

## Voices of Hickling

### Interview Transcript: Gwen Bullock

*Interviewed by Teri Ellis and Ray Cator on 18th October 2014  
(to page 19 and a later recording on 21st November 2018 - page 20 onwards)*

**RC:** *Where you were born?*

**GB:** **Hall Cottages, Hickling.**

**RC:** *Good, and your memories of first years at school, your friends who you had at that time, at school. And your teachers."*

**GB:** **I can remember when I first went to school, I can remember when I first went to school everybody shouted and I said, I said to them in the infants "What's happening?"**

**They said "Quick, run into the dell". I said "Why?" There's a motor car going by – that's the first motor car I'd ever seen.**

**TE:** *Good heavens. Gwen, just to .... We've got several recordings."*

**RC:** *Yeah"*

**TE:** *Can we start off this recording with just you identifying yourself, your name and your address and your date of birth, so that we can follow the questions on."*

**GB:** **You've got my name, haven't you?**

**TE:** *Yes, Gwen, Gwendoline Bullock."*

**GB:** **Yes. Date of birth, December '25, got that?**

**RC:** *Yeah"*

**GB:** **Now what?**

**RC:** *And your address, at present."*

**GB:** **[REDACTED], Hickling**

**RC:** *Lovely, that's wonderful. Yes, because there used to be a little pond in this corner, didn't there.*

**GB:** **There used to be a dell, just inside it.**

**RC:** *That's it. What they called the Dell."*

**GB:** **There used to be trees.**

**RC:** *So who were the teachers?"*

**GB:** **The teachers were Mrs Gold, from Ingham ...**

**RC:** *Good gracious."*

**GB:** **Can you remember her?**

**RC:** *Indeed I can."*

**GB:** I thought you would. And, um, Ruth Vincent. And the school master was Mudd, M U double D.

*RC:* Uh huh.

**GB:** And he had a daughter, Pauline, and she was my friend.

*TE:* Was, was Ruth Vincent the daughter of the gamekeeper who wrote the book?

**GB:** Wife.

*TE:* Wife.

*RC:* Yes.

*TE:* What was his name?

**GB:** Jimmy.

*TE:* Jimmy Vincent. Yes, because he's quite famous isn't he?

**GB:** Yes.

*TE:* Locally."

**GB:** Yes.

*TE:* So anyway, Gwen, what we really would like to know is if you can tell us of any of the special memories you had in growing up in Hickling. Well, you were born at .....

**GB:** Hall Cottages.

*TE:* And, um, you lived there with your family?

**GB:** Yes, my mother, father and brother.

*TE:* And brother, and your brother's name was?

**GB:** Edward, Ted

*TE:* Ted. So, what was your father's job?

**GB:** Well, when he first went to work for Lionel he was milkman, but he finished up running the farm because Lionel had a bad heart and he was in a nursing home at Hemsby.

*TE:* And your father's name was?

**GB:** Mervyn Gibbs

*TE:* Yes. Yes. So he was running the farm right up until the sixties wasn't he?

**GB:** Yes. Yes.

*TE:* Yeah.

**GB:** Yes.

*TE:* That's a long time."

**GB:** Yes.

*TE:* Did your brother go on the farm as well?

**GB:** He did, yes, before the war, yes.

TE: *So, you've just told us about one of your first memories of being at school.*

**GB:** **To see, that's the first motor car. I'd never seen one before and neither had the children in the playground.....**

TE: *Amazing.*

**GB:** **..... and it was a, a, grey ... I can't remember the name of it but that had a dicky at the back.**

RC: *Yes.*

**GB:** **You know what I mean don't you? You do, don't you?**

RC: *The, er, what would be the boot opened.*

**GB:** **Opened, and people sat in that. Yes, the car, there was the car, that was the driver's .....**

RC: *So, in theory it was a two seater, until you opened the boot*

**GB:** **Yeah, and the boot opened like that. They sat inside, that held two and they leaned on this thing. Yeah, I remember that.**

TE: *Everybody stopped*

**GB:** **Yeah, we went, all run to the dell to have a look at it. That was the first motor car been in Hickling.**

RC: *Were the roads made up then?*

TE: *So what year would that be then?"*

**GB:** **Well, I was just at school. That's all I can tell you. So that must have been about 19..... 29 or 30 something like that. I can remember the council houses being built.**

RC: *Yes, about '32 weren't they?*

**GB:** **There you are. I can remember that.**

RC: *Yeah, High Hill.*

**GB:** **That used to be a field.**

RC: *Were the roads made up in those...?*

**GB:** **No, no, no.**

RC: *That's what I thought.*

**GB:** **No. They were all stony and no tar.**

TE: *Oh. So they were rough roads.*

**GB:** **No electricity.**

TE: *What were they like in the winter?*

**GB:** **Just like they were in the summer weren't they?**

TE: *Oh. So there was a lot of gravel built up?*

**GB:** **Yeah. There was no tar that was just ....**

RC: \_\_\_\_\_ (?) sand and stuff"

**GB:** Hoggins (?)

RC: they had the extraction rights to do the road

TE: Oh.

**GB:** Yes.

TE: So how long did you stay at Hickling school?

**GB:** Well, the war broke out when I was 13, and that was the September. All my classmates left but I was the baby of the class because I was December you see, the week before Christmas, so I didn't leave. I went on the next year.

Because when we went back after Christmas we didn't have no desks, they'd taken them all to Stalham school.

And they had to get Jaleb(?) Brindid and Jack Durrant, you know who I'm talking about, don't you?

RC: Yes. Yes, I do

**GB:** And he brought some trestles and long planks of wood and they put them on it and that was our table. And we had our books stacked all down the middle. Yeah, because they'd taken all our.... and they even took a teacher, Miss Chettleborough – you won't know her. She married an East Ruston parson.

