

## **Telling our Stories, Finding our Roots, Exeter's Multi-Coloured History**

### **Interview Transcript**

Name of interviewees: Maurice and Ruth Hawker  
Name of interviewers: Ghee Bowman & Crystal Carter  
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Transcribed by: Dawn Eldridge

*Introduction by Ghee Bowman.*

*Maybe we can start with asking what you remember. Am I right in saying Maurice, you grew up in St Thomas?*

Yes I did.

*And Ruth?*

I'm the Channel Islands, so I have totally different memory.

*During the war? Occupation?*

During the war yes, occupation.

*Which island?*

Guernsey.

*Oh really, maybe that's another interview [laughter].*

*[Crystal] I only just heard about that recently.*

Give a long time if you're going to do it.

I do talks on that.

*You do, and have you written it down?*

No, because there are so many books already.

*Yes, but there's nothing like good oral history.*

*Anyway so Maurice, you grew up in St Thomas. So just tell us first what you remember about growing up in St Thomas.*

Well I was born in 1934, so when the war started, I was 5 years old in '39 and so between then and being 11 years old I've got experiences. And the experiences I can remember, things like the Exeter Blitz and so on, but the thing that sticks in my mind the most is, I lived in Union Street which is just off what was Exeter Rugby ground in Church Road. Church Road ran across the

top of our street and at the end of it was all the rugby ground. Back in those days it was more an athletics track as well. But when the Americans came to the UK, quite a few came down to St Thomas and were actually stationed at the County ground which was a big shock to us because quite honestly, we'd never seen black people before and all of a sudden there was masses of them, and we got used to them because they used to drive up and down our road because they used to have a depot down at Marsh Barton, which wasn't a trading estate then of course, the only thing down there was a greyhound track, just waste ground.

*So it wasn't a cattle market at that stage?*

Yes it was, I think that part of the cattle market was taken over as part of the store for the American armies, similar to the one that eventually finished up in Countess Wear. And all day long they were out in their typical American jeeps, they'd race up and down our street, all day long up and down, and the Americans weren't very fussed about how many people they had in the jeep at any one time, they would sit on the bonnet and the back. We got quite friendly with them actually. There were a few white Americans there but not too many, they were nearly all black. We got so used to seeing them about but of course, they couldn't go beyond Exe bridge. They were limited to just staying in St Thomas, they couldn't go up to the other side of the city at all, just the white Americans. And because I was, well I am, in the Salvation Army and was brought up in the Salvation Army, and I remember that the Salvation Army had their own church down at St Thomas right next to the County ground, the American base.

*It's not still there?*

Yes, it is, but it's not the Salvation Army, normally it's the karate club or something, right next to the Salvation Army which is this building. And I remember the American black and white soldiers couldn't worship together and so the Salvation Army set up a service on a Sunday afternoon just for the black American servicemen and what drew my attention to it because that man there, is a man called Didham, D-I-D-H-A-M, who wasn't running the Salvation Army there, but was running the one that's now still in Friar's Gate, and he did a terrific amount during the war, in fact he eventually got a certificate from the city council acknowledging all the work that he did. But he used to go down there as well on a Sunday afternoon, down to St Thomas, conducting services for black Americans. And I think they were very appreciative of it as well.

*In this photo, Maurice, I'd say there's about 20 of them, and they are sort of sitting in pews in rows and they are quite smartly dressed...*

Oh yes, when they weren't working they were very smart.

*What were they wearing when they worked, then?*

Well if you've seen the old American films, the old fatigues and the baseball type hats which we'd never seen before, that sort of thing. They were always quite clean, all the uniforms but to us it didn't make sense. And the other thing we had, you see, right opposite where I lived was St Thomas school, and we used to have things like the Home Guard doing their parades there, we used to watch them. And compared to the uniforms of the Home Guard and people like that, the Americans were very posh. So it was quite a lively time. And they used to come around looking for the girls.

*And did they find any?*

Well, next door to us, where we lived, were two girls I suppose one would have been 17 and one perhaps 19 or 20, and we'd be sitting on the curb outside the house, and they'd come down and they got to know one of the girls, and they used to come up and ask us if the girls were home. So the first thing we said was: "any gum chum?" Get the gum, and then say 'no'.  
[laughter] Silly memories, really.

