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

**Mill Street Memories – Harry Burden by Frank Voss**

My name is Harry Burden and I was born at no. 32 Holloway Road and I was born in 1937. My recollection of that time was that my parents had only just moved into the house, just a few years before my birth and I was born in that house – no.32 Holloway Road and I honestly have got really very fond memories of the street and the area including Mill Street and I do, clearly remember a family called Barrett’s who lived in Mill Street and they had sort of outbuildings and a stable in Holloway Road where they kept a pony and trap and even other farm animals, a cow for example which I used to go in occasionally when these animals were being fed and milked.

The war years, mainly, when I was younger, that comes to memory a lot with all the service personnel around and in particular the convoys of vehicles going over the bridge at the foot of Holloway Road and I recall running down the street watching these tanks and lorries going around to the coast at Weymouth for probably the build up to the D-Day Landings.

By that time then, you started school Harry, so in 1944 you were about 7?

I started school at the infant school at the top of Holloway Road...

Like we all did

And, again, all I can recall about that school is that I believe, the main school room was divided into two with a partition across, I think and the class that I was in, there was the old fashioned school desks with the lift up and shut down lids and at the end of the lesson, the teacher said “pack up and get ready to go home” or words to that effect and it was a race between all of us to clear the desk and to put things away and I must have made a noise of some description and the teacher said to me “what are you doing?” and I said, and I was sat next to a girl, and I said “I’m beating her”. This is true, and the teacher assumed I was hitting this young girl sat next to me and I was put in the corner as punishment and I didn’t understand why.

My mother saw the teacher, I came home of course in tears and my mother spoke to the teacher “why was he put in the corner” and she said that he was beating the girl sat next to him and my mother then had to explain as I explained to her that I was just racing her, putting things away before she got her things away, so that was the incident that I can recall about going to that school.

I did move on eventually, probably before I was due to leave because as a catholic I went, eventually to the catholic school up in the town, next to the Catholic Church, which is now the Tutankhamen Exhibition.

Were there many boys there?

Quite a few yes.

My friend went there and he was the only boy there, but that was later on

I eventually went up to the Dorchester Secondary Modern School.

Getting back to Holloway Road and Mill Street, the war years. Besides the convoys and tanks knocking the corners of the bridge down which can still be seen today, with the different coloured bricks where they were re-built eventually, we put evacuees up, as we had a large house and we hardly used any of it. We put the evacuees and people from Southampton in, and of course there were some young girl’s there and of course American soldiers then came to visit these young girls from time to time.

Leaving their land rovers outside the Barrett’s outbuildings opposite which I then could go and sit in and play soldiers myself and then even switch, because there was no key, switch them on and the engines would even start up. So I could almost drive at a very early age.

Yes, I think I can say that I was a member of the Mill Street gang and all familiar names of the Baskets and the Harrisons particular used to be in that gang and I knew both families quite well going over and calling for them at a young age.

After the war, I was always a football fan, like you Frank and I used to... one Christmas; I had a new and very expensive ball for my father to buy in those days because he was only working on the railway but I used to play in the field at the bottom of the street with Tubby Harrison, I call him Tubby, he was probably tubby when he was younger...

Everybody called him Tubby

And I said to him just before he died, why were you called Tubby and he said because that name stuck somewhere along the line and he always answered to the name Tubby.

The soldiers used to give us gum and things like that and always spoke to us as young children, I thought that was very good of them and they treated everyone fairly but one incident in particular that I would like to record of when the black soldiers were around. They were billeted down, I believe, just at the bottom of the town where the exhibition of the Chinese soldiers were......

The Masonic Hall or something

I forget what the hall was called but I came across one of these black soldiers and I don’t know how but he came in and visited us for a cup of tea or even a meal and the white soldiers were drinking in the Union Arms at the top of the road and they got the worse for wear for the drink and they came down and how they got to know this black soldiers was in no.32 I’ve no idea but they came down and challenged him to come out and to fight. My father told him not to go out but he said that “I can’t stay here, I’ve got to report back” and he said “I’ll go out” and he did and he walked to the door, then slid himself along the wall, keeping his back tight to the wall and I can remember, I came down the passage and knelt down beside my father’s feet and watched this and he slid himself, pushed himself along the wall and kept his back tight to the wall and challenged about, probably a dozen to twenty white American servicemen to come and fight, I think at the end, they decided they were all too worse for wear for the drink and nothing actually took place but he was prepared to take on at least a dozen white soldiers, just one person. I thought that extraordinarily brave.