RC: Right.

**GB:** And, em, when I was 12, my father paid for me to learn the piano and there was nobody to play at Hickling school, because this Miss Chettleborough, she went to Stalham school to teach. And so I had to play the piano at Hickling school and I was only about 13. But I thought that was grand. [TERI LAUGHS]

RC: Did you have electricity at the school at that time?

**GB:** I can't remember. No I shouldn't think so. Well, no, because in the dinner hut they used to have, em, three .... a three burner paraffin with an oven on the top – so there weren't no electricity. No.

RC: So, in other worlds, your school day had to finish when it got dark

**GB:** Yeah, yeah. We came out at quarter to four.

TE: How many children were at the school then?

**GB:** Well, when my brother went there was about 120.

TE: A hundred and...

**GB:** Just in those.... well there was 4 classrooms there, weren't there?

RC: Yes.

**GB:** The big one that they now eat their dinner in, there was a curtain down the middle of that and that were two classes. Then there was Ruth Vincent's class and then Mrs Gold's in the infants.

TE: And children stayed at school until they were 14

**GB:** They left at 14 then, but I didn't. I went on and, em, yeah, I played the piano there until I left. That was good because I played for the morning hymn and I got out of a lot of other lessons, because I had to play for them, you see. Yeah, and during the war, summertime, the children all went down Eastfield blackberrying.

**RC:** I remember.

**GB:** And when they got back again the, the Head Girls and that would make blackberry jam. Things like that, because you couldn't get a lot, we were all rationed you see.

**TE:** *Mmmm.*

**GB:** Yeah, Cor, that takes some remembering all that while back.

**RC:** *Indeed.*

**TE:** *I bet when you start though it all floods back, doesn't it?*

**GB:** Yes. Yes. Yeah. I can remember that quite plainly.

**TE:** *So, were you nearly 15 when you left school?*

**GB:** Oh. Yes, I was, yes, mmm. And when I left there I went to work on a fruit farm, in Ingham. And, um, my brother, he hadn't gone away then and he was 5 years older than me. I think he went away in 1941 and then he went to Ceylon, Egypt ....

**RC:** *Yeah.*

**GB:** And then he came back after being out there, I can't remember how long. And then he went to France, Belgium. Yeah, and that's a funny thing, Jack, he was looking through my grandmother's old photograph book, album, and that's about that thick and about this size. And in there was a piece of paper with all the names of it that my brother went through when he landed on the shores of France. He was in the Royal Marines.

**TE:** *Oh was he. Yes.*

**GB:** Yes.

**TE:** *So you had an interesting war?*

**GB:** Yeah. When he come, when he came back from there, from Belgium, cos they didn't come straight home, he trained for the police force which was right up my street, I'd have loved to have been a policewoman, yeah, I'd have loved to have been a policewoman, and, he passed everything, he even went to court and everything, you know how they have to.

And after that was all over, no he said "I still want to go home and see my mother" so he come out. That was always, I've still got his truncheon though. Yes, I've still got that.

**RC:** *When did you get your first bicycle?*

**GB:** When, I what?

**RC:** *When did you get your first bicycle?*

**GB:** I, I don't know what you.....

RC: *Bicycle, to ride*

GB: **Oh, I hated it.**

RC: *When did you get your first one?*

GB: **Well, when I left school my father bought me a new Raleigh and I had to pay him, when I went fruit picking, the money towards it. I earned £4 and the bicycle cost eight. [RAY LAUGHS]**

RC: *Lovely.*

GB: **So that was my first bicycle. And that was the worst thing ever anybody taught me to do because I just didn't like riding bicycles.**

TE: *You didn't. No. Well it was bicycle or walk to work.*

GB: **Yes, it was, yes, yes. But directly they leave school now they want a car don't they?**

RC: *Yes but you passed your driving test.*

GB: **Oh yes, I passed my driving test first time, yeah. [TERI LAUGHS]**

TE: *So how long did you spend fruit picking? Did you move on to other jobs?*

GB: **Until I was married.**

TE: *Oh so you stayed there a long time?"*

GB: **Oh, 4 or 5 years, yeah.**

TE: *So what happened in the winter months, there's no fruit picking then?*

GB: **Oh well, I can't remember but I know we had to ... You know the corn sacks what we used to get off Bert.... I had to sit there and put patches on them, they used to years ago ...**

RC: *Where the rats had ate the holes in.*

GB: **Where the rats had ate the holes in. They used to do it didn't they?**

RC: *Yes*

GB: **I can remember doing that, yes. Great big stitches we used to have in them. Yeah, that's what we done winter time.**

TE: *Did you have any special holiday memories? Christmas, Easter?*

GB: **No. Never did go on holiday.**

TE: *No.*

GB: **No. No.**

TE: *What was it like here at Christmas?*

GB: **Well, at Christmas, we always had my grandfather....**

TE: *Yeah.*

GB: **You know where Phillip Peat now live? Opposite the ....**

RC: *Opposite the Greyhound.*

**GB:** Opposite the Greyhound where that wall is right round.

**TE:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**RC:** Used to be an old blacksmiths.

**GB:** That's right. He was the village blacksmith yes. And, em, my uncle was the farrier in the First World War. That's a funny thing this should all come up because Jackie has got a woman in Ashmanhaugh doing the same thing. That's why she now took all my first war things of my uncles and that, she took them last week, everybody is doing this, aren't they?

**TE:** Yes, its become, we're remembering a bit. Well, we realise that ...

**RC:** its an appreciation of what people did years ago.

**TE:** Yes. Yes.

**RC:** And so it should be.

**TE:** And how life has changed so much.

**GB:** Oh I know, yeah.

**TE:** Yeah, yeah.

**GB:** That's a long while ago – 66 years.

**TE:** Yeah. You told us about sweethearts, tell us, you told us before we started recording, tell us again about meeting your husband and ...

