

Eileen Doxford

Interview with Eileen Doxford (nee Sawyer)

This is a transcription of an interview which took place on 22nd, May, 2009.



Eileen, could you tell me where you were born and some basic things about your family?

I was born in Crosby which is up the dale from Appleby [*in Westmorland, England*], and my parents were Arthur and Alice Sawyer. My dad was gassed in the First World War, in The Battle of the Somme and as a consequence he had to do light work. He was the village postman, he walked about 4 miles every day around the farms and as a consequence in a few years his lungs were OK, apart from one of course. He had lost half of one but he was alright and they had a hen farm. Six different kinds of hens and my mother looked after those.

I had a brother who was a year and a half younger than I and he left the village to go to Appleby at 11 and I had already left and gone to Kirkby Stephen Girls' Grammar School. I had to board during the week and my father picked me up at the weekends. I boarded with a girl who came from Gatton Hall, which was a big hall on the moors in Westmorland and her brother would take us on the Monday morning and my dad would pick us up on the Friday night. Of course I did not like it at all! I longed to go back to the village school where freedom reigned, but at the grammar school we were very much regimented by the Headmistress Miss Whitley. I didn't appreciate this until later years when I realised she'd really done me a good turn, I was prepared to obey orders and see the sense in things.

Which year were you born?

I was born in 1923.

Did you stay at school until you were 15?

I stayed at school until I was 17. The war was on then in 1940.

Can I backtrack on your personal background, did you have an inside toilet?

No, we didn't have an inside toilet. It was outside, just a wooden platform with 2 holes in it so 2 people could sit together and then my dad used to spread that on the garden actually. Toilet paper was cut up pieces of newspaper in the early days.

Did you have an indoor bathroom?

No, we had to wash at the kitchen sink. Then every Friday the tin bath was brought out in front of the fire and that was when hair was washed and body was washed.

Did you have a bespoke soap or was it just the bars of soap?

I think it was bars of soap, I don't think there was a shampoo because I can remember my mother washing my hair with this soap and I got some in my eyes one Friday and I leapt out of the bath and ran around the kitchen – much to their pertination.

Did they catch the water outside in the butts for soft water for the girls for their hair?

Yes, that's right they did.

Did your mother do the washing on a certain day of the week?

She did yes, on a Monday and that was in a separate part, an outside place where she **posser-ed** the clothes in the tub then put them through the mangle. There was no boiler she just carried buckets to this place.

Did your parents smoke?

My dad always smoked a pipe. My dad was in the Army in the First World War but my brother was in the Royal Navy.

It was quite posh to smoke a pipe instead of cigarettes?

Yes and he always wore plus fours and a cap. We had a little car. We had in the beginning it was a Morgan and he had the village blacksmith cut a little hole in the back and a joiner put a little seat in it for me. This was when my brother was born and he sitting on my mother's knee in the front so I had to go into this little seat. I must have looked funny. He was Clerk to the Council, the Parish Council of the village **Asby** and an adjoining village Ormside, and so of course he would use the car to go there. The living came from hens and their eggs. My mother washed all the eggs on Monday morning and they were put into crates and the Express Dairy came and collected them. My dad had served his time with a firm in Appleby to repair shoes and make clogs because we all wore clogs, the farmers wore clogs. He had spent a period of time in Kendal to learn how to make shoes so he could make shoes. He had a workshop which was adjoining the house and it used to be a sort of meeting place for the friends of farmers etc. to have a chat. Then he got the job of Rating Officer and he would go out into the villages collecting the rates. He went all around the farms and then after a period of time the job increased as far as the rates were concerned and he was given more Parishes and so we moved to Kirkby

Stephen and that was where I went to school, so no longer did I have to board which was jolly good.

You stayed at school until you were 17?

I did, I took my School Certificate and I got a reasonable one.

What happened to you when you left school?

This was war time of course and my first little job was during the school holidays. It was fear of invasion and so the children were coming from the North East by train and they were put in a queue and came down in two's from the station with their gas masks on their chests and a name plate. I felt so sorry for the poor little things, they were so young to leave their mothers. I applied for the job of looking after the evacuees. I did that in my holidays and then I persuaded my dad that I would like to not go back to school. Although Miss Whitley, my Headmistress, wanted me to go to university but I decided I'd had enough of school and so I went to work in the local solicitor's office and he was an evacuation officer as well. As a consequence I dealt with these children in so much as I knew where they were billeted and I had to fill in a little form for each house that they went to and these people were paid a certain amount for them each week and they could go to the Post Office and collect their money.