On the same vein, during the war, there was German prisoners of war around the town and they were allowed out on Sunday’s and again, I can’t recall as I was quite young myself but how I managed to get one of these German prisoners of war home, he came home with me and he again, after a visit, he used to come almost regularly of a Sunday afternoon and had tea with us at no.32. He was a watchmaker, I can visualise him, he wasn’t a very tall man, stocky I guess but he promised my father that he would give me; I was the only son, a watch if I would go out to the prisoner of war camp. I never did, I don’t know why, I suppose it was maybe my father could have taken me out to the camp but he never did and I missed maybe an opportunity of a good watch who knows.

It is interesting of our street but I would say that all the people living in Holloway Road used to... were quite humilitative, in the way that they used to speak, the women used to stay at home during the war and look after the home and the house and there were several little shops in the street, there was one – Pope’s shop at the top and....

Was that at the corner of Pound Lane?

Yes, Sophie Pope wasn’t it. There was one at the lower....

That was shut.

Was it?

Where Lakes was

Yes, Carol Lake, I remember her.

That was my cousin

Was it?

Auntie Nora was Carol’s mum, is actually my mum’s cousin

Well, that shop was open and....

Apparently, there was one where the Minterne’s lived as well but I can’t remember that, they had a great big ......

That was before my time. But certainly the Lakes and the Pope’s shop was open and we used to do, probably our main shopping in those two shops except, perhaps occasionally going up to the World’s stores in South Street and getting our meat, a joint of meat most Sunday’s round North Square, where there was sort of an arcade of shops around there, a butcher and other people in there.

All I can say is that, I look back on my childhood with fond memories and I can see it clearly, visualise it as clear as a bell today.

Next to no.32 there was a string of cottages, pulled down about the time my parents moved into no.32, I believe there is a record, photographs of these houses being pulled down and I understand people came with their wheelbarrows to collect some of the stone from some of these cottages and take them away to build garden walls and garden features and things like that. My father told me this, I don’t remember it myself but he can recall, in fact, it just come to me... when these houses were pulled down, they were pulled down in 1937 because I can recall my father telling me, even my mother telling me that the dust from the demolition of these cottages came in through the bedroom windows as I was being born, so that’s a fact that these cottages were pulled down in 1937, May in particular.

A long time after, the front door steps were still in the grass bank, even in my time they were still there

37, war started in 39, my father worked because everybody was encouraged to dig for victory during the war and grow their own vegetables, my father took over some of the gardens of those demolished cottages and grew a certain amount of vegetables, kept chickens in the back of those gardens and fruit trees and that was a supply of vegetables and fruit for us during the war and certainly afterwards for a short while.

He was lucky to keep the fruit from the Harrisons and Baskets......

Yes sure. I played on the railings an awful lot which led down from the Pound Lane down to no.32 where I lived and certainly there was a slope, we had trolleys and other sort of wheeled contraptions rolling down that slope and because there wasn’t very many vehicles around during the war and just after, we could even use Holloway Road itself and do the same thing.

Do you remember that clock that you used to have in your front room, a wall hung grandfather clock? I can remember going up your house and your mum used to give me your comics and I can remember that clock going tick, tick, tick, tock all night

Yes I do recall that clock Frank but whatever happened to it, how long my parents kept it for I don’t know.

It would be nice to have it now

Yes it would be.

I used to have your Kit Carson little books, Buck Jones

That was....

Your mum used to give them to me

Fine, I’m pleased that she did, once you’ve looked through a comic or read it and there wasn’t much to read in a comic, once you’ve skipped through them they were finished weren’t they, you never usually revert back to them too much I guess. I’m pleased that you in particular made use of them Frank.

