Mike Boardman

Born South Africa. Brought up in UK and Southern Rhodesia. Joined British Navy 1959. Trained as engineer. Married and left UK for Rhodesia 1970. Left Rhodesia for UK with family 1978.

This is Annie Berry interviewing Mr Mike Boardman on Saturday the 2nd of May 2009. Thank you very much for agreeing to talk to me today.

A great pleasure.

I wondered if we could just start by talking about how you came to be in Rhodesia initially and your family background leading up to that.

Right, well basically I was brought up in Rhodesia, lived there since the age of eight until the age of eighteen and then I came to this country, spent two years in the Royal Navy then left and by a long trial, qualified as a civil engineer. In January 1970 I got a) married and b) left the UK to go back to Rhodesia where we then lived until the middle of 1978 when we returned to the UK.

So can you tell me what your family background was and how they came to be in Rhodesia?

Basically we went to Rhodesia because my mother had been a medical missionary in Malawi or Nyasaland as it was back in the 1930s. She then migrated to South Africa where she met my father, married and had two boys, one of whom was me. Then we went briefly to the UK and then back to Africa but this time to Rhodesia, mostly because her brother, my uncle was there and he had a farm. The farm was in the north of the country and my mother became the local district nurse and we lived on the farm for five years. That was up until Easter time '54 and then she moved to Bulawayo and I lived there until the beginning of '59 when I came to this country to join the Navy.

So you were mainly schooled in Bulawayo?

Well I went to school at a place called Plumtree, as did my brother, which is 65 miles from Bulawayo. It's almost on the Botswana border although it was called Bechuanaland Protectorate in those days. Although we lived near Bulawayo we went to school in this place mostly because my mother wanted us to go to that particular school so she got us in there and then moved out to Bulawayo to be a bit closer to the scene, as it were.

So were you boarding there then?

Boarding at school, yes.

And what sort of values would you say that schooling instilled in you?

(00:03:12) It was basically a clone of an English public school, I should think. It was an all boys school, nearly all boarders although a dozen or so boys came from the local village or from around there. Some of the parents were farming in the area, others had businesses and so on in their local town there. So otherwise it was 95% boarders who came from all over the country and some of them from outside the country as well. So a typical school, with plenty of lessons, beatings; I mean I once got beaten for leaving a wet towel on my bed during evening prep! So that was severe, and I think that sort of thing still goes on there now. Absolutely monstrous, by modern standards anyway.

Very strict.

And it was fairly typical of a traditional British school really, a British boarding school anyway.

Would you get to go to stay with your family in holidays?

Oh yes, I went home in the holidays and at half term breaks as well. It's not that far and my mother, aunt and friends would come down roughly every third weekend and we'd go out on a Sunday exeat and go and have a picnic or visit a local dam. There were plenty of places to go around there so it was a fairly enjoyable existence.

What sort of awareness would you have had of the wider world and of the UK? You said you went to the UK when you were eighteen…
I think at school we were fairly aware of the outside world. We got newspapers in the house common rooms for instance and I think every boy in the house read the newspaper every day. Also we all had radios, listened to the news and generally took an interest in world affairs. At that time, the mid 50s, the Cold War was getting to a head; there was the Suez crisis and things were going on in Cyprus and so on. And of course there was the Mau Mau in Kenya as well and we ought to be interested in that. We were aware of the outside world anyway although within Rhodesia itself it was frankly a relatively boring place to be politically at that time. It changed later but we did take an interest in development projects and so on especially when they started to build Kariba and so on.

Were you quite near Kariba when you initially went to the north?

Where we lived up in the north it's probably about a two-hour drive, so it was relatively easy to get there. They had to build a decent tarmac road there to get all the equipment and things in, so from about '56 onwards it was quite easy to drive up there and have a look to see the dam under construction.

(00:06:50) **That must have been interesting to see it filling up?**

Oh it was. Just before I left Rhodesia they'd finished the dam and they had expected it to take two years to fill and in fact it filled in about six months. I remember on one occasion we actually went up there to have a look and to see it filling and there had been a dirt road down to the edge of where the

water was and I remember that we had a picnic there but before we started we put a little stone where the edge of the water was and about three hours later as we were leaving that little stone had become covered over so all that water had gone up by about 10/15 mm just in three hours.