That continued for how long?

Well, Hitler changed his mind, he didn't invade and of course we all thought that they would arrive in the **Middlesbrough** area and Redcar but he decided he would attack Russia first. I think he thought that we were a small island and once he'd got Russia he could soon get us. The evacuees gradually drifted back to the North East and they were from Newcastle and places like that. I do remember we had 2 billeted with us at home, a girl of about 9 and a little boy of about 4 and I remember taking them in the car to visit my Aunt who was married to a farmer. When we took these two little ones over there it was the first time that the boy had seen sheep in the fields and cows, he just couldn't believe his eyes to see these animals. That seems a little sad doesn't **it?**

You were about 18 by now, were you directed into other labour?

Well at 19 you had to go and do some form of war work if you didn't join the forces. I had been accepted in the Wrens and I was waiting for my call-up papers and visualising myself in this Wren uniform of course and over the radio came this announcement about joining the DSIR (Department of Scientific & Industrial Research) and my dad said you are going to join that, you get yourself written and I reckon nothing to you being in the Forces, I was in the Forces in the First World War and I don't want you going. I said "No dad, I've been accepted and I'm going". So I didn't write and he was very cross and so when the next the announcement came over the radio he wrote and we got this word that I had a choice of 3 jobs. I didn't want to go to the first 2 and the third one sounding more interesting it was in north Wales. You would be doing this work which would help in peace time as well as war time and so that was when I had to change my mind – reluctantly. When I went down

there for interview this Doctor of Science interviewed me and said that he couldn't tell me what we would be doing because only two people knew what we were actually doing and I'd got to accept that whatever it was it was to be of as much help in peace time as it was in war time. He hoped that I would go and of course I duly did and I was billeted in Mold.

Do you remember where?

I can't remember the name of the road. I have tried to remember because my son took me to Rhydymwyn this year to see what I could remember about it but unfortunately we couldn't get in, the factory was locked. If I had made arrangements there would have been someone there to take me in but as far as I could see there wasn't a lot there of the buildings, they seemed to have gone.

Your building is there, I have saved you some pictures of it.

Oh all that would have been interesting because there was the big building P6 and across the road was a low building where the engineers were and I spent quite a lot of time in that building. I must say at this juncture that an extraordinary thing, a chap from Morecambe, the next village to Kirkby Stephen, had been down there and had put electricity in the caves in the hillside where they were going, where the large part of the factory was making poison gas and where they were going to store this poison gas. So isn't that an extraordinary coincidence?

When you went down and you were interviewed and they said please come we would like to take you, and you went. Did you get a railway warrant?

Do you know, I don't remember about that?

I just wondered how people got around?

There must have been something or else I wouldn't have been able to afford to go without it.

Did anybody meet you? Did you go to Chester station and catch the train?

Yes, I remember doing that and going along.

When you went there were you warned about secrecy and segregation?

Yes, we hadn't to talk about what we were doing outside. The original digs that I was in, I don't know whether I should say this really, but the Foreman was there, of the men, there weren't many P6/7 in the Engineering Department and because he was very friendly, he became too friendly and so I won't go into that, but it was decided that I should move from those digs in Mold by this boy I had met in the Engineering Department and he found me digs in Buckley. This boy was Ken Doxford of course and he was just being kind, I didn't really think much about it until one of our group (there were 10 girls I should say), well one of them was really rather more than a girl she was the wife of one of the Rectors of the Welsh parishes, and she said one day

that boy has got his eye on you. That was the beginning anyway of a friendship and we eventually got married, in 1947 actually.

In one of the rooms in this small building they had erected a glass apparatus by the glassblower who was part of the team.

He was located in Building 45 wasn't he in P6?

Yes, I think he was. I worked with this glass apparatus and I had a pump because I had to pump this apparatus down to below atmospheric pressure and I should also say that there was a little instrument attached to this which was called a *pirani*, which earned me the name of Pirani Queen. I had to calibrate what was happening in this glass apparatus and pump it down below atmospheric pressure and I would have a piece of graph paper and down one side I would put the pressures as it went down and I suppose along the bottom would be the time.

