

Voices Transcripts

PREPARING FOR WAR

Norman Kennedy:

BM: And whenever war was declared, how did your parents or your family react to that?

NK: Well, you know, I suppose on the Friday, that was, yes the Friday was the first of September, and eh, Chamberlin had given Hitler this, ultimatum or ultimatum, eh that if he didn't pull – go away and retire from his advance on Poland, that war would be declared on 11 o' clock on the Sunday, that was the third, well now the, then it began to sink in that there was, there were going to be problems maybe, and there were certainly, you were making preparations, or at least you were advised to make preparations in the event of war being declared, that blacked out curtains, and, and you could see cars, particularly lorries or cars or vans, had the headlights blackened out and things, you know that would have been official cars, and norm- you know, not just an ordinary man on the street who had a motor car or a bicycle or anything like that, just went about his normal business; but the official cars that you would see, eh, would have been, would have started to get their headlights blacked out and things like that.

BM: Did your parents take any preparations?

NK: Oh aye my father, eh, where people normally had black out curtains – my father was a great do-it-yourself man, and he had a frame made with blackouts, black cloth tacked onto this frame which we put up every night once war was declared.

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Robert McKinley

BM: You were around about 18 I think you were saying at the start of war, what views had you formed about Hitler at that time?

RM: I suppose we were subject to a certain amount of propaganda – the only thing you saw was in the picture houses, the Movietone News, and the Nazis marching in Germany. There was no talk about the Jews or the Holocaust at that particular time. And eh, Hitler was going, Hitler had reneged on Czechoslovakia, he had invaded Austria, and there was more or less the feeling that Hitler and the Nazis were going to take over the entire continent. And, well there was a feeling of fear – could, could Britain and France contain Hitler? That was more or less the fear. And then of course it boiled down to, that Poland and Danzig and the corridor was taken, and that started the war.'

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Joe Parkinson

RP: Where did you join up, was it Clifton Street?

JP: Eh, Clifton Street there was the recruiting office, almost facing Victoria Barracks.

RP: Can you remember going there for the first time?

JP: Oh I do yes, I remember it well.

RP: What was the procedure, what was the process?

JP: Well em, when I went in, eh, the first time I was too young, you see. They told me 'you're too young, come back at a later date'. And then when I went to join up the next time, eh, of course they have all these posters and that around, you know, glamorising the army, and eh, I was signed up then – you take the oath, you know, the oath of allegiance to the King. And eh, always remember a part of it: if necessary, you've to give your life in defence of your King and country.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Bertie Annett:

BM: Obviously in the local area where you were you had people committed to, to farming activities to further the war effort, but there was a danger, I think particularly in the Newcastle area, em, that there might be some invasion or something by the Germans, do you know anything about that at all?

BA: Well the only thing they had, eh, some kind of stakes driven in the sea bed out there, maybe I don't know how far out [unclear] in case of an invasion by sea.

BM: When –

BA: It was coastguard right along the coast here anyhow, sitting up the top of the banks up there, and eh, in the most prominent position they could see, especially at Ballymartin point there, eh, and the radar was there as well, it was the highest point along the coast in Northern Ireland, the top of Ballymartin Hill, and there was a lot of Air Force, and especially Welsh stationed there to man that station, and eh you could see it from far enough, it was right at the top of Ballymartin Hill. The radar station.

BM: Whenever you came into, into Newcastle, obviously the beach could've, as you've already described, could've been a possibility for a German invasion or a paratroops perhaps?

BA: Well it would have been a, it've been a good point because they could've come in, the tide goes out there so far, eh, it goes out I suppose, it goes out a high mile nearly, and they

could've come in there and ran ashore, that half mile without landing directly on the beach anyhow.

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Willie Crea:

BM: Well let's just go back to Ringawaddy in 1939, can you just tell us something about what that place was like?

WC: Well it was a quiet country place, eh, farming went on, eh, that was good agricultural land that the airdrome eventually became on, and everything was going on to produce food, which was urgency, an urgent need as well. Eh, and eh, we all, we all were in farming, farming industry, and eh, it went on in the normal procedure, with an urgency on ploughing up of course, eh, to produce more food. And then came the, the evacuation at Dunkirk, and all that changed as far as [RAF] Bishopcote was concerned.

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Pauline Diplock

PD: And I do remember listening to the radio and hearing the infamous Lord Haw-Haw and his broadcasts to the British people, and I think I can remember my father being very angry about it.

Interviewer: Dessy McCahon

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Willie Crea:

BM: Did you – were you aware, either through newspapers or from cinema or anything like that, about what was going on in the war at that time?

WC: Well the radio was the biggest, was the biggest eh, eh, information centre. Nearly everybody had a battery-driven radio, and that was the, that was the, that was the eh, that was the best, as well as the newspaper, we still got our daily mail and what not, but the newspaper eh, the radio was a great centre of information.

BM: And were you aware that some of the information you were getting perhaps would have been propaganda?

WC: Oh well yes [laughs], that was the case yes, you weren't too sure what to believe but you had to read between the lines and sometimes you came to the truth, and sometimes you didn't.

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

NEUTRAL EIRE

Ken McLean

BM: At the start of the war, whenever you were joining up, would some people have been disappointed that you were going to join the British Army?

KM: Well, I think a hell of a lot of Irish people were, but there was a hell of Irish fellas that did. There was thousands of them. Thousands of them.

BM: Now you went, you went to Belfast. What did you join? The Army, the Navy, the Air Force, which one did you -

KM: I joined the Royal Artillery.

BM: Why the, why the Artillery?

KM: Hm?

BM: Why did you join the Artillery?

KM: I had a sort of a fancy for it, I knew people that were in it anyway you know and said yeah it's okay, eh, a couple of fellas in the insurance company went up there and they had their pick you see being volunteers, and I picked the Artillery and thought, yeah that's okay, and so the word got around, you know. They joined every bloomin' thing – Infantry, Artillery, Cavalry, you name it – and [unclear] some of those Irish lads joined the most dangerous regiments of the whole lot, you know? They were a gas crowd!

Interview conducted by Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

John Crisp

RP: Did you see any of the damage?

JC: In Dublin, to be honest, no.

RP: What was the reaction of the people after that there?