Right before your eyes.

Yes, right before my eyes it was filling.

That's quite amazing.

Were you very aware at the time of the sort of divisions in society? Did you feel aware of petty apartheid?

I don't think we did. I think we just took it as being what it is because the federation came in (whenever it did – I've forgotten the exact year), but the federal government was liberally minded. I mean, there were Africans going into the civil service and things like that and we thought it slightly unusual but thought well it's the natural way that things are going to go, which they did. So they call it petty apartheid but it was more of a kind of social thing than a political or legal thing. But yes, I think we were vaguely aware but otherwise just took it for granted that there was effectively a separation of the races and that's how it always had been and probably always would be; in fact still is. There's not a great deal of social mixing even now.

Would you say at the time that Rhodesia was very much your home or where did you see your home as being?

We were very much loyal Rhodesians but when we were in Bulawayo I happened to meet someone who had recently emigrated from the UK and I asked him how long it took to become a Rhodesian and he said he got off the train at Bulawayo and within two hours he was a Rhodesian, he was no longer an English bloke. So I think that's fairly typical; an exaggeration, but it was fairly typical of the attitude of most people there. They're fiercely loyal to the country and they just like the place really, it's a very pleasant place in which to live.

Of course at that time there were a lot of people arriving?

There were a lot, in fact the UK was almost encouraging it. I remember we came on a school trip over to Europe and also visited the UK and happened to be watching the evening television – which was a revelation to us (00:10:20) because Rhodesia didn't get television until 1960 I think; we'd never seen a television in our life before and sat there with our eyes wide open – but they did a news programme on successive evenings about what it was like to emigrate and we were amazed to see that one of them was about Rhodesia. There was a little five-minute sketch of what the country looked like and a couple of interviews with people who had recently emigrated there.

That must have been wonderful to see your country.

To see your own country, yes, on British television.

It must have made you feel quite proud I imagine?

Oh yes, to know that people had actually heard of us.
Did you have a sense of what immigration was doing for the country or any opinion of it at the time?

I think on the whole, people were welcoming people from outside to swell the numbers. And because they slotted in very easily and they were also thought to be contributing to the worth of the country because most of them brought professional or other skills with them.

Did you see any divisions forming amongst white society, for example with new immigrants and those that had been there longer, or with Afrikaans residents?

I don't think so, because the Afrikaner community there was small, basically they had to integrate with the English-speaking people, which for the most part I think they did. I didn't meet many "Rockspiders" they call them, or called themselves anyway. I didn't experience any tensions, social tensions or anything else.

But there was a sense of different skills forces emerging and new skills were coming in and a wider society was developing…

Well I think it was just that the incomers slotted into what was already there, I don't think that there were any divisions developing. They sometimes used to call…my mother once referred to them as "cheap immigrants from Sheffield" until she found out that my wife had been born in Sheffield, but anyway…but she was not a Sheffielder, she just happened to have been born there because her mother was there when she was born. So I think there was that, working class white immigrants were somewhat looked down upon unless they had particular skills and could lift themselves up. They were looked down upon by the residents and also by all the other immigrants who were not unskilled or semi-skilled people. Yes, there was certainly that feeling which continued for, well, probably still (00:13:50) goes on now. Although there are very few openings for unskilled whites there, in fact there are none.

Yes I'm sure. So can you talk me through a bit of what happened when you were eighteen and you left and came to the UK?