Were you measuring the decrease in volume of the liquid?

There was no liquid, it was purely air. Any air that was in this apparatus was pumped out and gradually as it got lower and lower, that is how I measured down the graph paper where it was and every twenty minutes. This instrument, the *pirani*, had been calibrated and it was taken away at a certain point and put on the big apparatus in the large P6 building, so I had got to be accurate.

You were measuring the efficiency of the decompression on it?

Yes, I find now after all these years it is difficult to explain.

You were measuring how pure the volume was and how low the pressure was?

Yes, below atmosphere.

I guess that the idea behind that was that if it held the pressure you could use that in a context in the P6 building, whereas if it was losing heat, it wouldn't be efficient?

On the big apparatus that's right, it was measuring for them at what state the lack of atmosphere was I suppose in these big apparatus that they had there.

How good was the vacuum and how long did it hold for?

I do remember there was a big tank in the middle of that building which they periodically cleaned all the apparatus they were using, it was put into this big tank. I should remember the name of the stuff that was in the tank, but I'm afraid I don't.

It was a de-contamination tank then?

Yes, but the name of the liquid that they used to de-contaminate the apparatus because it had to be absolutely pure to do the work that they were doing.

Is that what you did all the time you were there?

Yes I guess it was.

You went there in 1942/43?

Sometimes they gave me a change and I worked in the chemistry lab. I would certainly have been about 20 so that would be 1943.

Did you have any training before you went there?

No, it was just the fact that I'd got a good School Certificate that they accepted me.

So you went there in 1943, and you stayed until the end of the war did you?

No, I went back home when the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, just before that.

That was the end of 1945. Can I give you a piece of information which may help? I believe at the beginning of 1945 everything was closed down there – I believe that and all of the test equipment was taken out.

Well, I certainly went back home before then. It could have been 1944 when I went back home to Westmorland and I went into the Food Office then as I still had to do war work.

Can I go back to the P6 bit, did you have a different pass from all of the other people who went on the site, were you segregated?

We were, and we were very much made aware of it too. They felt we were sort of invading their territory and I was billeted after I had to move from this billet in Mold and I went up to this one in Buckley where there were already 2 girls there. They worked in the other part of the factory. Of course they quizzed me like mad because they all wondered what we were doing. They said "what is it that you're doing, why aren't you all open with the factory?" and I said "well I'm sorry but I can't tell you what I'm doing". They were really hoity toity about it and I suppose they just had to accept it in the end but it would have been easier if I could have told them but I couldn't and that was the end of it. I couldn't talk about it when I went home either.

Can you remember the names of the girls?

One was called Joyce and the other was called Margaret. Joyce came from Frodsham and Margaret came from London somewhere and I should think she was a very clever girl by the look of her. They were somewhat put out because I couldn't tell them and strangely enough I did meet Joyce, well Ken and I did, since we moved here because we were near Frodsham, but it didn't work, there was no rapport between us at all. She still felt as though she had a chip on her shoulder I remember. So we just didn't bother about it because we had this lovely home and when we went to visit her, which she felt she had to do, it didn't make any difference to us at all, the fact that she was in a little semi in Frodsham. It was just rather sad that though because it didn't make any difference to Ken and I.

They don't understand, it is the people not the things the people have got that matter, it really is. I go to different houses meeting different ladies and you get all sorts of houses and I'm not interested in the houses, I'm interested in the person and it quite interesting to hear what people say and it is quite interesting to see how some people have travelled from very basic, didn't go to grammar school and so on and they've got on smashing and they're really happy.

You lived in a house in Buckley with two other girls, what was your social life – did you go to pubs, dances?

No, we didn't go to pubs.

Of course, you had a boyfriend didn't you?

I had a boyfriend, Ken.

Do you remember the doll Barbie, I think her husband was called Ken wasn't he?

Yes. Our entertainment in those days apart from walking was going to the cinema. There were 2 cinemas in Buckley and one was the Tivoli and they had good films. They had good films at the other one but it was known as the flea pit, it was just a little one and in order to see a different film you would go. As soon as my landlady knew I had been to the flea pit she was worried about the fleas and on this particular night I do remember her son was home, he was in the Army, so he had to have my bed. I was sleeping in his bed because the two girls were obviously in a double bed and she had a double bed in the front room and so I had to go and sleep with her and I remember I hadn't been in bed very long when she came and got in and the clothes were suddenly thrown back, here's me all snuggled and getting off to sleep and she was looking for these fleas. That never happened to me before or since, that was Mrs Hibbert, she was a dear soul.

