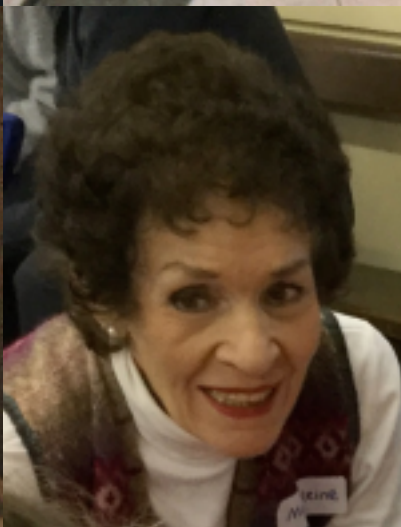




Step Back in Time

A collection of oral histories of older people
living on the Isle of Wight



Created by pupils at the Island Free School

Step Back in Time

**A collection of oral histories of
older people living on the
Isle of Wight**

Created by pupils at the Island Free School

Memories Matter

Since September 2016, 62 pupils from the Island Free School in Ventnor have been involved in a project to record the memories of older people from their community.

Pupils visited two residential homes in Ventnor, met residents there and hosted reminiscence sessions in the community for local older people to come along to. This is a collection of memories recorded there and what you will read here are direct transcriptions of the words spoken - from the taste of school milk, to the freedom of playing out with friends, of being frightened during an air raid, getting the bus to the cinema, remembering a bath in front of the fire and the smell of Pears soap. The combination of young and older people, artefacts and afternoon tea created a wonderful buzz of conversation about bygone days.

This project has not only created the opportunity for older people to have their memories recorded for posterity, but the experience of recording oral histories has given the young people new knowledge of the past through first-hand experiences. This book has been created to share these precious memories and save them for posterity, so that others may learn from them. The pupils of the Island Free School have curated this book. They have chosen their favourite oral histories, researched images to bring them to life and photographed the artefacts. What you read here are the exact words spoken by the participants and transcribed into print for reading. They hope you enjoy reading the memories and it gives you the chance to 'step back in time'.

'It's nice to see the children, they're interested in what we have to say and it's good for the them to know we had a life before now, before we were old!'
(Resident, Downside House)

'It's been wonderful, the children were very responsive and were asking some very interesting questions. I've enjoyed it so much - the chance to talk to children and share. It's given me so much pleasure.' (Ventnor resident)

'Thanks to the project I am more keen to find out what happened in my grandparent's past.' (Pupil, Island Free School)

'I enjoyed seeing the older people laugh and be happy' (Pupil, Island Free School)

Memories Matter

Contents

Child's Play	6
Lessons Learnt	16
There's No Place Like Home	30
We Will Never Surrender	40
Oh We Do Like to Be Beside the Seaside!	58
Stroll Back in Time to a Night on the Town	68
Happily Ever After	76



Child's Play



Fun and games were good to play,
when we were kiddies in the olden days.
Looking back when we lived with Mum,
being a kid was way more fun.
The books we read and the films we saw,
made us laugh, we wanted more.
I always loved the sandy seas,
the warming sun made me pleased.
The sweeties always tasted great,
when Mother placed them on my plate.
All the games we played outside,
made me smile go warm inside.
These are the memories we collected,
just to make sure they never ended.

What kind of clothes did you wear when you were little?

Jo Scott (born 1936)

Well, as you can see I was always dressed in dresses. You didn't dress little girls in trousers, except I obviously must have had a play pair of trousers or shorts on there. I bet they were somebody else's hand-me-downs, I bet they were. Oh, that's a point. Oh, that dress was one. My auntie's husband was chauffeur to J B Priestley when they lived at Billingham and therefore some of J B Priestley's daughter's dresses came my way and that was one of them.

...Yes, that was... it was handed down to my cousin and then when my cousins had finished with it, it was handed down to me and I had another one which I never had a photograph of me in it. It was pink silk with frills and edged with blue ribbon and I loved that dress.



Jo Scott as a young girl

What games did you play as a child?

Gwen Croad (born 1931)

We had to make our own fun as children, we played hide and seek, rounders, climbed trees, played hopscotch and skipping.



Alan Smith (born 1943)

We played outside a lot as children. One of my favourite games was Cowboys and Indians. I also liked reading cowboy books.

Peggy O' Rourke (born 1920)

Well I had two brothers, they liked football so we all played football. Yes, and cricket in the summer. I was reasonably good at sports. I won't say I was very good. Reasonably good at tennis. I was very good at netball. I had a very good eye and I used to get the ball in without any problem at all. Hockey was another one. That was quite good except you could get hurt with a cricket ball.



Peggy O'Rourke (back left) with her sisters in their garden, Fairlawn, Ventnor



Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

Two village boys who were close friends of mine, Jeff and Graham, were often to be seen around the village. We were known as "The gang". I remember so clearly the things we used to do and the games we played. Village life was never dull. Climbing trees to swing on the branches was natural to us... We made our own bows and arrows and played happily for hours. We made catapults, kites, go carts and all kind of things depending on the current craze brought about by the stories we read. The countryside of Birling seemed to be set out especially for us with plenty of open parkland, lots of woodland, a large, shallow lake and an old ruined Manor House. All this was free for us to explore which we certainly did. We played conkers as well. We would make log rafts and sail the lake, playing heroes and pirates, Cowboys and Indians on the prairies, hide and seek in the woodland and countless other inventions that took our fancy. Roller skating and cycling was good fun too... Indoor games were mainly draughts, ludo, hide and seek and reading comics, listening to the wireless was another pastime. The wireless set was a new invention in the 1930s.



Ted Busbridge talking to pupils



George Lyons aged 3 in his grandparent's garden.



Ted Busbridge and friends roller skating on Ventnor seafront



John Sandell (born 1929)

Well, my father would have games with me up in the attic. We had battles with lead soldiers and we threw corks and such like to try and knock out the opposite side. Then we had Hornby electric train which we built our own lines and shot it round (laughs). I don't remember much else that we had as games... My father had this sailing boat with an engine inside so he could take the sailing boat out onto the Solent and sail it there. Stop the engine and put the sails up. It's called 'The Wild Duck' but he was very keen. He even slept in it sometimes, go for a weekend down to where the sand pit was and slept down there.

What were your favourite foods when you were a child?

Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

When I was growing up my favourite foods were rabbit, stews, suet puddings, jam roly poly, rice pudding, apple pie and rock cakes.

Did you have any favourite books?

Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

I remember my favourite books as a girl were Little Women and What Katy Did.



Madeleine Wray aged 3

What kind of things did you used to listen to on the radio?

Alan Smith (born 1943)

Radio programmes I enjoyed as a child were Dick Barton's Special Agent and Jet Morgan's Journey into Space.



Gwen Croad (born 1931)

Oh golly! 'In Town Tonight', 'Children's Hour', five o'clock Children's Hour wasn't it?... Children's stories, plays, poetry I think it was. It was a whole hour especially for children between five and six in the day.

What fun did you have as children?

Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

Oh, penny for the Guy. We used to do that. Well, every November, you know the 5th of November, we used to make a big bonfire... so we used to have an old Guy, dressed up in old rags... and it would be put onto the bonfire... before that we used to stand outside, I can't remember where, outside a shop somewhere. Any passers-by we used to say, "Have you got a penny for the Guy please?" and then you'd take the money to buy fireworks. You had to dress them up, you know in an old raincoat, jumper, scarf and make a funny face out of it.



Mike Wood outside his house in Albert St, Ventnor

Mike Wood (born 1939)

I was in the 3rd Ventnor Scouts, the uniform was khaki then. We always had a big camp out at Corf on Whitsun weekend, I also remember camps at St Lawrence, Niton Undercliff and Gatcombe Farm. This photo was taken after a camp, we are outside our house in Albert Street, I must be about 13 or 14. I'm in the middle, I was patrol leader, my brother Ted is on the right, that's Derek Winters on the left and my cousin David Corby at the front.



Mike Wood at Scout camp at Niton Undercliff

Did you have a favourite toy?

Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

When I was a girl I had my dolls, I loved my dolls, they were called pot dolls, not china dolls then, they were hard to get, a lot of girls had rag dolls.

Did you have pets when you were young?

Madeleine Wray (1940)

Yes we did. A black cat called Timmy and we had a dog and later on we had a budgie... My father... he was very fond of Joey and he taught it to talk.

Did you have a teddy bear?



Jo Scott and her teddy bear

Jo Scott (born 1936)

My baby Ted... I had him when I was nine months old, but he's only a little fellow, very scruffy, but he's filled with straw. Well that wouldn't be allowed now would it? He's been everywhere with me... He went with me to college, to the schools I've worked in, he's been on holidays, he's been all over the world.

My Pink Ted I had when I was four. He's a bit bigger but he... when he... you know when you have a teddy bear, he normally growls. You tip him up and he growls. Mine plays a tune. In cuddling, not so much when pressing his tummy with your hands, you're supposed to cuddle him and he plays a tune called 'D'ye ken John Peel'... And he plays that in a musical box inside his tummy, and he still plays... he's missing one or two notes now after all these years, but he still plays...



Did you get sweets and chocolates?



John Peace (born 1947)

Sweets... funnily enough I got caught out eating sweets. We always... Friday afternoon or Friday lunchtime, going back to school we had sports mixtures... you know sports mixtures in these bags now. Well they used to sell five different sports mixture for an old penny which is... 240 old pennies to a pound, so you used to buy a couple of pence worth of those and take them with you.

George Lyons (born 1923)

Well we had... in those days there used to be they called a farthing. I don't know whether you've heard of them. There were a farthing which were like a half penny and when you went for any sweets, with a halfpenny, you maybe got five sweets, you know. Just depends whether your parents could afford to give you a penny or half a penny, but in many times you know it were half and when we used to run errands and that they used to give us a half a penny for running errands which was spent on chocolate or, well on sweets. Anything that lasted, you know, pear drops or anything like that lasted.

Ken Lawrence (born 1934)

They were the last thing to come off the ration, about a year after the War finished. 'Cos I remember we went in this sweet shop, Maynards, and there was a window, and there wasn't a sweet in it. Everybody went mad. Chocolates in the window and there was nothing there. That didn't last long but even, I mean, rationing, the last things, I think it was sweets, it was 1954 which is nine years after the War finished. Oh yes, you can say the good old days, but there was nothing good about them. People were more closer and more helpful to each other in those days, you know, people would help each other.



Ken talking to pupils

Peggy O'Rourke (born 1920)



Oh, now you've got me going. When we came down to live in the town, about 10 minutes walk I should think from the house where we lived, was a little old lady. Now she really was a little old lady and had a bun on the top of her head and she sold everything from paraffin to butter. You name it, she had it in the shop, but she also had a window, an ordinary house it was, this window was full of sweets. We were given six pence a week and we used to go up there and buy gobstopper, soda fountain, liquorice strips, something else, did I say soda fountains? There was something else. I think it was a creamy chocolate bar and we used to go and buy our six penny worth of sweets a week. That was it!

Did you have pocket money?



Fair on Southampton Common



John Sandell (born 1929)

My grandfather sometimes gave me half a crown... I used to keep it possibly for the Fun Fair that used to come at Easter, but I'd go up to the Fun Fair. I think it would be tuppence or a penny to have a go on the roundabout and that sort of thing. It was a travelling fun fair that came up on the Common in Southampton and they had one or two roundabouts, bumper cars. I'm talking about 1936... There were these steam engines at one side that supplied the electricity to run the roundabouts. It was a lovely smell though, hot oil, oh beautiful!... My grandfather when he gave me the money to go, and he said, "As long as you bring me back a doughnut."

