

Oral History – Lena (née Keeling) Bridger

Recorded by the late MARY ALFREDA (NÉE BRIDGER) RICE-OXLEY

Harry Nathan Bridger and his wife Lena ran the Village Stores in Effingham near the northern end of The Street for many years and together played a strong role in the community. Mary Alfreda, their only child, lived almost her entire life in Effingham and developed a deep interest in local history, not just that of Effingham but of neighbouring parishes too. Her recollections and her mother's, as related here in much detail, have been of immense value to ELHG's research.

Introduction

Mrs Lena (née Keeling) Bridger was born on 7 April 1894 to parents John Sheppard Keeling and Phoebe (née Barnard) who had married in 1885. She married in 1924 to Harry Nathan Bridger and together they ran the Village Stores in The Street, Effingham.

She was interviewed and recorded by her daughter Mrs Mary Alfreda (née Bridger) Rice-Oxley in about 1970-71. The original cassette tape recording was digitised to mp3 format by Christopher John Hogger in June 2011 and was transcribed in July 2015 by XS Typing and Susan Morris.

The audio recording is accessible on Effingham Local History Group's website. The transcript below is verbatim.

Lena died on 14 August 1974.

Transcript

Lena: For fifteen years, in 1932, Effingham, my husband and I kept the village shop. We took the shop over in 1932 but it belonged to us for three years before that. Effingham then was completely different. We were a small self-contained village with a small population. We stayed at The Milestones [Milestone] while the shop was being enlarged and altered. We were there for three months. The Milestones which is now a flat was a bakers shop in those days with a bake house behind and stabling for the horses.

Mary: There were three horses were there?

Lena: Yes. Early in the morning when the oven was lit the crickets woke you. Opposite, where the opening to the playing field is, was a path with a belt of trees.

Mary: And I think there was a pond.

Lena: And a pond, yes there was a pond. A beautiful spot there really wasn't it? The old milestone standing there ...

Mary: Which is still there now.

Lena: Is it still there?

Mary: I think so.

Lena: The playing fields were called 'The Park'.

Mary: That was before they were turned into King George's Field.

Lena: Yes. And had several clumps of beech trees. In the summer before hay making totty grass and moon daisies were very much in evidence there.

Mary: Yes we used to go and pick them when we were children.

Lena: Yes we used to go and pick them and totty grass was a great favourite. Browns Lane had beech trees all the way up on the side of The Park.

Mary: They were destroyed weren't they because they had some disease.

Lena: A disease yes.

Mary: That was after the war wasn't it?

Lena: Yes, oh yes. All the way up from what is now 'The Lodge' to The Howard School then part of The Lodge was a long avenue of lime trees across to the bottom of the footpath of the churchyard.

Mary: And a footpath that goes up ...

Lena: Up to the Effingham church. Down the village where the Mid-Surrey Gardens is was Henry Woods, the blacksmith. You could watch him and smell the horses being shod and we used to watch the anvil being blown up and it was most interesting there wasn't it?

Mary: There's not many, there's only about two blacksmiths left now, I think now.

Lena: Well you have to go right over to Abinger now for ...

Mary: Henry Woods is still alive.

Lena: I know he is yes, he works in Leatherhead. Archer Stovell had a shoe repair shed behind, it was a small little place, very hot ...

Mary: Little rows of shoes.

Lena: ... kept heated with a small stove and everyone took their shoes there to be mended.

Mary: And he made sandals too.

Lena: Oh yes he did.

Mary: And did his carving.

Lena: And he carved beautiful tables and things and he did a lot of that chip carving. The old Post Office just above his place was used, a very tiny office. Only two people could get in.

Mary: And it had like a little tiny cubby hole that you could look through.

Lena: That's right. You just went in and ...

Mary: In the corridor ...

Lena: There was that beautiful piece of carving on the wood there wasn't there? I don't know whether that's still there, but it was very very noted.

Mary: Mrs West-Rowse / Westerhouse? lived there.

