

So you were with your mother, and what was a typical working day for your mother - she sewed of course. But she also had to fetch water.

Yes: we had a well at the back door where we lived. We lived up here just past where the 'phone box is, and there was a well at the back door for the two cottages, there were two old thatched cottages. Well then when I was about 12 I suppose they were burnt down and then we went to Matravers, there was a cottage empty at Matravers and we went there.

So when did you live at Matravers?

Oh we lived up there two or three years in what was the farm cottage. I still was at school: I must have been about 12 I should think then when the place was burnt down and we went up there.

That must have been a very unpleasant experience.

On it was, because we were right next to what was the blacksmith's shop you see, and we always considered that the thatch caught - they were bonding wheels: I don't know if you've ever seen them doing it - sparks fly every way - and it was a high wind, it caught outside you see, but it wasn't anywhere near the chimneys or anything like that. And o'course in no time it was down because in those days the fire engine, I think, must have been drawn by horses, it took a little while to get here. It came from Bridport, and in those days there was no 'phones to ring up and say come, you know. So somebody had to go and tell them. There was quite a lot of fires in those days: quite a lot of fires.

And the blacksmith was quite a busy man I imagine?

Oh yes he was. I can remember the horses standing in the road up there waiting to be shod because they came from all the farms around. All the farmers had horses in those days. I don't remember the first tractors coming.

So when you were about 15 you went into service?

Yes, I went to Glanvilles Wootton, which is still in Dorset, the Sherborne area.

And you lived in?

Yes. And I hated it. Oh I hated it!

Well away from home and everything you'd known.

Yes, and all my friends.

So you had to start at the bottom I suppose?

Oh yes. I only stayed in that place a year, but it was horrible.

Where did you go after that?

Then I went to a place ... well Mrs Bartlett that lived in the Crown then, one of her daughters was in service, well she was in service with me because that's how I came to go to this place at Glanvilles Wootton, because she was there and they wanted another girl that she knew and o' course I went, mother really didn't want me to go. And then I went to a place near Blandford, well we both went together there, and we stayed there about two and a half years I think. That wasn't so bad there, but actually I didn't like it; I was never very servile you know: I didn't like taking orders - I don't now even!

So what did you do after that?

Well then I came home and I started doing the braiding, you know. The nets were made in the village, practically every house made nets. I did that, and then I walked in with somebody into one of the factories in Bridport and the Manager came and said this person was asking if they had any nets to be made, and two of us went and the Manager said 'I don't s'pose either of you young ladies would like to work in a factory', and I said 'Oh yes, I would', that was just up my street. But father was awfully cross, cos o'course factory girls were very low in his opinion y'see. But anyway I said I'd go the next week and I never regretted it. I had a very happy time. I had company and it was fun all together: I never found anything wrong with the girls, but it was just an idea you see, you mustn't work in a factory, factory girls were low ... but it wasn't so really. He didn't know anything about them, 'twas just the idea. Just the idea, and you know what people are, they get an idea in their head he was very cross.

And was this Bridport-Gundry?

Bridport-Gundry, yes.

So you were still making nets.

Oh yes, by machine, yes I worked a machine in there. And then after that, well I stayed there until I married. I married a chap who worked in the factory.

Would you like to tell me something about the people who lived in the village when you were young and their relationship with each other, how they felt about each other.

Well they were very very kind. If there was any sickness there was always somebody came, and there was usually a woman in the village who came when there was sickness, but very little pay.

She wasn't a qualified nurse?

No, not a qualified nurse but a very capable person, and if anyone was ill or if anyone died then they would come and lay them out, and that kind of thing, you know, to help in every way. And they were all, well everyone was more or less on the same level, poor working class people. Nobody had very much money but they were all ready to help each other. It was really a happy village, at least I found it so.

What about having babies - the midwife used to come?

Oh there was a midwife. There was a nurse who used to come but I think in my very young days that there was just like a midwife, well she must have been trained I s'pose to a certain extent, that lived in the village. There was one at Lower Loders and she used to come and help with the babies. But there was no question of going into hospital to have a baby, you had it at home and just managed how you could.

Of course you had all your family round you didn't you - your mother and sisters.

Yes, oh yes, and the older children had to help bring up the younger ones you know: they were quite big families. Some of them were quite big families.

And what about old people - did you look after them in those days?

Oh yes, it would have been an absolute disgrace to let anyone go in what was known as the workhouse. Oh yes, they were looked after right to the end.

And you had support from all your friends and family.

