

## Interview notes

Mel describes her early life in South Africa during the war and the era of Apartheid with its challenges and complexities. Her family returned to England in 1947 aboard a troopship, their journey led them to Kent, where she attended primary school in the 1950s.

Mel recalls significant events such as the death of the King, camping out during the Coronation, and the excitement of the Festival of Britain. She remembers sending messages of support to soldiers during the Korean War in 1953. Later, she pursued nursing training in London, where she eventually met John through their shared love for sailing.

In 1969, the family moved to Rowlands Castle with their three young children. The village, with its quaint shops, had a charm of its own. Notably, Miss Miles' sweet shop was run by two formidable ladies. However, there were limited social groups, making it challenging to connect, especially for young families. Mel describes the nursery school at Beechwood and the old school building, but their children attended different schools due to overcrowding, a common challenge at the time. She recalls difficulties in finding children's activities because of long waiting lists; there were no toddler groups. The children played in the abandoned brickworks or went to see the pony in the field at Bowes Hill. She remember when the village fair was initiated by the new people in Deerleap House.

Over time, the social fabric of the village evolved. The tennis club, once hosted by Lord Bessborough at Stansted, found a new home on the recreation ground, becoming a hub of activity. The village hall witnessed the NSPCC Christmas fair and talent shows, fostering a sense of community.

As Mel's children grew, so did her involvement in village life. Church became an important part of her routine, especially after her son returned from university and still is. Today, the village is alive with activity, thanks to initiatives like the u3a.