

## BAMPTON TAPES

Grace Eeles:

### **‘Shops, Church and War’**

JL     You were born at Clanfield?

GE     Yes; at Holly House, in Clanfield.

JL     Yes. Last time I went through, I looked for it, and I couldn’t see which is Holly House.

GE     And my father was in the Navy during the War – the First World War, of course – and when the War was over, in ’14, (sic) he wanted to be a farmer; so it was my mother’s money. She bought ... I was so delicate that I was never going to grow up in Oxfordshire, because of the “dampness of the Thames Valley,” so they bought a farm in Sussex, and we moved there when I was four. But every summer we came back for a fortnight or three weeks to Bampton.

JL     You came back to Bampton, not to Clanfield?

GE     Not to Clanfield, because Clanfield was finished.

JL     So where did you live when you came back to Bampton in those summers? Over the shop, or...?

GE     I think I told you last time: Grampy became crippled with arthritis, and he was bedridden and all that sort of thing; so they bought Folly View, not the one on the corner, the other one; and he used to lay in bed with a big mirror so he could see everything. And the rest of the house, we used to stay there, and one or two times we couldn’t – I don’t know, there were other members of the family there.

JL     Part of his family? - because that was a very large family. How many children did he have?

GE     He had twelve, you see.

JL     And - was that right?– it was two daughters – no; it was the other way round: two sons. Was it two sons?

GE     There was ..

JL     I shall be very impressed if you remember twelve names.

GE     Richard – Richard Eeles was the one that inherited the shop.

JL     Was he the oldest?

GE And there was Uncle Bill with him; and my father, Samuel; they went – some sort of cousin, and I think the name was Beckinsale – had the baker’s shop in Clanfield, and these two boys went to work for them; and they both married Clanfield girls, you see: Samuel married my mother, and William married Aunt Susy Clare, who was Clares’ Stores.

JL Clare’s Stores?

GE Of course, you wouldn’t know. Well, opposite Holly House, there’s a place that does bed-and-breakfast, and that was Clare’s Stores.

JL And that was just a village store, a shop?

GE A real village shop -

JL Yes; an everything shop.

GE - and Uncle Bill was a great man in the Church, and so was my father. My father used to ring the bells there; and..... Oh dear, where have I got to?

JL Well, we were talking about you coming back in the summer, and coming to Bampton.

GE Well, we came back to Bampton.

JL And you stayed in Folly View, which was your grandfather’s house.

GE Or, if it was very crammed, if there was no room there, we stayed at The Talbot, and felt very snooty!

JL Now, was it your grandfather that started Ian’s shop?

GE Yes, but you see, my cousin Bet, in Highworth, knows all about it; because she and her father, years ago, they went back, researching all the family tree, and all that; and I rang her up. Unfortunately she’s crippled with Parkison’s; but she’s going to... she said, “I’ll get them out and I’ll photocopy it and send it to you.” So I thought, well, you’d probably be interested.

She tells me that they came from Milton-under-Wychwood; but why they came to Bampton I don’t know. And he opened a shop in Broad Street – which part of Broad Street I don’t know –

JL There’s nowhere along there that is obviously a shop, is there?

GE Well, I wondered – they lived in Cromwell House, you see, where Miss Kent lived; and I wondered if they didn’t shop from there.

JL Those windows are very broad, aren’t they? And I know that lots of shops, in the old days, were little more than the front room.

GE Well, this is it, they were - as you say, just the front room.

JL And a few extra things; and sometimes in villages on the Continent you still find shops like that, just a few shelves and a table.

GE And he started the shop. Well, whether it shows in her records – she’s going to look them all out, and going to send them, so when I get them I’ll let you know.

JL That's wonderful. That would be a great help; and very interesting.

GE She – they were very knowledgeable about it all.

JL So the shop was started in Broad Street, and that would be, presumably, just a little shop; and then when did he move to the Market Square, do you know?