Lena: Yes that's right.

Mary: With the Pilgrim Trust ...

Lena: Plaque on the wall yes. Mrs Butcher the Post Mistress wearing black dress with a white high collar and a brooch at the neck. Inside was a lovely open fireplace in the office.

Mary: A great big fire in the winter, it was very hot.

Lena: Yes. It was lovely to go in there really. Mr Butcher was a general builder. He also did burials, the coffins were taken to church on a hand cart. Poor old Mr Butcher he had some very decided notions about things, and used to stick his feet down very hard on the Church Council. Mrs Essam has already been taped, before her recent death, she was the official layer out. Next to The Haig were two cottages, now destroyed, one occupied by Miss Marchant, she used to have a lovely bun didn't she, at the back of her head. Very picturesque.

Mary: Yes, very forbidding.

Lena: The church was much as it is now except the chapel which was still a receptacle for rubbish and unfurnished. It was lit by oil lamps and the organ was blown by hand. It was most amusing to sit in church and see the old blower.

Mary: Yes it used to make a noise before the hymn started, when he started pumping the air up.

Lena: That's right. By the last Church Cottages was a shed where a hairdresser for men and women was held on Saturday afternoons only I think.

Mary: I can't remember what her name ...

Lena: We used to go there.

Mary: She was a very good hairdresser.

Lena: Miss Campbell was the hairdresser.

Mary: She married the AA man.

Lena: Yes she married the AA man yes that's right. At the end of Orestan Lane in the woods was the Estate Lodge, and one of the Dench families lived there. It's now disappeared altogether.

Mary: It's a pity because it was one of these lovely lodges made of flint and brick.

Lena: Yes it was. It belonged to the Horsley Estate of course didn't it. Also in Orestan Lane there was West Lane Farm owned by the Killicks, now gone. It was a typical old farm house and you could get milk and thick fresh cream delivered by horse and cart daily. Old Westmoor Cottage and that next one to it, what's the name of it, where Mrs Leech lived, very tumbledown places then weren't they.

Mary: Yes they were ramshackle, somebody lived there ...

Lena: Old Westmoor wasn't, it was in a fairly good condition. Belonged to Major – I've forgotten what his name was [Col Sir Hugh Boustead] but Old Westmoor Cottage was quite lettable. The cottage opposite The Plough where Mrs Hanley lives, was separate cottages.

Mary: There were three I think.

Lena: There were three yes. Facing in The Plough forecourt was a row of attractive cottages pulled down when the Police House was built.

Mary: *They had little gardens in front didn't they?*

Lena: They had and they were very low when you went in and you knocked your head on the roof.

Mary: *Yes I think they were just one storey, perhaps they had bedrooms ...*

Lena: No I think there was a room up ...

Mary: *Very low because I remember the doorways being almost at eye level.*

Lena: Yes they were very low and very dark, still they ... A fair was held in the field at the corner of Orestan Lane and the Common Road.

Mary: *I don't think that was a yearly thing ...*

Lena: No only occasionally yes.

Mary: *... I think it was one of those travelling fairs.*

Lena: Yes. It used to cause great excitement.

Mary: *Yes everyone went out, there was a roundabout, and all sorts of things.*

Lena: And everything that a fair should be. There were two Tollgate Cottages, one on Guildford Road, the Effingham side of Dirtham Lane, the other opposite Rowan Tree Cottages on the Common Road.

Mary: *And they've both gone now.*

Lena: They've both gone yes. By Willow Pool was a pond with magnificent frogspawn, all the children used to go there.

Mary: *Yes I remember that yes, jam jars full of frogspawn.*

Lena: Paddy Whale used to love going down there didn't he?

Mary: *They never turned into frogs though unfortunately.*

Lena: Madge's had a butchers shop almost at the same place as Gibbs now only on the line of the road and approached from a side lane, open on a Saturday morning only. There were no houses between that and the village store, our shop, except well Mrs Edsall's wasn't there in the early days but ...