I arrived in the middle of April '59 and it was round about the first of May '50, I was marching around the parade ground at Dartmouth being shouted and screamed at (along with everyone else as well, not on my own!). I spent two wonderful years, most of the time either in or based at Dartmouth and the beginning of '60, the first ship I joined was in February of that year and it was actually in a dry dock in Devonport Dockyard. I and about twenty other cadets went and joined it and we had to endure living on a ship that was actually in a dry dock for the first week or so. They eventually finished the re-fit and floated her out and that particular time of year, early February that year was

freezing cold and I remember, I think it was on our first day that we were lined up on deck and told what we were going to do for that morning as the ship was setting off. It was going to set off on a cruise to the West Indies, which it subsequently did. They wanted to put up the poles of rigging which would then hold up sun awnings over the foc'sl [forecastle] and the quarterdeck. We were going to put these poles up – they're like a scaffold pole but they had a 10mm diameter spike welded on to one end – and these fitted into little holes in the deck and these holes had filled up with water, which had subsequently frozen. We were told by the Petty Officer in charge, "right we'll have to get the ice out of the holes first before we can put these things up" and I thought "ah, now I'm going to learn something" because the Royal Navy's effectively been in existence for about 1200 years, they've learnt a few tricks on how to deal with this sort of problem. Not at all, he said "go down to the galley, get a big bag of salt from the cooks, bring it up, pour a little heap of salt on top of each and every hole then take your little finger out of your glove and work the salt into it until it's melted." I thought "oh dear, this is about the lowest tech thing that you could possibly do" and the Royal Navy had learnt no wonderful tricks in 1200 years of coping with similar problems.

So that was one little thing that stuck in my mind and then a few days later we were in Gibraltar and a few days after that, went to the Cape Verde islands which was still a Portuguese colony, spent a few days there on a so called goodwill trip and we then had our free, all expenses paid trip all round the West Indies. I think we visited every island except Jamaica and we didn't go as far north as the Bahamas. But otherwise, we started at Barbados and went round everywhere. We sent some parties on a fake landing expedition on one or two of the little islands that aren't even inhabited, so I didn't even know these places existed but it was an eye opener, it was a wonderful trip. We only had to work during the day, although we used to have watches and so on. And we all got sunburnt because we'd come straight from an English winter into that and so we did suffer a bit from the sun, but apart from that had an absolutely wonderful time.

Sounds really interesting.

(00:17:55) And then later I left the Navy and left Dartmouth and got a job in London as a technical assistant and worked at that for three years doing a night school course for a national certificate. I then realised that a national certificate wouldn't qualify me as a full engineer so after three years I left and went into what's now Westminster University and did the four-year so called 'sandwich course' where you work six months at academic work and do six months industrial training each year. I did that and fortunately my industrial training periods were all worked on the same site and for the same firm because it was a huge power station job at Fawley, which is just the opposite side of the Solent from Southampton. It was wonderful experience for a young civil engineer.

Excellent.

Then after I'd graduated I got a job in London and worked there until January 1970, by which time I'd met a girl. We got married exactly a month after

Christmas and then four days later we were on a ship heading to Cape Town. We took a car with us, put as much luggage in it as we could and then drove up from Cape Town to what was then Salisbury.

Can I just take you back a bit, I just wanted to ask how you decided to join the British Navy from Rhodesia?

I think I'd been thinking about it since I was about ten years old. People realised I was interested; an aunt of mine in England whose husband was in the Royal Naval Reserve and a Captain in the Merchant Navy, had that naval connection. She, as an ever going Christmas or birthday present, bought me a subscription to a magazine, I've forgotten what it's called but it was all about naval matters so that kept up my interest. I also read every book in the school library that was about naval matters and others so I had been thinking about that and it had just become ingrained into me. It was only after I'd been at Dartmouth for a couple of years I realised that it's a wonderful life, but there are other things going on in the world and so I then changed to something completely different.

And how did you find living in Britain; I suppose you weren't actually there for very long?

Well I was mostly living in Dartmouth, although I went and stayed with the same aunt who had sent me these things during the holidays. Then sometime about mid-1960, my mother and brother who was younger than me, decided to leave Rhodesia and come to the UK. He, to go and do engineering training which he subsequently did and my mother, she had a little bit of money, bought a house in Lymington in Hampshire and she lived there and she worked at the local hospital.

So would that have been around the time of UDI then?

(00:21:33) No, UDI was '65 I think, so this is about 1960. My mother and brother came over round about the time I left the Navy actually. We didn't time it like that but that's how it happened.

And why did they decide to leave Rhodesia?

