

Interview with Miss B. Hadlow, aged 84  
67, Orchard Valley Hythe.  
Recorded 26th Sept. 1989.

Page 1. Born in Prospect Rd Hythe in 1905. House  
since pulled down.

The White Hart - father worked there for Cobay.

After school worked for Millicent Jones, milliner.

Mr. Cobay, Mayor presented Empire Day medals.

Moved from Prospect Rd to St. Leonard's Rd.

Father worked for School of Musketry, later the Small  
Arms School, which moved to Hydd in 2nd  
World War.

Page 2 Living in Barrack Hill. A shell came  
through roof, & was taken to the ARP post  
in a bucket.

Choral Society, conductor Gilbert Lamb.

Miss Jones, milliner, in a shop next to Walter's  
shoe shop.

Training as milliner, began at half a crown  
a week, rising to one pound or two pounds

Page 4 1st World War bomb in Cobden Rd.

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Maidstone, working in a canteen.

Returning to Hythe, doodlebugs

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Hop picking near Maidstone

The Institute, Mr. + Mrs Farmer (Mayor)

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reading room + library, also plays.

The Pavilion, The Stade and The Stade  
Court Hotel.

**Interview with Miss B. Hadlow, aged 84**  
**67 Orchard Valley, Hythe**  
**Recorded on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1989**  
**(Typed verbatim from recording tape – February 2003)**

Well, I was born in Hythe in 1905, so I am 83 years of age now. When I was a child, I was born in Prospect Road in a house, it was a lovely house but it isn't there anymore, it's been pulled down, and there is a garden there, and shrubs, nice shrubs and some kind of flowers, I think. Anyway, we had very happy times there and I went to the Sunday school from there and my sister too. My sister started school before me and of course, I was lonely when she went, and I said to my Mother, "I want to go to school". So Mum said, "you can't go to school, you're not old enough". – "I am old enough", I was saying this, you know, and my Mum didn't know what to do with me. So in the end my sister said, "alright, I'll take her", so I did go and I got to the step of the school, of the St. Leonard's School, here, to go up the alley to the school and I said, "I'm not going", so Agnes said, "not going, you must go, I can't stand here and leave you". So I said, "I'm not going", so she said, "all right, then I'll leave you then, what are you going to do?" "I'm going round to see Dad". And I went round to Dad at the White Hart where my Father worked for Cobay and he had to leave his work and take me home. Well, what happened to me after that, I don't really know, I don't know whether I got a box round the ears, or what, but I expect I got a good grumbling.

There was a little alley at the back of the houses in Prospect Road and we used to play along there, my sister and I, with the other children, and we had a dolly's pram and we trained our little cat to sit in this thing and we played with it. Poor little thing, I don't know what happened to it. Anyway, one day some children came to the door and said, "Please, can Agnes and Bessie come out to play?" "No", Mum said, "we're going out this afternoon". "Can we have the pram and the cat?" Well that was my early days.

I finished up at the school here, and my sister too. Then I started work at Millicent Jones, which was millinery, and we were trained there, and we really made hats there from the beginning. And all sorts of hats we had to make. We had one lady, she was very, very tall, and we really had to laugh about her, because she was something to do with the army and they were going to India and she wanted special hats and all that sort of thing. And one hat we had to make was, it was going circular, the lace was going round circular, and it was about half an inch wide. Can you imagine the work we had to put into that? We had to laugh because when we saw this lady in that, she was so tall, it was like a pimple on a drum. Anyway, she was a really nice lady and I think they were living at that time at Lympne.

Anyway, my Father, he was working at Cobays, and Mr. Cobay was Mayor, for quite a long time, I think and on Empire Day, which was held on The Green for the school children, Mr. Cobay presented us with some kind of medal, it was on red, white and blue ribbon with a brooch, and it had got the Hythe whatsit on it, and I've still got it. And I think I've still got my sister's too.

