



Carisbrooke Castle
Museum

Island Memories

Oral History Project

2015-16

Interview extracts

The words you will read here all come from the recorded interviews made with the participants of this project.

Over fifty oral history interviews have been conducted from April 2015 to January 2016 with older people from the Island, most of whom are in their eighties and nineties. We wanted to gather the testimony of people who we would consider to be 'born and bred' Islanders about their memories and reflections of Island life.

These interviews have covered a wide range of topics and places on the Island - from childhood to adulthood. We have chosen six themes for our exhibition which feature heavily in nearly all of our interviews:

- Our memories of school days
- Our memories of home and family life
- Our memories of wartime
- Our memories of the sea
- Our memories of travel
- Our memories of the shops

We hope you will enjoy reading our 'Island Memories'.



**Carisbrooke Castle
Museum**

***Oh we do like to be
beside the seaside!***

Our memories of the beaches of our Island

Recollections of picnics on the beach, Sunday School outings to the seaside resorts, fishing, sailing, learning to swim in the sea and summers on the beach were bountiful in our interviews. Here are some wonderful memories of happy times on the beaches of our Island.

Dorothy Russell from Ventnor recalls the Ventnor beach of her childhood....

‘I remember down on the seafront there was a man called Jimmy who had a ventriloquist dummy. There was a big hotel on the front, I think it was called The Esplanade Hotel. There was also the canoe lake. Blake’s owned the beach huts that you could borrow, they didn’t cost much. It cost sixpence for a deck chair. Blake’s were also the fishermen, they would sell the fish straight from the sea. They also cooked crab and lobsters there. When we were young we used to go on the pier, they had special nights of fireworks. I think it was damaged during the war. I hadn’t remembered that until now, going down on the pier for the fireworks, it was lovely’.

Pete Waite who grew up in Cowes recalls swimming at Gurnard....

‘I learned to swim at Gurnard. There was a diving board at Gurnard along from Gurnard Sailing Club with a notice saying only dive at high tide, that was considered not worth keeping up and collapsed after the war. There was a raft floating in Gurnard Bay every summer, anchored flat, a raft with rope handles and you clambered up to sun yourself, when you got to golden brown you went to Cowes and got yourself some bright yellow swimming trunks which went well with the brown body and spread yourself over the raft and waited for the girls to come but it never worked with me, I went pink and the skin fell off so I never bothered with the yellow trunks. I’d forgotten that, I’m really raking it up now!’

Tony Augustus spent a lot of time on East Cowes front in the school holidays....

‘My Grandfather lived next door and he was a blacksmith by trade but he was retired by then and he built model yachts and he built me a model yacht about 18 inches long and I used to spend all my time down in the paddling pool at East Cowes sailing this model yacht. I used to let it go from one side then run round and catch it at the other and I often ended up in the pool with all my clothes on but it was quite good. There used to be a chap who came over from Cowes – he had a yacht as well and we used to have races and I used to sail them off the beach when the tide went out at East Cowes – there’s quite a lot of sand – and it’s shallow water so we used to paddle, sailing our yachts out in the sea. I used to spend a lot of time down on East Cowes front – I lived there in the school holidays’.

Tony Augustus enjoyed going across from East Cowes for Cowes Week....

‘As soon as I was old enough, I suppose it was as soon as they had them after the war, I always went across. My Mum made me sandwiches and I used to go across and sit on the wall by the cannons. I used to save up and buy myself a programme and I used to sit there and I knew every yacht, every owner, every class, I knew everything and I used to spend the whole week sat there watching’.

Rachel Attrill who grew up in Whitwell recalled fondly the annual Sunday school outing to the seaside....

‘They would have a coach, in fact two coaches would often go from the villages because the mothers would come and all the children. We would take our dinner, sandwiches and go up the pier and find a seat and that was a treat for us, just to go up Ryde

Pier. Lots of kids would want to sit in the back seat. We would go down Ryde, along the front and you'd have a canoe lake there, which we never went to, and things like that, we didn't go on the beach even. You could buy a bucket probably for about sixpence. You got a few things for your money although it would only be little things but you'd treasure that because you bought it you see. Then the treat from the Sunday School, they would provide the coach and also tea in a café up Union Street. It is Shaplands, there are one or two of these cafes. They would book tea in there for so many there and somewhere else probably, so that was part of the treat from the Sunday School, to be taken into a café for tea because we never went to places like that, not the village children'.

David Harris enjoyed fishing trips with his Father....

'My father took me fishing, we were in the Ryde Fishing Club, off the pier to the side of the pier some buildings were built to accommodate on one side the rowing club and on the other side the fishing club. In the shed there were boats up on a rack for members to use, using block and tackle you'd get the boat off the rack, then select some oars. A few people had an outboard motor but my Father didn't have one. We'd both have a pair of oars and we'd row out and go fishing there. Sometimes we caught lots and sometimes very little - we mainly caught bream and whiting pout, the occasional skate, you'd have to spin for mackerel and we got that occasionally. Then we had to go round to the relatives to give them all some fish'

William Miller, born 1921, remembers the Cowes week of his childhood and in particular his favourite the Royal Yacht Britannia....

'In August Ryde and Cowes shared the yachting season. Cowes was always the first week of August that began with a Monday. In

those days it was the J-class, they were the largest ones. The King owned one, King George, the Royal Yacht Britannia, that was my favourite boat, she was heavy, and she didn't win very often except when there was a nice strong wind and she could move. I used to walk along first out to Gurnard, they would go out west and turn round off the back of the Island somewhere and come back. It was lovely to watch. All these boats with their huge sails and if they came back with a following wind they had the spinnakers out which was even better you see. But they could move. They had quite a crew on these things might've been a couple of dozen'

Beryl Adamson was taught to swim by the longshoremen at Colwell Bay....

'Learning to swim was compulsory, we went down with the school, the longshoremen there, they put a towel round you and so you had to do a few strokes you did that two or three times and they let the towel slip away so you didn't know you were swimming. Everyone was taught the same way, you were expected to do this. We all enjoyed it actually....It was always Colwell Bay we went to, it was the safest and sandiest and a lovely lovely beach. We walked there in a crocodile with the teacher at the front, got into the huts and got dressed, have our lesson, go back and get changed and then back to school. The costume I think was hand knitted, dreadful!'

Betty Dawson remembers swimming at East Cowes and special trips to Gurnard....

