

Gillian Gates

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Dymchurch, Kent

Interviewed by Lynda Ryan & Iris Pearce on behalf of the Hythe Local History Group (HLHG)
Transcribed Verbatim.



My name is Gillian Gates (formerly Thomason) I'm 77 now. I was born at Borstal which is a village in Rochester. My grandfather was a prison warden in Manchester and they moved down to Borstal to build the first Borstal Institution. My cousins have got a fantastic history of that, but that's by the way.

When I was a few months old, we moved to Greatstone my father was injured during the war in the Royal Navy and carried on lecturing and teaching within the Navy until after the end of the War. He was an Engineer and came to Greatstone because my aunt and uncle lived there and they built up a toy business. My uncle designing, and my father making the toys. Then along came Triang and some of those other big people so they stopped. Dad was searching for engineering premises because he was a mobile welder among other things, and anything he could do for fishermen and farmers who during the War had no work done. They couldn't get their ploughs repaired - that sort of thing and he was mobile for a few months. He went to all the local Councils trying to find premises to start his Business and Hythe Town Council offered the old refuse site which was behind the David Ian factory by the railway line and I have got lots of photos.

Describe growing up in Hythe and any childhood recollections.

And so we moved into Hythe when I was nearly 5 and lived in Orchard Valley. I started school at St. Leonards, my older brother and sister had started at New Romney and then we all started at St



Gillian Orchard Valley Bridge 1963

Leonard's and we were there almost at the same time. Lovely memories of that school I'm so sorry to see it as a bit of a tatty housing estate now - it could have been nice but it isn't really. I was in the building which juts onto Stade Street that was the Primary infants class - Miss Sculliford - anybody my sort of age will remember her and then we went into a long red building for the rest of the infants and then we had our own playground (got photographs of all this) then next to that was a bigger playground for the Junior School, which was the building as it is now, that's now houses. Loved that school. I've got a friend who's 10 years older than me and much to my surprise, she had more or less the same teachers -fabulous memories of those teachers. My sister became a teacher and she thinks that's where her desire to become a

teacher was from Hythe Junior School. We played on the Green and played rounders and shinty. The green was our playing field and as well as everything else, the Green was used for. After I left the Juniors, I didn't pass the 11 plus, I had no intention of doing that because I wanted to go to the technical school and we took an exam at 13 called the 13 plus and I went to the technical school in Coolinge Lane because that's where my sister had gone. When I was 11, I went into the huts on the green, which is now the Primary School I believe. There were two huts there with four different rooms in them that's where I met Janet Oakley nee Dowle, who's just died, and I'd continued to know her right through my life she taught us shinty which is a form of hockey on the Green. When I was one year in the Juniors Miss Done was my teacher, but I knew most of them anyway. For the 2nd year at St Leonards secondary school, I was in the Manor house at Hillside Street, so you come down from the Church the Vicarage was there that old house and I used to go to lots of parties there with Jennifer Newman that was when the Newmans were in residence there. Next to that was the Manor House and I had a year there and that again was fabulous, how lucky were we? I went there to somebody's house opposite there a few days ago and I looked down and there was a window at the side of the door of Manor House and it's obviously a separate thing and that's where our school I could see in there and that's where our school secretary was. We had the run of that building, we had the run of the garden and there is and I hope still, I mean there was and I hope still is, a mulberry tree in the middle of that garden and we used to sit there and eat the mulberries. I got confirmed when I was at school and I've got photographs of that and that was at Saint Leonard's when I was 12 or 13, I suppose. Then I went off to school at Folkestone, at the technical school that opened up my eyes if you like. I've got friends in Folkestone, Ashford everywhere girls came right from Lydd - that's a whole other story. They came by train to that school. We were from a very big area but again I loved school. I was so lucky to stay there until I was 17.

