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Name: Irene Bellamy  
Regiment: WRNS (Womens Royal Naval Service)

Date transcript:

Transcribe by:

Time code	What is said
01:00:00	Start of Film 1
01:00:01	My name's Irene Bellamy.
01:00:02	<b><i>Irene, just... Where are you from?</i></b>
	I was from Bristol. From the fishponds area... where I was born. And I went to school in Bristol. And started my work, after school, in Bristol.
01:00:23	<b><i>How old were you when war broke out?</i></b>
	Umm, well, I was born in 1919, so I was twenty.
01:00:31	<b><i>What was life like for you in Bristol, I mean, just tell me a bit about your schooling and just life in Bristol, so I understand who you are?</i></b>
	Umm, I originally went to a small private school, umm, and then went to coleston from there and umm, it... Bristol itself I found rather dull, you know. It was all pubs and churches. That's how it seemed to me, you know, there weren't the lovely, fun things that there are for young people today. We spent most of our time either going to, our free time going to the cinema, or playing some kind of games, you know, I belonged to various hockey teams and tennis clubs. And, umm, during the war, umm, of course we worked very long hours, umm, and late so you weren't looking for much leisure fun. And I moved because of the Bristol Blitz, during that time. Umm, I was put up by the firm, they didn't want us in the danger of central Bristol and so on, and so they took over a cottage in Chipping Sodbury, and I lived in Chipping Sodbury, for a couple of years. That was quite good fun, actually, the sort of village life – lots going on. But I'd always had a yearning to go into the Navy when the war broke out. Mainly 'cause I had friends who had joined the services.
01:02:15	<b><i>Was it... Was it WRNS over any other service?</i></b>
	Yeah, I didn't want to join... Do you mean... err?
01:02:24	<b><i>WAAF or ATS or anything?</i></b>
	No, no, no. My particular friend went into the WAAF and she had a very interesting time as... out in Washington, err, working for the Naval... not Naval, the air force.
01:02:40	<b><i>The WRNS was the right choice then?</i></b>

Time code	What is said
	Yes, yes. Liked the uniform too!
<b>01:02:44</b>	<b><i>Yeah. Just tell me a bit about Yate and what you were doing there and the... the work and stuff?</i></b>
	Umm, well as secretary to the chief designer in the beginning, it was a question of doing typing. He would dictate his design, umm, reports, 'cause it all had to go up to the air ministry for approval, err, 'cause they were looking for a, umm, an order for these planes of course, and it was typing all these sheets of description of these planes. Umm, and that, I mean to say he was a very un-disciplined man in that he left everything to the last minute, so one was working quite late at night, very often, to get it done to the deadline that the ministry had set.
<b>01:03:37</b>	<b><i>What was his name?</i></b>
	Basil Henderson. And he designed the small plane called the umm, what did they call it? Umm... The Hendy... It was a breakdown of his name. But it was Basil Hen... It'll come to me, but it was round about the time that there was umm, another chap designing those small planes, umm, I can't think of his name now. But that would have been in about 1937/38.
<b>01:04:18</b>	<b><i>Did you have a sense that war was coming?</i></b>
	Umm, not really no, I mean to say the boys that we used to meet and mix with were mostly umm, air force types, or going... interested in the air force and we knew they... It was the 501 squadron, the... at Filton, umm, that most of them flew with. Umm, and we knew at times that... from their conversation that things were getting very near. But, umm, not really, you know we weren't putting up the barricades or anything!
	<b>Start of Film 2</b>
<b>01:05:05</b>	<b><i>What about the outbreak of war, do you remember that?</i></b>
	I do, we were actually on Filton aerodrome when it... that Sunday when they announced it, watching these lads in their planes taking off, purely for exercise.
<b>01:05:21</b>	<b><i>So did things change in Bristol, when war broke out? What was the change, do you remember?</i></b>
	I can't honestly say because most of my life was spent between Fishponds and Yate, you know, I very rarely went the other way towards town, and didn't really get any feeling of what things were like. Even, you know, I read now about some of the ghastly things that happened in the bombing, you know, the loss of life. But it didn't affect me directly. Umm, my parents had a shop in Fishponds and they still kept going, you know, in a quiet sort of way.

