he was the mainstay, he was like the backup team, he was big and strong and he was the one that raced round the track, if bikes had broken down, you know, helping them back to the pits, whatever they called it.

(JJ) What machine did he have?

He had a, well before the war, he had a 350 Matchless. He got that when I met him in '30. Well, of course, during the war he didn't use it because he bought a small one, to save petrol, 250 BSA. Then he went to a smaller one than that. It was about a 197, something like that. He'd gone off to work one morning and about half an hour later, I was in the bedroom and I saw him walking past, and I thought whatever's happened. Well, it had let him down at Eight Ash Green and he'd thrown it in the hedge and walked home and got his bicycle.

(MB) It's not still there, is it? Go back and get it, it might be worth something.

No, I think he got Levett at Eight Ash Green to come and get it. I can't remember the one he had after that, but that was a small..., no he started to use the 250 BSA. That was the one he was riding at the end of the war. But during the war he bought an Aerial, he only gave 5 pounds for it and I looked at it and I said "you've just wasted your money." He said "do you think so?" and I said "well, what a wreck" but he worked hard on it and he got it up to scratch and it was absolutely superb and I remember going to Cambridge to have it licenced. He eventually sold that. Then in '47 he bought a 350 Royal Enfield, that's the one he thought he wanted. Well, he bought it and rode it, for some time, and one night when my brother came down, who lived in the village, he was talking about, he thought he'd get a motorbike, he'd only got a bicycle and at that time he was cycling to Layer, I think, when they were doing the waterworks. So, I was going out of the room and I was going to WI so I turned round and said to my brother, "we'll sell you ours." And I didn't say any more but when I got home my husband said "why did you say," "well" I said "you've been talking about it, you don't like it and you'd like another one." So he had that and we had a 500cc Norton, with the suspension, what do you call it?

(JJ) Swinging arm or telescopic forks, an ES2 probably.

Well then, unfortunately, in 1957, I had to have my veins done on my legs and I couldn't ride again, you know on the pillion, so we had to have a car, but he did keep the motorbike, he used to use it for work, but he was really spoiling it, because he was only going to Colchester. But in 1960, someone from Luckings from St Botolph's Street, in Colchester, delivered a cupboard and the motorbike stood out in the garden and he said, passed a remark about the nice bike and that, and I said "do you want to buy it." And he said "is it for sale?" So I said "well, I think my husband would sell it." Well he was working down at Ford Street on the big machine, digging out for the sewer. Well, of course, you can just imagine this young chap went up and asked him. And he said "who told you?" "well," he said "I imagine it was your wife." He said "well, I'll come back and see you tomorrow." So, when he came home, it was the first thing, after hello. And he said, "who told you that I was going to sell the bike?" And I said "you'd said it so many times, I thought that it was already sold." But he had it, they did the deal.

(JJ) And that was the end of it, yes.

But that was about 1962.

(JJ) But, nowadays, you wouldn't do scrambling in Friday Woods. Or at Lexden.

Oh no, no.

(MB) 'Cause the Clampin's still do it, don't they? Derek still goes.

He goes to the meetings. Ray doesn't ride, Ray's son rides. Cause I rang Josie yesterday and had a chat with her.

(MB) David's trophy's are unbelievable. He's got so many, David Clampin.

(JJ) There's such a fuss about noise and things nowadays.

(MB) I think the more noise they make the faster they go.

Well we digress from scrambles in Friday Woods, anyway. Well then, there were treasure hunts which, they were operated from the Ipswich Road at the Blue Barn Garage and, of course, I think the first, it was a Friday night, these were held in the summer, of course, they wanted someone to go, I think there was about three of them went on the motorbikes. And I don't think Charlie was there that night, I think he was working late, but I went along and I went with one chap and what we had to do was pick out signs, you know, and note them down and they'd got to come, on the next day, on the Sunday, no we'd do it Friday night, on the Sunday, and see how many they could get. Well now, I can't remember when I see anyone who is elderly and would know, but I remember when we were filled up at the garage, with petrol, there used to be a pennyworth of something squirted into the tank.

(MB) There did, didn't there.

(JJ) Redex oil.

(MB) Redex, yes that's what it was, yes I remember that.

Redex, yes, well I'll tell you where the last sign of that, thank you I shall remember that. Do you know where the Fordham's used to live.

(MB) David Fordham? Rowley's farm, it's still there.

