

Transcript of Jean Smith Audio Clip

I was eight in the September and then nine in the December. When the war broke out, I do remember being told about it. And what I was expecting — I went to look out the window when I was told because I was expecting to see German soldiers marching down the road. But obviously that didn't happen, thank goodness. When the Blitz started we were living in South London and our house unfortunately was near a small factory and I think they were aiming for the factory but they hit our house which was sort of sliced in two but we were in an Anderson shelter at the bottom of the garden, fortunately, so, you know, we were all ok. So after that, my mother had a sister who lived in Plymouth, so we went to Plymouth and soon after that, of course, they blitzed Plymouth as well so we had to leave there as well. We went to a little town in Totnes, in Devon called Totnes, which is fairly well known. We had to — we lived in 3 or 4 different places, we were moved around and ended up in a little cottage there which was lovely. I think after that we — the bombing had stopped in London, so we came back to London and then sometime after that the bombing recommenced again. So what happened, my mother sent me back to Totnes, to live with the people who had been our next door neighbours, and she went with my baby sister up to Halifax in Yorkshire. Unfortunately, I was homesick [coughs] and I think I was there for about three months and then — I don't know how they arranged it, when I think these days about the communication then — because I had an aunt who lived in New Abbott and it was arranged I would go with her and spend one night with her. Then I would go from New Abbott to Crew, I was ten years old at that time — Go to Crew and meet my father who was coming home on leave from the army. Then we were going up to Halifax, to my mother's. It was all arranged by letter. It is absolutely amazing the way it worked out and friends have said to me, these days, you know, you wouldn't send a ten year old on a journey like that now, on their own. But I can remember the train being packed with soldiers and because they were all giving me chocolate [laughs], which was lovely. So we stayed in Halifax, because I went to school up there and some — Actually, I hated Halifax. Everything looked grey because Devon is very green with hedges and Halifax, Yorkshire, is all stone walls and I didn't like that because I couldn't understand the Yorkshire accent either. That was another problem at school but anyway. We came back to London and that was — we stayed in London after that. My mother was given a requisition flat, in Clapham, South London, and we stayed there until the end of the war but because the bombing did continue but we did stay there. Actually the end of our road was completely flattened by a landmine and our flat had all the windows blown out but you know we stayed there.