*And do you think these two girls were interested in them?*

Well, I don't know if they ever went out with them, but everybody was friendly with them. I mean they became part of the community in that very small area, so eventually we just almost forgot they were black really, I suppose, looking back on it, they were just American soldiers. And we didn't see so many white Americans of course.

*But you said you saw some, so were they the officers?*

I think they maybe had black officers, but there were white Americans around and I'm not quite sure what they did. We could see them occasionally coming down, I can't remember seeing the white Americans coming down in the jeeps with black Americans. They always seemed to be separate what I can remember about it. But there were some, but I can't remember too much about this, but the Americans also had another camp at St James Park, Exeter City football ground.

*Really? That's the first time I've heard that. I know they were at Topsham Road Barracks.*

Well I understand they were at St James Park as well.

*Oh that's interesting because we interviewed somebody who grew up in Newtown, a few years older than you, and he remembers going to St James Park – he didn't say the year did he? – and saw an American football game.*

That's right, yes.

*I wonder if they were stationed there, that's interesting.*

I think they were because obviously the ground was taken over at the start of the war, and I believe that when the Americans came, as I say for me it was foreign territory then because we never went up, well we had the Blitz and everything so we didn't go over there. But I understand the Americans were there as well, at County grounds at St James Park.

*And were you being told that they were kept apart the white guys, the black guys by military police?*

Yes, I don't know about the military police, I can't recall... I can remember the military police up and down the road in their white helmets and white belts and white gaiters and these long truncheons they used to carry with them, but I can't remember if they were on the bridge or not. But I do know the black Americans couldn't go over the bridge to the other side, to the city.

*And do you have any idea how they felt about that?*

Well not really, I suppose I was a bit too young to know.

*I think they arrived in '42, so you'd have been eight.*

It was after the Blitz I think. We had a big air-raid shelter outside of our house in the middle of the road, brick-built thing where you went in one side and you came out the other and some of the... I'm not saying I was more sensible, but perhaps a coward, but they used to play a game going down the path, going through the railway shelter one side and coming out the other and trying to beat the jeeps or people in cars or bicycles, although there weren't too many cars about then. Just part of growing up really.

*It sounds like an interesting time to grow up.*

It really was, well it was, I thoroughly enjoyed it in a way. The Blitz, the emergency kitchens in the school hall and all that sort of thing. Didn't know... you see by the time the war started, I was five years old and I didn't know really a lot about anything else. Just mainly between 5 and 10, it was just war years. Things changed: towards the end of the war we used to see prisoners around mainly Italian, I think. Didn't take any notice of it really.

*Do you know what they were doing?*

Well there was a big camp just outside of Exeter, prison where – it used to be an open prison after the War – Haldon Forest? And before that it was a prisoner of war prison, so presumably... I don't know where they came from. I know that at the Salvation Army towards the end of the war, we'd find some of them at our worship on the Sunday, so they must have been fairly local, because they couldn't walk in from Haldon.

[Ruth]

Didn't you say your dad brought home a couple for meals.

[Maurice]

My dad did yes, to my mum's amazement he came home one Sunday afternoon, he had a couple and brought them in for a meal. I'm not sure whether they were Italian or German, I wasn't well up in languages then [laughs] I could speak more American than I could speak German or Italian.

*And they were happy to eat whatever you had to serve?*

Oh yes

*What was your dad doing in the war, and your mum?*

My dad had been in the military but he was in the Royal Artillery and he got medically discharged, but before the war he was a special constable in the city and so as soon as he came out the army, he had to go back in to the special constabulary, but he worked during the day and then they worked with the police at night.

*Gosh, that's quite a lot of work.*

Yes, well the police war reserve were people recruited back into the police force who were full-time policemen. And the special constables used to back them up week-ends and night-times, and whenever the siren went, the alert, they had to leave and they had certain places to go, my father always had to go to Jervis Avenue, there used to be a little police place – the first avenue on the right, well it's not quite the same now – as you get to Exe Bridge on your right, there's a road that goes down beside the river, that's Jervis Avenue, and down on the right there was a police, not a box, more like a hut really. And as soon as the siren went they went there and others went to other places. So it was quite interesting.

*Just to go back to the GI's, you don't remember any names of any of them by any chance?*

No, but everybody was a 'bud'.

*And you said that the black and the white GI's couldn't worship together. How did you feel about that and how did other people in the Salvation Army feel about that?*

Well I presume that – as I say I was too young then – but I presume that the military would say: you can't go together, so the Salvation Army said well OK, but we'd still make sure that they can have a service if they want to come, so we'll do a separate one on a Sunday afternoon.