Time code	What is said
01:06:03	<b>Did you see the Blitz? Did you see... were you in... were you in Yate when it happened?</b>
	<p>Yeas, I was in Yate, yeah. And that was one of the reasons why the firm moved us, to live in Yate, so we didn't have the business of travelling, umm, but we did have a daylight raid in Yate and that was very traumatic. There was... they sent a single plane, I mean we were all working away quite happily and the air-raid siren went, and err, I was being taught how to play bridge, by the friend who went into the air force, and umm, we didn't take any notice of the air-raid siren because we never had anything and suddenly there was the most almighty explosion, and the whole building shook. What had happened, a single plane had come in, apparently it came in from somewhere in the northern France area where the German's had, umm, airports, and it had flown up the Bristol channel to somewhere north of Gloucester, picked up the railway line and Yate runs along the railway line, you know, the building, and flew down and dropped this strip of bombs along the factory. Fortunately a couple of them didn't go off and I think it was about fifty seven people were killed, and it was my first experience of seeing a dead body, because I knew most of the people in the factory because of who I was working for and one of the other people living in the house in Chipping Sodbury was a woman called Sister Hobbs who became quite well known for the work she did in that Blitz. And she just caught hold of me and she said 'come on, we've got to go up to the brick factory' she said, to identify these people who've been killed. And you know, I was taken, but also I... it was 1941, so I was 22. At 22 to see all these disintegrated bodies, and I hadn't seen a dead body before, and that was very traumatic.</p>
01:08:26	<b><i>Yeah, was that, do you think, a catalyst for thinking I want to join... become a WRN then?</i></b>
	<p>No, I don't think so, no. No, that was quietly simmering away. And, I think the catalyst in the end was when my boss moved. He went to a firm, which again you may know of, Boosey and Hawkes. They, umm, he wasn't a musician or he hadn't made musical instruments 'cause that was the job they did, originally, they were making spare parts for some of our gun turrets. And they, umm, found that he was a man who could design what they wanted. And umm, they got him, they head hunted him, and when he left, I wasn't too happy with the person who got the job and I thought I want to move. But I had to work quite hard to get into the WRNS because, of course, I was in a reserved occupation.</p>
01:09:27	<b><i>I was going to ask was it a... I assumed it was a reserved occupation, so you had to go through the procedure to get out?</i></b>

Time code	What is said
	<p>Yes. And there weren't... the WRNS weren't open for recruitment anyhow. And at that time we were being, umm, drawn, I suppose is the word, for a... the... by a war artist. A man called Leopold Freedman, who I haven't been able to run to earth since, I have tried, because he did like a mural of people working in the factory and it went to the, umm, National Art... What's the one in Trafalgar Square? National Art Gallery in Trafalgar Square, umm, and I was sitting, you know, while he was drawing me and talking to him and I said I wanted to join the WRNS, the problem was there were no vacancies and I was in a reserved occupation. So he gave me the name of a woman, again, I've forgotten her name, but she was the head of the Ministry of Labour in London, so I go off to London to see this woman and she told me the sort of inside secret that I ought to be able to get in fairly soon because the WRNS were expanding and they expanded very rapidly and I got in very easily then. But I had to wait 'til the doors opened. Of course the Lords of the Admiralty didn't want women. You know, they reluctantly took them in at the beginning of the war, but, you know, it was a man's service. It wasn't for women.</p>
	<p>Start of Film 3</p>
<p>01:11:08</p>	<p><b><i>Brilliant. So what was the process then from... transitioning from being a secretary in Yate to becoming a Wren? What do you remember of it?</i></b></p>
	<p>Yeah, I remember, err, you know, having my papers and being sent to Leeds because... because they suddenly expanded, err, they had to open new training depots. I was in my early twenties and, umm, I had what they call a white paper, umm, which was a recommendation for a commission as soon as you were interviewed originally, you know. Most girls have to wait and work a while, but I was older and I think they saw me as a possible admin officer, well they did actually. But then I went from Leeds after I did my basic training to Rochester, which is really in the Chatham. Now I had seen myself as boats crew, you know, because I was a Bristolian I wanted to go to Plymouth, which was the uh... But the Navy had other ideas, so they sent me to be... to go to training for an admin officer at Chatham really. Anyhow, I... they put me in what's called the regulating office, which is, you know, where you monitor people coming in and going out and telephones. And, umm, I always remember that the first officer, who was the one in charge, was a very, very jolly woman, umm, and she was the daughter of somebody called Lady Burtonshaw? who lived in Hove and every Saturday afternoon Lady Burtonshaw would ring up her daughter, just for a chat and I was put on the telephone. Well, I'd never, never worked at a... you know those plug in telephones, I'd never worked one of those, and of course Lady Burtonshaw comes through and I was a... panic, you know, I wasn't very confident about it. Of course what do I do in the very middle of their conversation, I pull the plug out, you see. So I had to go in, she called me in and she said 'who was on the telephone', so I said 'It was me ma'am', so she said 'You are nothing but a broken reed'. And I thought, well nobody's ever called me a broken reed before! But you know, it did me the world of good. I thought I was God's gift to the Navy, you see, and I wasn't at all! But that remark, really has stuck with me all my life.</p>