JC: Eh, they were cross. And I think it helped to decide a lot of guys who were wavering a bit, that they should get involved. I know – my own feelings – it's difficult at all to be pompous about it because a lot of it was just for the hell of it, you know, and the fact that a lot of my friends and school friends and that were all doing the same thing – so, but I was uncomfortable about neutrality, to be honest. I didn't think it was the sort of occasion that you could be neutral. And at, by the time the war ended, I was content that I had done the right thing – when you see places like Belsen...yeah.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Bob Marsden

RP: Was there any discussion even after a while about Ireland's neutrality then during the war?

BM: All I heard about that was that there was a great – when I was out to – there was a great relief to know that things were quiet and semi-neutral, you know? That em – well it's like those two fellas in the trench in Italy, and – Irish lads – and the Padre comes along and he says to them, 'well, what's going on in Ireland now?' And then one lad says, 'Oh, there's a big general election going on, you know', says, and the Padre says, 'if you were home, who would you vote for?' 'Oh' he says, 'the tall fella. The tall fella.' 'And why would you do that?' 'Because he kept us out of the war'. And that's fair enough as it stands, yes.

RP: But you decide to enter the war, you decide to join up. Why did you decide to join up?

BM: To join up...because, it was coming towards a crunch point, and you could feel, there's something big gonna happen, and I didn't want to get left out of it.

RP: You wanted the excitement?

BM: I did. Truly.

Interview conducted by Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Pauline Diplock

PD: As far as the Republic of Ireland is concerned, I remember that mostly it was resentment – that we felt that we were deprived of so many things, and we were suffering rationing and clothing coupons, and yet over the border, there was a land of plenty. I think that's probably what the main feeling was at the time. But I don't remember any political talk, because I was probably too young to take a great interest in it.

Interview conducted by Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Norman Kennedy

NK: Eh, and then my grandfather had a bungalow in Donaghadee, just outside of Donaghadee, between Donaghadee and Millisle, so we went down there and spent the war years there then – and the, the post war years until the house was rebuilt in 1948. By that time I was working, eh, down in, on the Sydenham Road, when the war, you know, in 194- I went down there in 45, 46, worked down in timber trade.

BM: Did you feel a lot safer down in the country?

NK: Oh it was a totally different life, and we, and the, the, the bungalow my father – eh, my grandfather had was virtually on the sea front at Ballyvester, and you were able to watch the convoys eh, going up and down the Irish Sea, and bombs, them being bombed, you could see the mines or explosives or whatever it was, and the water spouts going up into the air. You'd be able to watch that.

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

John Sinclair

JS: I do remember, as I say, being at Pollock Dock, and I wondered what all the excitement was, and I went and looked out a window, and there was the...she was a frigate...with her bow blown clean off her, she had tugs that towed her in. And on the [unclear] from the mast down, from the funnel down sorry, you could see officer's epaulettes fluttering from it. Now she was after a U boat off the [unclear, maybe Donegal] coast, and she lost her in the [unclear], and she turned I think in Donegal Bay, she was turning and as she turned the U boat hit her, and as far as I remember there were only about 88 of her crew left. They landed the wounded and most of the crew at Derry, and they brought her around with a skeleton crew.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

THE BLITZ

Mary Carson

MC: The government said they had to be evacuated and I had to get them all the, like, suitcases, and put their clothes in. And they were neglected because they were there with the cows and all and they got dirty.

PC: How long were they in the country?

MC: About eh, three weeks, that was all. And when we, Da, like that was my husband, and I went to see them they were living with vermin, and eh, I come home crying my eyes out and told Granda Bob and Granda Bob went straight down the next morning and brought them home. He wouldn't have them there. And I had to get the doctor to examine them, to let the doctor see how dirty things were.

Interviewer: Peter Carson

Interview conducted by National Museums Northern Ireland

Jimmy Sloan

FC: Were you not kind of evacuated out of the city?

JS: We were, we were supposed to be evacuated to Newtownards. We were evacuated to Newtownards, but it wasn't for very long because, I do remember the air raid sirens going off. I remember the pram coming out. My mother and father and I can remember myself hanging onto the side with my young sister in the pram, and my brother and I on each side holding onto it and going up Castlereagh Street, I take it we were going to the Castlereagh Hills, I remember that. People say to me Jim, och how can you remember that you must have been only three or four. I, I, I can remember it.

FC: But is that where the people around that, Mountpottinger, would have gone? Up to the Castlereagh Hills?

JS: Castlereagh Hills.

FC: Like, like in the north of the city they would have gone up to Cave Hill and round that way?

JS: Yes.

FC: But you would've, you headed for the Castlereagh?

JS: Well, we headed for the Castlereagh because em, all the industrial, you know the, the shipyard, they were after the shipyard, eh all the industrial, the Ropeworks so we wouldn't have went down the Albertbridge Road, the rope works were there. Eh you were goin towards, if you were, in that direction you were goin towards the shipyard no matter what, you know it was in that direction, so we'd to go away, veer away from it so we

went to the Castlereagh Hills to get away from the, the bombs and. I remember them coming over, I can you know, I heard them coming over. I remember running up the Castlereagh Hills, I remember running into the shelters.

Interviewer: Fionnuala Carragher

Interview conducted by National Museums Northern Ireland

Norman Kennedy

NK: But I had a job: as soon as the sirens would have gone, this was from the 40s, 41, 40s and 41, eh, the sirens had gone, I would have got up from bed, put the good suit on – the navy blue suit – and I was in charge of the, the tin box which had the insurance papers, the house papers, all of those things, and I was charge of that, so, I was into the good suit and under the stairs. And eh, I often said, you know, ‘what’s the point of me going getting into the good suit?’ ‘Well, if’ she says, ‘anything happens, you’ll be in your good suit!’ ‘You’ll be well dressed if anything–’. But however on the Sunday night, she said she smelt gas, and she said she would rather have us blown up than gassed, so that night we went into the air raid shelter just round [Crystal?] Street. And that would have been the end of night the 5th of May, when two bombs landed virtually in the same, in the same crater. There was a small one landed which lifted the air raid shelter off its foundations nearly, there were about eight or ten of us, and of course the one thing I can remember is them singing hymns, and one thing or another as these bombs were exploding. And then the two landed in the one hole and our house virtually disappeared.

BM: Did you feel the people were scared?

NK: Oh, very scared at that stage, yeah. The Easter Tuesday particularly had, had frightened an awful lot of people, and as I say, then the people who were remaining, we went into the air raid shelter on the Sun- on the Monday night, and those bombs came down and they were – the screams, I can live with that scream yet, and the, ’fore the explosion, the flash, the smell of those exploding.

