

Transcript of 84-year-old Mr. John Holder of West Sussex in conversation with
Dr. John Goodyear (University of Birmingham / Kulturgenossenschaft Globe e.G.) on
Wednesday 28 November 2018, 3:15pm (GMT)

A: Interviewer Dr. John Goodyear (38, DOB: 06.09.1980)

B: Globe patron Mr. John Holder (84, DOB: 09.1934)

A: Hello and a very good afternoon and a warm welcome from me, John Goodyear, here at the University of Birmingham, and I am joined here today by another John. Hello, John.

B: And hello, John. My name is John Holder. I was born in September 1934 and I've, I am here to talk with John about my memories of time in Oldenburg, and in particular, the Globe Cinema, but I think we will be covering other things as well. I was a National Serviceman, 1953 to 1955, and I went straight from school via, of course, Oswestry, which is the Basic Training place. I managed somehow to get a commission and then went out to Oldenburg and became a regimental officer out there.

A: Thank you, John. Could you tell us a little bit about the journey from the UK to Oldenburg? Do you remember that journey?

B: Do you mean, do you mean the physical journey?

A: Yes.

B: Like the train and all that ...?

A: Yes.

B: Right, in those days, I don't suppose it is the same now, we, there were troop train and troop ships, which I think were daily, one in each direction. You'd go and get the train at Liverpool Street, go to Harwich, as if you were, you know, going to the continent in an ordinary way and, in the evening, get on the troop ship and arrive the next morning. At 6:30, you would hear over the loudspeaker system: '*imitates sound effects of microphone tapping*' Morning, this is your Ship Sergeant Major'. And then we would get off the ship, get on to a train. And the train would be made up of all sorts of bits going to different parts of the BAOR [*British Army of the Rhine*]. And my bit went to Oldenburg, and that's where I would be met on my first occasion. Usually, you were met by a group of officers, but they were away on exercise, so I just had the pleasure of just one officer.

A: And what were your first impressions when you got to Oldenburg, John?

B: The city or the barracks?

A: The city and the barracks!

B: Firstly, the city, I was delightfully surprised. Having come—remember this was 1954—and I'd come from, still, a fairly battered UK. Oldenburg, it seemed to me, had survived very well: it was ... the windows were brightly lit; the people looked happy, and altogether, I thought: a very pleasant town. The

barracks were typical, I think, of the old-style German barracks: very comfortable, not like the single-storey British ones. And I have to say, that, being an officer, I was a bit spoiled, conditions in the mess were, for me, very pleasant indeed. I was in the 44th Heavy Ack Ack [Anti-Aircraft Artillery] Regiment, which was one of the two mobile regiments, so in the summer, we were kept very busy with exercises.

A: Can you remember what you did in your free time then, John, when you weren't busy with exercises?

B: Well, most of the time, we didn't go very far. Occasionally, I would travel as far as Hamburg or Bremen and just look around. Erm, I did not do much sports. So, I, actually I played for the regimental hockey team, but that was about all, so I didn't spend much free time on sport. I was a frequent attender at the two cinemas in Oldenburg: that was the Globe, which in those days was in the town; and also the Astra, which was in the local RAF station, part of two TAF [2nd Tactical Air Force]. What else did we do? Erm, oh well, I used to, for example, do trips to Holland; rent a car, something like that. Otherwise it is difficult to think of what I did do.

A: Let's turn to the Globe itself. Now, you said that there was a Globe in town, John. Can you remember approximately where this was?

B: To the best of my recollection, well, I know it was on the southern side of the town. In other words, from where we were, we would drive down the road through the old part, the centre of the town, over the canal on the other side, and so we are coming out now on the south, and it was down there. Now, as for remembering the names of all the streets, I'm afraid I can't. I used to go usually by car. And we were fortunate in that we had, not exactly a taxi rank, but there were cars available for officers free of charge, driven by German civilians, mainly older men [*possibly the German Services Organisation (GSO)*]. And we would just, I don't even remember if we had to book them or not. Maybe we did. And they would just take us down to the Globe Cinema and presumably we had an arrangement with them to bring us back.

A: And you mentioned in earlier conversations and correspondence with me, John, that you would say where you would like to go to this particular German driver or these drivers. And they had a way of responding to you. Could you tell our listeners what that way was?

B: Well, it wasn't exactly that. What happened was that we would just come out of the mess and the car would be literally there on the road-way in front. And we would open the door and get in. The driver, not really knowing where to go, but because—let's say—it was, you know, we'd just had our meal and it was the evening, he would make a guess and he would say: "Zum Globby?"

A: So, in the other words: "zum Globe", and then "zum Globby", so in other words: to go to the Globe and you would be driven to that place you described before. When you got there, John, do you have any recollections of how the cinema looked or what you actually saw in the cinema itself?

B: Well, I have to apologise for not having a particularly good recollection. My view was that it, firstly, it wasn't a huge building; it was totally unlike a British cinema of the time: a Gaumont or Odeon where it was a block standing on its own. I thought it was just on the road, in amongst other buildings, it was not

set back very far. It was a converted, well, it wasn't a sort of a brand-new building, but I have to say, it was a very comfortable building of medium size.

A: And you can recall any of the films that you saw at this "Zum Globby" or this Globe or not John, what do you think?

B: My problem is to remember whether I saw them at the Globe or at the Astra. I'm going to slightly dodge the question by saying that it was, the programme was really, was if you were, you know, in a British town. They were, you know, up-to-date releases, all the musicals or whatever. *The Robe*, I saw. Actually, on the spur of the moment, I can't remember the other titles. But, you know, we'd ... there was nothing sort of particular about them; it wasn't as if they were ... had any sort of element of training or patriotism or anything like that, and, just, you know, very good selection of films.

A: We're talking about films, but, of course, these were places where potentially news reels could and would be shown. Could you remember, John, actually watching the news, a source of information of what was going on back at home and around the world?

B: Well, I think there was a news reel run, I think it was sort of like the old Gaumont British ones or Pathe, or instead of the cockerel for Pathe, you'd get the AKC logo coming up, and I can just, I can only imagine that they were telling us what was going on, in fact, there may have borrowed it, worked with Gaumont British news or somboedy like that, just to bring up up-to-date out there. I can't remember if there was ever a B film shown. I just don't, I don't think there was, but there could have been.

A: Looking at the Globe itself now, John, the real Globe on the site of the barracks on which you served, but obviously it comes after your time there. What do you think to the actual project itself, of this Globe Cinema on the Donnerschwee barracks, so on the Crerar Barracks, what do you think to the renovation, its reconstruction, then bringing it back into public and cultural life?

B: Well, my, my first reaction, John, when I read your article is to slightly query why there was this enormous enthusiasm out there and with you for this project. But I can see now that it has a certain uniqueness; and, in fact, it goes beyond the normal reasons for wanting to restore any sort of building because there are wider implications in the social side and, you know, historically and providing also, I think, a very good venue for the people of Oldenburg, so I'm, I find it very interesting and I shall watch with interest what happens in the future.

A: John, thank you very much indeed.

B: And thank you.



Fig 1. John Holder in uniform of a gunner outside wooden barracks in UK (1953)



Fig 2. John Holder in 44 HAA regimental uniform as a Junior Officer



Fig 3. Officers' photo at Donnerschwee Barracks (Eng: Crerar Barracks), Oldenburg, Germany (1954); photo developed by *Foto Woltje, Oldenburg*



Fig 4. John Holder with fellow officer at Bümmerstede training ground, Germany (1954 or 1955)