Time code	What is said
<b>01:13:46</b>	<b><i>Were you, excuse me for asking, were you a Chatham rating?</i></b>
	Yes.
<b>01:13:53</b>	<b><i>Okay.</i></b>
	I suppose I was. Nor?? command, it was.
<b>01:13:59</b>	<b><i>Did you go to Chatham?</i></b>
	Well, not... only in sort of... to visit because we were billeted in Rochester. And because I was doing the admin work in the office, the office was attached to the billet.
<b>01:14:17</b>	<b><i>How did you find moving 'round the country? Had you been out of Bristol at this point?</i></b>
	Umm, I... not very far, no. That was another thing, you didn't travel far, you know, holidays were... well the furthest we went was Tenby, in south Wales. But I had been to London, umm, and I had been to France on a school trip, umm, once. But no, not very far. We weren't very well off anyhow as a family, you know, we had to cut our corners.
<b>01:14:52</b>	<b><i>So after Rochester then, where did you... where did you go then?</i></b>
	Well, when I was at Rochester, the first officer, I was telling you called me a 'broken reed', umm, I was in the... what do they call it now? Sort of, the office which allocated postings to the girls, 'cause all the girls there were waiting to be sent somewhere, umm, and I was there, and nothing came in, 'cause I was looking through all the different things that came in from the Admiralty and nothing came in I was interested in. I was down for admin and then I found that to do admin I had to go to, umm, Lowestoft, to the Captain's office where they trained admin officers. And I found that there was a long waiting list, and I thought, 'well I didn't join the Navy to sit in an office and wait for that'. So I was given the opportunity to go and I said no, so they said 'well you realise you'll go to the bottom of the list'. I said 'well, I didn't join to have a commission anyhow, you know, I joined to do a job'. So she said to me if you see anything coming through, umm, it was a teleprinter in those days, let me know and I'll see, I said well, all I know is I don't want to work in London, I don't mind where else I go and, you know, I'd like to stick with my shorthand and sort of general office work. Okay, she said, so... in comes...



Time code	What is said
	<p>It was at the time when General Eisenhower was, umm, getting to be quite well known as a commander and he set up, if you remember, SHAEF, and I looked it... and I... something came in with ANCXF/SHAEF, and I thought 'well, that's interesting' and at the ANCXF was the Allied Naval Commander Expeditionary force and that was Admiral Ramsey. And I thought, 'well that sounds interesting', you know, so I went to her and I said could I have my name put up for that vacancy. And so she agreed and, you know, you had to take your chance what other applications they had and, umm, I got it! And I said where is it? So she said, well to start with you'll have to go to Norfolk Square in London, which is the headquarters of SHAEF, and the ANCXF group were collecting there, umm, and they were mostly WRNS who were going to do the D-Day planning. But I got... because I put in for ANCXF/SHAEF I got attached to the... this is where Admiral Parry came in, to Admiral Parry who, typically British, we hadn't started D-Day but they were always... already post-operative planning! And I couldn't believe this, I thought, well we haven't won the war, why are they planning for the future? You see, and that's what I was caught up in then, from then on. I was attached to him and sent to Bushy Park in Hertfordshire. Not Hertfordshire, umm, it's near Hampton Court Palace. And it was General Eisenhower's headquarters for... they were collecting all the more administrative people there, you know, while the troops were being collected around Kent and Sussex and places. Sorry, it's me nerves!</p>
<b>01:18:41</b>	<b><i>You're doing brilliantly. It's amazing, trust me, don't worry.</i></b>
	<p>Umm, and I thought, oh I don't want to go to London, but anyhow, in the end they said well you'll only be hold... held there until umm, and I was only held there a day. I remember sitting on the wall outside Norfolk House, which is where the London group were and told to wait and somebody would pick me up 'cause from then on it became highly secretive. And I was sitting like a lonely Wren with my naval case and nothing else and a jeep came zooming round the square and an American stopped by me and he said 'are you WRN Irene Ballamy goin' to Bushy Park?' Well, I said 'I don't know where I'm going, I've just been told to sit on this wall!' So he said... he got me aboard his jeep and we went through that bit It wasn't far from Norfolk to get out of London, went to Bushy Park.</p>
<b>01:19:46</b>	<b><i>Bet that was a fun journey!</i></b>
	<p>And of course, when I get to Bushy Park I'm the only Wren there, because it was a separate unit to the big group that were at Norfolk House.</p>
<b>01:19:58</b>	<b><i>What year was that?</i></b>
	<p>Err, be 44, I think, 44/45.</p>
	<b>Start of Film 4</b>

