

## Transcript of interview with Olivia Tottle (Woodfield)

Recorded in Petersfield, November 2013. Interview (and transcript) by Michael Blakstad



**00.00. Olivia.** My name is ... was Olivia Woodfield, it's now Olivia Tottle, and we lived from 1943 until 1960 in the house called The Tudor House in East Meon, and the address was just 'The Square', East Meon



Ralph and Ruth Woodfield outside the Tudor House



Olivia with parents in the garden of The Tudor House

**00.40 Michael** What brought you, what brought your family to East Meon?

**Olivia** My family actually lived in South London, in East Dulwich, and our house was bombed in 1943 so we had no roof, no windows, no doors, things were blown out of the house and so we had nowhere to live. We then heard of a house in East Meon which was to rent, and this was through an aunt and a friend of the aunt, and this house was available to rent, it had been left to this lady called Miss Seabridge who actually lived in Tonbridge Wells herself, she was a milliner in Tonbridge Wells, and she had been left it by her uncle when he died, and she really had no use for the house herself, so she rented it to us on a temporary basis.

**03.24 Michael.** Can you describe the condition of the house, what it was like when you moved in?

**Olivia** The house is mainly Elizabethan, it had been rather neglected, shall we say? It had been lived in by an elderly gentleman, he had lived there on his own.



The Tudor House, with overgrown garden



The shop extension can be seen on the left, and the outside toilet on the right.

**Michael.** That was?

**Olivia.** That was Mr Warren, Mr Arthur Warren, and it was fairly dirty and certainly the garden was very overgrown, but we were just very pleased to have a home to go to, and it was nice and big, as we had been living in a small terraced house in London, and now we had a house with four bedrooms and a large garden, and I am sure my parents were extremely pleased to have it.

**03.20 Michael** What was the plumbing the power and so on in those days?

**Olivia.** As far as I know we had electricity, though on the walls I remember there were still brackets for gas lights so we had some electricity, and my mother had a very small electric stove, which she put by, and there was also a kitchen range, in the kitchen, I know we used that at big family times, I am not sure it was used at other times, but I remember it being used at Christmas. Plumbing, we had one cold tap in the scullery, that was the only water in the house, so we had an outside toilet, no plumbing, and this one tap in the scullery, so for a bath on a Saturday night, the water had to be heated up and put into the tin bath, which was on the wall in the scullery.

**04.48 Michael** You lived there until 1960, so tell me about going to school there, the National School.

**Olivia.** Right, I went to East Meon School, which was up the road past the church, and we had three classes there , infants, juniors and seniors. So each class had two years in the class, so there was lower infants and upper infants, and the same with juniors and seniors – so you just moved from one side of the room to the other and became the upper one.

**Michael.** Do you remember who was the head of the school at the time?

**Olivia.** Yes, Mrs Hoyes was the headmistress and when I first went there, Mrs Boardway took the infants, and then Mrs Hoyes's daughter ,who was a trainee teacher, she came in helped with the infants, and Mrs Hastie took the juniors, and Mrs Hoyes, the headmistress took the seniors.

**Michael.** Did the Hoyes live on the premises?

**Olivia.** No, she lived out towards Basingstoke, I have forgotten the name of the village where she lived, so she came quite a distance that she came .

**Michael.** Did anyone live there, because there was a house at the end of the school?

**Olivia.** That's right, yes, that was the caretaker who lived there, and he had another job as well, so he was there to clean, I suppose, and to lock up, and we very rarely saw him or his family.

**Michael.** Do you remember your friends from that time?

**Olivia.** Yes, I do. I remember Hazel Goddard very well, and Doreen , Peggy Whitear and her older sister, I think Doreen Whitear, and Margaret Files, Margaret lived a couple of doors up from us, in Flint Cottage in Chapel Street, and a there were various others in our class as well.



Children of East Meon National School at 'road drill' in church yard in 1949.  
second row centre Olivia Woodfield, third from right Peggy Whitear, front row,  
right, Hazel Goddard

**Michael.** What happened when you came to an end at the National School?

**Olivia.** When it was time for the 11+, presumably we all took the first part of the 11 +, the 11+ was in two parts in those days, and you had to pass the first part, and then you were allowed take the second part, I think you had to go to Petersfield to take the second part, it was a big journey, but the morning of the second part, I came out with mumps so I was unable to take that, so I had to stay at East Meon for another year, and have another go at it, and I passed and went to Petersfield County High School for Girls.