Then my dad had Hythe Engineering and that got bigger. My mum did all the office work and she used to do the wages at home right from, sort of eight years old, I would help her count out the money, the cash for it all - so I always there. I had no anywhere else. My teacher training want to do that. I put, and I worked for up in Orchard Valley special. We, well, cars in Orchard Valley. can't think of the think it was Mr Terry from us. So I lived at little row of houses as Some people call that



Hythe Engineering Factory C under construction 1970 approx.

the wages, and do wanted to work intention of going sister went off to college I didn't wanted to stay my dad. Growing was something there were two My dad had one. I other one, but I who lived along 41, which is that you first go in. Green Lane and I

think it is, but our address was Orchard Valley, still have friends around Orchard Valley, but we were a group of children, from within about five years of each other, we were not the youngest, but the nearly youngest, and we played all over the place. We had the canal, we had the canal bank, which was open, not like it is. No, it's more open than it was. The top path was all bushes and we had camps and God knows what. There was no roadway or anything. We would cycle along to the dam. That was a really big adventure, but we had great fun round the valley itself. We had all our games that we played in the street because there were no cars came round. I don't know when that started to happen, but cars occasionally, visiting cars, would go in the dyke and that sort of thing. So my dad had the equipment to get people out of there and there were always one or two children who fell in the dyke and fell in the Canal, it was quite normal. In the winter, the Canal froze right over opposite the light railway in 1962. We were right opposite the Light Railway. The Canal froze over. Now that was in 1962, in the winter of 61/62, I think it must have been, the Canal froze over and that was a



serious freezing over I've never seen it do it since and we could get down opposite our house in Orchard Valley we could get down onto the canal it was all easy then not all overgrown like it is now., and so all of us Orchard Valley-ites would go down on the canal and have skating sessions and it wasn't dangerous, there weren't even watery bits at the sides. I mean, we learned how to deal with that. We knew when we could skate and when we couldn't. When I say skate, we were not on ice skates, nothing posh like that, just us playing with the toboggan and that sort of thing on the ice but that's Orchard Valley. We roamed the Canal down to the dam that was sort of like West Hythe which was like another foreign country really and then we'd go up the Roughs. Some of us weren't allowed up the Roughs as there were older boys who did naughty

things like shoot, rifle shooting, and things like that, my brother but I won't name any others- they know who they are and then we'd go up London Road and into Redbooks Wood.

We spent a lot of time in Redbooks Wood. We weren't allowed onto Sandling Park because Major Hardy had a gamekeeper and he would shoot us my dad said so I still think of that every time I go up there, so that was Brockhill Park, and the lake up there was strictly forbidden, but I think the older boys of Orchard Valley and probably elsewhere in Hythe did go on to the lake onto the island and see the grave of whatever it was a dog or cat, whatever was there but I digress. We also went up to Leany's Woods(Heany's), that sort of thing. It's not really Leany's Woods (Heany's), but I know that's what I know it as, so Orchard Valley was lovely.



At 11 I went to Folkestone for school and we'd get the bus at the Light Railway it was very important which bus you got on. We'd go round the corner and get the 10 or the 10 relief. It was very important which bus you were on and where you sat on the bus and you met your friends on the bus. It was hilarious and coming back especially as you met the boys on the bus. When I got to my teens, I had a very great friend, Brenda Blackman, who I'm still friends with and still lives in Orchard Valley, she worked for her father in the fish shop in Red Lion Square, which is now houses - Blackman's Fish shop. Brenda would meet me off the bus and we'd walk home down Military Road. One day she met me off the bus, and said, "Hello auntie" and that was to tell me that my niece had been born and I was 16 then. That's how I know it was 1962.



Gillian & Brenda Military Rd 1961

Yeah, I loved my days at the technical school still have obviously friends in Hythe. Before that, go back to when I was, say, 13, that's when Brenda and I started to put ourselves around the town a bit, let's say and we went to the county youth club we were completely separate from the Church Youth Club. County Youth Club was in that building that was when I was younger. Infant School, the one that comes out onto Stade Street, and we'd use the lower room for the youth club, table tennis, and all that, and upstairs was dancing. I think we then moved over to the long red building that had been the Infant School, but that's vague and Cliff Woodward was our youth club leader. That's when I met him and continued to know him all my life, he was very involved in motorbikes and my dad - Hythe Engineering - sponsored their motorbike - that was grass track racing lots of local

people know about that, but that's also another story. Some of the blokes from our works did all the motorbikes, did all the mechanics for Cliff and it was a sidecar that's another thing. Yeah, the youth club was great fun. We went by coach to Margate, Dreamland it was good fun. Lots of people from there I still know or they're still around but I don't know them. I was at Tech by then and I had a friend at Saltwood and we started going up to Saltwood not cycling up Barrack Hill cycling down and we'd all meet on the green at Saltwood and it was just a whole gang of people. Boys and girls that took me up to Saltwood to know another lot of people. After that at 15 I had a serious boyfriend for