Do you remember going to the cinema as a child?

John Sandell (born 1929)

Yes I remember Charlie Chaplin! I didn't go to see the nasty films, I was just taken to ones that suited children.

Did you ever go ice skating?



Kathleen Simmonds (born 1940)

Well I borrowed, I didn't own any but they were like that, yes, and I was never very good at it. I'd only just about learnt how to not hold onto the side (laughs). I wasn't adept but I did enjoy going skating in London and then they closed the hall, the rink, and it was necessary to go elsewhere so I enjoyed it and made the skirt especially to go there but it was of those with pleats all round like a gymslip.

Did you go swimming?



Kathleen Simmonds (born 1940)

No. No, we didn't go with the school. There was a big swimming pool, well in fact there were two swimming... there were two pools there, maybe even three. We used to go on a Saturday morning and my favourite story was about jumping off the top board when I was seven! I could just about swim and I was a daredevil really, climbing trees and that sort of stuff and went up on there, took a look down... AAAh!

Did you learn to play an instrument?

Peggy O'Rourke (born 1920)

Piano, but it was terrible. We always had some dogs in the house and the great thing was to get the dogs to sit on the mat outside the drawing room where the piano was and you go in there and you play and the dogs didn't like it at all so 'oooowwh'. Somebody would come out and say, "For heaven's sake, stop that noise."



Lessons Learnt



In this chapter we will be discovering what school days were like in the past. Journey through time with Ken, Win, Gwen, Bill and more - learn about what lessons were like, who their friends were and what punishments they suffered in the hands of their teachers. We hope you enjoy learning about their school days because we did!

Do you remember starting school?

Dorothy Morris (born 1923)

Yes, I remember when I first went to school, I'd probably be about four or five, because they used to go quite early when I went because they still had slates when I went. I can remember that. There was a lovely teacher, her name was Miss Scott and she was lovely. We all had little mats to sit on the floor and every Friday afternoon she said, "We're going on a surprise mystery tour" and we used to... she used to talk to us. We were all at different places all over the world.

She was fascinating and she was so lovely and we really thought we were on a magic carpet, you know? I think in the Arabian Nights they had these Arabian people sitting on carpets flying through the air. That's what we pretended that we were doing and it was lovely. So she was my first teacher and I loved her.

George Lyons (born 1923)

Well the school days were the happiest days of my life. I started at school at four and left at fourteen, same school, and I got certificates for attendance. I got 40 for 100 percent and I missed half a day, snow were up to bedroom window. So we couldn't get out to school. So me father were a miner and he dug through the snow a tunnel for us to get out. And I went to school at lunchtime, but I missed half a day at school. And that was the only half day that I missed in five years. I enjoyed school. I left as school captain at finish.



Dorothy Morris and sister Eileen in the garden at Osborne Cottage, St Helens

Peggy O'Rourke (born 1920)

Well, the first school I went to was just one old lady who took about five or six pupils at a time and we went into her sitting room, we always sat round in her sitting room. She really only talked to us about things. I don't think we were too bad. We had history and geometry and maths I suppose, I don't remember. Then I went on to a bigger school as a boarder, I stayed there. That was a bit too much for me. It was... what was I, probably about eight and I found it too much, I couldn't cope so after about a year, I left and went to a day school which was at Sandown, so I had to go through from Ventnor Station through to Sandown and then there was quite a walk but that wasn't too bad. It was called Bounsfild . It was a big house, do you know where the Catholic Church is? You go past the church towards the sea and it was on the corner. They've pulled it down quite recently. I was sorry to see it go. It was a beautiful house.

John Sandell (born 1929)

I went to the school called the PNEU. I can't remember what that stood for. I had to take a cup to have a drink and a pair of shoes to change in to and in those days I had to wear... gaiters which I had to wind up and my shoes also had laces which seems very strange. The gaiters went right up behind my ... almost behind my knee and you had that all day. I was only allowed to write in pencil until I could write properly and then they allowed me to have a pen. And of course it was pen and ink then, not biros. Yes, I remember that quite well.



John Sandell's birthday party, 1937

Margaret Groves (born 1925)

I went to the National School in Newport, my teachers were Miss Millgate and Miss Brigdon. You started school in the small building and then moved to the bigger school when you were a bit older. The girls were taught downstairs and the boys were taught upstairs. I didn't like many of my lessons. I left school when I was 14, that was the leaving age then.



The National school, West St, Newport

Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

At the age of seven, disaster struck: I was diagnosed with suspected tuberculosis and it was decided that I should go away to a residential open air home by the sea: St Catherine's Home, as it was known then, in Grove Road, Ventnor... The emphasis was mainly upon the health side of things at St Catherine's but we did have our schoolrooms and dedicated team of teachers. School started at 9-45 a.m. until 12-30. And 3-p.m. until 5-p.m. Except Wednesdays and Saturdays when it was morning school only. I was considered fit to be discharged just before my tenth birthday. Unfortunately on that very morning of discharge, my nurse realised that I had caught measles, so I was rushed off to the isolation ward, where I stayed for about three weeks. Unable to travel home. I was eventually released from isolation and able to go home.



Ted Busbridge, aged 7, outside St Catherine's Church, Ventnor

Did you have school dinners?

Bill Jenkins (born 1920)

I'm sorry, you've got me beat there. Never had such a thing as school dinners in our time I'm afraid. We could go home for lunch but you had a sandwich box or something like that, but the school wasn't in a situation where they could provide meals and you know... it was a very small school and a very small staff.

George Lyons (born 1923)

Oh no, no. There weren't such a thing then. No, we used to get an hour and a half for lunch, 12 o'clock to half past one and we used to have to go home, get your lunch and get back again. And the school times were 9 o'clock 'till 12, with a quarter of an hour playtime and then half past one 'til 4 o'clock with a playtime in the middle. A quarter of an hour playtime in the middle and that were a school day. There were no kitchens...

Ken Lawrence (born 1934)

The school dinners were horrible! Well they're better now but in those days they weren't very nice, you know, 'cos a lot of parents used to give their children sandwiches 'cos they moaned about the dinners.

Did you have school milk?



Ken Lawrence (born 1934)

Yes. Yes, a third of a pint. You had it around lunchtime. When Margaret Thatcher got in, she done away with all that.

Were there any punishments that you had at school if you misbehaved?

Bill Jenkins (born 1920)

Well, I must tell you, now that you've brought it up, I'm afraid being a keen footballer I was kicking a ball or a tin can around all my time and in the small play ground that we had, half a dozen of us boys who used to kick a football around while waiting to go in sort of thing, and one day someone cracked a window and the order went round from the Head that football in the playground was kaput, none, no more. And I'm afraid six of us acted inadvisably and carried on kicking round the ground and we were caught by a Master, "In you go line up outside the Headmaster's room" and we did, the six boys. The Headmaster came out, Sherwood his name was, and he was a very fair, tall, strong man, and he went through the why and wherefores as to why we were there and he said, "Right, you can't go unpunished, you were told not to do it and you've done it, so one by one hold out your hand." And we each got six of the best on each hand all of the way down the line. Little boys there trying not to cry and tears were... and that was the punishment we got for playing football. I don't think he did that all the time, but he was very serious about these breakages.



George Lyons (born 1923)

If you were naughty, you had to be a good ducker, because we had one teacher he'd throw the chalk at you and another teacher, you know all the blackboards, they don't call them blackboards now do they, but there used to be a wiper to wipe the chalk off. But if you weren't a good ducker, that used to fly through the air...

I used to get the cane, you know, and I mean the cane were about, I don't know, about that thickness, I don't

know what it is in centimetres, I don't know centimetres. Headmaster were about six foot, you know, and he used to... "hold your hand out." It's a wonder he didn't break us hands. I had the cane about three times and always sit front of the class. Not in the Headmaster study, no, 'cos the Headmaster used to take classes, you know the top classes, the Headmaster took the top classes and yeah I used to get caned but I daren't go home and tell me father or he'd say, "Oh, you got caned again I don't know." So you just got to take it rough, you know.



John Peace and George Lyons now

John Peace (born 1947)

When I was at Secondary school, we used to have to cover all our exercise books in either brown paper or wall paper and one time I didn't do it so I got 500 lines of... but it was the Maths teacher and I had to write out 'A plus B all squared which is, well you know, 'A squared plus 2AB plus B squared'. I had to write that out 500 times and then he caught me eating in the class so he give me another 500 and I had to do it by the next day (laughs).

Ken Lawrence (born 1934)

Oh yeah, used to get the cane if you were late. Yep. And there was Mr Dobson with his big size 10 slipper, and when you was late, you'd get the cane and the slipper. Didn't half hurt... on the bottom. Yeah that was the slipper one but the other one was on your hand. Ooh, I can feel it now! That was about it, or misbehaving generally. But what that was I can't remember, it's such a long time ago. The teachers were pretty strict. As I say if you were late you used to get the cane, you know, and then Mr Dobson... I used to sit on my hands and he said, "What are you doing?" "I'm sitting on my hands sir, it hurts." He said, "Good."

What subjects did you enjoy at school?

Bill Jenkins (born 1920)

Well I was very keen on History and Geography actually and of course in those days it was such a thing as the British Empire existed and of course far reaching across the World all these countries where we had invited ourselves and joined in all round the World really and looked upon it as if it all belonged to the British Empire which of course in real life now it doesn't and never did and breaking up all the time. But yes, I think at that school we were led to believe that we were a few points above the rest of the World if I can put it that way.



George Lyons (born 1923)

I always enjoyed learning and I still enjoy learning even today. You know you never get enough knowledge you know, same as you girls. Pack as much knowledge as you possibly can in to your life, because in later life it will always come in handy. So learn as much as you possibly can whilst you're at school. You don't learn as much, you know, you only read from papers and that once you get older. We had the same teacher all term. We didn't change any classes, we just had the same teacher all the time, you know, for all subjects.

John Sandell (born 1929)

Biology, Chemistry and Physics but the teachers of course had all gone to the War so we had old gentlemen who had no experience of teaching children for quite a time and they couldn't... I never knew what a percentage was, I couldn't understand half of the Maths, hence I didn't care for it that much. We had to learn Latin. I don't know why. Nobody explained why. I was hopeless. Amo, amas, amat, amamus, amatis, amant! That's Latin, but I couldn't pick it up and I couldn't understand why I had to learn Latin. I wish I had known then because all the plants had Latin names and I was keen on gardening, as you can tell!

