

“When I was little, right at the start of the war, my brother Alfie and me were evacuated to Eyemouth together and were sent there on the train where we lived with a woman and her husband, who was the captain of a trawler there. We went with other kids from the school to there. She got rations for us, big tins of cheese and jams, government stuff with no labels on it. It was all for us, but they used it as well.

One day we were out playing and she wanted us in for a certain time. When I got home, she told me to get washed because I was always the filthiest one. We used to play down at the harbour. We were sitting at the table and she put the soup down first and we had that then she put the main meal down and I thought oh this looks good. My brother then said to me “Don’t eat it” but I told him I was hungry and wanted it, but he told me off again. She heard us and asked why we weren’t eating, and my brother told her we weren’t eating it and we were sent to bed at six o’clock with no tea. I said to him he cost me a meal and told him I would tell my mum on him, but he said he was going to phone my mum because the woman shouldn’t be treating us like this. He phoned the stair and spoke to Jack Waller in the shop who got my mother who said she was coming down and taking us home. My mother spoke to her and said she wasn’t to treat us like that because we were Catholics and couldn’t eat food like that (meat) on a Friday. I was that young though, I was eating anything she put down to me, but no my brother and I told him it was just another day to me.

We used to go on the man’s trawler and steal the ropes to make nets and put a pin in the end of them and go fishing off the harbour. I used to play with others from my class. We used to go to school in the morning to a hall and in the afternoon, you were allowed to go out playing. We used to make pea shooters out of the poisonous plant, rat’s rhubarb and buy barley to shoot from them. My brother played with the older boys, but I never had a watch and was always late home. We were down there for about a year.

At the harbour we watched the fleet going out the Forth. Another time there was a submarine looking for the ships. One time there was a plane crash after a dog fight and a plane got shot down. We climbed the hill to have a look and the Police were all there, but the pilot was gone. The bullets were all scattered, and we went to pick some up thinking because they were all brass we could maybe exchange some at school for chocolate or a comic but the Police stopped us. I think that the Germans were trying to get the Forth Bridge and that.

When we came back to Edinburgh, I had to go back to school but I skipped it. My mother was working, and I used to have to go to school in the morning but the teacher said, if you are working Mrs O’Connor why not leave him to come to school in the afternoon as well. I thought I’m not for this but went for a couple of days before I started taking a towel with me and going to the baths in the afternoon. I did this for about six weeks and one day I went home on my mother’s day off. She asked me what the class was like in the afternoon and I said it was ok but different from the morning. She asked what we had been getting so I told her algebra and sums and that. She said, “You’re a bloody liar, you’ve never been going”, so she took me to the

school and told the teacher to make sure I started going in the afternoon from now on.

We used to have to go to the shelter in the school when they started bombing Edinburgh, they were after Leith and that. They also bombed a distillery in the west end with the incendiary bombs. There were guns in Leith Links and a lot of tents that got destroyed, Leith Town Hall also got hit.”