

Transcript of Tape "MEMORIES OF MARLOW"

No. 1, 'The First World War'
Collected by the Marlow Society during 1988-90

Interviewer: Paul Burden

Contributors:	Percival 'Took' Plumridge	b. 1909
	Evelyn Light	b. 1895
	Harry Gibbs	b. 1904
	Lily Tucker	b. 1892
	Elizabeth Harman	b. 1888
	Dick Kimber	b. 1908
	Kath Sheppard	b. 1911
	Sidney Sheppard	b. 1913
	Margaret Dickinson	b. 1910
	Rhoda Fossey	b. 1911
	Arthur 'Nobby' Mitchell	b. 1908
	Lily Cox	b. 1907
	Cyril Chalk	b. 1908
	Trevor Saint	b. 1920
	Annie Rockall	b. 1899
	Ivy Tagg	b. 1907
	Florence Hall	b. 1909

Paul
Burden "What's the earliest memory you have of your childhood, Mr. Plumridge?"

Percival
Plumridge "Well, the earliest memory I think, is leaning from my bedroom window and hearing a newspaper boy running down the street shouting 'War declared'."

PB "And that would have been the 1914/18 war?"

PP "Yes."

PB "In Marlow, the most obvious physical reminder of the war to end all wars is the memorial on the Causeway. But there is another record in the minds of those who have lived long enough to remember those years. Their memories tell not only of the anguish of the families of those who were killed and injured, but also of the passing of an old order - a world of big houses and armies of servants - a society where the major sources of work were domestic service and the land and where the internal combustion engine had scarcely begun to challenge the supremacy of the horse. A world which has all but faded into history but comes vividly to life again in the voices of those who remember.

Evelyn
Light "The Boer War - I was alive in the Boer War though very, very young. I don't remember anything of it, of course. Nobody visualised that there would ever be another war and yet this town used to be full of Germans in the summer. We had three German girls as paying guests from Hamburg (the father a rich Hamburg merchant) to see English life and to live in an English house and meet English people. I was practically educated on German girls, I always think. I was at boarding school then and they would go to all the parties, the garden parties and the croquet parties and older people loved it because these girls, brought up very strictly in Germany, would curtsy always to an older lady if they shook hands with her. My mother says she is perfectly certain now that they were all spies."

Harry
Gibbs "And that time the Regatta finish was at the Rowing Club, Marlow Bridge and, of course, that's when the bridge used to get crowded. At night time they used to have a concert at the Rowing Club and all the people used to get on the side of the bridge and, well, have a jolly good evening. And I can remember, once down there, old Charley Moore, he was the chauffeur to Johnny Langley and he was a good comedian. He had everybody in stitches in there and, of course, then they got to the rhythm of what everybody was singing and playing and all the people on the bridge got swaying with the bridge. Gawd, that went swaying backwards and forwards like a skipping rope."

PB "They could make the bridge sway?"

HG "Yes, and I don't know, I think it was Inspector West come rushing across, he said "For God's sake, stop it, stop it or the bridge will break, it can't stand no more of that" and of course, later on than that, they stopped a lot of the people standing on the footway of the bridge then. Of course, at that time they used to have these little lamps with candles stuck in them to decorate the bridge all along. There are a lot of those lamps about the town today."

- PB "They used to put candles in lamps all the way up the bridge?"
- HG "Yes, decorate it all the way up. Newman and Chalks used to do the job."
- PB "What year are you talking about now? Before the first war or just after?"
- HG "The first war, that was done."
- Florence Hall "There were eleven in my house - eleven children so when you earned a penny running errands, you went and bought yourself a lump of pudding."
- PB "They used to sell rice pudding in lumps?"
- FH "Yes, it used to be thick - not a lot of milk in it but it was good for you if you were hungry."
- PB "Can you remember anything else that you used to eat as a nipper that they wouldn't know today?"
- Annie Rockall "Well, swede, they don't eat swede nowadays do they - cut it up in little lumps, put it in a bag and pretend you'd got sweets."
- Ivy Tagg "Used to go out for a pennyworth of cheap sweets down by where Burgess is now, it used to be Carter's shop, and we used to go into Bartrams shop which Mr. Young used to have, then Mr. Bartram had it. We used to have two pennyworth of specky fruit."
- PB "What was specky fruit?"
- IT "Well, all kinds of fruit that's all going a bit touched, bad, that they don't want, you know, they mixed it in a bag and you had that. You cut the best out."
- PB "So there'd be apples and oranges....?"
- IT "Yes, anything that was there for tuppence."
- Percival Plumridge "The street was our playground really, there was very little traffic - mostly horse-drawn and, well, we used to play marbles along the gutters. Fag cards - stick one up against the wall and knock it down with others."
- PB "You flick a fag card with another fag card?"
- PP "Yes, and the one who knocked that down took all that was there."
- PB "Was there much in the way of organised sport? - football or rugby or cricket?"

