

Malcolm Clewer

Grew up in the UK. Had previously served in the British Army and has a strong military heritage in his family. Went out to Rhodesia in 1965 and served in the Rhodesian Army, initially with the RAR. Left the Zimbabwe Army in 1982. Left Zimbabwe for the UK shortly afterwards.

This is Annie Berry with Mr Malcolm Clewer on Tuesday the 25th of August 2009 in Aylesford. Thank you very much for your time today Mr Clewer, can we begin by discussing how you came to be in Rhodesia initially?

I came here for the desire to get out of England and the things that were going on there. I had been in business but I wished to go back into the army and the Rhodesian Army was recruiting and advertising for officers to come out. Having had a brother-in-law who'd done his flying training here in the Empire Air Training scheme and spoke glowingly of Rhodesia, I decided to come.

What had your army work involved prior to going there?

Well I'd started national service and stayed on a bit and became a Territorial. I'd served in Germany and Aden and then I came here.

And as we were chatting previously you mentioned a bit about your upbringing and scouts and so on.

As a young boy I'd been a boy scout, of course I was full of Baden-Powell and I read up his war, the Matabele War, never thinking as a young boy scout that I'd ever be in Matabeleland in the Matopos. Of course I did and when I was posted to 1 Brigade I spent many, many weekends going over to skirmish sites of the Matabele War where Baden-Powell had operated. I went to the Indaba site which came after the war and we went to Laing's Nek and Fort Sugarbush and all of the various little kopjes, we went over all the battlefields: The battle of the upper-Umguza where Gifford lost his arm, we went over the whole lot. It's a very interesting hobby, it really was. Getting out at the weekend, trudging in the bush.

Could you tell me a bit about your schooling and the kind of values that that would have instilled in you?

We were brought up by people who had served in the war and I had a superb history master who instilled in me a lifelong interest in history. I did normal grammar school-type education and so on in Leicestershire and that was it. I went to a polytechnic too, I qualified in textile technology for some peculiar reason and that was it.

What would you say your knowledge of the Empire was?

I was very interested in the Empire, having uncles who went to Australia and relatives in South Africa who I've lost touch with altogether, and reading Baden-Powell's book *Scouting for Boys* as a young boy, this is full of the Empire. So I had a great affection for the British Empire and in spite of all of its imperfections, it did a great deal of good; and the regimes which replaced it have left their people far worse off than they ever were: Fact.

(00:03:32) **And you mentioned that your grandfather had been in South Africa as well?**

My grandfather served in the Anglo-Boer war.

How long was he in South Africa for?

During the period of the war. He contracted paratyphoid on the Modder River but he was there during the war. He got the Queen's Medal with four clasps, but he served in the First World War as well, he was a regular. There's a picture of him on the wall out there as a young lad at Woolwich, over a hundred and something odd years ago. And his brother served in the Royal Navy and they had been involved in the Boxer Rebellion in China, and my uncle served with the Australian forces in North Africa and Borneo. So we've got quite a few people that have had military connections. But going back to the Empire, we read a lot about it. I remember as a boy we celebrated Empire Day on the 24th of May. As schoolboys we were always brought up with what was going on in the Empire, and that sort of thing.

So you had quite a military tradition in your family?

Yes, well I had a grandfather that I admired. He was an old soldier and I was always a bit skinny and he really tried to toughen me up, he was very good.

What would you say your knowledge of Rhodesia was prior to going?

Very little, apart from what my brother-in-law had told me. Of course I was interested when I saw my grandfather, with pictures of Generals of the Boer War and his photographs, and being taken on long walks with him. And he told me to jack my ideas and yes, he had a great influence.

Did that encourage you during your time in the army and your national service?

Oh yes, yes, but he died by the time I started national service.

So what year was it that you actually went to Rhodesia?

The end of '65.

So the Federation had ended?

The Federation had ended, yes, the year before.

Had you followed that at all?

(00:06:24) Not really, no, I knew of it because I remember seeing it on British television when Banda was taking over what is now Malawi. We knew a little bit about Zambia becoming Northern Rhodesia, but I didn't have a very good understanding really because it never came my way apart from what I read in the newspapers. In fact I knew very little about the Federation. I knew of it, I knew of Welensky and other people, but I had no real depth of knowledge. That all came when I started getting interested in the country.

You said you went out in '65 when UDI was declared?

That was coincidental; it had nothing to do with it.

Had you arrived before it was declared?

No, after, but I stress that it was not a political decision at all. I had been accepted before UDI was declared. It was simply to get out of England, to get to Africa, go on safari, serve in a Rhodesian unit, which I did, and get away.

Did you hear its declaration? I wonder if it alarmed you because a lot of people going out...

No, because Wilson said it would be over in weeks rather than months. Wilson was the Prime Minister.

So did it alarm you that you were going out to this strange situation?

No, not really, according to Wilson it was all a storm in a teacup, it would be over in weeks. And I was committed anyway; I'd made my mind up I was coming here, to hell with it, and there I went.

Can you tell me about your recruitment? That was in...

London, in Rhodesia House. I went through the normal recruiting procedure. By that time, Brigadier Theo Passaportis, who's now dead, he was the Rhodesian military representative there. I went through the recruiting procedures, medicals and so on and went there.

And were you recruited straight into a particular regiment?

No. When I arrived I initially joined what they called the Staff Corps and I became the Adjutant of the national training depot. In those days it was a Royal Rhodesian Regimental Depot and I became the Adjutant. I was Adjutant for about two years. From there I was then posted to the RAR.

Where were you based?

Bulawayo. Well I say Bulawayo, Llewellyn Barracks is in a place called Heany, which is probably about ten miles on the Salisbury road from

Bulawayo. It's a little place, Llewellyn Barracks. It had originally been an Air Force base in the Empire Air Training Scheme. There was an airstrip but all the accommodation was (00:09:39) ex-RAF Empire Training Scheme stuff including the married quarters, so that's where we started.

Were you married when you went out?

Yes I was. I subsequently became divorced. Brenda and I have been married 28 years.

And what did your wife at the time think of going out there?

She never really settled down to it frankly for various reasons. It was a bit of a rocky situation anyway and eventually we called it a day. When I was in the bush I was away quite a lot anyway, so that was it.

And what was your training like in Rhodesia? Did you have to go through any?

I went through all the normal courses, yes. The Army had a very good training system, you know, normal promotion exams, and then there were various courses you went on. I went on a forward air controller course, company commanders courses, counter insurgency courses and I did psychological warfare courses. And we had a Department of Military Studies who ran courses for promotion, staff training and that sort of thing. Oh we had a rigorously formulated training course programme for officers, in fact for anybody.

And how did it compare to the British Army? What were your impressions?

Well considering the situation that we were in, it compared pretty well, certainly better than the South African.... South Africa was Germanic and if they said to you it was raining in the desert, then it was raining in the desert. The standard was pretty good; we did very well with the limited facilities available. We had nothing like the facilities they had in the British Army, obviously. We had no tanks, so we couldn't practice armoured warfare, so we used Land Rovers, you know, that sort of thing. And for a period, we couldn't get any blank ammunition so we used ball ammunition and made sure we were not firing at anybody in particular. No, they did pretty well in the circumstances, considering we were sanctioned by Britain amongst others. Harold Wilson initiated sanctions against what had been a self-governing Colony; it didn't please us very much.

Did you fast learn about the politics of the situation?

