

Interview of Jennie Leighton

This is an interview with Jennie Leighton on Tuesday 28th April 2009 in Runcorn.

Jennie, could you tell me where you were born?

Jennie: I was born at 56, Ellesmere Street, Runcorn on the 7th September 1922.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Jennie: I had a sister 9 years older than me and I had 2 brothers in between us but they both died in infancy. well when they were small. The first one, Alec, died in the big flu epidemic. My mother and he both had the bad flu that killed so many people. The other son died just after the first one and then my mother had 3 girls me and my two younger sisters.

So what did your father do for a living?

Jennie: He was a bargeman on the canal. He worked for Richard Able & Sons all his life till he died. He actually died when he was working. He dropped dead when he was 58.

And what year was that?

Jennie: 1946. My husband came through the back door demobbed and he came through the front door in his coffin. My husband had brought his demob trilby and tobacco for him. It was a great shock to us all. We were having a Sunday lunch, Saturday lunch all waiting for my dad to come in so my mother said 'he's late' so we'll have our dinner and we just sat down to eat it and a policeman came to the door. a police sergeant and asked did my father live there and he'd dropped dead at work. He died in the dredging office of the ship canal on what's called 'no man's land' in Runcorn. It's disappeared now.

So what did your mother do?

Jennie: My mother was a housewife. She had no option those days. She had my grandfather her father and his sister living with us all my childhood, so she couldn't go out to work. She had too many to look after.

There wasn't a pension system in those days?

Jennie: 10 shillings a week.

How big was the house?

Jennie: We moved from Ellesmere Street to my grandfather's house my grandfather's house which was a self-owned house. When my grandfather Shaw died my grandmother Shaw went to live with her eldest daughter and my father bought the house off his mother and we lived in it. It was a big house. It was 8 rooms and a cellar.

That was a big house for those days wasn't it?

Jennie: Well it was because my grandfather was a Master Mariner.

So it was a detached house. You had your garden and so on?

Jennie: No he and his sister both had these houses built about 1870. They were both living there in the 1881 Census because I've looked at it. It was before my father was born.

So did you have an indoor toilet there?

Jennie: No.

Did you have an indoor bath?

Jennie: No a tin bath, sharing the dirty water when we were kids. Not after we grew up.

So what about soap? Did you have ...?

Jennie: Oh yes we used to have proper soap.

What long bars of it or individual bars?

Jennie: We used to have Sunlight hard soap and Gossages carbolic soap.

So that was individual tablets was it?

Jennie: Yes and we used to have toilet soap.

And shampoo?

Jennie: We used to buy them as we got older. When we were children it was wash with soap. And my mother used to put a barrel out to get the soft water. The toilet outside was slatted. I could tell you a funny story about that but it would take too long!

And sacking around the pipes and the candle in there?

Jennie: We used to have a light similar to a roadman's lamp in there in the winter to stop it from freezing.

Did you have toilet paper?

Jennie: No not really we used old newspapers and tissue cut in four.

Did you eat well in those days, when you were kids did you notice?

Jennie: We always had protein, fish and rabbit and things like that. I never liked rabbit because I couldn't bear cruelty to animals of any sort. I fact my daughter's vegetarian. I do eat steak now. We used an awful lot of fish in those days because it was a lot cheaper than meat.

So when you were a little kid you had a happy time?

Jennie: No one had anything those days. We lived opposite a Labour Exchange in Lowman's Road we used to see them queuing up on a Friday morning for their unemployment pay. There was a shop near my mother's house and they used to come across from the labour exchange and into the shop. She would line their things up, a loaf of bread a packet of margarine and 5 Woodbines.

So when did you go to school?