Mary: *That was built for Miss Parker who was the vicar's daughter.*

Lena: Miss Parker yes the vicar's daughter yes. Along Lower Road where the Roman Catholic church carpark is was a very old cottage set amongst old fruit trees, now pulled down.

Mary: *It had a lovely big garden.*

Lena: It was beautiful.

Mary: *I'm afraid it got tumbledown and derelict.*

Lena: Well people lived there. Miss Stack lived there for a time didn't she, and Mr and Mrs and Miss ?Black. The house was alright but I suppose the Roman Catholics wanted it for their enlargement. In the yard between the garage, the back of the garage and Beech Avenue was stables for horses. Originally a riding school was behind the old WI hall opposite Cubitt and West's. The stables bought horses for royalty abroad and used to go especially to Denmark I think and each day they used to run a coach through the village past the station and The Hautboy in the summer with postilions blowing the post horns.

Mary: *Marvellous weren't they.*

Lena: Yes. The stables were burnt down just before the war during one night and the clock tower on top was heard crashing through the roof.

Mary: *I don't remember that, I think I slept through it but it was a – must have been spectacular.*

Lena: I remember seeing the light there and wondering what was happening. We decided not to go up there because there was a crowd. Talking of horses Derby Week gypsies travelled through sometime before.

Mary: *Yes they used to travel from place to place up [unclear].*

Lena: Yes a week before they used to come and buy their provisions ...

Mary: *Travelling along the road.*

Lena: ... on their way. And Derby Day sitting on the wall opposite the White House [tea room] to watch the traffic going past.

Mary: *The children yes.*

Lena: Calling out 'Throw out your mouldy coppers', it was ...

Mary: *And people did too!*

Lena: They did. We picked up quite a bit there. It was quite a day. Everyone ...

Mary: Everybody had to go through the traffic.

Lena: The traffic was cars. The AA man was here, until the lights were put in just before the war and the 408 double decker bus turned at the crossroads to return to Leatherhead. Single decked buses for Guildford and Leatherhead waited outside The Haig to start the journeys.

Mary: Yes they had separate buses, one came from Leatherhead to Effingham ...

Lena: Stopped here yes that's right.

Mary: ... and then the other one started in Effingham to go on to Guildford.

Lena: The village taxi was run by Mr West in the mid 30s. He lived at Yew Tree House which was pulled down to make Yew Tree Walk. Of course in the meantime it was one of the army headquarters wasn't it? Now here ...

Mary: Yes I remember going to the station one Christmas Eve and the road was very narrow then, it was before it was widened and it was a very snowy one, very snowy Christmas Eve and the snow was higher than the car on both sides of the roads and there was only just enough room for one vehicle to go through. I don't know what happened if you met anything coming the other way, I don't think anything came.

Lena: It shut itself out. Do you remember the Muffin Man who came weekly carrying muffins on the tray on his head covered with a white cloth?

Mary: I think he came up from Epsom?

Lena: He came from Epsom yes he did.

Mary: I don't know how he managed to carry enough muffins.

Lena: He came back again after the war too.

Mary: I can remember his face quite clearly.

Lena: So can I.

Mary: And the rag and bone man.

Lena: Yes the rag and bone man, he used to always come and buy his little piece of cheese and biscuits until the rationing came and that put the end to that. In Madge's Field behind Curtis's and Orestan Lane magnificent mushrooms were there in the September mornings if you got up early enough.

Mary: It had to be day break didn't it to beat the other people to it.

Lena: Also the walnut trees, the walnuts from the trees opposite Rose Cottage came down on windy nights. We used to get up early to get those didn't we before other people came along.

Mary: Or the traffic came along and crushed them.

Lena: When we went to the village stores the staircase was in the cupboard from the living room.

Mary: That's right, Miss O'Connor's house Church Cottage.

