

Mrs Smith lives in Bekesbourne, not far from the Unicorn Inn. For 20 years she worked as secretary to the Administrator at Cluttons.

Interviewer - *Mrs Smith, how long have you lived in Bekesbourne?*

58 years. I arrived in 1952.

How old were you when you arrived?

20, almost 21.

You were married?

Yes, married virtually 2 or 3 days beforehand.

And you came from Sellindge I believe?

Yes, that's right.

Do you have any friends still in Bekesbourne you remember from that time, or Bridge or anywhere around?

Yes, some of them have obviously died, but their families I still know. There are a lot of people I know of a good many years.

For shopping, Bekesbourne didn't have any shops then?

There was a little shop in someone's front room at the Aerodrome where they sold sweets and possibly things like biscuits but very limited. I only went there once I think.

Well, it's quite a walk up there. So where did you do your shopping?

I tended to go to Bridge or, failing that, I went into Canterbury. Sometimes when I had the children in the pram or pushchair, walked to Canterbury.

That's quite a feat; a lot of people wouldn't do that now. Which route did you take to get to Canterbury?

Along the lanes to the golf links, then down St Martin's hill.

And I think you said you met up with a friend in Canterbury sometimes?

Yes, a friend who lived in Bridge, and she went to Canterbury from Bridge and I went from here and we met up very often outside Woolworths.

You obviously got to know Canterbury well and I think you had been to Canterbury when you were younger, in fact on the day of the great blitz. Would you like to describe what happened?

Yes, we had some relatives in Birchington, and I lived in Sellindge at the time, and we were going for the day to Birchington, which involved getting a bus to Ashford and then catching a bus from Ashford to Canterbury, which we did, and when we got to Canterbury, because of the previous night's bombing, we had to get out of the bus outside the city and walk in and catch the bus. I think the bus station was at the Westgate then. We had to walk through

Canterbury, which was still smouldering and there was a horrible smell with rubble piled up everywhere.

So you actually saw it the day after it had happened?

Yes, I know it was one of the big raids and it sticks in your mind very much.

Apart from that, were there any scares out here with bombings or enemy planes?

Not in Bekesbourne, because that is where I was living. We had quite a lot in Sellindge because we were quite near Lympe Airport, which was a fighter station.

Yes sorry, of course when you were a child you were in Sellindge. You said you went into Bridge for shopping sometimes. Which shops did you use?

Well, I used Price's but I don't know if it was called Price then, I can't remember. Also there was one called Pricketts. That was this end of Bridge. There was a very nice greengrocer's called Turners.

Yes, I remember that. She had a smallholding at the back.

Yes, she had flowers and did floral arrangements.

Can you remember any really interesting or eccentric characters in Bekesbourne?

There was a little lady who lived near the Unicorn, in the cottages joining the Unicorn, called Mrs Goodwin, and she told us that she was abandoned on the steps of the Unicorn. Whether it was true or not, there was no way of knowing. She also used to go every morning with a jug, or a mug or something, to the Unicorn! She was quite a character.

I guess most people were employed on the farms, were they at that time?

Yes, they most probably were. There was hop picking.

What did your husband do?

He started off really, I suppose, as a mechanic. He was at Rootes and they were doing an army contract at that time, there were army vehicles. When that came to end he left and went to Olbys. He went into the offices at Olbys but sometimes did the driving. Then, latterly, he had a letter from Rootes, saying it was now Canterbury Motor Company and that they had work and would he like to go back, and he went back and that is where he retired.

How did he get into Canterbury to work?

Initially he had a motorbike, and when he gave that up he cycled. Except he there was bad weather like snow, he could then possibly go on the train.

Yes, you are fortunate here because you have got the station. I don't know if there is anything else you would like to mention?

It depends really, what sort of thing you want to know.

Just anything interesting you would like to say.

Presumably, you know about the church floor collapsing?

I don't think I do.

There used to be some people called Rogers and they lived opposite. The daughter got married and the church was quite full, and just as the bride was about to come into the church (I wasn't at the wedding incidentally), the whole of the floor on the right hand side just went down about two feet and a whole lot of people went down it. It was in Canon Perry's time. That was quite an event. There was a lot of fund raising done to replace it. Fortunately nobody was hurt. A bit of a shock for the bride when she walked in!

Did you have children?

Yes I did, I had two boys. They went to Bekesbourne School and then onto the Langton.

I am quite interested in travel. How did they get into the Langton?

On the train.

Do they live in the area?

One lives at Eastry and the other at Maidstone. Not too far.

Well, you have a lovely view here. These cottages, I imagine, were farm cottages?

They were initially. We were the first to buy one and subsequently they have all been sold.