over a year and after him another serious boyfriend - he wasn't from Hythe he was from the outskirts of another village - I won't say any names. After that, I had another boyfriend from another village down on the Marsh and that took me to my socialising down on the Marsh - New Romney where we heard The Beatles and all that. In Hythe before that, we had the Institute I'm sure lots of people talked about the Institute that was so important to us- the dances and everything there, I think you know, we didn't know we were lucky. One of the things I noticed is missing in Hythe is the Police. When we were teenagers, we couldn't move there was always one policeman and it was always "I'll come and see your father." Well, you did not want that! He never did come and see your father, but the times I was caught - I was coming down Barrack Hill on my bike with bare feet and he stopped me at the bottom and told me off for that. Another time I was coming down Military Road and I was on the path by the canal it was one way then I think it always was one way there, unlike the High Street which was two-way early on and reversed in my lifetime - I was cycling down the footpath towards Orchard Valley and he told me off for cycling the wrong way I wasn't even on the road I was on the footpath, which is completely separate I wasn't allowed to argue! Another time one night, about six of us young ladies, we were 16,17, maybe 18 were in the bus shelter at the Red Lion Square, which was next to the actual fountain it had no light on it and for some reason, we were on our way to Tofts, which was the place where you met and danced at Folkestone, the Jazz club it was originally called and oh, I have friends with loads of history of that - they weren't Hythe people though, and we were doing handstands that's what I mean by young ladies. We were doing handstands in the bus shelter the light bulb had gone then this torch appeared and it was a policeman. Now I think it was Sandy, but it strikes me that there was Sandy wherever you were because there was a Sandy at Lyminge and a Sandy at New Romney as well, and "what are you doing in here?" we're on our way out for the night and we're doing handstands in the bus shelter – what were we like - that was my teen years!

We used to go shopping every Saturday morning in Hythe High Street we'd have fancy little baskets that would shop in with a list from our mothers, and that was a really important time to see and be seen. The traffic was going the other way then. We're coming down now in those days the traffic was going up the other way.

One of the things I didn't mention was the soldiers around Hythe. I mean loads of people I know



Hythe High St

mostly older ones married soldiers. I knew a few my age married soldiers. When we were young teenagers, they would be marching through the Town. They'd march from Shorncliffe to the Ranges and back again. There'd be 60 or so marching of course as teenagers would be going up Military Road, see the soldiers coming and it would just be catcalls, wolf whistles all the way they took 5 minutes or so to go by. I don't know if we loved or hated it but we were shy, we didn't like it much, and if it wasn't that they were in these great big lorries and they were all hanging out the backs of the lorries, wolf whistling and shouting and singing, you know. I'm laughing now but at the time we

were very embarrassed and shy about it we couldn't take the compliment if you like.

The High Street -I love that book by Rufus Segar I remember so many of those places. My mother used to come to Hythe as a child, but we all came to Hythe together so she didn't, she lived to be 100 and died 7 years ago her memories of Hythe were a lot earlier than mine she'd come down in a Charabanc or in her uncle's big fancy car and they'd go to the Paddocks, which was tearoom at the bottom of Marine Walk Street. The High Street is much as it was.

Let me move on to when I left school and started to work for my dad at Hythe Engineering Company and I would walk to work from Orchard Valley or cycle to work. At one time they were draining the canal, so they built a dam across the canal about where Jewson's is now - as we lived in Orchard Valley, I would just go down our side of the canal across the dam there and into work in 5 minutes instead of quarter an hour -that was fun.

What makes you happy about Hythe?

Although we live in Dymchurch now the Hythe side of Dymchurch as we always call it - we're still 2 miles from the village so we don't feel part of the village really. (I'm not complaining about that) and what I love about Hythe is the canal which comes very high on my list, whether it's the centre bit that's done or all edges that are not done and beyond the dam all those walks there when we had



Canal Summer 1988

dogs, we'd walk the canal the whole time. The sea is really important to me. In two of the houses I've lived in we've had sea views and I think that's what I really would like again - I'm only 100 yards from the sea now, but no view! I think the High Street is quite important in Hythe - we love those shops and it has a nice atmosphere. Sometimes it feels a bit empty, but that's the same as everywhere. During lockdown, we would walk the Marsh way as well, but we'd often drive into Hythe and walk all up round the hills. My parents moved to North Road in 1968,

my dad built his own house in North Road, and so all of that area I know well - the whole of Hythe. Also in lockdown, we would walk around the allotments right off Twiss Road because I started growing vegetables in lockdown, so I had to go to the allotments and see how their vegetables were getting on. We love doing all of that I digress – Hythe High Street.