Well my brother wanted to do the engineering training and my mother, who was English, decided she'd like to spend a few years in the UK. So put these two things together and they came over together, also by ship, as you just didn't fly in those days, it was too expensive. Then a few years later it was the other way round, it was much cheaper to fly than it was to go by ship; and quicker.

So you met an English wife then and decided to move back to Rhodesia?

Yes, I mean she knew I was a Rhodesian obviously and she was interested in the country and everything so we said "right, we'll go out there for two years and then come back to the UK." And in fact the two years turned into eight

and a half so I think we would probably have stayed on a bit longer. But by that stage we had two children and my wife wanted her parents to have a better…or for them to get to know their grandparents and family back here in the UK. There was that, together with the fact that future prospects were looking pretty bleak for any civil engineer, so we decided to come back, which we did.

You went out to Rhodesia in 1970?

Yes.

Had you been following the political situation when you were in the UK?

Oh yes. Because there was the unilateral declaration of independence, UDI, and then there were loads of things going on politically after that. Trying to negotiate a settlement, and try and alter the Rhodesian constitution to get a bigger say for blacks in parliament and the running of the country. But not, at the same time, for them to take over: The one man-one vote thing, which was the big sticking point.

What were your opinions of what was going on and did it impact on your decision to go back at all?

It didn't. I think we would have gone back regardless, unless the country was in chaos. We were going to go back for a bit before. In any case we would have gone, we had to get a job and so on.

(00:24:34) **I suppose you only saw it as a fairly temporary thing initially anyway.**

That's what we thought of at the time, yes.

So did you still see Rhodesia as your "home" at that point?

I think I did. I think I fought in two camps really, married an English wife, although she would call herself half Scottish. My late mother-in-law was a very, very St Andrews type of person. So much so that my daughter now, if she's watching a rugby match and Scotland's playing then she supports Scotland, even though she is only quarter Scots.

That's controversial.

Mind you she did go to Edinburgh University as well but there's some connection with Scotland anyway.

Can you tell me about your arrival in Salisbury in 1970 and what did you start to work in?

Well by that stage my mother and brother had gone back to Rhodesia. My mother rented a small place in Salisbury and she very kindly let us take that over for a few weeks while we found a house, while she went off on a trip to

South Africa actually. While she was away we found another house and rented that, moved in and when she came back, she went back into her sort of ground floor flat she was living in and she continued to live there. She lived in a couple of different places until eventually she died in April '76. Fortunately we were there and for the last couple of months of her life she actually lived with us and in and out of nursing homes. She had cancer. In the meantime, except for an eighteen-month period, we lived in Salisbury. The firm I was working for, a firm of consulting engineers, had a job at a place then called Marandellas, it's now called Marondera, building two concrete reservoirs and also a pumping station and an extension to the local water treatment works and so on. They needed a resident engineer so, I won't say they "asked" me to go, they "told" me to go and so we moved out and rented a delightful place on a farm near the town. It had wonderful scenery, wonderful country around it so we lived there while I worked. All the works were going on actually in the town itself so I commuted into town and looked after that while it was all under construction and when it was complete, I actually resigned from the company and then joined the contracting company who'd built all of these works. So I joined them as a contracts manger and then had a wonderful following two years of being on the contracting rather than the consulting side of the business.

And so that was staying in Marandellas?

(00:28:10) No, we moved back into Salisbury then and then this time we took out a mortgage and bought the house and lived there until we left for the UK and that was quite interesting. They actually built a railway amongst other things and it wasn't very long, it was only three kilometres but I was very proud of it when I saw the first train going along it. It was great fun; a lot of hard work but anyway, got there in the end.

Which railway was that, in Salisbury?

There's a line that goes from Bulawayo, across the border and eventually ends up in Maputo in Mozambique and about halfway along, down in the south central part of Rhodesia there was a mountain called Mount Bukwa and this is nearly all iron ore. The whole mountain is iron ore, most of it's low grade stuff not worth anything, but there was some very high grade stuff right at the top which was about one and a half thousand feet higher than the surrounding countryside. So they built a road up at the top and started an open cast mine, which gradually made the mountain a little bit shorter than it had been. Then all the ore was taken down a conveyor, which was about a kilometre or so long, and dropped about one and a half thousand feet; put in big stockpiles which were then transferred from there onto specially built ore trains, which took it to the iron works just outside the town called Que Que in the industrial midland; a big iron and steel works there. The railway line that I built was called a balloon loop. Fortunately the main railway line was there and it came off and went right round in a big circle and went back again for the ore trains to come off, get filled and then go back to where they'd come from and this was the balloon loop. I didn't physically build it all myself but I did the engineering side of it and the contracts management of it.