It was always untidy.

(MB) It's still there, it's still untidy.

Yes, well there was a sign on that. They'd got a little sign on their building of Redex. And nobody found it and they all said it was just my imagination. It was one club night, they said "I won't believe it unless you take me" and this Brian Nevard from Bentley He said "I won't believe it unless you come and show me." And that's true and I don't know whether it's there now.

(JJ) No pinched a long time ago I should think.

(MB) We used to have treasure hunts in the village with cars, that was good.

But that was very popular but the only thing was I couldn't go.

(MB) No you couldn't take part, no.

(JJ) You knew all the answers

(MB) They were good, the treasure hunts, there were quite a few in the village with cars.

And then, we used to go to hill climbs at Polstead and Leyston.

(JJ) You don't see that any more, do they? They do it in Yorkshire, I think, in the Dales.

Probably yes, grass tracks, I think is was

(JJ) You've got some old photographs from that period, have you?

No, I don't know what's happened to them, whether I've given them to one of my nephews, I don't know.

(MB) Clampin's might have.

(JJ) Well, the clubs still going, very strong.

Oh yes, it is.

(MB) Derek probably might have some photo's.

No, I think it was round the Ongar area they used to have a, there was a grass track.

(MB) Was there scrambling at Little Lovely Hall, like there is now, going back that far.

Oh yes, 'cause we used to go. That was the Halstead club used to run that. Yes, that was a good venue.

Anyway the grass tracks, we used to go, but, unfortunately, one of our club members, and I can't think, I thought it was Tony Sutton but Josie said it wasn't him, 'cause he's still alive. He was killed.

(MB) Yes, one boy just recently got killed.

The best one that I, well I don't say I liked this because it was held in the winter time, it was cold and damp, in Chalkney Woods, there used to be the trials and they used to put, usually there was enough to have, I don't know, I don't think there were as many females as there were males. But I didn't used to go with Charlie, he didn't have, he used to wander round so if someone had got stuck and whoever was there couldn't help him he would, yes, he was the odd job man. That was good, I know they used to have one point if they put their foot down, two points for two feet, three if they nearly fell off, and four, no five, if they really fell off.

(JJ) Came a cropper.

But that was very muddy. But then, in '50 three couples, we went to the Isle of Man. And that was Derek Clampin and Jean, Jerry Wheeler and Ann and Charlie and myself. And Geoff Duke, for me, he was super, that year. 'Cause I say, any members of any clubs, we used to go as far a Little Port to scrambles. And another one, there used to be a Brian Stonebridge, he came from the other side of Cambridge. You go past the American cemetery, it's only a little village, but I can't remember it. He was tall and really a lovely rider. And you could guarantee if you knew that Stonebridge was going to be at any of these events, there'd be a crowd. He was a real sporty chap. So was Jerry Wheeler, in our club at the time, he always had two bikes, 250 and a 350, and if some other chap had got a 250 or even a 350 and it had broken down and Jerry wasn't going to ride anymore he would lend them his bike, he was a real sport. But then, his father was in the position he could, you know, support him financially.

(JJ) Nice way to be.

But that was, no I quite enjoyed that.

(JJ) So, you didn't actually ride yourself, ever?

I didn't ride, only as I say down on the grass track at Spring Lane.

(JJ) Well we've got a bike, you can ride, if you'd fancy it. We've got a lovely little 250.

Oh I Say, well the 250 BSA my husband had, the day the Japanese war finished, he said to me "now if you can ride this bike," he said, "sensibly," he said, "I'll keep it and I'll use the Aerial," that was the one he'd done up. Well, I went out, I took him up as far as the airfield, and when we got nearly home, he said "slow up now" and I said "no were going further" and, of course, I opened up and I went down Middleborough, A12?, and back again and I can hear him saying it now. "Well" I said, "how did I do?" He said, "Well, I've come to the conclusion, if I let you have the bike, I shall become a widower." So that was the end. I did have one or two goes, as I said, at this grass track.

(JJ) Well I'm sure the Colchester Motorcycle Club would be interested in your tales and perhaps we'll have to contact them. Well, thank you, I think that's given an excellent addition to your original talk.

Well, it may seem idle chatter to some people.

(JJ) Well, It's the history of your life and especially relevant to Fordham. So thank you very much.

Ends

Transcribed by Theresa Jephcott in January 2012.

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