What was your first job- how did your career or job skills change over the years?

I started work at 17 working for my dad in the office, where there was a man running the office at that time, but I had already done all the secretarial courses at the technical school, which was what that was for - technical school was what they should have now. You were academic there as well, but you learnt, we had a nursing side, a cookery side, a needlework side a commercial side, and a scientist side. They are talking about bringing technical schools back because that's where the apprentices have gone and the hairdressers. People don't need secretaries now but that's what I trained for Shorthand, typing, English language, and accounts. When the man retired at Hythe Engineering, I ran the office, and over the years I was company secretary. I had assistants working with me then. It was all men. I realised later that I did like that. That was a bit odd for me because I was the boss's daughter so nobody could tell me off really that was when I was 17.

When I was 19, I met Keith at Tofts - loads of us can say we met at Tofts - we were hit and miss to start with, but carried on and eventually did get married at St Leonard's. We've had quite a few christenings, not ours, family christenings, confirmations, and weddings at St. Leonard's. At that



*Gillian & Keith married Aug 1971 St Leonard's Church
by Malcolm McHaffie photo by Jack Adams.*

time, the Imperial was the place to go for weddings, my sister did that a few years before me. By then, my parents had moved into North Road and they had a lovely garden. They were very proud of the garden, so my wedding was a marquee in their garden and the vicar was Malcolm McHaffie. I don't know if any of you knew him, he was absolutely wonderful. He was not like a vicar. We were in our mid 20s when we got married, he was sarcastic is the only word and we just loved that, he was such good company. Keith knew him a bit better because he was going up and down to London to work then he worked in various places - Ministry of Defence, mainly in London. He would meet Malcolm on the train every so often, and they'd just talk, talk, talk, all the way home. Keith still says I got drunk with the vicar at our wedding but I don't think I did, but he was just lovely and he died a few years later. (Malcolm McHaffie). As I lived in North Road, we had to have our banns read at Saltwood we had to go and see the rector there as well as St. Leonards and as Keith is a

Folkestone lad, we had to have the banns read at Folkestone as well. It was one church for each week - three banns - which was quite unusual really.

So where am I in Hythe, my parents in 1968 moved up to North Road I lived there with them occasionally, but I also had flats, mostly Sandgate, and Cheriton, where was the other one that was Folkestone as well. Obviously, Folkestone was the place to be we used it for nightlife when we used to go Tofts or anywhere like that, we'd get the 102 into Folkestone, no, it wasn't the 102 they'll all correct me anybody listening to this - it's the 103. We had to get the last bus back, my dad was strict and I had to get that last bus back from Folkstone! I might have been snogging in the Vine place at on the Leas Folkestone but I had to get back for that bus and woe betide me if I had to ring Dad to come and get me. I had friends that thumbed they would thumb into/out of Folkestone but I had it drummed into me not to do that. Phone up and risk the wrath of Dad rather than thumbing or hitching a lift - I never did do that. Keith and I would spend a lot of time around Hythe but obviously Folkestone had more entertainment.

Going back to when I was a child, we used to go to the Saturday morning cinema at the Ritz and as we grew older, it was pictures every single week, every Saturday went to the pictures, the Grove, or the Ritz. That was very important to us we needed those places to go to. Going back to the High Street mid-60s, I suppose we got the coffee bar and I want to call it El Torero but I know it's not that and I do know the name. that was just wonderful. We bit later on came the Bastille, building is no longer there - I building - that was dark and Neil Sedaka's song Happy time I walked in and the time had arranged to play the could tell you what I was to go to and then as we got older, we inhabited, depending on your friendship group or your boyfriend, you went to their pub. So it was the Globe spent a lot of time at the Globe and the Three Mariners were the main ones for me. Whether I've been in all the pubs in Hythe I really don't know because there were so many of them weren't there - I remember going in the Dukes Head, only once or twice, I have to say and The Gate in Dymchurch Rd was another one