PP "No, nothing of that sort, you made your own amusements in those days, at home and outside."

EL "I used to bowl my beautiful great big wooden hoop down the middle of the High Street when I was only seven years old; which shows how barren of traffic the roads were. People all came to church - they came in their carriages and pairs to church on a Sunday morning and it always fascinated me because we sat in the vicarage pew on the right and the men would come in top hats and tail coats from the house parties at the big houses. One of the big houses here called Blounts, about a mile and a half out of the town, Madam Melba would take it for three months of the summer."

PB "Dame Nellie Melba was this?"

EL "Dame Nellie Melba - the Australian great signer, and she would bring her whole house party to church on Sunday morning. The men would never kneel down, they would hold their top hats in front of them, like that, and I used to say to my mother 'why do the men never kneel down? and what are they doing with their top hats?' and my mother would say, 'they say their prayers into their top hats. They can't kneel down'. I said 'why can't they kneel down, we have to?' 'Oh well, you see darling, it would spoil the crease in their lovely trousers."

Lily Tucker "My hubby was called up. He had to go in the army and I was left with my little girl and then he came home and I had a second child. He was in the army and I was left with the two and I never saw him for four years."

PP "Food was very, very short and, of course, there was a lot of training of soldiers at Marlow Common, which is still called 'The Trenches' and I can remember them marching through the town to the station. I have one memory, I believe it was somewhere out in the fields near Bisham, but I'm not certain of that, I can remember being at Bisham and there used to be a pear tree in Temple Lane and we boys had picked a lot of these pears and we were throwing them to the soldiers as they marched by. I can remember that."

EL "First of all, old Sir George Higginson, an important man in the parish, who lived in a beautiful house on the road to Henley called Guildenscroft (it's now four flats, I believe) he was an ex-guardsman, he'd fought in the Crimea as a young man and as an old man he lived here in retirement. And he stood at the corner of the High Street to welcome a batallion of the Scots Guards. They were all in camp, almost immediately when the war broke out up at Bovindon Green, a little hamlet just above the parish, and the ladies of the town used to run a sort of canteen for the soldiers of this camp. Mother and Mrs. Hides used to go up two days a week to help in the canteen and one day a car came along. There was always excitement when a car came along - we never saw any cars you see, and in it was a chauffeur and two ladies sitting on the back seat. It stopped by the side of my mother and Mrs. Hides and the chauffeur got down and said, could mother direct them to the guards' camp and then one of the ladies leant forward and looked out of the

window and it was Queen Alexandra and she was perfectly sweet, I think she might have given mother and Mrs. Hinder a lift but she didn't offer one. They were going to the guard camp, she couldn't find it and she wanted to meet her Godson who was stationed at the camp."

Elizabeth Harman "1914, I was living down in Quoiting Square then. I'd got the children then when the war broke out. 1914 I lived in Quoiting Square in the little cottage next to Platts."

PB "What did your husband do for a living?"

EH "He was a painter/decorator."

PB "And what happened to him when the war came along?"

EH "Oh, he had to go in the army. He went in the army, of course, he was called up, you see and the soldiers all used to come in the Square in the morning for parades and I used to get in the bedroom window and watch them because we had walls put round to protect us from the bombs. Supposed to have been bombs going to fall, you see and we had part of a wall built round the houses. That was some time ago."

PB "That was the first war you were talking about?"

EH "The first world war and all we could see was to go up in the bedroom and look out of the bedroom window over this wall to see into the road."

PB "What did your husband do in the army during those war years?"