Jennie: First of all, I went to Shaw Street School which belongs to St. Michael's Church and that was an Infants' school. It was a very good school. I have a picture of myself when I was 5 there. They taught you very well. I can still remember Hiawatha. Longfellow was it? I could recite that by heart when I was 6. I left there when I was 7 and went to Victoria Road School. I absolutely loved that school. It was a good school, good teachers. And then at about 11 we had to go to Balfour Road Senior School. I went there till I was 14. I left there in October 1936.

So was that a National school?

Jennie: It belonged to the School Board, yes. I didn't like that school.

So then you started work? Where was that?

Jennie: I went to work in a grocer's shop in Church Street, Runcorn. It was called John Irwin. They had branches everywhere. It was a big grocers' shop with mahogany drawers and cupboards in the old style with an old cash register. There was no pre packed foods in those days. We used to have weigh everything up. Dried peas, sultanas, currants and sugar,. Everything was weighed up. We used to do it on a Monday and Tuesday. There were quite a lot worked in that shop. There were 5 girls and 4 men.

What hours did you work?

Jennie: On weekdays Mondays and Tuesdays 8.30 to 6.30 when we got out. On Wednesday it was 8.30 to 1.30. Thursday it was 8.30 to 7.00. Friday it was 8.30 to 8.00. Saturday it could be anytime up to 10.00 when we finished. People used to do their shopping after tea on a Saturday.

Did you get paid a lot of money for that?

Jennie: 10 shillings a week when I started.

8d an hour in old money.

Jennie: You earned every penny of it.

So you came from a comfortable background? You weren't hard up? You were working? Did you have some form of a social life when you were 14?

Jennie: Most girls went dancing though I never did. I don't know why. Possibly I met my husband when I was quite young and he didn't dance, so I didn't. I used to go to the cinema a lot an awful lot because there were two cinemas in Runcorn and they changed the programme halfway through the week so you could see 4 films in a week. I used to see the four. That was my hobby films in those days. I remember the Lowry Boys. I can see them now. They started off with Jimmy Cagney in Angels with Dirty Faces.

So you met your husband when?

Jennie: 1939 when I was 17.

So between those dates you just went to the pictures?

Jennie: Yes and out with the girls. Do you what they used to do in Runcorn on a Sunday? All the young people used to march up Grimmer Road along Moreland Lane and back again. They used to call it the 'Monkey Run' because everybody could see everybody. Boyfriends and girlfriends used to meet. There was nothing else to do. They wouldn't allow any kind of entertainment on Sundays.

So did your group smoke?

Jennie: I never did but all my sisters did, three of them.

So what did they smoke? Woodbines?

Jennie: Anything they could afford. When the war started I saw my 2 youngest sisters going through every pocket of every coat they owned, through every handbag, looking for cigarette ends. Because I was working shift work, they asked would I go and queue up in the cig shops. Silly me I used to do it.

So you continued to work at Irwin's?

Jennie: Up till 1940.

On 10 shillings a week?

Jennie: Oh no it went up by years. By the time I left I was earning 28 shillings. I had a bit of a dustup with the boss. I hated that job. I said I was going to pack up. So I went across to the labour exchange when I got home. I saw a woman there and she said to come back in the morning which I did and she gave me a green card to go to Randalls which as you know was the 'hush hush' works. I had no idea what the job would be or anything about it but she said 'be up there for 11 o'clock in the morning'. My mother was already working there as a mess

room attendant and she had no idea I was going. I just turned up at the welfare office and she was in charge of all the welfare for the women and she sent for an engineer... plant manager...a Mr Smith and I had about a 3minute interview with him and he said 'come back in the morning 9 o'clock and report to the K buildings'. I found out I was being employed as a time taker which was a job where you had so many people on your rota/shift and you had to around and see them at their jobs and see what job they were doing so their rate of pay would be paid properly. You did that every shift. I had I don't know how many I had. There were 3 buildings in the K building complex.

Why were there 3 buildings? Did they have 3 different functions?