'I love to swim in the sea, always have, my Mother wasn't allowed to swim as a child but my Mother always took us down to swim. Father was a good swimmer and expected us to swim, we swam at East Cowes which had two possible little beaches....When it

was Dad's holiday, a week in the summer, we went across to Gurnard and had a day out, that is as clear as a bell in my mind, packing up the picnic, walking up to the ferry, going over on the ferry, walking up through Cowes, going through Northwood Park where we had a sort of breather and played about a bit, then walking out of the other side of Northwood House, down Solent View Road, along across Gurnard marshes, down a little path that went round and then up onto Gurnard cliffs and there we would watch the J class yachts, this was before 1939. There were the two Britannia's, two Endeavours and the Velsheda, great big yachts, wonderful'

Peter and Paul Gustar went to Sandown on their annual Sunday School outing....

'Absolutely we had a Sunday School outing. To Sandown, there were trains in Newport then and all sorts of Sunday Schools were going up the station, all sorts of people there filling up the train, we played at the beach all day and a tea party at 4 o'clock in a church hall'

Home Sweet Home

**Our memories of family life in and around the
home**

The Island, being largely rural, was fairly late to the installation of mains gas and electricity. Many of our interviewees grew up in houses with outside loos, tin baths and coppers, paraffin lights and hot water bottles at bed time. For those in large families bedrooms were shared as were the household chores. In general hardworking wives and mothers managed the home (some women taking jobs outside the home as well) - which meant taking care of the children, cooking, cleaning, dressmaking and washing.

Christine Ferguson from Carisbrooke, one of six children, recalls her mother Mary doing the washing....

‘There was a scullery in the back of the house. The copper was in there in which you boiled the washing. Mother did all the washing. She did it on a wooden table in a sort of tin bath. She used to stand and do the washing, and then the clothes were put into a copper and boiled first and then they were all hung out in the garden. Monday was the big day - the sheets and all. In between she’d do it in the scullery and sink. We had a bath weekends in front of the fire in a long tin bath that hung outside. The loo was just outside the back door in a little yard. There were 2 bedrooms in the house....I slept in my mother’s room for a long time’

Vera Wheeler from Ryde recalls making mischief with clean sheets....

‘I got up to mischief once or twice with my next door neighbour, we thought we’d throw mud at the sheets drying in the garden and make a pattern. Mother chased us all around the house and found me under the bed and spanked me very hard. Because in those days you had a copper to do your washing, with a fire lit underneath, that was really hard work, so those sheets had to be washed again!’

Olive Hosking from Newport recalls her mother's cooking....

'My father had a very big brick shed and in the corner was a boiler for my mother to boil her sheets. We had a sort of come conservatory and our toilet was in there. In the kitchen my Mother had a great big range and two rings on a unit and that's how she did it. She did all her cooking there, jams, pickles - you name it she did it. Everything was home made. She was a wonderful cook and I learnt an awful lot from her to make me a cook, only by watching her, you learnt by looking....She made gorgeous pastry. Lovely short pastry, crisp but light, whether the oven cooks it better with a fire I don't know. We always had a roast on Sunday, lamb, pork beef, roast potatoes all the vegetables out of the garden. The meat came from Carisbrooke - Mr Burt. There was a cobbler upstairs and then the butcher downstairs before you get to the terrace of three houses'

Vera Wheeler from Ryde remembers her first radio....

'I remember the first radio we had. It was sent by a cousin in America. I was so excited I was jumping up and down on the bed, it was a springy one. It was Bakelite, we'd never had a radio. That was great excitement - a radio'

Rachel Attrill from Whitwell recalls the newspapers read in her house....

'Once a week we had the Isle of Wight Mercury and County Press. We always had the County Press and I think we had a Sunday paper. I don't know how they got that. When I was a little girl there was always a children's paper, it wasn't a comic, it was called the Children's Newspaper and it had quite a moral issue with it, it was quite a nice paper and there was a little strip in it, like you get these comic strips, and it was Pip, Squeak and Wilfred, these three little animals, but that is about the only comic

we had in our house but children have comics galore now don't they?'

Pat Phillips from Arreton recalls the amenities at the home she grew up in....

'We didn't have electricity or mains water. We had Aladdin lamps and candles and little lamps which we had in bed at night. We had a well in the garden but it was connected to a pump indoors, it was lovely water, cold and fresh. It was pumped into the roof, we had a bathroom, so it was pumped there but we didn't have hot water, we had to boil water to take up to the bathroom. We were fortunate as we had flushing loos because of that. The electricity didn't come through until 1951 and the water even later. But we managed. The Aladdin lamps gave warmth to the room. We had a cat called Freddy who curled up around the base of the lamp because the warmth must have come down on him and he loved it there'

Bill Shepard from Newport remembers how he earned pocket money at the weekend....

'In my youth pocket money was scarce, one of things I always got money for on a Saturday, I had a handcart, the same as all boys in those days it was a Tate and Lyle cubed sugar box, mounted on two pram wheels, with wooden handles. I could fill that going round town, on a Saturday afternoon in a couple of hours with horse manure and father would give me sixpence if he wanted it for his allotment'

Joyce Trueman recalls the installation of electricity at her house....

'We were the last house up here to have electric, I didn't own the house then, the landlord would let us have it, everyone else had electric but he wouldn't let us have it, he said the wires would

come into the house and damage the house...as soon as he said we could have it we went off to get an electrician and the first thing we had was all the plugs put in and we got a telly and then a fridge but nothing else for a long time after that. We didn't have an electric cooker, we had a calor gas one and a calor gas washing machine. That was in 1963'

Eric Lewis remembers his jobs at home as a child....

'My job in the morning was always to clean the shoes and wipe up. On a Thursday morning mother would clean the flues of the old Kitchener, we had to take everything off the dresser wash all that up put it back up again and go to school. I used to chop the firewood, get the coal in, we all had our different jobs, being the youngest I had to do more because the other 3 were off to work, so I got lumbered. That was life, you helped out. Father got the Primus going in the morning for breakfast and lit the fire. I used to wind the old mangle for mother'

Sylvia Greville grew up on a small farm in Chale....

'We lived in a little thatched cottage, a little farmhouse called Gladices at Chale. We had a big pump outside that would pump the water up, a toilet down at the end of the garden, Mother cut up these bits of paper strung on a string. They made butter and cheese and Dad used to take the butter and cheese to Shanklin to sell, there was a place where he could sell his produce. He was a one man farmer, up at 4 o'clock every morning, as soon as the milking was done - there was no milk marketing board then he had to find his own market - they'd be making butter and cheese. I can see my Mother making it now, all these butter boxes and the slate shelves. Wonderful times really, hard working for them'

Betty Dawson describes her house at Yarborough Road in East Cowes where she grew up....