So would it be fair to say that there was quite a lot of work?

In the early and mid seventies, there was stacks of work for civil engineers. Anyone who decided he wanted to move his job could pick up the 'phone and get another job within half an hour or so, it was like that. But then it changed in '77/'78 and the writing was on the wall that the construction business as usual was going to get hit for economic reasons.

So you got to travel around Rhodesia quite a bit with your work? Or were you mainly based in Salisbury?

Mostly in and around Harare but as I say, I spent a lot of time at this place Bukwa and we also had a lot of work going on in the iron and steel works place in Que Que. We also quite separately got some contracts to build, amongst other things, a very large cold storage thing for meat, mostly beef, just on the outskirts of what's now called Gweru; it was called Gwelo in those days. So I travelled a lot up and down because the main road goes from Salisbury to Bulawayo and these other places are on it, all connected together. So I more or less wore a rut going backwards and forwards up and down this road to various (00:31:57) places as well as these trips down to Bukwa. Also the company was owned by a man who had been a pilot and for various reasons ended up being a building and civil engineering contractor. Because he was a pilot he got the company to buy an aeroplane and then subsequently bought another one so they had two. So I mean I can't fly, I'm not a qualified pilot but several members of staff were and we used to get flown around in that a lot which was good fun to see a lot of the countryside from the air as well. It also saved a lot of time being on the road trundling along.

I'm sure it must have taken a long time to travel on those roads.

Also because they're short of fuel, the government clamped down and actually imposed a blanket-wide speed limit on the open road to 56 mph. We weren't allowed to drive any faster than that and this was enforced by the police. So driving across endless long straight undulating roads for hour upon hour doing 56 mph can be quite tedious.

I'm sure, yes. At that time in the early seventies I guess one of the first big attacks was Altena farm, in '72. Were you aware of the situation?

Well what we were aware of was the South African ANC had set up bases in Zambia and the only way they could get to South Africa was by trogging through Rhodesia. So the South Africans then sent so-called police who weren't really because they were Army, and the helicopters were all flown by South African Air Force people who wore the police uniforms just to keep up the façade that this is a police operation not an Army operation. They used to patrol a lot up and down the Zambezi Valley on the Rhodesian side obviously looking for the ANC infiltrators and I think they had a bit of success doing that: That is a huge area and it's not easy to find people. Albeit along that path, the Zambezi Valley, there's Tsetse fly so almost no locals lived there so they could patrol from the air and other things and they could actually find these

infiltrators relatively easy because if you saw any Africans walking along, half a dozen or so of them at a time carrying heavy packs, they were almost certain to be ANC infiltrators. I think they captured quite a few most of them just by patrolling from the air and then sending in ground troops to pick them up. So there was that going on and we were all conscious of that but although it was happening on Rhodesian soil we weren't directly involved. One of the great game reserves, a place called Mana Pools which is stretched along the northern boundary, beside the Zambezi but it stretches for quite a long bit, we would actually go and visit this place and while we were driving through the bush to get there, passed this great big airfield and saw South African police people driving round in Land Rovers and so on. They were actually there looking for the infiltrators. In the meantime, we were there looking at the elephants and game and catching fish in the Zambezi and things.

So there were signs of their presence?

(00:36:02) There were signs that things could be going on but we weren't actually directly involved with it.

There was some conscription in those early times, wasn't there?

Well there'd always been conscription even going back to the1950s. In fact after I was over here and in the Navy, my mother got a snooty letter from the Rhodesian Army people saying "where is your son? He must report for two years' National Service." She just wrote back and said "well at this moment he's marching around the parade ground at Dartmouth" so they said "oh alright." Everyone had to do their two years and everyone was doing it right up until the end I think.