Time code	What is said
<b>01:20:04</b>	<b><i>I mean, just describe the set up at Bushy Park and what you were doing there before D-Day?</i></b>
	Well, Bushy Park, umm, is... I presume it's a sort of local... it's a very large park and in it were porta cabins in which, by then you'd got the British and the French, err, and Americans. Who were the fourth ones? Not the...
<b>01:20:38</b>	<b><i>Canadians?</i></b>
	No, yes, well there were a few but not many. I was thinking of the group that they split Germany up into regions, didn't they, there was the British...
<b>01:20:51</b>	<b><i>Russian?</i></b>
	Russian. But I can't remember Russians being at Bushy Park, I think they linked up later. Umm, but I remember being in one of these... we had our office and this is where... I didn't actually, couldn't say I met him, but the doodlebugs had started flying and, umm, we... they'd got... they had Bushy Park in their sights and they got very near us, but so there were air raid shelters built specially and a lot of the Americans, particularly the women in the American army had never experienced anything like it before – they just went to pieces if there was an air raid! They were a terribly nervous lot. But I quite enjoyed being with them because it was a different lifestyle altogether. Their method and the equipment they gave us, you know and the hygiene was put in. So I was really... I was under air... umm, ATS supervision, err and somebody called Lady Brecknock? I think she became quite a power in the Land afterwards from a political point of view, but she was in charge of us and she... and I resented her because she... she used to open my post, which of course the Navy never opened your post, but because I was under ATS rule, all our post was opened. Umm, and Lady Brecknock always made a point of reading and remembering what was in them and I was always sending home for money! And err, she was always saying you know, 'you don't need money, you've got plenty, you know, you should manage on what you've got.' And that was seven and six a week. So from there...
<b>01:22:54</b>	<b><i>Did you meet Eisenhower?</i></b>
	Well, yes and no. I was talking about the Doodlebugs, umm, and if he was on sight, umm, in his office, he didn't come very often 'cause of course the... his responsibility was enormous and the places, you know, people said 'oh Eisenhower was there' but they were never there for long. Umm, but he did use the air raid shelter, which was the same shelter that we used because we were in the joining offices. Umm, but you know, he hardly saw us, because he'd pop down and all his entourage would be with him. Err, but, I mean to say we didn't feel we were lesser than him, you know, he always had a word to say, but you can't really say you met him, you know.
<b>01:23:46</b>	<b><i>When did Admiral Parry come onto the scene?</i></b>



Time code	What is said
	Umm, not actually until I went across to France, because in the mean time his... one of his sidekicks was a Captain Owen, who had been the Portuguese... umm, it wasn't an attaché, the Naval representative in Lisbon, umm and so when he joined us on the staff of Admiral Parry, I was attached to him and he always called me his minina. Do you know, I've never actually spoken to a Portuguese to find out, I was told it meant friend, but I was always thinking... He always told people if they wanted something 'go and ask my minina.' But he was a very gentle, very nice man, who... about whom I knew... never heard much about him at all. I know Admiral Parry, umm, at the end of the war, umm, I think he... he was an apple grower in Kent, and that's what, in his retirement that's what he did. But Captain Owen I never knew.
<b>01:25:05</b>	<b><i>What did you sense? What did you know about this escalation towards D-Day? How, sort of, privy to it were you?</i></b>
	Oh, absolutely, because, you know, although I wasn't in the typing pool, as it was, umm, I knew... I'd seen papers going through and you knew what the planning was.
<b>01:25:28</b>	<b><i>And you say it was top secret, what... just describe the secrecy process. What did you have to do in order to be let in?</i></b>
	Well it was, umm, BIGOT (British Invasion of German Occupied) was the third level, which was the absolutely... I don't think we could ever get through, but there were special lines and things on the telephone and it was mostly for use by telephone, but I never really knew how they decided, umm, I knew when I had to... if I had to make a call which line I had to use, whether it was the ordinary one, the top secret or BIGOT, but I never knew when, say Captain Owen was wanting me to do something and he said 'that'll be BIGOT' how he knew it had to be BIGOT, you know. That was something known to him.
	<b>Start of Film 5</b>
<b>01:26:27</b>	<b><i>Is BIGOT above top secret?</i></b>
	Yes.
<b>01:26:29</b>	<b><i>Just describe what your job was. What were you actually doing? Predominantly?</i></b>