EH "He was what they called a Batman - Officer's you know.... and he had a lovely officer and his wife and she used to send me baskets of fruit in sometimes. "Take these down to your wife" she says, "she might like them." I never knew her - never saw her, but she was often sending me little things down because she told someone I was good to her husband. Yes, he was a nice officer, he was."

PB "Do you know what the regiment was and do you know where it went to during those war years?"

EH "The Berks and Bucks Light Infantry, my husband was in."

PB "You were a little girl at the time of the first war. Quite young yet. What can you remember about it?"

AR "Used to borrow a barrow and get a quarter of coal for the fire and coke. To the station to get the coal. Used to walk down there with the barrow and bring home a quarter of coal."

PB "Was coal scarce at the time?"

- IT "It was. Coal, everything was scarce. We used to have a truck, threepence from Mr. Greens, that's at the bottom of Dean Street next to the little shoe shop Mr. Bristow got, threepence a time and we used to go all up the Common and get firewood twice a day on the truck. We used to do that. We'd got no coal, we were hard up. The rent was half a crown a week - it was a lot of money in those days wasn't it?"
- PB "How much wood could you get in there from Quarry Woods - was it free for everyone to go up there and get it?"
- FH "Oh Yes, we used to pick up the dead wood, but you could take as much as you wanted - as much as you could get home anyway. You had a job getting it over the bridge with the horse and' carts coming along. But you had to take a fair bit home else you got no dinner."
- PB "So it wasn't a question of doing it for fun or pocket money?"
- FH "Oh no, you had to do it for keeping warm because there was nothing else that would do unless you wanted to sit cold, which we did, didn't we? We put our coats round the doors at night to keep the draught out then took them up to bed to put them on the bed to keep you warm, put them on in the morning to go to school."
- Dick Kimber "We were aware of shortages, we were fortunate probably being on the farm and we killed two pigs a year and that kind of thing. We always had plenty of fat bacon and we were brought up on fat bacon - never any lean - it was fat and I can see the kitchen now. The sides of bacon hung from a beam in the kitchen and when we wanted a bit of bacon we simply cut a joint off and that was it. And, of course, we had poultry and milk, of course. No, I think we were fortunate in that way. I suppose sugar rationing hit us as much as anything."
- Kath Sheppard "We didn't have any real gentry in Marlow. Not what you would call real gentry. We had General Sir George Higginson that lived along West End."
- PB "Why do you say you wouldn't call him real gentry?"
- KS "Well, we had no real gentry. General Sir George Higginson wasn't liked in Marlow. He never bought a thing in Marlow - everything came from the Army and Navy Stores in London. And if a fellow that was out of work went and shot a rabbit, he was a magistrate wasn't he, and he put him inside."
- Sidney Sheppard "Yes, Oxford Jail, yes."
- KS "The gentry that we had was at Bisham Abbey. That was Vansittart Neales and they owned Bisham Abbey. and the daughter was our Guide captain. She owned Bisham Abbey and she owned all the land, the village, everything and ever since they turned from Roman Catholics to Protestants, there was never a direct heir - there never was. She lost her brother at fourteen and then her sister had two sons and they were both killed in the war and the Abbey was given over to the National whatever it is."

SS "There has been a female handed on ever since?"

KS "Mrs. Liston, she was a magistrate from Liston Place and her maiden name was Forest and when her brother went into the forces in the first world war, my uncle worked there and he went with him as his batman but they were both killed."

PB "You were a Vansittart Neale, at least through your grandmother's side. A fairly grand family. What sort of society would a family of the Manor like that have enjoyed?"

Margaret Dickinson "The people in the next big house - we were not snobs, but of course the village was the village and gentle folk were gentle folk but you didn't think of those things in those days. For instance, I remember my cousins talking about exchanging cricket matches with the Astors at Cliveden - that was a routine matter, house matches."

PB "And where would those have taken place, and do you know what form they would have taken?"

MD "Oh, they could have taken place in what is known as the Warren, which is now part of the sports ground land, or it could have taken place at Cliveden."

PB "How did a big house like that entertain itself?"

MD "Well, you had sixteen staff in the garden and you probably had ten or twelve at least in the house."