Jennie: Yes. The first building K1 they filled army shells 25 lb and 90 lb with the mustard gas. They put them into bond and then they were stencilled up and sent off to wherever they sent them! K2 was Air Force weapons which would be dropped off from an aeroplane and K3 was for naval weapons anything the ships would... like mines. I didn't know what on earth they did when I started out there. It was 2 days before I found out. One of the fitters told me what the stuff was that we were working with and it was mustard gas!

So you were working in K1?

Jennie: They had an office where all the foremen had one floor and the stock takers, people who looked after the bonding and the shells and weapons and the time takers had the other office. It was 2 storeys and there was a metal staircase going upstairs. That was in K1.

Can you remember what you got paid while you were there?

Jennie: I got £4 the first week I worked there. I thought my ship had come in! 28 shillings to £4. I met 2 of the girls in the shop after I'd got my first pay packet and they asked where I was working and I told them. They asked 'how much do you get paid' and I showed them the pay slip and they wouldn't believe how much money I was getting! I was getting more than the men in the shop. It was the best day's work I ever did in my life! It was best thing I did because it gave me an entrance into ICI. They were the agents for the Government. Of course, once you worked for ICI...

When you went to ICI in 1940 did you have many friends who were working there or was it strange to you?

Jennie: Oh yes. No I made friends. They were the happiest days of my life, when I was working there. We had a jolly good time considering the conditions and everything you know. I was just 18 when I went there. I never smoked. I never drank only if I was in a wedding. Girls never went in pubs in my day. I remember the very first time I went in a pub in Runcorn. It was the Queen's Arms in Waterloo Road and there were 2 girls from my shift at the bus stop waiting to go to work and they said 'Let's have a quick one' in the Queen's Arms. I'd never been in a pub before and they persuaded me to go in with them just for a quick one. I was terrified in case my dad got to know.

Did you have a port and lemon?

Jennie: I forget what we had, something similar to that. I was terrified for weeks after in case my dad found out.

In the factory, was it fully working then or were parts of it being built up?

Jennie: No. It was fully working. It was under production.

Can you tell me what month you were there?

Jennie: I'm trying to think what month it was. I've thought about it many times. I think it was in the Spring. I know the Blitz was on because the first night I started shift work I was 9-7 at night 7-1 in the morning and 1-9 in the afternoon shift. I started on the night shift and the foreman in charge said 'I'll take you around and show you where you have to go and what you have to do'. So I said 'Alright' and we were going down the steps into K1 and there's a conveyor belt table and all these women sitting around with their uniforms on. They all wore uniforms, I didn't and they were like trousers and a top in khaki with a blue B there and they had to wear caps. If they hadn't got the caps on they had tin hats on, these women. They were all sitting on this conveyor belt stencilling numbers with anti-gas paint on shells, 25 lb shells. I said to Charlie Hancock, the foreman. Why are they all wearing their tin hats the air raid siren hasn't gone yet? He said you'll see when the air raid siren goes. And sure enough I did. The roof of the plant was made of corrugated asbestos and there was a big gun battery at Moore village which is just the other side of Randle and when these guns started up, when the air raid started all the shrapnel came straight through the roof. It makes me laugh now when I see these women who are claiming hundreds of thousands of pounds off their employers because somebody's groped them or somebody's said something nasty to them. I think to myself that these women were stencilling away with weapons full of poison gas and there was shrapnel coming through the roof. There wasn't one of them that didn't have a husband or a son or a brother that was fighting abroad in Burma or somewhere and not one of them ever complained. I look at these silly women and they don't know what they're talking about.

Did they have a canteen there?

Jennie: Yes. They had a mess room. A great big canteen where you could buy meals and a rest room which was what my mother did there. She looked after the mess room. You could take your own food in, you took a couple of potatoes or an onion which was scarce and they'd do a big dish of potatoes and onions in the oven and you'd each have some and you'd take something to go with it. They made tea and coffee.

Was coffee drunk much then?

