

Extract from Jack Carter, transcription of audio files (Suffolk Record Office, (L401_1_210_004M)

Jack was born in 1912, he was born in Gipping Farm.

We were here during the first war and I can remember as a small boy standing on the garden gate, up near the road, watching the Cheshire regiment, I think they were, march past with their rifles and their picks and their shovels, go and dig the second line of defence trenches, cop. –

➤ Where were they stationed?

- They were stationed in Stowmarket. And so far, as I remember, they were stationed in the old Hopple Yard, which is now the council highways to Barton and they used to come along here with their band playing and I used to be a little boy standing on the bottom rung of the gate and waved to them as they went past and they used to wave back.

I didn't realize, we weren't old enough to know what wars were about but always we used to just stand there and watch them go along and come back again at night. That's my earliest recollections of the First War and then on one occasion an airplane that probably had something to do with war landed on Stowupland green and it ran out of petrol and the pilot had to wait to spend his night at the village shop and wait until the next day to get some more petrol.

When it took off, the green was a bit bumpy, but it did get off, but it didn't seem to rise very high, it was flying very low and it caught the top of some ash stubs down what we call rental lane and it crashed and it smashed the whole thing pieces but the pilot luckily was escaped he wasn't injured at all and I can remember with another boy who I knew who lived down the road we went down to see this wreck and we found a Propeller blade, lovely shiny propeller blade.

We thought we'd got a wonderful find, and we brought that home. I like brought one over here, and my father looked at that, and I soon got a clip of the hair, and I had to take that back straight away. (laughing) That didn't belong to me. You take that back, it'll be in trouble. And I had to take that back, my quick.

➤ **Was that the first airplane you ever saw? –**

The first one I'd ever seen. But I couldn't understand why it should be made of plywood. It was a peculiar, it was all wood. It was a funny looking thing. I'd never seen one before. Did you ever find out where it had come from? No, we never did. Never did. I never heard where it came from. But I suppose somebody came along, picked up the bits and bits and took it away again. But that was the first airplane I ever saw, but I can remember on one Saturday night,

Father saying, "Do you want to see the church (sic, Search) lights?" Because there was a church light in the parish, because they were there in case the German Zeppelins came over. And I remember him saying, You boys want to come and have a look at the searchlight. It's up tonight and we went and looked outside the back door and stood on the path and there was the searchlight which was near at the Stone Mountain {sic, is this Stowmarket?}, where we are. And there was a massive beam of light and it was picking up the German Zeppelin in its light.

➤ **The Zeppelins did come over Stone Mountain (Stowmarket or Stowupland?)?**

Yes, oh yes. And this massive thing up in the sky was a German Zeppelin, it was quite low. And they thought, "Oh, what's one now? What's that's going to do?" But anyway, that one, for some unknown reason, it went off. It didn't drop anything. But that was the first Zeppelin I ever saw.

And then, sometime later, it must have been, it might have been several months. On another occasion, we could hear the drone of this serpent (sic – zeppelin) again and thought, "Well, there's another one coming over somewhere."

And that seemed to be searching the Hepstone Marlborough (sic?), because there was a gun-cotton works down there. And they exploded. That's where the I.C.I. now is.

And they went I had to look outside the door again and there was this zeppelin up in the searchlights and We'd gone to bed I and my younger brother we'd both gone to bed But father thought that that wasn't very safe outside, so They all came in doors and left us upstairs and never even came to bring us down But that He actually dropped seven bombs in one field, down what's known as Malting Lane. And that was on a Saturday night. It was said that the chap in charge of the gun, there was a gunner greeting, Chris and Peter, the chap in charge of the gun, he was dead drunk and he wouldn't let the gunners fire. So that went off. I haven't dropped his bombs and that had unscathed, nobody chased it, and we never knew anything about it until the Sunday morning, we children, and we got up and Father said we'll go and see where it dropped the bombs, because we used to always go down to the Stonewifery (sic), what was then the Congressional Church for service every Sunday morning, and so off we They're an all -in -one with a pony -trap cart.

And they drop these bombs all over one field. And literally, there was just one huge hole. The field had gone, literally. Just blown the field away. But luckily, they missed the gun -cotton. But as the crow flies, I don't suppose they were any more than-- oh, might have been a little over a quarter of a mile away. Hardly that. They were pretty close. The bombs, I suppose, they would have been thrown over the side. I don't know.

So, it was just fun to see it to us, about one hundred parents of course. But the war went on. During the war there were a lot of what we called airships. English airships or otherwise they came from Pullham and they went to Cardigan in Bedfordshire. I think they We used to transport verps as some, I don't know what they transported, but they were known as Pullum Peaks, and we used to see them

regularly, and they used to come straight over the top of the house, they come from Pullum in Norfolk, straight over, and go down to Cardigan in Bedfordshire. And on one occasion, and this was during the first war, one of them was coming back from Two pulled him and his middle gas bag burst. He didn't catch fire, but it tipped up. I remember seeing that quite vividly.

It was one morning about 11, half past 11 in the morning. So just in July. And the two ends tipped up and it left the most odd looking thing bubbling along. The crew naturally they wanted to keep it in the air until they got to Pulham so they Tried to lighten it and they threw out everything they could get hold of and we saw tables and chairs and everything come down in the fields. I remember standing on the path watching them come down at the back of the house and They failed they couldn't keep it afloat though. It wouldn't just keep in the air it got lower and lower, and it crashed, and it crashed about a mile away, or slightly less. And on the run also the road. I believe there were about 40 members of the crew, or on board at the time, and the only injury that one chaps up was a cut hand, where he was supposed to have slid down a wire loop to get out. It never caught fire, it landed in a ditch, a great big thing.

➤ **Did you see it on the ground?**

Oh yes, because I remember running through the fields of barley. Everybody went to see it. As soon as this came down, everybody went. All our parents went out of the house. The only person left in this house was my younger brother, who wasn't old enough. He'd be about two or three years old, but he was asleep and they had nobody thought about him, so they just left him. And off they went, and I went as well. I couldn't keep up with the others, but I managed to get out there. I remember going through a field of barley with the vessels around my ears. But we got as near as we'd ever go, but they were keeping the public play in case it went up and flowed. But I saw it land in the side of the ditch. I'm going to go down to that very spot now where it landed. But it was dismantled and all taken pieces and taken off the puddle, eventually.

And we never heard any more about it. But later on, the larger airships that were built, like the '94, the '33, they were regularly over here, used to come over here and go through to Cartagena, and they were mashing things, and then later on still, way back into the 1920s, 1926, we used to see, I used to see them at Pullum, used to fly from Pullum, and I was at school in this at the time and we often used to see them in this, flying around there. We got to know some of the members of the crew.

In the R -100 and R -101 I knew the wireless operator, a man named Keely. He used to live in Pellgrave. He was at this all the time we were there.

➤ **When did you start school?**

Oh, I started then the village school in about 1917, just before the war ended. We went to school. I wasn't very keen on school. We had a headmaster and a headmistress who were, well, they were very good disciplinarians, and I'm afraid I didn't take very well discipline. And I'm afraid we got the stick quite often. I thought but it did very harm, but we didn't make much of it at the time.