‘Above us there were some semi-detached villas, on the other side of the road, at the top of the hill there was a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, then there were terraced houses all the way down to the bottom where there was a butchers shop and a yard where animals were actually killed. On our side of the road, immediately below my house, which was not flat on to the road - it was at a bit of a tilt, was a little terrace....it was a little at right angles to the road, with I would think perhaps six cottages, three on each side...I was aware that life was a lot tougher for them than it was for us, we didn't have money but we did have a nice house. Below that there were more terraced houses or semi-detached ones and at the bottom there was the Co Op and there was a bakers and grocery shop and a little drapers and over the road by the butchers there was a little news agents where I used to go and buy my Father's cigarettes sometimes and they sold sweets as well. So it's not a long road but I knew most of the people there and I went to school with the children on that road and from the ones near’

Peter and Paul Gustar were choir boys at St Thomas Church Newport....

‘All the ladies in church had a hat, ladies weren't allowed in without a hat, they smelt of eau du cologne and mothballs, all the gentlemen wore stiff collars and it was very proper. We had a visitors book where people wrote, they always said it was a choir boy that wrote Mae West, Hollywood in the visitors book! We were 8 and 9 and half when we joined the choir, we practised Monday and Wednesday boys only and Friday full choir. Being a Church of England school which was part of that church, we were also permitted to sing at weddings and funerals and we were paid for that quite well, a shilling for a wedding and 6d for a funeral’

Peter and Paul Gustar recall the Rink in Newport which was close to where they lived....

‘At the top of Hearn Street on the right hand side was a place called the Rink, it had been a roller skating rink, then a cinema then an amateur theatre, we used to play on the steps there, we saw a pantomime there - Aladdin, other people said it was the Grand cinema but it was not, it was the Rink. It was pulled down in 1936 and we played on the timbers there when it was pulled down’

Neil Shutler was just thirteen and a half when he joined Newport Cricket Club....

‘The first year I played I came 3rd in bowling, 4th in batting and the bloke gave me the fielding prize. To my mind the best cricketer batsman in my time when I think of all the blokes I played with was Keith Mitchell, he was captain of Newport for years, he was so tight batting, he wouldn’t give you a chance, he wouldn’t give you the drippings of his nose so they say, he was a good skipper, good fielder, good wicker keep, good captain too, best of the lot, didn’t bowl much but a chap who could’ve been better than him could’ve been Brian Humber but he didn’t bother, it wasn’t in his nature. A lot of good blokes I played with. Newport trades played Thursdays afternoons, over for over I took more wickets than Harold Barber, makes no difference who gets them, Harold bowled from pavilion end, I bowled from the other end, didn’t make much difference. In one match at the Rec I took 9 for 27, I thought I’d had the last man out but the umpire said ‘not out’ but everyone to this day who played that match said he was out!’

Les Benford recalls his earliest memory....

'My earliest memory in our little two up two down cottage with the scullery stuck on the side is sitting underneath the kitchen table, which was my refuge from the world, watching Mother scrub the flagstones of the scullery. That's a memory that has stuck with me all these years. We had a table cloth which almost reached the floor and whilst I was in there I was safe from the world, that was my little bolt hole'

Les Benford remembers helping out at the local farms around Shanklin as a boy....

'After school and at the weekends we'd help out on the farms, you'd go they'd give you a sickle, a rip hook or even a pen knife at times and you'd cut whatever was growing barley or wheat, rye and you'd cut whatever the tractor could not get at easily. We helped the cowmen bring the cows in. Most of the transport was horse drawn then, horse and cart. We'd go up and help the ploughmen, one job we got sixpence a day to throw rocks when they were ploughing we were finding all sorts of things, flint arrow heads and all sorts....We learned how to build hay ricks, we used to catch rats, it was all good fun...we learnt a lot'

***Any more fares
please?***

**Our memories of travel and transport around
the Island**

Getting around the Island is an area of much change since our interviewees were young. The increase in the number of cars on the roads, the end of steam trains, the demise of Island railways, the introduction of new ways to get on and off the Island make the Island a very different place in terms of transport. Several people recalled how 'you didn't get around much' back then; for some the Island seemed like a very big place.

Reg Colley from Wroxall remembers how he used to travel....

'First I had a bicycle, it cost me 6d with a back brake. Then I had an old banger, ADL 442. When we went up a hill the lights used to go out. Then my wife bought me a new car, one with a wooden back, a Morris Minor and we used to like driving out to Freshwater and going down the coloured sands at Alum Bay'

Michael Arnell from Cowes recalls exploring the Island by train and bicycle....

'When I was a kid we could go down to Mill Hill station in Cowes, for pennies we could go to Newport and we could go on the train with our bicycles. We'd go off and then go through to Newport and catch any train which was going anywhere. You could get on a train going to say to Yarmouth and say to the driver you'd want to get off at Five Houses Halt because if there was nobody there it wouldn't stop, so he'd drop you there and you'd go for a ride. Which is why I know every nook and cranny of the Island, you'd use the railways to go out and then cycle back. You could flag a train down from a halt'

Ken Killeen recalls a memorable motorcycle ride as a dispatch driver in 1941

'My colleague Geoff Smith and I were riding a couple of bikes – I think we were doing a training run out along the Yarmouth Road and of course in those days we didn't have motorcycle helmets

and we sort of open throttles a little bit and we were doing about 60, 65 and Geoff hit a pothole and I was right behind him and saw a large empty place between his bottom and the saddle and the bike wobbled all over the road but he managed to stay on board and didn't come adrift but of course I was so close behind him I couldn't miss it either and I did exactly the same as him and I'd never ridden a motor bike so fast ever since!

Ken Killeen was a keen walker....

'Beryl and I used to like walking before we got married, the first time I took Beryl out was when I cycled down to Gurnard with my brother and his girlfriend and I said to Beryl at the time 'I'm very fond of walking - Bank Holiday Monday like to come out for a hike?' 'Yes by all means' said Beryl. That Monday came and we started off and I picked her up in Newport, we walked up through Carisbrooke, up over Bowcombe, up over the downs, down into Brightstone and then started walking towards Chale and we got in the vicinity of Whale Chine and Beryl sat down at the edge of the road - 'I'm not going any further, I'm exhausted' she said 'I thought you said you liked nice long walks, we've only done 15 miles!'. Nearly the end of the romance, damn lucky that a bus came along and we got into Chale and then got back to Newport, otherwise she'd still be there now and that's quite true'

Vic Lewis remembers going over to the mainland....

'I remember the steam driven paddle steamer very clearly. You could walk past the engine room, it was all completely open, the mighty steam engine with its crank shafts all visible. Up the top there was a crane and they managed to move 3 or 4 cars across at a time which gives you an idea of how few cars there were'

Vic Lewis remembers the buses of his childhood....

‘The bus service from Carisbrooke was a bit unique because it was Shotters bus service which was private, they were brown and cream as opposed to the green buses of Southern Vectis, they did the Carisbrooke to Newport run, whether it did anything else I’m not sure, I remember the fare being a penny. I also remember the Southern Vectis buses they had a drop off platform at the back and everybody agile used to drop off when it was in motion. There was no concern for health and safety in those days. I also remember having a bike at one time and if there was a lorry we’d hold onto the tailgate on our bikes and be pulled along! There was not much traffic at all, cars were rather special’

Vic Lewis remembers his first car....