Time code	What is said
	I was in London, wasn't I? Well, mainly doing the Admiral's or Captain Owen, whichever one was around, doing the, umm, their post and taking dictation and what planning they had to do in terms of post-op. Most of the post operative stuff was the division of the German Navy when the war was over, you know, who was going to have what, and that was interesting, because of course the Russians wanted everything... this was much further on, when we were in Berlin. But the Russians always wanted all the big stuff, you know, and we knew all the best equipment was in the smaller destroyers and things, so, umm, we went for those. So, you know, they were working out all those sort of things and of course it all had to go up through the admiralty and back again, so it all took time. But it was just straightforward short-hand reporting of the post operative planning.
<b>01:27:45</b>	<b><i>Even before D-Day?</i></b>
	Yeah.
<b>01:27:47</b>	<b><i>Did you ever meet any... you know, were there any other like Churchill, any of the other big wigs?</i></b>
	Never saw Churchill. Montgomery, umm, when we were in Germany, it was the fashion to have a dog. I never had one, but umm, my friend had one which she called Frat, 'cause that of course was no fraternisation. And I remember we... we had an office, we were in Frankfurt at the time, and the office there had a sort of staircase going up and Paddy always took Frat to work with her. Nobody minded 'cause the war was over by then. And, err, we were going upstairs one day and somebody said 'watch out, Montgomery's coming' and he was in the building, at some meeting and he was coming again with his entourage down the stairs as we were going up, you see. And, umm, apparently, he didn't do it in front of us, but, umm, when he got back to his office he told his adjutant to contact whoever was responsible for the Wrens to say he didn't want dogs in the building. Typical!
<b>01:29:15</b>	<b><i>So, if you were very privy to all this stuff, when did you know it was going to be June 5th or 6th? Did you know that?</i></b>
	Umm, well yes because, you know, of the delay. Do you mean D-Day? Yeah. Because of the delay, with, you know, yeah.
<b>01:29:32</b>	<b><i>So you knew that... that this was going to be the day that the landings were happening? Did you ever...</i></b>

Time code	What is said
	Yes. Well, it was... you did and you didn't, you know. There were always things being said to put you off, so that you weren't a hundred percent sure. But, I don't suppose anybody was really because of the weather and things, but we were...when I was at Chatham and there wasn't, you know, we'd done all the work we had to do, that we were waiting, umm, we were sent cherry picking in the Kent orchards, and that was amazing because all the lanes and roads all round, sort of Kent and the sort of area going down to the coast were full of army vehicles and men waiting. You knew that they were there ready to go! But I think that's how I know rather than through the office.
<b>01:30:32</b>	<b><i>So after Bushy Park, you went back to Chatham, did you? Or back over to...</i></b>
	Bushy Park, I've got to get this, 'cause I did so many things! Umm, no from Bushy Park, umm, we were moved back to London and I worked in Princes Gardens there. And we lived in England's lane, in... in sort of... England's Lane it's sort of Swiss Cottage way. And there was a nurses' home there, I think it was the cherry cross nurses' home and they used that for WRN billet. And then we used to travel to Princes Gardens from there, and it was from Princes Gardens that I was drafted over to France.
	<b>Start of Film 6</b>
<b>01:31:28</b>	<b><i>Can you remember how you felt when you found out you'd be going, following the expedition?</i></b>
	I was a bit disappointed 'cause I felt that my... I am still, that my Naval life was anything but Navy, you know, 'cause I had great... great ideas of being boats crew, as I said, and going to sea with the mail?. So I was a bit disappointed that it was going to be in land, as it were. But once I'd got used to it, and there was a certain adventure as well in going over.
<b>01:32:06</b>	<b><i>Did you sail to France?</i></b>
	We went over... you know those, umm... boats they took the troops over in, the... we went over. Actually, umm, when it came to it the war was... the army was almost in Berlin by then, so they felt it was safe to put the girls over. And we went across to a little town in Normandy called Granville on the umm, well ducks we called them, you know DUK, those, like landing craft. And I was terribly sick. I may say it proved to me I wasn't a sailor anyway!
<b>01:32:47</b>	<b><i>Describe the sort of... the day that you went on the landing crafts to France. Just going back a little bit on the story and what you remember of... you know, that day. Where did you sail from and what was the weather like etc, can you remember?</i></b>

Time code	What is said
	Yes, the weather wasn't too good, hence the fact that I was sick. Umm, I suppose... I think there were probably nearly... between fifty and a hundred of us going. Not only WRNS, but others. Umm, trying to think. We went from one of the little ports. They weren't really ports, they were around the Beaulieu river, that way. Umm, we were excited, we didn't... you know, you had all sorts of imaginations of what might happen crossing the channel – might sink, you know and you'd be able to swim far enough, and you know, we didn't have to go through water when we got the other side like you see the men, you know trailing out with all their stuff through water. They managed to beach us, so we were quite dry when we got to the other side. And, you know, the French actually in Normandy were very accommodating and they were very pleased to see us. They were very different, in my view, to the ones we met in Paris.
<b>01:34:19</b>	<b><i>What... was it obviously war-torn?</i></b>
	Oh yes. Yes, you know, the umm... because it would be after D-Day of course that we went across, so things were still pretty, umm, broken, you know and all the, sort of front line houses and things were all bashed about, because they'd been bombarded of course from the sea.
<b>01:34:49</b>	<b><i>And Granville, what was the set up there, and you... you know, you're still in a war zone, basically, aren't you?</i></b>
	It was a war zone. Well, it was just a sort of getting off point for moving people on behind the army, I think it was felt to be a reasonable place to start moving, 'cause we had a lot of equipment as well. We didn't but the army and the air force and the navy for that matter all had equipment to move up with us. And I think Granville probably as a little town was considered, you know they had, umm, good roads... not good, but the transport situation, moving stuff was reasonable. But very basic living conditions, you know, we had no running water or umm, we had sort of things like your tripod with canvass bags in them which we used as washing... err, machines, well... umm for washing. What else was there? It was like camping really, from the living point of view and very little work we had at that time.
<b>01:36:12</b>	<b><i>And what... were you just writing or did you have teleprinters or anything like that? Was there any technology?</i></b>