Then the war came, well before the First World War, I remember that, and we moved from Prospect Road to a house in St. Leonard's Road, a very nice house and we were all very happy there. And then the war came; my Father had to leave to go into the army. He served overseas as well, and when he came home after the war, he said, "I don't think I can go back to working indoors, having lived the outdoor life", and he felt so well with it, so he got a job at the Small Arms School, well it was the School of Musketry then, and he worked there until he retired. But when the Second World War came, of course, the Small Arms School here moved, and the men were all asked, would they like to stay here and work at Lydd, or would they prefer to go away. My Mum said, "Whatever happens, I'm not going to leave my home", it was on Barrack Hill then, you see. So Dad worked

down at Lydd, he was what they call a something employee, an army employee, I don't quite remember.

*"Civil Subordinate"*

Yes, yes, something like that. And that's what happened. Of course, Mother, she was up on the hill all by herself, surrounded by soldiers. We had a lovely cat up there, and the butcher used to come and bring him little bits of meat – that was Newman's at that time. Mum was doing something in the front room, and she saw something lying on the floor, she picked it up, with that, Mr. Newman was at the door with the cat's dinner. She said, "look what I've just found in my front room, and there's a hole in the ceiling, too". "Good gracious, Mrs. Hadlow", he said, "that's a shell, have you got a bucket". She said, "Yes, I've got a bucket". "Well, for goodness sake put it in a bucket and I'll take it down to the ARP", which was down the bottom of the hill. Of course, Mum realised what it was and what could have happened to her, you see. But I wasn't here then because I had left Hythe, because there was no trade, you see, all the trade went. And in any case, the styles of the millinery changed so much and you'd got to have special blocks and all that sort of thing for it. Well, Miss Jones, she carried on after we left, and sometime during the war she was still here, but after that she had to retire.

*Whereabouts was her shop?*

It was next to Walter's shoe shop; it was there, now it's been all sorts of things I think. But when I go past there, the step is just the same, we used to go in there, and there was a lovely garden out the back. But when I left Hythe I went to Maidstone, and of course, our life as a family had all been singing, Mother and Father were singers and we were in the Congregational Church choir here, all of us, my sister and her husband too, Jack, and any other friends that we picked up on the way. We even had practises at home on the piano after we had practises there. That was our life, and Mum had a very good alto voice, very strong voice, a lovely voice. Dad was bass, my sister was mezzo-soprano and I was first soprano. Even now, at 83, I'm very proud to say that I can still sing in tune, and I can sing the top register right down to the low register if you know anything about music, do you? I can sing up to F, right down under lower C. I do a frightfully good range even for anybody, let alone at 83. Anyway, that's blowing my own trumpet, isn't it? And I couldn't do that to save my life!

*Did you go singing to other churches then?*

Yes, with the choral society, we all joined the choral society under Mr. Gilbert Lamb, and we used to have some lovely practises up at the church. We used to practise in the church and of course in, there were the Miss James' with their beautiful voices.

*Were those the schoolteacher ones?*

Well, yes, there was Daisy and Winnie, but Kathleen, she was never a teacher, I don't think. But she had a marvellous voice, she really did, she would have done well on television in these days, she would have done marvellously. And then of course there were all the bass Barnes and Freddie whatsisname, and the schoolmasters, some of the school masters, they were in.....I knew them all and we used to do all the oratorios – I've got them now. And Handel's Messiah, the whole Messiah, I've sung that many times now since then, all well into Maidstone where I lived. I was in a choir there. And so that's our lives with music, you see.

*What choral society was that?*

The Hythe choral society. Mr. Lamb, he was a very tiny little man and he used to sit like this,... beating time whilst I was looking at music. And one day, he stopped us all, "sopranos", he said, "I've got a sharp there, count your music back, what have you got a natural or have you got a sharp?" And of course we all looked at each other, - "Well, you're supposed to sing what's written". We had good times in those days because we had to make our own good times and being all in music, you see, - I wasn't in it, but my mother even did Carmen, that was at the Institute - not as a play, just the music. And I've still got that music, I've got all sorts of oratorios, I really have, that I've sung here and there and whatever. So, as I say, it's been my life and I'm still singing.

*What happened to the choral society?*

Oh, I don't know. I went away, you see. I expect it disintegrated, maybe Gilbert Lamb finished up or whatever, I can't remember.