‘My first car was a 1932 Austin 7, if only I’d kept it, it would have been worth a fortune today. I used to hand start it, it was my pride and joy, I drove it out the Winter Gardens eventually it was before my licence but you got away with things a bit more then. I did take a test, I claim that I passed first time, but I couldn’t have made more mistakes, but I amused the examiner and he let me through, I shouldn’t really have passed first time!’

Joan Tierney remembers going on the paddle steamer to Southampton to stay with her Aunt Nelly....

‘Grandmother put me on the old paddle steamer at Cowes, a man she knew would be keeping an eye on me. I used to go over to stay with Aunt Nelly in Southampton maybe three out of the four weeks of the summer holidays. It took a good hour to go up Southampton Water in those days. I was told to sit on my case and not to talk to anyone until Aunt Nell came on board, or someone came on board to collect me. It was quite an adventure really but once the war started we couldn’t go over anymore’

Bill Shepard describes rush hour in Newport....

‘A very strange thing about that period was the time of day what you would call the rush hour, believe it or not, this is the late 1920s early 1930s, the rush hour that was eight till nine, there was a police man on point duty in the cross roads between St James Street and the High Street. When you think about if sixty vehicles passed in the hour, one a minute, that would have been something, most of them would have been horse drawn carriages. He used to stand there with his white armlets on and turn the other way, if anything was waiting, you can’t imagine it really warranted a policeman to stand there and see that bit of traffic across there. There was a chap come stand outside the Lamb and watch this and when the policeman was gone he’d come out and start directing the traffic and funnily enough they seemed to obey him!’

William Miller remembers the early buses in Cowes....

‘They were red and blue buses, before Southern Vectis, we used to have to get out and push at times. It was quite a limited service in those days. I was on the Cowes to Gurnard route one day and we had to get out and push, on the flat, we got it going and it carried on. It cost tuppence I think’

Sylvia Greville has been driving since she was 17....

‘You didn’t have driving tests when I first learned to drive. I’ve been with a car all my life. At 17 you had a provisional licence for 6 months, you just went out on the road and I just took to it straight away and here I am still driving at nearly 90. My own first car was a little a Morris 8 with a soft top and had celluloid windows and when they cracked you stuck them up with tape. I remember it cost £75 and at the time we only had £70 so my Dad lent us £5 so we could get the car’

Laura Hunt remembers travelling in her husband's motorbike and sidecar....

'After we had the children we got a sidecar. I remember one day we went to Sandown and we took our neighbour with us and she had two girls. I was on the back of the bike, Bunty was in the front with Janice on her lap and daughter Nicola by her side and there was Penny and Vicky at the back. People stood there open mouthed as five people got out of the sidecar!'

William Miller remembers his friend buying a first car....

'I remember a friend of mine had a vegetable round, he used to go round, only on a push bike, but he built up quite a business and eventually bought a shop in East Cowes and did very well. I went with him one day, he was going to buy a car. We went to this address - he had never driven before in my estimation - he bought this car and we went home in it. You didn't need a driving test, it was safe on the roads in those days, no one hurtled around at seventy or eighty miles per hour, you did twenty or thirty although you could go faster. I don't remember if it was a Riley or something but it was twice as high as a current cars. You didn't have to bend down to get in, you stepped up onto the old board and got in. Those were good motoring days, if you had a car it was wonderful. You could travel around the Isle of Wight unmolested. There were not many garages about in those days, if you broke down I don't know how you got on then'

The Island at War

**Our memories of the Second World War on
the Island**

The Second World War affected the lives of Islanders in so many different ways. For the young there was a mixture of fear and excitement and a sense of knowing nothing else. National Service called those old enough into many directions both on and off the Island, with some leaving the Island for the first time in their lives.

Ken Killeen was working an overnight shift on ARP watch at County Hall when war broke out, he recalls the declaration....

‘In the morning when we went off duty at 8 o’clock we went two doors down the road to Hazards House. In between of course was Mr Brown’s butcher shop. Hazards House was a part of the County set up and we used to go in there and we got our breakfasts – we didn’t have to pay for them – that was our perks, that was all we got otherwise it was voluntary duty we did, and that is how we got the war started. In fact I remember that I was on duty on the Sunday the third of September at 11 o’clock together as we were doing some additional shifts when we heard Mr Chamberlain over the radio announce the declaration of war’

Dorothy Russell from Ventnor remembers being called up for war work....

‘There was an employment office above where I worked. They sent you a letter to say you were called up for service. Me and my friend, our surnames began with B and A, thought we would go together but it didn’t work out like that. I was 21 then and I was sent to the mainland to Hertfordshire to work on radar. I’d never been to the mainland before. I had to get a train to London to be met by a lady who told me where I would be going. I was billeted with a family, a lady and her son, the husband was away. I had to go to work on a bus or transport. It was in a field, like a factory, a big place it was where we worked. There were a lot of women from all over the country that worked there. We made the valves

to go in the radar. We had to weld the parts on. I didn't think much of the job but you had to do it'

Christine Flux who grew up in Cowes remembers the bombing raid of the 5th May 1942 when she was living in Mill Hill Road.....

'The air raid started at 11pm we stayed in the shelter till 5 the next morning. When we came out the first thing we saw was a lady injured sitting in a chair in our road. We came out of the shelter and found we had no windows, no doors properly on. We went indoors and we had great big holes in the ceilings, no gas, we had great big pieces of the plasterboard down, we looked out the windows and found all 8 houses more or less gone and there were people killed in them'

Deborah Hewes, remembers arriving for school in Newport on the morning of an air raid....

'They had a raid on Newport at 7.30 one morning. Our parents didn't realise what had happened. We all piled on the train and went in. It was chaos. We all wandered around Newport and had a good look to see what was happening. There was quite a lot of us 5 or 6 of us and then finally we thought we'd better go back to Westmont. It was a shock and there were school children that were killed. I remember sitting in the back of the car on the way home with my younger sister, 3 years younger, my mother had dashed in - she was allowed a car, in the sticks you had to - and we were arguing in the back, this unfortunate little girl, whether she died or didn't'

Pam Margham who grew up at Crocker's Farm, Northwood, was 9 when war broke out and recalls wartime at home....

'We had two army camps on our farm. One above with a searchlight and one below with guns, all quite scary and when the air raids started even more so. My grandfather was very deaf and refused to come down stairs until he heard the bombs dropping which he couldn't so my mother went to Wadhams in Newport and bought him a divan. While I had another leaf put in the dining table and a mattress to sleep on all through the worst of the bombing. Neighbours from the next farm traversed 2 fields with 3 daughters and felt safe with us until a bomb dropped outside which we used for rubbish disposal as there was no collection then, in the years to come folk would wonder what they found!'