It was El Sombrero in Hythe High Street felt so modern a coffee bar, you know. A which was at the top of Chapel Street. The think there was a fight to keep that murky and you'd go in . I was 16 then and Birthday Sweet 16 was quite a hit at the music was playing - my boyfriend at the music as I walked into the coffee bar - I wearing too! We did eventually get places



quite important. When I was a child at Orchard Valley, we didn't have supermarkets and we shopped at Cooks and we knew all the family. My dad called him Captain Cook and Lofty Wimble worked for him, who was a stalwart of Hythe and mum would do an order and it would get delivered by bike and it was only across the road from the Canal at Orchard Valley. Minters a butcher a bit further up Dymchurch Road and then the main thing was the corner shop on the corner of Dymchurch Road, by the Light Railway and that was a sweet shop and I think we had ration book then my sister would have been in charge of it so I don't remember it terribly, but I can remember sweets coming off rationing I didn't know the significance but I remember the excitement. My friend, I know now who's 10 years older I now find out her mother was the lady in that sweet shop and it would have been the same elderly lady.

Next door, but one or two or three for what was a fishing tackle shop that's just been converted into a house on the edge of the Light Railway Station car park, which was Kays the hairdresser. I think it was Mr Gaunt and the shop was Kays, or it was he was Mr. Kay and the shop was Gaunts and that was the ladies' hairdresser. It took me until I was a teenager (I didn't go there) all our mothers or all the ladies for the whole area all had the same perm. They all went to that hairdresser and they all had the same perm - I realised that now I've never talked about that to the girls that lived in Frampton Rd, Fort Rd, Dymchurch Rd. But I expect we'd all say the same. I'm just jumping about a bit here, aren't I? We moved to Golden Valley which was newly built actually and Keith's mother lived in Folkstone we felt we had to be between the two mothers so that we kept it equal and we were there for 5-6 years and then we moved to Cliff Road Seabrook.

Memories of the 1987 Hurricane

We were there in the hurricane of 1987. that's something to talk about. I remember it so well (I've got photographs) we'd flown from Tenerife the night before and got in an hour early but we didn't know why, now we know that was the hurricane coming in. The friend that picked us up at the airport and brought us home told us there was high winds we got home about 10:00 at night. We had 2 cats and two dogs, but they were with my mother in North Road and we weren't picking them up until the next day. I was expecting a cousin and two friends to come the next day. When I phoned my mother from Gatwick - no mobile phones - only 1987 and no mobile phones or anything (we all lost phone lines in the hurricane and we couldn't use the phone) she said she'd keep the dogs anyway, 'cos we were late that night and she said, by the way, your cousin's already at your house. I said but she's supposed to be coming tomorrow night, she said. well, she's there now with her two friends. Anyway, so I thought blow me, I thought and got home and I don't think we were aware it was windy



After the Oct 1987 Hurricane .Keith clearing apple trees. Appletreewick-Cliff Road,

or anything, and yet we're very exposed. Our house had huge windows looking out onto the seafront we were level with (the golf course was there) the first bit of rough ground and then the Seabrook bit was over there. It was dark anyway; we weren't aware of anything. The cousin and her two male friends were going to France the next day and they just stopped off at us for a bed for the night. I don't know how early in the morning it was, but it was still pitch dark. Oh, those houses are upside down houses the two houses that we lived in Cliff Road, so it looked like a bungalow from the driveway, and that was the lounge, kitchen, blah, blah, and then you go downstairs to the bedroom, and downstairs a bit more to the garden. One of the reasons we wanted to move - we wanted to be able to walk out onto our garden, and that's what we've got now. So I think I got up about 5:00 am and went upstairs to the lounge, and I thought, what's that noise? I could hear a clanking and I thought it was metallic and we've got a metal back - a balcony out front with a metal railing, couldn't see anything no power. I could hear metal, and then I could hear things going down the roof. My Cousin appeared who was sleeping upstairs in the lounge. When I went up, she said good God what's happening Is it always like this? She comes from Sussex now she used to live in Hythe and went to the Marist Convent. What's going on - we couldn't see anything. Keith was fast asleep, slept through it, and the two men friends that were in our spare bedroom, they didn't know anything about it. When I started to see a bit of daylight, I could look out on our drive and I could see brickwork and I eventually worked out it was the inside of the chimney. It was white stone or concrete but blackened. and I thought surely that's the inside of the chimney coming down I heard it rattle down the roof breaking a few tiles and then the ones that went out the front hitting the balcony rail as they went down two floors down. Eventually woke up Keith anyway and woke up the cousins. My Cousin said my friend's a diabetic, he's got to have something hot to eat, I said we've got no power how are we going to do that? We've got cornflakes and milk he'll have to have that -I mean really! She just got on with it, she was going to France, she knew the area and she was