Lena: Yes that's right. The bake house oven and the chimney all came down when we had the premises altered and it took an awful long time to pull that bake house oven to pieces. It was bound together with bands of iron. I think it took nearly a fortnight to pick it to pieces. In those days Mr Diamantidi lived at Grove House and members of the Russian Ballet visited him and came into the shop. Two actresses, Gwen Farrar and Norah Blaney, lived at The Paddock, now Mrs Wright's house.

Mary: They were characters they were.

Lena: Oh they were, yes oh yes. They used to dress up and walk up the village and all sorts of peculiar things.

Mary: For those days anyway.

Lena: Yes oh yes. They made us all wake up didn't they? Then there was the old village characters, there was old Scam [or Scan?], do you remember him, who lived behind Mizen's in the caravan.

Mary: Somewhere in the woods?

Lena: He lived behind Water Lane there and he was a real character. He used to I suppose do odd jobs in the farms and he lived – well I don't even think he had a caravan, I think he had a sort of bivvy out here. He used to come in for his rations.

Mary: And his tobacco.

Lena: And he loved his bit of pipe. There was also the son of a very keen WI member Mrs Dench, George, he was retarded and he used to stand in front of their cottage in Victory Cottages saluting every car and he really was well known, and for miles round people would say 'Oh Effingham, that's where that funny boy lives isn't it, who sends the traffic along.'

Mary: Yes he died when he was quite young didn't he?

Lena: About 35 I think he was. A very nice young man.

Mary: He was.

Lena: Very kindly. One time the vicar of Effingham was Mr Floud and the Little Bookham rector was Mr Drinkwater and Dr Waterfield was the local GP.

Mary: That used to cause quite amusement ...

Lena: It did. Dr Waterfield was a great sport. WI was very go ahead. We had a folk dance club. Mrs Poland was a leading member and she always lost her way, took the wrong turning, but we got along. We won several certificates.

Mary: Everybody had the same material, dresses made from the same material.

Lena: Yes that's right. Miss Madge the butcher's sister played the piano. She'd sit there for the hour and play, by the hour playing these wretched dance things.

Mary: It was great fun though.

Lena: Oh we had great fun, a lot of fun. And then we had concerts by the village people and the schools, Miss Parker, the late vicar's daughter produced several Shakespeare plays and the children really were very good at it. Very good indeed. Before the war the WI President Mrs Farrar, she was President at the time and her husband 'Ajax' of the BBC Children's Hour organised a concert including Richard Murdoch and Ida Haendel violinist. It was to have been a yearly affair but of course the war came and that put the end to that. Then there were the Silver Jubilee celebrations for King George V, do you remember what a very hot day that was? Baking hot, everyone was so thirsty.

Mary: I don't know what happened in London that year, they must have been ...

Lena: They must have been nearly dead ... We had a fancy dress parade around the village, with the village band led by Mr Stewart Adams as the drum major with a walking stick. Mr Street, Mr Pole, Mr Patten and Mr Stovell in the band paraded finishing in Madge's field. Then they had a comic football match and sports etc. And everyone was so thirsty they drank gallons of lemonade.

Mary: I think it all ran out didn't it, the lemonade?

Lena: Yes, in the shop and there wasn't any. Then of course outside the school a tree was planted by Stewart Adams. The Coronation of King George the Sixth was not so involved, just a tea party for the village children.

Mary: Everybody was given a mug.

Lena: Oh yes.

Mary: That was the only other thing I can remember about it. A mug for the Silver Jubilee and a mug for the coronation just like there was a mug for the present Queen's coronation for everybody.

Lena: Yes I suppose there was.

Mary: I kept mine for a long while.

Lena: Before the war was declared there was a meeting of shopkeepers who had to say how long customers could be fed. Mr Stewart Adams was appointed Food Officer and we had instructions that nothing was to be sold without his written consent. Miss Young the Matron of The Lodge she was appointed the village midwife in case we were cut off here. The vicar and the Roman Catholic priest were to be notified of deaths. Our shop had permits for the Home Guard food and we were all really prepared in case we were cut off.