Interview conducted by Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Ken Anderson

KA: In actual fact, to cut a long story short, it was Belfast was getting bombed, by the German bombers were going over.

RP: This was 1941?

KA: 44.

RP: It was 44?

KA: Well they got it in 41, they got another touch in 44, now I would have been what, 8 year old then? But we were taken out of course, now you remember everything was in darkness, they couldn't put the lights on in the car, and eh, we were taken out and wrapped in a, whatever, a rug, and put into the car, and eh, as I say I was - and I can still hear and see those bombers, the drone of those bombers going overhead, they were flying very very low.

RP: Was there a- was there any panic at the time?

KA: Not, I would say, not a lot of panic, my father took us out to Magilligan, to somebody's caravan who lived out Magilligan. Now he drove there in darkness – how he done it I don't know, but I've always remembered that distinctly, the drone of those bombers.

RP: Were you frightened?

KA: No I wasn't frightened, no. Maybe my father and mother, I think my mother was up to high doh about it. But I always remember the noise.

RP: Were there many families doing that?

KA: Oh there was, aye. That street that I, Queen Street in those days, there was [unclear], and there was eh, maybe four, five families of [unclear] all on that one street there. And they all – in actual fact it was the man who owned the caravan, that's where he lived, and he had two of these caravans which were unheard of, a caravan in those days! And that's where he kept his caravan, it was.

RP: So was there much of a mass evacuation from Coleraine?

KA: Aye, at that time, I don't remember that. I just – I remember that, as I say, the family going out there and my father and my mother taking us out to the – and we thought of course that this was great! You know,

RP: A bit of excitement?

KA: Get lemonade, or whatever biscuits there was!

RP: And did the Germans drop any bombs at that time, in 1944?

KA: Oh they did, they dropped on Belfast. They did, they dropped on Belfast. But they were always frightened of, eh – you see, we did a load shipping here in Coleraine. You remember [unclear], you remember the boats coming in to the harbour there, and eh, that was a sad day the day they closed the harbour there, but however, that was the one thing they were frightened of.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

A GLOBAL WAR

Robert Crawford

RP: And what was the purpose of, of your [unclear]?

RC: We were training then to go to the Far East, and what happened was, this [unclear] Martin and I went down to South Africa on leave, and we were in Cape Town waiting to go-sail back to West Africa when we got the signal to go to India. Outside, eh, Pune, they set up a camp, which we did. That's right, bought that hat in Pune.

RP: Well now, before we get into that, how long were you in West Africa for?

RC: Em, at least two years.

RP: And what were conditions like?

RC: Eh, very, very, sticky. We had mosquitos nets of course, food wasn't too bad, em, we had to watch about using mosquito nets, we had – what do you call it – British other ranks, we had a small number of em, white, soldiers, as well as the African, and they were a bit careless, [unclear] a bit careless about their health, about sun, sun in particular, and you had to take these – had quite a bit of malaria there, had a hospital there.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Ken McLean

KM: There was the King's Own African Rifles, [unclear], but they were all joined together in the 11th East Africa Division. That was the whole division, and that was the infantry, artillery, em, transport, you, you name it, anything you had to do in, in a regiment, yeah. Had to do that.

BM: And where did, where did you meet up, where did you meet up with them?

KM: In Africa.

BM: In Africa?

KM: Oh yeah, we landed in Africa, and eh, we were stationed in Kenya for, I think about three months in Kenya, did a little spell down in Uganda, and eh, by that time anyway, well we had been trained, we were trained gunners, so it was – I won't say it was easy, but it was easier than if we hadn't been trained, you know.

BM: And what about any language problems?

KM: Yes! We had! We had to do a three weeks course on Swahili, because they'd no English, we'd no Swahili, and we had to turn around and learn the language. I still have my Swahili book on the side there.

BM: Was it easy?

KM: Oh I must show it to you, yeah. And em, but the thing is – when you're learning a language like Swahili, you're learning it for months and months and you knew it, even with your European pals you sometimes lapsed into a bit of Swahili, you got so used to it. That's a story, isn't it? Yeah. A lot of peculiar things used to happen. Yeah.

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Bob Marsden

RP: and you were moving on to move further down towards the Rhine were you, and that? You were telling me you saw Monty at one point, can you tell me that story?

BM: Well as I say it was when we were actually practicing to cross the Rhine, Monty had ordered the 7th Armoured Division to be the initial crowd across, and see, we were the infantry brigade belonging to the 7th Armoured, we rode on the tanks until the hit infantry then we jumped off. Em, but, we would have had to go infantry brigade first across, establish a hea- eh, a what do you call it,

RP: A bridgehead?

BM: A bridgehead, then in come the tanks then we jump on them and away. But em, he suddenly decided that he wanted a proper big do, and he put a whole infantry division – the 51st Highland – to cross the Rhine and establish a bridgehead. And um, [unclear] went about, the piper in the first one of these amphibious tanks, he was – moment of glory had come, he was gonna play them across the Rhine, and when he started, nothing happened. His bag had burst. And he swore to some [unclear, maybe Sassenach?] like, [unclear] a tank with them, anyway. But em, yes, we practiced when it was supposed to be our do, we practiced on the river Maas I think in Holland, and had a whole exercise – march up, jump into these – get into these, um, amphibious tanks, and go down splash into the Maas, cross it, and up the other side there was a little village, so you disembark and go charging through the village. And one – when we had it all perfectly in order, um, Monty came up to have a look and see it going, and up came the army camera men, and they kept away from Monty, and they filmed us going up getting into the amphibious tanks, going down to the river, plonking in, and coming up the other side. And eventually, when the Rhine was crossed, the film that they made of us practicing went up on the screens in England with all sorts of crash-bangs and everything on the soundtrack; and one mother of the lads in Birmingham was at the pictures that night, and she saw her son about to cross the Rhine, and she shouted out 'that's my son going across the Rhine!', and the whole cinema jumped up and clapped and roared! She, she went to it every night while it was there and did the same thing, got the same enjoyment out of it.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

WOMEN IN THE SERVICES

Patricia Tate

RP: You moved down now to your first major posting, which was...

PT: Medmenham.

RP: Medmenham?

PT: Uh-huh.