After the hurricane Oct 1987. Appletreewick Cliff Rd.

determined to get to Dover. You couldn't get through to any of the ships. We didn't know it was anything more than just Hythe you know, you don't. I suppose we'd got transistor radios we must have put them on, but she couldn't phone to find out about the boats. They were meeting a party from London coming down and all that and she told me afterwards she had to get up out of Hythe. There's always a problem with snow and you've always got a hill to

go up. Apparently, these friends of hers were so impressed cos she went up all of those hills with fallen trees, but she eventually got up onto the A20 and got to Dover, and the two men friends with her were just flabbergasted that she knew the way around. We hadn't got the dogs or the cats, we couldn't speak to my mother, so we drove into Hythe and we went to Charliers, who were in Stade Street then to get on their list for coming and doing our roof. I think they came out that day and put tarpaulin over the broken tiles -it wasn't a big area. Then we went up to my mother's she'd got huge windows with floor to ceiling curtains she didn't tell me for a few months that the cats had gone up the curtains and ripped all the curtains - the dogs were not too bad anyway I did leave the cats with her for another few days and took the dogs home. Then of course we had a look around Hythe and the uprooted trees I've got lots of photographs of them from a few days later when nieces and nephews came and stayed and they were about this big and they went down in the holes where these the trees uprooted it was awful. In our own garden, we were very exposed to the West winds but our garden was low, we had two apple trees that were completely uprooted, and they're just picked up and laid aside. I mean, it was incredible again I've got lots of photos, of course, and we still had no idea it was all over the South even London, I think, felt it, so really strong memories of that.



Hurricane damage on Hythe Rec Oct 1987

What historic events have you experienced?

One of the things to think about was had I lived through any or joined marches and sort of historic events and I haven't got any of them. My sister used to do the Aldermaston March but yeah, I did experience a hurricane.

What changes have there been since living in Hythe -good or bad?

Things about Hythe that have changed, not for the best, I came down London Road last night and seeing that awful Sainsbury sign I keep wanting to swear I will try not to! The Sainsbury's sign I don't know what the people on those estates up Hythe Hill or London Hill must think but you see that Sainsbury's sign and why do Sainsbury's need that huge orange sign? I think they fought for and there was a fight over it - but why do they need that the shop's not even open at that time?

Of course, I remember all the officers, and the small arms school that was in where Sainsbury's is why couldn't they do what Deal did and convert those buildings? That's a huge piece of land. There was loads of army stuff and of course the canal bank, the Soldier's Way as we call it which is now - what do they call that bit where they have - Holman's Field - that was Soldiers Way to me and it wasn't paved or anything, but that was our route to and from school, home, youth club and we stopped and snogged in the doorways of those places. There were lots of people about, like, after I suppose, after the war the men in black we used to call them and they had black suits, work suits, but they were suits and they were former soldiers that had retired and that sort of thing that worked for the Army and they were everywhere, running the small arms school, which of course was a huge feature of Hythe.

My dad invented a building system which he took to the ranges to see if it was bulletproof, and it turned out to be anti-ricochet - I'm getting technical now - so the bullets went in and stayed there instead of instead of ricocheting off bricks so the army took that up for training villages. Then we built training villages here, in Germany and Ireland as well for the soldiers to do live fire training and we were very closely working with the Ministry of Defence and all the people there that we knew and oh some of those soldiers were nice, the captains and that we worked with for designing because I did all of that sort of thing working on with lots of different things at Hythe Engineering.