[Crystal]

*Can you tell us anything more about what the services were like? So the Salvation Army, what denomination is it?*

Well, it's Protestant. They'd sing the hymns you'd sing in any church, probably a little bit free and easy compared to the established church service. I'm not sure but probably had a brass band. I know they had one there because they used to march up and down the street on a Sunday morning. So when I look at that [photo], the number of black Americans that I can remember at the County ground were far, far larger than that.

*How many do you think there were then?*

Well it's hard to tell, they were up and down all day long, I suppose it could have been the same ones, I don't know. But you can see how smart they were.

[Ruth]

One of the things we just thought was we could just scrape off – we had these pictures given, trying to scrape off... you thought it might be western...

[Maurice]

Western Morning News or Western Press

*Or the Western Times, yes..*

[Ruth]

When this was sent to me it had that on it: Exeter Christmas 1944, if it was the Western Times, which it looks like it was, it would be worth looking at newspapers around that time to see what's reported supportive and you might then get more information. I mean it's one of the things I haven't done, it might be worth pursuing given that you're rather short of photographs, I understand,

*This is the only one we've seen so far*

then it might be worth trying to look at. I don't know if you know that a lot of the photographs from the Western Times and the Express and Echo were destroyed because when I was putting that together I tried to get copies of things that I had from newspapers and in the '70s or something they just destroyed lots, so you probably wouldn't get an original picture. But to find the context - you just wouldn't have had a picture like that without something written underneath.

*The other week I went to the British Library's newspaper archive in Collindale and I was looking in the war years, I didn't get up to '44 - I only looked at '42, '43 and I found some very interesting photos and stories relating to our project and more generally, but I'm not sure that I can get the originals. But next time I go I'll look at this time, Christmas '44, and see, as you say, exactly where the picture..*

[Ruth]

It wouldn't have just been in the paper without even....

[Maurice]

I just wonder if that was in the newspaper what sort of description they put with it, whether they would say why it was just black Americans, because they are not white, I don't know... at that time, I don't know whether anybody would have queried it in a way.

*From what I've seen in the Express & Echo during the war time, there is a kind of things that are just not said because they are so obvious. So for example, in May '42, there's all these photos of the Blitz and initially it says these are photos of a 'West Country town' and then a few days later it says: 'the Exeter Blitz'. And they don't need to explain that to the Exeter folk, because everybody experienced it, so I wonder if, in a caption of that photo, whether they would have said: these are the black GI's in St Thomas, rather than the white... I don't think they would have needed to say that probably.*

[Ruth]

But they would have said at least celebrating Christmas in St Thomas or something.

*Ok, so I have a couple of questions: could you tell us how you came by this?*

Yes, well the daughter of Brigadier Didham, sent us, her father died, she was going through his archives and found this

[Maurice] that's this fellow there

[Ruth] and because I've been collecting photographs for this longish-term project, people when they found photographs would send it to me, she knew nothing about it at all just said: is this any use to you. Well I was fascinated by it, but again - no more than I'd actually got in there. The context that I set it was the bit I knew at the time which was really the bit that was in Todd Gray's book.

But the only other thing about that, I've got all bits that I collected - this was in an Exeter history magazine: Heavitree District News and this was just after Obama became president, and he wrote a little bit about the County ground. The person who wrote that was a man called Rodney Stone - I've never contacted him, so I rang the editor of this particular magazine to get the author of this, because it was un-authored, and apparently he's done quite a lot of work written about, based on newspaper articles on... if you haven't come across him, he may be worth... because he's done more work on it I think.

*Wonderful! That's a great help. Thank you. That's really useful, we'll follow it up, won't we? And just for the record, just so we can acknowledge, Brigadier Didham's daughter is called..*

Winifred, I'm not sure if she is alive still. Her husband died, I've got a feeling that she died. Because she was living away up in Salisbury I think it was.

[Ruth]

When I wrote that... The difficulty was trying to acknowledge where pictures had come from... so because it wasn't a publication for commercial use, I hadn't done a copyright, looked for copyright... I did ring the Echo, but I couldn't tell you, at that time I hadn't scraped this off, I couldn't tell you where it came from, these were all given to me by people who had copies, who paid for the copies. I think if you did use that one and you found it was in the Western News, then obviously you'd need to acknowledge it in a way that I haven't done. I see it as a pamphlet rather than...