Time code	What is said
	<p>Oh yes, there was a lot of... but not in the group I was with, you know, the... actually the first people to go over were the communicators. The telephone operators and so on, umm, and of course they were still... the engineers were still fitting up field equipment, when they arrived. And there were a lot of WRNS in that group. Tremendous number. And from Granville, you know, they found the work they wanted me to do was more centred back in London, so I was shipped back to London, to wait until they'd prepared what we needed, or I had to help do that. Umm, and we went then to Paris, but I went from London, from England's Lane that was, to Paris on my own and then I really was... I'd not been anywhere on my own before, and they... I was met when I got to the Gare du Nord, 'cause I went over on the train, by another Wren who'd been over. And then we were... I was billeted and worked in the chateau in, umm, it's a suburb of Paris anyhow, and I worked there for a very short time, and then the administrative group were following on behind the army, and we went from, umm, Paris to Frankfurt and, umm, I didn't enjoy Frankfurt very much because, umm, there wasn't much to do by now, you know, most of the planning had been done and life became rather, sort of, there didn't seem to be any point in what we were doing, we'd done it all, you know, so it was a bit of a playground.</p>
<b>01:38:32</b>	<b><i>Okay, was this at the end of the... Is this after the war?</i></b>
	<p>Yeah. Now this is the, umm, troops had entered Berlin, umm, and we were back in Paris, so it was sort of just as the war was ending. And yes it had ended, because one of the things that struck me in Paris were the fashions, you know, the most beautiful hats made out of cellophane paper, you know, sweet papers and things that the women had made. They seemed untouched by the war in Paris. They didn't much like us, I don't think! I think the Germans had given them quite a good time.</p>
	<b>Start of Film 7</b>
<b>01:39:18</b>	<b><i>Were you with Admiral Parry then, at this point?</i></b>
	No. I met Admiral Parry when I got to Paris.
<b>01:39:24</b>	<b><i>And what was he like?</i></b>
	<p>As a person very quiet, you know, you didn't really feel, you know, he could hit anybody let alone kill anybody, but, umm, or even discipline anybody, he was always very gentle and... and very nice to work for. But very clever, of course. He, umm, knew what he wanted.</p>
<b>01:39:53</b>	<b><i>And what... Just describe the sort of working relationship – what you did for him and what the purpose of you being there was?</i></b>

Time code	What is said
	Umm, do you mean... Umm, you see most of the... He, he really would have communicated to Captain Owen most of what he wanted, 'cause he'd be off doing something else. Umm, but... so that Captain Owen was really the person who was giving me work, when there was work to be done, but Admiral Parry certainly was very approachable and he mixed with us, there was no sort of officers and others. Everybody mixed. And, err, he's a difficult man to describe really.
<b>01:40:48</b>	<b><i>That's nicely described, Irene...</i></b>
	You know, but the... when we were in Berlin, do you know Berlin at all, in the lakes in the Wannsee, the lakes that are on the outskirts. Well, when we were living in what had been the, umm, Japanese Embassy in Berlin. The most beautiful house and it was in that district where the lakes were – I always said the Wannsee lakes, and they would freeze over in the winter, 'cause we had a winter there and, you know, the admiral would arrange skating parties and, you know, of course the ice there is so thick because it's so cool, that you could have barbeques on the ice. And, you know, that's when life became a bit superficial, latterly when there wasn't much work to do, you know, you really felt you should be somewhere doing some work!
<b>01:41:46</b>	<b><i>And how did you get from Paris into Frankfurt? Were you on railways or were you in vehicles?</i></b>
	Oh, in Naval Jeeps. Most of the travelling we did. The only thing, when I went from Frankfurt to Berlin, I had been home on leave, and when I got back, it was to find that... I don't know why but they couldn't notify me and couldn't get hold of me to let me know that the main party had gone on to Berlin and it... when I got back to Frankfurt, I had to go and report to one of the army officers to get transport. And when I got there I found a message to say that General Eisenhower's chauffeur had married one of our WRNS. I knew they were very friendly before I went. And that he let them have his house in, umm, near Frankfurt for their honeymoon and they were both due back in Berlin and they would give me a lift. So I went breezing up the autobahn from Frankfurt to Berlin in General Eisenhower's car!
<b>01:43:06</b>	<b><i>Amazing! And what was Berlin like? What was post-war Berlin like?</i></b>
	Absolutely devastated. Yeah. That really did shake me when I saw it, you know, there was, almost every building we saw was destroyed and there were these, and they weren't necessarily old women, but they looked old, 'cause they were all hunched up, you know, in dark clothes with wheelbarrows clearing the streets. Working so hard and little food, you know, they were working with very little strength. But, umm, I must give the Germans their due; they did work hard to get Berlin back.
<b>01:43:51</b>	<b><i>Did you go to the Brandenburg Gate or ???</i></b>