Rhoda Fossey "My brother George was nineteen when he was killed, but he was married. He was killed in the war, but I didn't really think about it at that age - I was not really concerned, you know, but my mother was very upset. I can remember her standing at the mantelpiece and saying that she had had this letter, this telegram saying that he had been killed. I remember his widow. She had a child and my mother brought him up because she didn't want him. So that was ten of us, you see, she brought up."

'Nobby' Mitchell "There were some big families in those days, you see. We go to Bovington Green, there was one family of eleven, Newells. The Moores were nine, the Sparks were nine, the Horsburghs were six, the Mitchells were seven, the Bucklands were four. You see, the little school at Bovington Green there was nearly a hundred pupils. They come from Woodend, you see, the Balkwells. The grandson is there now, six boys in the Balkwells and two girls. There's the Bradfields from Hollowicks which is just in between there and Rockwell End out in the middle of the field. There were six of those. They used to walk from there to Bovington Green School"

PB "Marlow has changed a bit in the 80 years that you have lived here."

NM "Well, everybody knew everybody and everybody was friends. That's what I can say of Marlow in the old days. You didn't hear anyone say a bad word and you could leave your front door open and nobody would ever come in."

EL "My father died. He had a stroke. He died at 59 worn out by the sorrows of the first world war and the appalling casualties in the town, out of proportion to the population of young people. Every day it was a common occurrence. Every day to see the telegram boy with his funny little round hat on his head and his red bicycle go up to a house and you knew he was delivering a telegram to say that the son had been killed, or one of the sons had been killed. All that prayed on my father, I think very much, the awful, awful sorrows and the ghastly amount of casualties in this town and remember the population was only 5,000."

PB "What are your earliest memories of farming and farmwork from your childhood at home?"

DK "I can remember the first world war very well. My father was farming at Hughenden and he was Chairman of the War Agriculture Committee in those days and we had a crowd of German prisoners who were sent to help labour on the farms and they lived just up Hughenden Valley. And they were a fine lot of fellows - all six footers, the Prussian Guards and one of the conditions - we employed six of them - and one of the conditions was the guards delivered them in the morning and they had got to be escorted back to their camp at night. I was only a youngster, but very often I was sent to escort them back they would take my hand and I was the escort!"

PB "Your husband was in France was he?"

Lily Tucker "Yes"

PB "Was he able to write back to you - what sort of things did he tell you?"

LT "Oh, he never told us much. He used to ask me to send him a parcel and candles."

PB "Why did he want the candles, and what did he want in the parcel?"

LT "They were in such a state. They used to light the candles and burn the things on their clothes. We used to send him anything in the parcel!"

PB "They used to use the candles to burn what on their clothes?"

LT "'Cause they were in such a state out in the trenches."

PB "Would this be for the lice?"

LT "Yes, yes."

PB "So he wanted candles to burn the lice off his clothes?"

LT "Yes. And then I used to send him cigarettes in a packet - five at a time. I used to sat on them so they were alright. He used to have them for himself, you see. If the others saw them he had to share them."

PB "So you used to pack them so that he could have them all for himself?"

LT "Yes, five."

PB "How often did you send him a parcel?"

LT "About once in two months, cause we didn't get much to make a parcel. No."

PB "Do you know what regiment he was with?"

LT "The Ox and Bucks."

Lily Cox "At Bocker End, you see, we had the troops all round there because of the trenches. They were practising, rehearsing, in the trenches actually there."

PB "Did you used to go and watch them as children, what did you see?"

LC "Oh, we used to love to get down in the trenches and play but mother had two of the soldiers billeted on her. I can remember when you talk about the lice, mother finding that in the bed. I can remember going to search in the bed with her. We had lice."