**GB:** I said that all once.

**TE:** I know but we didn't get it on the recording. [TERI LAUGHS]

**GB:** Oh! I see

**RC:** About your skating days.

**GB:** Well, yes.

**TE:** Skating days.

**GB:** I can't remember what year it was but I know I'd then left school and my father used to take me down to Hickling Broad, in the dark, skating, and they were there from Norwich, all around there was hundreds of people.

**TE:** Yeah, yeah

**GB:** And us children, we used to get behind when they used to form, like a long line.

**TE:** A crocodile

**GB:** Yes, and we used to go on the back of them and we used to hang on for dear life. Because if you once let go you'd never catch them up. We used to go all round the Broad like that. Yeah, and I tell you who I was with, Sheila Nudd.

**RC:** Oh, yes

**GB:** You can remember

**RC:** Jack's' daughter

**GB:** Yeah. David's sister

**RC:** *Mother.. sister, sister*

**GB:** Yeah.

**RC:** *You know , David Nudd and sands*

**GB:** His sister. Me and her used to hang for dear life on the end of this crocodile, whatever you call it. Yeah, and, er, but when I was... that was the first time I'd ever skated, when I went out there, 'Cos my father was teaching me to skate on Hickling Hall farm pond and I didn't want anybody – which is only natural I suppose – I didn't want them to see me go sprawling across when I slipped down.

And, at any rate, I was waiting 'till all the men on the farm went home and, through the dusk, I could see somebody walking towards me. First of all I thought it was my father – but it weren't. It was the fella who'd ... the new fella on the Hall Farm who I was trying to keep clear of. I didn't want him to see me fall off my skates. [TERI LAUGHS]

And he come down, he said "hello", I said "hello".

He said " I come down here" he said, "to ask you if you would come out with me Saturday night.

I said "Well, where are you going."

"Well" he said "we can go to the pictures, North Walsham or Yarmouth".

I said "yes, fair enough."

**TE:** *How did you get there? Was there trains...?*

**GB:** We had to bike to Stalham. But you had a job to get on the train because, oh, that was full of soldiers coming home on leave, going away, yeah, and that was due in North Walsham to come back home at nine o'clock at night. That never did come in before 12.

Well, you had to wait there all this while. We could have walked home in the time.

**RC:** *Good gracious.*

**GB:** Yeah, but the trains were absolutely chocabloc with soldiers, airmen, everything.

**TE:** *Hmmm.*

**GB:** Either going on leave or ....

**RC:** *You just don't realise do you?*

**GB:** ..... going away

**TE:** *So it was quite an effort to do anything outside the village."*

**GB:** Oh, yes, yes. 'Cos my father, he was in the Fire Brigade. Now you know the old, what do they call that, Webb's old house weren't ..., the Old Manor, you know where that is don't you?

**TE:** *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*



**GB:** I don't know who live in it now, but Webb lived in it then didn't he? And he had pots of money, and he bought this old fire engine and Hickling had a fire engine you see.

**RC:** *Did Jack Edwards used to drive it?*

**GB:** Yeah, yeah.

RAY MUTTERS SOMETHING.

**GB:** Yeah, and during the war my father had to go up there, there was 10 of them, I think, what manned it.

**RC:** *Possibly.*

**GB:** Yeah, and, er, he used to go up there every other night. He was on duty every other night and then the other ..., and they slept there, they had a den where these beds were all in. And he was called up Norwich when Woolworths got on fire, Buntings....

**RC:** *Good gracious.*

**GB:** Yeah, and I'll tell you what else he went to, Ingham Old Hall.

**RC:** *Roof burnt off that.*

**GB:** That caught on fire, yes. And there was a man in there, um, some, one of the head ones.

**RC:** *Was that a training school?*

**GB:** Yes. A training school. And they couldn't find this man, one of the head ones, he was. And my father was on that night, you know, with his hose and that, and in the morning, after that calmed down a bit, they went looking for this man and they were, got their pickaxes and that, you know, and they, he said he found, he was dead of course.

Yeah, but there the things I remember, 'bout the war.

**TE:** *He's, there big things aren't they.*

*Oh, so there's lots of things about the war, that you do remember, life in the war.*

**GB:** Oh, yes, yes, yes.

**TE:** Yes

**GB:** And, um, they asked me if I'd go to Sutton Staithe.

**TE:** *Mmmm.*

**GB:** There's a, before you get to Sutton Staithe there's a shed there, isn't there? A brick shed,

**RC:** *Uh huh.*

**GB:** And, er, to learn first aid, and I said yes because I wanted to get out and see my husband you see. [TERI LAUGHS] My boyfriend then.

So, 'cos I weren't allowed out, I mean they, we didn't go out like they do now, no, you had to be in by 10 o' clock. (TO RAY) Look at him sit there laughing, that's true.