It’s the war years, eventually I had to go into the army myself for national service and I went in 1955.

I can remember the day that you left, it went round Harry Burden’s off... because we used to live just below you then.

Well I mean, just opposite there was a man called Mr Studley (Typist’s Note: you’re talking about my grandfather Walter Studley, I vaguely remember that he still had the garage in Holloway Road in the 70’s) working in, he was a car mechanic and he had a garage there and he used to repair cars just virtually opposite no.32 and again, he was a family friend and he drove me and my father on the day that I had to go into the army, I had signed on before of course but the day that I was due to report to Aldershot, Mr Walter Studley drove my father and I to Aldershot and I can’t imagine how my father was on the way back. I’m sure he was rather upset.

Or happy?

Or happy indeed.

Walt Studley used to have a car called a Pilot, a great big tank, a Ford V8 Pilot.

Well, a little bit more on Walt Studley, he was a mechanic at the Post Office and he repaired the Post Office vehicles.

One of the first cars that I had was... the Post Office used to sell off the cars after they did so many miles, it was the mileage or how old they were, I mean 10 years for example or maybe a 100,000miles, I’m not too sure and Walt arranged for me, because he knew the vehicles, he repaired them and maintained them and he looked out for one with low mileage and he looked out for when one of these vans became available and I bought one. That was when I came out of the army of course, years later.

It was just 2 years national service?

I did 2 years national service, however, because I had no trade, I signed on for the extra year.

You get more money

Yes, you get more money exactly and the money I saved through the extra year was a deposit for my first house. So I think it was probably worth it in the end. Obviously you don’t want to hear about the service side of things abroad but I was on active service for most of the time that I was abroad in the Middle East which is another story.

I’m trying to recall other incidents, things that.... I know you Frank would understand that some I can’t repeat and it wouldn’t be right and should never go in the book but I think maybe that the Mill Street gang at that time didn’t do everything right.

You did the same as everybody else, went out Bockhampton Path to Whizzy Beds(?)

Yes and bows and arrows.

The beech and remember the hollow tree out by Beech

As it is today, lead was valuable and I’m afraid with our knives we used to go round trimming lead off various places where we could reach it and find it, roll it up and take it down to the scrap yard for pocket money.

They never charged you did they? They never said “where’s this lead come from?

You never had to declare... they used to accept it in. We used to travel around Dorchester... I’m not sure if I should say this but there was a house on the corner, you can delete this Frank, there was a house on the corner of... is it Herringston Road? Prince of Wales Road, off South Court Avenue... Herringston Road?

Manor Road?

Yes, up that way. A big house on the corner had a really large garden pot – lead and I’m afraid that went missing, we hauled it down to the corner and cut it up with our knives, blunted them.

We all carried knives then, I remember I carried a sheath knife; we’d be locked up now.

Yes

I always regret that and during it because I knew I was doing wrong.

We can’t change it

Another incident as well, again the Mill Street gang with 3 or 4 of us were walking down next to what was called, we called it Toshy’s Fish and Chip shop and the Salvation Army Church hall was just behind it, there were a few young lads with their instruments outside waiting to go into the hall and I’m afraid we gave them a little bit of a rough time and we were blamed for damaging their musical instruments and we had to go before the Police and we were.... I don’t recall damaging the instruments but the Salvation Army said we did and they tried to claim new... I think they were old instruments and they tried to use the opportunity to refresh or get new instruments and they tried to charge our parents but we had no money and we couldn’t pay.

You seem to recall a lot of my life Frank, more than I can recall of mine. Do you remember anything in particular?

I followed on behind you and Alan was just behind me. We all did the same thing. There was no lead left by the time I got there.

When the bottom part of Mill Street was pulled down that was in 58/59...

When that steam engine got put into the fields

I remember watching that being delivered.

A lot of that stuff went off there as well

Do you remember the sweet shop down Kings Road next to Hardy’s Avenue? There was a place there that used to boil up sweets didn’t they?

Oh, the sweet factory? Absolutely, yes I do. There was a lovely smell, we used to climb up the fence and watch them rolling out the toffee and we never had a sample at all but the smell used to get into our noses.