Jennie: Not very much. It was Camp coffee. Some people liked it. I wasn't very keen. They had to wear these hats, the girls who worked on the factory floor and they hated them. They were like a cap with a turn up and a blue thing on. You had to have all your hair inside this hat. They used to come out with little hats perched on top of their hair fastened with

hair clips with all these curls around. Mrs C (?) used to stand outside and pull their hats over their hair. They used to go mad. It used to tickle me as I didn't wear a uniform.

Did you stay in K1 for long?

Jennie: I stayed there until after the invasion and they started to run it down again. That was 1944/45. I did shift work. Then we went on days because they didn't need as many, when they knew that Hitler didn't use gas in the invasion in Europe. That's why they made the film with us in. They thought when the invasion took place that they would resort to gas. They wanted a stock. They wanted people training quickly. It used to take 6 weeks to train people for the toxic work but when they made this film I told you about before they could train them just by showing them the film 2 or 3 times. I was there till the beginning of 1945. Then the Works Manager sent for me one day and I was terrified because I thought I'd done something wrong somewhere and as I walked down from the plant he was in the office block in the top window and him and another man were standing watching me up and down and I thought 'Oh my God what have I done?' He was transferring me to the Rec what they called 'operations' and that was more a 9-5 office job.

When you worked in K1 were there any Army people ever on site?

Jennie: Yes they used to come from Porton usually on a Friday night because they used to come and wait in our office when I was on nights. Two soldiers and they used to take samples of the gas. The gas looked like Golden Syrup you know. It wasn't a gas as you'd think of gas. If you got it on you, it couldn't be wipe it off. It was rubber based.

When they had all the shells from K1 and they wanted to take them off to wherever...?

Jennie: They used to send an Army wagon from Porton which is still going. It's called another name now Porton Down. They used to take the samples back with them.

When they wanted to deliver them to stores...?

Jennie: They used to do a run out on a Friday morning 9 o'clock every Friday from buffer storage we called it, the big tankers used to take the gas to Rhydymwyn in Wales. We called it Valley. I used to book those tanker drivers so I used to know all about it. I could tell you their names if you like. There was Tommy McHugh a international rugby player from Widnes. He was one of them. 109 his clock number was. There was Charlie Delph. There was Jack Smith, Bill Smith was the foreman. There was Arthur Woodward, Arthur Keresley, Lennie Oscar.

These men were taking road tankers to Rhydymwyn?

Jennie: With a Police escort.

So what about the stuff that went out by rail?

Jennie: I don't know. I didn't have much to do with that side of it. In between the buildings they had tunnels with bays. You went down a step and all the shells and things were stored

in these bays. Down below, you walked alongside them. That was in the buildings. There was a big walk way between the 2 buildings K1 and K2. You went from one building to another along these tunnels and all the shells and whatever were stored for bonding purposes. They used to have to be in bond about a week I think. They sealed them with yellow paint. If there was a leak in one, it went red. They were rejects then.

After they completed bonding, what happened to them then?

Jennie: They did have trains shunting about the factory because one little train that used to go around regularly and there was a pigeon on with the driver! The train driver had made a friend of him.

If they were taking the completed bombs they would go by rail?

Jennie: Yes.

So you worked for nearly 5 years in the K buildings on shift?

Jennie: Yes. You got a rate of pay for the shifts you see. Depending on what you worked. You didn't get pay rises in those days like you do now.

So did you go above your £4 starting wage?

Jennie: It varied from week to week according to what hours you worked. It was roughly about the same. I don't ever remember having a pay rise.

Did famous people come to entertain you?

Jennie: Yes. Jack Doyle. The Horizontal Heavyweight they called him! He used to sing afterwards. He married the girl who was in the Mutiny on the Bounty with Clark Gable and her name was Malvita. They came as a pair. They entertained at night. I wasn't on that night unfortunately but they did entertain the factory workers in the canteen. We used to get all sorts of people, famous classical musicians. Old Mother Riley came to Springfield at Preston.

