

Morecambe Bay Partnership is a charity working for people, nature & heritage in Morecambe Bay and to keep Morecambe Bay special

Defending the Docks Project:

A small collection of oral history recordings, capturing WWII memories in and around Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, January 2023

Cumbria County Council, The Factory,
Castle Mills, Aynam Road, Kendal, LA9 7DE
Tel: 015397 34888

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

© Morecambe Bay Partnership

INTERVIEW NO: 02
 INTERVIEWEE NAME/S: Francis John Crossfield
 YEAR OF BIRTH: 1934
 INTERVIEWER/S: Jenn Bell
 DATE OF INTERVIEW: Wednesday 18 January 2023
 LOCATION: Walney Island, Cumbria
 SUMMARISER: Jenn Bell

0.00 - 5.30	Name, DOB. John talks about his job as an apprentice gardener and his working life
5.30 - 7.25	Meeting wife Pauline, marriage, children
7.25 - 9.00	Family history (part of Crossfield boat builders)
9.00 - 10.20	John's father started as an apprentice ship wright in the shipyard aged 14. He was the longest serving employer of the shipyard, serving 58 years in total.
10.20 - 14.40	John's parents were both involved in St John Ambulance. Married in 1929. Info about John's brothers and sisters.
14.40 - 18.00	John shares his knowledge of the beginnings of WWII and his own personal account of the declaration of war on the radio. The importance of Barrow as a shipyard town. Gas masks being handed out before the war.
18.00 - 22.00	As a 5 year old, John remembers the pathe newsreels at the cinema being fairly graphic. John's knowledge of the early bombings.
22.00 - 27.10	John lived in Bristol Street and remembers a glowing skyline from all the bombings. As kids, there was a feeling of excitement before the bombing began in Barrow. John shares information about the first bombs that struck Barrow, and the first casualty – a 5 year old child.
27.10 - 32.25	Air raid shelters and what it was like to be inside one. John's father built some benches for their shelter.
32.25 - 36.55	Former air raid shelters that still stand today on former recreation ground. What John remembers about being inside the air rad shelter as a small child. First aid

	stations that were used in the town, and John's parents' involvement in St John Ambulance.
36.55 - 40.00	Memories of bomb damage in the town. John lived on Walney Island and there wasn't a great deal of damage on the island, but he remembers the damage over the bridge in Barrow town. Visiting his Auntie Alice in the town. Hall Street bomb damage. How Barrow looks today as a result of the bomb damage.
40.00 - 42.05	Bomb blasts and the damage in the town. Location sites that were damaged – Trevelyan Hotel, churches, local baths.
42.05 - 43.15	John was fortunate not to lose any close family members during the war. It was the young men who were called up to fight.
43.15 - 45.50	John's father working in the shipyard – what impact this had on the family. A draining experience for the family as a whole. Bombing patterns of the area.
45.50 - 50.14	Info regarding Barrow local authority applying for evacuation status. The area was split up into zones so the children of Barrow were selected for evacuation depending on where they lived. 1500 children were evacuated on May 21 st 1941. Disruption on education during the war years.
50.14 - 55.52	John was evacuated in the second wave of evacuation later that year. He describes what it was like being evacuated with his sister. Nobody explained where they were going or who they were going to stay with. He talks about both the documentation of that evacuation and what it was like having lived through it too.
55.52 – 1.02.02	Getting to Brougham school and being 'selected' by a Mr & Mrs Scott of Whinfell Park farm. What it was like living on the farm, walking 1 mile to the school every school day. John talks about his unpleasant experience at the school and the teacher giving them a slap across the head. Some of the children were separated during this 'selection' process.
1.02.02 - 1.06.10	John talks about staying with the Scott's and day to day life on the farm. They lived on the farm for about 18 months and saw their mother once or twice in that period. But he doesn't recall missing home that much. Apart from the school, he enjoyed his stay there and thinks that his inclination for becoming a gardener comes from his stay at the farm.
1.06.10 - 1.08.10	Returning home after evacuation and having to adjust to the routine and town life.
1.08.10 - 1.13.51	John talks about his father and his role at the shipyard, his level of proficiency but lack of financial reward. But they were comfortably off as a family, and didn't class themselves as poor. The 'holiday' week at the shipyard.
1.13.51 - 1.18.00	Food during the war. Father's allotment. They would have a roast on a Sunday and limit meat during the week. Sugar rationing. Queuing early on a Saturday morning for 6 sausages. Food that was rationed. John remembers being given tokens for extra cheese when he became a gardening apprentice as he was classed as an agricultural worker (still rationing in early 1950s).
1.18.00 - 1.22.00	Detailed information about Walney training airfield.
1.22.00 - 1.25.18	Access to the airfield was very restricted during the war years, but after the war, as kids, John and his friends would wander up and play around the airfield, whilst training was still going on. Saturday afternoons were spent collecting bullets. He remembers workers that were sent to the airfield and the shipyard being accommodated in the local community – playing cricket with the workers at the end of their working day. One day they were there, the next they were gone.
1.25.18 - 1.29.05	The American airmen and how that influenced John's childhood. American soldiers frequenting the cinema, and asking for gum. John's mother manning the 'doughnut

	dugouts' on a Thursday night, serving doughnuts to the Americans and then bringing a bag of doughnuts home with her at the end of the night.
1.29.05 - 1.31.15	John recalls the occasion when the Hindenburg airship, 'this great sausage thing' flew over Barrow in 1936.
1.31.15 - 1.37.05	End of war. Relaxation of certain restrictions. Being able to get a packet of sweets. But fighting was still going on in many parts of the world. Locally, rationing and taxation, re-building society. It took a long time for things to get back to 'normal' as it were. John remembers travelling to town and still seeing the dilapidated buildings.
1.37.05 - 1.38.45	1950 - John began his apprenticeship in the park and still remembers then men coming back from the services

[End of tape]