Time code	What is said
	Oh yes. Yes.
<b>01:43:56</b>	<b><i>Tell me about some of that?</i></b>
	Well, that again was more like a tourist trip, you know, we... I've been trying to think what our office in Berlin was like, and do you know... By then, of course, it was control commission, and, umm, I can't visualise it at all, it's an absolute blank in my memory. I can remember the Wrenery, the Japanese Embassy, and I can remember going on the tram from there to the office, but I can't remember the office. At all! And I'm not... I was there for nearly a year. But, umm, we went to see the bunker, you know, where Hitler was killed, and that was still in, you know, pretty rough state, you know, bits of furniture were still there, you know, it hadn't been tidied up.
	<b>Start of Film 8</b>
01:44:59	<b><i>What was your sentiment towards the Germans at the time?</i></b>
	Well, it was interesting because, umm, I found them very helpful, but then, and, you know, I quite liked them, but of course they had a lot to gain from us, in the way of food and so on. The Russians, of course, were the... the problem. Because, I... The story goes that the main Russian army that took Berlin, they pulled them back and they replaced them with the sort of third line who were Mongolians, and they were pretty rough, and, umm, on one occasion coming home from the office, a couple, very... they used to drink an awful lot, any booze they could get hold of, a couple of very drunk Russians started... We were walking home from the office in Berlin to our digs, and, umm, they started getting their guns out and shooting all over the place, and we had to jump in a hedge and after that... to keep out of their way, and after that they put a fairly strong Marine presence on the road, you know, a sort of guard on the... and we weren't allowed to travel on our own. So, we were pretty okay on transport, if we got the tram home, we were alright, it's if you started walking. We had a German cook in the Wrenery, and he found it difficult to be pleasant to us, but he was, because of course he... he used to collect our used tea bags and take them home and he knew that if he didn't, you know, treat us all properly, he'd get taken off and we'd get someone else and he'd lose out on his bits and pieces he was getting. And we also had an interesting maid, Franzeska, who was German. Not, sorry Jewish. And, umm, she had had a very bad time. She had legitimately become, well I say legitimately, but it was her boyfriend and not a German or a Russian, err, pregnant and she had this baby in a cellar which she was hiding from because the Germans were still looking for Jews, even after the war, and, err, anyhow, it was a Russian soldier who actually helped her have her baby in this cellar and, you know, who really rescued her. And then of course the British... We were in the British region, of course, but Franzeska used to have lessons in German for us, which... She was an educated Jew.