- PB "That was a problem with the army?"
- CC "Yes, She went to the farm and said that she couldn't have them unless they cleaned themselves up."
- LT "I had my children, you see, nobody else didn't worry me. Then when they were little, tiny, I went to work at the Brewery. My next door neighbour had my two children, I worked at the Brewery. I made some shells for the army."
- PB "These were artillery shells?"
- LT "Yes. And I used to go six o'clock in the morning and come home at five in the afternoon. I went every day, all but Saturdays. I used to come home at eleven and I used to have to come home and have a good clear up and do all my washing."
- PB "But it meant, I guess, there was a bit more money coming into the house."
- LT "Yes, we had sixteen shillings a week for doing all them hours."
- PB "What did you actually do with the shells, what was your job?"
- LT "Well, I used to make shells and they used to pack them and send them away to be refilled. They wasn't filled down there. A big lorry used to fetch them when it was dark. And it used to load them up and then take them away to be filled."
- PB "So that was a lorry. The lorries had begun to appear during the first war?"
- LT "Yes."
- HG "I used to know the old rowing team, old Frank Clark, Bob Toovey, Jack Shaw, er Donnan."
- PB "Of course, quite a lot of people didn't come back. There's that long list of names on the War Memorial. What did people feel about all those lives that had been lost? How much did people think about it?"
- PP "I was too young really to take in that sort of thing. I mean, you noticed a lot of sadness around but at that age you're bouyant. I mean, hopscotch and marbles and hoops and skirmers were more important, really."

IT "Yes, they were good old days. But they were hard days. But they were happy."

PB "Why were they happy? What are the good memories? Can I ask each of you in turn?"

FH "Well, for one thing, nobody had anything. You all had just the same as each other."

IT "The only happy time was when you went down to Jack Langley's on May Day. We used to take a garland down there. "Please remember me garland, it's the first of May" and he used to give us all tuppence each didn't he, Flo? We used to queue up for this tuppence and nearly all the Marlow School used to go down there and wait - down St. Peters Street."

PB "Who was Jack Langley?"

IT "Well, he went away as a millionaire."

PB "Did your father get called up?"

Lily
Cox "Yes, he got called up twice. To me, I was terribly disappointed because everybody at school said "My dad's in the army". My dad wasn't in the army, but he is going to get called up and he was called up. We went to school that day. "My dad's gone in the army today". My dad didn't go in the army. He had to come back on the farm because he couldn't use a rifle. When he was a boy of nine he fell off a hayrick while he was working and broke his arm and it never got set, so he was no good to the army because he couldn't use a gun."

PB "How did you feel about that?"

LC "I was disappointed, I wanted my dad in uniform like everybody else. Quite disappointed that he came back and he'd got to work on the farm."

PB "Did you change your view as time went on?"

LC "Oh yes, oh yes, when you saw the tragedies you know, everyone coming home and crying that their father had been killed, yes, we were very thankful that dad didn't go."

EL "This dreadful war, the casualties the awful casualties. All my generation were killed, all my boyfriends were killed. I had to destroy a photograph the other day because I couldn't bear to look at it. The picnics on the river and every single boy in it had been killed. It had a frightful effect on people. It was a wicked, wicked war. The Bishop of Buckingham, who was the vicar of High Wycombe, he lost three sons, all at Marlborough, all one year after the other. The three sons were killed. Families didn't lose one son, they lost two, they lost three. It was that wicked, cruel trench warfare."

EH "He was in hospital when he was wounded. He was brought back to Chelmsford and they came and said to me would I want to go and see him. I said I would, so I said I'd got no money so they said you go to General Sir George Higginson who lived in the big house. Do you remember that? And I went to him and I asked him if he could help me to get to see my sick husband. He said "You're like all soldiers' wives, you ought to save, you know these things would happen, you ought to save for that sort of thing." Well, we had no money to save for anything like that. I went home and told my mum and dad. They kept a butchers shop as you turn in Spittle Street. So mum says, "Don't worry my duck, we'll get you down to see Bob sometime". So I went by train and I had a baby in arms. I had to go to Chelmsford. I got to Chelmsford. I sat on the platform there. A soldier came along and says "What are you doing here, where to you want to go?" I said "I want to go and see my husband". He said "Where is he?" I told him the hospital. He knew you see, so he took me to the hospital. He says "You come along with me". He could have took me anywhere, I wouldn't have known. I went to this hospital and there was a woman sitting outside and they said "You can't bring that child in here". "Well, " I said, "What am I to do?" Someone said "I'll look after your baby" and this person looked after baby while I went to see my husband and his first words were "Where's the baby?" and of course, I couldn't see him properly because he was all bandaged. His face was all bandaged. His head and shoulders, you see, were wounded and so, of course, I couldn't see much of him. I said "Well, where's my husband?" so the soldier boy said "I'll take you to him". So he took me to him. Oh, do you know, I cried, cause I said "Oh Bob, fancy you being like this". He said "Well, I can't help it, my duck."