RC: *I believe.*

GB: **And I passed my first exam.**

RC: *Yes.*

GB: **On that first aid business.**

RC: *Who ran the courses then?*

GB: **Oh, I don't know, some doctor I didn't know. Yeah**

TE: *Talking about doctors, what, what about when you, what, tell us a little bit about health and illness at home and having the doctor to visit, was it a big thing?"*

GB: **I can't really remember. I can remember the doctor coming but I mean I was ...**

TE: *Did you have any childhood illnesses?*

GB: **Not much. Not that I can remember, no. But I can remember the doctor coming because when, when it was D day my mother was worrying about Ted, you see, because he'd come back from Ceylon and we all knew this D day would have to take place sometime and she worried about that, and the very morning that happened she had this nervous breakdown.**

TE: *Mmmm.*

GB: **And that's the only time I can remember. The doctor used to come in, Doctor Walsh we used to call ....**

RC: *Paddy*

GB: **Paddy we used to call him, yeah. Used to come in my mother's, sit down on the settee "What horses running today, Mervyn?"**

RC: *Out come his Players ...*

GB: **Yes.**

RC: *...Player's cigarettes.*

GB: **And yeah.**

RC: *First local surgery.*

GB: **Yeah. Do you smoke?**

TE: *No, no. Do you?*

GB: **No. But I can remember, we had a hospital in Hickling.**

TE: *Did you? Tell us about it.*

GB: **Didn't you ever see it?**

TE: *No.*

GB: **No. Johnson bought it didn't he?**

RC: *I don't know.*

GB: **You know where, I can't, I'm terrible for names, Janet ... Prime?**

RC: *Yes.*

**GB:** There used to be an old Wesleyan Chapel there didn't there?

*RC:* That's right, big old place.

**GB:** You can remember that. Can't you?

*RC:* Oh yes.

*TE:* That's near where the village sign is, is it?

**GB:** That's right. Round that corner ...

*TE:* Yes.

**GB:** .... And, er, round the back that was a school room weren't there?

*TE:* Yes

**GB:** Well, that was sold. And it's a shame, because that was our Hickling ....., they had an ambulance too and, um, they got us girls and they put us, I'll tell you where they put me – down the Smea, all among the osiers.

*RC:* Mmm, mm

**GB:** And I got a broken leg. Supposed to had. Yeah, and we had to, I had to lay there till they found me and picked me up.

*TE:* Oh, this is an exercise is it?

**GB:** Yes, and they put my leg all in splints, and I went on this ambulance. Gwen Amis used to drive it, didn't she?

*RC:* I don't know.

**GB:** Yeah, Gwen Amis drove that ambulance. And she ....

*RC:* Something I never knew.

**GB:** Pardon.

*RC:* Something I never knew.

**GB:** Yeah, they had ....

*TE:* And that was during the war?

**GB:** Oh yes. And, er, they picked me up, put splints on my legs and took me back to this hospital and got me in bed. I weren't the only one, oh there was 12 beds in there, with, um ....

*RC:* And a snooker table.

**GB:** Yeah, beside, you know, a bedside ta ... Yeah. And the school room was where they was supposed to do the operations.

*TE:* And did it ever get used properly?

**GB:** No, only for ...

*TE:* It was there for emergency.

**GB:** That was there for emergency. And that was beautifully clean, everything.

*TE:* Did other villages have the same thing?

**GB:** I don't think so, don't know.

*TE:* Don't think so."

**GB:** But that got sold.

*RC:* That was a big old building.

**GB:** Yeah. That was a big old building.

*TE:* So, who did it belong to?

*RC:* Wesleyan.

**GB:** Wesleyan Chapel

*TE:* Just the, sorry, it was the Wesleyan Chapel.

**GB:** I can remember going there with my mother. Yeah.

*RC:* I've got a photograph.

**GB:** Wesleyan Chapel, yes.

*RC:* It filled that site, where that house is built on, it totally filled it.

**GB:** Yeah.

*TE:* Well how interesting, that's a new thing. I'm sure we haven't ...

**GB:** That was, and then it got sold, Johnson bought it and he used for tools and everything.

*RC:* For his business.

**GB:** Yes

*TE:* How did people manage to afford doctors in those days, this is pre NHS?"

**GB:** Oh I dunno.

*TE:* Wasn't anything that you had to worry about?

**GB:** No. NHS, when was that? 1948 weren't it?

*TE:* 47, 48. 47,48.

**GB:** I didn't know much about it 'cos I, now my mother ... Maisie, .... We used to call her Maisie Mouse. Maisie Mace ....

*RC:* Yes.

**GB:** .... she used to come round Hickling, once every 3 months and my mother used to .....

*RC:* Like a little club. Do you mean running that little Health Club thing?

**GB:** Er, you paid so much.....

*RC:* That's right.

**GB:** ..... to the hospital, in case you went to hospital.

*RC:* Now that only finished not long ago you know.

**GB:** Yes.

*RC:* The Norfolk and Norwich Hospital Association, it were later called

**GB:** Yes, they used to pay so much once every 3 months in case any of the family had to go to hospital.

*RC:* That's right.

**GB:** That's all I can remember about that.

*RC:* They did. They supported it well.

**GB:** Yeah.

*RC:* Yes, 'Cos Fred ....

*TE:* And did that cover the cost, doctor's fees, or just hospital fees?

**GB:** I don't know.

*TE:* You don't know?

**GB:** No.

*TE:* No.

*RC:* Fred, he was ...

**GB:** Fred who?

*RC:* Tillett

**GB:** Oh yes. That's right.

*RC:* He was ----- it(?)

**GB:** Yes. Yeah, Fred Tillett, yeah.

*TE:* So how many, how would you say Hickling has changed over the years? I mean I've seen changes in 30 years, you must have seen enormous changes.

**GB:** That's. Every garden has got a house in, that's what I don't like. 'Cos I used to love gardening, and they used to build on all the gardens didn't they? Yeah.

*RC:* Tell, 'cos you moved from Eastfield....

**GB:** Yeah.

*RC:* Gwen moved from Eastfield with her family, um, down that, er, little cottage that was knocked down, on, on the Causeway.

**GB:** You know the Causeway? There was a little cottage there, weren't there?

*TE:* Was there?

*RC:* Yeah

**GB:** Yes.

*RC:* Used to go down to the ....., as you go from Colonel Gordon's .....

*TE:* Yeah.

RC: ..... on the left hand side, about, possibly just about a quarter of a mile, um, before the other prefab, other house, there was a cottage, end on to the road.