*It didn't start up after the war, did it?*

No, I don't think so, not as such. But the Saltwood choral society, that was good, and they were doing Mendelssohn's Hymn of Praise and Mrs. Wiseman who lived over the road, she said, "do you think you would like to come and help us in this little play?" I said, "I know it very well indeed, I've sung the solos and everything in it", so she said, "Would you like to come and help us at the Saltwood choral society because the sopranos seem to want a stronger voice". And so I was able to go and I thoroughly enjoyed it except for being cold in Saltwood Church when we had to sing it. Our new church along at East Street,...-our poor old church has been pulled down, it's so heartbreaking when you see what you've done in an old church and the memories that are there, you know, the families and all this sort of thing, but there you are, it was tumbling down and we had to spend such a lot of money, a thousand pounds here and a thousand pounds there, we just couldn't cope with that sort of thing. So it had to go, but now we are a thriving church along there, everybody is happy and the meetings are good and all that sort of thing.

*It's certainly warm down there isn't it?*

It's warm, too hot have you been in there?

*That's where we have the Civic Society meetings.*

Oh, yes, I believe you do, that's right, yes. Oh yes, it is warm. It can be too warm but the seats are so comfortable, better than the old benches that you get in church.

*Going back to when you trained as a milliner, what was your training like, and can you remember how much you earned to start with?*

Oh, I had half a crown a week, I was apprenticed.

*And how long were you apprenticed for?*

Two or three years, I think, but after the first year I had a pound and after that I had a lift up to One pound Ten as it would be then, or Two pounds, I just can't remember. It wasn't much, but in those days it seemed a lot of money, but it isn't now. Well we had trimmings to do, you know, ribbons and all sorts of things, bows and whatever to make, and we even used to make wire shapes for

crinolines, sort of. And I even got the nippers, little nippers to do the ? ..... you had to make....you had to have two rounds, and you had to join the rounds together so that you had a spoke out here and a spoke out there and it was a bit of a job to start them you know, because it sort of went here, there and everywhere, but we did some nice ones there. And we made lace hats, you see and they were transparent sometimes. And then, everything came to be blocked, all the London styles were on blocks and all this sort of thing, and we didn't really have the trade then. The trade began to fall away and this sort of thing. So Miss Jones said, "We can't carry on like this, you'll have to find something else", so I went away, you see, but then the millinery trade really did give up. It's only just coming back now, because royalty are keeping to their hats, that's what it is. And these great big things - I'd never keep one on, what with me handbag and me stick, and holding this on, I wouldn't half look lovely wouldn't I? (Much laughter).... That was the end of the millinery, really.

But, going back to the singing, I always loved singing and I still sing. I can't join our choir because of transport and going out at night, and I won't go out at night. I don't go out at all unless I have transport, because the old leg won't go properly. But I do my bit, singing in the congregation, if they don't like it they'll have to tell me to shut up.

*Can you remember anything about the First War; did it make much difference to Hythe?*

No, it didn't really make a lot of difference. No, I can't really remember all that much about it. I suppose we did have something, we had something drop in Cobden Road, as far as I can remember. There was a nurse who lived up there, I was very young, I can't remember the name. I know that we went up to Cobden Road to see what was going on and there was a crowd of people but I couldn't find out anything, so I went back to Mum and said, "I can't see anything, Mum, I don't know what's going on". When I was a child I was naughty, my sister was a bookworm, but I wasn't, oh no, I wasn't, I wanted to be out playing, My Mum wanted me to do things, but I said, "oh no, I want to go out to play," and she said "you do what you've got to do." I used to go up the street in St. Leonard's Road, there are some bungalows built on the fields we used to play in, they'd got trees there, I used to climb these trees, the boys went up so I went up. I went home without a belt on my dress one day and my Mother said, "Where's your belt?", "I don't know, Mum," so she said, "you went out with it on" but I thought afterwards it's most probably up the top of the tree. It makes you laugh to look back on things like that doesn't it?"

*What shops can you remember that are not there now?*

Oh well, Bushels is not there, as Bushels now, but of course, over the top, its about the air something or other, - propeller, the screw propeller, that's right. I mean, I have passed up and down there ever since I've been born, but I can't tell you exactly what its like. Then of course, Bon <sup>Children</sup> - Marché, Mr. and Mrs. Britcher, that was a big shop and I know that is now made into several shops, that property.