Did you have Worker's Playtime on the Tannoy?

Jennie: Yes but we didn't have the news. Now and again they'd get girls out of the factory to put records on. The women on the shift were on the same shift for years and you got very friendly with them all. They coached them in from Winsford, Northwich, Liverpool, everywhere.

You still went to the pictures did you?

Jennie: Oh yes. I didn't go dancing. I never fancied it really.

Did you have any boyfriends?

Jennie: I had a few. I went out with one boy, Ernie Foster. He's died recently and he was in the Territorial. I must have only been about 15. As soon as the war was called he was off. He was at Dunkirk because the Cheshire Regiment were stranded in Dunkirk if you remember. A lot of them were taken prisoner. He got back home. I went out with him for quite a while. About 12 months I suppose. I used to write to him while he was in the Army. I started going out with Jim then. I had quite a few boyfriends, odd ones you know. I got plenty of invitations.

So what about the Yanks?

Jennie: There was a troop of them came to Randle to learn about handling the poison gas. They weren't as proficient at it as us. We'd been at it a couple of years when they came. This Major Zahn came and there must have been about 2 dozen of them twenty three sergeants and a couple of privates. One called Buckmaster. I went out with one named Melvin Williams. There was another one called Dave Davies. We used to chat to them. I wasn't married then. They used to chat you up.

No Coronation Street in those days was there? You didn't have anything else to do?

Jennie: I remember being in K2 office one day and these Yanks were all sat with their backs against the wall on the floor and Major Zahn came in and I was with Albert Williams who was the foreman in K2 and there were glass windows so I could see what was going on. We saw the major come in and not one of them stood up. This foreman had been in the First World War. He said my god Zhen, if you'd done that in the British Army you'd have been court-martialled. They never got up off the floor. Didn't salute or nothing.

Where did they stay?

Jennie: They billeted them with people in Moreland Lane. They just knocked at the door. The one I went out with was staying with a family called Duckett who owned a big shop in Runcorn. They had plenty of room in the houses.

Tell me more about the film you were in.

Jennie: They were doing this film for training purposes in case Hitler used gas in the invasion and they recruited all the people in the film from the factory. They wanted somebody who actually worked in the factory but didn't use protective clothing. They were only 2 of us who reached that qualification. It was Jane who worked with me and me and the boss who was Ernie Moore. They said 'one of you've got to do it'. Neither of us would volunteer so he tossed a coin and I had to do it. These are the photographs (Jennie shows them). I had to appear in the film and I was supposed to have been in the factory and inadvertently brushed against a shell that was leaking and got this gas on my arm. Mustard gas if it got on you, you wouldn't really notice it till the next day. The effects didn't show up for 24 hours. That was so bad about it. And it was based with rubber. You couldn't wipe it off. It was a wicked thing really. You'd come up in a great big blister the next day but the fumes could make your eyes all ulcerated. It was dreadful. I had to do that. They filmed as if I was at home ringing up and they told me to go into the ambulance room. Not many people had phones in those days so

I had to go to a public phone box up by the Red Lion and phone up. It was with a film crew that came from London. They were all professional film makers. They had to wait till the sun came out to film outside. We went in the Red Lion at Moor and waited for the sun to come up! I was the only woman. I was 21. I had to sit with all these men who were boozing! I remember in the pub the landlady was getting on a bit and the Home Guard were meeting there were rallying there and these film men got them all outside and with the landlady and took a picture of them.

So when it was completed did they show it to you?

Jennie: Yes they did. Everyone who took part including Mollie Sutton who did the nude part were all invited to the conference room in the office block and were shown the film before it was shown in the canteen. I have not seen it since. The cameraman gave us some bits of film and my husband reproduced some pictures from it.

Do you remember someone called Dora O'Malley?

Jennie: No.

She was in the film and a 65 pound 'leaker' was being painted on top with a stencil?