Did you go to dances?

Well, I went to the odd one but I didn't go to many. There would be a sort of annual dance, I remember going to that at Mold Town Hall and one thing I do remember is that someone had asked me to dance and I hadn't actually got up, when Doctor Kurti came to ask me and I felt terrible that I had to say I'm sorry I've already been asked. I thought that he was somebody important of course. Oh dear what should I have done? Anyway I just was honest about it.

Someone told me something about the dances in Mold, there was a chap who worked at RAF Hawarden, girls had big skirts then, flared skirts and when they used to jive they used to fly up, so this guy used to give lead shot to the girls and they used to stitch it into the bottom of their skirts. I thought that was terrific. Which of the scientists can you remember from P6? You, said Dr. Kurti

Doctor London, and Appleby and I don't know whether you would call Clarke a scientist, I think his name was Ron Clarke, then there was Pearson in the lab.

A very important man?

Yes.

Professor Simon, can you remember him?

I can't really.

Do you remember Klaus Fuchs, the future spy? He spent a lot of time in Oxford but I know he was up there because he stayed in Maes Alyn.

I must be honest and say the name doesn't really mean anything to me .I do know there were groups of them used to come around and chat to one another and look at what you were doing.

Did you go to the evenings in Maes Alyn, the social evenings?

I only ever went I think to one. Might have been to two but that would be the most that I would go.

Or Bryn Belan because that was the other one, there were two.

No.

What about eating, did you eat in the canteen?

Yes, there were 2 canteens, there was the works canteen where my husband went and I was in the staff canteen. One thing I thought was grossly unfair was the works canteen had entertainment. ENSA wasn't it, yes they used to have people come to entertain them. We didn't get that.

Can you remember the people who went there? Can you remember Rob Wilton being there?

I can't really.

He was definitely there.

During the war yes, "my wife said to me" was his favourite phrase wasn't it.

"The day war broke out, my wife said to me". Joan Hammond, can you remember her being there?

No.

How big was the general canteen, could you get lot of people in there?

I think they would both be about the same size really. I don't clearly remember.

What did Ken do there then, besides chase you all the time?

He was an instrument engineer, he had the Apprentice of the Year in ICI Billingham and as a consequence he went into the RAF when he was called up the year before me. I didn't know it then of course, they brought him out of the RAF to do this job, to be apprentice in P6.

He got special treatment there, not only special treatment he must have had special knowledge to be there.

Well they needed somebody who knew about all the instruments that were on the various pieces of apparatus and who could repair them so that they could keep going on. In that engineer's hut was a foreman and another man under him, Jim, and there were 2 apprentices, Ken and Stan who came from Billingham, the ICI factory.

Yes, I do know some of the background for that.

He was disappointed really when he went into the RAF as he was visualising flying, but because he wore glasses he couldn't fly and so he would be ground staff. I don't think that he was too disappointed when they pulled him out.

When you were in Buckley, did you go by train or bus or walked to work?

Bus, there was a bus that took us there every day.

Were there many buses parked there waiting for people to take them to and from?

Yes, I suppose there were, going to different parts of Wales. I wouldn't say there were a lot but there would be several.

Do you remember air raids or air raid warnings?

Yes, that would be when I went over to Redcar, do you remember I said that during the early part of the war that the people came over from the North East because they thought Hitler was going to invade the North East, and so in Kirkby Stephen came all these little evacuees and the ones who could afford it, families came as well. There weren't many who could afford to come and we had a family staying with us from Redcar. When Hitler turned his attention to Russia of course they went back. I used to go there for weekends to stay with them and while I was there I can remember seeing the sky all lit up because they were bombing **Middlesbrough**. They did not bomb ICI Billingham because they said that Hitler came over here before the war and sized it all up. There was a big German section in ICI Billingham, the Bund, so they would definitely not want to bomb that otherwise that would have been a wonderful place for them to have bombed but they didn't and **Middlesbrough** got the attention. I do remember visiting and over **Middlesbrough** all the sky was red.

At Valley, do you remember the air raid warnings?

I just remember the warnings but I don't think anything happened there.