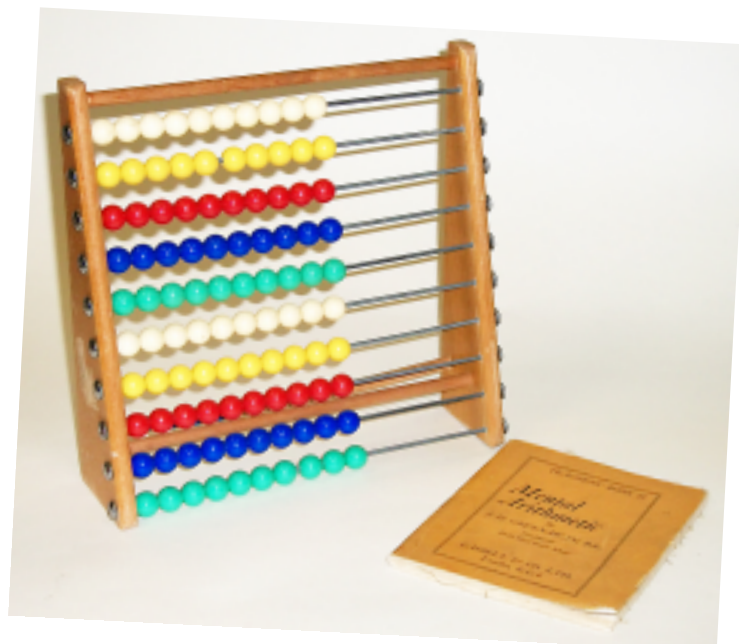


Jo Scott (born 1936)

The usual history, geography, maths and English, English literature and English grammar... when it came to the 11 plus, at the Covent School we didn't have 11 plus like ordinary children did, we had an exam for Sheffield Grammar School... I know I've got certificates for handwriting, copper plate handwriting for Sheffield grammar and mathematics...

Ken Lawrence (born 1934)

Arithmetic, they used to call it, geography, history. My favourite subjects were history and geography. Didn't like maths and those subjects. No too good on English because I didn't speak like I does!



How did you travel to school?

Jo Scott (born 1936)

During the War, I told you before, we were here in Ventnor after being bombed out, when we went back to live in Newport, that's when I started going to the Convent because my aunt lived in Newport and that was nearby, but then I was only, barely eight when we moved down to Cowes and I'm not sure if I was seven or eight when we moved down to Cowes, but I still went to the Convent. At that stage, you didn't travel far to go to school and I was the first child to travel from Cowes, up to Newport, change buses to go up to Carisbrooke for school. When I left school as a senior, there were about three bus loads coming from Cowes to Newport, you know, with school children, but I was the very first child to travel that distance and it was during the War. Changing buses and going up to Carisbrooke. I couldn't have been more than seven and a half, eight at that time.

Did you learn music at school?

John Sandell (born 1929)

I did. When I was in the junior school, I learnt to play the piano and tried to learn the violin because my grandfather played the violin in Southampton, in the orchestra there. I took to the piano and I didn't do too badly there and I continued 'till I was just about to leave the junior school and I was quite good at singing and we had an Open Day where we had to sing and play piano or whatever we did and I thought oh, I'll get a good point for my singing but I didn't. I got them a good point, a first class for playing the piano and that rather shook me!



What sports did you do at school?

John Sandell (born 1929)

In the junior school there was... they played football and I enjoyed that. Go to the senior school, oh no that's rubbish, that's for the lower class you know? It's rugby over here and I couldn't stand that so I was usually given a place at the back. I can't remember what the position was called, and if you got into a scrum, a loose scrum, which is where they all join up... they join together to try and get the ball out on their side, and it collapsed. There was an awful twang and somebody's leg broke underneath it! Oh no, I didn't like that. There was cricket of course. There was nobody to teach PE so the senior boys taught the junior ones.

Bill Jenkins (born 1920)

I played football for the school and I was lucky enough to be chosen for Portsmouth school boys in 1932 and 1933 and we did very well and from then on I carried on and I was fairly good at it. I was a Centre Forward, striker now isn't it?... We did Best School one year and we also won the trophy playing for Portsmouth Schoolboys against Guildford I think it was, if I remember rightly. I did play at Fratton Park four times in the 1933 year and that was very good. The home games were played at Fratton Park you see which if you don't know is where Portsmouth FC are housed. And they aren't doing very well these days either.



Sandra Wood (born 1942)

When I was at Sandown Grammar we walked down to Sandham Grounds to play tennis. We also went down to the Fairway for domestic science and hockey. We spent a lot of time walking to and from all these places.

Did you have a school uniform and what was it like?

John Peace (born 1947)

When I went to Secondary school, yes we had. We used to have a navy blue blazer with a badge. A red and blue tie and a school cap as well which you had to wear all the time. Well not in school obviously. But you got a detention if you were seen outside in the street without a cap.



George Lyons (born 1923)

I never wore long trousers until I was 16. I wore short trousers and these trousers had more patches on than what they were trousers (laughs) and nobody bothered because everybody were the same, you know, everybody were poor and they were just the same. And me father, when I got to 16 he decided to get me a pair of long trousers. Well in those days they were turnups. Have you seen trousers with turnups at the bottom? Well he got these here trousers a bit long so he cut the trousers off by top of the turnups. So then, the trouser were too short and when I used to go out in them, lads used to say, "Who's died?" I'd say, "Nobody, why?" They said, "Well you've got your trousers at half mast."



George Lyons aged 5

Bill Jenkins (born 1920)

No, no, but you had to wear a tie. It was only an elementary school and they didn't believe in uniforms in those days if you weren't Army. No.

Peggy O'Rourke (born 1920)

Oh yes. We had a straight skirt with four pleats in the front and back. It wasn't a bad thing, uniform really, quite nice and coloured blouses. I think ours were check, a small check, gingham blouse.

Jo Scott (born 1936)

Gymslips, that was our school uniform, gymslips. You had a yoke here and you had three big box pleats here and then that was all the way down but pulled in with a girdle round your waist. Done like a tie. You did that like a tie but it wasn't a belt, it was a long thing and you had your dangle bits down, you know, just like a tie but on your waist. The performance it was... you had a little breast pocket up here to put your hankie in or what have you. I remember the performance of mum washing it. She used to stitch all the pleats in before she put it in the wash so that when it came out, it was all still in it's pleats, you know. It only got washed once a term mind you. We had white blouse... it was navy blue jumpers in winter but summer was the white blouse. And we had a tie.



Jo Scott at The Convent School, Carisbrooke



Sandra Wood (born 1942)

My school uniform at Sandown Grammar was a navy gymslip with a white blouse and a navy and light blue striped tie. We had blue and white striped dresses in the summer. We had hats which were awful things, mine was second hand and it ended up in holes! It was like a beret with a brim. I hated wearing that!

Sandra Wood in her Sandown Grammar uniform

Did the war affect your schooling?



Whitwell School, late 1930s

Winifred Smith (born 1935)

I was a school girl during the war at Whitwell School. We had an air raid shelter which was a concrete building with a slanted door and steep steps at the side, it was like a cellar. There were wooden benches to sit on, the teachers took torches because it was dark down there and we had to carry on with our lessons.

Ken Lawrence (born 1934)

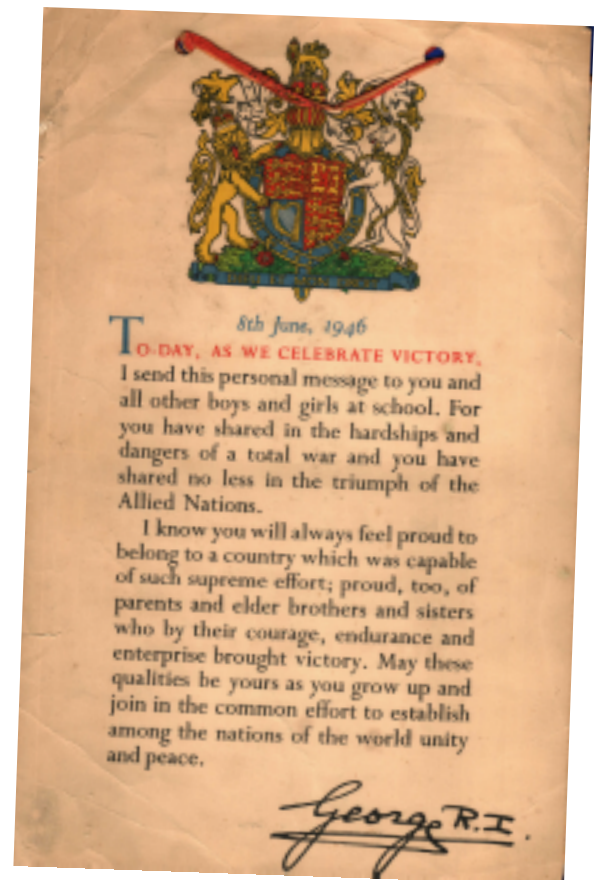
We didn't have a school uniform in those days. Oh yes, because it was War time, that's why you see. And if you went to a Grammar School, I didn't, you used to get a uniform from a firm who used to supply the schools with uniforms.

Winifred Smith (born 1935)

The first time I saw a banana was at school, somebody (I cannot remember who it was) brought a box of bananas into school, one for each pupil. We were also given a bar of chocolate, what a day that was!

John Sandell (born 1929)

From my first school I went to a Primary school just up the road and that was called Oakmount School and I was only there for a short while, for about six to nine years I would think and then the War came and the whole school was evacuated to the Forest, the New Forest and we were in a Manor there.



Winifred Smith's certificate issued to children to commemorate the allied victory in WW2

John Sandell (born 1929)

Of course the War was on and doodlebugs were coming over and we got so used to them that unless the doodlebug happened to... if you heard the engine stop, you laid down flat on the ground and after it had exploded, you got up again and went on playing cricket... I didn't care. It was nothing to be concerned so long as it exploded somewhere else, but we had some of the first doodlebugs coming over and there being an American airport nearby, I thought there was a bomber coming back and it had one of its engines cut out because it was such a loud noise and then I heard the explosion and I thought, oh, poor kids. Having landed in the airport and exploded but it wasn't that at all. It was this doodlebug. That's the sort of experience I had at school.



Jo Scott at the Convent School, Carisbrooke

Jo Scott (1936)

If the sirens went, I can remember going down to the cellar of the Convent, that building that's still there, that was the air raid shelter and sitting on these big girls laps 'cos we were all crammed in, it was only a little narrow place, and we younger ones had to sit on the laps you know because there just wasn't room. I don't know what happened to the babies, these tiny tots down there because the youngest ones always sat in the front row!

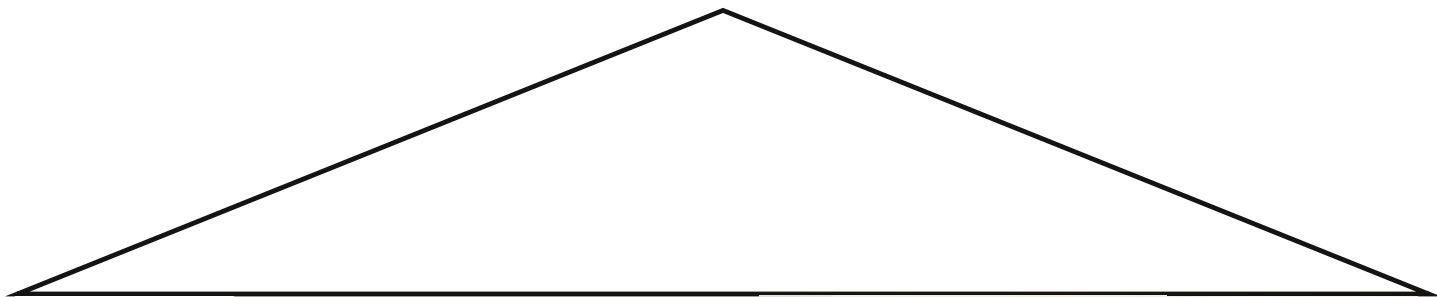
How old were you when you left school?

