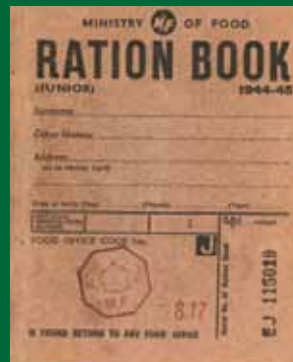




1. Evacuation



2. Gas Masks & ID Cards



3. Rationing & Memories



4. Questions & Answers

The following is Part 4 of a transcript produced from a tape recording made in 1983, when Margery Kelsey (née Chambers) spoke to a class of children at Pyrford Junior School in Surrey, about her experiences during the Second World War.

Part 4 (of 4) - Questions and Answers

Teacher: "Could they ask you, do you think, a few questions?"

Margery Kelsey: "Yes please. If you've any questions. Yes dear."

Child 1 (*difficult to hear*): "..... guides and scouts?"

Margery Kelsey: "That's right. Yes, I was a girl guide. And it wasn't..... my school had a company but I didn't go to that before the war I went to a church one. But once I evacuated I went to the school one. And in fact when we got to Wales the locals had a guide company and we all got together, all the companies in the area and we put on a big show to collect a lot of money..... and in those days if you had..... the government arranged big sort of flag days, it was "warships week" so you put on a show and all the money would go to help build warships; "war weapons week" and that was for the army's weapons. There was probably something for the air force and I can't think what we called it. But we certainly put on shows in the youth clubs and collected the money and it all went to help build the armaments, the ships."

Teacher: "So things haven't changed much today have they because they still put on performances and plays and things for charity don't they?"

Margery Kelsey: "And you still do things for charity - there's a lot more charities. Yes dear."

Child 2: "What things did you do to entertain yourselves?"

Margery Kelsey: "Well, for one thing there was no television. Nobody had television, it wasn't.... it was invented, but it wasn't in the local homes. We had the radio. We listened an awful lot to the radio. We had children's hour which you might have heard about. That was a great thing between 5 and 6 o'clock.We went in the park a lot and we played..... ball games, the boys played cricket, we played netball and hockey. But other than that - we went for walks. We did used to walk a lot. When we were in Bexhill it was quite the thing to go down - you couldn't go onto the beach in wartime it was all barbed off - but you walked along the promenade and 1940 was a most beautiful summer. We went into the fields..... coming from London we didn't know much about country life. So.... again in Wales we went visiting."

Child 3: “How many times did you go into the shelter because of the bombing?”

Margery Kelsey: “Well, having been evacuated I didn’t, because I was away from it, but the people in London, once the bombing started and it started in about 19.... in August 1940 and it went through to about November, they would go every night.”

“Now when I left school in 1942 and I came home and I went to work – it must have been in late 1944 - when they started another lot of bombing but it was more like the rockets (those Scud missiles you heard about) they were called V1s and V2s. The doodlebugs they were, we described them as. And those came along, you would hear them, there was no pilot in it - it was just like a rocket. You’d hear this coming, you’d see it and then the engine would cut out. Then you knew you’d got to run. Once that sound stopped you ran for the shelter, because within a couple of minutes it would have exploded and no one would know where. Then a bit later, early 1945, there were then the V2s which didn’t make any sound at all so you didn’t know. You were just walking around and the thing dropped. If you were unlucky, that was the end of you. But.... every night whilst that happened we went to the shelter, 1944, 1945, until the end of the war. And probably they did during the blitz of London and Coventry and all the big cities.”

Child 4 (difficult to hear): “When the planes tried to..... with the wings.....?”

Margery Kelsey: “Dipping their wings? Oh the doodlebugs. They would have all their...no I don’t think they had petrol. They were like rockets that were sent from somewhere in France. So I don’t think they would have.... they were shot off, just like you do on Guy Fawkes night when you have a rocket – you light it and it goes up. And I don’t think the doodlebugs or the others had any.... any chemical in them in those days. They just came and exploded.”

Child 5: “Have you seen a barrage balloon go up?”

Margery Kelsey: “Gosh yes.”

Child 5: “And um..... did any airplanes collide into them ?”

Margery Kelsey: “Oh yes.... just before war started in London (and probably the other cities, but I can only talk about London) all the barrage balloons went up, but the trouble with those was they couldn’t go high enough..... they could only go a certain height, and the airplanes once they got used to it, they came in and flew over the top of them. So they stopped using the barrage balloons I don’t know for how long. I expect they were around for a few months, but that was the difficulty the planes came in and went over the top.”

Teacher: “There’s a hand at the back there.”

Margery Kelsey: “Yes dear.”

Child 6 (not audible): – (question about stealing coupons?)

Margery Kelsey: “I don’t think that happened in those days. (This is the times in which we live isn’t it). One lost them. One lost them. I don’t think.... there was much too much going on for people to be thinking about stealing things. If they did they would have been unfortunate they wouldn’t have had them, but if you lost them you could go to the Town Hall; write – you know - fill in lots of forms, and in the end you would get.... probably not as many as you’d lost but you could replace them. But they only lasted a year and you were hanging on to the end of that 12 months to think “good”; and you always knew what you were going to buy with the next lot. And you just waited you know – when I get my coupons I shall buy so and so and so and so.”

“Yes dear.”

Child 7: “What was it like moving from one place to another?”

Margery Kelsey: “Yes.... what was it like moving from one place to another. I told you I was that much older so the whole thing was quite exciting for me and for my friends. It was like an adventure, we said, ‘ooh wont this be fun, we’re going to do.....we’re going away’. It was like going away to a boarding school. And we all used to read a lot in those days. You said what did you do. We all read – we did read a lot of books because there wasn’t any television. So it was a great adventure and we just accepted it. I was very sad when I left Bexhill because I loved that home and I liked the people; and, before this bombing had started I had gone back to London for one weekend. I don’t know, people did go backwards and forwards, so I enjoyed that. It was different when we got to Wales, it was much, much too far; travelling was difficult, so once we got to Wales that was it.No we didn’t mind, we quite enjoyed going from one place to another.”