*And that was where?*

<sup>Cook's</sup> Swinnards Agency now, for holidays, in that area, and there are two or three shops there. And of course, Duruz was there, the florist and that isn't there any more.

*Was Britchers the fashionable dress shop at the time?*

Oh yes, it was. And then there was Miss Inge, that shop is still there, but of course it isn't Miss Inge now and they are good class people.

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*What do you remember about the arcade, what was that like?*

Oh, yes, the arcade. There were nice shops there, all sorts of different kinds of shops, you know, gift shops, whatever. But before that, of course, it was the cinema. And a lady by the name of Miss Beech, she used to play the piano there for the pictures and she asked me once if I would go and play for half an hour for her, so I said, "Alright", but of course, I didn't play the right kind of music, did I? She was used to following the picture and all this sort of thing and playing, well, you've got to, you see, but I don't know what I was playing; anyway the manager came and said, can't you play something more cheerful. So that was the end of that. Then after that the cinema was at The Grove, where Gateway's car park is and that was a very nice cinema that was. And then after that of course, it closed and it went to the Ritz, but now, its all flats isn't it now?

*Can you remember any of the films you saw at the old Picture Palace?*

Oh, it was all Charlie Chaplin and all those sorts of things. Well, no, not really. They were very good. The one at The Grove was very comfortable, very nice, and so was the old one. The one where the arcade was had galleries each side and one at the back, my boyfriends and I used to go. We didn't paint the town red but we enjoyed ourselves in those days.

So, then came the Second World War, and we all know what happened there. I was in Maidstone and I finished up working in a canteen at the church canteen there. We used to get queues right out to the door and right out to the street, we worked like slaves, we really did, we didn't have the equipment then as we have now, and all that sort of thing. Everybody wanted chips, they all wanted chips. They wanted egg, and you know what the egg was, powdered egg, ugh. At one time I had to be in charge, the other girls and women, all voluntary, were looking to me because they didn't know what to do. "What do I do with this?", "Well, you mix it with water, don't put too much or else it will be stodgy, if you don't put enough.....". That powdered egg nearly drove me mad when I was telling these girls what to do. Then it was time for me to go home and I said, "I'm going, girls, you know what to do" and all that sort of thing, and "you've got plenty to do." And they said, "you can't go, you can't go." And I said, "why can't I go?". "The air-raid is on and the guns are going." I said, "if the trolley is running, I shall be on it", and I was. Mind you, I was a bit scared. Anyway, I got off the bus at the right place, it was dark you see, and you can't see, the blooming guns were going, the lights all shining round. I ran as fast as I could up the road and got indoors as quick as I could.

*Were you able to come back to Hythe during the war?*

Oh yes, well I kept house for my uncle who was retired from the Metropolitan Police, you see, and when we came down from Maidstone to visit Mum and Dad, we were all stopped at Norrington's garage. All the cars were stopped. We thought, what will we do, we'd got to go on to Hythe, but my Uncle said, "It's alright". The police came up, and we were on the top deck and he looked at my Uncle and looked at me, and said, "Where are you going?" "we're going to Hythe", and there was something went on between those two policemen, my Uncle and this other policeman, I never knew what. I said to my Uncle, "how was it we weren't turned off that bus", and he said, "Well, I've been in the police force, haven't I?" So we came down you see and we used to be able to do that. I've no idea, how my Uncle made that man know that he was a policeman, but there are ways and mean, I suppose, little signs, or a trick of the eye or whatever, could have been a sign of his hand or fingers, I've no idea. So that was coming down here in the war time.