TE: Yeah.

**GB:** And they called that Noah's Ark. [TERI LAUGHS] Yeah, they did, and the walls, if there was a hole in there, that was all lined with reed, the walls were. You know, under the plaster.

RC: Reed and plaster, lime plaster.

TE: So, it must have been very old.

**GB:** That was old, yes. But, um, oh, its changed a lot, yes. Because, as I say, there weren't that many people, there weren't many houses in Hickling then.

TE: No, but how many shops did it have?

**GB:** Oh, they had 5 shops, loads of shops. There was one up Town Street....

RC: That's right, in the island.

**GB:** Yeah, that was the first one. Then you come down here to Jack Martin's.....

RC: Yes.

**GB:** .... that's the second one. Then you come to Enoch Gibbs'

RC: Yes

**GB:** And then you come to Burdetts.

RC: Yes, and on the other side of the road

**GB:** Yeah, there was the Post Office.

RC: Yes.

**GB:** Turner.

RC: And he sold clothes.

**GB:** And then you went down Stubb, and there was Doris Osborne's, five. And on top of that there was ....

RC: Sometimes in the summer around

**GB:** The Broad? Guest house.

RC: Yes.

**GB:** You could go to a window there and say "Can I have a bar of chocolate, please?"

TE: How many people do you think, how big was the population?

**GB:** Oh, I don't know.

RC: Tell us about the people who worked for Jack Martin.

**GB:** Oliver.

RC: Yeah, tell us, 'cos there were several people who worked in there.

**GB:** Well, I can remember Oliver Myhill, he used to live up near the church.

**RC:** *That's right, he used to do the deliveries, didn't he?*

**GB:** **That's right, yes.**

**RC:** *And then there was Hilda. Um, Colin Shingles' mother.*

**GB:** **Hilda Shingles, yes, yes. I can remember her.**

**RC:** *There was another woman used to work in there.*

**GB:** **She had two sons, one at Winterton.**

**RC:** *That's right, Roly.*

**GB:** **Roly. And Colin, he's still alive at Ludham isn't he?**

**RC:** *That's right.*

**GB:** **Yeah, yeah, of course. Now if I'd have known you were going to ask me all these questions, because since I had that kitchen done I don't know where nothing is. I had to move a lot of things in the shed.**

**TE:** *We've only asked a few questions ....*

**GB:** **Yes I know.**

**TE:** *Kicked all your memories off.*

**GB:** **But, I've got an old book somewhere and that's donkey's years old. All about people who lived in Hickling.**

**RC:** *Really?*

**GB:** **Yeah. But I don't know where it is now, that's the thing.**

**RC:** *If you could find it I'd love to copy it.*

**GB:** **Yeah. Have you ever had a new kitchen put in?**

**TE:** *Mmm.*

**GB:** **You have to move everything out don't you?**

**TE:** *Mmm.*

**GB:** **I lived in here for a week.**

**TE:** *It was horrible?*

**GB:** **That was horrible, yes. I had my kettle over there. Yeah. He used to fix the cooker up in the kitchen for me so I could cook my tea.**

**RC:** *Yes.*

**TE:** *Anyway, what do you think of Hickling then and now?*

**GB:** **Oh, I think Hickling's a great village. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.**

**TE:** *No.*

**GB:** **No, I was born here and I'm now 88 and I'm 89 the week before Christmas.**

**TE:** *Are you really?*

**GB:** **Yes. We've been back a long while haven't we?**

RC: *Do you remember Jack Martin used to have those, um, remember years ago, biscuits?*

GB: **Yeah.**

RC: *Used to be kept in tins.*

GB: **Yeah.**

RC: *Square tins, about, um, 9 inches square by about the same depth, and they used to drop in and have a glass front.*

GB: **Yeah.**

RC: *There used to be about 3 layers of them in the shop.*

GB: **Yeah.**

RC: *And, um, I can remember Enoch's, him wrapping lard up in newspaper.*

GB: **Yes. [RAY LAUGHS] But in Enoch's you used to go in and say "Can you just let me have half a pound of sugar?" I reckon your mother can remember that. "No, I ain't got no sugar" he'd say, "Anything else you want?", "Yeah I'll have some chocolate or some sweets." "Well I hadn't got no chocolate."**

RC: *Was this when it was on ration?*

GB: **Yeah. And when you think about going out he'd say "Just a minute, I'll have a look". Out would come half a pound of sugar and so much chocolate. Yeah, he was like that weren't he?**

RC: *Do you remember that big old Cherry Blossom shoe ....?*

GB: **Tree, yeah**

RC: *Advert at the back.*

GB: **Yeah.**

RC: *With the two little kittens on the boots.*

GB: **Yes. Yes I can, yeah. But there's one thing I haven't told you.**

**I worked in Wroxham for 25 years.**

TE: *What were you doing there?*

GB: **Well, I went there with Christine, Allison ...**

RC: *Really?*

GB: **..... and, er, we both went there together, so when we went for an interview Christine say "I aren't going to do no talking" she said. So I said " Well, I can't speak for you as well." "Oh, yes you can." So, any road, I went in and I saw Eric Smith, you worked there didn't you?**

RC: *Yes, yes.*

GB: **You knew Eric**

RC: *I knew Eric.*

GB: **And, er,**



RC: *Mrs Jeckells*

TE: *Jeckells.*

**GB: And CJ.**

RC: *Yes.*

**GB: Well, I made sails when I first went there, first year.**

TE: *How old would you have been then?"*

**GB: Oh, I was about 32 I suppose.**

TE: *Mmm, mm*

**GB: Because I've always loved sewing, I made Jackie all her evening gowns, and she's still got 'em. You know, what sweep the floor. They were ever so long and big and the sleeves all went down there.**

