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‘Memories of West End’ – Stella Pasley

As part of West End Village Society’s ‘Memories of West End’ project, Stella Pasley discussed her memories with Mike Underwood and Guy Consterdine on 30 June 2026, and her daughters Gill and Christine were present. The conversation was recorded. This document is an edited summary of the discussion.

The text below is Stella’s own words. An occasional few lines expanding on a topic, shown in italics within square brackets, are the editors’ comments.



Stella in June 2026

91 years in West End

I’ve been here in this house for 91 years. I was born upstairs, in 1935. I’ve lived here all my life. My Grandad James Glazier had this pair of semi-detached houses built in 1909.

My mother’s parents, James and Harriet Glazier (nee Street), lived at Colony House. It’s up Lucas Green and across the Common. That’s where my Mum, Ellen Nora Glazier, was born. The house was very close to the Bisley shooting ranges, and they were in danger of getting stray bullets through the window! It became too dangerous and they moved to a little tiny cottage in Streets Heath called Church View. Later they built this semi-detached house - North Leigh, Benner Lane.

[The area of Colony was taken over by the War Department in 1879 but the Glazier family continued living in Colony House, a substantial eighteenth century building, for some years. Journeys to and from school and elsewhere had to be carefully timed to avoid gunfire on the ranges. Eventually the house was demolished.]

My Dad Frank was a Howarth. It's pronounced Hawth. He was a northerner from Todmorden in Lancashire. A Hawth from the North! His parents were William Howarth and Betsy Kenyon.

My Mum married my Dad in West End church, but then they lived up north. When my Granny died, who continued to live here after my Grandad died, my Mum came down from the north with my Dad and my two brothers Norman and Laurence and my sister Pam. And then I was born here. The house is number 33 Benner Lane but I always think of it just as North Leigh. That's the name on the front, isn't it.

But when I was 11 I was sent to Blackpool for six months because my mother had cancer.

[When she was 13 Stella lost her mother to cancer. Stella lived on in North Leigh with her father, her brother Norman (who later emigrated to New Zealand), and her sister Pam. With the others out at work, Stella had to deal with many of the household chores.]

My brother Laurence lived in Port Way, Bisley. He'd had heart trouble when he was a three-year-old and we didn't expect him to live then, but he lived to be 44. He had three children.

Schools

I went to Holy Trinity school, the original one by the church.

Mr Cooper, he was the headmaster, who lived in Streets Heath. Opposite the pond, he was the third house down. And he had a daughter Janet and a son, John Cooper, who moved to Lightwater. There was Mrs Adams, who lived in Valley End. She used to come to school on her bike. And Mrs Corbett, I think she lived in Bisley. Miss Garrett, I don't know where she came from, but she was nice. And Mrs Payne; she was an infants teacher. Mr Bradbrook, he was before my time. He taught my brother.

I was all right at school. Nothing exceptional. I certainly didn't pass the 11 Plus because I was living in Blackpool. My Mum used to write to me, and she told me Josephine Fellows had passed the 11 Plus. From the Fellows the builders family.

We used to have May Day. It had Maypole dancing and I did that. And I went round and made sure that everyone voted for Shirley Cressey to be our first May Queen. Janet Cooper was another May Queen. And Mr Eccott's daughter. And then we had The Most Popular Boy, Owen Glazier. He was my cousin because my Mum and Owen's Dad were brother and sister.

There were three of us that were the youngest in the class. There was me, Brian Woods and Bernard Rapley. Some other names were Derek Chapman, Peggy Farr,

Norma Edwards. Shirley Cressey was a good friend. But I was friends with all the people in the road. I don't know about a best friend. We were all friends.

At Holy Trinity we used to put a performance on. A lady used to come and teach us, and we used to put on a play in the village hall, the old Women's Institute village hall. The old tin one with a wooden stage.

At 13 we were transferred to Chobham, to St Lawrence's. We had a coach that took us there.

Well, when we went to Chobham School, we were allowed into the village, and one day a car stopped and they wanted some schoolchildren for photographs. We didn't know about that. "Get into the car", so we all got into this car, about four of us. And they took us to, I can't say - if you went towards Fair Oaks and then took a left turn - to one of the fields up there. And they were haymaking. And what they wanted was us to have our photographs taken with the hay sheaves. Because there was a little picture in the, I think it was News of the World. Beauty and the Hay Sheaves. My friend's dad wrote to the paper and complained that they should not have picked us up from school and taken us down there and they could have taken us anywhere.

My God, we were just trusting. We just got in the car and went with them. Unbelievable, isn't it.

And then when I was 11 my mum had cancer. So I was sent to live with my aunt and uncle in Blackpool. And I went to school in Blackpool for six months.

I came home and told my mum that my aunt was treating me at 11 years old like a slave. And she was. Because I had to come home in my lunch hour and serve her guests for their lunches because she had a boarding house. And every weekend she made me sweep their driveway. And I had to wash all the windowsills outside.