*Well we would love to use it and we'll acknowledge it for sure.*

[Maurice]

It's interesting to see that Joe Louis the boxer, was stationed here. But he was allowed to go up and down wherever he wanted to go. You were saying about the girl... I'm not saying that they went out and had babies or anything like that, but there was a lot of fraternising with black troops and local females in Devon at least 83 babies were born.

*Yes, that's very interesting. Ummm... Good. So we'd love to use that.*

[Ruth] so if I let you have that, I'd like to have it back at some stage. I'm more than happy for you to have it.

[Crystal]

*About the camp at the County ground, did you ever visit the camp or could you see in to..?*

You could see in, but you couldn't go in.

*So do you remember... because I've got lists of the different battle groups that were there, the 595<sup>th</sup> battalion or whatever, but it's hard to figure out how many people were there and how large these groups were. Do you remember seeing tents or do you remember seeing...?*

There were tents there, I mean there was only the little grandstand there, there wasn't any other covered accommodation. I can't remember, eventually I know they built some stone buildings, I'm not sure if the Americans built that or whether the rugby club did, but the rugby club was just a small organisation then. There were an awful lot, bearing in mind my age then I didn't think about it, I just know there were a lot of black Americans and lots of tents and lots of jeeps and lots of gum, and Lucky Strike cigarettes.

*Which of course you didn't try because you were only? [laughs]*

But the adults were very keen on them.

*Was there a guard on the gate?*

Well they had people there, you couldn't go in, they wouldn't let you in, no way you could go in. But you could see it, because the gates were open, big wide gates – it wasn't secret or anything like that.

*Can I just check, the County ground was the rugby ground, was it also the Devon Show Ground, where the Devon County Show used to happen?*

I don't think so.

*Or was that out in..?*

No the Devon County Show Ground was out in Whipton.

*Right, where St James' school is now.  
Exhibition Field*

Yes, where the Athletics Stadium is, that was the Devon County Show Ground.

*Something in this photo, I don't know how good your eyesight is, there is something white hanging down there which is nothing to do with...*

Yes, I did notice it but I have no idea what it is.

*And here, just behind that guy..*

It's a camera.

*Is it a camera, or is it a projector or is it a... what is it? Would it be a projector for a film?*

I would think it's a projector because they're looking at something. I think it's a projector.

*So why would they be projecting a film, I mean is it Christmas Day or was it just kind of Christmas-ish?*

Well it says Christmas 1944.

[Ruth]

That's why it would be really worth trying to see if there is anything in the date..

[Maurice]

Looking at more of this, that looks like not Trevor Tripple, Derek, it looks very much like him doesn't it?

[Ruth]

Trevor's not alive. No, Derek's dead. The trouble with this is that so many people who could help, by the time you come round to looking at this...

[Maurice]

Looking at this, some have got T on their arms, I don't know whether that means 'Transport'.

*Well spotted. And some of them are definitely NCO's aren't they?*

Oh yes, there's a sergeant there, there's a corporal, you see a couple of them have got a 'T'

*Do you know what that means, Crystal?*

[Crystal]

*There were Quartermaster groups and there were some transportation units.*

Got T there, look. T

*There was a truck battalion I think.*

[Ghee]

*You haven't any idea what they were doing, those that you saw Maurice, in terms of what their work was?*

No. I think they were doing more work down at Marsh Barton. They were stationed at the County Ground, but I think that was just their camp, and they were going up and down to Marsh Barton. Now what they were doing down there, I don't know.

*We know they had a food depot, didn't they?*

*Yeh.*

They had something big down there, I know that. I mean there were so many at the County Ground, that they must have been doing something. I mean there were jeeps and even lorries up and down all day long really. Do you know I've never noticed that camera there before.

[Crystal]

*I've heard stories of the GI's sometimes playing football, playing American football – did you ever see the GI's around St Thomas?*

No. I did hear in fact – I'm a very keen football, soccer, support at St James Park, I've been there since right after the war with my dad, and I've read something about the Americans playing American football or baseball or something at St James' Park. Thinking about it, I didn't see them so much in the evening, mainly during the day. Plus the fact I suppose that we weren't allowed out in the evenings, because in 1942/43 parents didn't want you out in the evenings when the sirens were still going off.

And you were quite young still I suppose.

Well I was 7.

*[Crystal]*

*Did you ever see them around Cowick Street and around St Thomas?*

Yeh, they were around St Thomas generally.