GE I don't know; but whether it would show on her records; it probably will; hopefully.

JL But you remember it in the Market Square?

GE I always remember it in the Market Square. And you know when you look at the shop, this side –

JL Just for the record, let's say which shop it is, because not everybody will know.

GE Londis.

Well, as you look at it, where my left hand is, there's a sort of door, like that; well, that was the entrance into the dwelling part of the shop. You went down a long passage and then along the back, to get to the living quarters.

JL Now, haven't we got a lovely photograph of that back room? I think we have, in your album.

GE Yes; I've got a little one, yes.

JL It's lovely; and I'm going to get that one blown up, because I think it's one of the few interiors that we've got; and it's a lovely sort of period piece, lovely.

GE And, of course, you don't ever use it, only on Sundays.

JL The best parlour.

GE Yes; oh, yes.

JL And not to be played in.

GE Oh, no. Well, it's all very vivid to me; I suppose it was so different to the life I led in Sussex.

JL Can you remember the shop as well? I know you've told me about it, and I'd love to have it down, so that people can hear your memories.

GE Oh, yes. As you walked in the - where the doors are now, you walked in, and there was all these rows of biscuits, in tins with glass fronts so you could see....

JL Loose biscuits these were, were they?

GE Oh, yeah; all loose. You bought them by the pound; and my uncle, he always kept the broken ones to give the children. I think Roy will tell you he remembers the broken biscuits. And there was a counter all round, like that; and an entrance at the back, into the living quarters, almost where the door is...no. The shop wasn't as deep.

JL So there would have been a wall across the shop as it is now?

GE Yes, and there was a door through to the living quarters.

There was a little office somewhere up there on the right; you went along a path, a sort of little corridor, and you went up some steps, and that was the office.

JL Did the office have a view of the shop, by any chance?

GE No; it was blanked off from the shop; but it looked out over the garden; and underneath were all these cellars. They used to make sausages down there!

JL Goodness me! So were you selling meat products as well?

GE I suppose they must have done, mustn't they?

JL They actually made the sausages down there? I bet there weren't so many rules and regulations then.

GE Oh, no! because – well, you know I married my cousin, he was one of them; and the boys used to be down there making sausages, and you could hear them laughing and having a good time! A little gang of them – Harry Kemp from the Malt Shovel; and Jim, and all their buddies; who they were I don't know, but they were all down there. If you were sitting in that sitting room you could hear them laughing..

JL Yes, and having a good time while they were making the sausages.

GE But when... it was sold to the International; my husband didn't want to keep the shop, and they sold it to the International; and they filled it all in with concrete, the cellars.

JL What a waste.

GE Yes.

JL And you talked about the loose biscuits: do you remember what else was sold loose? Because now-a-days ....

GE Sugar; in blue packets, blue paper packets.

JL Did people ask for a pound and it was filled up in a packet there and then?

GE Well, behind the counter as you go in, on the left, there were these big deep wooden drawers, and you pulled them out, and they'd got different sugars in each drawer.

JL So there was just as much choice of sugars then, but not in packets? Demerara, and brown...

GE Yes, oh yes. As children we were privileged, we felt, to be allowed to fill up some blue packets; of course, somebody weighed them, but we used to think it was wonderful to fill up these different sugars.

JL A lovely job for a child.  
What else was loose?

GE I only remember the sugar.

JL What about flour? Did flour come loose?

GE I suppose it must have done; but I don't remember ever...

JL Didn't they have flour sacks? And they were used for various things? They used them for pinafores, because it was good, tough cotton. I have a feeling that was flour sacks.

GE To divert; talking about cotton, we used to wear these white aprons with fringes round the bottom,

JL Long? Almost to the floor?

GE Yes; tied around, you know. They tied it round, and there was a piece like this, and it fell over, if you like, so it made a double apron; it had these... in the material, it had a fringe round the bottom. I think it... Did I give you an old picture of them standing with their white aprons? You'll see that....