Mary: I wonder how long was that before the war, I can't remember?

Lena: About a month I should think, it was all well organised. Stewart Adams got everything well in hand you know. At the declaration of war the Church House at Bookham was the first aid post. The village women went to help. Mrs Brown of High Barn was a Commandant. The air raid siren was opposite the Church House in Bookham. We had no siren in the village so if the wind was in the wrong direction no warnings were heard.

Mary: You'd hear the 'all clear' and say 'Oh there's been a raid.'

Lena: We felt safe then. Mrs Mooney was the billeting officer for evacuee children. She used to go round badgering people to take children. I think they got rather tired of her eventually. The Sunday war was declared two coach loads of children from Fulham and expectant mothers came and they were sent to various homes. Some were not prepared with food and we kept busy supplying them with all their needs. Many women went back, they couldn't stand the quiet of the country but many children stayed all through the war. Later the Strand School boys from Dulwich came and took over Browns as the school.

Mary: That was when ?Bernie Hughes-Halletts [unclear].

Lena: That's right. That was a good time before they came because you see after the boys left it was turned into flats for a time if you remember.

Mary: Yes I'd forgotten that.

Lena: Before that solicitor from Epsom then took it over before Hughes-Halletts came. In 1940 the Howard of Effingham School opened.

Mary: Yes they started building it before the war.

Lena: It was started before yes and then they finished it and it was opened and it used part of the day by the local and part by the evacuee children. The primary school from Fulham shared St Lawrence Primary. Their headmistress was a very nice woman, do you remember her, Miss Harrison wasn't it.

Mary: Yes I do, she was very sweet.

Lena: She was very nice and she was so kind to those children. Miss Ross of The Hollies had three girls and a nurse from the Putney Home for Incurables. Then of course the Canadian troops arrived and barricades were erected at the garage and Beech Avenue.

Mary: Mays garage?

Lena: Mays garage yes. And we had permits to deliver the food up there. These Canadians were tough, reputedly ex-convicts included and nothing, it was nothing in the night to hear revolver shots, and Saturday afternoon it was quite an occasion when they used to fetch them out of the pub do you remember, in a relief lorry.

Mary: Closing up time.

Lena: The White House tearooms were frequented by troops. Later on in the war the canteen – well the war started the night the troops came into the village to run a canteen at the Women's Institute. This was run by the WVS and Mrs West of Cubitt & West was in charge. Of course they completely took over the WI hall.

Mary: Yes the lot, right the way through and they had table tennis at the back.

Lena: Yes. I remember we used to cut the bread in the shop and how cross they were one night when it was late getting there. Mrs Fraser then secretary and many WI members took turns to help. Opened each evening and the day before D Day when the troops were confined to barracks, were open all day and the officer came and asked us if we would keep it open all day. They were allowed to go to the canteen.

Mary: They were allowed to go to WVS but nowhere else.

Lena: They weren't allowed to go out of the village so it was on all day that day, open all day long. On the first air raid old Mr Tyrrell our Air Raid Warden came cycling up the village in a tin hat in the early morning calling out "They're over, take cover" Much to everybody's amusement. "No sound until the all clear." When the Canadians came the lorries parked up Beech Avenue under the hedges and on Guildford Road and all the way down Manor House Lane.

Mary: They were literally nose to tail.

Lena: They were, everywhere. The old stables were workshops and the cookhouse at the golf club inside the main gate.

Mary: Didn't one of them, I'm not sure which out buildings ...

Lena: Wasn't there a tent there or something?

Mary: I'm not quite sure what it was.

Lena: I know they had the mess up there. The officer's mess was at Colonel Cubitt's house in High Barn and the company office in Yew Tree House also South Lodge and The Cottage were taken over. Then that butchers shop was turned into a gas chamber wasn't it?

Mary: So it was, Madge's the butchers.