But had you done any from the 70s?

No I didn't do any National Service because I was out of the country for all those years that I was liable for call up. But many of the people who stayed there, they all had to do their bit. Then after they had done their two years bit they were in the reserves and they were called up, initially during the sixties when there wasn't much going on. I think they just did a nominal one week camp each year just to make sure they could still clean a rifle and do things like that. But then once the early seventies started, then they were spending long times in the bush in the reserve and also they then started recruiting everyone else. A few went into the Army with specialist skills but most became part of the BSAP reserve. Then when they started building the protected villages and so on, they needed people for Internal Affairs and I was one of those who was not asked, but told, to be part of that. Then subsequently, the people at Internal Affairs realised that they were effectively fulfilling a military role and yet they were being organised and led by civil service administrators in the PVs. So the Army then formed another group which was called Guard Force and they were specifically recruited and trained and under Army control to go and actually man all these PVs and CVs and carry out other similar duties. Whereas in Internal Affairs, apart from the

security role, the idea was to try and keep civilian government moving as much as they could out in the rural areas.

Yes, it was supposed to be more of an administrative role initially wasn't it?
Yes, although we were called up, we weren't trained as civil servants at all so there were the people who continued doing that but we supported them at other things. For example the Cold Storage Commission, which was a government body, had a statutory duty to buy up or to attend auctions and buy cattle for slaughter and to do that they had to go out into the bush to organise these auctions, which they did at the local cattle dips. They also had to take large sums of cash with them because it's pointless giving a tribesman a cheque when the nearest bank's miles away so we had huge sums of cash sitting in a big steel box. We had to take that and provide some security, not just for the cash but for the auction itself because Mugabe's lot were trying to disrupt civil administration as much as they could and this is one of the (00:40:08) things they would have liked to have…well they had many attempts at disrupting these auctions and also the cattle dips, but they weren't successful in the long run. It usually led to disaster for them because the moment they had made contact during daylight hours, the Army would send in the helicopters with Fire Force, which is usually about six or seven chaps. They would get on the ground and start chasing the terrorists; and in the meantime, the helicopter gunship would take off and they could circle round and they had a perfect view of what was going on. So these people who had attacked the cattle dip, frequently it was fatal for them although they might have enjoyed the initial attack. It made all the Internal Affairs people hit the ground and so on and it killed quite a few of them. A chap I trained with got shot through the head; he was killed instantly. But then subsequent contact was made on the follow-up. If they didn't see them from the air, they put trackers on the ground and tracked after them and that was often very successful too.

So can you tell me about your call-ups and what you felt about them, because it may have been very disruptive I imagine?

I think everyone knew that everyone was going to get called-up so when the call-up papers arrived they weren't surprised, they had steeled themselves for this. And in our case you were called up initially to do a three-week training period, that was it, and then we went home for a few days and then went on the first trip into the bush, which lasted six weeks.

So was the idea that you would be acting in a reserve capacity; or did you know then that you would need to do twelve months?

Well we weren't called up to go on long term. We were still expected to keep our civilian jobs and then do this part-time, although part-time meant most of the time because during the calendar year of '77, I spent just over two hundred days on call-up actually, so it was more than half of the year away from my job. But this was all done in six-week periods, so we were in for six weeks and then out for five weeks and so it went on ad infinitum really. You had to plan your holidays and things around that and your jobs and everything

else. But I attended every time I was called up; I didn't have an excuse. I mean some people had an excuse, and they had it deferred for some reason but I didn't: Every time I was called-up, I went.

So you initially attended a three-week training?
The three-week course taught us how to fire a rifle, salute, do a bit of drill, use the radio and a bit of skirmishing tactics and how to set up an ambush and a few basics like that.

And were you called immediately into Internal Affairs?

(00:43:34) Yes and the whole training period, we all went into a group that had been trained specifically for Internal Affairs.

And do you know, were you targeted for Internal Affairs particularly because of your work or it just was by chance?

No it was just totally random. Some of my friends were called up for the police and others were Internal Affairs so it's just the luck of the draw which one you went into. You didn't have any choice.

And what was your training like? Do you know how it compared to the training of other forces and also to your British Navy training?