**And I went there, to Jekylls, and the first year I was there I thought, you know, you made a sail and then they brought you another sail to make, and then they brought you another sail to make, and then they brought you another sail to make, and that's how that went. I thought, well I thought, yeah, I'll keep here but I thought, I don't really like it.**

**And they come to me one day and said "You're wanted in the office, Gwen." Oh God, I thought, what have I done now." And, er, in I go, you can picture it can't you? That office where CJ used to be in, 'cos I got on ok with him.**

RC: *Cecil Jack?*

**GB: Cecil Jack, yeah. And Raymond sat there ....**

RC: *Yes. His son.*

**GB: He died this last year didn't he?**

RC: *He did ....*

**GB: Ray.**

RC: *..... and his, his .....*

**GB: Yeah.**

RC: *.....his son lives in Sutton, married a girl in Sutton.*

**GB: Raymond's son?**

RC: *Yeah*

**GB: That's right. Where do they live?**

RC: *Enough, on the opposite....*

TE: *You know I think we are straying away from Hickling."*

RC: *No, we won't stray too far.*

TE: *Don't stray too far.*

**GB:** No, but any rate I worked there 25 years, and I worked my way up till I had a room on my own and I had 6 machinists in there and that was when I started going round the boatyards.

**RC:** Yeah

**GB:** To find work for them to do.

**TE:** Oh.

**RC:** Used to go out in the van didn't you?

**GB:** You weren't there then were you? No, no. And I'll tell you where I had my first room, you know Moores at the back of 'em, they had this big showroom didn't they?

**RC:** That's right.

**GB:** Where the motor cars were and Jeckells bought that garage.

**RC:** Yes.

**GB:** And there was glass right to the top, and you could go to it and see, you know.

**TE:** So, when did you learn to drive?

**GB:** Oh, when I was 31. Because the Suez. Can you remember when the Suez.

**TE:** The Suez canal thing. I was a child but I can remember."

**GB:** Yes, those people who had a driving licence a learning licence, didn't have anybody to go with them.

**RC:** You didn't have to be accompanied.

**GB:** No, you didn't

**RC:** In Suez because there was a restriction on petrol you had to get them there tokens

**GB:** You didn't have to have anybody with you, see. So we were down East Field at the time but my husband had got a driving licence and we'd got a car.

So he said "If I were you" he said "I should apply for a driving licence". So I said "Yes I will. But I aren't going to have you teach me " [LAUGHS]

So he said "No, because he went to a school of motoring in Lowestoft.

I said "I am going to a school of motoring – so that's what I did – in Lowestoft and I passed first time, and he passed second time [RAY AND TERI LAUGH]

**RC:** So you rubbed it in.

**GB:** And, yeah, that was when I passed. Then while I was at Jeckells I used to get a lift with Ivor Kemp.

**RC:** Yes.

**GB:** His father what now live where the shop was.

**RC:** Yes.

**GB:** Bowlers, yeah, and, um, he said, er, "I've got something to tell you Gwen". "Oh" I said "What, what?" He said "I'm retiring".

**“Oh” I said “you can’t retire” ’cos I got a lift with him you see and so he said “Well I am afraid I am”**

**So I went home and I said to Gerald “Ivor is retiring”. “Don’t think you’re going on that bus” he said.**

**“No” I said “I thought I’d buy a scooter”. “I put my foot down at that” he said “scooters are very dangerous”.**

**He said, because we knew somebody who used to drive the buses – there he was coming from Wroxham and a hare ran out into his wheel and that killed him.**

*RC: That’s right*

**GB: Yes. And, er, any rate, how far did it get? Oh! So he said “No, you can’t.” So I said “Well what am I going to do then.”**

**He said “Buy a little car.” “Well” I said “ I had thought about it.” “Well don’t think no longer” he said “Just get one.”**

**So he went to Ludham, at Clarkes, and he asked them to look out for one for me.**

**I said “I don’t want a great big car.” So he bought me a, a little, what do you call ‘em, I can’t remember now.**

*RC: A little Ford?*

**GB: A, a, what was that?**

*RC: A little Ford?*

**GB: That’s right, yes. And then I had that 3 years and then I had an Allegro.**

*RC: Yes.*

**GB: With big wheels on it and a square driving wheel.**

*RC: Wheel. Yes.*

**GB: And so I said “No, I don’t like that wheel”, so Clarke said “I can get you a round wheel on that.” And when he got me that round wheel I’ll always remember that cost me 25 quid and I thought that’s a lot. [LAUGHS]**

*TE: Oh dear. So, you’ve, you’ve really come, you’ve been in Hickling really from before, seeing your first car....*

*Yeah.*

*TE: ..... to driving your first car*

**GB: Yeah, yeah.**

*TE: Yeah. Well, certainly seen some changes. Anyway, thank you very much for this.*

**GB: Well, I hope you learnt a lot.**

**Second Recording 21st November 2018** with Sally Kirwan:

**GB:** My father bought me a new piano when I was 12. And that wasn't one of these old ones with candlesticks on. It was a lovely, nice low one.

Well, any rate, I was about 15 I should think, oh, at The Bull, and - no, I was a bit older than that I should think, because me and Gerald, me and Gerald - that's my husband - we were about 16 - yes, that's my husband [*points out photo of Gerald*] and we stood there talking near this wall. Well, we had arranged - we were going somewhere that night, but I don't know where. This was about 7 o'clock and all of a sudden I said "Look, I'll go up to my grandfather's" because I used to have to take them their milk from the Hall.

So he says "Alright I'll see you when you come back". I said "Yeah." I was only about 16, that was when we sort of first got together, you know. And away I come, all the way past here, and then that started. De, de, de, de, de, de, de. Town Street. That's this aeroplane machine gunning.