In your time, the playing fields weren’t there when you were young was it?

I’m not sure if people were aware but that was a refuse waste ground, they filled it in and eventually made a playing field of it but I do remember it was a low lying field, alongside the river Frome but it was built up....

Pop Magey, he had his allotment just over by the bridge didn’t he?

Yes, it was amazing.

Did you go swimming in the swimming baths, in the river?

No, I didn’t but there were a lot that did and I must admit, even my parents were aware of the possibility of Polio and in those days, they advised me not to go, therefore, I never learnt to swim until I eventually got into the army, by then I was 18, 19, 20ish. So I was a late developer for swimming, I’ll admit to it.

Was there many boys, children got polio from in there?

I don’t personally know of any but I know that it was a concern even in those days, I don’t know how many people were aware of that disease but my parents said don’t go in there but that was where we all learnt to swim so I believe.

Just 100 yards up the cows were still in the river

Your bread, did you get it round Fordington Cross like we did at the bakers?

Absolutely, our favourite thing to do was to buy a new loaf of bread which was still hot having come out of the ovens and a tin of condensed milk and then open it with our pen knives and dip the new bread into the tin of condensed milk.

Was it called Lewis’s?

I can’t remember

I believe it was called Lewis’s and I remember going to buy the bread in there but to this day I cannot remember which of the two shops that I can recall being on Fordington Cross at the time, which one, I think now it was the one that is still open – One Stop – I think that was Lewis’s. The little building on the left as you look at it was the actual bake house I believe.

I think you’re right because there were houses next to that, there was the shop and a couple of houses which they’ve converted now all into the shop and I think that was the bakery.

It wasn’t bad growing up there though.

No, it wasn’t Frank, no.

You had your arguments and your little squabbles but nothing serious

No doubt about it, there were differences for one reason or another but I don’t know, they didn’t seem to come to much, maybe as children, we weren’t involved, maybe the adults maybe fell out for whatever reason but I can’t recall my mother or father being involved in anything. Because of the cottages being pulled down, there was no-one on the left of us to fall out with. I remember a Mrs Hurn at the top of the road and we got on with her very, very well, always spoke when we went by and indeed with all of the other people that were around at the time, it was always a passing of a few words, never a walking by without speaking, that didn’t occur.

Just behind where you were was the Howes?

Yes, indeed.

They were a couple, weren’t they?

They were yes. Again, my father – because they were neighbours, he used to go up and see them occasionally and I used to go there. Mr Howe used to – when I was scratching around down below him used to shout over the hedge to me “don’t do that” or whatever but he used to frighten me off because he used to appear out of nowhere.

Exactly the same happened to me. A few years after you, nobody seemed to walk up that road without spying on you. You could just see his head and he had to say something.

I would also like to record as well that about Mr Edwards who had a solicitor’s firm in the town and round the Mill Street Mission, he actually, I believe he owned the house and the retaining wall behind no.32 Holloway Road fell down, my father spoke to Mr Edwards about this collapsed wall and virtually Ricardo’s the builders firm situated on Fordington Green were virtually there in a day or two to rebuild this wall, I can again recall the builders, the men there clearing the rubble and rebuilding the wall and I must admit much appreciate the swiftness and quickness Mr Edwards had in having the wall re-built, he saw the responsibility, it was a retaining wall and that wall fell into our garden at the back of the house virtually but he had it put right within a few days – very good I thought.

We’re hearing a lot of stories about Mr Edwards and what a benefactor he was

I can recall him I was watching from Holloway Road by the railings on a Sunday evening - him and one or two other people arriving, they were probably the only ones who had cars, arriving during that time probably during or just after the war coming of a Sunday evening, there was a particular woman Frank and I’m sure you will recall her name, I think she seemed to be the mainstay with Mr Edwards during a lot of business that went on in....

Mr and Mrs Oates, they were pretty big in there or it must have been their daughter who used to take us for Sunday School

Was one of them a spinster, she seemed to be on her own.