JL Yes, I shall look at the fringe now, take a note of it.

And then, what about butter, and cheese, and things like that? Was that cut there and then?

GE Oh, yes; they had big boards; cheese was cut with a wire, you know, but on these boards; and I think tobacco was sold by weight; I wouldn't like to..... I think it was; because... I've got a pair of lovely brass scales in my sitting room, which I would have given you, but I've left them to one of my nephews, you know; but they were used for weighing tobacco on.

JL Because it came in ounces and half-ounces, didn't it?

GE That's right; very expensive stuff was weighed on these delicate scales.

JL I believe you said something about the back; you had the chicken foods and things like that.

GE That's right; you went down to the bottom, through the garden – well, there was a sort of pathway at the side of the house: a verandah - and you went out into the garden, and then at the bottom were all these buildings, where they kept the ironmongery stuff, you know, and there was one where they had paraffin, and another one where they used to sell pig food. Toppings, it was called. Roy would tell you about that.

JL He'll remember that very well. He'll probably listen to this, and he'll remember a lot of it.

GE So it was – if you wanted a few screws, it was quite a trek to go and choose them, down the garden, and then they were taken back to the shop, and you paid for them there.

JL It is amazing, isn't it, that a village store had all this range of things, from paraffin to pig food, to foodstuffs, to just everything.

GE Yes; everything. But I know that my uncle used to be very meticulous, if we went down there; there was what we called the wash-house, which was separate from the living quarters: you went across the verandah, and there was this room called the wash house, where Emmie used to come and do the washing.

JL Was that the kind of wash house where you had a copper?

GE A copper, yes.

JL Describe that; because children these days won't have any idea what a copper was.

GE A copper; well, it was built in – I suppose it was built with bricks and cement – and the fire was at foot level; and you had to light the fire. There was a wooden top, which you

took off, and there was this big round copper basin, which was heated by the fire; and sheets and things were boiled in this, everything white was boiled in the copper.

JL What was soap powder like? It wasn't detergent, was it?

GE It was bars of creamy yellow soap; you used to cut pieces off – that brought it back to my memory.

JL Then you used to rub them?

GE Yes; and they used to have a board thing, that you put things on and then scrubbed it. A washboard.

JL That was a board that was convoluted, wasn't it? And it became later a musical instrument, you know? Because it made a sort of rummy noise, when you rubbed a stick down it.

GE And there was a mangle.....

JL Now describe a mangle; because, you know, children now-a-days have spin driers. It's very hard to describe a mangle!

GE It is! It's an iron affair, with two wooden rollers, long ones, put close together, but you could adjust how close they were to each other, depending on what you were mangling: if you were mangling something very thick you didn't have them so close. And there was a big wheel at the side that you had to turn to rotate the rollers; in fact, when I got married there was one here.

JL I think you get ten out of ten for describing a mangle! I think that's absolutely brilliant! Exactly right! And it just squeezed the water out, didn't it?

GE Squeezed the water out.

JL And physically quite hard, because you had to turn that wheel at the side.

GE Well, quite often we children were roped in to turn the mangle.

JL And that would be a fun job?

GE Oh, yes. Quite privileged, if Emmie let us turn the mangle. And then, of course, they were all hung up outside to dry. And in fact this verandah, that ran from the shop part to the living quarters, down to the garden, it had a glass roof, and on wet days the washing would all be hung up; in fact, bless him, my husband said, "There's only one thing I want you not to do when we get married." I said, "Whatever's that?" "Hang out the washing where it drips on everyone!" As a child, it was awful; you walked down there, and there were things dripping on you!

JL You see, that doesn't happen now, because things go in the spin drier, and there's no dripping, is there?

GE No dripping at all.

JL And wash day was a big struggle then; an enormous job.

GE And it was always Monday; and old Emmie used to come and wash for my mother.

JL Which Emmie was that? Do you remember her surname? She'd be one of the Bampton families, wouldn't she?

