During the War

Lake Estate had its own fire station and fire brigade. Colonel Bailey went to an agricultural show one day and came back with a brand new fire engine. They made a fire station at the end of the cart shed, and ultimately the whole place including the stables, the fire station, the cart shed and the head groom's accommodation, ended up in smoke. The next morning the village was looking at the remains of the building and who should arrive - it was the postman. He arrived to present Burt Hull the head groom with his calling up papers. And there was Burt stood outside the ruins of his house, in the clothes he stood up in and was called up to do National Service.

George Freer



Lake Fire Brigade



High Post Aerodrome Hotel

I remember during the war when the Spitfires took off in formation from Boscombe. And a Hurricane crash landed in Great Durnford and do you know the engine went into the ground about four foot. I was in a tree down the village one Sunday morning and we heard this awful noise and a big explosion and then silence and that was it. And also around that time we were playing in the same tree on a Sunday morning and we heard a machine gun going off and that was a German going over and he had targeted a plane taking off from Old Sarum. The poor chap had jumped out and was coming down in his parachute and the German went in and fired at him as he was coming down, but luckily they shot the German down before he got to Southampton. So that was a tragedy. We had lots of activity at High Post; it was an aerodrome for the Lysander and of course they used to make the Spitfires in Salisbury and they would bring them to High Post to be tested. Of course it was already an aerodrome anyway before the war because the hotel was the control tower for the aircraft. The road past the factory was closed down in the war because the planes used to go across the road and so they made the concrete road for people to get down to the valley. Where they blocked the road off they put ten railway carriages for airmen to live in. Oh yes, there was a huge amount of activity during the war.

Monty Hazzard



WAECO Girls

Then, of course, the war came along and I had to register and if I hadn't gone up to the factory I could have been put in the forces. Well, I didn't want to leave home because my young sister and me, we looked after my dad because Mother had died. I was six years at WAECO. We did all sorts; made smoke bombs, tear gas, distress signals and flares for the forces. Every so often, we had to go in the coloured shed, to make like coloured distress signals. We had to be wrapped up, our head and clothes because it was all coloured powder. We did red and yellow. We enjoyed it really.

Margery Truckle

When I worked at WAECO I was driving up there and I had no licence and this bloke who was a driver up there said "Come on Sam, I'll take you out to drive." "Come on jump in" he says. I used to drive into Salisbury, all over the place. I had no licence, no insurance and nobody really cared. One day I took my father to Salisbury and as we were coming back and I put my hand out to turn right and a big RAF vehicle come up and hit me. I thought to myself here we go again -that wasn't my fault, it was his fault. I had to go to the RAF station and fill the forms out, I said. "Nothing to do with me – he's in the wrong." "Don't worry about it son." I says," I'm not." So we were getting a bit late then. The road around the airfield that used to be – the concrete road, I came back that way, well I had to. And I flew along that road, the log book flew out the window and I crammed the brakes on. The old man, well he nearly hit his head on the windscreen. He says. "I'm not riding with you anymore, your bloody mad!" So that was that.

Sam Lavender

I do remember a bomb being dropped in Salisbury bus station in the Market Square. I went with my former nanny and we were on the bus station in Salisbury and there was all this terrible furore and I think I remember a fire engine being pulled by horses. It was just a little bomb – tiny, it hardly did any damage at all. And somebody fainted, I do remember that.

Ann Carr

We had two convalescent homes in the war; one was down in Lake and one was in Wilsford Manor. I was thirteen by the time war had finished; the war years -that was all of our childhood really. The convalescents, all our mums and the old people always used to call them the Blue Boys because they used to wear the blue suits, white shirts and a red tie. They used to come over in the evenings. It was a motherly instinct, you'd see a young lad and you'd feel sorry. A lot were Americans and in those days it was – "any gum chum." Although it was war time, it was a happy childhood because we had all the freedom. Although there was rationing, we had half a pound of butter a week to do everything with and yet we survived. I'll always remember that in the summer we lived on rabbit and rhubarb. In the harvest the trackers used to kill the rabbits and you'd have rhubarb in the garden. You'd come home and it would be a hot, hot, day and you'd come home to rabbit stew – you didn't moan because it was just how you were.

Betty Evans