Well you're bound to. I mean we studied, I read up, and as I say, I studied the history of this country from the days of the occupation, bearing in mind my interest in history anyway, and in the Pioneer Column. We never did, but we planned to do a follow-up by horseback on the route they came up; we never got round to doing it for various reasons. But again, we went to various spots

where the Pioneer Column had stopped on the way up and that was something, quite (00:12:59) an achievement. Yes, I studied that and I studied most of the Rhodesian history books.

So it sounds like there was some sort of pride in what had been achieved, but then irritation at this sudden disowning by Britain?

Yes, because they had a starry-eyed outlook on what was going on in Africa in particular and without wishing to sound racial, which I'm not, it has been proved, you cannot impose a western style democracy on a continent like Africa. It's totally foreign to their custom: Fact. Their system of governance, whatever it may be, is resting in the hands of a leader, depending on the leader, he could be a Cetshwayo, he could be a Lobengula, he could be Mzilikazi, he could be Dingane, he could be Shaka. They were brutal in every possible way and they kept control by sheer brutality, which in many ways is being emulated by the present day political leaders like Mugabe and others. So to try this one man – one vote never really worked. We used to say, "you say one man – one vote, once," and the political party that gets in is normally numerically stronger on tribal grounds, and having got in, they're very reluctant to change. Now the only country where it has worked at all, or nearly worked, is Botswana, where the first president, Seretse Khama, was a highly intelligent man and he allowed an opposition to function freely and fairly straight away. They had a very strong economy based on diamonds and they're in the Rand's financial area. They had the national herd outnumber the population and that really is probably the only success story in the whole of Africa. Botswana was able to loan money to the IMF and now they've got Ian Khama, the current president, he's the son of Seretse, and he too seems to maintain his father's outlook. Bearing in mind Seretse Khama married Ruth, so you have the white influence.

That was quite controversial at the time wasn't it?

At the time, yes. Certainly most of Bamangwato, his own tribe, they were not at all happy really, but Seretse Khama turned out to be first class, and the only first class president in Africa.

What did your family think about you going to Rhodesia?

Well they weren't very happy, but I mean I was a big boy.

Did you maintain contact with them?

Oh yes, we used to come over here on leave every so often. I had a mother who demanded I wrote every week, which I never did, but I did write fairly regularly. We didn't lose contact, no, we maintained contact.

Where would you have said your home was at the time?

Oh there, Rhodesia. I never had any intention of coming back to live here.

(00:16:31) So your move out there was seen as quite a permanent one?

Yes, very much so. We were privileged in many ways, but we were privileged in the country, the open spaces and our lifestyle, the bush. If you wanted an open-air life, Rhodesia was superb. We had servants, we had to because of the size of our properties; and by doing so, we created employment. And I would hasten to add now, in the days of Smith, with all the imperfections and the RF regime, the majority of the Africans in Rhodesia were far happier and far better off in every material way than they are now, fact. The pan-Africanists like Mugabe, of course. Some of the politicians over here, the loony-left, the do-gooders, insisted that "the Africans have to be given their freedom." Well they've never been given freedom, they're worse off.

When you went into the army initially, what were your impressions of the make-up of the force?

Well like any other, you had your friends, you had the usual, like any other army.

Were you with many other British soldiers?

There were one or two. Being in the time I came out of course, I was regarded as rather a suspicion, being a Brit, a Pom, you know, because they were all anti-Britain. But I settled in.

Was that a bit of a division initially between Rhodesians?

Well yes, between certain people, not all. There were one or two people that were very, not exactly impressed by having a Pom, but that soon disappeared. I became a Rhodie fairly quickly because I played sport and of course I did everything everybody else did.

Were there any other divisions that you noticed, between generations for example or urban people and people that had come from rural areas, things like that?

You mean from the UK?

Within Rhodesia.

Well funnily enough, the RAR, basically being an African unit, I'll show you our regimental history and give you some idea. We recruited basically in two areas. We recruited from what were the Karanga people and they had basically a military-type background historically, which the bulk of the Mashonas never had, and we recruited from Bikita and Gutu. Ironically, we did not recruit many Matabele. Again, you had this great family spirit within the battalion because they all had (00:19:37) uncles, cousins, brothers who had been or were in the battalion and every year we'd go out and recruit in Bikita and Gutu. We used to have hundreds turn up and we'd have a limited number we could accept. So from the African point, that was almost entirely rural.

Was that an important part of the RAR?

Yes, that was going on and by normal wastage, people's time expired, they were going back to their kraals and whatever. So you had a constant replacement coming in and you had an annual training programme and well obviously we'd go down to one of the recruiting areas and people would go down and say "yes, I know your father." But they had a fairly strict selection and of course the other thing is that when they arrived, we got them medically examined and medically improved. The men had new housing and other things and it's amazing how they changed when they came in.

So this sort of family tribal tradition was quite important?

Oh very much so, yes, because again, you know in Bikita and Gutu, Karanga people cover that area and they have an Arab streak in their blood from the days when Arab slavers came up the Sabi River. People traded, there were trading stations at Great Zimbabwe and the Khami ruins in Bulawayo, they had been set up by what was known as the Rozwi people. But being on the Sabi River, there was this clear evidence of slaving going on. Zimbabwe was built about the 14th century as a trading area, and the trading ceased when the Sabi silted up and so boats could no longer come in trading. That led to the decline of Great Zimbabwe, as you see it now. So there was this Arab influence genetically into this area and you can look at the features of the Karanga, they do not all have the negroid features, you have a good look at them, the true Karanga, they do have this Arab influence.

So do you think that's what gave them this preferable feature?

Yes, they had this, if only sub-conscious, tradition of some sort of semi-military background. They never went to war as far as I know, but they had this military capability and that's why we recruited in Bikita and Gutu, it worked very well. Latterly of course, at the end, towards the end of our war, of course we were recruiting all over the place. But I'm now talking early sixties when we were still living old-type Rhodesia.

Did you have much awareness of other elements of the security services at the time?

(00:23:14) Yes, we worked with them.

Can you tell me a bit about that? To what extent did you work with them?

Well like any other army unit, you have your signals, you have your artillery, and you have your services to start with, and then you have engineers, and we had all those elements. We had all those units within the Brigade and we had the normal Brigade structure. Of course we trained together and met each other, so yes, we did meet each other quite regularly, and of course on

courses we had members of different services all together, and so we got to know people quite well.

Which others? For example, would you have encountered the BSAP at the time?

Oh yes, we had quite a lot of dealings with them. And the Air Force. And I did an FAC course, Forward Air Controller, in which we flew in Vampires to get air experience for conducting air strikes. Oh yes, we had fairly close-knit little armed forces.

What were your impressions of the other security services and did you have any particularly good or bad impressions?

Well we regarded ourselves as being the best of course. Considering the conditions under which we had to operate, people operated very well. I mean, for one thing, our mine protection policy was streets ahead of anybody else's. We developed mine protection – and mine protection, not mine-proof, there's no such thing – we developed a whole range of mine-protected vehicles, which were very successful, off our own back, by the Rhodesia Engineers. We developed all manner of things that were used. The Air Force developed means of different types of bombs and using metro rockets on air craft and so on. Yes, they were pretty good. Our mine-clearing techniques were pretty good.

And what about parts of the security services, some of which had varying reputations sort of throughout the war? For example Selous Scouts and RLI and so on.

I had very little to do with the Selous Scouts. Yes, I really questioned myself whether it was necessary to form them because pseudo operations had already been carried out before the Selous Scouts had formed. I mean my great admiration was for the SAS, now they were superb beyond any shadow of doubt and a lot of the work the Selous Scouts did (00:26:10) could have been done by the SAS. But I'm not denigrating the Selous Scouts; there were some very good operators amongst them. But whether it was necessary to form a separate unit, I'm not really in a position to say. But certainly the SAS were quite superb and they really were very good.

