

Interviewer:

So this is Terry Ford on the 25th of July, 2023 at Places for People in Mowbray Road and I'm interviewing Christina Elliott about evacuation. So Christina, you said that you'd been evacuated during the war. Could you give me any details, please?

Christina:

Well, I was eight when the war started and at Mowbray Road School and my mam decided to send me my sister and there was a cousin and another friend, I can't remember her name, but there was four of us went and I remember going, my mam, we had to have two vests, two of everything, and we didn't have a case. So they were put a pillowcase. We both had a pillowcase to carry, put a label on your coat, see your name and that and we went to Kendal and there was a vicarage and there was the man and the woman, and they had two daughters and there was a cook, but we joined it. What was all prayers before your breakfast and we had lovely food and that there was never a shortage of anything. But we went to school there and then I was in the brownies with one of the sisters.

They'd been missionaries somewhere. The man was a bit religious she was, but we're there a year and my sister turned 14, so she had to come back to, Shields and start work. She left school. So we all came back. But of course the bombs started again. So we mam decided I had to go away again. So I was with my cousin, she was a little bit older than me, just a few months and we were sent to Keswick, well Thornthwaite, just outside and I remember in the institute, everybody just sitting around and people come round and picked who they wanted. They wanted boys and Joyce and I were together and we went to Thornthwaite Grange called them Wilson and I think he must've been quite important. I mean the house you had three and four bathrooms. Big house. Big house and we where there, for three and a half here. So we four and a half altogether, wasn't I?

Daughter:

Yeah,

Christina:

Yeah.

Daughter:

To think you've got some bits and pieces in here about his sister being, she was an author, Theodora Wilson-Wilson. Was his sister really. They had a chauffeur and his son and his wife were leaving for South Africa.

Christina:

The first time we went, we had to stay with the chauffeur's wife in the village because her son was taking his family over to South Africa and the had a baby and it hadn't to be in contact with anybody. It was only two or three nights and then we went to the Grange.

Daughter:

And when you went and lived with Mr. Wilson, he took you up to a mine, can remember going to mine?

Christina:

Yes.

Daughter:

He owned mines in the hills.

Christina:

On a Saturday he would drive a car, but we went right up into the hills and they were all Canadians, soldiers and miners and they were mining for Wolfram and Shellite. I always remember that, Tungsten. Yes we used to up a few times. They used to spoil we.

Doreen Jameson:

You were one of the lucky ones

Christina:

We used to get Polo mints now?

Daughter:

Yeah,

Christina:

They were like polo mints. But they didn't call them that.

Daughter:

They called them life boys according to what Jenny wrote in 2009.

Christina:

Life Boys. Yeah. But we used to get spoiled rotten, have we're meals, you know have we're dinner with them and the big pots with the ...

Daughter:

Do you remember the teacher who wasn't very nice to you?

Christina:

Oh yeah, we went to school in Braithwaite, it was about a mile and a half away and there was only the head headmaster taught and this one teacher

Daughter:

Mrs. Joyce.

Christina:

And she wasn't very nice. She once kept us in because I couldn't find me sewing. I think we had more tears. I must have cried every day, I think to come home. But I had to,

Daughter:

You missed the bus and you had to walk

Christina:

Home. I had to walk all the way home.

Daughter:

Mrs. Wilson was furious and you never saw the teacher again, did you?

Christina:

No, I think I had something to do with the school. So I think they were quite influential people. But what we were treat well, yeah, they had two maids when we first went and then they joined the ATS. So we just had people from the village come and did thing. But we went back for a holiday when we were about 16, you know.

Daughter:

He left your money in his will when he died.

Christina:

He left us 10 pound,

Speaker 2:

10 pounds a lot of money?

Doreen Jameson:

No. Well, you were well treat then in that case, yes, because a lot of them went out and they weren't well treat.

Daughter:

Oh no. My dad had a terrible time. They run away. Terrible times, didn't he. My dad run away. He took his brothers and went it's all in there. You told Jenny all about it. I've been reading it.

Christina:

Jenny's book.

Daughter:

It's her year 12, 11, 9 project or something.