*Did they sort of go to shops as usual, that sort of thing?*

I'm sure they must have, I didn't take too much notice. I mean they became part of the scenery, if you like, around St Thomas like everyone else – I didn't take too much notice of them, just become so used to them.

*I'm just noticing some other interesting things here – I assume this is the entrance behind this wooden thing there, and there's a bloke at either end..*

Yes the entrances were either side, you came in the main door.

*There's a chap at either end and the chap on the left, he looks like he's kind of peeping around the corner. And the windows were all blacked out, they've got big blackout curtains.*

Yes, well of course everybody had them back then. But it looks like Derek Tribble.

*I'm wondering if you've got any other memories of the wartime, Maurice, the Blitz or anything else?*

I remember the Blitz. We were in a Morrison shelter in the front room of the house we used to sleep on top of the shelter. When the sirens went we would just get in to the shelter and my dad used to put the mesh on the side and he'd go off to his police station and wait for that. And when the Blitz came, what I remember, it wasn't sort of big bangs, more crumps really that you could hear all the time going. And it caused a bit of a problem, because next morning there wasn't any gas or electricity, stuff like that, so we had to go just across the road into the school, they had emergency feeding centres as they called them, things like that. In our actual street there wasn't any damage at all, but there were just two or three streets away, in Regents Street there were sporadic raids after the Blitz and they did destroy some houses there. And of course they did do a lot of damage in Okehampton Street, Okehampton Road. It was a bit chaotic.

[Ruth] didn't you used to go out to Crediton.

[Maurice]

Yes my dad had relatives who lived in Crediton, so a few nights after the Blitz he decided that we would all go out to Crediton to sleep, and that was the only time that they dropped by night on Crediton [laughs]. And then every night, two doors up from us, there was a baker, worked for a bakery firm, had his van, so we'd all pile in his van and he'd take us out in the country and we'd

sleep in barns. And my mum was asleep one night and she thought, there's something furry.. and put on the torch and a big scream 'Rats!'. So a whole crowd, lots of people just went out, and they'd go out to lde or wherever, because they were country areas then, and sleep in the barns till things started calming down again and then, you know....

*And the farmers knew you were there?*

Oh yes.

*I've heard that in Plymouth, but I never heard it in Exeter before.*

Yes. Chap who used to take out was a chap called Penhalligon, he was a baker for, I think it was Hill Palm Edwards Bakery then. A lot of people went out rather than stay in their houses, and then I suppose gradually everyone got used to it again and started going home, and from then on there was no problem really.

*[Crystal]*

*I've heard about evacuees from London coming to St Thomas.*

Yes, my gran had two, Douglas and Brian Leonard – I can remember them.

*Were they nice?*

Yes, they were alright. [laughter]

*You sound a bit hesitant.*

No, they were alright, they were fine. Eastenders.

*Were they your age?*

Yes, one of them may have been a year or two older than me. But they weren't used to the countryside. So we used to... we took them out Clarks Barn pond and they were a bit concerned, you know, they were in the country and this pond and one thing and another. And we ran off and left them there and my grandmother went up the wall with us [laughs].

*How long did they stay?*

Well quite a while, and they stayed very friendly with my grandmother and grandfather for a long time. Back home, they were the bosses really, they were more worldly-wise than we were. We had a three-wheeler bike, and they were always pinching this bike. And one day Brian or Douglas, I can't remember, and he was riding this bike and his brother was on the back and I was shouting it was my bike. So the other brother went and sat on the handle bars one and me to stand on the back, and I came off and broke my knee-cap.

*You broke it! Oh no! oh dear.*

Yes, I remember them very well. [laughs]

*How funny, little boys from London. They went to school with you?*

Yes they did.

*And were they down as part of a group?*

Well they were scattered, you know, but yes they were from all over the place. I presume they just came down in the trains from London and then they were billeted out at various places. My grandparent's family they were all away in the war overseas and one thing and another. So she looked after them.

*And do you remember, there were various other people from various other countries in Exeter during the war, there were Poles, Czechs in the airforce, an Indian troop— do you remember any of those?*

No, I think a lot of the Poles were stationed out at Exeter airport, because they had their own squadron out there, didn't they? I may have seen them about, but it wouldn't occur to me...