As things started to progress towards the seventies and things started to get more serious, what did you feel that you were fighting for?

Well all the way along, that's the question. I realised that initially Africa was trying to be conquered by the Russians, not militarily, but by ideology using pan-Africanism as a vehicle by which to do it. The Russian aims were quite simply to get Nacala on one side and Walvis Bay on the other, or Lobito Bay, and they would have dominated the whole of Africa from a naval point of view. They had worked out a plan by indoctrination and ideology penetrating the whole of Africa and South Africa was the target. To me, I could see quite clearly what we were really fighting for. What we were fighting for was to

prevent that sort of thing happening. I don't think we were fighting for white supremacy, certainly not from my point of view; I looked beyond that.

The reality on the world stage was that we were part of a global conflict and the Cold War, and we were put at a great disadvantage ourselves because of the conflict between east and west and the ideological objectives of the east and west. We were really a pawn on the chessboard in international politics. The west was trying to counter the activities of the east and we, like the rest of Africa, were a pawn on the chessboard. Do you remember when Nigeria became independent? The British military attaché said "we can adequately train 'x' number of cadets at Sandhurst or Mons properly." The Russians came along and said "rubbish, we can train hundreds," so what happened? So it was that sort of thing that was the reality of Africa, it was ideology that was the overriding factor all the way through, and we could see it. Alright, we were happy with the status quo, I mean, let's be quite honest, but we were really only fighting for survival.

I was going to say, in some ways, do you think it was more what you were fighting *against* that was at the heart of it?

I think so, in reality, yes. There was Marxist-directed terrorism. We had ZAPU controlled ideology by Russia and ZANU, which is Mugabe's crowd, ideologically controlled or directed and assisted by China, it's as simple as that. Two elements of Marxism controlling the operations in this country, or directing it anyway, and certainly assisting it.

So this is the influence of the Cold War, the international status of the Cold War having an influence?

Yes, very much so. South Africa was the objective of Russian domination. Without wandering into the realms of apartheid, which I don't approve of, I've never approved of, but the ultimate aim of Russia and China was domination of Africa by ideological means; puppet government, puppet states, which they (00:30:04) can control. And you can see it, I mean ZAPU, Joshua Nkomo was really a relatively, relatively moderate man. I use the word 'moderate,' he gloated when the Viscounts were shot down, the other chap, Dumiso Dabengwa, who was known as the black Marxist, he'd been to Russia. So it was a clear division of ideological training, and of course that reflected itself in the way they were operating in the field. China and the thoughts of Mau, "swim like the fishes amongst the people," and Russia were more towards the conventional type war, which they were leading up to, that was to form conventional armies to invade. Initially, they were coming through the early stages of early terrorism.

Did you encounter elements of those leanings in your operations?

Probably only by documents that were picked up. Certainly the hammer and sickle was predominant, certainly in raids in Zambia you could see the hammer and sickle on places that were raided which clearly showed the Russian element.

And where would you say your sources of information came from? Did you have much contact with media when you were working? You refer to it in the bit that you wrote, but can you tell me about discussions with your superiors and so on as well?

Well you can't run a war without intelligence. I mean, the Chinese man said "he who knows the enemy as well as he knows himself can never be defeated." So intelligence, in any war, is vital. Your sources of intelligence are varied. They can vary between published papers, magazines, to covert operations, the whole gamut. And of course radio monitoring, everybody's doing it. So the answer is yes, you have numerous sources where you can get your information.

I'm not thinking so much of tactical operations information, but also the kind of information that would have informed your opinions about who you were fighting and so on.

Oh you could see it on the ground, what was going on. The longer we operated, the more 'just,' in a way, the war became. It's a strange word, to say 'just,' but it was not unjust. But in terms of influence, I'd already made my mind up; I was fairly well read in what was going on.

What sort of things would you have read?

Well, normal books on Africa, intelligence reports which were circulated, naturally, and briefings we went to. Nothing unusual, that's quite normal practice. And of course doing recce patrols into areas was a source of information and so on.

Did you discuss the situation with your colleagues and so on?

(00:33:53) At what level?

Well I'm thinking more on a personal level of what you were doing and what you were involved in?

Oh yes, in our rank, but it was not always from a political point, you know, "what the hell's going on?" We could see many things that the government was not doing, which we thought was wrong.

Did you discuss the politics and your opinions?

Not really, we didn't really. We were not a political army. For one thing, I never voted at all and alright, there could be one or two hot-heads, as there could be anywhere, but we never had political discussions. You know, the good old Smithy thing did exist but it was not something which was always there, it's not a subject you discussed. We had far more important things to think about like doing our job and of course, like anybody else, we were highly critical of the government's attitude in some ways in not promoting, let's say,

an African middle class where they could have done, and educated more. But again, we're living off into an area which is political, but then no government is perfect.

Absolutely, yes.

Look at the British government.

I was going to say, yes, least of all Britain.

No, in answer to your question, we were not a political army, we maybe had political points of view but they were never discussed. We never had political lectures from anybody. Nobody ever came along and said "vote" whatever, it never happened, never ever. In fact, it would never have been allowed, would *never* have been allowed.

Yes, a lot of people have really emphasised that actually, the apolitical emphasis that was placed on the forces.

We were politically aware but we were not political at all. I mean, I don't recall ever, ever discussing politics in a serious sense. You know, "oh God, they've done it again" sort of thing, but that's not discussing politics. No we weren't, not at all. We were not the Rhodesia Front in uniform, that is for sure.

Perhaps the apolitical element is one value, but were there other values or standards that you felt were important in the army as well?

You mean civilisation? Civilised standards, good behaviour, good governance in the broadest sense. A structured society; you could think of that, peace, stability, law and order. They were all values, which we valued, that were being disrupted by Mugabe and Nkomo and his terrorists. In many (00:37:03) ways they were beguiled into doing what they were doing, in the belief that they would be better off. They received an enormous amount of propaganda. I mean that was the end, when they received political indoctrination, which of course we know they did, we know they had. They believed they'd get freedom, that was the banner which they thought they were fighting for. Look what they've got.

I suppose those kinds of promises were made to the populations who bought into it?

You see they're fairly gullible, let's be quite honest, they were. Again, this will upset the loony left in this country when I talk, but it's factual. Generally, the majority of the blacks, they were super; pastoral, simple people, and that's all they wanted. Get drunk at the weekends on Chibuku, you know, they lived a very simple, pastoral life, but they were being influenced by politicians who were promising "get the white man out and we'll have freedom," and you get these highly influenced youngsters who start to believe it. We used to find, on our trips round the bush, we'd go to what they used to call a *Dare*, this is a council of elders sitting down, and they used to say "the young people are

not listening to us anymore.” They traditionally have a simple system in African society. If you have a problem, it’s sent down for discussion and you have a sort of sub-process where people discuss it. It eventually gets up to headman level and eventually you get to a situation where the chief’s had the decision made for him. That is their system of governance, if you like. But here, you’re trying to implant a one man-one vote system in a parliament, which they never really understood, and now they’re being beguiled by the promise “get the white man out, you’ll have a car, you’ll have a Mercedes, you’ll have 10,000 acres,” and they believed it because they then saw the comparisons between how we lived. The fact that most of us actually worked to get what we got; the fact that most farmers had carved their farms out of virgin bush and in many cases were assisted or recommended by the British government after the Second World War to come out and settle here...

Yes, settlement schemes.

