

Transcript of 83-year-old Mr. Bill Maybury of Malvern, Worcestershire in conversation with Dr. John Goodyear (University of Birmingham / Kulturgenossenschaft Globe e.G.) on Tuesday 18 December 2018, 5:15pm (GMT)

A: Interviewer Dr. John Goodyear (38, DOB: 06.09.1980)
B: Cinema patron: Mr. William Duckett Maybury (known as Bill Maybury)
(83, DOB: 20.07.1935)

A: And a very warm welcome from me here at the foot of the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire. My name is John Goodyear and I am joined today by Bill Maybury. Maybury

A: Hello Bill.

B: Hello!

A: Bill, could you just give us a bit of a background about your time before you got to Oldenburg?

B: My time before: I was called up in November 1953 and we started off at the training, ... artillery training camp in Oswestry, near the Welsh border. We were there for ten weeks, and after that, we went down to Woolwich barracks in London for ... until we were trained up as clerks, and then awaiting shipment out to where ever we were posted to. We were allocated to the 44th Heavy Ack Ack [Anti-Aircraft Artillery] regiment, royal artillery, which was stationed somewhere in Germany. It transpired that this was in Oldenburg, in the north of the country. When we arrived at the station to go, we were marched down to Woolwich and we boarded a ship at Harwich. And on the overnight boat, we went to the Hook of Holland, when we were fed and put on a train directly to Oldenburg. There were several other trains in the station, each one, military trains allocated to various military destinations in British Army of the Rhine. When we arrived in Oldenburg, we were met, checked off against a list, and put into the back of army lorries and taken somewhere to barracks. We were then lined up and paraded on a square, and put into different rooms, about six to eight to a room for about a three-week transfer camp [*corrected to one-week transfer camp by interviewee after the interview*] under training regime to get to know more about the routine in that particular barracks, and life, military life that is, in northern Germany. At the end of this time, we were allotted, according to our trades, to different batteries in the regiment and transferred to their particular accommodation. After about three weeks, then, we were transported to the Baltic Coast where they were on the annual practice or training shoot for the heavy Ack Ack guns. In the camp, there were, there were four different sections, one for the Dutch, one for the Americans, one for the British and a spare camp, each accommodating several Ack Ack guns.

A: Bill, that's all very, very interesting stuff. Could you tell us a little bit about the barracks in Oldenburg? First of all, what were they called? Can you remember?

B: We didn't have a name. We just called them Oldenburg barracks. There were two military regimes in Oldenburg: there was the military camp and there was the RAF base in the camp, which they were totally separate. The military

barracks in Oldenburg were ex-SS, which were overtaken by the Canadians and after several years, they were then transferred for use by the British Army.

A: Let's look at your life there on barracks? Could you tell us a little bit about what you would get up to on a day-to-day basis? What would be your regime, your routine?

B: Yes, I was a clerk and I was in a battery office, so that I was exempt from most parades and overnight outside guard duty, although we did have overnight duties, manning the battery office, should any emergency arise. We would get up in the morning and reveille about six-thirty (6:30am); we would prepare ourselves and go for breakfast in the Dining Hall; return, and start our day-to-day routine at about half-past-eight (08:30am). We, in the office, would go straight there and start our duties, whereas the people manning the guns or the radar sets or the drivers would assemble on the parade ground and have a miniature parade and to be ... and inspection to see if they had shaved and had their hair-cut.

A: It's very interesting, Bill. What did you do in your free time outside of all of these military duties?

B: The, the only free time we had was at Saturday afternoon and Sundays and in the evenings after we had finished our daily duties. We didn't have supper in the military because of the food, but we did go invariably every night to the NAAFI [*Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes*] where would have endless cups of tea—coffee wasn't in in those days—and chips and eggs or something of that order. On a Saturday night, we would ... a small group of friends would retire, go out, went in civvies [*in civilian clothing, i.e. not in military uniform*] when we were allowed to wear them and have a meal at one of the German public houses, as you might say.