GE Well, she was... I don't know whether she was Emmie Tanner, but she was connected to the Tanners. Have you got someone of the Tanners to talk to? Well, Alice – whatnot – is a descendent of the Tanners. Talk to her about it. Because she used ... and I can...

That's another thing; if you wanted things crisp and starched you had to mix this blue stuff with water; and I can hear old Emmie coming and saying to my aunt, "Will you come and mix the starch?" It was a very skilled job to get it just right.

JL So that it wasn't too sharp and crisp?

GE I suppose so; and anything like the aprons and things were all put through starch, weren't they?

JL People don't do that now.

GE And I can remember – yes, of course, pillowcases were starched; anything white and wanting to...

JL And there was also a blue thing, wasn't there, which was different?

GE Oh, the blue; yes, to make things white; that was a little thing – they used to sell them in the shop, a little ball covered with some material, white material, and that was the blue; you put that in to..

JL To make things look even more dazzling?

GE That's right.

JL Amazing; yes.

Your shop wasn't a butcher's shop, was it?

GE No; the butcher's shop was next door, where Temple's is.

JL Now, there was also a butcher's shop – because I've seen a photograph of it – down, was it called Clark's? I wonder if you remember it? – next to The Horseshoe; do you remember that one?

GE Yes; where the Charity Shop is now; that was a butcher's shop. And there was one... you know that little place next to Adrian Simmonds'?

JL The Poacher's Rest, or the other side?

GE The other side; there was – well, when I got married there was a butcher's shop there, Mr Harrison used to have the butcher's shop.

JL So that's three butchers' shops at least.

GE Well, they operated at different times.

JL And I've seen other photographs, with other shops that have disappeared now; down the High Street there was a sort of a drapers'.

GE That's right, Busby's. You know, where Mrs Goody lives, with the handles up –

JL Oh, of course; the handles up beside the step, to get into the shop. And that was just a sort of outfitters', socks and nighties and...

GE Well, and I remember my mother buying me a dress there on one of our visits; they used to keep everything. And I tell you who were the last owners, I think, of it; they used to have the Post Office – oh! My brain!

JL You're doing very well. The old Post Office? Or the new Post Office?

GE The old Post Office. You know who I mean; it may come to me. But she was there – I forget the name of the person who owned it. It'll come to me, probably in the middle of the night.

JL Opposite there I remember another little hardware shop?

GE Mrs Stroud. That was the blonde lady's mother; she had a wonderful shop there. It's just a house now.

JL So many of them have become just houses, haven't they?

GE And of course there was Paul Bovington's, the fishmonger's; but long before that - you know where Mrs Landray lives? – on that opposite corner where there's the road up to the little chapel; well, a cousin of my family's by the name of Beak lived there; and I think – I wouldn't like to swear to it – I think they used to bake bread there. But I'm not... and there's no-one I can ask, because, bless them, they're all dead. Well, someone might remember, yes.

JL Then going up through to the market square, there was a garage there, wasn't there? Where Abbey Properties is. Did he just sell petrol there, or did he do other things? And who was that?

GE Just a garage. I do remember one thing; at some point whoever lived at the Grange – was it Lord Downshire? – a very odd man, apparently, with plenty of money; and because he couldn't get petrol one day, he bought it, so that he could get petrol whenever he wanted it. I wish I could remember who it was; well, it may come to me.

JL We'll talk about the big houses in a minute. Then go on down into Bridge Street: the biggest shop there, I think, was Dutton's.

GE And the one before, where The Romany is now was Matthew's; Billy Matthew's mother had it. Now he could tell you all about that.

JL Is that a very old Bampton family too? I'll ask him. And was that another grocer's shop?

GE Grocery; and they did a lot of chemistry, like a chemist's shop, medicines and things like that.

JL It's extraordinary how many there were that have disappeared. So then we come down to Dutton's. What about the butcher's shop; Patrick Strainger's shop?