They had the settlement scheme, and later areas around Karoi for example, which was total bush, became vastly fertile and productive. It’s now, of course, the favourite spot of Mugabe’s crowd. But the thing to emphasise is that this was virgin bush. It wasn’t a case of the white man taking the best and leaving the rest to the African, that didn’t happen, generally speaking. In any case, over 80% of all the land in Zimbabwe is in the hands of the government anyway. When they start talking about 70% of the land owned by the whites, that’s of the remaining 20%. And that 70% was rich, arable farmland, highly productive, which meant this country could export its agricultural produce to other countries – which was beneficial to the country – by farmers who maybe generations ago had started with nothing, in virgin bush. And these farmers are doing the same thing down in Nigeria and in Zambia. So the landless peasant’s theory, it doesn’t really wash when you delve into it.

(00:40:56) You made reference in the written answers that you’d sent, to the differences between black Africans and terrorists and the sort of values that each had. Can you tell me a bit more about this?

Well quite frankly, the African soldiers we had in our battalion, they’re the Askari originally but later became termed as AS (African Soldier). They were disciplined, they were really apolitical. We were a great family, we were a parochial, paternal society. We looked after them and they looked after us. It really was the most incredible feeling that they had now been through the process; they’re under a disciplined organisation. Terrorists were recruited for various reasons to do something entirely different and in doing so, they became totally different. I mean the terrorists committed the most appalling atrocities; our chaps never did. I mean, the terrorists, I have seen women who have had their lips cut off with pliers by Mugabe’s thugs. RAR troops never did that. People have had their feet chopped off; the atrocities as such were carried out by the terrorists. I don’t deny some people, terrorists were given a bit of a rough time, but there was no terrorism or torture as such. They might have had a bit of a rough time.

You mean on the side of the Rhodesians?

Yes, but again, when you come to a terrorist war, information intelligence is vital and needed in a hurry. But nobody ever died under torture and nobody was tortured as such. But Mugabe's and Nkomo's thugs intimidated vast stretches of the population by sheer terrorism on their own kith and kin, which of course aided their cause. I mean, for example they'd lay a mine near a village in the hope and the belief that the security force would come and beat up the village and that sort of thing was going on. So there was a big difference between the terrorists and the Rhodesian armed forces blacks, in whatever service they were in. They were in a disciplined force, they were well led, controlled and looked after.

And can I ask also about how you perceived the differences between ZANU and ZAPU or ZANLA and ZIPRA?

Well their motivation and training was different; I mean their orientation was totally different.

Particularly in terms of their combat styles.

Well bare in mind, then, they were fighting each other. You will have read somewhere surely that ZAPU and ZANU were actually fighting each other and in terms of the war, right at the very end, they were looking for territorial gain. And ZANU moved right into Matabeleland and there were literally fights between ZAPU and ZANU so really, there's no real liaison. As I said earlier on, their persuasion politically was different and their tactical directions were different because of the political orientation. ZAPU's image was a more conventional war-type operation. ZANU was relying on the (00:44:30) Chinese form of operation, like Fidel Castro, that sort of operation, to gain majority one way or the other.

And did you experience that difference in any contacts that you had?

Not really, the bullets are still the same and the actual...no, not really.

But you were just aware that there was this underlying difference?

Oh yes, their overall strategy was different, yes. Fairly early on, ZAPU tried to operate in, if you like, conventional terms, by sending three platoons in three different places. They tried to have a simultaneous crossing, whereas ZANU tended to have crossings in different places. They only really tried that once until later on, right at the end of the war, but that's why they call it infiltration. Ideally of course, they were trying to get in as far as they can, to go as far as they could and set up base camps and then start politicising the locals on the error of their ways.

Can I ask more about some of the things that you were involved in? You joined the RAR having spent time in Bulawayo?

Yes, well the RAR barracks were just down the road.

Can you tell me about the work that you did in the RAR?

I joined the platoon as platoon commander, then I became a platoon company second in command. And I became a battalion intelligence officer. Nothing out the ordinary.

And what did your work involve? How often would you be going out when you were in the platoon?

We went out into the bush quite regularly, whatever job you were doing, it was always in the bush.

Were they in stints of a few weeks at a time?

Oh yes.

And then you were back. Was there any regularity?

Oh yes, they did it on a rotation basis initially, yes.

And how long would those periods be?

A month, six weeks.

And how long would you have back when you came back?

(00:47:07) About three months probably and then you'd go out again, sometimes in different areas.

What was that like having this to-ing and fro-ing from operational areas?

Well we went out in the bush, stayed out, and you were self-contained. We were re-supplied probably by chopper or road and when your tour was over, you came back.

Was disruptive to life, as it were, in turn?

Well it's like any other army, look at the British army now, look how they're being disrupted by their commitments. We never had that sort of thing until 1975. Even so, I think the Territorial Army who eventually became fully committed in our war; they were doing about a six week tour before they came home. We were still doing that sort of thing anyway.

How did it change as the war progressed? Did you have longer periods out in the bush and shorter periods back?

I think we did, we're talking a long time ago now. Yes we did, as the nature of it, the scale of the war increased, we did spend more time out, yes.

Were you involved in any particular operations?

Well like all of us, we were involved in operations.

Did you go to any of the particular operational areas that were declared from '72 onwards?

The war, as we're talking about it, we're talking about what became known as what we called 'The Bush War,' although operations prior to that were mostly in Matabeleland. But the war as we're now talking about, started on the 22nd of December 1972 with a raid on Whistlefields farm led by a man called Rex Nongo, he's now called Solomon Mujuru, where he had murdered a man called Mr de Borchgrave, and that was followed by a raid on Jutland Farm where a man called Jellicoe was killed. Now that was the period when the war started, yes, and we all did our bit in various places. I spent most of my time in Mashonaland and Manicaland. I had been operating in Matabeleland, but that was prior to '72.

What was your perception of how things were progressing and did you think things were getting more serious?

Up until 1975, we were gradually getting on top militarily. Now we had a major thrust called Operation Inlet where we forced... "we," the Rhodesia Forces, cleared out practically every terrorist in this country. There were an estimated 200 operating around Mount Darwin and they had mostly been forced back (00:50:43) into Mozambique where they'd come from and in many cases, right back into Zambia, and South Africa pulled the plug in the interests of détente. So at that time, we were really in a very strong winning position waiting for the politicians to come to some rapprochement with Britain or whatever. Where we were concerned, we were, at that time, pretty well on top militarily, very much so. And in fact, at that time, the Territorial Army had not been really heavily involved and the economy had not really been affected because the majority of the civilian population were still working in their particular positions and when they were called up, it was just for a very short period of time. Eventually we started having all battalions of the TA being called up. 1975 was the break point. At that time, we were having support from South Africa and overnight they withdrew their support. They withdrew the South African police, they withdrew their supporting services and they withheld ammunition.

So that, for you, was a big turning point?

Well then we were really on our own, weren't we? Portugal had collapsed.

Yes, by that time, Mozambique would have...

Yes, at that time, Mozambique was not particularly hostile in '75, but later on they became fully associated with ZANU-PF and gave them free access and training camps in Mozambique. But '75 was the point when something might have happened, but of course you had the Falls Bridge talk, which collapsed.

At the time, there were probably only about 200 terrorists in the country, and again, the economy had not been affected. But that's outside the realms of the military, that's a political situation.

What was your opinion of conscription and the effort that was relied on in that way?

Well African conscription did not come in until pretty late on. The European, the whites and coloureds, Asians, were conscripted from way back. Originally they did four and a half months; when I was Adjutant, it was extended to nine months. So there had been a conscription of national service in this country for quite a long time. The Africans came in later on, when it became necessary to increase the number of the battalions. The RAR finished up with three battalions.

