

## **CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE NEW VENTURES** **Battle of Britain - Interview Summaries**

These interview summaries are of a series of recordings of the reminiscences of local people with particular emphasis on the Battle of Britain and its effect on Chichester and Tangmere. Compiled for Chichester Festival Theatre's New Ventures production of 'Battle of Britain', 1977.

The interviews can be listened to at Worthing Library:

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or at West Sussex County Records Office in Chichester:

[http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure/explore\\_west\\_sussex/record\\_office\\_and\\_archives.aspx](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure/explore_west_sussex/record_office_and_archives.aspx)

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[John B Bisdee OBE DFC](#)

[Mr A V Oakton](#)

[Mr J W H Lyon and Mrs Lyon](#)

[Mrs Redding](#)

[Mr H J L Hallowes](#)

[Mrs Peggy Moss](#)

[Bernard Price](#)

<b><i>Interviewee</i></b>	<b>John B Bisdee OBE DFC</b>
<b><i>About interviewee</i></b>	During the Battle of Britain John Bisdee was a fighter pilot in the 609 Squadron stationed at Middle Wallop, near Andover, in Hampshire. He ultimately rose to the rank of Group Captain.
<b><i>Summary</i></b>	<p>Talks about the "weekend flyers" and their reaction to the outbreak of the Second World War.</p> <p>The beginning of the Battle of Britain in July 1940. The RAF heavily outnumbered the Luftwaffe.</p> <p>The contrast between the fight in the air and the "phoney war" on the ground. The maintenance of regimentation on the airfield.</p> <p>The relaxation of air crew after the actions – the local hostelries and the problem of "double summer time" – the lack of social life.</p> <p>The frustration of waiting in readiness for the actions – the air battles themselves.</p> <p>The feelings of the British fighter pilots towards their German counterparts – the depersonalisation of the conflict compared to the First World War.</p> <p>The camaraderie of the Squadron.</p>

[Back to top](#)

Wartime West Sussex 1939-45  
Chichester Festival Theatre New Ventures

<b><i>Interviewee</i></b>	<b>Mr A V Oakton</b>
<b><i>About interviewee</i></b>	During the Second World War Mr Oakton worked in the administration department at Worthing Hospital and had special responsibility for the admission of wounded servicemen and prisoners of war.
<b><i>Summary</i></b>	<p>Outline of his responsibilities at the hospital.</p> <p>Personal observation of the Battle of Britain – the crashing of a British plane at West Worthing and the treatment of the pilot.</p> <p>Anecdote about the problem of identifying an airman's body found at Goring.</p> <p>The procedure for dealing with wounded German prisoners admitted to the hospital – cooperation with the intelligence division at Chichester – the treatment of the prisoners of war.</p> <p>The bombing raids on the south coast – the "hit and run" raids – the bombing of Worthing Hospital.</p> <p>The visit to the hospital by Princess Royal to see the Fusiliers injured during experiments with new bombs.</p> <p>Anecdote about D-Day</p> <p>The mystery of the house called The Snipe by Chichester Canal. The use of Birdham Pool as a base for vessels used to retrieve allied resistance officers from France.</p> <p>The fears of an invasion of Britain – preparations for the evacuation of civilians from the South Coast in 1941 – the moving of patients from Worthing Hospital.</p>

	<p><b>Mr A V Oakton continued</b></p> <p>Anecdote about the bombing of Worthing.</p> <p>The testing of Churchill tanks at Worthing.</p>
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[Back to top](#)