George Lyons (born 1923)

We had to leave school at 14 and I didn't want to leave because I enjoyed school so much, but I had to leave school to get out to work... You know, 14 that was it. You had to go. I enjoyed school. Nobody enjoyed school no more than what I did so enjoy your school days while you can because once you leave school, it isn't the same. Learn as much as you can.

Gwen Croad (born 1931)

I think I was one of the youngest who ever left school. Yes, because I was 14 in the August and we broke up in the July, so I was 13 and for a month. I didn't pay any insurance. You see I left the term War finished and we were lucky to even have a teacher let alone anything else



There's No Place Like Home

These memories will make you think of home, a warm, familiar and safe place, where you used to live. You will find out about the everyday life of people in the past and compare how your own home is different now. Join Bill, Jo, John, Peggy, George, Madeleine, Alan and Sandra in some of their memories of home. We hope you enjoy reading all these stories, and maybe some of them will send you back in time!

What was the house like that you grew up in?

Peggy O-Rourke (born 1920)

It was a large house with six children and three adults so we needed a fairly big house so we had really a lovely lawn. It was named correctly, it was 'Fairlawn'. It had a lawn big enough for a tennis court. We were not that energetic, we didn't like tennis particularly, and a rose garden and then going up in the banking tiers, we had vegetables and fruit trees and things, so it was really quite a good house. The house itself, we had one big sitting room and on the side of the house there would be a drawing room. At the back was our dining room. Because it was such a funny place being up and down and up and down, our kitchen was semi-basement. In other words, in the front it came up to the first floor, so we had steps to go down to the kitchen which then opened... so it wasn't dark.



Did you have your own bedroom at home?

John Sandell (born 1929)

It's my earliest memory. I was about three years old and I was moved into a separate room. I was with my parents in the cot and I was moved into a another room. The bed seemed huge to me.



John Sandell talking to pupils

How was the washing done when you were young?

Bill Jenkins (born 1920)

We lived at the end of a small alleyway and the houses backed onto the canal in Birmingham... in the yard was a wooden hut sort of thing and that contained everything to do with the washing. The water supply, the bath and everything was all in this place. And three families had to take it in turns to use it. That's all we had. None of the families there had money to burn or anything like that, no one did in those days, had enough to survive and that's what we... but yes, it was quite tricky and there was a sort of bon homie about the place. "Alright to go in is it?" "Yes"... It was very very meagre, the whole area actually at that time.

Sandra Wood (born 1942)

We had a stove... it was like an old coal-fired stove if I remember rightly and you used to put the pan on the top and boil the water and then you used to have to fill the copper with these saucepans of water until it was full and then put the washing in. You rinsed it in there and then we used to have to go out into the back yard and have a mangle. Feed it through and turn the handle.



A mangle



A washing copper

Was the washing done on a particular day?



John Sandell (born 1929)

Yes, Monday wash day, Tuesday was drying I think and Wednesday would be ironing. It was all sort of set out and you had your roast meat at the weekend and then cold the rest of the week and possibly on Friday you'd have cheese. It was all in a regular pattern.

Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

I remember Mum using those (dolly bags) for the whites. 'Dolly's Whites' I think they used to be called. I think you can still buy these now. So that made the whites... the white sheets white. Cotton. Because you didn't really have coloured sheets then did you? It was nearly always white sheets.

But I remember Mum, I think it was once a week, used to have something called 'The Bag Wash' and this man used to come in a big van and you had a big sort of sack or whatever it was and you'd put all the white things in there and he took it off... and then he would bring it back the next week, so all that was done.



How did you have a bath?



George Lyons (born 1923)

When we were little boys we used to have what they called 'ardin' which were sacking and that's what we used. And then when me Grandmother and that used to rub us down after we'd had a bath in the tin bath in front of fire, she used to rub us down with this ere 'ardin' and we never had a towel. I used to have to borrow stepmother's when I went to bath and give it her back and hope I didn't get wet.

Bill Jenkins (born 1920)

Well, if it was our turn to go into the room I've just described (wash house), three boys were together we could strip off and throw water over each other to our delight! It was our turn and we had the place for however long it took. And yes, we managed to keep clean and what have you in difficult circumstances really. I know it's difficult to think about it in these days but in the days I'm talking about, it was a very poor area and the buildings were derelict, most of them. It was just a question of surviving.

Did you have a bathroom inside the house?

Jo Scott (born 1936)

I think we must have had a bathroom. I do remember a toilet upstairs in the houses that I lived in, but I know the house at Carisbrooke that we lived we had a bathroom space but no toilet. The toilet was out in the yard. There was one cold water tap, there was no hot water in the tap. You boiled a kettle... you had a paraffin stove... so there was always hot water... the water for washing had to be boiled somehow, so usually a lot of houses had a big copper in the corner which was mixed.

Gwen Croad (born 1931)

We had no bathroom in our house when I was a child, we had an outside toilet, there was no running hot water, the water had to be heated up on the fire for a bath and washing. We had gas lighting, there was no electricity 'till I was about 8 years old.

John Sandell (born 1929)

There was a bathroom but I didn't like it because it had peculiar plugs... I was always frightened that I'd go down the plug hole. You put a hot water jug outside your bedroom door at night and in the morning the maid... by the time you got up, the maid had put hot water in it ready for you to wash your hands and that in the wash basin. You'd clean your teeth and so on. There wasn't a sink or anything, you had a wash stand and a bucket underneath which you put your used water in... We used to have a little enamel potty under our bed... It was called the 'Gazunda', and we used to try and fill one of the bathroom potties by all using the same one, trying to aim that to empty into the loo.



John Sandell showing pupils the hot water jug

Did you have to help with chores around the house?

Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

As children we had to help with chores because I was one of four children and our Mother couldn't do it all. We helped with laying the table and washing the dishes. We also did the dusting, we used to tie the dusters round our feet to polish the floors, we didn't have vacuum cleaners in those days.



Did you have gas and electricity at home?

John Sandell (born 1929)

In my grandparent's house at first there was only gas, there was no electricity and you had a switch at the side of your bed which you turned and the gas went up to the light up above and 'plop' you could turn it off again. But there was no electric light until later on and when the electricity came, oh, she (my grandmother) was delighted. She could have a vacuum and all sorts of things. But the electricity was cheaper in those days and it was only 200 volts, not 240, so the electricity was made in Southampton, in the Electricity Station, the Power Station, and it was fed to the trams. Because it was fed to the trams, they could produce the electricity cheaper for the town. Weird things.

How was your house heated?

Jo Scott (born 1936)

Our house was heated with a paraffin stove which I nearly knocked over and burned myself, I was about 2 at the time. We had coal fires and in a later house we had a range. There were no washing machines then. Our clothes were washed by hand in the sink, put through the wringer and then hung on the line to dry.



What were your favourite things to eat and what things did you not like?

Bill Jenkins (born 1920)

The favourite things I had was porridge for breakfast with a spoonful of plum jam in the middle of it. Porridge is very good for you. That was my favourite one. We loved pies, and I don't know if you like this one but my favourite was rabbit pie. I don't even know if that is allowed these days, but it was very common sort of thing in those days and it was very nice. But any sort of pies, that sort of thing we liked.

John Sandell (born 1929)

Well it was War time so you had to enjoy your meals. There was nothing in particular... I didn't care for crab or lobster or stuff like that. I don't know what else, I'm trying to think. Then there was the offal we used to have at the end of the week. Liver, kidneys, I wasn't keen on kidneys. All those sort of things, made into a stew, and breakfast, well you had porridge and it was cooked the night before and then in the morning it was put over boiling water in a saucepan to heat it up. I can't bear it now!



Gwen Croad (born 1931)

You used to have Camp coffee... but it was a glass bottle, the same label as now but a glass bottle and it tasted of chicory rather than coffee.



Who did the cooking at home?

Jo Scott (born 1936)

Mum did all the cooking at home, we had a gas cooker. We didn't have a fridge but a larder and a meat safe outside. My favourite meal was Shepherd's Pie and you had to eat everything. You didn't have your pudding unless you ate your dinner first.

Did you have a television when you were young?

Sandra Wood (born 1942)

The television was a big square box with a tiny little screen. We had it for the Coronation in 1953. There was a street party for the Coronation as well. There was only one channel on the TV at that time and that was BBC and the programmes only started at tea time and went on until about 11 o'clock. There were not an awful lot of children's programmes.



Jo Scott (born 1936)

We didn't have a TV when I was a child, they were only being made the year after I was born. The Queen's coronation was the first thing I ever watched on the television. We did have a radio and I liked listening to In Town Tonight and the Children's Hour.



Peggy O'Rourke (born 1920)

Well, not as a child. I should think I was about, oh, well into my 20's when I first saw my first television. The first television I actually saw on the Island was at the Hare and Hounds, you know the Hare and Hounds? We got somebody from Portsmouth to bring over a television set and they set it up and they got it all going beautifully, and every time a car went by outside, it scrambled it, so we didn't buy a television. It was well after the War before we bought a television set.

Alan Evans (born 1918)

The televisions then were in a wooden cabinet. Mind you, we were the Rolls Royce of radio and our television sets were in taste. We could do them... in mahogany or oak or whatever the purchaser wanted it to be... to fit in with his own furniture. A television when they first came out was about £100. Now then, going back... yes, it would be quite a bit of money in those days but I'm just trying to think of something else that one bought at that time because it's difficult to... because of course we've now gone metric and this was in the days before metric. I'm talking about £100 before metric, not after metric. I'm not sure quite how that would balance for a start. Other companies made television sets and I think they weren't quite as expensive as ours, put it that way!

Did you have a radio at home when you were young?

John Sandell (born 1929)

Yes, it was a radio by valve. There were valves in the back and it's like putting a lamp light in. You sort of screwed these things down. I used to have a bath in front of the fire in the front room. Had this metal... you've seen the big metal bath things and you'd pour the hot water in from kettles. I'd be having a bath and then I was allowed to sit up and listen to the radio until about half past six or something and then I was then shot off to bed... During the War, there was 'Music While You Work' that was a regular thing. And there were one or two other serial things that went on like you have on television now but to do with the radio instead.



Radio showing valves

Did you have a telephone at home?

John Sandell (born 1929)

Well, because of the business and my grandfather's business, the telephone was on the wall with a hook thing like instead of having a stalk, it was fixed on the wall and I think when my grandfather had a telephone down at his office, I think there were only about six in the town and they gradually increased... when I was about eight or nine I had to answer the phone at the weekend if nobody was about and quite often it would be from the Needles... or

Nab Tower... I'd have to put down the number and message and so on and leave a message to then please will you contact on the Monday because I had been answering the phone on the Sunday. How they trusted me I don't know.



Sandell Bros Shipbrokers, High Street, Southampton, bomb damage after the Blitz

WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER



This chapter is about people's memories of World War Two. It is also about how people never gave up, never surrendered in times of worry and pain. We are told about people's first experiences of the War. Learn about rationing, barrage balloons, land mines and much much more.

Where were you at the start of the War?