Interviewer:

So, I mean, you went away to evacuate. Do you know why your mom and dad?

Christina:

I think my mam was just frightened.

Interviewer:

She was frightened.

Christina:

I think she was just frightened. Anything happened.

Daughter:

They lived in Osborne Avenue and I can remember me Auntie Marion telling her about when she came home and all the bombing started again over the steps. Just Wharton Street and Spohr Terrace

and what have you all got bombed? Just after they came home the first time and that's why, because me mam's sister's 97.

Interviewer:

Because sometimes some people went away, but others didn't.

Doreen Jameson:

No, I didn't.

Interviewer:

So you stayed basically the full length of the war.

Christina:

Nearly all the war.

Interviewer:

Yeah. So I mean, were other people evacuated with you that you knew?

Christina:

There was one or two, but not a lot. There wasn't many because it was just a small village. So I think there was only the two of us.

Doreen Jameson:

I don't think there was many from Shields evacuated. No, I don't think there was that many.

Christina:

The bus was full

Interviewer:

There was a lot of people who was five and a half thousand on the first day. Evacuated from Shields? A lot of them came about 6,000 the next day. But a lot of them came immediately back very, very quickly back because there was nothing happening. So that was the reason.

Daughter:

Called it the phoney war, phoney war for a while. Didn't they.

Interviewer:

Was there anything else you can remember about What were your meals like? Well, you said there was some very good, no rationing.

Christina:

We never, there was a farm next door and we used to go with the can and get the milk and they kept chickens. So really we never...

Daughter:

They had an apple orchard as orchard. Who has those pictures of you in the orchard?

Daughter:

What did you get for your breakfast when you were at Kendal though? Can you remember?

Christina:

Kippers and milk to drink!

Daughter:

She used to spill her milk every day and get wrong off her sister.

Doreen Jameson:

Well we had a fish shop here, which was wiped out and only fish shop. The nearest fish shop was right down in Stevenson Street. We have to take, used to take a pie dish down to go and get these chips and then when you got halfway home and you started eat them, by the time you got home, there was never anything left.

Christina:

I know it was always dark on the night. People were always breaking something because you had to have a torch when you were home. You couldn't go out without it.

Doreen Jameson:

We used to go to the cinema and then halfway through when the sirens went off, you had to come back out. But it was blackout. There was no lighting. It was total darkness and I know, I remember my mother had a name plate. It's not my turn..

Christina:

It's all, right it doesn't matter. It's best.

Doreen Jameson:

My mother had a name plate Watson, that was my maiden name and she had this brass plaque on her door, name plate. Everybody had them years ago, had name plates and when my father went out, when he came back in again, he had to feel on every door. He used to feel for this name plate for this name plate to find out where he lived. Because it was total blackness. You just couldn't see a thing. Inky black.

Christina:

They took all the railings.

Doreen Jameson:

Yes, they took all the railings down. Mother had railings around the house, had any spare pans. Yes. and anything you had they could melt, meltdown. Yeah,

Christina:

I mean I don't think I was only unhappy all the time.

Doreen Watson:

Oh no. But

Christina:

I mean we used to have a few ...

Daughter:

Aunty Marion used to sing you, didn't she you?

Christina:

The lights of home and make us cry.

Doreen Watson:

And make you cry.

Christina:

That's what sisters do, isn't it?

Daughter:

Not in my house.

Doreen Jameson:

I can remember you couldn't buy sweets, chocolate and sweets was out of the question. They just weren't there and from school, we used to go from school and buy little Turog loafs. They were tiny little, they were that big and they were the shape of a bread a Turog. Yeah, I know the name. Yeah and we used to actually buy these little loaf and it was bread because you couldn't get sweets. You couldn't buy sweets.

Christina:

Well, bread was on, everything was on ration.

Doreen Jameson:

But it was just outside the school. It was a bakery and they used to sell these little Turogs and the kids used to buy it Because it was something to buy because you couldn't buy sweets.