[Ruth]

On that, one of the people we've identified that used to come to the Salvation Army, they're a couple now who are both in a nursing home, and he was a Jamaican and he was serving with the overseas Jamaican force, and she was serving in the Salvation Army canteen in South Street, the Salvation Army had a canteen for forces in South Street and she met him there and they married. And they are now both in a nursing home, and one of the things I was going to ask them – I don't even know if they are well enough to talk – but some friends of ours do go and visit them regularly. If Crystal or somebody was able to go and talk to them, if they felt they wanted to, would you send somebody to Exmouth to talk to them, because he would be ideal. But I'm not sure how well they or if he is well enough. But if you were interested I would ask the people...

[Maurice]

They would certainly know about the Forces, because the canteen in South Street was a very busy place.

[Ruth]

And so, he was with an overseas force anyway as Jamaican.

*Do you mean an overseas Salvation Army?*

RAF – I think it was the RAF actually.

*[Crystal] Yes because Jamaicans were in the RAF.*

*[Ghee] And he stayed in Exeter at the end of the war? Or he went back to Jamaica and came back to the UK? We'd love to talk to him.*

[Ruth] Again, I don't know. But I'd have to ask if he'd be well enough, and this friend of mine who goes to visit would probably go with you, so that it was somebody that they knew. But if you would like to do that, I will try and see if we can organise that...

[Maurice]

There would be other forces there, they'd all be using the same canteen. I think there was a canteen too in what is now the Museum in Queen Street, I think they had one there somebody told me.

*But that was already a museum during the war, wasn't it?*

The Salvation Army definitely had one, what was called the Red Shield Canteen, which is still going of course.

*So where was it on South Street?*

You know where the White Ensign Club is, just opposite there.

*The pub more or less, near the White Hart.*

Yes it was further down.

[Crystal]

*There's a taxi building there.*

That's right, just up from there. Because it's all changed, bear in mind that the whole of that area is changed from those days. Completely different there, toilets, go down the steps...below the toilets... the shops in Magdalen Road opposite Magdalen Bridge, the traffic lights there, and Quay Lane, Coombe Street has gone now, but that would take you right down to Exe Bridge.

*It's changed a lot hasn't it?*

[Crystal]

*I've one more question. Do you know if the Salvation Army in St Thomas ever had dances or social events?*

I doubt if it had dances, not in those days, they might now, but not then. They probably did, I mean they were so close to the camp, I can't believe they wouldn't do. The troops in there wouldn't have been able to go to the canteen in South Street, so probably... I mean there may have been other ones, I don't know.

*The Red Cross used to have dances in the city centre, they wouldn't have been allowed to go there, so I'm not sure..*

Presumably not. I'm sure I heard somewhere or other that there was a canteen in the Museum in Queen Street – I may be wrong.

*This is very interesting, thank you. I wonder if there is anything else Maurice, after the war, in the time you were with the police, anything else that you think might be interesting or useful to us, bearing in mind that our project is looking at people from across the world who come to Exeter, lived in Exeter?*

Yes, well in 1963, for three years I was what they called an Aliens Officer, they called them then, overseas people in Exeter City police

*Couldn't be better*

and there were very few actually, people who we called 'aliens' except that it was at the time when a lot more overseas students were coming in to Exeter for the university and I can remember at, sort of September times, they had a queue – do you know the system how it used to work? When somebody came in from overseas, they were interviewed by the Immigration authorities at sea or air ports and they were given a card, if they were allowed in, setting out conditions that they were allowed in to the UK. That card would be sent to the police force, whichever area they were going to go, and they would then in 7 days, they would have to come in to the police station – we had the card – and then we would have to issue them with what we called an 'Alien's Certificate', a little green booklet, and we had to put in there the conditions of entry 'unable to work' or whatever, and the period of time they were allowed in.

And then when they went out of the country, they were checked by Immigration, and Immigration would send us another card to say they'd left. Now if they were here for a long period, part of my job was to visit, to make sure, they were where they said they would be. And to make sure they'd not buzzed off somewhere else, that sort of thing. But generally speaking it was alright, most of them were around the university and places like that. Had a few people living here, there were quite a number of Indian Sikhs, lived in Old Tiverton Road.

*I imagine that was some of the family who went on to start Heera's. That was '63. But this was '63 to '66.*

Yes, because I joined the CID in Exeter in '66 and I'm sure they were there then.

