



Judith and Allen Sawkins, Farnham

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**Rural Life Centre, Tilford, Surrey**

**Interview with Judith and Allen Sawkins**

**Interviewed by Elisabeth Blanchet**

**Transcribed by Sonia Zhuravlyova March 2018**

**Elisabeth: Can you first of all tell me who you are, what are your names?**

*JS: Right, I am Judith Sawkins, and I lived in 31 Middlefield.*

*AS: And I'm Allen Sawkins, and I live in 31 Middlefield*

**So when did you get into the prefab?**

*JS: We moved in, on June 1953.*

*AS: And I was born there in 1957.*

**Actually in the prefab?**

*JS: I was born in the prefab, yes definitely, prefab kid!*

*AS: Yes she was.*

**How come your parents got a prefab?**

*AS: They were living in a rented flat, in Farnham it was third floor of a Georgian building, I think they were on the council waiting list, and obviously came to the top of the list. And then they got the prefab when I was just three years old.*

**And what did they think about the prefab when they...**

*AS: They loved it.*

**At first sight?**

*JS: Yes.*



Judith and Allen Sawkins, Farnham

AS: *Yes, yes, yeah. I think in those days the paintwork was dreadful, from what I can gather it was all sorts of greens and browns, and they hated it. Because our father was a painter and decorator by trade so he made it all light colours because they didn't like the colour scheme.*

**And what do you remember of it?**

JS: *I can remember the design, I can remember the old copper in the kitchen.*

AS: *And it had a gas fridge.*

JS: *The doors, they opened into the room, and that one opened into the room and you couldn't get through it quick enough, could you?*

AS: *No.*

**So you had to share the same bedroom?**

JS: *We did to start. But when I was four and half our dad died and I actually got told off for putting on the light and waking Allen up so then I slept in the same room as my mum from then on. Disturbing his beauty sleep.*

AS: *I don't know about that.*

JS: *So yeah that was how the bedroom was set up.*

**So you lived in Middlefield in Farnham, do you remember roughly how many prefabs there were?**

AS: *I think there were 50.*

**Did you get on with the other people living in the prefabs?**

AS: *Yeah, we knew them all. And even some of the older ones now, we still sort of know them...*

JS: *That have moved on, the estate was built to move the people from the prefabs onto another housing estate. So you moved with the people that you lived in the prefabs with, you just moved with them.*

**Ok, so that's good in terms of community, because it doesn't break up the community...**



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Judith and Allen Sawkins, Farnham

JS: *That is now breaking up because they are obviously passing away now, they are very elderly, the original ones from there. One of the pictures over there - they still live on our estate.*

**Wow...**

**Have you got any funny stories to tell about life in the prefab?**

JS: *We used to make camps and things, because as I said it was a corrugated shed and outside there you'd put a table up and chairs on top to make a wagon. I can remember...*

AS: *You got told off.*

*You got told off, because I fell off the back of it or something.*

JS: *You did something and I got the blame for it!*

*I think the other one of the funny ones, the chimney, used to get blocked in the prefabs, because our mother was on her own, she'd used to have to get a table outside the back door and put a chair on the table to get on the roof to clean the chimney.*

AS: *If I wasn't around. Which I wasn't.*

JS: *I remember getting told off, myself and another little girl because we were laughing at her brightly coloured bloomers, or long johns as they were called in them days.*

*There is lots of memories, and they did have big gardens, you had your vegetable patch.*

AS: *Out the front, and ours were out the front.*

**So you move out in 1967, because they were going to pull them down?**

JS: *They didn't want to move, did they?*

AS: *They didn't want to move. But they were really damp by then.*

**They had lived really...**

AS: *This is it, they had served their life.*

**You moved to a traditional house?**

JS: *Yes, they were all built especially to moving people on.*



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Judith and Allen Sawkins, Farnham

AS: *Apart from the ones who had to move into three bedrooms houses...*

**How did your mum feel about leaving?**

JS: *Well, she said she'd move. And then she was determined that she was going to move back on to the site of Middlefield again.*

AS: *It's still there now, it is a different housing estate.*

JS: *She didn't like it so much so we stayed where we were.*

**Would you live in a prefab now?**

JS: *I don't think so now. They were lovely at the time.*

AS: *I don't think so now. At the time when we were growing up they were lovely. I don't think so now.*

**Why?**

JS: *They were spacious at the time. Wouldn't like the design now, I don't now. Especially when you see all the old furnisher.*

**Were your friends at school looking down at you for living in a prefab?**

AS: *No, because there was a lot round us, they were the same age as both of us and we went to school together.*

JS: *Wouldn't have been something I would have thought about.*