Jennie: She must have been on a different shift from me. I would know her if she came from Runcorn but if she was from Liverpool or Northwich I wouldn't know her. You came into contact with 2 other shifts on your shift. There was C1 and we came into contact with C2 and the relief rota.

So you got to 44/45 and then you were offered another job?

Jennie: It was the operations dept. for the CD factories. There were 6 factories. It was the operations for running these 6 factories. The job they put me on was ledger clerk and you controlled everything that went in and out of the stores. All the supplies that went into the factories were on these ledgers. I was on implements, tools and utensils. So everything that went in the stores in 6 factories came through me. I would get all the chits back and I had to price them all up to the 3rd decimal point. Then they were taken off the card. It was quite complicated. They've got computers now but in those days. The person in charge was a Mr. M D. Lees. He was quite an important man. He was a director of ICI.

Where did Mollie Sutton come from?

Jennie: Mollie was one of the shift workers and she had to leave all her clothes on one side and change into factory clothes on the other. So they photographed the back of her going into the showers. You had a shower, left your uniform outside and dressed in your own clothes when you came out.

So where did she come from?

Jennie: From Liverpool. She was a very pretty girl. In the beginning of 1945 I went to ICI, which had been made into offices at Western Point. I worked there not quite 2 years. I left in early 47 because that's when I was having my son.

So you would have been there for VE Day?

Jennie: Yes I was. I was at Randle then. The whole lot of us went up to the Tup which is a pub. It's called the Travellers Rest really. We all went and even Dr Hardy was there a real big noise in ICI. We spent the day there.

So you drank that day then?

Jennie: Oh yes. We had a good day. I remember when I was at the Rec we had VJ day. We had a bar downstairs then because it was a Rec. It wasn't as big an occasion. I remember the election when Labour got in.

So was that a big shock to everybody?

Jennie: It was to the men who'd stayed at home. I remember having quite a heated argument with Rich Gorst who worked in the office I worked in. He said 'it's those blue collar workers who've done this'. I said 'no it's not, it's all the poor soldiers and sailors and airmen that have been fighting abroad for the last 5 years that have done this'. He was one of them that stayed at home. My mother went into service. All that stopped in 1945.

So did your wages go down because the war was over?

Jennie: All the jobs had gone. The men who came back wanted their jobs back. Most of the wives got pregnant and stayed home anyway. I stayed at home. We were living with mother at the time. When my son Geoff was about 3, he went into the nursery and I took up work at the Atomic Energy then. That was in 1949. My husband came home in July 1946. My son was born in June 1947. We had some very terrible winters post war. We had a fairly bad one in 1940. There were cars in Moorlands Road outside and you couldn't see them. They were completely covered by snow. In Surrey Street the whole house was covered in snow. They had to dig themselves out. We had another bad winter of 1947 when I was pregnant because I had to go Widnes to a maternity home. I use to have to go for checkups. I had to go by bus to Widnes and then had to go across the old transporter bridge in those days. I had to walk down because I lived in Moorlands, over the old transporter, get a bus the other side and go to the top end of Widnes. I had a heck of a job getting there with the snow.

Where were you living then?

Jennie: I was living with mother because houses were very scarce. Everybody had come home and everybody wanted houses and the prices shot up. My husband had worked on the building, he was a carpenter by trade and before the war he'd worked in the building trade and he worked for John Laing building houses in London and he was expecting the houses to be the same price which was about £1200 or anything from £5 to £1200. But they shot up after the war. He thought they were too expensive.

It must have been a comfort to be with your mum and be a young mother and so on?

Jennie: Yes. It was a horrible winter and coal was scarce. People used to go up to the gas works for coke. It was in Holt Road. There were big gas works there. They used to sell coke. I've seen people with prams and all sorts going to buy coke. We used to buy our coal from a coalman in Wigan. When the weather was bad he didn't turn up.

Did you have a radio at home?