Rachel Attrill was at the dentist in Ventnor when a German bomber flew over....

'I was in Ventnor, this was early September, in about 1941, I went to the dentist, which we did because we had to go, and his surgery was in Ventnor in Alexandra Gardens which is quite a big terrace of lovely houses overlooking the sea and the Winter Gardens. I had to go to have a tooth pulled out and the dentist's chair you sat in and you were leaning back looking out to sea and out of the window. I was there and he put cocaine in as they called it then, an injection in your mouth which is called cocaine, you've probably had that. Well he put that in and you have to wait about five minutes so I was sitting in the chair and he was watching out the window and we saw a plane coming in and he said 'Well here's one coming in rather low' and we were just watching it and then a bomb came out of this plane and he pulled me out of the dentist's chair and in the surgery he had a big knee-hole desk. He pulled me out of the chair and he said 'Get in under there' and then after that the siren went. They would come in, drop their load perhaps if they had some left and this one was

aiming for Ventnor pylons. He said 'Stay in there' he pushed me in there, I can remember because it was a big knee-hole desk, you'd get a kid in there because I was 11 or 12 then. Then we heard the siren go and a clap, bang and goodness knows what and you could hear glass somewhere and then the siren went after that had happened, the all clear went. Everything was clear and so he pulled me out and he said 'Well I can take the tooth out now' and after he had taken the tooth out he said something about I don't know how you'll get home, because I had gone in on the bus'

Michael Arnell was just a baby when war broke out but his mother was still expected to do her bit for the war effort

'In the war, as a tot, my father was in the army, my mother was expected to work, at that time there was a place at East Cowes, the big hanger, Saunders Roe in those days, where they made seaplanes and women had to go and work and so you as children were looked after. There was a nursery in York Street and the thing I remember about that was the orange juice. So I was looked after by teenage girls during that time as they ran the crèches'

Betty Dawson did fire watching during the Second World War....

'When I was working at the Inland Revenue office in Newport we all used to take a turn in fire watching, you stayed over all night, we used to set up a table tennis table, there were perhaps four or five of us watching the offices, you slept there, I can't remember any excitements really. If the warning went you had to get up. We took sandwiches and played table tennis'

Tony Augustus' earliest childhood memory is of the blitz on Cowes.....

'We lived in Old Road just below the junction with Cambridge Road next door to my Grandfather and he had shored up the kitchen with timbers and corrugated iron so we used that as an air-raid shelter. That night we were in there and a bomb fell in Cambridge Road just around the corner from us and the blast took the shutters off the windows in the kitchen, took the front door off and it shook us up quite a bit. The blitz was in two halves – there was one part and then there was a lull and then it started again. For the second half we went down to the - I don't know if it was an air-raid warden but somebody came and they took us down to the air-raid shelters - the Saunders Roe factory air-raid shelters – and I spent the second half of the blitz in there, asleep. But the next morning we came back home and my bed was full of house bricks and you could see through the ceilings. The windows were all gone, the doors were all gone and we caught a bus up to Newport and walked up to Staplers and we stayed on a farm in Buckbury Lane'

Pat Phillips remembers getting her gas mask....

'1938, I can remember having to go to the Methodist school room in Arreton to collect my gas mask. My sister because she was two years younger than me had to have a special one, it was more of a junior one I think, she hated it, she used to scream when it came out'

Vera Wheeler had an evacuee at her home in Ryde....

'We had one evacuee during the war, a little boy, a nice chap, Mother put a crease in his trousers the wrong way, he didn't think much of that, he went back to London'

Joan Martin recalls 'doing her bit'....

'We all had to register for work. There was nothing we didn't do. We all had to sign on the dotted line. Can you guess what I was on? I was a bus conductress. And by God, wasn't it interesting. It widened my outlook on life in every way. Everyone travelled on the buses, there were no cars because of petrol rationing. All classes of people. I could tell you some tales. Once the bus emptied at Newport and everyone got off but there was a newborn baby left at the back. I went to the driver and said stop at the next shop or police station. Obviously a woman must have been in distress, she'd gone home unpacked her groceries and realised she had no baby. We went to the police station with the baby. I had a lovely letter from the woman to say thank you, she said she clear forgot she had a baby'

Mary Parker was working as a dispatch clerk for Saunders Roe when war broke out....

'We were up night after night with the bombing raids. My father had a steel shelter built in the garden and we had to sit in there night after night. Most people had something wrong with their houses there in East Cowes because of the bombing, windows broken and so on and then there were the doodlebugs. But we still had to go to work in the morning. We had the siren at work if there was an air raid and there was a shelter over on the green. I used to walk to work from home, there and back, it was a long walk from home because the factory was right down the shore end. The pay was 10 shillings a week. I loved the work, I did the paperwork for what went on and off the lorries, the drivers had to sign in my book and they would give me a chit'

Eric Lewis explains how rationing didn't really affect life in the countryside....

'We had our own gardens, our own chickens, rabbits, milk from the farm. We had plenty, we grew everything we wanted for ourselves. We had eggs (Mother used to put the spare eggs in isinglass for cooking), we grew all our own vegetables, we could get meat - chicken and rabbit. As a child we knew very little of the war, here we used to play normally, we could play football, in the rick-yard at Whitwell Farm. Everybody in the village had a garden or allotment, we were all self-sufficient'

David Harris remembers the lead up to D-Day....

'When D-Day was building up there was a lot going on in Ryde, Americans coming ashore in their Liberty boats and there were tugs everywhere for the Mulberry harbours. I remember being entertained by D-Day troops - Canadians. They put on a party for the children of Ryde in the town hall. We had smarties, I'd never seen smarties before and ice cream and watched Mickey Mouse films, it was an event to remember'

Rosemary Matthews remembers the shelter at the Convent School in Ryde....

'At the Convent School they let the children go home at 1 o'clock to miss the raids in the afternoon. When there was a raid, in the middle of the church, down the middle aisle there was a big board which was lifted up and you went down a flight of steps underneath the church and that was our shelter. We used to sit on benches and pray for our enemy'

Peter Waite remembers the bombing of J.S. Whites and Saunders Roe....

'Late April 1942 I think about a dozen Messerschmitt 109's came over, wave hopping, down the river Medina, when they got to

Northwood, three of them peeled off to the west to have a go at Somerton factory, and of course the old Cowes airfield which was part of coastal command, it was interesting to the Germans. The others all carried on to Cowes and bombed J.S Whites and Saunders Roe. One bomb landed in the middle of the concrete yard at J.S Whites, bounced over and hit a line of cottages, it was quite horrific. There was some bombing further up the river near Marvins yard, where Grandad's yacht used to be, and then they thought they'd better go home. That was an early morning hit and run raid'

Dorothy Stevens worked for the Fire Service during the Second World War....