GE I can't remember what was there; and of course there was Mr Money, the shoemaker. I can see a picture of him in my mind, sitting there with his boots on the frame, you know, repairing them and making them.

JL Yes: he didn't just repair, it wasn't a case of sticking soles on, was it? He used to make them; and I think, from what I hear, the gentry came from miles around.

GE Oh, they did! Everyone came to Mr Money to make their shoes. Only if you were rich could you afford to have Mr Money make you some shoes.

JL He was very important, a very good tradesperson, wasn't he?

GE Oh, he was. And another thing that brought to my mind, Mr Chandler; you know – I forget what the houses are called, but in the market square: Folly View is there, this big house, it's changed.... Well, Miss Chandler lived there for years.

JL Yes, she's only just gone, hasn't she? In the last five, six years is it? It's quite recent.

GE Yes; but over the sort of garage at the side – do you know where I mean? – over there he had a leather shop, and he used to make all kinds of leather things.

JL Was he the saddler?

GE Saddler! That's right!

JL So he made saddles, bridles, anything to do with leather?

GE Well, in the war he made us handbag things, shoulder bags. I used to have one that he made; because you couldn't buy them in the war. It was wonderful to come to Bampton and be able to buy a bag; because there was nothing in the shops, everything had gone to the War effort. So that was a shop, you see.

JL Well, I think after he went it became just a little antique shop that Miss Chandler sort of ran, with somebody else.

GE Well, she lives at the flats; she would be able to put you in the picture with that.

JL I wonder what happened to all his tools and things.

GE I don't know. But she would be able to tell you, wouldn't she? She and Miss Chandler lived together there; and then when Miss Chandler died it was sold, and she had to move, and she went to live at the flats.

JL There are so many people to speak to, aren't there?

GE You'll be surprised!

JL And one will lead to another, you see.

GE Yes, well, this is it.

JL We talked, very briefly, about the little road that goes past Doctor Landray's house, the little lane at the side where there's a chapel. Now, can you remember when it was used? We'll get on to churches and churchgoing now. Can you remember which kind of a chapel it was?

GE I think it was a Baptist. I wouldn't like to bet on it.

JL Was that a very strong group in Bampton? I know it is in Aston, it's got a lot of history in Aston.

GE Oh, yes! It was very strong! Because – do you know where Dinah Green lives? That was another one.

JL Was that exactly the same church, or was that a breakaway group?

GE I don't know....

JL It's interesting isn't it? So we had Baptists, we had Methodists...

GE And then - I don't know when they became Plymouth Brethren, but my aunt and uncle who lived at the shop, they became Plymouth Brethren.

I don't know how; because – well – I'm very prejudiced against the Plymouth Brethren, they were awful. They ruined my husband's life. They ruined everybody's.

JL Tell me about them a little bit.

GE Well, on a Sunday you mustn't do anything, not even cook. And they used to go to Witney, to the meeting room, which is still there.

JL So there's not a meeting room for Plymouth Brethren in Bampton?

GE No; they always went to Witney.

JL Were there a lot of them in Bampton at that time, do you remember?

GE I don't think so. And of course, some of their children became Plymouth Brethren; Dorothy, the daughter, did; and for a time, my sister-in-law that's just died, she was Plymouth Brethren; and my husband, when he was fourteen, said, "Anyone with any brain can't belong to that lot!" He wouldn't belong; but they made his life a hell, because he didn't belong. And you weren't allowed to do anything on a Sunday.

JL Not even read?

GE Well, no. Oh, you could read the Bible, but that's all. But Uncle Dick would always take us children for a walk down to the river on a Sunday afternoon; that was permitted. But I remember a time, my husband in those days had a motor bike, and I remember when I was staying up here, he said, "I'm going to take you somewhere beautiful this afternoon! The most beautiful village in Oxfordshire!" And I said, "Oh, where's that?" And it was – oh, dear – that lovely village on the way to Cirencester, always in the papers; and when we got back, you'd have thought we'd done a murder! It should never be! And oh, we were ostracised for the day.