When we first had the doodle bugs come over I was here by myself, I'd be left by myself at home, and there was this noise going on. Up there, we had a big window, it looked out over this way and I said, "Dad, look at this, whatever is coming over has got a light on it," and it was making an awful noise. So Dad said, "I don't know what it is, but lay down in the hall, all of you." We lay down in

the hall until it went. That was the beginning of the doodle bugs, that we saw. Of course, we had an awful lot and I've got a map, you've seen it I expect, about all these doodle bugs, horrible things, and of course, I went back to Maidstone and the next thing was broad daylight, one of these things came and there was a children's school at the back of our garden and I don't think the children were there, but I was there picking raspberries, and it came nearer and nearer. I was transfixed, I couldn't move. And I watched it and watched it and watched it, but I didn't upset my raspberries. When it had gone right over I thought, thank goodness for that. Then you wait for it to drop, you see, you wonder where it's dropped and hope for the best it hadn't killed anybody – they were dreadful things. All those horrible weapons, they were terrible. And all the weapons they've got now are they're dreadful too. All these things that happen now, all what happened at Deal, just recently, it made me want to cry, it really did, dreadful.

I don't think I can tell you much more.

*When your Mother lived up Barrack Hill and when you went to stay there, I imagine you got a good view of the aircraft coming across?*

Oh yes, yes, we did, that's right.

*You weren't up there for the Battle of Britain, were you?*

No, actually, when Dad was away at Lydd, we decided that we would go hop picking for the nation, you see, we had a hop garden right at the back of our avenue, and so we went along there, up early in the morning. Mind you, we didn't make much money because we weren't the right sort, no, we didn't pass half a crown to the man who filled the basket, or whatever you called it. Oh dear, oh dear. I remember the Italians were coming over in planes then and all this was going on, the shrapnel was going, and I was at home because I'd got some cleaning to do and some food to get ready and Mum was out there with my Uncle, and I was scared for them; these things were coming over, and what I did, it was a house you see, we'd got stairs, I got in a corner of the dining room and it was attached to next door – I thought well this is the safest place to get, or so they tell us, and that's where I was when all these things were going over. But when Mother and Uncle came back, they made me laugh. The children were out there, "another one down Mum, another one down, - it's now one of ours." So you do get the funny side of all these things, but it's very scary.

*Whereabouts did you go hop picking?*

Right along the end of the avenue, this was ? Avenue, I don't know if you know Maidstone, well, it is so changed, since I was there.

*I know there are lots of hop gardens near Maidstone.*

Oh, yes, lots of hop gardens all round. There are a lot of houses built on that area now but it was at the end of the road.

*What do you remember about the Institute?*

Oh yes, the Institute, we had some good times there. There were dances there, you see and we used to go to the dances, whatever kind of hop they called it, we went there and Mr. and Mrs. Farmer used to run it. She used to play the piano and she had a small band.

*Is that Mrs. Farmer who we had as Mayor?*

Yes, that's right. Oh well, there were concerts you see, and even now we miss the Institute, we do really miss the Institute. It was central and you could have everything there. There was a reading

room and a library there – going up the steps, there was a library there. Of course it was a fire hazard really, because once you got in there were steps up each side right up to the rooms. I can't remember if there was a fire outlet at all, well you didn't think of things like that in those days.

*I think they did put one in at the back, if I remember rightly.*

Did they, well maybe they did. Well most probably they had to you see.

*Did have plays and things, and visiting companies?*

Yes, they did, another place was on the seafront. It was called The Pavilion. You know the Ocean, whatever it is, restaurant, round about there somewhere, if I can remember. Of course, it is all so altered. They had a little restaurant there and Mr. and Mrs. Farmer used to run that, as far as I can remember. They had dances there. Oh, I was very thrilled, made special evening frocks I did, and went up there with my friends and we had a dance and so forth. Even then, boys used to bring us home. I didn't know the boys, but I wouldn't do it now, mind you, if I was a teenager.

*Can you remember before Stade Court was built?*

Well, yes, I suppose I can really, because that has been built for many many years hasn't it, a good number of years.

*Just before the war I think, wasn't it?*

Well, I don't know. Of course, the Stade is where the boats used to come in and out you see, and now, of course, the fishing boats now are all along this end aren't they? I don't know whether they catch much fish locally, I believe they do don't they? I don't walk up there at all. We had many picnics on the beach, and I've got plenty of photographs showing the family. Sometimes, if I'm looking for anything I turn these out and that's fatal, you usually don't finish your dusting. I don't think I can tell you anymore, unless you can think of anything.

*Tape ends.*