RP: And, and what was your role there, Pat?

PT: Well we were doing the photographs for the different campaigns, etc., we did the, em, we did- we made maps for the North African campaign, we, we did, em, eh, photographing, eh, we did, first of all, the photographs were done, eh, contact printing, and then they were laid out in a mosaic, and then they were photographed as a mosaic, and eh, sent to the different places. Well once they got them to the stage of being a mosaic, eh, there was some of them, eh, that we, em, re-imposed, I would say it was, onto a metal plate. It was done with like, eh, a carbon lamp, you sensitised this metal plate, I couldn't tell you what the liquid was now, but you kind of put it on a, you put the metal plate on a turntable, and you a just dripped a little of this liquid onto the plate and it spun round and sensitised over the whole plate, and then it was put on a thing and a carbon lamp, and the eh, negative, and the, was imposed onto the metal plate. And then it was developed up with black ink. And then, eh, it was dried and, etc. and then it was put onto a [unclear, maybe rotor?] printer, and eh, and they printed the maps. And each colour had to be done separately! They had to go through each colour separately, and they ran off the maps for the North African campaign.

...

RP: So you didn't speak to anybody, about anything?

PT: We didn't, you never talked about your work, you just, eh...they said we, we, we never said what kind of a unit we were, but, we said – if anybody who, with a little knowledge, looked at our hands, they would know immediately, because there were never enough rubber gloves to go around while you were doing developing, and so you just developed away with your bare hands, and you finished up your nails were nearly black with developer [laughs]. And I was sitting one day in the canteen with my hands and I was – unconsciously probably, but you never did spread your hands out because as I say they were...and I was sitting with my hands closed and this American who was at the table said, 'why do you sit with your hands closed?' he said, 'open then out!' And then he says 'oh close them up again!' [laughs]

RP: Were they all black were they?

PT: Your nails were black with developer. You had to wait 'til it grew out.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Angela Neely

RP: So your role was to intercept German radio signals?

AN: No, our, our em role was to em get the messages coming through on the teleprinter which was nearly always plain language at that stage and eh, that was about the 1940's I think. Eh, they came in em and somebody higher up would decode and then we distributed them to wherever they had to go. You know, you'll send that one to so and so and you'll send that one to.....

RP: So, initially the messages came in in plain language, or some messages came in in plain language.

AN: Some came in in plain language, some of them came in in code.

RP: And the other official, a more senior official decoded?

AN: Did the decoding.

RP: And were you privy to any of the decoding?

AN: No, not at that stage, no.

RP: The plain language ones that came in, what typically were they about?

AN: Och, something to do with kit or somebody's leave or something like that. Nothing, nothing that would, had much bearing on the...

RP: And did you have to log all of these?

AN: Yeah.

RP: What way, how did it work, what way did it work Angela?

AN: Well they came through on the teleprinter. Eh, the teleprinter operator decided which people it had to go to and eh, the message was torn off and put down and you typed it or whatever. I mean you had to do a bit of everything. And em when it was distributed through to the people in different parts of the country that it would go over the telephone probably if it was a plain language thing it would just go by telephone.

RP: And so you could have been on the phone to somebody in Belfast or Londonderry?

AN: Oh yeah. Uh huh, that's right.

RP: Passing that message on.

AN: Yeah.

RP: What about the ones that came in code then?

ARN: Oh well they were, at that stage they were, they went to the almighty ones [laughing]. We, we didn't get much to do with them at all.

...

RP: You were saying you went into this other room where the funny stuff was going on. What exactly was going on there?

AN: The decoding, only it was now up at the stage you were now deciphering as well as decoding and eh, right having- having just gone in I was getting the ordinary mostly decoding and a wee bit of cipher and then cause it's, it's more complicated

RP: Now explain cipher.

AN: Oh don't, I couldn't explain it. I couldn't, in fact, I couldn't because I couldn't see the difference between calling it the coding and calling it cipher. I think the cipher was more secret than the coding. It's the same, the same mechanics but it was more secret. And then this stuff began to come in from Bletchley. Now I never got to see that. There was another step up that, the senior officers, they worked at that.

RP: Were you aware of Bletchley Park at this stage?

AN: Yes.

RP: Were you aware what Bletchley Park was doing?

AN: Yes.

RP: So whenever you saw stuff coming in from Bletchley you knew this was this was top secret?

AN: That's right. Top secret. It just didn't come to us. It had to go to the higher echelons.

RP: Was it difficult Angela to decode and to decipher?

AN: No. No, if you could do your sums it was alright. Oh no it was mostly numbers and you match them up with different letters and things like that. It was easy, dead easy.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Edith Chambers

EC: Within two or three weeks I was posted to Gloucester, and then while I was there they were looking for people to go out to relieve RAF wireless operators that'd been abroad for a long while and I thought, what a good idea! So that's where I went then.

RP: So you went out to Egypt.

EC: Yes, and Jack was in France at that time.

RP: Now what was life like, in Egypt?

EC: Oh it was great, I really enjoyed it – there, talk about men there. It was a great big place where everybody that'd have been working in England, all the different troops of all different nationalities, were going home, the New Zealanders were going home, the Australians were going home, the South Africans were going home and they all based in Cairo, like a PDC they call them, camp where they were going onwards. So instead of Belgians and Yanks and British, I had New Zealanders instead! [Laughs] Needless to say I had a ball.

RP: And this was at the, this was at the end of the war then Edith when you were there?

EC: Yes, yes, yes.

RP: Can you remember roughly, were you out there in 44 or 45?

EC: D Day was what?

RP: 44.

EC: And when was VE?

RP: 45.

EC: 45, it was 45. I spent VE Day in the middle of the Mediterranean on board the boat, on the ship that we went out on, and we were in Algiers port, and there were two naval ships and they all docked together like that, and they all came on board, and we had a big dance under the moon on the Mediterranean.

RP: And that was, and that was VE Day?

EC: VE Day, yeah.

RP: And that was you on your way down to-?

EC: To Cairo.

...

EC: So that was VE Day, and we went to Italy, very southern place, part of Italy – we dropped 600 WAAFs off in Algiers, 600 off on the toe of Italy, and the other 600 of us went to Cairo.

RP: So you were on board with quite a number of WAAFs then?

EC: Oh yes, yes, yeah.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Constance Baillie

RP: And what was your role in Belgium? What was the role?