Kathleen Simmonds (born 1923)

Well, I was at school. I went to a Covent School in Forest Gate and we were in the September I think it was after War was declared we were evacuated. The school was evacuated to Suffolk and not everybody went, but quite a lot of people went and we were divided amongst half a dozen different villages and we were, my sister and I we were in with... there were six of us and there were three lots of families. There was six girls, and there was Margaret and Bunty Price and two Chamberlyns, Mary and

me. And we were in these bedrooms, six of us, and there was a room off where the teacher, Miss Higson would stay, so she had to go through our room in order to get to her room so we had to be on our best behaviour all the time. But we weren't there for long. We were only there for a month and then we were sent onto Thetford, near Norwich and divided up into little houses and Mary and I were in with a Mr and Mrs Beaumont, a very old couple, in a little cottage and all the school was all divided up and we went into a big college and that's where we were. And then of course nothing was happening in London, so we all came back to London at Christmas time. Mary and I got a lift with three teachers in a car and we got back. I always remember that Miss Duncan had a hot water bottle tucked in the back!



Spitfires

Were you an evacuee?



Evacuee case



Evacuees from Portsmouth boarding paddle steamer to IOW

Ken Lawrence (born 1934)

Well sort of because in 1944, I was evacuated with me mum. They could take their children, or their children could take their mum. I remember when War was just announced, we went up to... there it was gone now, it got bombed, you know, but a friend of my dad said Berlin was more badly damaged than the English towns. Someone said the bomb even dropped on the Isle of Wight.

What job did you do during the War?

Alan Evans (born 1918)

When the War first broke out, I joined the firm that was in Birmingham and so I lived in Sutton where I had been born and used to travel into Birmingham. That was in 1940. But in 1942, oh Birmingham was getting bombed practically every day, every night, well two or three times a week and in 1942 our factory was in Birmingham got a direct hit and we were... the Ministry gave us a new factory up in Shropshire, well out of the range of bombing and that sort of thing, but it didn't quite suit our requirements so they needed an architect and I was an architect, so I was there... We designed the factory and altered it to suit our requirements to produce the products that the Army wanted. The factory we had that was given us was used for making road signs, which when I first... you can imagine in the same sort of street as Army equipment. Our equipment was mainly to do with radar, radio and communications and that sort of thing.

Bill Jenkins (born 1920)

I was 20 when I joined the Army and we had to do a very long period of training, yes. Split up into numbers, three or four or five hundred I think, all round the country at different places. Recruiting over a million people who never knew a rifle from what ever and we were taken to these places where they had a few elderly soldiers, regulars and they were very very good and they taught the people the basics. Marching, handling the rifle, "Look after that rifle young man." "You thought your mother was your best friend but it's not, the rifle is your best friend now", all that sort of thing. Yes, we marched up and down and we learnt how to handle the rifle and we moved on round the country as I say to where I finished up my training in Eastern England where by this time, it took us about 18 months to get there in bits and pieces.

We finished our training as best we could in mud until we went on to Glasgow where we embarked on our ship to North Africa... that was when the invasion of North Africa took place. And that was a tremendous size because this is when the Americans came in and then really hundreds of ships took part in it... I was in one of the ships that was torpedoed in the Mediterranean and it was torpedoed by an aeroplane and fortunately what happened was it slipped off, it bounced a little bit and so it didn't go so deep into the ship's side as they would have liked, so you had a big gaping hole that you could literally drive a bus through it, but it was enough damage to stop the ship completely and eventually... shepherded by a Destroyer... into a little place in Algeria. We were quite close to the shore and luckily I happened to be on the shore side when the sea side suffered quite a lot of casualties. We got there and we managed with help from some of the locals with a lot of planks and wood from aboard to get ashore where we stayed overnight and the following day we jumped into a cattle wagon and carried on to join the rest of our Battalion... and that was why I was a little bit behind the rest of the boys.



Bill Jenkins during WWII



WWII uniform



MTBs built at Woodnutts, St Helens

Dorothy Morris (born 1923)

I worked at Woodnutts in St Helens where they were making Motor Torpedo Boats. Well I worked in the office. I did everything really. In those days if you worked in an office, you typed, you did everything. I mean we didn't have computers and things so everything had to be done by hand. Yes, we used to do all the accounts, you know, and sometimes we would meet some of the Army and people during the War who'd come down to inspect the Motor Torpedo Boats and also later in the year, we used to... they did trials when they built these little boats, you know, trials to make sure they're OK and later in the War of course they had... they built these... Oh what do they call them... can't think what they were called... airborne lifeboats that were dropped out of aeroplanes into the sea to pick up airman when they had to bale out of a Spitfire or something that had been shot down and they had to bale out into the sea and these little boats were dropped into the... they dropped by parachutes...



Isle of Wight Women's Land Army

Kathleen Simmonds (born 1923)

I was 20 when I was called up... I said, "OK. I would like to go into the Air Force". So they said, "No, they don't need anybody in the Air Force, you've either got nursing, a factory or the Land Army". So I chose the Land Army and when I... I had to go for an interview and they looked at me and said, "Ooh, you're much too small for the Land Army"... I know, they said, "You could be a milk recorder"... they needed people to go round to check up on how much milk was coming out and all that sort of thing. So I agreed to that and so I joined the Land Army and we went to Norfolk. Woodbridge first of all... that's where we learnt how to milk cows and there was a girl there who was teaching us... and she said, we had to get up at five o'clock in the morning and I said, "I'm not going learn how to milk cows, I'm going to do the milk recording. That's what I was told". So she said, "It wouldn't be a bad idea if you knew how it happened, how it got there". So I said, "OK". And I never did do any milk recording. I carried on milking and whitewashing and mucking out and doing all that sort of thing... We had to wear a uniform, it was green jersey, brown jodhpur kind of trousers and brown boots. I can't think, oh dear, what kind of shirt did we have? I can't remember. I'll have to think about that. But I did have a photograph taken in my uniform.



What do you remember about air raids?



Bomb damage at Solent Works, Saunders Roe



ARP Wardens in Ventnor
(Mike Wood's uncle on the far left)

Alan Evans (born 1918)

When the air raid siren warned it went (imitates a warning sound)... undulating the warning with a clear one was a straightforward one (imitates warning sound) kept on the same tune all the time, or the sound all the time but the warning sign was when it started to go (imitates warning sign), undulating up and down.

Mike Wood (born 1939)

The bombers were dropping their bombs here on the Island on their way back from Portsmouth if they had any bombs left. One of my earliest memories is a bomb dropping right in the middle of the road at the top of Albert Street in Lower Ventnor. I remember seeing a huge hole in the road. There was a hotel there that was blown up, later on we used to play in there with bows and arrows... Ventnor was quite badly bombed, most of North Street and West Street were destroyed and I remember another raid in the High Street... I've got a war wound - a scar on my head, right at the end of the war there were not as many planes coming over but we were stood there watching this plane and it opened fire and smashed the glass in the windows behind us and it cut my head. It was quite nasty, I must have been about 5.

Kathleen Simmonds (born 1923)

Before I was in the Land Army I was a secretary in London, my sister worked in the same building, the same office, a land mine fell and the place was hit badly, so they were on the third floor. That's where the office was, on the third floor and they got... one of the girls there got really hurt bad, but Mary got out alright.

Did you have an air raid shelter?

Alan Evans (born 1918)

When I went home to Sutton Coldfield, seven miles north of Birmingham, when there was a raid on Birmingham we always had to go into our shelter. Now our shelter, we had an old fashioned house and it had a cellar. So we used the cellar as our shelter.



Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

A lot of people with gardens had an Anderson shelter during the War but if you didn't have a shelter you would go under the stairs.

John Sandell (born 1929)

My father was in the First World War and he was knocked out. He wasn't killed obviously otherwise I wouldn't be here, but he was very shaken and he couldn't stand the noise of planes and bombing and that sort of thing so he had a shelter built and this shelter was I suppose about 10 feet deep in the back garden and it had wooden railway sleepers to support the sides and the roof and then concrete all the way around that and when these bombs dropped and all the dust came down from above.



Winfred Smith (born 1935)

We did not have an air raid shelter, but Mum and us girls went under the stairs when the siren went. We had a big mattress in there and pillow and blankets, a bottle of water and a chamber pot for emergencies only. There was also spiders and little silverfish which fascinated me. Dad and our cousin Harold would not come into the under stairs; they always stayed out in the porch on guard for incendiary bombs, as being a thatched roof they were on the lookout for fire. One night, Dad called us all to come out, as Southampton had been bombed, and we could see it burning a huge reddish yellow in the sky.

Did you ever have to take shelter?

Sandra Wood (born 1942)

I was born at 4.30pm on 4th May 1942 at Sandown, Isle of Wight, which was the night of the big air raid on Cowes. I had to spend my first night under the kitchen table with my grandmother for safety while my mother had to stay in bed up in the front bedroom with the noise of the planes overhead on their way to Cowes. My grandfather stayed with her to keep her company.



Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

We moved out of London in 1942, my brother was two then, he was shaking so much when the bombs were coming over the doctors said you'd have to move out of London or he would suffer, so we moved to Yorkshire where my father was stationed at that time.

Dorothy Morris (born 1923)

Many times! First of all at the beginning of the war they used to come round and look at the house and tell you where the safest part of the house would be to go during an air raid, and then they came round to see if they could build you... under your table... You could use the table, you know, kitchen table as a shelter. They had sort of wire sort of cage things fitted underneath so... I know it sounds daft... I only remember going in there a couple of times, and then we used to go into a shelter, you know, out in the garden. Some people you know, used to sleep down there. I only went once and I had slugs and snails and things and I thought I'd rather stay in bed and be bombed!



Dorothy Morris aged 15

Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

One day, I was in my house with my mother, with just my mother and I and we heard this doodlebug approaching. I knew it was a doodlebug because by this time I had got to recognise the engine and the engine stopped and I said to my mother, "Down!" and we laid flat on the floor and this doodlebug glided on just a little bit further and then it came down and hit the ground and we lost three windows that day. The blast from the doodlebug, it knocked out three of our windows but we were lucky. It didn't hit the house so we considered ourselves very lucky.

Did you have to make changes at home because of the War?

John Sandell (born 1929)

We had to make a room in the house gas-proof. People were advised to do this at the time. The floorboards were wood and in-between there were gaps so we had to mash up newspapers in water to make something to press down between the boards and the chimney of the fireplace, that was stuffed up so you couldn't get gas coming down. The windows were absolutely plastered with sticky paper, so that if they happened to break it wouldn't go flying everywhere and we had to have a bucket of sand in case there was incendiary... a bucket of sand and a bucket of water with a hand pump to spray. Fortunately we never had to do that and the door had a heavy curtain over it and we had a cupboard full of tinned food in case there was a breakdown in electric or gas or whatever.

Dorothy Morris (born 1923)

They used to come with the Air Raid Wardens, used to come round when it was dark and if they could see a chink of light, come in sort of like... bang bang bang on the door "Put that light out!" Oh they were very very fussy about not giving away to the Germans that there was anybody living there. When I think about it now I think it must have been... I don't know how effective it would have been to be honest - the blackout. Whether it really... you know, and I suppose it must have made a difference, obviously.



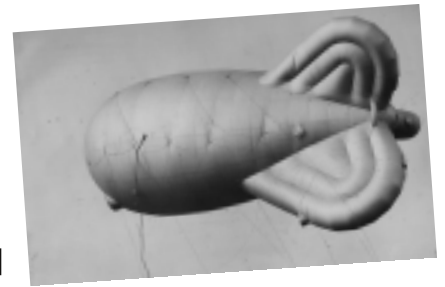
ARP Wardens at Newport market



What kind of defences were there against an invasion?

Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

On the other side of the County (Kent), the northern side, there was about 30 miles of barrage balloons. Now a barrage balloon is a big balloon about the size of this room, I'd say. It's huge, and they are filled with Hydrogen and they're meant to lift cables up and so of course they'd rise to about 2000 feet, I think that would be about the height, and they'd take cables with them that were interlocked with other balloons as well, so it formed a network right the way along, you see? Now the whole point of these was when the raiders or German aircraft came over, they would have to climb over these balloons and the network. They couldn't go through them you see, otherwise if their wings struck one of the cables, they'd come down, of course. And they had to climb up over them. Well, quite often, if they were heavily laden with bombs, because they were on their way to London, you see, or if they were being bombarded with gunfire, they would start to climb, because they wanted to climb over the top of the balloons or away from the gunfire. And when that happened, if they couldn't climb quick enough, the obvious answer was to drop a few bombs anywhere, so instead of going on to London, they used to drop their bombs and we used to get it in Kent!



Do you remember the beaches being barricaded?

Dorothy Morris (born 1923)

Oh yes. That was horrible. We hated it as children, having had access to the sand all our life and suddenly you couldn't, and that was horrible. Yes, you couldn't. They had all barbed wire and stuff to stop people. It wasn't to stop us, it was to stop Germans coming in boats.

Sandra Wood (born 1942)

The beaches on the Island were cordoned off during the war, you couldn't go on to some of the beaches. The pier in Ventnor was cut in half, they just took a chunk out of the middle so ships could not dock and come up the pier.



Sandown sea defences



Ryde sea defences

Where were some of the worst bombing raids on the Island?

Dorothy Morris (born 1923)

Well I think really Cowes got the worst of it from what I've been told. There was so much war work going on in Cowes, you know, that I think that... more people killed. You had a few in Ventnor but nothing like they had in Cowes. The worst thing I do remember was when Ventnor was actually bombed because they were trying to bomb the pylons that, you know, the radar that was used against the enemy. We had these pylons up on top of Ventnor Down and during the Battle of Britain, I was on my way home for lunch and I got caught up in this Battle of Britain, but we'd got to get used to it by then. You could see the bombs dropping on Ventnor from work, you know. I wasn't made to go down the shelter because I'd left the office and I was on my way home on my bicycle... and we just stopped and looked. You couldn't believe what you were seeing actually, but when you're young, you're not frightened like you are when you're older. I would be frightened now but I wasn't then. You know you get used to these... You just hope for the best.



Aerial photo of Cowes taken from a German reconnaissance plane



Bomb damage to cottages at East Cowes

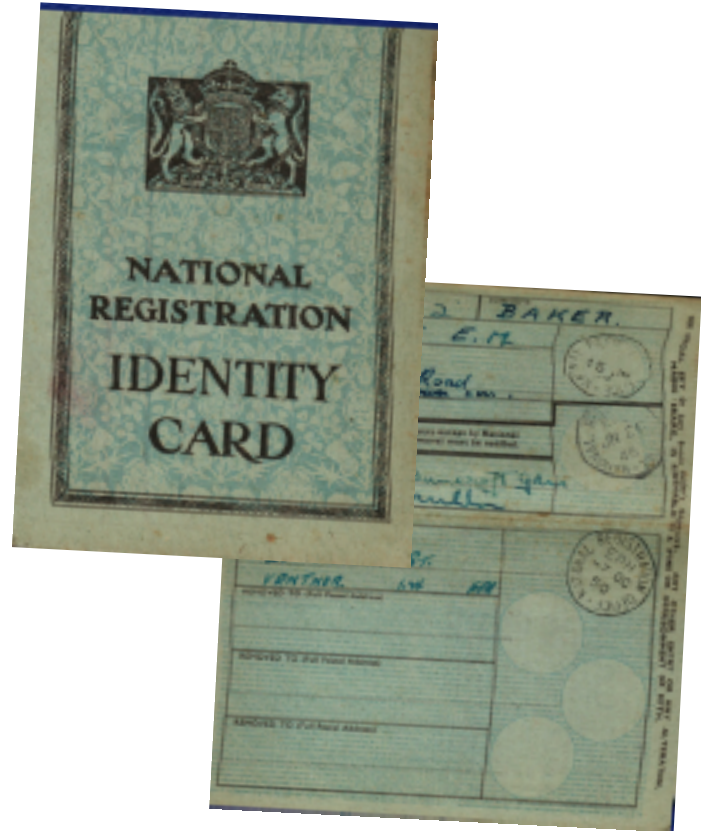
Winifred Smith (born 1935)

During the war high points around the south coast of the Island were key radar posts. Niton and St Boniface Down and there were RAF camps all around these areas. One such camp was on Stenbury Down and all service men had to pass through our lodge to gain access to the camp.

Did you have an identity card?

Winifred Smith (born 1935)

I still have my identity card. Everyone had to have one - adults and children, it was known as National Registration. You couldn't get off the Island if you didn't have one. It had your identity number on it. There was also an identity bracelet you had to wear with your number on it.



Sandra Wood (born 1942)

You had to have an identity card if you wanted to leave or come to the Island. One time my mum went to the mainland to visit my dad who was in the army then and they didn't want to let her back on the Island!



Did you have a gas mask?

John Sandell (born 1929)

Oh, horrible. Being about nine years old, they came and fitted a gas mask on me and I absolutely thought that I was being suffocated and this gas mask had a siphon thing in the front to clean out any gas and you took in a breath and breathed in through this cone and then you breathed out and there were sort of rubber bits down your cheeks and when you breathed out it made the farting noise (makes the sound). And I had to carry that to school every day until I moved up into the public school.



Did you have a ration book?

Dorothy Morris (born 1923)

Oh yes, yes. And of course you couldn't buy any new clothes. You had to ... you only had coupons. Most of us used to go to jumble sales and buy things and cut them up and make them into... I remember Mum used... My mum made me a coat out of a blanket. These are the sort of things you had to... You know, you had to improvise, and it was all quite good fun really, yes.

Do you remember being affected by rationing?

John Sandell (born 1929)

Well you just ate what was put in front of you. You didn't leave lumps like people do today. You ate everything, literally and it was meat that was difficult to get much of, sugar, you didn't see things like bananas and oranges, they weren't available because they had to be brought by sea.



Dorothy Morris (born 1923)

Stockings were very difficult to get hold of. We painted our legs and put pencil lines up the back 'cos in those days, women wore stockings with a seam up the back and you always had to get your seams straight. We'd do each other's legs, you know?

John Sandell (born 1929)

Oh you had... sweets they were rationed. You had so many ounces a week and you took your ration book to school and they had a sweet shop at the back of the school where you could draw some sweets each week.

Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

I can remember being hard up and food being rationed. Mum was good at making pastry and we had a lot of pies to eek the meat out because you couldn't get very much meat.



Did the rationing of petrol affect you?

Alan Evans (born 1918)

Oh yes, you had to be doing a certain job or be, say, a doctor who would have a ration and specialised people. When I eventually started managing the firm that I had, I got an allowance for that because I had to travel about the country and go down to Birmingham or somewhere else and I had to travel, or though a lot of the time it was done by train, but if you had a necessity for petrol, you could get it but you had to have a legitimate reason. What you wanted it for was to do with the War effort. Otherwise you wouldn't... well apart from doctors or people who work with that sort of nature or those connected with the War specifically.

Were your family or friends involved in the War?

Ken Lawrence (born 1934)

Well my dad was in the ARP 'cos when I went Sunday school, she says, "What does ARP mean?" and I used to say, "anging round Pubs." It didn't mean that, I can't remember what it did mean now 'cos the Queen was in the Auxiliary Service, you know, whilst she was a Princess then you know, because she used to be a driver, you know she was driving.



WW II Shell dressing

What are your memories of the end of the War?

Alan Evans (born 1918)

Oh that was interesting, because I was in Bridge North, my digs that I was in was five minutes' walk from the works you see, so I remember the day the War finished. I walked to work about 8 o'clock or 9 in the morning whatever it was and the crowd of the work people, 200 of us in the factory, already round the gate waiting but they hadn't gone in. And when I came up they said... they just asked me straight up, "Have we got to go to work today Mr Evans or can we have it off?". I said, "No, you can all go home if you want to". Mind you I was only too glad so that I could go and get off to Birmingham myself so, yes, I remember that day. That was my personal memory of it.



Mike Wood at VE celebration party, Pound Lane, Ventnor

Kathleen Simmonds (born 1923)

Well I had just come out of the Land Army at the end of the War and so on VE day I went up to Trafalgar Square on my own because my sister's had already gone, my elder sister was there, but I never found them. There were millions of people in Trafalgar Square, everybody laughing and dancing about so I wasn't happy about that really. I joined in a bit but being on you own up there and don't know anybody and millions of people so...

Winifred Smith (born 1935)

Our village celebrations for the ending of the war in the village were wonderful. My father and the carter from the farm brought out their hay wagon and the shire horses and dressed them in great splendour with gleaming brasses and the little tinkling bells and magnificent and headdresses and we village school children were lifted up on the wagon and we rode around the village finally ending up at the village hall where we had a splendid tea party. Where our mothers got the food from I never know but it was all lovely.



Street party VE Day ,Cowes



Oh We Do Like to Be
Beside the Seaside!



ISLE OF WIGHT
OSBORNE & COWES
For any Information or Guide to the Island apply
H. K. DAY, I. W. RAILWAY, SANDOWN
RUSSELL WILLMOTT, I. W. CENTRAL RAILWAY
NEWPORT.
CARISBROOKE

This chapter is going to focus on the fun and activities the people we met enjoyed doing at the seaside. Punch and judy, sticks of rock, ice-cream sundaes, donkey rides and beach combing were things children loved doing in the summer. From the Isle of Wight to Lincolnshire, we've gathered some wonderful memories to transport you back in time to the seaside.

What do you remember about going to the seaside when you were young?



Jo Scott at the seaside on a donkey



Jo Scott at the seaside with Donald Duck toy

George Lyons (born 1923)

We used to go once a year to the seaside and we used to go with a Working Men's club and they had... the Working Men's club hired a train for the member's children and that's all we got, once a year to the sea side. It used to be Cleethorps in Lincolnshire. And that was our seaside holiday.

John Peace (born 1947)

We only went to the seaside once a year and if we were lucky it lasted a week, but more often than not we used to go for days out, but we didn't have cars in those days. Not many people had cars so we used to have to go on a coach which took about three hours to get there from where we lived. It was only about 70 miles but it took about three hours to get there and back of course.

Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

We loved to go to Combe Bottom and St Boniface down where we would run free playing hide and seek among the bushes Bonchurch pond with all the duck and fish life, Ventnor park and of course the beach. We sometimes had a picnic on the rocks at Castle Cove spent hours paddling in the rock pools seeking crabs and small fish. I once found a pipe fish, it is similar to a seahorse it had a seahorses snout but the tail didn't turn inwards like a seahorse.