*Interesting. And do you know where these records are now – are they in the Devon Police Museum?*

Probably gone, to be quite honest, because the force has amalgamated twice and when the first amalgamation - Exeter City Police amalgamated with Devon County in 1966, and then in 1967 the Devon and Exeter Police amalgamated with Plymouth City and Cornwall, to become Devon and Cornwall Police and at that time, there were masses of skips and stuff was

thrown out. But of course the system changed at any rate. They didn't come in for Alien Certificates any more – it died out eventually.

[Ruth] It's worth checking West Country records then because if they were issued with alien certificates. Because you would know the people who were in at least between '63 and '66.

[Maurice] I doubt whether it's there.

*[Crystal] Also you said you got the cards from Immigration, was that from the Home Office*

The Port of Entry.

*So those records would still be stored in the National Archives? I wonder if there's anything in the Police Museum or, as you say...*

I'm sure there's nothing in the Devon & Cornwall, because I've been to the Police Museum, Devon & Cornwall.

*How were the relationships with the people you were working with, did you get on well with them?*

They were OK, but the only difficulty we had sometimes was language, understanding each other.

*Do you have any idea of numbers, like how many in a given year, how many there might have been?*

Oh dear, in Exeter alone, I can't remember, must have been....

[Ruth] It was your full-time job though, was it, or was it...

I was responsible.

[Ruth] or were you doing other things as well?

Yes, I didn't do it all the time, it was part of my responsibility. I had to check them in when they came and visit them, issue certificates. It was only a little green book about that size, 3 or 4 pages maybe more. At certain times of the year there were queues at the desk, you know, because so many coming in a lot of them for the university. But it's hard to remember now, it was so long ago.

[Ruth]

You don't think of these things until someone reminds you. And yet again, there must be records somewhere, supporting this.

*It's fascinating. I mean this is the sort of bread and butter of our project, and one of my vain hopes is that we will be able to track numbers so that, as I say, in 1522 we know that there were 64 aliens in Exeter.*

Oh it would be more than that. I am just trying to visualise, we had a book and when people came in and we'd done all the necessary for them, we used to type out a little slip that went into a book, so that in date order we know and we're checking, and we can take them out of the book when they'd gone, and I know there were an awful lot of pages, but I'm just trying to think...

*[Crystal]*

*So what was the process, so if I'm a new student from, I don't know....*

Well if you were a new student and you came in to the UK, and you weren't a British Citizen back then, you had to come through immigration, and if Immigration allowed you in, they would fill out a card and they'd find out where you were going to be, they'd fill out a card and send it to the Police Force, like if you were coming to Exeter, send it to Exeter City Police, and they would then tell you that within 7 days you had to go and report to the police station. And then you'd come in, we'd look at the card, check out who you were and do the little 'Aliens Certificate' we called it, Aliens book, fill all the details, they'd be taken off the card to say that: yes you were allowed to come into the UK, you were allowed to stay for 12 months, you were NOT allowed to work, or you were allowed to do certain work or you were studying, and then we'd issue that to the person concerned, so if they were stopped, they'd got the book and say yes that's me. When they went out of the country, then they obviously have to go through Immigration again, and when they went out, Immigration would write down all of their details and send another card to the police station, and we'd be able to write them off and say they're not here any more.

*So the other part of that would be that you as a policeman or perhaps other people in Exeter, saw somebody who was an alien, you would ask them – or somebody who looked like an alien in the street – you would ask to see their certificate.*

Yes, it didn't happen very often to be honest. It wasn't a problem back then.

*[Ruth]*

If they didn't report, then you'd follow them through.

*[Maurice]*

And of course if they didn't report, then we'd start looking for them. And of course if they didn't report and they didn't have an Alien Certificate there's not a lot they could do either.

The person who hadn't reported, they couldn't go to work, go to university or anything like that, because if they didn't have the book, then that's it.

*[Ruth]*

Show that at university, or work...

*[Maurice]*

Yes they had to be legitimate.

[Ruth]

It was almost like a pass really, wasn't it?

*Can I check, because in '63, so a British citizen would have included somebody, would it have included somebody who had a 'D' passport?*

Yeah

*For instance one of the people we interviewed, Olive Fernandez who came here in the '60s at some stage from Uganda, and she came here with a 'D' passport. So she was born in Uganda, but had a British citizenship.*

Yes British citizenship, they wouldn't have to come as an alien. I mean Australians, Canadians, South Africans at that time, New Zealand, they didn't have to report.

It's people outside what is now the Commonwealth.

*How interesting.*

Of course, French and German back then, because there was no EU.