CB: I was doing dietician work. I enjoyed it. It was nice.

RP: How did you get from your, your, previous job, to becoming a dietician?

CB: Well, I was back on what, what I was supposed to be doing you see. So, instead of being in the kitchen, where it was heavy, they put me on diets. I enjoyed that, it was nice.

RP: And exactly what did you do then in Belgium as a dietician? Did you give advice to people, or what exactly did-?

CB: No, you just made food to suit their injuries, you know, cause some of the boys were coming in with their mouths all shot, you know. Em, and some had stomach problems cause they'd been shot. And, they were coming in from prisoner of war camps you see and they were like skeletons and of course they had to be built up and you had to just make food that was advised that would do them good, you know.

RP: Was that a very difficult job to do, looking at the individuals?

CB: No, not really, you know. Some of them used to come for their own food, you know. And they – no, not really. They just, [laughs], some of them used to say, 'Are you going to poison us today?' you know; but no, eh, they were all right.

RP: Well did you find it rewarding if you got them back up on their feet again?

CB: Oh yes, cause they were, it was terrible, especially if you were going into the hospital and you saw them getting out of the ambulances, it was awful. They were like sticks. Mm, you'd no idea.

RP: And had they many stories to tell themselves?

CB: Well we never, we never really heard them you know, because, I mean, half of them were too ill really to tell you anything, you know.

RP: And, how long were you in, in Belgium for?

CB: Eh, we were there for quite a while, and then we moved over to Germany. Went to, em, it was a new hospital in, where we went, and that was in a forest, a real heavy forest, and eh, it was, they told us it was shaped like the swastika, it had been built like the swastika. You could see it from the air you know, you couldn't when you were on the ground, but it was a lovely hospital I must say, we had a room each and it was really gorgeous.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

PRISONERS OF WAR

Ronnie Cartwright

RC: On one occasion I was a member of the Tally-Ho Club. The Tally-Ho Club was somebody who was willing to help, eh, those who wanted to escape, to escape; but unfortunately, I suffer from claustrophobia, therefore I could never tunnel, so I was out as far as I was concerned. But on one occasion the powers that be within the camp took me to a little place they'd built off one of the billets, next to a wall, and behind that wall there was all sorts of maps and uniforms, so therefore, they must have been able to bribe the Germans to get all this stuff. So, there must have been a fair amount of bribery went on within the camp, that's the only clues I have.

...

RP: You say yourself you made it eh, an escape attempt yourself?

RC: I did, from Stalag, eh, 8B, that was eh, the one I was telling you about that was eh, filthy as far as vermin was concerned. We were all covered in this particular camp, we were all – I must tell you this wee story. We were all, all covered with lice and eh, one of the evening entertainments was to take our shirt off and kill as many lice as we could, hang it up on the beam, and the next morning, lift, bring it down and it was crawling with lice. Now, what we were scared of there was, there's a disease comes from lice known as typhus, and apparently, if typhus had broken out in that compound, we'd all have died. It would have been as severe as that.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Rosemary Hay

RP: Any worry – you were talking about security there – any worry about spies, or about –

RH: No. Never thought about them.

RP: People of German nationality?

RH: No, the only thing was Italians, when Italy came into it, they did inter some of the Capronis and we thought of them as being as Ulster as we were. You know, we were used to them. We thought nothing of them, we thought it was awful to inter them.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Ben Tilson

RP: You remember seeing the U boats in Lough Erne?

BT: Yes we brought a number of these U boats in, circled them and brought them, every morning – biggest insult to the German army. They brought a bunch of Pioneer –British Pioneer Core boys with a, usually a sergeant in charge of these ones, and they got all they [unclear] had, U boat officer- officers, they were very very, eh, queer – some of them, some of them were actually sea men, and very good and so on, but a big lot of them were real Nazis, and eh, they were very annoyed at getting the Pioneer boys to look after them when they should have had an officer escorting them and so on and so forth.

RP: Did the Ordinary Submariner, did they looked defeated and despondent?

BT: Eh, not the Nazis, eh, you could've told – there was two different lots of them, eh, and some of them, I think, though they were on U boats, I don't think they really liked sinking ships, but that was their job and they did it and they did it exceedingly well.

...

BT: Well then I went, from there, I was posted to Killadeas in County Fermanagh, and charged with the maintenance of the marine craft, and everybody was getting sent home, demobbed, and all the rest of it, and eh, we had 50 German prisoners of war there, and they were in a big camp. And these had been vetted and so on and so forth, and eh, they were perfectly okay, you'd have no problems. And eh, there was one boy, he was an interpreter, nobody else could speak English, till one day I was standing in the workshop and I heard two American voices outside walking past the window, talking- chatting away, real American accent, I checked - two American- eh, two Germans chatting away, and so, they were [unclear] out and sent away back to England to some place.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

ALLIED FORCES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Ann Cameron

RP: But your age, now you'd have been at the time war broke out 18, 19, 20, I suppose with the troops around the place, and being a girl in Larne,

AC: Yes, it was great.

RP: It was great?

AC: And there were a lot of Belgian soldiers and they were wonderful waltzers. We used to have one come here, eh, he had – two of them came, my mother used to keep them, and he couldn't speak very good English, and eh, he was called, em, forget his name, but he always asked for 'milik' in his tea! And his wife wrote to my mother one time and asked her, would she mind telling her if her husband was good looking – meaning was he well, you know.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

John Sinclair

JS: I remember going to Ballykelly one time – or sorry, Ballyhalbert, and eh, when we were there we heard this weird language over the tannoy, and the WAAF officer was near me she said, 'oh that's the Polish Squadron being scrambled!'

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Pauline Diplock

PD: I think that when I was about 17 I, that was when the Americans arrived in Northern Ireland. And of course they were absolutely everywhere, so if any of us went to dances, we would meet various people in the American and the Canadian forces, and I do remember very distinctly meeting a very, very nice Canadian officer called Frank Ney. And it was a standing joke that he said he had been related to Marshal Ney, that he was the descendant of the famous Marshal Ney who fought with Napoleon. So we used to joke in the house about this because we thought it was perhaps a little bit of an exaggeration. But he was a very very charming man, a good bit older than I was but he took a shine to me, and he actually wanted to marry me and get me to go back to Canada. So I have postcards from Canada, because when he went back he sent word, and he sent me information about what his job was – he was a real estate agent and so forth. But all I do remember is that he was connected to the Canadian Air Force, I think he flew Sunderlands from Lough Erne, and then he was moved somewhere else after that. But I have photographs of him standing outside the Grand Central Hotel in Belfast, and, eh, also I think he went to the South – how he

managed that I don't know, because of course they were neutral, but he was a very charming person and I'm sorry I didn't keep in touch with him later on.