Ted Busbridge on Ventnor seafront in paddle boat



Pipefish



Peggy O'Rourke (born 1920)

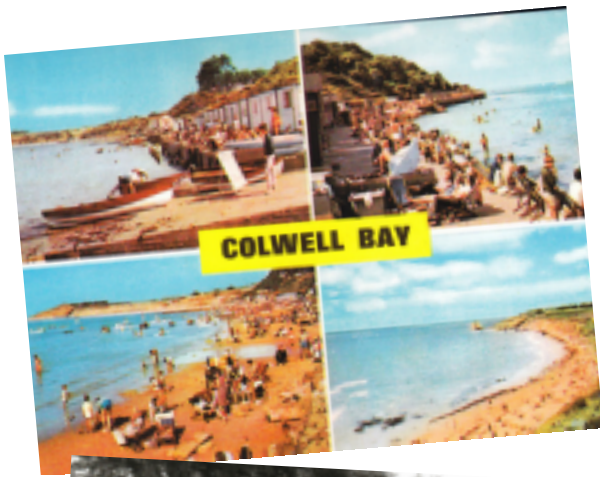
The beaches we went to were round here, Ventnor. We didn't go very far from here really... I don't think I went off the Island... I was about 10 or 12 I think. We used to go for our holidays out to Freshwater... Aunty always used to take us out to Freshwater, year after year after year. One time I said to her, "What on earth did you take us to Freshwater every time for?" She said, "You wouldn't go anywhere else!"



Ventnor pier

Margaret Groves (born 1925)

We didn't go on holidays, we couldn't afford them. We used to go on outings with our Sunday School at St Thomas's to Sandown. Always Sandown. There was a coach that took us there. A day out on the beach, we really looked forward to it, it was a treat.



John Sandell (born 1929)

We used to come on holiday to the Isle of Wight, to Colwell Bay. Came across from the mainland. We had some help there because my grandfather ran a shipbrokers office in Southampton and used the Red Funnel quite a bit to order tugs to go and bring boats in. He organised that sort of thing so when we went on holiday, we had free tickets to take us across... And on that beach there were still left... oh, what do you call them... the changing room on wheels... bathing machines. They had them but there weren't people necessarily using them and I used to go and play in them. You'd go up the steps in the dry and out the other side of the bathing machine. It was into the water so women could go into these and change politely and come out the other side ready to swim.



John Sandell wearing hat with older brother William on beach Colwell Bay 1936



Jo Scott (born 1936)

This was taken on Sandown seafront. I think I might have been about 16 and John was 17 and... right near the Pier that was, and it was one of these photographers on the seafront where they used to snap your photograph and then give you a ticket and go to the kiosk and get it a day later.



Jo and John now

Did you learn to swim as a child?

Sandra Wood (born 1942)

At school we went to the Blue Lagoon on the esplanade at Sandown for swimming lessons but they were very strict and we were too nervous to learn. Holiday times I went to my grandparent's in Sandown. They had visitors to stay who would take me out to the beach and I learned to swim in sea during the holidays.



Sandown paddling pool

Mike Wood (born 1939)

We were taught to swim by the longshoremen at Ventnor. We walked from school down Albert Street and on to the beach. A lot of children learnt to swim in the sea then.



Ventnor paddling pool



Mike Wood's Mum, Gran and Great Aunt on the beach at Ventnor



Mike Wood on beach Steephill Cove with cousins



Peggy O'Rourke on the beach at Ventnor with her Mother, Edie Knight, sisters Micky, Pam and Libby

Peggy O'Rourke (born 1920)

Mainly I learnt to swim because I went in the sea. There was nobody there to show me, I just... you know, sat on the brink and then we got more braver and then one went in a bit further until suddenly you find yourself out of your depth, then you scream, and nobody comes to help you 'cos well you're perfectly alright. In a couple of splots, splots, splots, you're in your own bit again, so I did learn when I was quite small. I should think I must have been about five.



What were your swimming costumes like?

John Sandell (born 1929)

I had a knitted costume and my brother had one the same. It was knitted by my mother and when you went in the water it obviously got wet and then when you came out it was hanging round you!

Alan Smith (born 1943)

Our swimming costumes used to be made from wool, knitted costumes and they felt very heavy when they were full of water!



John Wright in deckchair

What seaside entertainment do you remember?

George Lyons (born 1923)

I remember Punch and Judy shows when we were little, you know... and we used to sit at the front and watch the Punch and Judy and then... you know when the War came they seemed to phase out then, you know, Punch and Judy. I never knew them after that.



Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

One day I was browsing the shops in Ventnor, when I saw a mysterious looking box of junk. In a second hand shop, in pier street. It was priced at five shillings. Twenty five pence in today's money. I bought it and then discovered that it was the remains of a Ventriloquist's dummy. This was gold as far as I was concerned. I set to work refurbishing him and after about a week the result was very successful. I repainted his face, made him several wigs to wear and made him various outfits too. Much to the delight of the children, he began talking to me and to the children, laughing and joking. We named him "Cuthbert," and he became quite a popular member of St Catherine's School. I have tried to trace Cuthbert's history: He apparently belonged to a man who used to entertain holiday makers on Ventnor esplanade in late Victorian times, so he must be about one hundred and fifty years old, possibly older.



Ted Busbridge with Cuthbert



What do you remember about the carnivals?

Janice Whittle (born 1945)

I was always involved with the carnivals when I was young. The first was in 1949 and my dad helped to build the floats. Carnival is wonderful. We had horses and horse brasses. The marshals were on horseback, the trailers were pulled by shire horses with their tails plaited and wearing horse brasses, it was a lovely atmosphere. We used to put together anything, make paper flowers. There was no television then so you'd sit and make the decorations. The first carnival I was in was the Upper Ventnor Queen's float and I was a little princess. After that I was in Swan Lake in 1950, then Roses for the Way when every cupboard in our house was filled with paper flowers. When I was 16 we did a Charleston float and the Girl Guides did Highland Games and we all wore tartan skirts. The most memorable floats were Henry VIII and his wives and Pieces of Dresden China where they had real pieces of Dresden china on trays. They were made by Ray Burnett and his wife Dorcus; they were just perfect and you knew when they entered you wouldn't stand a chance of winning!



Peggy O'Rourke as Ventnor carnival Queen aged 19 or 20, pulled by horse drawn float



Ventnor carnival queens

Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

The carnival was a wonderful thing to be involved in. When I worked at St Catherine's School there was never a shortage of children to get involved with the carnival. We made a different float each year and those I remember well were 'There was an old woman who lived in a shoe' and the 'Raggle Taggle Gypsies'. The following year a large, almost full size American style Choo choo train, complete with cow catcher and conical chimney and called it "Wheezy Anna."



Carnival float 'There was an old woman who lived in a shoe'



Carnival floats created by Ted Busbridge and pupils at St Catherine's School



Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

One year we made a giraffe which was a wooden frame on a metal chassis covered with papier mache. The children got themselves in such a mess making it but they were happy. Another one that sticks in my mind was a big ship we made, the 'Hispaniola' which had 30 broomsticks to make the masts. We sailed all around Ventnor in that! We enjoyed all these things, winning prizes in various carnival parades. Real fun time. We all got ourselves in an awful mess with the paste, paint etc, but who cared? We were very happy.



Peggy O'Rourke and her brother Jack dressed up for Ventnor carnival, Peggy aged 5



Carnival float 'Hispaniola'



Mike Wood outside house in Albert, St Ventnor decorated for carnival

What was the ferry like when you were young?

John Sandell (born 1929)

Well it was a paddle boat! And there was one time when there was a display of boats down the Solent and around and there were trips to go down and see all these boats from across the world... There were a whole lot of ships lined out opposite Cowes and down opposite from Portsmouth... The paddle boat took you down the centre, there were two lines and they took you down the centre so that you could see the boats and there was the captain of the boat with his megaphone up there and shouting down, "Will you stand in the middle of the boat!", because being a paddleboat everybody went to one side, the boat tipped and only one paddle went and so we were going to go round in a circle.



Stroll Back in Time to a Night on the Town



This chapter is all about fashions through time. Here are the memories of going on a night out - dancing, watching a film at the cinema and music time. People told us all about how fashion has changed within the years - memories of mini skirts, winkle pickers and perms!

What hairstyles did you have when you were young?

Jo Scott (born 1936)

My first perm, because as you can see I'm very very straight, "straight as a yard of pump water" as my mother used to say, if you know what a pump is you know where you pump the water out, how the water comes 'whoosh' so it's as straight as a yard of pump water. That was the expression Mum always used. But my first perm, after I had my plaits cut off at about nine, yes I must have been about nine and a half, and had a perm. You were wired, there was no rollers and lotions not like nowadays, you were wired up to a machine with all these... almost as if you were being electrocuted and after you come out of the machine, you weren't supposed to comb your hair for a couple of days for it to set in, and the murder, I can remember the murder of getting the comb through it after that, that was awful.



Kathleen Simmonds (born 1923)

We used to wear our hair high, pulled up like that. It had clips turned up like that but when I went into the Land Army, I went and had... I don't know whether you remember the film with Ingrid Bergman with her hair curls all over? I can't remember what it was called now and it was all the rage. So I went and had one of those, it had curls all over the top and it was a wonderful perm. It cost me £2.50 but that was a lot of money and Victor Sassoon, I think the name was. I don't know if they are still around but this was all the rage so I went and spent... It wasn't £2.50, it was £2 10 shillings and that was very convenient when I was in the Land Army because it was easy.

What fashions do you remember over the years?



Madeleine Wray modelling in the 1980s

Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

There were lots of different fashions over time, in the late 1950s early 1960s, pointed toed shoes were fashionable, they were called winkle pickers. In the 1970s I had some platforms, looking back they were ugly but I thought they were the bees knees.



Did you make your own clothes?

Margaret Groves (born 1925)

I used to do a lot of knitting and sewing. I knitted all my children's pullovers and jumpers when they were young. There were lots of shops where you could buy wool in Newport, if you couldn't afford it that day you'd have it put away until the next time you went.



Jo Scott (born 1936)

I did make my dresses in those days, yes. I made that dress... it was a dress with a scooped neck line with a jacket over the top, a bolero jacket over the top, but I did make that myself, yes... I used to enjoy it I must admit. My mum and dad bought me a little table. It sort of folds down to this length with two big drop leaves and I'm still using that table indoors... Elba, my friend, she was quite a good sewer and showed me how to use the machine but we sort of muddled through together, but we used to buy a pattern, take it out and read it and cut it out and sew it together in the right order, really, so self taught I would say. Yes, some of the bits I made like the dress in the photograph that came out alright.



Sandra Wood and her friend at Babbacombe

Sandra Wood (born 1942)

This is my friend and I on holiday in Babbacombe, in the summer of 1959. The fashion at the time was big petticoats to make the dress look full. I had to make do with 2 or 3 petticoats underneath my dress to make it stand out!



Jo Scott and her dance troupe

Kathleen Simmonds (born 1923)

I made a lot of my dresses when I was younger... We did do a lot more then and my sister was a machinist, not a machinist, she was a Court Dressmaker and she worked in London actually, but I wore school uniform most of the time and I know when I used my gymslip to make a skating skirt because I used to go ice skating with a colleague where I worked, so I made a skirt out of that but... I didn't have a lot of clothes then. I know my sister made me a very nice coat when I was about 13, and when I wore it, it was fitted like that and I used to get whistled at by boys up the street. I was most embarrassed, I didn't like to wear it. Oh!

What do you remember about going dancing?



Margaret Groves (born 1925)
We used to go to dances at the Barracks. They had lovely dances there. There were always plenty of soldiers to dance with as the war was on.