Jennie: Yes. We had a proper big Marconi radio with an 'M' on the front. My dad got it. I'd been to the cinema on a Saturday afternoon and they'd had it installed while we were at the pictures. It was a great big box thing like mahogany and the 'M' for Marconi on it. A great big electrical one. My friend had one that you had to get an accumulator charged up. That was our job on a Saturday morning. We'd go into the shop in town to get it. It used to cost three pence. We had to take one down and bring one back. They were open at the top with acid or something. My friend used to have a special bag that her mother used to put it in. It was a cycle shop called Rigby's I think it was.

Did you eat well after the war or was rationing on. You had a big house didn't you?

Jennie: The old people had died by then. My youngest sister had joined the Army. My next sister was in the Merchant Navy. They went to South Africa after the war. I used to go every Christmas after my husband died. I've travelled a lot in South Africa. I've been all over Namibia. I've been right up the Skeleton coast. I've seen the Kalahari. I've been on the borders of Bechuanaland. It's where that lady detective set...Botswana. I've been all round Rhodesia when it was Southern Rhodesia. I've been to Victoria Falls and the Kariba Dam. I've even been to Livingstone's last camping place before he discovered Victoria Falls. I've been to the Cape of Good Hope. I've been to Cape Town about 4 times, to Durban at least 8 times, seen Mafeking. I've seen Ladysmith. I've seen Kimberley and the big hole!

So when you were there in 1947/8 do you remember the sporting things, do you remember Stanley Matthews?

Jennie: Oh yes. Tom Finney. He's still in the same plumber's house. My ex son in law, his father, ran Grahams, a big warehouse and shop in Birkenhead and they supplied all the plumbing for hospitals and he was a great friend of Tom Finney. He used to get his supplies from them. I remember Tommy Farr fighting Joe Louis. My dad and me got up in the middle of the night and listened to the fight on this Marconi radio. He nearly won! I went to the Grand National in 1947. I don't know what won it that year. I went with my brother in law, Ambrose. He had a bad war. He worked for John Laing in London. He was a foreman. Of course, when the war started they stopped all house building and they directed him into the National Fire Service in 1939 and he went through the London Blitz. He was living in London with his wife and kiddie. As soon as it all went quiet they banged them all in the Army! He was 38 at the time and they sent him to Northern Ireland to train for 6 weeks. He got a weekend pass and we never saw him again till the end of the war! He was in the Western Deserts. He got wounded. His mother thought they'd send him home but they just sent him

to a hospital, patched him up and sent him back! Jim and he and I put half a crown on each race and they insisted on picking the horses. They wouldn't let me pick one. The last 3 races were on the flat. I asked to pick the very last one. Gordon Richards was riding a horse called Light Cavalry. It was 33 to 1. Thought that was a good bet because he didn't ride 'nags'. So I insisted on putting the money on and it was the only win we had! It covered what we'd bet.

After you got married rationing was still in place then?

Jennie: Yes. It went on until 1950 something. I got my first house a 2 bedroomed one. I remember the dust bin man when they came to empty the bins and they asked me for some tea. I said 'it's on ration'. I gave them the tea and they came back and asked for sugar! That was worse than tea really.

So you got Churchill back in then didn't you? So you must remember the Coronation?

Jennie: Oh yes. We were the only ones with a telly in the road. We had quite a nice telly. It stood on the floor, a cabinet. My brother in law and his wife came from Manchester to watch it. All the neighbours and kids came. My mother made some meat pies. It was a happy day. It was a very special day. It brightened people up. We had the Festival of Britain that was before in 1951. My dad's youngest sister won a prize in that. She was a marvellous embroiderer. The thing is somewhere on a wall in Germany now!

Do you remember the aircraft carrier coming around?

Jennie: I do.

That's a good place to stop. I can always come back and ask you other things. It's been smashing. It's flown hasn't it?

Jennie: I think we'll have a cup of tea!