Interviewer: Dessy McCahon

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

REFUGEES

Eva Gross

SC: When did you come to Northern Ireland?

EG: I came to Northern Ireland on the 11th of September, nineteen hundred and thirty-six.

SC: And what was your reason for coming to Belfast?

EG: My father was a Jew, my mother was an ordinary German, of course he was a German national too, but there was no future for me in Germany. We – [unclear place name] had a lovely beach, it was a seaside place, and people came there in the summer, but if you wanted to bathe on the beach, which was looked after by lifesavers, you needed to have a pass. And officially it said somebody at that time who was 50% Jewish could go on the beach but it wasn't really safe. My friends were afraid that I might be accosted. So, they – and really I couldn't go to dances with my friends, who as a teenager, of course we're keen to go dancing. And so - I could go to another beach but then my friends were all going to – life, really, the social life was all on the other beach. And of course also in school, all the – now in Germany you still had school on Saturday morning, but all the girls in my form, in my lyceum – the grammar school - had to belong to the Hitler Youth, because if you wanted to go to the university, or if you wanted to be a civil servant, you definitely needed to belong to it. So I usually was left in school with one or two children whose parents were communists. And so really I was ostracised.

Interviewer: Sarah Cherry

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Birgit Kirkpatrick

BK: And we had the first Jewish refugees coming up before the war broke out, really.

BM: Because we talk about the war breaking out in 1939, but did you have some of these Jews coming before 1939?

BK: Yes. Yes.

BM: Tell us about that.

BK: Well, they didn't come in droves. It was the ones who could afford it, I mean, my friend lived in a, you know, how you live in flats, and in the flat below her, a family with Jewish girls – daughters – moved in. So I was aware of that family. And it came, you know, there were others, and you sort of heard of others.

BM: Were you talking to them at all?

BK: No, no. You were aware of them.

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Zelda Enlander

ZE: 1938 was the Kindertransport. Children came to Clifton Park Avenue.

BM: Can you remember seeing them?

ZE: Yes, of course.

BM: What state were they in?

ZE: In a daze. We all helped. Gave whatever we could in the way of clothes, money. That was it – then they moved to the farm. Millisle.

BM: That was down in Millisle?

ZE: Yeah. You must have the history of that.

BM: Did you feel very sorrowful for these children?

ZE: Broken-hearted. What would you expect me to feel? Broken-hearted.

BM: You helped as best you could.

ZE: Couldn't do a lot, but whatever we could do. Hard times, you know, growing up.

BM: And - maybe not being totally aware of why these children came, probably from Germany, and parts of Europe -

ZE: We knew! Of course we knew.

BM: What were your thoughts towards the Germans then?

ZE: What would you expect them to be?

BM: Pretty rough, I would have thought.

ZE: Repeat?

BM: I would have thought they would be pretty – rough, is the word I used, but eh.

ZE: They were cruel, of course, but not all. Not all. Heart-breaking.

BM: Were you surprised then, when em, Hitler started to move across into Belgium, and Holland, and various countries? Did it come as a shock?

ZE: Well, remember, I was young, and it all came as a shock. The children came in 1938, you tried to help as much as you could.

BM: Did the Jewish community still try to help when they were down in Millisle, down in the?

ZE: Of course, how would they survive?

BM: Did they provide money, or did they provide food and clothes?

ZE: Food, they grew themselves. Money, yes. Then we helped them to get to Palestine when they wanted to.

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

THE HOLOCAUST

Josephine McGrillis

JM: I didn't stay that long in Riga. But, I will say – the concentration camp wasn't far away from where I lived.

RP: How far would it have roughly have been?

JM: About 10 minutes away. And every day you heard something else, somebody was hung again last night, because of this and that. So one day I said, I must go round that camp and have a look. And as I say it was just a camp with wire fencing around it. And when I came up to the, to the main gate, a big lorry had arrived and all the Jewish women – when I say Jewish women, they were well-to-do people, well dressed, well looked after. They still had their lipsticks on and their fingernails painted. And they wondered why they were treated like animals, really.

RP: And were these people, these Jewish ladies getting out of the lorry, were they being taken into the camp to be-?

JM: They were brought in – out from the camp, put on the lorries, and then put on the streets to pick the ice off the street. So when I stood there I still remember, I felt...really...who am I, really, you know, to have a look – to be – to see other people being treated like animals.

RP: Did you feel sorry for them?

JM: I did, I definitely did, and I – was never happy there.

RP: How big was the camp?

JM: There must have been – it wasn't really that big, maybe half a dozen huts. Or what d'you call them. But we, otherwise we never would have seen – the Jews were always in the camps, except for doing the work on, in the street.

RP: And their job in the street was to clean up the street?

JM: Clean up the street, yes.

RP: And were they treated harshly when they were doing that?

JM: Well, when I worked further down there already were women picking the ice and the soldiers were always over them. And, later on, I heard that all those Jews was taken into the forest and all shot. As I say I never was happy there.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Teddy Dixon

RP: But you, you arrive at Dachau. Did you know much about what was-?

TD: We knew nothing about it.

RP: So, it was a complete surprise for you?

TD: The first thing I saw in Dachau was a death train.

RP: Can you remember walking into the Dachau camp?

TD: I remember, well, vaguely. The cries was terrible. The smell of it.

RP: Now, you say the crowds; these were the inmates, was it?

TD: These were the inmates.

RP: Were they all inside or were they walking out?

TD: There was a couple outside, but we were told; when, when we got organised a wee bit, we were told not to let any more out for they were scared of disease spreading; typhoid and all was -

RP: Were you one of the first to go into it?

TD: One of the first.

RP: To actually liberate it?

TD: Yeah.

RP: And it was your American division?

TD: Our, our company was the first. We were lead unit that day in particular.

RP: But, did you see the building itself in the distance and know, that's where we're heading?

TD: No, the first thing we come across, the first thing we saw was the death train outside the camp.

RP: What did it look like?