'I started as an ordinary fire woman taking down messages and answering the telephone. Because I'd been a school teacher they thought I was clever and I was made an officer. I was in Shanklin for a while and it was my job when a fire call came in to decide which appliances went out. I was in charge of a lot of women, they operated the telephones and did other jobs. I had a uniform which was very much like the men - a jacket and a cap like the men....We had to know as much about the appliances as the fire men did. We had to know what would go with what. If you had a hay rick fire you wouldn't send water out, you had to make sure you had beaters'

Joan Tierney had six weeks to organise her wedding to the fiancé she had not seen for nearly four years

Tom phoned to tell me 'I'll be home in the next six weeks so you can go ahead with the plans for the wedding'. Well Mum and Dad did it. I had a white wedding with two bridesmaids. Grandma had a grocers shop so she made the cake. We rented the Sunday School rooms in Shanklin. All the family kicked in with their bit.

Masters at Sandown did the basic reception, my sister was a waitress there. Dad provided the wines. It was whatever you could get and wherever you could get it. In those days you could buy someone else's bridesmaids dresses because there were no extra coupons, so I bought two dresses, one pink and one blue. I borrowed my Aunt's veil. We had a drummer and trumpeter come in the evening, but no piano because I'd checked that day and the piano had no keys, so all we had was drums and a trumpet!

Joan Tierney remembers some of the troops that were on the Island during the War....

'The Island was loaded with troops all the time, more and more built up right from the beginning. The first ones to come over were the great big anti-aircraft quads, like a tank and they tow a big 25 pounder, that was the Royal Artillery. Then the Hampshires, our county regiment, they were only here three weeks and then went out to North Africa. There was the Duke of Cornwall light infantry. There were two lots of Commandos - the No 5 Commandos, they were army and the 40 Marine Commandos, they were Royal Marines, those regiments went on the Dieppe raid, a lot of them were missing and killed. The 8th East Lancs regiment – the story is I met my Dumont with that one!'

Vic Lewis remembers VE day....

'When the end of the war was announced, I think I was up at Parkhurst, you could hear the church bells ringing all across the Island. We went to Newport Square, it must have been VE day, the whole place was jam packed, I have never seen so many people in once place genuinely happy in all my life before or since, although there must have been many people with very sad memories at that time'

Are you being served?

Our memories of shops and shopping

Many of our interviewees talked about what is used to be like to go shopping and recalled many of the shops of the past. People recalled with fondness the traditional grocers where goods were weighed and measured - butchers, bakers, sweet shops, fish shops, stationers, shoe shops, drapers and tobacconists to name but a few. Having groceries delivered to the door was commonplace and a full range of other goods such as coal, milk, paraffin, newspapers and ice could be brought to the door.

Joyce Holbrook who grew up in Apse Heath recalls her mother putting in an order for shopping with Mr Blake.....

‘The buses were just coming in when I was going to school and then eventually Mr. Blake had a bus and if you put the right flag out he would stop and if you wanted shopping at Sandown he would get it for you and bring it home when he came home in the evening’

Joyce Holbrook who grew up in Apse Heath recalls the ice man delivering....

‘I must tell you about ice cream. This is going back to when I was still at home and young. In the hot weather the ice man would come to the house with a big bag of ice and salt and before that you would make the ice cream. Dad had his farm milk and it was a container like that, and you turned the handle round with the stuff in until it was ready and then you put it in and packed it with ice and that would last all day. If it was hot weather it went but if it was cold there was still ice cream and when my sister and I came home I remember sitting in front of the fire having ice cream. It was a lovely treat’

Bill Shepard, from Newport, remembers when the Newport market was in St James's Square....

'When the market was in St James's Square all the animals came in on the hoof. To get a cow in a shop was not unusual. They didn't trust banks, they all had leather purses. The market moved in 1928 to South Street'

Ken Mew remembers the blacksmith at Carisbrooke....

'My grandfather used the blacksmith when he made wheels. I used to take the wheels up and he would sweat on a steel band and put them on a hodge. Mr Barnes was his name, he lived in Gunville area'

Vic Lewis remembers a special treat on Saturdays in Carisbrooke....

'On a Saturday morning when you'd got your pocket money a sweets van arrived in the village, it parked by the stream and all the kids arrived to buy their licorice or whatever sweets they had'

Bill Shepard talks about just how much things have changed since his childhood....

'It was the honesty of people in those days - Burtons a dress shop very well known, they did alterations, they used to close for lunch from 12 till 1 o'clock or 1 till 2. Outside there was a big wicker basket, if you had a label on it you could put it in there and although it was lunch you didn't have to wait to go in, you wouldn't see that today....As for the carriers it could be shopping or anything, the shops would put bags and packages they put them on the stone surround of the war memorial and the carriers would check who it was for and pick it up'

David Harris, who grew up in Ryde remembers going shopping with his Aunt....

‘Aunty Elsie had a lot of friends she would gossip with when we went shopping. We’d go into Colenutts, the grocers at the top of Union Street, amazing when you compare it to supermarkets now, she’d go carrying her basket and put it on the counter, there was a chair provided, she would sit there and order and the man in the shop had a grey apron and you’d ask for butter and he’d pat it up into brick size, there was no lino on the floor, just floorboards, and they sold boxes of broken biscuits’

Sylvia Greville remembers how they did their shopping at Chale....

‘Chale Green was the village store, if mother wanted bacon I’d go up the field, past the chicken runs and cross the road and down into Chale Green, you’d think nothing of it, you walked everywhere then. People also came to the house. There was a lady from Newport who came in her old car, she was like a green grocer, that kind of thing. Neat, Mr Neat the old man from Newport, everybody had paraffin in those days. Sherratts, I didn’t know what a radio was until I was 14 when my Mother and Father first got their wireless, Sherratts would come with these accumulators to charge up all the time, that was a fortnightly affair’

William Miller remembers the bakery up the road from his house in Cowes....

‘There was a bakery not far away, near the old school, connected to a shop in the High Street and you could go there and have a pie top put on your dish. It was beautiful pastry. I’ve never had anything since like it. We used to go in the evening when they were making the bread, chew a handful of raisins whilst we were

watching, it was fascinating watching this bread being made. There were several brothers who made the bread at night'

William Miller remembers the High Street in Cowes being flooded in high tide....

'Cowes used to be underwater when the seasons were so and when was high tide there would be a least a foot of water all the way through the High Street. All the shop keepers would have boards and clay or something and they would stick these boards in and put the clay up and sit back and hope. You could swim from the doorstep!'

Pete Waite remembers shopping trips to Newport with his parents....