Child 8 (difficult to hear): *(question about souvenirs?)*

Margery Kelsey: “Souvenirs. Yes,well, all the forces had medals of course. You know..... other souvenirs. I think of that as my souvenir. You see..... and things of that nature, and things that I would keep.....from my school days – they’re my souvenirs now.



A souvenir - the gift from Margery’s host family - a birthday book.

Child 9 (unable to hear question): *(question about favourite things?)*

Margery Kelsey: “Sweets. I think, when I was a child it would be sweets. Probably once I grew up and went to work..... we didn’t have tights, you had stockings and I would imagine stockings and shoes, I expect I felt dreadful; I had a grannie but I had two..... I had an older sister and a younger sister and we used to be vying for who was going to have grandma’s coupons you see.”

Child 10: “What was your friend’s name?”

Margery Kelsey: “My friend’s name was Hazel and she too was on that picture. And she too comes back to school and we all meet, and hear what’s happening. But the school isn’t there now because like all the schools it’s gone comprehensive, like all the local schools.”

Child 11: “Did you have joke books?”

Margery Kelsey: “Did we have what? Joke books. I don’t think we did – it was a different world altogether. I don’t think we had joke books no. We read a lot – we read all the classics. Sounds dreadful... doesn’t really sound dreadful but.... we did have someone similar - Angela Brazil - was a favourite one of mine.....and the ‘Chalet School’ stories. Now they’re going now because my grand-daughter is into the ‘Chalet School’ stories and I used to love those.”

Child 12: “What was your teacher’s name?”

Margery Kelsey: “What was my teacher’s name? Well, my form teacher was Miss Wilson. But then, you know we had a different mistress for every subject – for French, for Latin, for Maths, for two Englishes, for Music, History, Geography.”

Child 13: “What was your best teacher?”

Margery Kelsey: “My best teacher - well I was very keen on music so I liked my music teacher best of all.”

Child 14: “What sort of toys did you have?”

Margery Kelsey: “What toys did I have? We didn’t have that many toys as children. It was, as I said just now, a different world. I had a bicycle and I loved my bicycle and in fact, I’ve just remembered, when I told you I went home for one weekend, I went home to get my bicycle. And I took it on the train and it only cost a shilling from London to Bexhill.”

“So I had a bicycle, that was.... lots of us did that, we were older girls and we were able to go home and get our bikes. So when we were in Bexhill we cycled a lot, inland and along the coast. But that was another thing, when we had to assemble on that Sunday morning in June to go to Wales, we all had our bikes and that was another thing - a great hazard - but, they all arrived. That was my best thing - my bike.”

Child 15: “What did you put in your suitcase?”

Margery Kelsey: “We were told only one change of underclothing. They didn’t say anything about extra shoes, or wellingtons or anything like that. It was only that and your washing things and a toothbrush and your coat. So within a fortnight, certainly not in the village at Crowhurst, but at Bexhill within a fortnight I was writing home and saying I must have this and I must have that and I need a pullover. We all were saying that, because we had been told it was only a change of underclothing. I think we only had our school uniform nothing else so we were living in that all, you know, seven days a week. And I do remember my father coming down with various things.”

“You see when war broke out it was the summer holidays. Most families were on holiday. My mother with my little sister and my baby brother were in Devonshire with my older sister. Now my older sister was a teacher she had just become a teacher, and all the teachers had been notified and told to come back to their schools. She wasn’t teaching in London she was in Kent, but she still had to come back. I wasn’t on holiday.....again, I didn’t want to go to Devon, I was a very keen guide and I wanted to go to my guide camp with all my friends, so I was at home with my father – he hadn’t gone on holiday – and my older sister.”

“So.... we.... it was my sister that got me ready, took.... didn’t take me.... said goodbye. We went to school every day that week because nobody knew when we were going. We went with our change of clothing and our packed lunch. And then I went back on the Monday - perhaps not every day perhaps.... I know we went two or three days that week and then when I said goodbye on that Friday morning, I didn’t go back that Friday - that was the day. But nobody knew until we got there. So it was only the change of clothing and your overnight things.”

Margery Kelsey: “How are we doing?”

Teacher: “One last question?”

Margery Kelsey: “Yes dear.”

Child 16: “How old was your sister?”

Margery Kelsey: “When I went to..... my younger sister? She was only 9 when war broke out and when she.... she stayed in Devon. But then obviously my mother couldn't stay down there forever. She came back with my baby brother and left my sister there because she'd got her installed into a school. But then she joined me at my schoolin Bexhill.”

“That too was traumatic because she couldn't get a billet and the school took over a large house and so there were lots of girls there. She used to cry, “I want to come with you” she used to say. I had to take her back, it was a long way it was a mile out of Bexhill and she couldn't walk all that way and by now I'd got my bike so I used to wheel her on it, take her back to the house – with lots of other girls there who still couldn't get billeted. I used to bath her and put her to bed. And then I went back on my bike. And one of these other girls or one of the teachers used to bring her to school the next day and then at the end of the day I took her home.”

“But then when we got to Wales it was a much close-knit, much smaller place, and we all.....you just got used to it. I'm sure you'd all just get used to it. Obviously you'd miss your parents but you'd get used to it and you'd turn much more to your teachers. You'd go to them with any problems you had and they'd sort it out for you.”



Margery Chambers (left) and her younger sister, Valerie. (Ammanford, 1940)