Miss Good? Miss Oates did come to take us for Sunday School but I have no idea how old, I don’t think she was that old

Miss Good used to work for Gould’s, sounds like it was the daughter seems to ring a bell.

I can remember both of those coming, sometimes they would come together I believe.

Did you go to the Mission at all?

No I didn’t, for the reasons that I said earlier. As a Catholic I didn’t.

You didn’t have to go.

In those days, I’m pleased things have changed, Catholics kept themselves separately and I think things are much more open and friendlier these days between the various churches, but I very much appreciate St Georges and I love going in there, I think it’s a wonderful church and I’m pleased that it’s still quite strong.

Frank, is there anything I can help you with? Come on, jog my memory please.

I’m trying to think of something that you haven’t...... Most of the men were away during the war

My father wasn’t because he was a railway man and that was a reserved job I believe and whatever work they considered important during the war years – they didn’t have to go but he served as a, what do they call those policemen in the.... I think he was a special constable.

I think you’ll find that your father taught my father into joining after the war when he came out of the army

Do you know Frank, that’s true, I can remember that distinctly.

We was talking about sleeping underneath great coats but I slept under a special constables coat

Going back to the war years then, we had a Harrison shelter in the front room, it was like a steel cage, I don’t know if you had one at all Frank...

I can’t remember, I was born right at the end

Oh, right, well during the war we shared our house with a family called the Blandermeres and had two children called Marian and Gordon. Gordon has come back to live in the town, I think he lives in Fordington even to this day, I’m not too sure where. I see him around.

We had a shelter put together from kit form and I think they were called Harrison shelters and when the siren went, you had to get in, children in particular to this shelter, it was made of steel but during the day it served as a table and my mother used to put a decorative cloth across it with flowers on it, a vase of flowers and things like that.

Yes, Marian, Gordon and I were in this shelter most nights during the war.

I can remember them, their father was Henry Blandermere

He worked for Meyers up in Wyvern Fireplaces.

They moved up to Roberts Place I think

I’m pleased to say that Marian was older than me but she’s still alive I understand.

There’s hope for us all then. You say that Gordon is still around?

He is around yes, I see him occasionally, living in Fordington Cross area but I’m not too sure where exactly. I speak to him when I see him.

I haven’t seen him for years and years

I can remember going out and trying to follow people like you but you used to run away and lose me

Probably I did the same to people. When you left Hardye’s School, did you have a job before you went in the army?

Yes, I didn’t go to Hardye’s, I went to the Secondary Modern. When I left school, I turned down an offer for WHSmith because I was offered a job with WHSmith and I went to work for the NAFFI up at Poundbury, not the Prince of Wales Poundbury but the Poundbury that we know. There was a shop up there with a store and the NAFFI used to supply all the foodstuff to the canteens and kitchens of the army and we used to serve the army families who lived at Poundbury, there was a residential quarters there and that shop was purely for the regimental families. I started off working in the store as a shop assistant before I eventually went into the army in 1955 and I can remember the wives of the soldiers coming in and asking a 16/17 year old “what can I give my husband for tea” and my favourite thing to offer and recommend was a gammon steak which I used to cut off myself because I was allowed to use the bacon machine and I used to cut them off a nice thick gammon steak and they used to come back in a few days later to thank me and say “oh my husband liked that gammon steak” but I was only probably 16 at that time.

Was rationing still in then?

Rationing was certainly still around and we used to use these coupons in Popes shop mainly. They used to take them but I remember, in fact, I think I’ve still got an old ration book around somewhere; I’ve saved it all along.

I think they’re a collector’s item to some people but I don’t think they’re worth an awful lot, I’m sure there’s a lot around.

We used ours up, we didn’t have any left

A favourite pastime for the youngsters was to.... there was a footbridge just by the Mill Street Mission flats and when the Environmental Agency used to control the flow of water for whatever reason, the river used to dry up quite considerably and our favourite pastime was to get a stick, tie a fork on the end and then lie down leaning over the edge of the footbridge and try and stab the eels as they poked their head out from under the bridge. Also, a jam jar on the end of a piece of string to catch the minnows and things.