Yes, it did grow a lot didn't it, towards the end?

It did, to three battalions, yes. We originally had 1RAR; it was a five-company battalion. The idea was eventually at some stage in the indeterminate future for a second battalion, which eventually happened of course and they were based in Fort Victoria, which is now called Masvingo.

What about white conscription? Some people did leave the country based on what was going on...

(00:54:22) They did, more towards the end when it became apparent that it was going to have to be a political solution.

What did you think of that?

There was not a mass exodus initially. I agree, some people did what they used to call 'the Chicken Run' but no, it was not a mass exodus because everybody believed there was going to be a settlement. We kept having various talks, which seemed to suggest something could happen. But I think '75 was the point where we said, "well the South African's have pulled the plug, now we're on our own."

Did that concern you in terms of your future in Rhodesia?

Well I was committed, I was divorced by then anyway, I was on my own. So there I was, there I stayed, simple.

Had your wife returned to England?

Oh a long time afterwards, yes.

During your time in the Army, did you have much knowledge of African belief systems and so on?

Oh yes, very much so, we were very much...I've got a book here called *The Man and his Ways*, and we produced a book called *The Shona Book Of Customs*. Oh yes...

You did speak a lot about the elders and so on. And how...

Oh yes, we knew how to behave and we insisted people knew, particularly the white troops, you know, respecting their traditional places and so on.

I'm sure within the RAR that must have been a very important thing?

We learnt a lot, yes. Funnily enough, we had to deal with some of their witchcraft problems. They'd come to us, but it's another world altogether if you get into witchcraft, it's very powerful. Don't ever believe that in Africa it's dying, it isn't, it's as strong as ever. We knew of a clergyman who'd had falling congregations, what was his solution? He went to the witch doctor for assistance. Tales are legion about the effects of witchcraft, and they're still there.

Were there any incidents that you could talk about?

I could tell you of a chap we had, a corporal called Corporal Kasarai who was a big strong chap. We were totally cut off, except by radio and he had no connection whatsoever with his family. One morning he came to me, grey. He said "I've got to go home" and straight away, my Sergeant Major sort of gave me the nod and said "he's been got at." How it happened, I don't know, but he had and he was being bewitched by his father's second wife. Now really I (00:57:24) can't tell you how it's done but I've seen it happen. We sent him home for a month and he came back fully cured, it happens. We had a Sergeant Major in the battalion who had been brought up by a District Commissioner as a white boy and he was very well spoken, well educated, but when we used to go home at night – he still lived in the battalion – he indulged in witchcraft and he was bewitching the children and we had to Court Martial him. Now here's somebody who had been brought up by a district Commissioner, been to a local school, brought up as a white boy, he didn't go to university or anything like that but he had a normal education. When the front gates closed at night, we all went back into our married quarters or wherever, and darkness came over the barracks bewitching of children, led by this Sergeant Major was being carried out. We eventually got to hear of it and he was court martialed, so it was there.

Did you see any of its use in terms of Rhodesian operations, perhaps against the opposition?

The terrorists tried to use it, you've probably heard of the mediums, the Zvakiros. The Midzimus were the family spirits in north Mashonaland, this is the area of the Monomatapa confederation. You've heard of the Monomatapas?

Yes.

Well the Monomatapa confederation, they were a whole series of sub-tribal areas. The man who founded the Monomatapa confederation was called Mutota. Anyway, he died way back, but in African custom, his spirit remained and he would be accepted. The spirit would be retained and eventually, somebody would go into a trance and do certain things and the elders of the tribe who knew the custom and tradition would test this young man or whoever he was and say he was now the reincarnated spirit of whoever he claimed to be. Now there were very often lapses in the succession and the terrorists on one occasion tried to use one of the spirit mediums to have influence on the people in the Muzungedzi River area, but the man who claimed to be the spirit medium actually crossed over the Muzungedzi river, which damned him completely in the eyes of the locals. The original man, a Chief, in the whole of his life, he'd never, ever crossed that river.

So there were attempts to use the spirit medium for whatever, but spirit mediums like Parangeta and Nehanda, she had two heads. Nehanda had two heads for some reason, there were two Nehandas in two different areas but the main one of the Monomatapa confederation was...gosh, I wish I'd knew you were going to ask all this, I've just forgotten all about it. The answer is, it was being used, but the other thing of course, is that we had people who were very knowledgeable on the spirit medium customs and beliefs, which are still there. I mean this is not new and they would know where not to go and where they should not go because of the spiritual connotation with people in the area. So there's one way of making sure we didn't upset the locals, which a young 'townie' white man could do quite easily, quite unwittingly. So Parangeta was one name that comes to mind, Nehanda and Mutota. But anyway, the answer is yes, it was used on both sides, and on our side a) to make sure we didn't do anything stupid; and b), to persuade people, if you like, of the (01:02:26) justness or the fact we were doing the right thing. I've got books on African customs, which I've read, and if you can wait a second afterwards, I'll show you a book called *The Man And His Ways*. This is the traditional tribal African, how he lived, his beliefs and his customs.

You also mentioned the Psyops and other training you'd had, was that something that linked in with the use of spirit mediums at all?

Well with the psychological, you're trying to sell a product aren't you? In our case, we were trying to sell what we were trying to do to the people. In that we were not successful; for one thing, we could not indulge in terrorism, and again, the methods we used were not really the best. You need highly skilled people to control a psychological warfare campaign and quite frankly we didn't really have that. We tried, but it didn't really work.

What about languages and local languages, did you...?

We promoted, as far as we could, learning and teaching of Shona. We in the battalion went to Shona lessons and eventually Shona became a subject in the schools in Rhodesia. So there were attempts to learn Shona. Some of us learnt, not as well as others, but we all had a smattering of Shona and it made

a tremendous difference when you went into a kraal, if you could greet correctly and you speak to your soldiers in Shona. They used to laugh but they used to laugh because they were pleased you were trying. The answer is yes; we did make an effort to learn Shona. But funnily enough, Shona was the predominant language or dialect in Rhodesia. Matabele was used by the Matabele but the dominant tribal language was Shona.

But bare in mind, Mashonaland encompassed a vastly different number of tribal areas and in the early days of occupation, a Shona in the northeast could probably not converse with a Manica, although their language roots are identical. It was only when a white man produced a book called *Unified Shona* and wrote it down, that some sort of uniformity crept in. Bare in mind, there was no written language in this country, in Rhodesia, prior to the white man going there and teaching it. Nor was there a wheel, they used sledges: Fact. We made a big play of trying to really understand the African and his customs, man and his ways, to try and speak Shona. I don't say we were all successful, we did make a real effort to do it though and certainly in the battalion, well, it was too easy, but everybody who commanded African troops had some knowledge to a more or less degree.

Did you have any sense of a tradition stemming from Malaya and Kenya?

Well in terms of doctrine, yes, we studied the campaigns in Malaya and in Kenya. I mean the concept of protected villages originated in Malaya under General Templar, and it was very successful. We had them but they were not quite as successful, but they could have been but they weren't, not as well as they should have been. But the concept of protected villages was very good, provided (01:06:25) you could protect them and you gave the people in them a similar standard of living to what they had before they were moved in.

What do you think happened with them in Rhodesia?

I think it was a lack of resources really. They tried it in Mozambique, the Portuguese called it the 'Aldiamentos,' which were a total disaster, but the concept was very good. But here we had a lack of resources really. In many cases, it was the way the thing was handled, but there were cases where it did work. The siting of the camps was not always as good as they might have been, but again, we're talking about something thirty years ago now.

And was Kenya discussed in operation or in training and so on?