I was just thinking where do people go? It is a chemical weapons factory, so where were the shelters, were they on the banks, at ground level or?

I suppose they were but I don't remember.

What about food in the war?

In Kirkby Stephen everything was fine there because it was the country and people kept pigs and so we did have some extra rations but we did only have our little few ounces of butter and cheese. They said we were all the healthier for it.

What about clothes?

There were coupons in the ration book. There were two pages, you see why I should remember is when I went back home I went into the Food Office in Appleby and I issued ration books. You could only have a ration book if you presented your old ration book and your identity card. A part of it that I did enjoy when you are talking about food was that our boss, when the time came when the year was up for people to have new ration books, it was done in the villages all around Appleby and he had his petrol ration of course and we used to go off with him to a village and we would sit in the clubs in the village to issue these ration books. To me, what was good about it was that we went to the local pub for our meal and so we got a decent meal. That of course was extra.

Do you remember British Restaurants being around?

I do remember British Restaurants, I would think that that was probably a British Restaurant within the factory was it?

I don't know. I was speaking to a gentleman in Frodsham and he was brought up in the war years and he said he would never leave food.

I never leave food. I just simply could not leave any food, I never waste, no.

Do you remember the Americans down at Rhydymwyn?

The only thing that I remember about them is that they came around in a group periodically.

Were there any coloured ones amongst them?

I don't remember that there were any coloured ones.

Do you remember the Army and Navy people visiting there as well?

Not that I know of, they weren't in uniform.

It was a different section to you but they did visit the site, for courses and so on.

That must have been the gas part of it.

So you got the end of the Tube Alloy stuff and it all went off and you went back home to the North West and you got another job in 1945?

Earlier than that, it would be I think. I went into the Food Office in Appleby and so I had to stay in digs in Appleby and I stayed at a place where she had a fruit and vegetable shop, so we did quite well for food there.

So Ken was still working down at Valley was he?

Yes, he was for a little while and then he came back to Billingham.

He was over that side of the country and you were over this side? This is before he had the Morgan?

No, that was my dad, no Ken wouldn't have a Morgan. The first thing he had was a motorbike and he used to come over on this motorbike and one weekend I remember we went down to Cheshire, my Granny and Grandpa lived in Cheshire, my mother was Cheshire and my father was Westmorland. It poured, it absolutely poured down and when I got to my Granny's I was saturated right through to the skin because the motorbike threw the water up you see, so I said to him "that is the last time that I am going to ride on a motorbike, if you expect me to go with you, you will have to get a car". Bless him, he did get a Ford 8, a very old one.

So was this after the war?

Well I suppose it could have been, could have been 1945.

He must have loved you Eileen to get a car in those years, he must have worked for that mustn't he?

He must have done, the funny part of it was he took his dad along Stockton-on-Tees High Street and one of the wheels came off and it was running along the road in front of **them! He'd** not had it very long, only a few days, we never forgot that!

So through this you came up to VE Day?

VE Day and VJ Day I think I spent with Ken, I went over to the North East and spent it with his family.

Were those big occasions memorable occasions?

Well, they were memorable to me in so much that it was the end of the war but I think they did have street parties at Kirkby Stephen for the people but I don't remember a street party for me.

By now, you'd been going out for 7 years so it was about time you got a proper job instead of these temporary things you'd been having? After the war did you get another job?

I suppose his dad thought it wouldn't be easy for me to be living with them, which it wouldn't have been really. A part I haven't said is that my boss at the Appleby Food Office, although we got married on **May 24th**, he wouldn't let me leave the Food Office until the completion of the rationing year, which happened to be the end of

July. Now how many people today, how many girls today would have stayed at that Food Office to complete it? They wouldn't would they? Well I stayed.

So did you say that was in 1947?

No, it would be 1944/45.

So you got married in 1945?

We got married in 1947, I just went over for weekends to stay with his family.

So you were working at the Food Office until 1947?

Yes, I suppose so. Food rationing went on after the war.

In 1947 when you got married, did you move over to the North East?

Yes I did.

Did you have a house?