Oh yes, yes, they were good. People were good in those days. They helped each other: there was no question of well I must be paid so much an hour, no question of that at all. They knew they had somebody who would come in immediately there was any trouble. And o'course the babies they were not looked after, well they were looked after but not as they are today, pushed out in smart prams, they were just put in a cradle and while the mother was braidin' at the table she was rockin' the cradle with 'er foot.

And probably very happy too.

Oh yes, they never had much but they were always happy.

And of course good food, because you had the local produce.

Oh yes: everyone had a big garden and they grew all their own vegetables, most of their own fruit, and that kind o' thing. But everything was straight from the garden into the pot almost, it was all fresh. No question of things being frozen. In fact my dad would never eat anything that had been in a tin. That was no good for you, tinned stuff. And I know some of the older people today that won't eat frozen stuff - at least they eat it not knowing that they are eating it!

And what did people do in their leisure time?

There wasn't a lot of leisure, but o'course they went to the pub and they had ... I don't remember, there was a football team here at one time but that was when I was grown up and we had a club, a girls' club, which Mrs Lessor that lived at Matravers she started. We used to play netball and that kind o' thing. But that was when I was growin' up but I don't remember a lot of leisure in my young days, not to say, you know.

Where did they play?

Well football down at that field just past Lady Lasky's, between Bradpole and Loders.

That was a field that was available to the village for playing games was it?

Well I expect it belonged to the farm, Sir Edward I expect, I don't

really know who owned the field actually but it didn' belong to the village as a field. It wasn't a recreation field or anything like that for the village. That was o'course like I say I was growin' up then.

And then you had what one might describe as the rich people in the village who had big houses.

Yes, oh yes, and employed quite a few people. Uploders House they had several maids, and horses, when the Colvilles were there and they had three grooms, no four grooms, they had one groom lived in the cottage, their stud groom, and then there were three younger ones, but that was quite a busy place then.

Where the Sanctuaries live now?

That was the stables and the grooms had the rooms up over y'see. They lived on the premises.

And then the whole of Uploders Place was one house? It must have been a lovely house then.

Oh yes it was. I don't think the house was terribly convenient - I think it was a lot of steps and that kind o' thing inside - old fashioned. But it was lovely. In Mr Patterson's time, which was ... I was grown up then ... he had those grounds beautiful. Oh they were lovely. He used to open them for the Nursing Association and they were pretty, beautiful.

Of course it's a lot of work. There are some lovely old trees there.

Oh yes, yes. Of course they cut down, when Mrs Lane was there - that was after the Patterson's or before: after I think - the right-hand side as the house is on the left, all that was big trees there and they had them all down. It was a shame really cos they were beautiful beech trees. But of course I s'pose that wood was a money making thing at that time and she had them all down.

As well as the blacksmith, I believe you had at least one carpenter in the village.

Yes, there were two carpenters - a village carpenter that went round to the farms doin' things, and then there was a carpenter and wheelwright and he employed two others, a man and a boy, that lived up here opposite

the chapel, Trossachs they call it now, but it was a wheelwright as well. And was there another carpenter in Loders?

Yes, I believe there were two.

I notice you call it Lower Loders - when did it start being called Loders and Uploders?

That I can't say because it was always known as Lower Loders and Upper Loders. All one village. It's Lower Loders and Upper Loders to me because that's how I always knew it.

In fact Uploders is all part of Loders.

Yes it's all Loders, it's all the village of Loders, but it is the upper part and the lower part y'see.

Did you have any personalities in the village, interesting people who particularly stand out in your memory?

Well I can't say that anyone ... they were all what I consider interesting looking back. You know, they all spoke their minds; if you asked a question you got a straight answer, you didn't 'ave nothin' beaten about the bush, and in the dialect o'course they all spoke the dialect and some of them were real characters that liked their little drop and said what they thought when they'd had it, and that kind o' thing, but I can't say that anybody stands out in particular because they were all more or less the same.

How did you feel about people in the other villages?

Oh they were all friendly, yes. Yes I can remember the Powerstock people comin' over here, the mummers, comin' here in wintertime and comin' into the cottages; I can remember them comin' in our home and doin' their li'l play, the mummers play. And of course they were all inter-mixed y'see, because most of our relatives lived in the surrounding villages.

And there wasn't any rivalry - you can't think of anything between the different villages?

I never knew of any, no. I never knew of any: not really.

Tell me about Christmas in Loders.