'We had occasional visits to Newport to go shopping, to appease me there was the early evening cinema and in Newport there were 3 cinemas then, the Odeon, the Medina and the Grand, I'd be taken to the early evening performance at 5.30. Dad used to stand on the pavement outside, dressed in his best suit, trilby hat and smoking a cigarette waiting for mum to come out of the shops. Before the cinema we'd go to Weeks tea room, we had a tea, which Father thought was absolutely disgusting to pay five shillings for a few sandwiches made of dry bread, no cakes and a cup of tea. Food was difficult during the war you see. On one occasion there were some cakes there, some meringues, I'd never seen a meringue before, a strange white thing like a ball, it had a slice of artificial cream in it, I was supplied with a little fork but I didn't know what to do with it so I thought blow this....whack....it shot into a a thousand pieces everywhere, my mother said 'Peter!' and all the people on the other tables turned around and glared at me, there I was with a smoking fork in my hand and a bright red face'

Beryl Adamson worked at Miss Simmonds shop in Freshwater Bay when she left school at 14....

‘Miss Simmonds shop was fantastic, on the corner, a big general drapers and she sold everything a women would need - knitting wool, baby clothes, underwear, everything. I remember when anyone local died and the funeral was due to go past all the curtains would be pulled out of courtesy, a token of respect. When the widow came in for her black Miss Simmonds wouldn’t let me serve her, no, she served her and took her into a little room and fitted her out with her black mourning clothes. It was like going back centuries really, but it happened then. It was weeks before I could serve and years before I could cut fabric, we never handled the money, you took the money to a cash desk....I was taught to use the telephone which was terrifying!’

Beryl Adamson remembers the range of shops in Freshwater....

‘Down the High Street and into the main road, there was everything you needed - we had a thriving furniture shop called Wadhams, fish shops, two butchers, two or three grocers, a big International Stores, there were clothes shops, shoe shops. There was everything you needed. No one had a car so everyone shopped locally, it’s not the same now at all’

Beryl Adamson who grew up in Freshwater remembers going to Newport for Christmas shopping....

‘We went to Newport once a year on the train, it was a big big family event, we went Christmas shopping. We all met at the local station, aunts and cousins, we got in the train and went to Newport, did our Christmas shopping and then went to Weeks for tea. Do you remember the goldfish? You’d sit on the rim of the pond and watch the goldfish whilst the grown ups had their tea.

Coming back we all chatted in the carriage and compared what we got. It was an annual treat, apart from that we hardly ever went to Newport'

Paul Cotton remembers the village shop in Shorwell and having goods delivered to the door....

'In Shorwell there was one shop and the post office, more or less combined. There were two shops in Brighstone but I didn't go there much in my young days, it was foreign territory really! Local farms supplied milk and eggs and we would go there to get these particular things. We had goods delivered to the door. The hardware company Neats delivered galvanised utensils and brushes and so on, they would come around quite regularly. Bakers and grocers from Newport would come out. There was also a man who would come out to recharge the old accumulators for radios but not for my home as we had electricity and our radio worked without accumulators'

Ian Kerley who grew up in Carisbrooke describes the shops he remembers as a boy....

'Down the bottom there was a sweet shop Pettits, up from there Charlie Burts butchers shop, next door Cecil Coward a shoemaker shoe repairer, up a bit more on the corner of Castle Street Mr Webb's post office, opposite was a little shop a bicycle repair shop Mr Moffat I think, round the corner there was Coopers paper shop, next door Attrill groceries shop, at the top Dunns grocers, turn right into Priory Road and first on the left was a sweet shop, next door was the blacksmiths shop, then there was Shotters garage at Priory Farm Lane, go along Priory Road and there was a grocers shop there and right opposite another grocery shop. Raymond Stevens fish and chip shop was there for many years'

Top of the form

Our memories of our school days

Memories of school days have included recollections of school milk, uniform, teachers, lessons, punishments and exams. Some of our interviewees remained at their school until they were 14, others moved on to secondary or grammar school.

Tony Augustus went to school in East Cowes and remembers how the war affected education....

‘I went to school in the Methodist Rooms – the Methodist Church along Adelaide Grove. I was in Miss Souter’s – the first class I remember was Miss Souter’s and then Mrs Jackson and Miss Thompson. I knew Miss Thompson – she was the Head Teacher at that school and she lived down Cambridge Road so I knew her before. We walked to school, nobody had cars in those days. We walked from Old Road, we had to go down through the factory and in those days there were security gates across the factory because it was wartime and we had to have passes to go through the factory and I got to know all the security people in Saunders Roe and in the end they didn’t even bother with our security passes because they knew us. We used to go through there to school and walk all the way up along Adelaide Grove to school and back at the end of the day. We had an air raid shelter which was just up across the road so I can remember spending lots of hours in air raid shelters singing Ten Green Bottles Hanging on the Wall and things like that so my education was a little bit deterred I think because of spending time in the shelters’

Joan Matthew recollects York Street School, Cowes in the 1940s

‘When we started school, aged 5, Miss Elderfield allowed us an afternoon nap, lying on a mat on the classroom floor. Mrs Paskins played the piano for morning assembly. She had taught my father and was a much loved and respected character living in Cowes.

Very straight backed, she always wore a flower from her garden in her buttonhole'

Joan Matthew recollects Newport County Secondary Grammar School, Nodehill, Newport in the 1950s

'Our uniform was a white blouse under a navy gymslip. Around our waists the girls wore a coloured girdle according to which House we were in. Mine was red as I was in Swinburne House. The other houses were Arnold, blue, Faraday, yellow and Tennyson, green. The boys wore white shirts and grey trousers with a navy blazer which had the school badge on its pocket. Their navy caps and our navy felt hats had the yellow and gold school badge on the front and we all wore navy ties with a gold diagonal stripe. In summer the girls wore yellow or pale blue summer dresses with white collars. No hats were worn in summer term and to celebrate it was traditional for school leavers to toss their hats from the train window on the last day of term!'

Pat Bester remembers her time at Denmark Road School, Cowes....

'We had gymslips, I can't tell you what we had underneath, I think a jumper in the winter and a blouse in the summer. When coupons got better in the summer we had little check dresses. I can remember a couple of teachers but I can't remember their names. All our teachers lived in Cowes and that was the thing everywhere on the Island I think you will find, teachers lived where the schools were and so you never had any problems with people getting there if it was snowing or anything. I loved history, really loved it, and English. There was a Miss Ball, I remember her, she was quite nice and we had two or three men teachers as well in Denmark Road. There was a lady who lived up in the park, in one of the Council's park places – Mrs. Bull, she was there. They all seemed nice at the time'

Rachel Attrill remembers the test she took at age 10 to determine if she would go on to secondary school....