NM "It was the same with the old general. You see, when we were kids, he gave Bovington Green School to the children of Bovington Green."

PB "Which old General was that?"

NM "General Higginson"

NM "The school house which is the school house now, Bovington Green School and on the wall "Presented by General Sir George Higginson to the Children of Bovington Green". How the Council got hold of the deeds to sell these places, I don't know. But every birthday he had when I was at school at Bovington Green I was there, I went when I was five and I come away when I was seven and I went to his place at least four times. All the children from Bovington Green went there on his birthday to tea - afternoon tea and games on the lawn."

PB "What was that like?"

NM "Oh lovely, well it was a treat to us wasn't it? We used to be taken down there in the old horse and cart and that was it. We used to have all sorts of games, play on the tennis court, play croquet, yes and he was there. He used to come out and make a fuss of you. But when he would sit on the bench he was quite different. He was quite an old rascal on the bench. He'd give you six months if you pinched a rabbit!"

PP "I started at the infant school, which was in Oxford Road. It's still much the same now to look at and I can remember, the headmistress was a Miss Salter, very well, what we would now call a 'fine figure of a woman'. And the boys were segregated from the girls in the same room. The girls were given dolls to dress and the boys given plasticine to play with and I got told off for looking at the girls dressing the dolls. It wasn't proper."

KS "My father was in the war, like and so I couldn't have been very old. They used to have a town crier come round every Saturday about mid-day. He used to stand in the square where the buses are now and tell everything that was going to happen the week because people didn't buy newspapers - couldn't afford it I suppose and he'd tell you if there was a concert on or if there was a sale someplace or anything happening at the school and he went round to each square ringing his bell about mid-day on a Saturday and that is how you heard your news."

PB "Is that true? It sounds like something from ancient history."

KS "No, I mean I'm talking about when I was about three or four years old. I mean, I went to school when I was three - between three and four, because my father was gone to the war. My mother had to go to work, my eldest brother was at school and Miss Salter, the governess, came down and she called my mother. She said 'What's Kathy been doing playing in the Square?' She said 'Well, I'm at work' so she said, 'right, send her to school.' so I was sent to school between three and four."

PB "Who used to pay and organise for the town crier to come around?"

KS "I don't know, It was a Mr. Fletcher and it was Mrs. Fletcher who used to ring the bell at the funeral. When it was one ding it was the death of a child, when it was two it was a female and when it was three it was a man."

PP "Towards the end, I think a little of it did come through, because the news used to be posted up in what is now the clothiers in the middle of the High Street. I believe it was Walter Davis's then and the latest news from the front used to be posted up there in the window."

LT "He was away four years. he came home one night at 12 o'clock and knocked at my door and said 'Can I come in?' I said, 'No you can't' I didn't know it was his voice and then suddenly I opened it and he said 'Don't come near me, get me a bath of water' to take off all his clothes and put them in the bath 'cause he was in such a state."

PB "How old were you when you were married, and how old was your husband when he went away to the war? Can you remember?"

LT "I was 21 when I was married and my little girl was two and then he went away. He had to go away and then after he went away he came home and I had my second girl. She was only a baby and when my hubby came home from the war she cried. She ran in the street and said 'There's a man in my mum's bed' and the next door neighbour came out and said 'What were you doing to her?' I said, 'Mabel, tell her what's happened' so she said, 'There's a man in my mum's bed' and then his aunt came up to see him and she said what was I doing to her. I said, go upstairs and see and she went upstairs and there was my hubby there. Four years...."

PB "Britain was at war with Germany at that time. Did they look like soldiers? Were they in uniform? Was there much hostility towards them?"

DK "They were in German uniforms except on the backs of their tunics there was a circle of white, I think it was, which really denoted them and they were really a high class type of fellow, the Prussian guards and we really got quite, you know, really fond of them. I believe my mother used to break all the laws there were and give them a little bit of food at lunchtime. They were terribly strong. I can remember them pitching sheaves of corn. It wasn't one at a time, it was at least two at a time when our men would do one at a time."

PB "Do you know what feelings they had towards contributing to the British war effort?"