I think it was the 80s, the Ministry of Defence had stringent cuts and they stopped doing that extra building and I suppose the villages we built were mainly for soldiers to practice before they went to Northern Ireland and all soldiers that went to Northern Ireland went through Hythe Ranges I mean, it was very important and I was only on the edges of it and I know that and then the Ministry of Defence cut all jobs so that that lost us a lot of work and Hythe Engineering went through several recessions and survived. Finally, the last recession we had a huge debt that didn't get paid to us and we couldn't do anything about it and we finished, we finished. So that was awful for me because it was what my dad had started the year I was born and it was very, very hard and we were making redundant men that I'd almost grown up with you know, it's very difficult, but I sort of took a year off and then I did temping for a while. Then we started up a business letting holiday apartments in Tenerife. I temped at Lawrence and now I think it was Lawrence Butler then before it was Lawrence & Co and I went temping as Tim Lawrence's secretary and I was doing maternity cover, but I then stayed on a bit and run by Mr Egan (I think), not selling houses but selling businesses. The lady opposite me was his secretary and she ripped this thing out of her typewriter and said, who wants to sell apartments in Tenerife I thought, oh, that's interesting. We did buy that business - Keith was still working, by then he'd moved to Dover customs and was doing shifts so that worked out quite well. We did that until we moved to Dymchurch 20-odd years later.

How were you affected by Covid?

I can see there's a question here about Covid. We managed well I mean we were living here we were very lucky. I started growing vegetables and didn't have any real problems. I was impressed by Hythe really because we all queued. We all did as we were told and that wasn't happening everywhere, you can still see the markers around Waitrose car park and you learned not to go when the queue was round there, didn't you and yeah, I think we were lucky to be where we were.

The thing about changes since living in the Hythe, good or bad. Apart from Sainsbury's - I do shop there- but why have they got that sign up that huge giant sign?

When I got married in 1971 and we lived on Golden Valley and I worked down Dymchurch Rd in Hythe Engineering, my dad's firm, he was quite philosophical my dad, the company was worker participation, which meant all of the men who wanted to own shares and Dad built those factories there - they've been reroofed now but over the years, 3 factories were built and that's where David Ian is now and I have been back in and had a look around my old office and my dad's office, which was upstairs. I don't know why I started that but that's just about the buildings.

Have any changes made you nostalgic for times past?

I think changes in Hythe yes - when we got married in 1971 there were no supermarkets, there were no freezers and I would shop at a shop called Haywards, next to the Gem, they were two different shops and the Gem was run by the Lafermes I went to school with one of the daughters, Marion, and she is still around and perhaps involved in this. Next to them was Haywards, which was as you know, food and all that sort of thing. I would go daily to Haywards and buy the food for the day for what I was going to cook that night. I was driving by then because that's how I got in and out of work - that's another story it took me 3 goes to pass my test, but I said that we learnt to drive and park in Hythe High Street and I always tease my husband about this - you learnt to park in the Hythe High Street cause it's really difficult. You bumped up to the one in front and you bumped up to the one behind and then you knew you were in - but I exaggerate didn't really do that, but that's what it felt like! I think only a year after 1971 we got a frozen food shop on Golden Valley, which was one of the early frozen food shops. So suddenly in 1972/3, we were probably all getting a freezer and buying

frozen food so we didn't have to shop every day .In Hythe High Street Vyes was the biggest one where Sunshine Cafe is now and that was a food outlet, I think that we then had International Stores and places like that, but I'm a bit vague about them, and so when actual big supermarkets came, I don't know, but we saw that change. I think we've seen so many changes like that. I mean I suppose in fifty years 20 year olds now will say there were big changes, I think we've seen a lot, haven't we? I talked about favourite pubs, restaurants Keith and my favourite was - the one that's in Folkestone now - Sotirios and where that was - well, I'm going to say where the Nelson was. The Nelson and two little shops next to it. I think they were both Martins, one was a sweet shop where Blue Shield is, and one was I think the children's uniform shop or a children's clothes shop. - Sotirios was our favourite restaurant we absolutely loved that and it was so special and we went for any anniversary, birthday any other places in the High Street I can't really remember as restaurants not that we used I used as an adult let's say. We had a Wimpy coffee bar, which was where Vyes was where Sunshine now is I think that was a Wimpey coffee bar felt quite modern with that, I think. Sotirios then moved to New Romney, sorry Greatstone, and we did go there a couple of times but thank goodness they moved back to Folkestone because we go there a bit now. We like some of the Indian restaurants. Oh, I tell you what our favourite other one in Hythe was the Royale, I always call it Royale Bengal because he had an E on the end of Royal which was next to what was Barclays Bank and it's just become something else - an art shop or a flooring shop you went up two steps. That was Paines the printers when I was a child and we used to go there for work stuff - Royale Bengal was a sort of old-fashioned Indian restaurant. People were a bit worried about it, but we loved it funny isn't it how you change?