And I was coming past here and I turned round like this and I could see this plane over there, and I thought... I could see this plane over Town Street, that way. There's a cluster of houses. You know where it is, don't you? Yeah.

And I suppose this German thought you see - "Oh, a cluster of houses" and de, de, de, de, de.

Well I kept biking up here and, you, know where the Treasure Box is ... That used to be a newspaper shop. Right opposite that is a thatched cottage. That's built on to now, but in my day that was just one.

Well, I heard this plane coming - well, that's a drone, them German planes are. And I start my bike and I rode into that yard, threw my bike down - I had a new bike, mind you - and that just slid down the stones and I went for the door. This house had two doors, one here, one there. Beside this one was a big bush. I don't know what sort of bush it was - I was too scared to find out. Well, any rate, I lumped into this door and got in this bush as far as I could, because I could hear this plane coming. And it was only just over the rooftops, and I could hear it coming and, do you know what - that was a terrible experience because this plane, I saw it through the leaves and that - I was in the middle of this bush - and the plane went past me like that and I could see everything of this plane. I felt as if I could touch it, that was that low. Oh, that was low: that was only skimming the rooftops.

Well, any rate, that went. I thought I am going to stay in here long in case he come back again...

So, any rate, out come Jimmy and Bertha Pratt out of the other door. "Whatever is going on?" I said, "Well, did you hear, that's a German plane machine gunning". I said "They might come back again".

So, "Was it?", he says. I said "yes, they've been up Town Street and machine gunned up there."

Inside they go again and I thought, I'll just walk out onto the road. I walked out onto the road, and I could see Gerald coming on his bicycle, from the Bull.

He said "Are you all right?". I said "Yes. Where are you going?". "I come to see where you are", he said. He said "They machine gunned Town Street and that big white house there as that went "de, de, de, de, de, de, de, de", the window sill, like that, that took it off and landed in the garden. These bullets shot this off".

And, er, any rate, I come out there. He said "What you going to do now?" I said "Not much", I said, "'cos I'm too shook up"

Do you know, that was a terrible experience! I was in this bush. Yeah!

When they left Town Street, they went - you know where the Hall is, do you?

That flew straight to the Hall and machine gunned the Hall. And these bullets went through the roof, and you know those big old wardrobes they have in these Halls... Mind you, it ain't there now 'cos that got burnt out three years ago - can you remember that? - because I said "Well, amongst that debris, I said, there's some bullets, because that burnt that to the ground. Well, anyway, this bullet that went through the roof, through this wardrobe and embedded itself in the wall.

In this big field we used to count these British planes and American back from Germany and, do you know what, this particular morning they were coming across. You could see they'd limped all the way from where they had been bombing. They were flying just over the hedgetops.

Well, we were picking these little white turnips up - we had to pack them up to go to Manchester Market or somewhere - and this particular plane came back. Oh, I said "Look - its got an engine stopped", and I admired that pilot because he'd limped from wherever he'd come from in Germany - got to here, and Hilda said "They're going to hit something".

So there was a big high bank. We got up on this bank and there was a tree, oh, several fields away from us at Sutton. Do you know where the Vicarage is? That little short road. Yes, well that's the last bungalow going this way, yes, and, er, yes, this plane was just limping over the hedgerows. And this tree, I said "that's going to hit that". Do you know what - this plane that went round, that was just going over the hedgetop, like this, that hit that. And, do you know what, that turned that clean round and that landed on this bungalow, right on the bungalow.

**“Oh”, I said, “That’s on Eileen’s bungalow”. Well, any rate, the baby was in the pram outside, so that was all right. And the mother was in the wash house, that was all outside.**

**But any rate, that landed right on top of this bungalow. So I said, we couldn’t actually see what that hit, but we could see all the dust and smoke and everything and, yeah, that got knocked down.**

**Now do you know where I’m talking about? Yeah, well, when you go home, there’s a house in a plantation on that corner, ain’t there? That’s the last bungalow, and they were Americans, yeah, they were.**

**But, you see, he’d got all this way and he only had to go as far as Ludham, ’cos that was where the airfield was. And they used to get to the shore, like, of the sea and they only had to go over there. Yeah, but he didn’t get there.**

**I used to live in Hall Cottages - do you know where Eileen live? Yes. That was where I was born. And my father had a motor bike and side chair when he was first driving, that’s what he first had. And, he had a garage built. Well, when this war come, he said “we shall have to have a dugout”. So he said “what I am going to do - sell the motor bike and side chair”, and that left the garage. So he said, “we’ll make some steps down to this garage, you know, steps like that”, and he filled some sacks with straw so we could sit on the seats, because that was underground, you see.**

**And, Ted was home on leave - that was my brother. And I don’t know where he come from, but anyway, he was on leave, and me and him were luckily down our garden, near Eileen’s. Well, we heard this plane - that way - had dropped its bombs on Stalham.**

*Jackie Cox (Gwen’s daughter): “Was this The Grebe where those people got killed?”*

**GB: Yes. And the bakery and her father and daughter got killed. Yes. So Ted said to me “Quick”, he said, “Down dugout, it’s a Gerry”. So we scooted down this dugout and the steps that they made us, we laid on these steps and we saw that Gerry (I think there was three...) But, any rate, they came past us like that, and before they went back to Germany, yeah, before they went back, they dropped the rest of their bombs over Horsey. And that’s how the Germans used to do.**

**They didn’t go right into Norwich and that, not all of them. They got to the shore, dropped the bombs.**

**My father was in the Fire Service. Hickling Fire Service. And this particular night, this was, er, about 11 o’clock time we could hear this vroom, vroom, vroom - they droned, those Germans did - and they come from that way and Dairy House - do you know where Dairy House is? Yes, they dropped bombs on that because there was a house and that down there then.**

SK: Yes, that's not there now

GB: Yes, and they come along where Cator lived, Council houses, just up the road here, yes, High Hill. That way, yes, that way. You could see it if they pulled the school down!!! But, any rate, they dropped these incendiaries and there was fires all along them there.