DK "Well, we had no trouble whatever with them and they really worked hard - totally different from the type we had in the last war. In fact, when the war was over and they went back, I can well remember when they stopped at the farm and said goodbye to my mother there was quite a good feeling between them all the time."

LT "My hubby went out with three mates and he never came back with one. He was lucky to come back himself. Mr. Sawyer down there, his father was one of them come back with him. They two came back together."

PB "There were many who didn't come back?"

LT "No, a lot didn't come back."

PB "Your father was away all this time at the war, did you get much news?"

PP "Very little. He tried to join up straight away because being an old soldier and a first class rifleman, etc., but he was supposed to have something wrong with his heart. They wouldn't take him and eventually they took him into the Royal Flying Corps where he served as batman out in France. But we had very little news from him until he came home, which was a great day, of course."

PB "Can you describe to us what happened the day he came home? Do you remember?"

PP "Well, I think everybody cried."

Cyril Chalk "I had a peddle car like they have now. I have great memories of that because I heard over the grapevine that on November 11th 1918 that the Armistice was about to be signed and I can see myself now rushing down the High Street in this peddle car waiting for the Brewery siren to say that peace had been declared."

Lily Cox "I was still at school and I can remember the day war finished. Two teachers had gone into lunch and they came out and she said, because at Boocker End as we were always the first at school it was our priviledge to ring the bell and she said 'Will you go and ring the bell and ring it really loud' and the people came from the Talbots, from the big house. I caught hold of that rope and I pulled and pulled the thing over and that was the end of the bell ringing."

PB "But that was to mark the end of the war?"

LC "Yes."

EL "I was terribly affected by the death of all my boyfriends. That did have an awful effect upon me. I don't think I ever got over it. Because a woman said to me why have I never married but I said 'Remember, my generation were wiped out, literally wiped out'."

PP "I don't remember much about the end of war other than the 'flu epidemic, which was dreadful. That was just before father came home. I had had it a long time previously, thought to be poisoning of some sort and then my brother and my mother went down with it at the same time and left me to look after them. Nobody would come in for fear of catching it because it was a dreadful epidemic - a tremendous number of fatalities."

PB "Were lives lost in Marlow?"

PP "Oh yes, many from the 'flu, a great many and the vicar came around and he said that a lot of people he had seen had turned black after they died and he thought it was the black death."

MD "The memorial is rather fun. There used to be a huge tree there, an elm tree, where all the village lads and lasses did their courting. It was very, very old and it was there in the days that William and Mary came over to England in 1688 - I think that was about the date - and it fell down during world war one and that was the spot that was decided by a Miss Kelly who at that time was renting the Grange from the Vansittart Neale family. She had lost her brother in the war and she decided to put up a war memorial herself and she was very

on the ball, she knew all about Eric Gill, the famous sculptor, so she selected him to put up this memorial. Meanwhile, the village naturally had ideas on putting up their own war memorial and why should the rich person at the Grange put up a war memorial in the village for her brother while we had to go and just have a war memorial in the church and I have always been told by my cousin that the temperance in the village was very, very bitter about this. Finally, peace was decided and both the Kellys and the village shared both the church and the village war memorial."

Trevor
Saint

"I can remember on Armistice Day singing 'Oh Valiant Hearts' as a solo and seeing the poor ladies who had only lost their husbands a few years before dabbing their eyes and I thought that was wonderful, but I now look back on it, having been in the war myself, what a dreadful thing it was.

PB

"Do you mean there was a sort of gap between the reality of what had happened.....?"

TS

"Yes, there was. When I was a lad I didn't realise the war had only been over a very short time really and there were still one or two people at the church who were gassed and had very bad health and I can remember one very nice man, Mr. Plumridge, who died when I was quite a small boy as a result of gas and they added his name to the war memorial, the tablet on the wall. You can still see it now, done in a slightly different form on it and there are still a lot of people walking around with artificial limbs and that sort of thing. As a lad, it was talked about, but you didn't realise the reality of it. I didn't realise how dreadful it had been - not until I was a bit older."

MD

"Alas, this year, 1989, for the first time they have not held the Armistice service there. They have laid a wreath in the church but not at the Eric Gill war memorial, simply because, well, two reasons perhaps, one because of the traffic perpetually going by. Secondly, alas, memories are becoming fewer and fewer about the boys who were killed in world war one."