**Michael** Was that unusual, for a village girl to go pass the 11+ and go on?

**Olivia.** As far as I know, I was the first one to pass the 11+ and from that school. There were some others who were at the school earlier, they moved and went to other schools, and they passed and went to the High School.

**09.14 Michael.** You said it was a big journey to go to Petersfield. Presumably people did all their shopping in the village in those days. Can you remember the shops?

**Olivia.** They did, yes. Attached to our house was a general store, and I think they were a drapers of some kind but they sold almost everything.

**Michael** Who ran it?

**Olivia.** At first Mr Hobbs ran it and he and Mrs Hobbs lived over the other side of The Cross from our house.

**Michael** In Cross House, the one bang next to The Tudor House ?

**Olivia.** That's right.

**Michael.** Of course, Arthur Warren had started the drapery business, hadn't he?

**Olivia.** Right. Yes, other shops. There was Mr Pink's shop, and he had sweets, and since it was rationing time, I was allowed to go along to his shop once a week with my sweet ration.

**Michael.** That's what is now the Corner Cottage ...

**Olivia.** That's right.

**Michael.** And was later Mr Witts, the butcher.

**Olivia.** That's right. Then there was Mr Smith, and he was the postman. And he lived a little just a little further down.

**Michael.** Postmaster.

**Olivia.** Sorry, that's right, he was postmaster, not postman. He was postmaster, and he had the post office, but also general stores as well, you could buy food things in his shop as well. He had a daughter who was older than me, who went to school in Petersfield, primary school in Petersfield, and she also passed the 11+.

**Michael** Was that a private school?

**Olivia** Yes, and further along the High Street, on the left, was Coles' garage, and they had a little shop and we were able to take our battery for our wireless along there to get the battery topped up.

**Michael** Do you remember whether, at the end the Post Office garden, there was a shed or a little shop where a fishmonger came, did he come in your time? He only came once or twice a week.

**Olivia.** The fishmonger lived at the bottom of The Cross, on the right hand side as you are going down the Cross, that was his house, and he had a blue van, which came round twice a week with fresh fish, Tuesdays and Fridays, and he came to the house.

**Michael.** Carrying on from the yard, the garage, was there still a shop at Glenthorne House, at what was called the Gaitehouse?

**Olivia** Was that on the same side? No. But on the other side opposite the garage was a cobbler

**Michael** Was that in Old Bell Cottage? Because that was a saddlery, way back, so that was continuing the tradition.

**Olivia.** That's right.

**Michael** So, carrying on down that side ...

**Olivia.** Was Parsons shop. Parsons was another grocers, but also a wine merchant, the wine merchants, you came to that first of all, and they had a separate door, into the wine merchant, and then, joined on, and also run by Parsons, was a general store.

**Michael.** And that, from what I could gather, was probably the biggest general store? The one that most people went to.

**Olivia** We very rarely went there because we had Mr Hobbs shop next door to us.

**Michael** And was there anything at Riverside, the other side on the curve

**Olivia** There was a butcher's and that was Mr Wyatt and he had, I think it was probably a wooden leg, and he was very lame, and he was open on Saturday mornings.

**Michael.** And was it a walk-in, or did he serve through a hatch on the wall?

**Olivia** He served through a hatch on the wall.

**Michael.** Was the smithy still operating?

**Olivia.** Yes, the smithy was still operating.

**Michael.** And where the stores now are, coming right back to the Tudor House, what was there?

**Olivia.** Aah, right. That was Mr Aburrow's woodyard and general ... not sure what he did, but there was lots of wood there, and if you needed that kind of job done and get your trees sawn up or whatever ...

**Michael** Doctor, nurse?

**Olivia.** Yes, doctor, definitely a doctor, Dr Clifford, and he lived at the junction of Workhouse Lane and the main road.