Christina:

We used to get Bournvita and dip your finger in it. It was like Ovaltine, but you didn't have sweets

Speaker 5:

And licorice root. The kids used to chew this licorice root. Can you remember the licorice? She loves, still love it. She still hate it because there wasn't, and I think the first sweets that came out were Poor Bens. They were like little round licorice and they called them Poor Bens and I think that was about the only choice you really had sweetie wise.

Interviewer:

So when would that be about?

Doreen Jameson:

Well, that would be near the end of the war, nearer the end of the war when the ration books came out, we got ration books and you got so many, so much for potatoes. You could only buy so much

potatoes, egg powder because the eggs weren't available. The egg powder, everything was on ration.

Christina:

Well, when we were married, 1953, we were still were still on ration books. Still.

Doreen Jameson:

Yeah and clothes. You got so many. I remember when my brother got married,

Christina:

Utility,

Doreen Jameson:

His fiancé, everybody in the family donated so much of the clothing coupons so she could get an outfit to get married in. Not a wedding dress, just an outfit.

Daughter:

No, me Auntie Marion didn't. She had a suit, didn't she?

Doreen Jameson:

She had a suit and a hat and it was through everybody handing in a voucher

Daughter:

You had a wedding dress in 1950.

Christina:

In 1953. I had a wedding dress, but I think I was ..

Doreen Jameson:

But that was 53. But I mean, I'm talking a lot sooner than that. That was when the clothes was on

Daughter:

Ration.

Doreen Jameson:

And I think he got married in the demob suit. Probably that the fellas came out with demob suits.

Christina:

My brother was in the Merchant Navy.

Daughter:

Were any of his kids born by the time the war started? Well, there must've been because she got pregnant. Got to get married.

Christina:

Yeah. Yeah, they had, he was away more. Well they had two and the They would have two. Yeah.
But eh

Doreen Jameson:

Well let's hope it never comes back to that again.

Christina:

Well, we don't want another war do we!

Doreen Jameson:

No, but it's looking very ..

Christina:

One of the maids I first had, she lived in Workington and I remember they took we there for the weekend and they used to tell ghost stories and it was about supposed to be real and somebody called William Moore, he killed a woman. But they had a song, remember the song. There she lay...

Daughter:

William? William Don't Murder Me or something.

Christina:

Yeah.

Daughter:

You used to sing it. Don't when I was little.

Christina:

Yeah. I can't remember now. I'm 92. Wonder. I could remember anything. But no there was...We used to spend a lot of time on the hedges picking rose hips and they made the rose hips syrup with it. I don't think I had an awful lot of education. Really?

Doreen Jameson:

Yeah. Then there was a hoo-ha in the town because there was a shop opened...

Christina:

Oh, they attacked it

Doreen Jameson:

The shop opened in Westoe Road and they were selling horse meat because you couldn't get meat and they used to sell horse meat and then next door to it, there was a tripe shop and me mother used to send me, I had to stand, you could stand at least an hour in a queue outside the shop for tripe, which it revolted me. But there you go. That was, they ate that kind of stuff because there wasn't, there wasn't anything else.

Interviewer:

So was the horse meat shop, did it stay long or was it ...

Doreen Jameson:

I can't remember. I don't think it would somehow, but I vaguely remember looking at the meat as a child and it was green. No, that's true. That's true. Now whether it was supposed to be that or whether in packaging, I don't know. But they used to have it in slabs and it just stayed in my memory looking green this horse meat. So between the horse meat and the tripe, not a nice time.

Christina:

Was it a shop in Ocean down Ocean Road called Sieber or something?

Interviewer

Yes

Doreen Jameson:

Sieber's was, that was the pork shop. Well they got a real hammer. Windows was smashed in and that, they were German, you see. They put all the windows in and everything. People went right against them. There were Germans. But they were people who had lived here all practically all their lives. They were German Sieber, yeah, Sieber's Pork Shop. That was in Ocean Road. Yeah. It was next to the Oriental.

Christina:

I can't remember just being told about it.

Doreen Jameson:

No, I remember. I remember Cassie, the girl that ran it, called her Cassie.

Christina:

No it wasn't a very fun time.

Doreen Jameson:

No, it wasn't a fun time. No.