*Do you remember the 'Onion Johnnys'?*

Yes, used to come down our road with the bike with the onions on, with the berets, always knew when they were coming?

*You don't know about the 'Onion Johnnys'? (to Crystal). Tell us about the 'Onion Johnnys'?*

Well at certain times of the year, they used to come over from France to the UK, they'd come round selling onions, and they'd ride round on their bikes, and they'd have all their onion round their neck on strings or on the bicycle and they all wore these berets, and us kids used to love it.

*[Crystal – laughs]*

*And that happened once a year?*

Yes, the time when they harvested their onions and they'd come over.

*And did you have to check on them?*

I don't think we did.

[Ruth]

Perhaps they stopped coming by then, because I don't really remember them. I was here sixty...I know of them but I don't... I think they might have stopped.

We probably imported more now. Might have stopped by then.

*Anything else you remember from your time as the Aliens Officer?*

Not really. Except it was a bit of a pain trying to find someone, checking on them. It took an awful lot of time. But Exeter was smaller then than it is now, it was much easier. Now it's just expanded and expanded.

*[Crystal]*

*You said most of the people, that most of the aliens you looked after were students and said...*

Most of them yes, and also people would come in from language schools as well. Generally learning, very few were coming in for work.

*Where were the language schools in '63/'66? Was that the Globe?*

Oh I don't know. It was the start of that really, when lots of people started coming in.

*Anything else you want to tell us, either of you?*

I don't know

*No, that's great, that you were the Aliens Officer, that's wonderful!*

Well there were others, but at that time, that was me.

*Do you remember the names of anyone who did it before you or after you?*

Reg Hubbard, I took over from him. Reg is around, I see him every Wednesday. Can't think who was there before Reg. I can't think who was after me. Because I went in '66, I went into CID and I can't...

*[Ruth]*

Perhaps it had stopped by then.

'66 – I don't think so. No it was till going when I left in '66.

*And were you the only Aliens Officer at that time? So it must not have been tons and tons of people, it must have been manageable, if you could manage it on your own.*

Oh yeh, they didn't all come in together, you know, only certain time, in groups obviously the start of new terms, new university years and one thing and other. I'll ask Reg, of course he's away till next Wednesday, I'll ask him if he can remember.

*Wonderful!*

He'll know. He'd have been there three years earlier, he'd have been there 1961-'63.

[Ruth]

The only other person I was thinking who might be able to help you, was Peter Hinchcliffe, didn't one of Micky and Sandra's sisters marry an American GI? Yes, because we went to the wedding. Sandra's sister, her daughter was a bridesmaid at Sandra and Mike's wedding. Yes, I don't know if you've talked to anyone who actually married a GI or went to America. Yes but Peter Hinchcliffe, his sister-in-law, he's always interested in talking about anything he knows and he's quite interested in local history.

She may not be living still.

[discussion on Peter Hinchcliffe & wedding]

I could ring him, or ask him if he's got your number...

*That would be great. Or even if he had some documentary stuff without necessarily having to meet.*

I've done quite a lot about Salvation Army local history, and he's done quite a lot about police local history, and whether he'd be interested to talk to you. I'll ask him.

*Is he involved in the Police Museum?*

Yes

*I maybe met him. I went to visit the Police Museum a while back at Okehampton.*

It's a bit of a muddle at the moment, or was. They haven't got it sorted out. I think it's moving again. I think it's going to Marsh Barton, I'm not sure.

*I think we're done, thank you very much.*

Would you like a copy of that.

*We'd love one. wow, what a lot of photos!*

I be happy for you to borrow them, but I do want them back eventually.

*You're going to do something about...., which bit?*

I'd just like to eventually set the broader context rather than the social history.

Yes, so GIs..

Black GI's in Exeter you might have done, and I'd set it into a broader context.

*So you two should get together?*

Well it might be quite helpful. I'm still at the collecting stage – anything I find I think that might be quite helpful. These you've had anyway, the GIs in war time Britain. You'd probably get most on the net anyway. Do you want to borrow...?

*Yes, if we could borrow and make notes of the titles and things.*

That one would tell you what American regiments were here in Britain.

*Yes, I've got that one. if you go on the website you can get a link to my reports and it's got lots of references on it, and you can see some of the stuff I've got references...*

*Why don't we show them the website... I'll make a copy of this. This is a cornucopia of....*

I just thought every now and then I'd stick things in this box.

**End of Interview**