JL How very difficult. Were you living in the same house at that time?

GE I was living in Sussex, but I used to come up. And of course my husband was my cousin, we were always very fond of each other, but it was preached that we shouldn't – first cousins can't marry, and that's that, and all of that, you're going to have that. It was difficult; and I suppose we never had the courage to – well, that's beside the point, but ...

JL And young people tended to do what their parents said. And they were backed up by the Bible, and that's the Word of God, and that makes it very difficult.

GE Yes; and also the marriage of Susy Clare to my Uncle Bill at Clanfield, they had children who were mentally deficient and that; in fact, every child that was born in the family, everyone looked at them to make sure that they weren't like the Clanfield children. So I suppose there was always that fear; and of course there were no pills in those days. They all died very young, at thirty, but they used to shake like this, and they couldn't speak, and...Oh, dear.

JL A sort of cerebral palsy it sounds like.

GE I've learned since that it came from their mother's side of the family, not the Eeles side. I believe that to be true, because there's never been anything on the Eeles side. So what it was I don't know.

JL They probably could tell you now. Times have changed.

What about church going? Was that very regular? Did everybody go?

GE Well, you see, being Plymouth Brethren, my aunt and uncle didn't go or anything; they went to their meeting house in Witney.

JL In Bampton generally, did everybody go to either church or chapel?

GE I suppose they did; I never really thought about it.

JL Because that's something that's changed, hasn't it? That people don't go; and I believe that in those days all the children went to Sunday School as well.

GE I suppose they did. I never went to Sunday School, so I don't know. I mean, I attended church in our village, Slimfold, in Sussex; my father used to sing in the choir, and as children we always were taken to church; so I was always Church of England.

JL The Church Choir also, I think, was very important; it was where people went to sing.

GE Well, this is it; I mean, Miss Molineaux was one of the choir, and Miss Chandler was.

JL And now our choir is so thin; and we didn't have an organist for a time; and we certainly haven't got a choirmaster in this church.

GE No, well, that was in the days of Warren Green, I suppose.

JL Yes; I saw a picture of Warren Green yesterday, as a little schoolboy. Black stockings he seems to have on, and short trousers.

GE He was a wonderful person. Oh, he was wonderful. I remember he was Music Master at one of the great...

JL Cranleigh. I think it was Cranleigh.

GE And my husband died in the September, and at Christmas he took me down to their carol service; that was his way of .....being nice to me: he said, "Would you like to come to the Carol Service?" I said, "It would be lovely, Warren," and the two Christmases he was alive he took me, you know. I did appreciate it, it was a lovely thing to do.

JL I think he was a very kind person; I think a lot of people have very fond memories of him.

GE And when he played the organ, well.... Who can pay it like Warren used to?

JL He wrote a wonderful poem as well; I think I told you; all about The Lanes and little tiny hidden pathways in Bampton.

GE Oh, yes; he was very knowledgeable; but I'm told – I mean, my Mary, that works for me, she said that apparently everything he left was burned.

JL Now the person that might know about that is Alice Pittatcourt.

GE She would know.

JL Is she Mrs Brooks's daughter, or... because Mrs Brooks was very close to Warren; she looked after him a great deal, and I think a lot of the village gossip went from Mrs Brooks to Warren.

GE That's right! Well, Aunt Alice – she's my Mary's Aunt Alice, so I always think of her as Aunt Alice – she would be able to fill you in with a lot; she's very bright, not like me 'a bit dim', you know!

JL You're doing absolutely fantastic; and it's amazing that you remember such a lot. I know that you played some part in the War. Tell me about that; because we haven't touched on that. I know it wasn't in Bampton. Where did you go?

GE Well, I was living in Worthing, you see; I had a flower shop in Worthing. At twenty-one – we never realized it – we were little entrepreneurs, my friend and I, we opened this flower shop. I inherited some money when I was twenty-one, I couldn't wait to get away from my father, because I didn't love him, and we decided we were going to open our own flower shop; which we did, in Worthing.