Kathleen Simmonds (born 1923)
Before I went into the Land Army, we used to have a good time up in London when we went dancing. In the Royal Opera House it was a great place to go dancing because they had Ted Heath and his Band, Joe Loss and all those people and when the Americans came into the War, there was all the young Americans there and I remember walking with one of them... I can't remember where I met him and his name was Bill McFerson and we were walking through and he said, "Let's go find a telephone kiosk and snog"!



Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

We used to have very good music during the War and all the dance bands... there was a lot of nice things that were sort of pointing our way during the War for us to build our spirits up a bit as teenagers. We used to go dancing in the Palais De Dance. It was a Dance Hall. It wasn't far from us and there was always a live band there, dance bands consisting of about, I should say about 15 or 20 players. Not the guitar type, but other instruments, soothing instruments, you know? It was lovely. We used to dance like anything and there used to be a notice up, believe it or not, 'No Jiving'. On the walls all round! You weren't allowed to jive, no, it was a dance and it had to be waltzes, quicksteps, foxtrots and that kind of thing, you see? So it was strictly no jiving! But of course now, it's all jiving isn't it? I liked the jive actually but of course, you see, we were young teenagers at the time and we wanted to enjoy ourselves.



What kind of dances were there?

Kathleen Simmonds (born 1923)

Oh well, waltzes and foxtrots and quicksteps, that sort of dance. My favourite dance was the quickstep. It wasn't all the jiggling about that you'd have nowadays although jitter bugging did come in at the end. I remember doing that in the Land Army' cos in fact I had a good time in there. There was American Air Force camps quite close to us and there was a... we used to go to a bar, The Ferryboat Inn, I don't know if anyone knows that, on the Broads and it was close to where the Hostel was. We used to cycle everywhere and I was taught how to ride a bike no hands by a chap called Dizzy... we called him Dizzy, Disaroff his name was and he taught me how to ride a bike with no hands and it was a great fun time really.

What music did you have when you were young?

Ted Busbridge (born 1928)

Now music was very important. It carried a great deal of fashion. Love songs, rock and roll, juke box, swing, a tremendous variety of big bands and small groups. The big bands were absolutely wonderful. There could be about 30 or 40 musicians in a big band and Glen Miller and all that...



What music did you listen to on the radio?

Madeleine Wray (born 1940)

Well I can't remember much myself, but my mother, I can remember on a Saturday night she used to listen to... what's it called... something Theatre it was called... um... and she used to love that. It used to come on about nine o'clock and that was something she enjoyed. I can't remember a lot of radio or television, not until I was a bit older, and then I used to listen to Elvis Presley and things like that which my mother hated! You see he loved classical music, my father, and he didn't like modern music.

Did you used to go to the cinema?



The Odeon in Newport

John Wright (born 1935)

I used to get the bus into Leicester to watch films, there were four or five cinemas in the city then. I loved the music and the singing and dancing. I was only about 9 or 10 years old but I'll never forget one time I had a penny ha'penny and I went and bought an ice-cream in the cinema as well as my ticket and then I had no money for the bus to get home! I had to ask a stranger for a penny and that got me home.

Peggy O'Rourke
(born 1920)

Yes, oh yes. We watched anything that was on really. My father used to like cowboy films and we went to all the cowboy films but also the dance ones and variety. Not terribly keen on dramatics but if it were people that one knew, actors when you knew you went along. There were two cinemas in Ventnor at one time. Do you know where Kings Lodge or what they called it... off the High Street, the road that goes up out of Ventnor, on a side road there was a small cinema there and then there was a cinema in the centre of the town, in the High Street and we managed to keep up with all the modern films that were there. The one in the centre of the town, I think it burnt down, a bad fire anyway and the other one kept going until the War... oh by that time we had got the Rex Cinema... we used to have some very good films there.



The Rex in Ventnor



*Happily
Ever
After...*

Have you had your special day yet? Many of the people we met told us about when they were married. From wedding dresses to cakes, flowers to confetti and honeymoons - here we go back in time to the happiest day of their lives.

What was your wedding like?

Kathleen Simmonds (born 1923)

I had 6 bridesmaids. My sister was a dressmaker and made my dress and the bridesmaids. In Green Street, that was in Plaistow, or near where we lived. It had a market and they sold off the ration and we could... and that's where we bought all the material. And we wanted Bridesmaids dresses that they could wear later, not just for a wedding and they were beautiful, in blue crepe, that other dress there was blue crepe with sleeves which were... they were very nice. My dress was white. It was a kind of cotton fabric with a silky pattern all over it, like flowers all over it. It was very pretty... I did have a veil, yes. The cake was two tiers - we really went to town after the War. We have... the bill for all the sitting people... five and sixpence or something a head!

It was fairly small I think but I've got quite a lot of relations who I don't see any more. I mean I've got my own family and I've got six great grandchildren now so... but as I said there were four big bridesmaids and then two small ones and a little boy, who was a page boy.

Joyce Odem (born 1928)

I married in 1950 and my mother made my wedding dress. It was very formal, made from white satin with stiff material underneath the dress.



Kathleen Simmonds showing her wedding photograph



Kathleen's wedding day in 1946

Margaret Groves (born 1925)

I was married on the 22nd March 1948 at St Thomas's Church in Newport to Paul... it was a lovely wedding. I was 24 years old. We had our wedding reception at the Temperance Hotel on the High Street, Newport as my mother and father owned and ran the hotel there. I had pink roses in my bouquet. A girl I worked with at Weeks Restaurant lent me her wedding dress and veil. My bridesmaid is my niece and she wore pink. In those days you went to the photographers shop to have the wedding photographs taken, this was in the High Street in Newport. We went to Guernsey for our honeymoon. We stayed up all night on the boat because in those days there was only a night crossing on the ferry.



Margaret and Paul Groves



Margaret Groves and her wedding party



Sandra Wood, and her father, on her wedding day

Sandra Wood (born 1942)

I was married in 1963 on my 21st birthday at Holy Trinity Church Ventnor. I made my dress myself on my Mother's kitchen table with a hand sewing machine. I made it from a pattern. The fabric was Duchess lace over satin. My sister was my bridesmaid and she wore a peach dress that we bought from a shop, in Portsmouth I think. I wore white high heeled shoes with pointy toes that ruined my feet, but that was the fashion at the time. I had a long navy coat for going away with a white handbag and shoes.



Alan Evans (born 1918)

I was married to Audrey in 1943 in Sutton Coldfield, it was a church wedding and afterwards we had a reception for 50 guests at the town hall. After the reception to get to our honeymoon... there were no cars then as it was wartime so we had to go by train, I left a change of clothes at my Father's office to change in to, then we went down to New Street Station and were met by the wedding party, about 8 or 9 of the young guests they said "we've got you a carriage", we went in and there was an old lady sitting in the corner and the guests came in and threw confetti all over us - and her! I've still got my "going away" suit, my Mother insisted I had a good suit to "go away" in so my Father bought it for me as a wedding present, it was from Scrutons in London and I had to go for several fittings.

Alan and Audrey Evans on their wedding day

Dorothy Morris (born 1923)

I was living with my aunt and uncle in a guest house in Madeira Road in Ventnor when I got married. They ran the guest house so we had the reception there. My uncle was a confectioner so he made the wedding cake. It was all beg and borrow being not long after the war, 1949. My dress was borrowed from one of Aunt's friends, the bridesmaids dresses were "second time around" dresses and were cut down for the children, they were turquoise. I had red carnations in my bouquet, which was huge, that was the fashion then, a large bouquet and because I got married in December you could only get the flowers that were in season so I couldn't have roses. We stayed with my cousin in London for a honeymoon, but I lost the piece of paper with the address on and only realised when I got on the train so called out "I haven't got the address!" You see when you went to station your guests came to see you off... Anyway it should have been 22 Totterdown Street but we thought it was 122. We got there and asked a policeman where it was, we got to 122 but it was nothing but a bomb site. Carrying our suitcases all that way you can imagine what we looked and felt like! We found her house eventually and had a lovely time... we went to Hampton Court and London Zoo and to West End shows, she had it all planned out for us. Time we got back home we were worn out. We've laughed about this many times since... happy memories.



Dorothy Morris on her wedding day, 3rd Dec 1949

Thanks to those who shared their memories



Gwen Croad



Alan Evans



Madeleine Wray



John Sandell



John Peace and George Lyons



Ted Busbridge and Alan Smith



Kathleen Simmonds



Janice Whittle



Sandra Wood



Ken Lawrence



Margaret Groves



Dorothy Morris



Joyce Odem



Mike Wood



Jo Scott



Peggy O'Rourke



John Wright



Winifred Smith



Bill Jenkins

Thanks to the pupils of the Island Free School who were involved in the project -

Autumn Term: Aimee, Beth, Bethany, Carrie, Daisy, Dulcie, Elsie, Eleanor, Elenor, Ella, Emmeline, Faye, Jessica, Joe, Kareena, Lara, Lucy, Madeline, Meredyth, Millie, Molly, Niamh, Tammy, Trudy.

Spring Term: Abbie, Cassidy, Ellie, Ellena, Emmeline, Faith, Faye, Gracie, Honor, Hope, Jack, Jamieleigh, Jasmine, Jessica, Joe, Lizzy, Lorna, Madeline, Mia, Millie R, Millie W, Molly, Morgan, Rosie, Sophie M, Sophie R, Taniesha.

Summer Term: Ashley, Alex, Ben, Beth, Caitlin, Cassidy, Cleo, Faith, Hannah, Isabelle, Jessica, Lacey, Linnea, Madeline, Olivia, Sam, Ty.



Thanks to the staff at the Island Free School who supported this project -

Jo Boyd, Natalia Peace, Daniel Williams and Henry Garner.

Thank you to all the participants who shared their memories and had them recorded -

Alan Evans, Alan Smith, Bill Jenkins, Dorothy Morris, George Lyons, Gwen Croad, Janice Whittle, Jo Scott, John Peace, John Sandell, John Wright, Joyce Odem, Kathleen Simmonds, Ken Lawrence, Madeleine Wray, Margaret Groves, Mike Wood, Peggy O'Rourke, Sandra Wood, Ted Busbridge, Winifred Smith.

Thanks to the staff at Downside House and Byrnhill Grove in Ventnor for supporting this project.

Thanks to Chris Litton for transcribing the recordings.

Thanks to Philip Bell of Beachy Books for assisting in the creation of this book.

Thanks to the funders and project partners -.

The Isle of Wight Heritage Service, Carisbrooke Castle Museum and The Heritage Lottery Fund.

Photo Credits: IOW photos courtesy of Carisbrooke Castle Museum collection. Personal photos courtesy of the project participants, June Attrill and Beryl Flux. Photos of museum objects from the IOW Heritage Education Service collection, taken by pupils of the Island Free School.



Memories Matter

This project has been a collaboration between Carisbrooke Castle Museum, Isle of Wight Council Heritage Education Service and the Island Free School. It has been funded by a Young Roots grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

During 2016-17 this project has enabled young and older people to come together through an intergenerational approach to oral history.

This project has provided the opportunity for older people to have their memories recorded for posterity and given the young people new knowledge of the past through first-hand experiences.

This book has been created to share these precious memories and save them for the future, so that others may learn from them. The pupils of the Island Free School have curated this book. They have chosen their favourite oral histories, researched images to bring them to life and photographed the artefacts. They hope you enjoy reading the memories and it gives you the chance to 'step back in time'.