Well the highlight of Christmas for the children was the Christmas tree they had in the school, and that was always provided by whoever lived at the Court and us that had been to school all the year and got the top class medal, we were always allowed to choose first from the Christmas tree and then the others afterwards, but in those days nobody had very much that that was the highlight of the year to have the Christmas tree, and then usually a treat in the summer at the Court.

And did carol singers go round the village?

Oh yes, carol singers went round, and like I say the Powerstock Mummers used to come. And o'course I s'pose they used to come to us because we had a big kitchen and one o' them was father's nephew, y'see, he had a sister in Powerstock with grown up children.

Did you have a village hall at that time?

Yes. Well it was always known as the School House, where Mrs McLochland lives - the Old Parish Hall they call it now, but in my young days it was always the School House. Whether it was a school at some time in the past I wouldn't know, but it wasn't during my time, but that was the only one we had y'see. The hall down here was built by the ex-servicemen after the first world war. Mr Fookes was most instrumental in that, Fred Fookes the schoolmaster's son. But that was built by the ex-servicemen for their own use really: then it was passed over to the village, I think Sir Edward still owned the land but I believe Lady Lasky gave it to the village; and then of course this up here was sold. The Charity Commissioners I s'pose agreed to that, I don't really know the ins and outs of it, but then I believe the money ... I don't know whether all of the money went to the other hall or not, but some of it did.

So there were various events throughout the year; one of them was Christmas, and then there was the mid-summer party; and presumably you had a harvest supper.

I don't remember ever harvest suppers.

What about the fete? There must have been a fete - I thought the fete went back, but perhaps not?

The fete was more or less a Church fete at one time. Let me see, that was ... I can't really remember it as a child but when I was married

first I can remember takin' Roy to it when he was a little boy, but then it was more or less run for the benefit of the Church, but it isn't now.

It is, basically, but it is really for the whole village.

And o'course they had various celebrations at coronation times, and things like that, you know.

That must have been fun.

Yes, they would dress up and have parades through the village and that kind of thing. And the Jubilee.

So you were actually married in Loders Church?

Yes I was married in Loders Church. Mr Hutton was the Vicar at the time. We had a very very quiet wedding, just two or three relatives. We came back home, had a meal, and then went to our home in Askerswell, which was a little cottage up near what was then the school in Askerswell, it's now a house - and there we were. There wasn't any celebration such as they have today, but we lived in Askerswell 'bout two years and then we came back to Gribb, Loders, into a little cottage there, and there our son was born.

What did your husband do?

At the time that we were married he worked at Gundrys in the factory. I was workin' there too, that's where we met, and then the factory became short of work, very slack time it was, a lot of unemployment at the time. So he went on the farm. And after working on the farm for some years for two local farmers he went to the brick yard at Bothenhampton, which that is all now closed, it was closed during the war. And during the war he was sent to the brick yard at Chickerell under the direction of Labour, and stayed there some years. We could have lived in Chickerell but I didn't want to leave Loders. There was a cottage for us but I didn't want to leave Loders, mother was livin' here and my relatives were all here, so after he left the brick yard he came back and started workin' for a builder, then he did labouring.

And during the war you actually helped teach people to do braiding?

Oh yes. People in those days, everyone had from up to a certain age had to be registered and were given certain jobs to do and some of them decided that they could do the braiding so a friend and meself we went into the Parish Room and they came there, but it was hopeless really. We tried to teach them, but braiding's not a thing you can learn in five minutes. I think about only one person actually finished up doing a little and I don't think she did enough to be worthwhile. I always felt that was time wasted.

I suppose you've got to learn as a very young person, almost as a child, to be really good at it.

No, not actually, it's just practice. You can learn to bait which is very simple and much the same sort of mesh, makes the same mesh, but to braid you really want to practice quite a lot.

And this is actually rope making? How thick were the nets?

The braiding is the making of the net. We made hay nets, and during the war years there were hay nets and great big nets for cargo, and balloon nets - you remember the balloons that flew up around the cities, we made those nets. That was quite a heavy job because it was made of rope more than twine. And all those kind of things, all the things that were used in the war. Pull throughs for cleaning the guns, and that kind of thing people did. I never did the pull throughs, I did more braiding.

What are pull throughs - I've never heard of them?

Oh they're pieces of rope with bits on the end which were spliced, and I believe rags were put in these things and they were pulled through the barrels of the guns to clean them. The army used quite a lot; people who couldn't do anything else could do that sort of thing. But there was quite a lot done for the war effort.