<b><i>Interviewee</i></b>	<b>Mr J W H Lyon and Mrs Lyon</b>
<b><i>About interviewee</i></b>	<p>During the early part of the Second World War Mr Lyon served in the fire service in Brighton and experienced the bombing raids on the town. Later, in 1944, he commanded the signals section of a Royal Artillery battery stationed at Selsey.</p>
<b><i>Summary</i></b>	<p>The work of the battery at Selsey – the deployment of the anti-aircraft guns and the radar equipment – the responsibility of the signals section</p> <p>Anecdotes about the bombing raids on Selsey and the shooting down of German planes.</p> <p>The airfield at Selsey. Relations between the airmen and the anti-aircraft personnel – complaints of firing at allied aircraft.</p> <p>Reminiscences of the Battle of Britain.</p> <p>The V-Bomb attacks on Brighton in the early stages of the War. The lack of air-raid shelters.</p> <p>The bombing of the Odeon cinema during a children's matinee and the heavy casualties. The machine-gun strafing of civilians in Brighton. The sense of comradeship created during the war.</p> <p>The demand for a "new Britain" after the war and the refusal to return to the conditions of pre-war Britain.</p> <p>The efforts to lead a normal life during the war.</p> <p>Domestic economy – homemade clothes and toys – wartime recipes.</p>

[Back to top](#)

<b><i>Interviewee</i></b>	<b>Mrs Redding</b>
<b><i>About interviewee</i></b>	During the Second World War Mrs Redding's husband was stationed at Tangmere airfield, and her recollections relate to the airfield and the airmen.
<b><i>Summary</i></b>	<p>The formation of units of Home Guards in the villages around Tangmere in 1940-41, and the precautions against infiltration of fifth columnists.</p> <p>Anecdote about a Home Guard exercise that went wrong – the "capture" of two fifth columnists by the Home Guard at Tangmere.</p> <p>Relations with the airmen. Helping in the public house at Tangmere and entertaining the pilots at home.</p> <p>The bombing raids on Tangmere airfield. The use of Goodwood House as a hospital for the casualties – nursing the wounded.</p> <p>The "good times". Anecdotes about Sam Costa, then a corporal at Tangmere.</p> <p>The bombing of the school at Petworth and the death of the boys.</p>

[Back to top](#)

<b><i>Interviewee</i></b>	<b>Mr H J L Hallowes</b>
<b><i>About interviewee</i></b>	<p>At the outbreak of the Second World War Mr Hallowes had already had many years experience in the RAF, having entered the service in 1929, and during the War he became Wing Commander of 43 Squadron at Tangmere. He was officially credited with shooting down 20 enemy aircraft including the Stuka shot down over Thorney in August 1940.</p>
<b><i>Summary</i></b>	<p>Description of the action on 18 August 1940 against the German planes raiding the airfield at Thorney. The dog-fight between the Hurricanes and the Stukas.</p> <p>Outline of his own career and training.</p> <p>The attitude of the British pilots to their job – the courage required during the actions – the feelings they had for the enemy airmen.</p> <p>Anecdote about an action in February 1940 against German planes raiding trawlers off Whitby. Peter Townsend and Tiger Foulkes, two of the pilots, later visited one of the German pilots they had shot down.</p> <p>The feelings of the British pilots towards their German counterparts.</p> <p>The bombing raid on Tangmere airfield on 16 August 1940.</p> <p>The relaxation of the airmen and their visits to local hostelries in Tangmere and Chichester – the Dolphin, the Unicorn and the Nags Head.</p> <p>Anecdotes about Arthur King, landlord of the Unicorn – his flying over France in a Spitfire and</p>

	<p><b>Mr H J L Hallowes continued</b> his attempts to have beer flown over the France. The spirit of the British people at the time of the Battle of Britain.</p>
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[Back to top](#)



