



Brian Finley, Alton

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**3/7/17**

**Rural Life Centre, Tilford, Surrey**

**Interview with Brian Finley**

**Interviewed by Elisabeth Blanchet**

**Transcription by Sonia Zhuravlyova, March 2018**

**Elisabeth: Can you tell me your name?**

*Brian Finley.*

**And where are you from?**

*At the moment, Borden.*

**And you were born in which year?**

*1935.*

**So you moved to a prefab with your parents, can you tell me the story?**

*Well, at the end of the war my father had an option of a prefab, he was a serviceman, so we moved up over there in 1947 when I was 12.*

**It was an estate? How many prefabs?**

*Forty I would have thought, I couldn't say exactly, we were number 33.*

**So at least 33... The layout of the prefabs were like, in rows?**

*Yeah, you had a crescent, that is why it's called Gill's Crescent, that went round the prefabs built around there. You had other houses at the end, so to speak, because it was cut in from another row and one or two little offshoots, you know.*

**And do you remember the first time you went to the prefab, what did you think about it?**

*Can't remember now. But you did notice the fact that it was nothing you'd ever seen before. We had to wait round the corner for a toilet if we were lucky on the*



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*island, we just had to wait round there. But the uncle who live at the (can't hear from 3.13).*

**You had all the mod cons?**

*Oh yeah, like this.*

**Did you think it was luxury?**

*In them days yeah. Being young we didn't take much notice, as you know. When you look back, how many people had a gas fridge, and all that lot built in.*

**And how many kids were you?**

*Only one.*

**So you had your own bedroom?**

*Yeah. Two bedrooms side by side. And that side of the hall, as you say a loo, a bathroom, then dinning room and kitchen.*

**And the garden around?**

*Yeah, it was nice garden. Wait till you see what the front's like, the back was quite a good size. And father was lucky, he got a piece of allotment just over the fence. So he used to fill that with spuds and then used to put them in bags, and I had to go round with the old barrow and deliver them to whoever wanted them. I think it was five bob a bag in them days, that was good 100 weight, you know.*

**Did your mother like the prefab?**

*Oh yeah yeah.*

**And what did she like about it?**

*She hadn't been used to that sort of thing. All modern.*

**They stayed in that prefab till?**

*Yes, till the date on the back, 1985, then they were rehoused. Then father spent two years there, then he passed on in 1987.*

**So they were rehoused on the same estate, how did it work?**

*Well they rehoused some people, don't ask me where. And then they started rebuilding and then the others they sort of moved them round.*

**And there none left of them, over there?**



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*No, no.*

**Have you got some funny stories or memories to tell about the prefab?**

*I know me brother locked himself in the loo one day. I always thought father got through the window, but I can't see how he ever got through that window, it wasn't even that big. And I used to use the bathroom for a darkroom.*

**Ah you did some photography?**

*Yeah, I got my own crates (6.14- 6.17) you know and put sliding doors under the bathroom, do all my developing in there. It weren't very big to do developing in.*

**Well, it's cool so you did some photography as an amateur or?**

*An amateur, yeah, that's right.*

**And were there a sense of community between neighbours?**

*Because they're all the same, you probably get someone walk in and say, 'oh sorry wrong house'. The next-door neighbour was always coming in ours instead of his.*

**Were there street parties?**

*No, never had much, well when the occasion arose, like you have street parties like that one on there with fancy dress. I think that was probably part of one. They had the what's it name there and then went all down to the.... I don't know, went down town somewhere, could have been the community centre or something, or the assembly room perhaps.*

**And when you went to school, other kids at school, were they looking down on you because you were living in a prefab?**

*Not that I remember, no, and also I went opposite the church, to the school over there, and I was supposed to come about a year earlier but the prefab weren't ready and when I came over here I was about a year in advance of what I was doing there. Yes so witnessed more over there earlier then what they did.*

**You told me something about the story of the prefab, can you tell me more what you know about the prefab itself?**

*The central heating, where they had this strut going into the bedrooms, that was hit and miss, mostly miss.*

**I imagine the heat was going up anyway. The heat was going up – the heating system was not very clever.**



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*No it was really hot air finding its own way through, it didn't work. But the towel rail used to get hot. I have to say if you think what was about in them days, you might say they were about 20 or 30 years in advance.*

**You move out of the prefab to get married your parents stayed and now what do you think of prefabs, do you think they can be used again?**

*Well they could if they only, what they could have done was brick round the outside and they had weight sails, permanent prefabs, because they were built in a similar way. At the end of the day, they started rotting away. I don't think people get mortgages, but anyway what they did is they sold them all. I think some people have built, as I say, round the outside.*

**Yeah there are some prefabs that are bricked around and look like bungalows.**