No, we got married on the strength of getting a flat, but by the time we were able to go, because of this wretched boss of mine saying I'd got to stay there until July, the woman let it. So we lost it so it was decided, Ken and his father, that he should move from ICI Billingham to ICI Welwyn Garden City and we went down to Welwyn Garden City in 1947. He worked in Welwyn Garden City for a few years really and we lived in a flat, well half a house it was, in Old Welwyn and points of interest to me was that travelling by bike, I had a bike then, from Old Welwyn to Welwyn Garden City I went along a road and at right angles to this road was a long low cottage and who lived in that cottage – H G Wells. He used to be standing in the doorway, I could see this little very grey haired man standing in the doorway.

A very sad man, he insisted that his son serve in the First World War, it was the patriotic thing to do and he kept on sending him back to the front and he got killed eventually. He was a Major at about 23/24. Very, very sad man. I thought why should he pay for patriotism.

The other thing there was living around there, Old Welwyn, we were cycling along the road one day and we saw this sit up and beg coming towards us very sedately and this man in tweeds, Norfolk jacket and his pants, and who was that – Shaw, G B Shaw. So those two men stick in my mind from that period. I thought I was lucky to have seen them.

In 1947 there was the worst winter in living memory?

It was a dreadful winter. At Kirkby Stephen the snow was level with the walls, the top of those walls that were put together with stones. So they just had to cut a path through and that was another memory because I had to ring the Food Office to say that I was sorry I couldn't come in because we were snowed in. And so he said "Oh Good Lord, Eileen, of course you can get here, the snowplough's coming through

isn't it?" I said "yes it is the train has got a plough on the front of it" but I said "Mr Harker they wouldn't want me on the engine would they now", I said "Oh no, I can't come". Wasn't that a ridiculous idea to think I could be on the engine that was going through to open the railway. He was dreadful.

Living next door to us in Kirkby Stephen was an old gentleman by the name of Warton, the Reverend John Warton, and he had been a vicar in Liverpool, but more important than that, he was the descendent of Thomas Lord Wharton, who was a friend of Henry VIII. So he was very proud of this fact, in fact I've got his family tree somewhere, which he made his job trace. Now what I'm thinking is that my wedding bouquet, he died in that hard winter, and I requested that they took my wedding bouquet and put it on his grave because he was a grand old man, he used to refer to me as Miss Eileen. He lived next door and his housekeeper, Miss Latham, made my wedding dress for my present. I only got a long wedding dress because everybody gave me their coupons, clothing coupons so that was how I got a long dress. We came to Leeds to buy the satin, white satin and she made it for me.

Do you remember the parachutes being sold?

Yes I do and I had **one**. I made myself clothes out of it, I think I made myself a blouse and an **under slip**.

It's just something that people don't remember now.

I should say that I remember the wedding car took my dad and I down to the church, Kirkby Stephen Parish Church, which is a lovely big church and when I got out there was a gathering of children all around the church gate and when I got out of the car they went, I can hear the noise now, they went "Ooohhh" because they'd never seen a long dress, a long wedding dress. I was the first one for them to see. I wouldn't have got it if people hadn't clubbed together with the coupons.

Do you remember the year after 1947, the horrible winter, 1948 and the absolutely marvellous summer? I know it's not a lady thing but Edrich and Compton, the cricketers and that marvellous summer they had, Dennis with the **Brylcreem**?

Yes I remember, oh and you asked about cigarettes. I smoked Craven A. A red pack with a ring on with "A" on the label.

It had a brown piece on the bottom but there was no tip in it was there? Do you know they were made in the West Indies?

Were they really? Why I started was this 20 minute waiting between readings.

Oh, down there you started?

Yes I started down there, I didn't ever smoke very much – 5 or 6 a day. Couldn't afford it anyway because we were only paid about a pound or 28 shillings a week.

But the process workers were paid £5 to start? You had a special pass though?

Yes, I suppose.

So, sorry you got £5 when?

I would have got £5 if I had stayed at the Food Office because I would have been in charge of this department of the issuing of the ration books. I could only be in charge for a year, he forced that, I think he was annoyed because I'd taken the job, to tell you the truth, when he felt that I would know that I was going to get married. I knew the way he treated the girls that worked there so the girl who was in charge was moving to the south coast to a Food Office down there and so I was the one really to take her **job**. I did get £5 a week for a short period of time, so that would be in 1946/7.

Do you remember the National Health Service coming in and free dentistry and Provision of the Education Act – do you remember that – were you conscious of that? Or was it just something that was in the press which didn't really affect you?