‘I was at Whitwell School until I was ten and then you used to take the intelligence test. There was a test that you would do early in the year to split the children up and one would be English, one would be mental arithmetic that would be taken about March I think it was, when you were the age, and the results of that would say how many would go to the secondary schools on the Island – there was only one in Sandown and one in Newport. About 65-70 children went and so then you did a lot more subjects than maths and English and I managed to pass it although I was quite young when I did. If you didn’t pass the test that year you had another chance to take them next year, if you were those that didn’t fit in with the numbers, if they had the top so many then you got the chance the next year to have another go. So I ended up going to Newport Secondary School’

Joyce Holbrook recalls her days at Newchurch School....

‘Mr. Millett was the master when I went and there was the infants school and this big room divided in half. When you first went you went to the bottom half and then you moved up and there is this big partition and at the back there is this huge boiler thing to heat water and he used to sit in front of the fire with his pipe and a big kettle on the fire and eventually he would say, there you are you do that and occasionally he would get up and write on the blackboard and that is about it. Skipper Millett, if it was a cold winter and he had hot water boiling mum used to give me a little bottle with some milk in and a packet of cocoa with sugar in and I used to mix that up and then he’d tip the hot water on and stir it up for you. It was very kind of him, he did that. We took

sandwiches for lunchtime. I didn't wear a uniform, just ordinary clothes'.

Christine Flux remembers school milk at York Street School, Cowes....

'There were no dinners in our day, we come home to dinner every day. But when we were in York Street you were supposed to drink a bottle of milk. It was put round one of those stoves in the middle to warm up, well we wouldn't have that!'

Joan Martin remembers being distracted by the opposite sex when she was at Nodehill Council School, Newport....

'The boys used to come over from Barton to learn gardening when I was at the Council School at Nodehill. When the boys were there, we were all about 13 then, we couldn't stop looking at them. What got done in the garden I couldn't tell you!'

Vic Lewis recalls Newport Grammar School, St James's Street during wartime....

'Because my schooling covered the war time period there was a strange mix of teachers in some respects. One was a conscientious objector, quite an intellectual chap, he wore a fancy cape and mortarboard, he was very well qualified'

Eric Lewis went to school by coach....

'I was at Whitwell school until it closed in 1945 and we moved to Steephill Castle because St Boniface School in Ventnor was closed because of the bombing. We were coached into Steephill by Randalls coach. There were about 50 children in the school, 3 classes. The headmistress took 2 classes, one each side of the partition. Miss Thompson was the headmistress, Miss Rowson the infant teacher. Miss Thompson lived in the school house which joined on to school'

Iris Lewis went to school on the train....

'I lived in Whitwell and went to school at Ryde Secondary Modern. I had to cycle from home in Whitwell to Ventnor to get the train to Ryde, I left at seven in the morning and it was gone five before I got home. The teachers wondered why I didn't do enough reading!'

David Harris had to move from his school in Bettesworth Road, Ryde....

'I was only at Bettesworth Road for a fortnight and the Germans dropped a bomb on it and destroyed it. Luckily it was at night so there were no children there but quite a few people were killed at the top of Church Street. I went to the Parish Hall then, just opposite our house in Church Street, it was adapted as a replacement school. It wasn't warm, we sat there in our gabardine raincoats, there was a tortoise boiler to keep warm'

William Miller recalls the punishments for bad behaviour at Denmark Road, Cowes....

'Guppy was the Headmaster, he caught me hopping about in the classroom one time when the teacher was missing, I had the cane for that. Mr Pennington was good at that too, he had a vicious swing. That was the discipline in those days'

Rosemary Matthews represented Ryde Secondary Modern in athletics....

'It was a lovely school, a happy school, a busy school, we took part in everything, there was so much going on in the Island then, choral, verse speaking, choir, country dancing, athletics, music festivals, I can't speak highly enough of it. I became very good at athletics, hurdles in particular. I represented Hampshire in the All

England in 1949. My time was 11 seconds for the 75 yard hurdles, I equalled the English record that year'

William Miller was in the school football team at Denmark Road, Cowes....

'I played football for school and won a couple of medals. We had leather boots with whacking great studs and if you got caught you had a big gash. We had a leather ball which if it was wet was like a cannon ball. I played outside right, in those days it was a set team position, a goalie with two backs, two wing halves, a centre half, five forwards, that was the accepted thing, no one deviated from that. There was only one cup and that was called the Victory Cup which was played at Westwood Park, Cowes FC home ground in Northwood Park. We had medals for this and I had mine stolen, that was a pity. Our biggest competitor was Grange Road at East Cowes, they had quite a good side, they beat us once 1-0 but we beat them when it mattered!'

Beryl Adamson went to Freshwater Council School....

'I started school at 5. My friend and I went to school hand in hand together on the first day and we've stayed friends ever since. We walked to school when were old enough, it was quite a trek from home, perhaps three quarters of a mile. We walked there in the morning, home for dinner, back to school after dinner and home for tea. In the summer my Mother had a picnic bag ready at home and we went straight down to the beach, walked there and back'

Peter and Paul Gustar remember their days at the National School in Newport....

'We went to the Church of England National School at West Street, adjacent to the infant school was what we called the big school where we completed our education at age 14 and then we left. The first lady we had was Miss Dodsworth, then the next

class Miss Ouseley, next step up Miss Scott, then the top class Miss Oram. The first thing you did in the morning was chanted your times tables to the piano, every morning two or three different times tables. We were in each class for six months in the infants. The infants were all together on one floor. At about age seven we went up in to the boys school, the first teacher was Miss Weeks - member of the Weeks family baker and confectioners, next class Mr Clark, then Mr Campbell, Miss Mabey, Mr Scadding, Mr Chandler- the tyrant. Our first lesson of the day was scripture because it was a Church of England school. We had an elementary education but it was a good grounding for its time'

Stan Turner remembers a particular visit to the school nurse....

'I used to get the train to school in Ryde. We were pulling in at Ryde St Johns and one of the lads ran and slammed the door on my thumb, next morning it's all black and blue, awful, Mum said you'd better go to school and when I got there they said you'd better go up and see the school nurse who was in another school at the top of Ryde, there was a room there with a nurse for all the schools in Ryde. A few weeks after I had to go back up to see her, she was sat there holding my hand and said 'by the way did you see my budgerigar' and I turned round to look and she pulled my nail off. I thought 'where's the budgerigar' and off came my thumb nail but it got better quickly!'

Paul Cotton recalls what happened on leaving school in the 1940s....

'What I remember clearly in those days was that everybody on leaving school went into a job. There was a lot of farm work, office work and shop work. University was hardly ever talked of

and only two or three people would be good enough to go to the few universities there were at the time - we only knew about Oxford and Cambridge. No-one worried about not getting a job, locally and around me I didn't know of any that didn't go into a job'