It was discussed at officer level, yes. I had intelligence debriefs on Kenyan operations, and their failures...we studied our profession. And bear in mind we had people in the Army, certainly in the RAR, who served in Malaya, so they had a very real knowledge of counter-insurgency in Malaya, particularly under General Templar. So the answer's yes, we were aware, very much, of the principles that were operating there. You see in Kenya, they introduced pseudo gangs, very successfully. A man called Henderson introduced

pseudo gangs. We introduced pseudo gangs, which led into the formation of the Selous Scouts. But the first pseudos were RAR soldiers.

Did you know much about how that worked and what happened?

I had some knowledge but it was kept very tightly controlled.

Do you think that it worked?

Like anything else, some of it didn't work very well. Some operations are excellent, some are not as good. Overall, I would say the pseudo concept worked quite well. The pluses outnumbered the failures, put it that way. It's a very good concept, better having a black man doing the job than having a white man with a black mask isn't it; it's a difficult disguise, although it did happen. But the pseudo concept was very, very tightly controlled and it worked very well in Kenya .which led to the capture of Dedan Kimathi and his crowd. They soon learnt, didn't they?

Did you think that these sort of schemes worked, making these links between operations?

The thing which let us down in the end was the attitude of South Africa and lack of resources and the sheer scale of operations eventually. It was lack of resources. Bearing in mind we were being sanctioned against, we had to fly aircraft which should have been scrapped years ago, we were denied the full scale of ammunition. If the playing field had been equal, level, we might have done far better because the scale of operations on the terrorist side may not have reached the scale it did.

(01:10:05) What did you think of the tactics of your opponents and how they operated?

Well they were following classical insurgency lines, there's nothing unusual about them, I mean, they didn't really bring anything new. We read all about them in books on insurgency, they were following Mau's principles basically; intimidating terror on the locals, which denied the security forces intelligence on movements and so on. And of course, the other thing they did, they got the locals, what were they called, Mujibas, young lads, to act as lookouts because otherwise their village might be punished. So they could monitor our movements in the bush, but you never saw them in the bush, I mean, we always knew we were being watched although you could never see anyone.

Is this Mujibas?

Mujibas, they're the young men, yes, they were used. And of course we used turned Mujibas in one way or the other. We're raking up memories now, which have been lying dormant for a long time, like that man's name.

How did your operations change? You said that you moved into intelligence eventually?

I didn't say that, I was intelligence officer in the battalion and was the brigade intelligence officer and so on, and I was with the military intelligence directorate in the field and in offices as well.

So did that involve closer contact with the range of security services?

Oh yes, very much so, and Special Branch and the police, and CIO of course. Yes, there was a sort of interchange of ideas. It could have worked better, but the fact remained it did exist, oh yes, it had to.

And it was towards the end that the JOCs changed their name, didn't they?

We had the ACC, the JOC concept was that you had JOCs at various levels, Joint Operation Commands, which were comprised of Police, Army, Air Force and Special Branch at all levels.

And then NATJOC, was it the National JOC that...

Right at the top.

(01:12:51) **Yes.**

Yes, that was called the OCC, Operating and Co-ordinating Committee

And Com-Ops?

Com-Ops, yes, Combined Operations

Did you get involved in that level of things?

Not really, no, only on the odd occasion...

It was just within your Battalion mainly?

I had some dealings, yes, but I was never part of Com-Ops, put it that way. But obviously I had access to it and we had dealings with them, we had to.

And did your increased involvement in the security and intelligence elements give you any sense of the way things were going?

Well I had a pretty clear understanding of what was going on.

How much did it concern you? Did you have a feeling that things were getting particularly...

Well they certainly weren't getting any better, that's for sure, now we could see the influences of external support the opposition were getting. We had no intentions of pulling out though, put it that way.

And how did operations change when you went out into the areas?

Well they didn't really change; the operations as such didn't change. As I say, we developed a Fire Force concept, which you probably know about which worked very well.

This was calling in back up?

Towards the end, that was a very successful concept where troops, very often the Selous Scouts, would report something, which would be acted upon. Supplies would either be dropped by parachute and the Fire Force would be flown in by chopper, controlled by a gunship with the Fire Force commander in the gunship. That was very successful. But bear in mind lack of resources, we didn't have all that many choppers; and in the end we didn't really have all that many men. We had a vast area to cover if you think about it and of course we were doing external raids as well to nip the elements of the enemy in the bud where they were based, and in that way we were very successful.

(01:15:22) So bearing in mind that sanctions were beginning to be felt and the territorial forces were being used more, South Africa had pulled out and Mozambique was starting to go, what was it like commanding a battalion?

Well we had a job to do, I mean that was it. The great thing was that we put on a presentation for the government of the total involvement of the country in terrorism, and they wouldn't believe it. We were fairly forward thinking as an army where we put up a scenario of where we believed the thrust would come from – it was fairly obvious where they were going to come from – and the extent to which the operation would go to, and really all the politicians said was, "oh we're very interested, but that will never happen, will it ?." And we said "yes, it could." So we're talking military, I'm not discussing politics. But again, that sort of thing of, we thought "my God, what the hell's going on here?" They weren't going to pull out.

It sounds like you weren't being listened to by...?

You never are when you get in this, you never are.

We hear similar things today; it's been in the news a lot recently hasn't it?

Yes, you never are. You tell people the unpalatable truth and that's what happens, isn't it?

Break in interview

Could you tell me what you thought of your commanding officers as well? I mean, you were commanding a battalion yourself but...

I didn't command a battalion at that time, no, I had commanded a company. As I said in my questionnaire, I think we had some very good COs. David Heppenstall was particularly good, he's very good. Bill Godwin, he was very good. John Shaw, Brigadier, he was very good; he was killed in a helicopter crash. A chap called Leon Jacobs who was very good. David Parker was an outstanding commander; Andy Rawlings was a very good commander as well.

You generally worked quite well together?

Well there was a war on, yes we did, they were very good. David Heppenstall was excellent. Others were not so good, but I won't mention them.

And how far did you think the war went towards creating and sustaining a Rhodesian identity?

(01:18:41) Well it was rather like Britain during the Second World War, you know, we were alone. We had this tremendous spirit, we were on our own; Rhodesia was the centre of the universe. You had a map showing 'down south,' UK and black states, that was it. We were the centre of the universe, you know what I mean. But we were bloody proud, we were Rhodesians standing up against the world and that was generally felt by most people. But of course the reality started to creep in, but we were still pretty good, but the dice were being loaded very heavily against us for the reasons we mentioned earlier on. Therefore a political settlement had to be arrived at. There's no doubt about it, Mugabe's element was worn out as well. I don't know whether they would say it but they were pretty sick of the war.

Do you think that Rhodesia had a special culture in particular?

We did, we had a sort of special way of life. We were colonial, I must call it colonial, that's a terrible word in this country but it was. We had wide-open spaces, we had the image of lots of sport, sunshine, and it was certainly a Rhodesian identity, it's still there. I mean we have Rhodesia Worldwide and we have a Rhodesian Army Association and we have Rhodesian Army gatherings every so often, so the identity is still there.

So it's still maintained to this day?

Yes, and particularly around here because there are quite a number of ex-Rhodie army people in this area; it's our social life.

I'm sure it's crucial, having come back so recently, to have that link and that connection?

Yes it is because there are some funny people in this country. We've been very lucky with our next-door neighbour. We served together in the army forty-odd years ago. We have a gathering every so often and we're having another reunion sort of thing on the 19th of September at a pub down the road, we're

all going down to have a couple of beers and a lunch. No speeches, just having a chat and coming home.