We used to go looking for the ‘biddleheads’

Well there again, we followed on behind you, doing exactly the same

It’s all vivid in our memories isn’t it, the way we all did the same things, each group.

I used to walk to school from Fordington and the Mill Street area up through the Walks and all the way up to Victoria Park to the school.

It’s a fair walk

It is a fair old walk.

It is now but it wasn’t then.

No

And if it was raining, you got wet, simple as that, we didn’t have a bus.

You would have gone to the Classics Cinema would you?

The Plaza and The Palace.

Yes, The Palace, that’s right.

I don’t know if you remember The Palace?

Yes, it was open in my time as well.

I tried to jog a memory of a few who were at the last exhibition of photographs by mentioning a Mrs Scott, I think her name was, I think she was an Indian or Pakistani lady, do you remember her at all?

Not ringing a bell

No, but she used to take us in, we used to gather around outside The Palace cinema and we couldn’t when it was an A film, we couldn’t get in but when Mrs Scott used to come round, she used to get us all in.

I think the picture house was pleased in a way because they weren’t officially allowed to let children in underage but when Mrs Scott came along, they could take our money.

Did you have a radio at home?

It was a radio relay with Home and Light Service and I think radio relay was situated in High East Street.

All we had was a cable coming in with a speaker

We used to rent for a few pence a week this radio relay which was ....

On that radio, do you remember on Sunday’s you had the programmes building up to the records for the soldiers, I can’t remember the name... family favourites? The Billy Cotton Band Show every Sunday, you would never miss it would you?

Yes

Going back to Sunday’s, when you walked up Mill Street, everybody had a fried breakfast, it seemed. The rest of the week they were at work but on a Sunday, you could smell egg and bacon everywhere

I must admit, that was a particular favourite of mine, a fry up on a Sunday morning, you are quite right; it was mainly on a Sunday. A roast lunch and not eating in the evening, like most of us do now. It was usually lunchtime and I know that a big fry up in the morning followed by a roast at lunchtime with just a couple of hours in between, I couldn’t take it to be quite honest with you and I know I used to upset my father who felt that I should be eating and I was full up from the fried breakfast.

I had - not a physical fight but a fight with my father every Sunday dinnertime, I was exactly the same. I would sooner wait until Monday and have my cold meat and chips which we all did.

They used to try and encourage me by putting vinegar on the cabbage and said “look, try this” but I don’t know... vinegar! I still like a touch of vinegar on my cabbage to this day.

I do the same

Good to hear you say things like that Frank because a lot of the time, a lot of things used to pass me by, I was an only son and I didn’t have anybody else to converse with, to know what was going on maybe if I had an older sister or brother, I could maybe talk to them to know what was what but I was probably a bit naive and didn’t appreciate what was going on a lot of the time. I never noticed my comments going missing and they were going down to the bosses down the bottom of the road.

My mother used to say “I’m going up to see Mrs Burden” and I would say “I’m coming” just to get the comment.

I remember the Clarkes, probably next to you and Tony Clarke was my age.

Barry Clark was my age

I still see Tony, he’s moved back to Dorchester. We all seem to move back to Dorchester but Tony went away to the Midlands, Birmingham mainly.

He was a male nurse wasn’t he?

He was yes. He eventually came back to Dorchester, probably within the last 5-7 years. He’s around the town now and again I speak with him. Because, again, he was my age and I used to play with him quite a bit.

We never locked our front doors neither did we?

No, there was no need to was there.

No, if I ever went to yours, I used to just open the door and shout, because you didn’t lock the door because whoever was inside would have had to walk right to the front door to open it.

Though we weren’t perfect, no one was perfect and no one is perfect. At least we wouldn’t steal from one another and from each other’s homes. We were quite safe in that respect. Maybe if we went out in a gang the big thing I recall was the Fordington Hill gang and the Mill Street gang used to challenge one another and I remember that they plucked up courage from Fordington Green and Salisbury Fields area, probably it was a combined gang, they marched down not more than 10, 12 years old and they marched down through Mill Street and we watched them go by and someone called Richard Brown and I’m sure you know Richard who lived at the top. Once they had just passed by he shouted out at the top of his voice and chased them, again, they were a gang of probably up to a dozen or more and I think they had a woman among them, Edna Daubley amongst them as well. They all scattering around for their lives and Richard was just having a bit of fun by chasing after them, I don’t think he intended to hurt them in anyway, he was a bit older again by a couple of years.