Lena: Madge's the butcher's was turned into – training, yes. During the Dunkirk evacuation time we could stand at the bottom of the garden and hear continuous sounds of trains going through from Guildford up to London and the WVS went from the village to give the troops refreshments on Guildford Station.

Mary: The troops, they used to stay on the train and they used to hand it through ...

Lena: Used to feed them through the window yes.

Mary: They would rumble through night and day.

Lena: Oh it was constant sound.

Mary: I can't remember how long it went on for.

Lena: Well you see the weather was so beautiful we could hear everything from Guildford as though it was quite near.

Mary: And there wasn't the traffic in the village.

Lena: No of course there wasn't and everything was quiet and we just felt as though we were near it.

Mary: And you could hear the guns from across the Channel too couldn't you?

Lena: Yes you could yes. Yes. And it was very funny do you remember the time when a chauffeur came in to the shop and asked Daddy the way to a certain village and he refused to tell him.

Mary: I don't remember this.

Lena: He said no, he wouldn't tell him and he didn't tell him. He said we weren't supposed to – he didn't know who this man was so he wouldn't give him any directions.

Mary: Might have been a foreigner, might have been a [unclear] or something yes.

Lena: He thought it was but this man was so cross because he wouldn't tell him which way to go. He was 'Well surely you know' because he ...

Mary: All the signposts had been taken down anyway hadn't they.

Lena: The signposts were all removed and if you hadn't any idea where the places were well you just hadn't ... During the Battle of Britain, of course it was lovely weather like it is this year, wasn't it? Beautiful weather.

Mary: Lovely skies.

Lena: Lovely days we had and we could stand and watch these battles going on over our heads.

Mary: Yes you could actually see the planes lit up and ...

Lena: Yes we could and I remember the day that one was brought down at Horsley, we saw that quite well. Altogether two companies of Canadians and three RAS companies were in the village and – I want to go back to the Battle of Britain, well we shall come to that presently shan't we. The village was busy – the guard changing the traffic etc and ...

Mary: Very busy, they suddenly came to life then, the village then didn't it?

Lena: Yes we had ENSA concerts in the Howard of Effingham and dances and the villagers were invited to them if they cared to go.

Mary: They were very good entertainment.

Lena: They were good concerts. Yes they were.

Mary: And anybody in the companies, in the soldiers, amongst the soldiers who could entertain, there were several of them.

Lena: There were. I'd forgotten all those yes.

Mary: One very good violinist who came from the London Philharmonic Orchestra, I think.

Lena: Yes we had some very good people amongst them at times. Well then of course the flying bombs came. The Institute hall roof was damaged by a bomb, by a bomb which dropped at Orchard Walls.

Mary: Mrs West lived there then.

Lena: Mrs West then, yes, Cubitt & West lived there and then the – another bomb destroyed the house next door to Windy Ridge on the Common Road where a man was killed. The house was later rebuilt. Our shop ceilings came down, cans of food thrown off the shelves.

Mary: They were blowing all over the place weren't they?

Lena: Yes oh yes it was a real muddle and people came in there to shelter and get away from ...

Mary: All running and rushing into the hall.

Lena: They'd just walk in and we'd provide cups of tea afterwards before they went home. One night incendiary bombs dropped in the village and lit up and one – we had a stick of them in the tree at the shop and the curtains at The Haig were set alight and during that evening the village was alive with people putting them out. We also had foil dropped by enemy planes to mislead our radar.

Mary: Yes we found that in the garden one morning didn't we?

Lena: Yes we did yes. Now you go on with this ...

Mary: Yes I remember this bit because this is me. Because I was up at the convent one day and the cloud was very low and I just happened to be standing outside the lodge back door and I heard a plane coming out of the clouds and suddenly to my horror I started to be machine gunned, they were machine gunning the convent. This was a Dornier that came out, it came down very very low and I rushed for cover I must say.

Lena: Yes I remember you coming back full of it.

Mary: It was a bit terrifying.