**Michael.** Which is now Glebe House, today. And do you remember what happened at the Institute in those days?

**Olivia.** At the Institute, there were definitely whist drives, which my family didn't have anything to do with, but also the then vicar, probably in the '40s, Dr Budden, he had magic lantern shows and I remember we were allowed to go to those.

**Olivia.** Yes, obviously there was All Saints, the Anglican church, which was I suppose reasonably well attended, at that time, very cold, rather unwelcoming in those days, and people had very definite places to sit, you didn't go and sit in their pew. They were not marked or anything, but you knew who sat there. The organ was round on the north transept, where the Millennium Embroidery is now, so the organist could not see anyone in the congregation at all, you could just see the vicar, from your mirror, and there were some people in the choir.

**Michael.** And any other chapels or churches?

**Olivia.** Yes, there was a chapel, I think it might have been Congregational, near Parsons shop

**Michael** Which later became Catholic.

**Olivia** And there was also a chapel building, up Chapel Street, on the right hand side, near where the school is now.

**17.55. Michael** So, compared with today, tell me about everyday life in the Tudor House. First of all, tell me about the garden.

**Olivia** My brothers, originally there were seven of us children. The eldest was Philip, and then there was Alan, then Gilbert, then Owen, and Peter and myself, and I am the youngest. Perhaps first of all I should just say, when we moved there my three, four eldest brothers were still at school in London, and their schools evacuated out of London, so they didn't live with us, didn't move to East Meon when the rest of us moved there, and then shortly after that the three eldest had to go into the services, so two went into the Army, and Gilbert into the Fleet Air Arm, while the War was still on. So, my parents had the worry of three boys all in the services, all abroad at the same time. Gilbert was killed, in 1945, when he was 19, the other two survived.

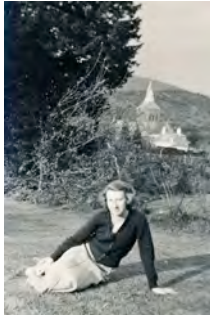
So there were five of us, sorry four of us who actually moved and lived in the house, and the two boys, particularly the oldest one, Owen, was a very keen gardener and he helped my parents a lot in the garden and then later Peter as well. Peter by this time had gone to Churchers when we moved there ..

**Michael** Which of course didn't take girls in those days.

**Olivia.** No girls, definitely, and not fee-paying, just a grammar school. As you went into the garden the first plot down beside the wall was actually rented out to the village policeman. He lived down, I think it's called The Hyde, he lived there and he had a dog. He brought the dog up sometimes, and the dog was very good and sat waiting for his master. Yes, we grew parsnips, carrots, turnips and

in the winter of course greens, lots of spinach, so in that way, compared with London, we ate very well.

Well, we had lots of gooseberries, blackcurrants, lots of gooseberries, and of course lots of apples because we had an orchard down the bottom of the garden with all kinds of apples. And we went out to the countryside to pick blackberries and raspberries.



Olivia in garden,  
church behind



Olivia with  
chickens



The Woodfield family, sister Margaret  
second left, Gilbert and Owen, right

**Michael** I can't help noticing from the photographs that you had an unfettered view of the church from the garden.

**Olivia.** We did, yes, no modern buildings between us and the church.

**22.02 Michael.** So, in the house, you said it was quite cold?

**Olivia.** Right, in the winter, of course, there were beautiful frost patterns inside the windows, not just the outside. There was no heating in any of the bedrooms, apart from my parents' bedroom where there was a one-bar electric fire, which seemed to be a great source of comfort to us small children. Downstairs, in what we called the front room, which was the room beside Workhouse Lane, that was our main living room, we always had a coal and wood fire and of course a fireplace in the dining room, which was the panelled room..

**Michael** That was the dining room?

**Olivia.** That was called our dining room.

**Michael** Did you use that much?

**Olivia** We used that when the family was home, because we needed more space.

**23.21 Michael** You had an outside loo, so the night soil man came, did he?

**Olivia** Right, yes. We had an outside loo, so we had to go outside, into the snow or whatever, rain, come wind.

*Postscript. Olivia also mentioned that the family raised pigs in their garden, and took them to Mr Wyatt, the butcher, when it was time to slaughter them, which was quite emotional because of the screams emitted ...*