Well, I don't know what number it was, but Mrs Cator and her husband were in bed and this incendiary come through the roof and as she lay there that dropped on her arm and broke her arm. Yeah.

That was scary really, because I think what made me more scared was my mother, because we were there alone, you see, and my father, he was gone to Norwich.

Hickling had a Fire Engine. Some... - Webb, that was his name. Mr Webb. He had loads of money and he bought Hickling this Fire Engine. And he lived on the Heath... I don't know who live in that house now. Somebody was in there...

...I can't remember which is the story I am telling now...

Well, we used just to count them out and count them back, but a lot of them had engines not going, you know, they'd been hit or something. But, yeah. Me and her went to work one morning and this same field we looked. "Hallo", she said, "what's gone wrong?" There'd been a bomb dropped there during the night, but you see with all the marshes, everything is wet, isn't it, where the marshland is.

Jackie Cox: Did it go off?

GB: Well, that'd gone off. This was me and Hilda going to work the next morning at nine o'clock Yeah. Mmm.

Yeah. Yes, he was in the Royal Marines, yeah. And they paraded through Hickling Street on November 11th, being Armistice Day, and they asked him to lead their marching through. Yes. But, er, there was nothing really for that, but, coo, he thought that was something to lead that marching through Hickling Street. Yeah, Yeah.

We were down on the farm then, you know, where Eastfield is and, er, he come in. He say "Did you hear that plane go down? I said, "Yes, where is it?". He said "Right own near Martin Dove's".

Well, I'd got her [daughter Jackie] as a little girl: how could I go and have a look at a plane? Well. anyway I said to my next door neighbour "Are you going to be at home?" I said "that plane came down" "Yes", she said, "that's all right. You can leave Jackie with me" So I went and had a look. Yes, and that was down at the bottom of that field, you know where Tallowin live?

Stubb Road. Opposite side, that was right down at the end of the field, that plane. And we weren't allowed to go near it, but we stood on the road and had a look. But, whether they got out or not, I don't know. But, that's where it was. Down Stubb Road. Yes. Because years ago there used to be a farm down there, you can't remember that - Jericho. That got burned out. Yes. But that was where the plane was.

Well, this plane was crashed on the field, but we couldn't get there: the police were all round it. And we stood along Stubb Road, you know where that is, just watching.

Well, any rate, they were trying to get some pieces of, well, that was like perspex stuff - that's just like glass. And they used to send it somewhere and they'd make a ring. Yes. And, er, Webb got us a piece of glass and she took it and then they moved to Australia - so I never got my ring...

Prisoners of war at Barton, but they weren't treated like our prisoners of war in Germany. Because on a Saturday afternoon all these Italian prisoners of war piled into Stalham and we got to know some of them, you see!

And that's all there was, really, but... No, I don't know nothing about that ring, where it went.

A massive searchlight. That was the biggest searchlight round here. Because you know where the soldiers all were, down on the Rec, that's where all the soldiers were, and this searchlight found this German plane and they'd concentrate on that and we could see this plane up in the sky, but I shouldn't think they - they never did shoot at it because I suppose that was too far away... But, yeah...

*Jackie Cox: Did they have guns at Hickling with the searchlight?*

**GB:** I don't know, I can't tell you that. I weren't interested because for once I weren't allowed down there... Strict father... My father wouldn't ket me go down there! Cor, no!

[There was] a prisoner of war. And, er, I don't know how he got to know Sam Harmer, but, any rate, he said to him "Where are you living, then?" "Well", he said, "we're just shacking in at Barton". That's what he said. "Well", he said. "I've got a room you can have it to live in" Now. Go to Ingham. Do you know Ingham, where that cluster of houses is near Harris's farm.

*Jackie Cox: There's a little white cottage amongst all the rest what's been built.*

**GB:** Yeah, that's right.

*Jackie Cox: This little white cottage is gable end on to the road with a thatched roof.*



**GB:** Yeah. And there was a door in the end but that isn't there now. So Sam said to him "I'll give you the key to that", he said.. "You can live there." That's where he lived. Now, that didn't lead to the house where Sam Harmer lived, not that way - you had to come from the road to it. And that's where Werner lived for donkeys years, didn't he.

Because you can remember Werner...

*Jackie: Yes*

**GB:** Well, his mother wrote to him and said "Don't come back to Germany: that isn't worth it", she said. And I can remember Werner saying that. And he never, never did go back again. And the last time I saw him was at Sea Palling working in one of those cafes there.

Yeah. That's the last place I saw him. But I suppose he's dead now, I don't know...

*Gwen talks about her husband:*

He volunteered when he was seventeen to go into the Navy. And they wouldn't take him because he weren't old enough. So he came home disappointed. He waited another year and went and volunteered again and they said well, you'll have to have a medical. So he had this medical and he had to have his tonsils out. Well, that meant another 6 months! And he did so badly want to go in the Navy.

Well, any rate, in the end they called him up. He done all his training. Everything.

And then, they said to him as you were a land worker - because he worked at the Hall - I'm afraid, he said, we shall have to give you leave to go back to that.

Now if anything happened, he said, if we are invaded or anything like that, he said you will be one of the first to be called up.

But that didn't happen.

*This transcription has been made to back up, not replace,  
the audio tapes that form the main record output of the VOH Changing Village project 2015 to 2020.  
The transcribers used their best efforts and checked back for proper names and places.  
We ask for forgiveness for any errors...*