<b><i>Interviewee</i></b>	<b>Mrs Peggy Moss</b>
<b><i>About interviewee</i></b>	During the Second World War Mrs Moss, then a single girl in her early twenties, lived with her parents on a farm in the Tangmere area, and worked as a teacher at the Girls Central School in North Street, Chichester
<b><i>Summary</i></b>	<p>Personal observations of the dog-fights during the Battle of Britain – sheltering under the haystacks from the flying bullets – victory rolls by the pilots.</p> <p>The bombing raid on Tangmere airfield on 16 August 1940 – the destruction of the canteen and the feeding of the airmen at the Toc H rooms in North Street, Chichester.</p> <p>The billeting of troops rescued from Dunkirk and their reaction to the German bombing raids. The shooting down of a Junkers 87 during the raid on Tangmere.</p> <p>Continuation of the story of the Junkers 87. The "looting" of the plane by the local people.</p> <p>Further impressions of the raid on Tangmere on 16 August 1940. The effect on the British airmen.</p> <p>Anecdotes about the Tangmere pilots. The story of Jim Hallows who was shot down over France and returned to Tangmere in a taxi.</p> <p>The recreation of the pilots – their visits to East Pallant House in Chichester. The hero-worship of the pilots and the downgrading of the soldiers.</p> <p>The story of Monica Pedley, wife of Wing Commander Pedley, who travelled around with</p>

	<p><b>Mrs Peggy Moss continued</b></p> <p>her husband, wherever he was stationed, and provided him with home comforts. Their stay at the farm.</p> <p>The thoughts of today's children about the war – an extract from a child's composition about a bomb crater.</p> <p>The spirit and humour of the British people during the war – the reaction of the children at the Central School to the air raids on Chichester.</p>
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[Back to top](#)

Wartime West Sussex 1939-45  
Chichester Festival Theatre New Ventures

<b><i>Interviewee</i></b>	<b>Bernard Price</b>
<b><i>About interviewee</i></b>	Bernard Price, the local writer and broadcaster, was a schoolchild in Chichester at the time of the Battle of Britain. Here he gives his own reminiscences and also gives advice on the compilation of material for a study of the Battle of Britain.
<b><i>Summary</i></b>	<p>Douglas Bader. His ruthless attitude towards the enemy and the reasons for his unpopularity amongst his flying colleagues.</p> <p>The digging of defensive trenches around Chichester and the use of underground hideouts by the military.</p> <p>The role of the Unicorn pub in Chichester. Used as a base for air force planning and strategy.</p> <p>Arthur King, the landlord. His efforts to provide the aircrews with the best of food and drink. The flight to Normandy in a Spitfire to deliver beer to the servicemen.</p> <p>The bombing of Tangmere during the Battle of Britain, and the setting up of an emergency headquarters in a shop in Little London, Chichester, and later in St James School, Chichester.</p> <p>The satellite airfields and the military and naval camps around Chichester. The occasional conflicts between the services. The "division" of the city between the services – the air force in the public houses in the eastern sector, the navy in the South Street pubs, and the army in the North and West Street pubs. The heavy drinking</p>

	<p><b>Bernard Price continued</b></p> <p>amongst the servicemen in Chichester, and the frequent shortages of beer and beer glasses.</p> <p>The bombing raids on Chichester. The bomb-damaged areas in Basin Road and St Martins Street, since converted into car parks. The machine gun strafing of civilians.</p> <p>The siting of anti-aircraft guns in the city. The heavy machine guns on the shoe shop by the Cross and on the Gaumont Cinema, and the Bofors gun in the Recreation Ground in New Park Road.</p> <p>The satellite airfields at Goodwood, Dell Quay, and Merston.</p> <p>The use of the Bell Tower as an ack-ack observation post contrary to the general policy not to use church property for military purposes.</p> <p>The affinity of the school children towards the armed services. Memories of watching Battle of Britain dogfights from the railway bridges in Whyke. The victory rolls of the returning aircraft.</p> <p>The "immunity" of Chichester from serious bombing raids. The policy of the Germans not to bomb the city because of the navigational value of the Cathedral spire. The respect of the Germans for Bishop Bell and for his plea to spare open cities from bombing raids.</p> <p>The incidents of crashed aircraft in Chichester and district – the crashed Dornier at Shopwhyke Manor.</p>
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[Back to top](#)