TD: Must have been about thirty or forty cars; different types; the bodies were, some lying on the ground, some lying inside, and the blood coming out of them. There was one man alive in it.

RP: And how far was the train away from the camp?

TCD: Across the street from it.

RP: It would have been about 100 yards, was it? Or less than 100 yards?

TCD: Less than 100 yards.

RP: So you knew, you knew there was something awf-

TCD: The railway actually run into the camp you see.

RP: Aye, aye. But you knew then, that the building you were looking at then as well, there was something awful in behind it?

TCD: Something awful. We heard the howls of the people, and the smell of it, before we actually went into it.

RP: Were you fearful about opening up and going in?

TCD: See when we went in, they mobbed us. You didn't know what to do.

RP: Mhm.

TCD: Now there was thirty-two, about thirty thousand in the camp. Some was dead, you know and -

RP: They were all skin and bones, were they?

TCD: Aye some were skin and bones.

RP: Had they big, sort of stark eyes?

TCD: Yes, I can show you pictures of it; in the Divisional book.

RP: It's hard to get that out of your memory wouldn't it –

TCD: For a while it did, then all of a sudden we blac- it seemed to be, I talked to guys after it and it seemed to be you wanted to black it out.

RP: Um. And how long did you stay then - ?

TCD: I only- we stayed overnight in it. Our company stayed overnight and then we moved on to Munich.

RP: And did, did some of the thirty thousand appreciate that this was liberation?

TCD: Oh, yes. They appreciated it, definitely.

RP: What did they do?

TCD: They were kissing us and hugging us [laughs].

RP: Was it very emotional?

TCD: It was emotional. It was.

RP: I mean seeing that awful sight-

TCD: It was emotional, that guy in the camp, that reunion.

RP: Yes, at the gate.

TCD: He was a Belgian.

RP: Did they, were the majority of people in it Jews or were they just a mixture?

TCD: They were a mixture. At that particular stage I think the Jews was a small crowd. It wasn't a death camp now, it was a work camp, but they worked them to death. Like there was a crematorium in it.

RP: Yes. So what sort of work were they doing there?

TCD: Everything. They'd different factories set up and then they just worked the people to death.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

BYSTANDERS

Joyce McLaren

JMM: Well, my great friend who was Dutch, she was at school with me and her father held a very important position in Germany and he asked me whether I'd like to see Hitler and go to one of his birthday parades and -

RP: How did you feel about that?

JMM: Well, I was a little nervous – in fact, I don't think I've ever felt quite so nervous as when I got on to this stage with all these Germans and they were obviously very impressed with this man Hitler; he was right opposite us, so I had a very good view and all the young boys in their tanks, they were very young, were driving past us and eh, it was very impressive but it was very unnerving and every so often we had to "Heil Hitler" and eh-

RP: So you saluted with the-

JMM: Oh, I had to, so I saluted with them because I felt very strongly about this, I thought I should feel the same as they did where I was...amazed at this little man who had such charisma, astonishing, he was. And eh, I'll never forget it because I was very frightened but at the same time I had the courage to stand there and salute him and eh, that I will never forget.

RP: Was the whole atmosphere at the time very military?

JMM: Oh, very. They were- his charisma had the most amazing effect on everyone.

RP: Would that have been men, women-?

JMM: Men, well I was with men, and I suppose women as well, yes. He was an astonishing man; quite frightening really.

RP: And did he speak that day Joyce?

JMM: Oh yes, he called out to his army and his young boys and they all heiled Hitler. Oh, I know they were very impressed with him. It was extraordinary.

RP: This was in Berlin wasn't it?

JMM: This was in Berlin. I have been to Berlin recently. The change now is extraordinary.

RP: This would have been about 1938?

JMM: Just before the war.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Josephine McGrillis

JM: From Giessen we were posted to Riga. And we had – a wee boy, a wee boy, he was about 15 or 16, he was a Jewish boy and he done wee jobs, bringing the wood, the coal or something, in, because it was in the wintertime when we got there and it was very cold. And a few days later, or maybe a week or so later, I couldn't – I didn't see the youngster, and eh, I said, I asked where he was, and I was told the officer that came to entertain us, playing the piano, he was able to beat that youngster to death because he took a piece of bread, because he was a Jewish boy.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Eva Dixon

RP: Had you any enmity between the Germans and yourselves, was there an attitude of hatred at any point in time?

ED: Now I'll tell you no, not with the younger ones, but Frau Mueller and the Mueller family that we were billeted in – oh very modern flat, probably the Nazi SS must have lived there! - and Frau Mueller was very kind and very good, but very very much for – you know, she didn't want to know that there were concentration camp – concentration camps. Now her son, the younger son – there was Frau Mueller, her husband, her husband's brother, her youngest son Hans Martin, and he was very good at English and told us a lot of information – his oldest brother was in the Nazi SS and tried to get him involved, but, eh, Hans Martin didn't want that, he went to Heidelberg University, and he had good knowledge of English so he supplied us with a lot of information. But Frau Mueller was made to go – the Americans made her go em, the Americans thought us this, that they had to go and see the films, the concentration camps; or, I don't remember it now, maybe they didn't get fuel, or, you know, they put a force on it.

RP: And what was the reaction to Frau Mueller when she saw the films?

ED: Oh she didn't want to go at all, she was very bitter about it and said that they were no good – the older generation in Arolsen did not want to know.

RP: There was a resentment from them?

ED: Yes.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

AFTER THE WAR

Angela Neely

RP: Do you remember VE Day?

ARN: Yes, I do. Because eh, there was a Canadian ship in and I was friendly with a couple of the middies and there was this big celebration in the centre of Belfast. And these two Canadians, they wanted to get pictures to take home with them. And so we went round to the back, the three of us, (I should have photographs somewhere, no I haven't), eh to the back of the City Hall and I got talking to the wee porter man that was letting people in and I said could we get in and he said yes. And we went up and up and up and you know the balconies round...somewhere in the archives there's a picture of two middies and a Wren on that balcony and that's us.

...

RP: And was the -

ARN: Crowds underneath. Oh thousands, right away up Donegall Place. You couldn't put a pin head between them. And when we came out they saw the uniforms, and [cheer noise] [laughs]! It was a great night.

RP: So you, you came out as if you were like the Queen at Buckingham Palace out on the balcony and the crowd cheered you?

ARN: That's right.

RP: How'd you feel?

ARN: Aw, we felt great!