And we did very well.

JL Wonderful! Where did your flowers come from in those days? Nowadays they come in these big, almost refrigerated lorries, from Holland.

GE Well, in those days Worthing was famous for its tomatoes and flowers. There was greenhouses galore, and we were always very friendly with the people who had – well, they were all men, that had these big nurseries that produced carnations, sweet peas, you name it. And we had one man that used to import from Holland, small things, once a week. So we... well... and also we had another man who used to go up to market, to Covent Garden, and come down with his lorry full of flowers to sell us, you know, and if we wanted anything special we told John, and he would get it. It was all friendly, a wonderful way of doing business. We never made much money, but we had great fun.

But then when the War broke out..... By that time my partner had married, I called him my third brother, but he was not an Eeles, he lived in London, and he spent all his holidays with us, I've always called Ernest my third brother. So she wasn't called up, because she was

married. I was unmarried; and – I’m not being funny, all our friends, I’ve got – when I turned out those pictures I nearly wept for the pictures, you know; they were all in the Territorial Army, so they were all called up, and when I was told I’d got to do something I said, “Well, I’m going to join the Army!” The only thing I can do – because Jim had taught me – the only thing I can do usefully is to drive.

JL Was that unusual, being able to drive, for a woman then?

GE Well, it was quite. You see, Jim taught me to drive long before I left school.

JL So what age was that, that you learned to drive?

GE Well, I suppose I must have been about fifteen or sixteen. And, of course, never passed the test, or anything. And I made up my mind I was going to be an A.T.S. driver; and they sent me... They wanted me to be an instructor, but I wouldn’t. I said, “No, I don’t...” And I wouldn’t take a commission. “I don’t want to be commissioned; I don’t want any authority” – shall I put it that way?

JL Now, why was that?

GE Because I think I’d always had a lot of trouble with my father, and younger brothers, and that; and there again, the brother who was next to me in years...

JL Let’s go back to talking about your brother. Your brother was ..

GE The youngest one, who was seven years younger than me. I’d always looked after him, since my mother died when I was fourteen, of cancer, and I’d always looked after Ted; he was a pilot, flew Lancasters. He came through the war, and so did my other brother; he was a ‘Desert Rat’, with Montgomery’s chief of staff everywhere.

So of course I said, “I’m going to drive;” so I went to Camberley; we had a – was it six weeks’ or was it ten weeks’ driving course? – learning to drive these great big ambulances, we learned to drive everything. But then I became a staff driver, and I was posted to London; well, first of all we went to a holding camp, in Essex.

JL Was that where they decided where you were going to be posted?

GE Yes; and to digress, I met another great friend, and she was Dutch. We always said we couldn’t have got through the War without each other! But we were posted to London; we were attached to a Signals regiment, and the Old Brompton Road Tube station, that was requisitioned, and they did all the plotting down there, we used to sleep down there.

JL That was a sort of safe underground....

GE Safe from bombs, yes. When the sirens used to go, we used to have to go down there and sleep, which was horrible. And we were all stationed – do you know that part of London? – we were all stationed in those requisitioned houses, and they were so cold it was nobody’s business!

JL Of course we forget now-a-days, because we all have central heating; we forget how cold English houses were.

GE Yes; I shall never forget those awful billets. And, well, we had a pool of drivers. Sometimes we drove officers, sometimes we drove the men, which was much more fun! And I always say today, I would take three men out in my – in a pick-up in those days, if we were driving the men – I could go out with the men and never have a qualm. We were always treated beautifully; and that for me was what I think the young miss today; because it was a lovely... we never questioned it. Completely safe! And if they were spending all day on a site, because they had to do all the telephones and that, in those days the Zed sites had the beginning of television on them, and they would see that the driver had somewhere to sit, and make sure we had a meal, and... They looked after us, which was wonderful!