But I loved it up there because I had a lovely uncle. Took me to all the shows. Because they got tickets for all the shows in Blackpool. So, yeah, I went to lots of shows.

Childhood out of school

We had a telegraph pole opposite us and that was our base when we played rounders out there. There were no cars really. Benner Lane was just a narrow country lane. We used to play out in the road and we used to have hopscotch on the pavement. And hand stands against the hedge.

We knew everyone in the road. There weren't many people in West End houses that you didn't know who lived there.

Mr Horace Medhurst used to give us all a ride on his farm cart. He'd go along with his horse and cart, and we could all jump on. He used to sell vegetables out of his barn. Every child that went, he would give them all an apple. It must have cost him a fortune. He was a lovely man. John Medhurst's grandad.

There were two ponds along Streets Heath. We called them the Big Pond and the Little Pond. The Little Pond was opposite where Mr Medhurst lived. *[Little Pond was later filled in, and Horace Medhurst's horses would then drink at Big Pond. It's now been named Medhurst Pond.]*

My mum used to have a rack that you could wind up and let down - a drying rack.

They used to have youth clubs in the old village hall. I remember we used to go on a Friday night. And jumble sales. We used to have a children's medical clinic there. Well, to start with, I used to walk to Chobham. I pushed the pram, you know, to Chobham for the clinic. It was a long push all the way back. And then they started one in the village hall.

There used to be a tin chapel on the corner of Brentmoor Road and Birch Lane, painted black. I'd go down there to Sunday School. We used to have a teacher called Mrs Rowe, had to go down there to Sunday school.

We had the Salvation Army in King's Road. Mr and Mrs Smith from Chobham used to cycle there every Sunday. In all weathers. No car. Mr Smith was the Scoutmaster at Chobham. And I had to go morning and afternoon. We had to have a tambourine. We used to argue over who could have the biggest tambourine! There was a girl in King's Road called Nora Maynard, and she was always in charge because she was older than any of us.

I met my husband Gordon through the youth club at Chobham, but I didn't like him! He used to work at Belcher's butchers shop, and he used to leave at lunchtime. So all the girls used to go down to see him. How did he win me round? I don't know, well, he just cycled up here one evening.

The War years

When an air raid siren went we were shoved in the cupboard under the stairs. I thought we'd be saved because of the stairs. The stairs usually stayed intact, didn't they, when there was a bomb. That's what I remember, having to go in the cupboard under the stairs. I did sleep in the cupboard at one time.

If you looked to the east at night you could see the red glow in the sky, it's London burning. I used to see it from our front bedroom window.

Did I see any German planes flying overhead? Well, yeah, but I couldn't say definitely what they were. I remember people saying those are German planes flying over here, or going back.

When the German bomber fell on the rec I wasn't allowed up there. My dad and my brother Norman went and I wanted to go and I wasn't allowed to go. Because I was little. Not very old. I wanted to go up there and my mum wouldn't let me go. And what she said went.

We had two metal bits of that plane that used to stand on our mantelpiece. I don't know what they were. They're probably in the shed somewhere. There was one crash at Halebourne as well.

The stress of the war? Well, you didn't realise what it was as a child.

People, shops and door to door salesmen

We used to have door to door salesmen. There was Emerson Bakeries - Vernon used to deliver the bread. There was Harry Richardson in his fruit and veg truck, he used to come round on a Friday. The pools man would come round with the pools coupon to do the football pools. Then there was the turby man. Oh yeah, we used to run when we saw the turby man coming. I don't know what we thought he was going to do. We used to run like mad to get out of his way.

The Pru man used to come round. Mr Wagstaff. Sometimes if we had to go out I just left the things on the windowsill with the money in it. You couldn't do it now, just leave the insurance books and money on the windowsill and go out.

There's a lot of shops that have gone now. I remember that little sweet shop down by Gordon's school. Mr Bull was lovely.

We had cockerels and at Christmas time I had to catch the cockerel, as my dad had gone to work. I had to catch the cockerel and put it in a sack and take it down to Mr Hart the butcher, the one down Brentmoor Road. Put it in a sack and he's tapping about. Don't ask me how I caught it but I had to catch it. Oh lord. Put it in a sack.

I used to walk my dogs, when I had two dogs, I used to walk up Fairfield Lane. And I used to get over the gate and go through the nursery and come out in Penny Pot. And as I walked up Penny Pot, there would be Mr Chown on his way to work, but he'd be sitting, before you turn into Penny Pot, he was sitting on his bike, lighting his, whatever he smoked, cigar or cigarette. It just seemed every morning.

It used to be nurseries all around here and the men walked to work. Some of the school children came to school on bikes, and some used to leave them here. I used to take in a lot of bikes, lined up along my hedge.

[West End Parish Council made Stella their 'Citizen of the Year 2019' for her reliable and supportive roles in a dozen or more clubs and activities, over many years. The full citation is on the Parish Council website.]