Time code	What is said
<b>01:48:11</b>	<b><i>So you didn't go to Potsdam?</i></b>
	Yes, umm, the Potsdam conference was held while I was in Berlin and Admiral Parry, of course, had a... 'cause the main purpose of Potsdam was to sort of finalise the break up of the German Navy, umm, and I went with Captain Owen, because of course they'd done their work on the Navy to contribute to that. I didn't go in to the actual meeting hall, 'cause it's quite small actually, I was surprised. I've been back since and had another look at it, you know, and I thought yes it is small. But I went this time, you know, because I was driving as well, you know, so our group, umm, the Captain said if you'd like to go, you can go, but you won't be able to go into the conference.
<b>01:49:08</b>	<b><i>Did you know it was a significant moment in history?</i></b>
	Oh yes. I think you... you knew that, yes. You know, you saw Stalin and Churchill, you know, just as though you were a tourist watching!
<b>01:49:29</b>	<b><i>You talked a bit earlier about how the Navy knew more about the German Navy than the Russians. The Russians wanted the carriers, the Brits wanted the destroyers. Was there... You know, just sort of recap on that. Was there any more of that discussion, sort of pre-Potsdam that you can recall or was it all sort of done and dusted by then?</i></b>
	No, I don't... I think they sort of... There was another, umm, Admiral Miles was someone who appeared on the scene at, umm, before Potsdam, and he had a lot to do with the, you know, sorting out the German Navy. But, umm... Sorry I've forgotten what your question was now.
<b>01:50:16</b>	<b><i>Just was there more discussion about, oh you know now we've heard about the V2 rockets, we should be getting those rather than the Russians?</i></b>
	No, I think it was all done before hand. I don't remember. I know there was, and I can't remember what the... there was supposed to have been an incident when, now of course, I don't mean Churchill I mean Atlee because it was at the Potsdam conference, you know, that Churchill, umm, lost his seat and Atlee came in and that meant... made a change of foreign secretary and it was... What was his name now, the big man? Socialist. He was Atlee's foreign secretary, and he is reported to have got, umm, cross over something at Potsdam and banged the table and water... You know, there were glasses of water which, I gather that the Russians didn't take very kindly to! This man, you know, who was determined to have his way bang the table. The work up until we got to Berlin was really quite interesting. But once, you know, the final stamps were being put on, the dividing of the city into regions and things like the break-up of the Navy, of the German Navy, there really wasn't much interesting to do, and it did become a sort of, almost a playground.

Time code	What is said
	Start of Film 9
01:51:58	<b><i>Just tell me about VJ day?</i></b>
	Well, we were in Berlin when VJ day was announced and they said there would be a parade towards the Brandenburg gate, so we went, had the day off and went down to see and it was a wonderful display, even though it was the end of the war and everybody was a bit tired and fed up. The Americans put on a great show with what equipment they had and so did the Russians.
01:52:31	<b><i>Were you thrilled that it was the end of the war?</i></b>
	Were we...?
01:52:37	<b><i>Were you thrilled that the war was over then?</i></b>
	Yes, I suppose we were really. We were all a bit uncertain about what was going to happen, you know, the war was over and, you know, there was this devastated city – how was it going to recover and, you know, who was going to see the Germans behave themselves, you know, with little recognition that the Russians were really the problem, in terms of the future, because that was in Stalin's day, of course. Yes, it was like going, any group just going out to see a parade, you know.
01:53:20	<b><i>When was you demob, and just tell me a bit about that.</i></b>
	Oh, I did go back to Chatham to be demobbed. You know, I said I wanted to be demobbed and of course they were then planning the break-up of all the services, and I went back to Chatham, just to be... hand over things that I... equipment I'd got that I had to return. It was a very uneventful thing, my demob! And I returned home.
01:53:54	<b><i>What were the circumstances around your BEM?</i></b>
	Well, that again, was a bit difficult for me to explain because it was mainly for the work that I did, you know. The thing that came, you know, from... from the palace just said for zeal and devotion to duty. Whatever that means! Yeah. But of course it was war-time and there was no sort of going to the palace to get your gong or anything, you know, it just came in the post!
01:54:31	<b><i>It must be nice to have...</i></b>
	But it was quite nice to feel that it was recognised. Although it wasn't madly interesting or madly responsible, you felt you were contributing in some way, which is what I wanted to do in the beginning! You know, it's a great thing to serve your King and country.

Time code	What is said
<b>01:54:54</b>	<b><i>Doing your bit!</i></b>
	Yes.
<b>01:54:58</b>	<b><i>And how do you reflect on your life as a wren, then?</i></b>
	I think one of the things, you know, I began to become much more interested in being with people rather than paper, as it were, and I had a... I was looking round for a job and I just found that there was an approved school wanting a secretary and they called them housemistress, in Bath. I didn't want to be in Bristol, I didn't want to go back to my old job, and that's how... that was my first step into social work. And then my father became very ill and as the unmarried daughter in the family, I was expected to be at home. And, you know, I was concerned for both of them, because he was a good deal older than mum, so I returned. I gave up the approved school that I was working at, which incidentally the last one was a place called Duncroft in Middlesex, which had been associated with Jimmy Saville! I thought my goodness! And, then I... Oh, I had, before I left Duncroft I had got myself a job with Bristol children's department, which was in the days before the social services as such were formed. And I stayed with them 'til I retired. Which, golly, do you know that was twenty nine years ago.
<b>01:56:45</b>	<b><i>Do you still think about the WRNS?</i></b>
	Oh yes! It... Oh the WRNS has remained constant because they have a very strong association and that's, I gather, how you ran me to Earth. And I've belonged to the local branch since 1953, I think it was, I joined.
<b>01:57:08</b>	<b><i>So, you're still as proud to be a WRN now, as you were when you became one?</i></b>
	Yeah. Yeah.
<b>01:57:14</b>	<b>End of Films</b>