JL So is that a happy memory? And it's a funny contradiction; because it's wartime.

GE The only thing I remember with great unhappiness is going down in the Tube stations and seeing all those people sleeping on the platforms. There were we catching the Tube to go somewhere, and they would all be laying in their beds. Do you.. who was that wonderful man, that made that drawing of them?

JL Henry Moore.

GE Yes; and it's just as it was, yes.

JL They're looking like mummies, aren't they, rolled up in their blankets lined up on the Tube station?

GE At least we had billets to go back to.

JL Yes. It was a hard time, a very hard time.

GE It was awful.

JL People do have memories of things happening in Bampton, but they were minor compared to what happened in London.

GE Well, I always say Bampton didn't know what war was.

JL But everywhere had rationing, of course.

GE Oh, rations! Well, that's another thing we had to do at the shop.

JL Oh, let's talk about that!

GE Well, rationing; I'd forgotten about that, yes.

JL I can remember going with the ration book, and coupons were cut out of the ration book, weren't they?

GE I can remember my aunt and that, having all this paperwork on the dining room table, sorting it all out.

JL Do you remember amounts? Do you remember how much we were allowed each?

GE I don't remember; because I was in the Army it didn't sort of touch me; when we came up to Bampton, Uncle Dick ..... my husband saw the War coming, he was a partner with his father in those days, and he stocked up everything, he had things stacked away in various barns and places, ready for the War; because it was inevitable.

JL Yes; and that would be the only certain produce that you could store.  
I think in a way people in the country were lucky; because some people had chickens.

GE Well, this is it; and my father – you could have, I think, three pigs, and if you – you had to sell two and you kept one for yourself.

JL Yes. Most cottages around here had a pigstye in the garden; I know my cottage had two pigstyes up the garden. And next door's cottage had a pigstye just outside the kitchen window, so you see anything for them got thrown out of the kitchen window!

GE Yes; but everybody in the country had a pig, because you were allowed to – I think you.. I don't know, I think it was a ratio of two to one, you kept one but you had to produce two for the country, but I expect there was a lot of fiddling went on!

JL Where were the pigs taken to be killed, or did people kill their own?

GE Oh, that was the slaughterhouse.

JL Is that down Moonraker Lane?

GE Yes, where the dentist is now; and there was Charlie Ponder; he had a cottage down Cheyne Lane somewhere – I tell you who could tell you, Aunt Alice will tell you!

JL I must have a long talk to Aunt Alice.

GE I'm sure you will. She'll have a lot of Bampton memories. Because my Mary that works for me and is so good to me, she's her niece.

JL What's her surname?

GE Buckingham; she lives at Clanfield. But she was Tanner.

JL I've talked to her; because she came about a photograph; did she tell you?

GE Oh, yes, she did. Now she's got a wonderful knowledge of Bampton.  
And Buckingham is another Bampton name.

JL Shall we stop now? Because that's been .. It's lovely, and I really enjoyed it, because it's so interesting what you remember. I hope you've enjoyed it?

GE Oh, yes; this is the awful part when you get old, there's no-one to say "Do you remember...?" All my three brothers are dead, you know; this Dutch friend I was so fond of, she's dead; my business partner's dead – she died a long time ago. But it's funny; I see their son, he lives at Port Solent, he's about the only one that I can say "Do you remember?" - because as a small child we had a lot to do with each other, and he remembers things, you know. It's funny, there's...

JL And memory is important, isn't it?

GE Well, I think so. I tell you, they want me to write my memoirs!

JL Are you going to do it?

GE They've brought me a computer! But I never learned to type, you see. So I had a few lessons last winter, and I can sort of pick out things, but of course when the weather's

nice I'm out in the garden. And then the last four months I've had difficulty with falling and that .. but perhaps this winter...

JL It's a good idea; I think it's a lovely winter project. Get it all set up for yourself, and type.

We shall finish now, and we can go on chatting afterwards, anyway.