Lena: It was certainly.

Mary: Very low, it suddenly appeared out of the mist. You remember it, you were in the shop one day when ...

Lena: One Wednesday I looked out through the shop window and there were a soldier and a woman crouching under the hedge just opposite and there was an aeroplane machine gunning them.

Mary: *You can't believe that this actually happened can you when you look back?*

Lena: It seems impossible doesn't it?

Mary: *I mean plenty of flying bombs going over but none of them ...*

Lena: Lots of flying bombs and I think those were the only two really serious incidents we had. I remember the WVS coming over from – the first aid people coming over from Bookham and being all busy about it. The [Women's] Institute, I went up to see what had happened up there when it was all over and we had to see to that being repaired.

Mary: *Yes one night while you away, I don't know where you'd gone to but we were woken by this tremendous rumbling and it went on and on, gradually got noisier and noisier and it was a whole lot of tanks, gigantic tanks. They'd come over Ranmore, down Beech Avenue and they were going down the village street and in the morning when we went out, these tanks were so big and vast that they had damaged the kerbstones where there just wasn't room for them to go down the street. I don't know where they were going to.*

Lena: And all this time we were dealing with food coupons and points and occasionally the old Adjutant would come from the Home Guard and say 'Now if we're called up tomorrow what can I have? I've got so many points ...' and I would be going through telling him what he could have and we'd be about an hour sorting out what food he could have if he was called up on the next day and this is how life went on. We had no free time.

Mary: *We kept the ration books didn't we and we used to have to count the coupons up, I think they had to be counted up in hundreds and sent in little packets down to ...*

Lena: Accounted for and once a fortnight we had to give our stocks so they knew what stocks of ration food we'd got in hand. We were supposed to keep a fortnight's ration in hand all the time in case we got cut off. It made life very hard but still it went on. Later on in the war the WI people prepared lunches for Neil & Spencer, they were an engineering firm which took over the garage.

Mary: *Out of Leatherhead, they'd expanded tremendously out of Leatherhead.*

Lena: And we used to get their lunches ready for them in the hall. And then after that of course the government gave us permits for sausage rolls and jam tarts and ...

Mary: *Meat pies.*

Lena: ... and meat pies that's right. Once a week they used to come and queues of people used to come from all over the village.

Mary: *They were quite good.*

Lena: Oh yes they were, very good. We were always busy doing something out of the WI. That's how the war went on and we – people were so much more friendly in those days. People used to say 'Oh well I shall be going down to the station with my husband tomorrow morning. If you get the goods ready from my neighbours I'll take them up.' And they used to do the delivering just like that. I don't know what we should have done without them sometimes they were so kind.

Mary: *I remember once our van driver was ill and all the customers turned and knuckled-to and anybody who had any petrol came along and did some deliveries for us.*

Lena: Yes. On one occasion everybody was ill and the army sent a man to give us a hand.

Mary: *Oh they did yes! Yes I remember going out with him yes.*

Lena: So long as someone could go who knew where the houses were, they let the driver come and he did the delivering for us.

Mary: *Yes I'd forgotten that.*

Lena: Oh yes they were very good like that.

Mary: *Terrific cooperation between the army and the village people.*

Lena: The village people were all much more friendly in those days.

Mary: *Everybody knew everybody else.*

Lena: Everybody knew everyone and what one hadn't got the other one would find for them. It was quite a friendly little village. One of the soldiers said to me once, well we've been in all sorts of villages but I've never been in one – such a friendly one as this is. Everyone says "Good morning" to you which of course they did.

Mary: *They did because they all knew each other.*

Lena: Yes I remember how when before they were going away the number of people who left their money with me and bicycles and all sorts of things to be sent on to their wives after they'd gone. It kept us really busy. When the occupation of the village ended after D Day, when the last soldiers left for France during the middle of the night and next day all was quiet and empty and we started on our own way again, back into the old rut.

Mary: The quiet.

[end of recording]