No it didn't really affect me very much, I don't think. I don't really remember much about the dentists, apart from the fact that we had two dentists in Kirkby Stephen who had come over from Newcastle-on-Tyne and that they decided to take my two remaining good teeth out which supported my top jaw in order in order to make it easier for them to give me a complete plate in the top. That annoyed me, I really was stupid, I shouldn't have let them do it.

I was talking to a lady yesterday who said that my age group what is different between my age group and the previous age groups – we were the first generation that all of us almost without exception have got our own teeth. People just before us when they got in their late 30's early 40's they had their teeth taken out and plates put in. My generation which is 70ish now all of us have got our own teeth.

I know my dentist here is always amazed that I've still got my bottom teeth.

My father was 89 when he died and he got some missing with the war but he'd got all his teeth. He'd religiously gone to the dentist.

That's the important thing and cleaning your teeth in between meals as well, after a meal I **mean**. **We** weren't taught to do that when we were very young.

It is ingrained in me – it is a ritual, I clean my teeth in the morning and I clean my teeth in the evening. I've got an electric brush.

You don't do it after meals? If I can I do.

I do use floss, you know those floss sticks.

Yes I know.

This is standard, kids are taught this, it is part of their education. Do you recall the Atlee Government coming in? You remember Clement Atlee replacing the great war hero Churchill? Were you shocked by that?

Well, I suppose I was a little bit because he'd been there so long. He'd been such a wonderful leader, he was a leader. It seemed cruel to put him out.

People thought they'd let him down didn't they?

Yes, I can remember that feeling and I think he was hurt too. Even though he must have been very tired really.

I think he was hurt as well. I heard Atlee described absolutely beautifully it was "moon to Churchill's wartime sun" – beautiful. You were a child of the Depression, you had a war with rationing in, you had rationing after the war so when 1953 came along you must have had some hope in your life for the first time, with the Coronation and a new young Queen and the rump of the war, politicians starting to disappear over the horizon, they were past their best. Did you feel that this coronation was a new start for you?

I did yes, yes it was the beginning of a new era. My first boy was born in 1950 and then Paul was born in 1954. In between I looked after my brother's baby while his wife was in hospital and I also had another baby at some time to look after. Isn't it funny how these things go out of your head? During the war my dad's cousin came up from London with her little baby, her husband had died, and she went out during the war to Australia taking this baby with her. I can't remember, did she go through the Mediterranean or would she go around by South Africa, they sank everything in the Med. Can you remember the actual coronation, can you remember the day of the coronation and it being on TV?

Funnily enough I can't, the thing that I remember most was Princess Margaret's wedding day. We were living in Templecomb Way in Morden [*in Surrey*]. The young couple next door said could they come in to see it because we were fortunate to have a television. There weren't many and it was little 8 inch screen.

So you can't remember watching the coronation on TV?

Well I can I suppose well I stop to think about it. What was on this weekend in the Abbey, it was full wasn't it – oh it was the Roman Catholic cathedral, the crowning or whatever you call it of the new Archbishop and I should remember it from that really. Also whilst I'd been staying with my brother in Old Coulsden [*in Surrey*] for two weeks we went up to the NAFAS flower display in Westminster Abbey. I was reminded of the coronation because of course I saw the coronation chair in the abbey. There was no decoration on it but there was decoration around it and all the different parts of the abbey had got these wonderful flower arrangements. One that impressed me was the RAF Chapel.

RAF St. Clement Danes it is called isn't it? I just have one final thing here. What do you recall of Myfanwy? (Myfanwy Pritchard-Roberts was one of the ten other lab assistants who worked at Rhydymwyn for Tube Alloys. She is also still alive and we are trying to get them to meet at Rhydymwyn for the first time since 1945)

Oh I remember Myfanwy, she was a very even kindly sort of girl. There were ten of us she probably told you that did she?

Nobody asked that question, so there were ten of you?

There were ten girls and seventy men.

And the ten girls were lab assistants?

That's right with different sort of jobs, but I did spend most of my time in the engineering section.

You weren't clerical?

No clerical.

So ten girls and seventy men?

Yes which was a big joke, because you're not going in the forces my girl, this is for you and when I got down there, there were just ten girls and seventy men! That was a joke you see because he thought I was going to be safe.

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In 2013, Eileen Doxford was featured in the BBC's documentary series "*Science Britannica*" when she was interviewed by Professor Brian Cox at the Rhydymwyn Valley site.