A: Were there any other forms of entertainment that you used or that you had access to whilst you were there in Oldenburg?

B: Yes, there was a NAAFI, a large NAAFI establishment, which was restaurant and retail shop, but we very rarely went there; instead we went farther on through the town to the Salvation Army [*corrected to Church Army by interviewee after the interview*] who had a marvellous cafeteria there and lots of armchairs where one could relax without pressure to either buy something or to move on. When we went to cinema, we would go to the military cinema, which was farther along the, past the Salvation Army [*corrected to Church Army by interviewee after the interview*] cafeteria, and it was some further distance along on the right-hand side of the road when there was a conventional type of cinema with stalls on the bottom and an upstairs balcony which was mainly reserved for the officer corps.

A: Bill, you have some memories when it comes to the building or the construction, the possible construction of a cinema on-site. Could you tell people listening about what you remember with regards to the construction and your time, and when that would have been?

B: Well, it was towards the end of my time, which was October 1955. I recall it because we had no cinema on-site then at all, and the reason I remember it: it was a rather illegal escapade in that I was informed by somebody that I should acquire or assemble my office staff to go over there in the dark one

evening, in October, and acquire one or two planks of wood which were two inch by three inch (2'3) for use, usage in our own barrack facility. But there was no building, maybe construction had started, but there was nothing to see and I can't imagine now even where it would be because it was beyond another regiment, way out into enclosed land.

A: Talking about this particular cinema that was under construction, you recalled a few moments' ago and also in previous telephone conversations I've had with you, Bill, about a special conversation, specifically about the cinema and a Brigadier General that you had conversations with. Could you sort of retell that story for our listeners?

B: Yes, indeed. It was towards, towards the end of my time, probably the October, and we had a brigadier doing his brigade inspection which they did every few years. And this particular one, it was due just before my time finished to be demobbed, and I was quite demob-happy [*pleased to be demobilised from the Army*], and when this chap came in with all his mind, everybody was smartly to attention in the best uniforms; shoes bulled up [*verb to clean and polish army shoes*], and with no caps on, because that wasn't necessary in an office, and he was asking us about the routine and these sort of things, and the social life, and happy we would be, and how pleased we would expected to be when the new cinema was opened. Now, I hadn't the confidence to tell him that I would be demobbed before this occurred, and so I went along with half-truths about: yes, it would be a useful acquisition because of the distance we had to travel, on foot, to the other, old establishment.

A: Looking now at the story of this cinema that eventually then got built after your time, Bill, what do you think about the story, sixty years on, of people coming together and saving this old British-commissioned, British-run cinema in Oldenburg?

B: I am absolutely amazed. I can not understand ... what, there again, I never saw the building, so I didn't get to see the beauty of it. It must be a huge affair; it must be very popular with the local population. I don't know whether it is a current camp or not; and whether they would have to go through the camp to get to it or what facilities there are locally for people to travel, either by commercial transport or by their own cars. It is a big asset and I can not, understand why there wasn't an old, an older German cinema built in the town other than or additionally to the one which we used to remember at the other side of town, right at the other side of town.

A: That's it, Bill. Thank you very much to talking to us.

B: Thank you. Goodbye.



Fig. 1. William Maybury, known as Bill Maybury, was trained and worked as a Clerk for the 44th Heavy Artillery Regiment. He was stationed at Donnerschwee barracks, which he calls the "Oldenburg barracks", as part of compulsory National Service from April 1954 until November 1955. Here, Bill is sitting in front of what was called "the swimming pool" on the Donnerschwee barracks in June 1954.



Fig. 2. Bill Maybury photographed in the *Schlossgarten* in Oldenburg peddling a paddling boat in June 1954 as a nineteen-year old national serviceman attached to the 44th Heavy Artillery Regiment.



Fig. 3. At his home at the foot of the Malvern Hills, Bill Maybury possesses a little token memento of his time in Oldenburg: a small plate with the Oldenburg coat of arms.