As things moved towards the end of the war, the end of the seventies, what kind of emphasis did you place on African Nationalism? What were your thoughts on that?

Well they'll still be there, they will never go, they're still there, pan-Africanism. They're still the driving force in Africa, particularly amongst left-wing regimes like Mugabe. Not so much now in Mozambique although Guebuza, he was also very left wing.

What sort of importance did you place on it in terms of what happened?

(01:22:03) Well there's nothing we could do about it, it's a fact of life. We're getting on with our lives. But really in a way, for five years, we could; although we were quietly being eased out of the Army and forces and they were making it very, very clear they didn't want us. Civilians, I think, really they felt relieved the war was over, they weren't concerned with politics, and for five years they were just left alone to get on with the job. And the first five years in this country, although there were rumbles, we knew things were going on, in fact, from our point of view, we had a very good life there. It's by ten years, that's when the rot started, when the true Mugabe and co started becoming really apparent. But certainly from '81 to '86, those five years, it wasn't Rhodesia but it was still pretty good. Until the rot set in, which it did in full measure, and really came to a head in '97 I suppose, with the farm invasions and the involvement in the Congo, the diamonds.

You've mentioned the importance of ideology in the war but what sort of emphasis would you place on the question of it being a racial war, a tribal war or a civil war?

Well with ZAPU/ZANU it was a tribal war straight away. It's still there, the tribalism is still a major force in Africa and don't let anybody kid you otherwise; it's still there. It even breaks down to certain areas: In Mashonaland, the Karanga for example are not really strong in government; they're the people now around Masvingo. The Zezeru element of the Shona, they are the dominant element in the government so tribal factions are still there. Manyikas are not strong; look at the way they castigated Ndabaningi Sithole, who was a founder member of ZANU, but he was never given a hero's funeral when he died. Not that I'm suggesting he should have but in terms of their philosophy, he's not of the right kind. And also, retribution comes into the mindset of Mugabe because the Matabele pillaged the Mashona before the white man came, so now Mashonas are getting their own back on the Matabele. Don't believe that's not true because it is. Matabeleland has been deluded of resources quite deliberately by a Mashona-controlled government. Ironically, the Matabele War was recommended by a missionary believe it or not, because of the depredations being carried out by the Matabele on the Mashona, particularly around what is now Masvingo, Fort Victoria. A

missionary strongly recommended a war to squash the Matabele, to stop the depredations. Our annals of history.

You've mentioned the ideology and tribal elements, what would you say about the civil war question? Would you describe it as a civil war, or a racial war at all?

It was more racial than civil. It never grew to a civil war stage, where you were having a civil war. It could have done with Shona and Matabele having a go, it was getting to a civil war-type situation when both factions were fighting each other. That's what a civil war is all about. The racial element was the one which was conjured up by both terrorist factions. They saw it as a "get rid of the white man and you can have everything you want."

(01:26:21) So it was racial from one side of it perhaps? They saw it as racial but not so much...?

We were not so racial. Alright, we all wanted what we had but most of us, certainly the people I was associated with, recognised the reality that it couldn't go on forever. But what was going to replace it had to be something better than what has happened now, whatever it might have been. The great fault of course was Britain was anxious to get rid of its colonies at a high rate of knots. I believe if Kenya had waited another ten years, things would have been different there, but it wasn't. Britain believed that Jomo Kenyatta and the Kikuyu would be dormant and so on. Look what happened in the most recent election in Kenya; 1000 people killed. So Africa is simmering. It's a veneer of civilisation, with a simmering mass of savagery, which bursts through every so often. Look at every country. Malawi's considered a nice, benign country, but Hastings Banda was as brutal as anybody. Even Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda; underneath the surface he condoned brutality, although he practiced what he called humanism. Yes, but he had a faction called the Young Pioneers, the UNIP Youth. They were just like the militia in Zimbabwe. In Malawi, you had the Young Pioneers. So really, nothing's really changed.

And you discussed ZANU and ZANLA, but you also mentioned UANC as well. I wondered if you...

Yes, well that was a Muzorewa creation, united Africa.

What did you think about that?

They had no real effect, they were a Muzorewa creation. To my knowledge, they had no part in the war at all, although they had some camps in Mozambique. But to my knowledge, they had no involvement at all.

Did you encounter any of his auxiliary troops, some auxiliary troops of Muzorewa and Sithole?

Personally, no, I didn't.

Did you hear anything?

No I didn't. We had our own auxiliary forces.

These were troops who were supposedly working with Muzorewa towards the end?

They might have done but if they were, I don't know of it. If they were, they weren't very effective. There were auxiliary forces and we had Special Forces. No, UANC was purely political and Muzorewa was probably a hope. When we had the Pearce Commission, that's when he came to light and ironically, people, many people, the Batonka, rejected the Pearce commission (01:30:03) because they were very happy with the way things were, they didn't want to change. The Batonka people in the Zambezi Valley who used to knock their teeth out and put things through their noses, they voted en masse not to have a change, they didn't want to change, not at all, they were quite happy as they were, knocking their teeth out and getting drunk and all the rest of it. The Pearce Commission, that is when Muzorewa started; it came to light during the Pearce Commission.

And when did you finally leave the forces?

I left because it was patently obvious I was going to be got at when they sabotaged my staff car.

What happened to you then, in 1980?

I went into industry, I used my polytechnic qualification to go into textiles and eventually I ran a large company, which ZANU-PF wanted. Because it was an internationally owned company, you had to have a third of the board local and they were ZANU-PF and they wanted the company to fail so they, ZANU-PF, would get it, like they got lots of other companies. I had 1200 workers and I resigned. Within two to three years, they'd finished up with 120 and a year later the business closed down altogether, under the ZANU-PF management. I worked on my own, doing a bit of consultancy and then getting involved in a bit of security work, security products and so on. Latterly, I was doing contract work with a company called Minetech, involved in clearing remnants of war from ex-battlefields in Zambia where they had rockets and things being left behind, being retained by a geological company there who'd been retained by Australian mining interests, because they were looking for uranium which is in abundance in the Zambezi Valley. We had proper mine clearing teams doing the, clearing the areas and declaring it free for people to move in. We found rockets and bombs and mortar bombs and so on, which had been left behind during the war. That's what I was doing before I came over.

Did that give you a glimpse of what was on the other side, of what you were against?

Yes, it was nice being in the bush, bush whacking, super. We lived very simply in a magnificent part of the country, beautiful, at the top of a high ridge.

When did your position with the RAR actually come to an end?

I left the RAR as such, because I then went to the School of Infantry as an instructor.

And what year was this?

That would be about '71 (01:33:26). In 1971 I went to the School of Infantry as an instructor and from there I went to 1 Brigade and from there I moved out to Army headquarters and that was it.

When did your work in the Army in Rhodesia actually finish then? Was it 1980?

Well I left the army at the beginning of '82 when I realised, I didn't want to leave the army but I wanted to get out of what was going on. I never wished to leave the army at all. When things are going on and people are saying "hang on Clewer, you've got to watch it," when you can see what's happening and the terrorists are taking over control and so on. They were not interested in normal staff procedures and so on, so disillusionment set in and I got out.

What had your views been of the different battalions? You said that when you started there was just the one?

The RAR?

Yes, the RAR and by the time you left...

There were three. The second one was at Masvingo, Fort Victoria. I only visited them, I never served with them and the 3RAR was at Umtali, now Mutare, and again, I visited them but I never served with them as such.

You mentioned at the start that their recruitment had changed?

Well the first and second battalions were actively involved in terrorist operations. The third battalion wasn't as involved, because originally they were just a company which was increased right at the very end. In fact, the authorisation for that battalion to form came from Lord Soames although they were already in being. But the first and second battalions, I was first battalion but they were both very good battalions.