RP: Did you wave to them or anything?

ARN: Uh huh, uh huh. We did. You see the two lads had all this they wanted to send home. And if they could get newspaper photographs we would send them home so they really went overboard. It was great craic.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Jackie McAlister

BM: The end of the war, VE Day, do you recall that message coming out?

JM: Well, I was reading recently an account of VE Day in Coleraine, and eh, which I think the local museum service had produced it, and I didn't really recognise any of it, because there obviously there were bonfires, there was dancing, there was – there were parties, there were flags, and it – quite a lot of celebration, but Bruce had just died, really, the previous September, and I remember it as a very quiet day. My parents were still in mourning, really. And my older sister may have gone out, but I, I didn't, I, the only thing that I remember was my sister took me out to see the bonfires in the evening when it got dark, but we just walked down, walked round the diamond, then came home again. It was not a celebration in our

house at all. And I imagine that would be so in many of the houses, you know, where there was a bereavement.

BM: Yes, cause many people think it was a time of celebration, but on a personal family level –

JM: It was, it was a grieving time really, because they were probably feeling – if he had only survived.

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Eva Dixon

ED: Well my work, really, about knowing about the concentration camps, was handling all the records – photographs that came in, in the Central Tracing Bureau.

RP: And what did you do with these photographs then, did you log them, classify them, or?

ED: Well I was in the [unclear – Milledisplatzten?], we had to send them out to different zones. There were four zones in Germany: the British, American, French, and the Ge-Russian, were in the sector in Berlin, but our work was really in trying to reunite families with the correspondence that came into the Central Tracing Bureau from all over the world using all methods – the correspondence between all the zones to try and trace the relatives.

RP: And would this be somebody writing in to say –

ED: Yes.

RP: - I have lost my –

ED: Yes.

RP: - family, my name is, I live in -

ED: Yes.

RP: - or I used to live in -?

ED: Yes, that's right.

RP: Did you find that heart-breaking?

ED: Very heart-breaking. Because there weren't too many, sadly. But there were – there were happy occasions, in that, there would – there were some of the displaced persons – one person I worked with from Latvia was surprised one day, she worked, eh, in the office, and she – her brother walked in unexpectedly. So that, you know, the people tried to contact us by coming to the Central Tracing Bureau, but it's a big subject, you know...that...that...

RP: In that case, from Latvia, there was tears of joy rather than tears of, of grief?

ED: Yes, but there weren't too many now of that, no, sadly.

...

RP: Did you see many of the wee children?

ED: Oh yes, I did, that, that I did see them, some of the children of the, the displaced people that worked in them, and heard their story. And they – some of them that survived it, were brought in to the camps, and they were very traumatised then, because they had seen their parents killed in front of their eyes. But they were well looked after with all the other Red Cross work and the nurses, there were lots of other organisations that joined UNRRA to send help.

RP: And I suspect children, being very vulnerable, would have been – it would have been quite hard to see, and hear their stories?

ED: Yes – well their stories were, really, that they had to keep so quiet, that when the people, you know, after the war, when they were in the camps, they were told they could shout as much as they like. They must have shouted and yelled for about two days, they were so relieved.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Michael Williams

MW: My bearer, who was my sort of personal servant, he was in a terrible state, and all those servants were because they relied on the British for their bread and butter, and they saw terrible prospects ahead of them, because they thought that if India became completely Indianised, they would be regarded as being sort of on the same level as the British whom they'd got rid of. And they, they were heart-broken at the British leaving, and the cry always was, 'who will look after us?'

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Leslie Baird

BM: If you were to sum up the war, Leslie, how would you see its effect on you and on Scarva?

LB: Well, that, after the war was over, people at least were able to get stuff [unclear], picks of houses, you couldn't get before that, you know. It was a good job, oh you felt that relief, everybody was happier because of it, you weren't living in dread, you know, just of being bombed, or been overrun by Germans, [unclear] you felt happier before it, you know, that there, when, the only, just, [unclear] was a bit of unemployment was a bit of a sickener, you know? It wasn't easy getting work.

BM: Without putting words in your mouth, in some ways it seems that for you, the war was a period of unemployment and more money – or a period of employment with more money; prior to the war you'd been unemployed, after the war there were difficulties as well?

LB: There was diff- there was less work and less money in a whole lot of cases, you know? And you'd just had a lot of people then went to bits of schemes to learn bits of trades and things you know through the dole, and that sort of thing there. But it was a good long time before things begin to pick up again and bits of businesses started, you know?

Interviewer: Bob McKinley

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum

Ken Anderson

KA: After the war then, the 50s that you're talking about there, then the subsidies, the – I remember my father getting cheques, and he didn't know what he was getting them for, to tell you the truth. It was [cattle?] that he'd sold to you, many months before, and he was getting a cheque in for it. And he just had not a clue.

RP: And that'd be coming from the government was it?

KA: Oh aye, that was the government, aye. Subsidy. There were giving a farmer, they were giving him a subsidy for building a barn, or building a new shed, or blah blah blah. He was getting a subsidy even for any building at all, was subsidised. Which he didn't get before.

RP: And what role did women have with employment – did their chances of employment increase just after the war?

KA: After the war? Aye, well, as I say there were a lot more, and I would say definite increased. Education of course was a big factor then, the factories were all springing up, the factories that were looking for secretaries, then the banks, for instance, now started to take on girls, but they'd never done before. My sister actually was a, she was taken on by the Nor- the Northern Bank, and eh, which was unheard of. That sort of thing. The women were definitely as equals to the men.

RP: And how did the men take that?

KA: Well! [Laughs] Not very well! Eh, my generation was dead on, the likes of my father's couldn't, couldn't wear this at all. He just could not abide by that. But even his own daughter, my sister Alice, got the bank, and he would say to me, 'Ken! That wo- that's no job for a woman!'

RP: So what did he think was a job for a woman?

KA: The house.

RP: Working in the house. So what we be the biggest thing changed after the war in the Coleraine area?

KA: Biggest change, Richard? Been housing, I would say. People building houses. That which you can see here, this was all [a green build?], as I mentioned before. All the different, then all of a sudden, housing. Young people, young couples, buying their own house. We're married 45 years couple weeks back there, and our first house was two and a half thousand pounds, and that was on the Ballycairn road.

Interviewer: Richard Parkinson

Interview conducted by The Somme Museum