We got that reputation for being rough, but not in our time was it?

No, but I do remember a particular fight with someone that you and I know Frank. Sammy Harrison, I’m not too sure his name was Sammy.

I just know him as Sammy

An older brother of Tubby Harrison, it was a particularly bad fight outside of the Mission Hall because there seemed to be a little square there.

Chapel Square

Yes and I don’t know who he was with but I know Sammy was one of the contestants and both drew blood in a big way, cut eyes, mouth, lips and I remember seeing both of them but I don’t remember who the other person was but there was quite a bit of blood flowing. What it was over or how it ended, whatever, I don’t know but we used to gather around in a group and once the fight was on and you weren’t involved, no-one seemed to have the sense to stop it.

No, we didn’t.

I remember seeing Sammy’s face in particular, god knows what the other guy’s face was like, I don’t recall but I remember looking at Sammy’s face and he was, I would call it quite badly injured, grazes, cuts and things around the face. Amongst ourselves, we didn’t hardly fight at all but it was only maybe when we chased the other gangs away from us because there were various gangs around the town, I think there was a gang from the Grove area and so on and the Park was being developed and I do remember at least one other gang in the town somewhere. We had a bad reputation it’s true but I don’t know why. The whole area did have a really quite...... I think Thomas Hardy started it – blame him. I think he through his writings claimed that Police had to be in pairs to walk down through.

My wife was told to run past Mill Street if she ever went along Kings Road, to run past. I did say to her “why?”

I can recall going over and knocking on the doors. Nigel Lucas is another familiar name and then the Harrisons and the Baskets and the Hallets.

Obviously the Chessman’s

One in particular next to the Hallets, you’ll have to remind me.

Next to the Hallets was the Cheeseman’s one side and Corky’s the other, in my time, then there were the Smiths then. They were next door to the Cheeseman’s

It was a lad called Smith and there was a girl.... do you remember her name.

No, I think the boy might have been Colin Smith

We were very young and it was all innocent but I discovered once, that the girl was a bit sweet on my for whatever reason and I was too young what it meant even, what it was all about but apparently, she told someone that she like me or something. I don’t know, I was living on the other side of the river perhaps that was a natural sort of barrier between Mill Street and Holloway Road and maybe I felt a foreigner in some way but I know she used to come and run with a gang occasionally, I think she was just that year younger but I think she let it be known that she liked me, no more than that.

It’s funny, in my time, in my gang then, my Mill Street gang, we had girls who used to run with us but there again, we only wanted to play rounders, didn’t want to play girly games

We used to play down Hardy’s Avenue and use those houses, not at the lower end, but there was a house, the Vallards, they used to live there, we used to use their wall to chalk up some stumps and we used to play cricket down Hardy’s Avenue – I can remember that very, very well.

We used to play ‘kinging’. You had to hit someone with a ball, if I threw it at you, you had to chase everybody else, it used to go on for hours, do you remember that?

There was a street party in Hardy’s Avenue, just after the war, it was VE day celebrations but I can remember my mother making a few cakes and making some jam sandwiches and things like that and walking over Mushroom Bridge and the tablecloths were all laid out. I think there were two tables down through Hardy’s Avenue and all the kids around and it was ....

I did the same for the Coronation; you weren’t around then were you, in 53?

No, I did see some photographs in the exhibitions, whether it was the Coronation or VE day I don’t know but I think it was VE day, because I was about 7 or 8 years old at the end of the war. I thought I might be lucky to see myself in the photographs that I’ve seen but I couldn’t recognise myself.

What we used to do for a jam sandwich, I still like them now actually

Life was simple back then. Television – we don’t even have a brain now, television tells us what things look like, we don’t have to think, when we read a book, if you had a book to read, you used to use your own imagination didn’t you?