So what were your movements afterwards? You went to Zambia immediately after Rhodesia? Did you then...

I didn't live there, I lived in Zimbabwe. I lived in Harare the whole time and I was still living in Harare when I left the Army and I stayed there, in Harare until I left last year. But I'd go into Zambia on business.

(01:36:04) **So you were just working in...**

I would go up on contract work in Zambia for several weeks at a time in the bush, yes. And one reason for leaving was while I was away in Zambia, we were robbed. My house was broken into, fortunately Brenda was not touched in any way but they got in the house and that's very unsettling to a woman on her own. Having had a friend who some while ago, was also a widow living on her own, who was badly beaten up and really beaten up by a group of four thugs...she had all the sophisticated alarm schemes but they still broke a window which got them time to get in the house. They really beat this woman up, ransacked the house and fortunately the gardener, the garden boy 'phoned us. In the meantime the reaction stick are on the way but it takes time to get there and we got there about 15 minutes after she'd been beaten up. The thugs had been giving her a rough time and her face was just red. Now that has an effect on anybody, particularly a woman on her own and of course the other thing, when the so-called police were fetched, they had no transport, no vehicle, no petrol. And when they arrived, these were not real policemen, these were militia dressed up as policemen and they had a woman police sergeant who fell asleep doing the investigation, not a docket was produced. When the thugs ran away, they left a hat, caught on a bush. Not one police person found it, we did. Now all these are contributing factors to wanting to get out of the country, apart from the political unsettlement, the breakdown of law and order and the economy and so on.

And you said that your staff car was vandalised?

Well no, they sabotaged it. They removed brake fluid, just enough for me to drive, and I was driving through Harare and the brakes went and I managed to crash the gears and the handbrake. So I thought, "well Clewer, it's time you got out," and I did.

It's a worryingly popular way of tampering with things?

Well you could do nothing about it, that's the trouble.

Yes.

What can I do? So there you are.

Had you planned to go to the UK? You said that actually you eventually went through South Africa?

I went on holiday to South Africa to see relatives and friends. We'd planned to come over here. We'd made contingency plans anyway to come and stay over here in the Legion Village and my children had got over here by then anyway. We got them out of the country and the grandchildren were out of the country and I had a sister living over here and where else do you go?

Did you see it as a permanent move then or was it temporary?

(01:39:03) What here?

Yes.

Oh, we were back here for good, I'm not going back to Zimbabwe. I'd like to go back to Africa on holiday somewhere, maybe Zambia or maybe Malawi, even Mozambique now or Kenya are very pleasant, depends where you go though.

And how did you think British people saw you when you came back?

Generally speaking, they weren't remotely interested. Zimbabwean news is so small on the media, occasionally you have a flash but really you don't take a great deal of...they weren't really interested, had no idea. Some people had no idea where Zimbabwe was and they're funny people here anyway, I mean always looking for compensation and health and safety and can't upset the ethnic minorities on any account. Fortunately we're living here in Kent; we're still living a super life, albeit in smaller surroundings. I mean we had a much larger house in Zimbabwe and had a large garden. We lived there for 28 years before we left. We're very happy here though, although we were very sorry we had to leave, but that was not our fault.

What did you think of the end of empire? I guess this had been happening when you had gone out originally.

Yes, the Commonwealth was the theory to sort of represent it. I've got a tremendous admiration for the Queen and for most of the Royal Family. I think this, in a way, gave the impression of Empire but in reality though, the only countries of the Empire who are worthwhile are Australia, New Zealand and Canada. But the old Empire, the rest now are a rag-tag bag and South Africa is going downhill rapidly. Though the apologists will not see it that way but crime is on the increase, unemployment is on the increase, there are far more unemployed now than there were under the apartheid regime, strange as it may seem. Not that I have any truck with apartheid, I really don't. But the fact remains that in spite of everything, the Africans, or the majority of them, had employment which they've lost now. And in spite of being promised the land, they haven't got it and the economy's going one way and crime is horrendous which is never reported and they are Africanising it at a horrific rate, which is not producing greater efficiency. The South African Army now, for every General, just numerically, there are 130 troops, so that will show you how many generals there are. What they're doing, I've no idea. But the South African Army is no longer capable of operating as an army, although they've got some lovely equipment.

Had you been out of Rhodesia and then subsequently Zimbabwe much when you were living there? I mean you'd gone to Zambia or course...

(01:42:25) We used to go out on leave, yes, in the old days we used to be recommended to go down to sea level for a holiday because Harare, the high veldt was about 6000 metres I think, far higher than anywhere in this country.

Going down to sea level was supposed to gee us up a bit. It's nice to go down to the coast anyway and I used to come over here once every two or three years, but that was about all. I used to feel I was going home when I went back. I always looked forward to going back but that changed after independence, well after ten years, and we could see fairly clearly after five years that there was going to be no turning back. The situation started to deteriorate and political involvement became more increased and so on and law and order was slowly breaking down. Inefficiency was creeping into the civil service and becoming a shambles, so there we are.

And you've mentioned a bit about people in this country, but what did you think about the UK and Britain generally?

Well, lack of discipline, lack of respect in a way, lack of self-discipline in many cases; a "why should I?" attitude. "You can't touch me," health and safety, that sort of thing. The old Englishman, of independent, tough being, is no longer. Except when he gets in the armed forces, where he still is.

It provides that means for discipline and so on?

Yes, I mean look at why the youths have had all this binge drinking going on, and the knife crimes, I mean, that never happened. Crime existed, always has done, but we never had binge drinking where people just got totally drunk for the fun of it. You can drink 24 hours a day very cheaply. I've read somewhere that £10.00 can get you drunk three nights a week, I mean really stinking drunk. What sort of culture's that? And the attitude of the officials, people don't have any initiative, I don't know. The civil service, on pensions, we have pension credit in one department and pensions in another. They're in the same building but they don't correspond with each other so if you have a query on pensions, you say "can I deal with pension credit?" "no we can't touch them, you have to make another telephone call to speak to pension credits" and all that sort of thing. Bureaucracy, it's got out of hand. We're still here, we're very happy.

You've still been able to make it home to an extent?

Oh yes, we belong to this place now and it suits us. In many ways, it's like a Rhodesian homestead, you know, very similar in some ways, and it's rural. We've got fields and rustic pigeons and squirrels and various birds and so on, super.

One final question which we're asking everyone as well is that looking back at the war period, do you feel that it was worth it? You might want to answer from your perspective but also perhaps more generally.

(01:46:03) We were right to give it a go. If we'd done nothing, it could have been worse I think. Probably not much worse, but we were right to stand up against what we perceived to be the enemy of the country in whatever form, political, militarily, even economically. We were right to stand up against it. So in the end I think we were not fighting a racial war. I believe in some ways

we were fighting a very just war, on the global stage anyway. Because we did prevent South Africa going communist, and because we didn't collapse in the way that they expected. In fact, the breakdown of the Eastern Bloc helped in preventing South Africa from becoming communist and it stopped the thrust into Africa by the Russians.

So you almost held off the north, in a way, from South Africa? Is that what you mean?

Sorry, say it again?

Do you mean that Rhodesia almost held off the north from South Africa?

Yes, I think so. But as I said, was it worth giving it a go? I think the answer has to be yes, but at an enormous price. We couldn't have given it and just handed it over, despite what Mr Wilson wanted. They got it all wrong; they really had no idea. So there you are.

Well thank you so much Mr Clewer, it's been really helpful talking to you.

End of interview