Did you join any of the local clubs?

One of the questions was about clubs I was involved in no sporting clubs whatsoever. I did belong to the county youth club, which I've said and I would belong to guides I didn't do brownies. I did guides and I did the Red Cross. The Red Cross was an important bit where it is now in Hythe, High Street, we went there. I think it was the Red Cross that I was in when I was on a boat in the Venetian fete. We were in lots of different countries and I had on a costume which was all lace and it was French that's all I remember, but I was on the Venetian fete. My friend Brenda was, and I can tell you who the boy was, but I won't. We did a county youth club float on the Venetian fete and they were Romeo and Juliet I think - I must ask her about that. I also belonged to a rifle club.

I had a friend working at Portex and she went to the rifle club and she got me involved in it and I loved shooting and I was actually quite good at it, something I was actually quite good at. There was a small range on the ranges in Hythe and sometimes we went out and did the more distant things and we went to Bisley, famous Surrey ranges there with the rifle club. I did get involved in a bit of competitive stuff but then I got to the stage where I needed my own gun and it was either the gun or keep the car on the road. We were both using one car, I don't know how we did it back then, Keith driving to Dover, me to Hythe and then we got a second car and we never looked back. So I gave up the rifle shooting, but they were the clubs I belonged to.

I got involved in dog training late 1960s and it's still a major part of my life it's a club, a group and you know, I've got great friends through that in Folkestone we've now had to go up to Hawkinge, but that's never been a Hythe thing though lots of Hythe people do come to that.

One of my memories of living on Cliff Road was the Seabrook end of Cliff Road and it was very different then we left there in 1998 we fought off the Marina when we were living there - the whole of Seabrook got together as they wanted to breach the sea wall and put a Marina there and eventually, we found out that involved blocks of flats 6 storeys high, which put the lid on it. At that time they managed to make the canal an ancient monument and that protected the canal which hadn't had the protection. Then thank God the Marina got fought off because it really would have given us nothing, not even a financial benefit. We were dog walkers we'd walk down to the seafront almost all of that piece of land that's now fenced off behind the whiteboarding was where we dog walked. The paths were kept clear people used them all the time. The gypsies came occasionally or travellers, maybe

because they're and that's when around along the them coming in - because we they're walking we did walk only if two of us dogs, we'd walk especially after much as we sympathy with that sort of life, it disgusting what The travellers



Cliff Rd Seabrook end Summer 1991

I should call them not true gypsies they dug dykes all roadside to stop and did work and thought right on our pathways through there together with our through the site they'd gone and might have that sort of living, was absolutely they left behind. should have been

stopped that was right but then the Council neglected that whole area, I mean it I could cry at seeing it how it was left. I remember them dredging the canal and using a portion of that land to form a lagoon, which they then filled with the wet mud and that was essential work we know that. In previous years that have been used to make the higher banks on the northern side of the canal. I remember that being done in the 60s, it must have been and we would watch that as that mud dried out when they'd vacated the site we watched. It was a sea of mud, which then became dry and then gradually shoots, green shoots appeared all over that big area of mud and now it's trees and bushes. It's neglect basically and I could cry to think that land was going to be used for housing, I love the fact that it's open land, that it divides Hythe, Sandgate and Folkestone and divides Seabrook from Sandgate - it's a delineating area if I can use that word. Also I was horrified that they were going to take road away and over towards the canal, I thought that was bad because we used that sea road regularly. We park there all winter, spring and autumn when we can't sit outside the car, we park there all the time, making the most of the sun in winter, and when it's cold and windy. I know we would still have had plenty of room to do that, but no, my argument was put it on the Green. I know there's a Trust, but if the swimming pool is for the people of Hythe, that's what the Green is for - I feel strongly about it. That's a whole other argument.

I think I've finished really. We had 20 odd years in Cliff Road and Seabrook and all of our clubs and just anything we belong to, all our exercise classes, my husband's a bowler - everything was around Hythe. We moved to Dymchurch in 1998 and still spend a lot of our time in Hythe. We feel very much part of Hythe.



PRINCES PARADE