Well the Royal Navy training takes two and a half years and during that time you only set foot on a ship twice. I mean completely different, exhausting training in everything, so three weeks was pretty minimal. I think basically, nearly all the people I was called up with, they were all in their early or mid 30s; almost all of them had University degrees or they were managerial types rather than anything else and so with people like that you don't tell them anything twice, they can take in fairly simple things like radio procedures and so on. So the training was a long way from being exhaustive and also we were still pretty unfit by the time we were going out into the bush. But otherwise, they gave us good lectures on what the terrs were like, what they wore, what their tactics were at the time, what their weapons looked like and how they fired and so on. We also spent a fair amount of time on the rifle range firing rifles but we weren't given anything more. People who went into the Army of course had grenade throwers and machine guns and all sorts of things and some of them went into mortar platoons so they knew a heck of a lot more about weapons than we did; whereas we were just given a rifle and told how to clean it and how to fire it and that was it.

And were you being trained specifically for the Guard Force then?

Yes.

Or just Internal Affairs?

Well no, the Guard Force came along a bit later actually. At the time I went in, Guard Force didn't exist but within a few months it had then started this thing, initially from scratch.

And so you ended up becoming part of Guard Force?

Well no, we didn't transfer across actually. Guard Force was a separate organisation but they gradually took over the security duties at these PVs and CVs I think, after I left. I'm not quite sure what happened to the Internal Affairs guys, they might have been transferred across to Guard Force but nearly all the people in Guard Force were black recruits with just a few (00:46:50) white officers here and there and black officers as well scattered around to look after them.

And do you know much about its formation recruitment and so on?

I think it was recruited and trained pretty much on the same lines that we did although their training was much longer and more comprehensive. But otherwise their duties were almost identical to what we'd been doing only they would then go into a PV and CV that had been established, whereas what I and my colleagues were doing was often starting these things from scratch as a particular part of Internal Affairs. We tended to go to certain regions and effectively become the Internal Affairs people to man those regions and the people who were running the bit I was attached to were told they had to go and start building these PVs and CVs and so they looked for people with construction skills, of which I was one. So I spent the last, at least year or perhaps longer, actually not wandering round the bush with a rifle in-hand and going out and setting up ambushes at night and things like that; but actually just doing what I did in civilian life, which was supervising construction work and as these things were all the same, it wasn't very taxing. It was mostly a management thing of calling up materials and getting them delivered and then paying the work force at the end of each month and keeping records of their attendance and so on.

It would be wonderful to hear more about that. Can you say a bit about your initial work in Internal Affairs and how frequently you would be going out and to what kind of operations you were being called into?

Well as I say, we'd go in for six-week periods at a time and during that time there'd be all sorts of things that are organised that we might have to do, for instance escorting the cattle buyers; also escorting the people who supervised the cattle dipping. I remember on one occasion the Army decided that – they had their base a few miles up the road from where we were and there was quite a large African population living in little villages around – they go out looking for terrorists all over the place, but what's happening right here on our own doorstep? So they decided to do a night sweep right through all these villages but they didn't have enough people. So we went along to supplement their numbers and just waited until just after dark and then swept through and got every male to go to a certain point where they'd all be looked at and interrogated and then sent home. Needless to say they didn't find any terrorists but I suppose as an exercise it was worth doing. So that became typical of the kind of thing that was going on.

So were you providing extra manpower for regular staff who were there?

Not usually, I mean Internal Affairs had their own, as I say, civil servants and they'd go round and meet village elders and so on and we would often act as the escort for them. So there were a lot of ordinary everyday civilian routine (00:50:44) things in which we had become bystanders really, but we'd go along to make sure they didn't get shot at which on several occasions they were.

Just one typical occasion, I wasn't actually there but we were staying in a camp in the Melsetter area. Although it was a solid building, we were not under canvas and civilian internal affairs people had to go and look at quite a lot of what was being built. In this case I think it was something like a small clinic or some little building a few miles away. So they went there with a couple of our chaps as escorts in a couple of Land Rovers and on the way back, and this is in the middle of the day too, they were ambushed by terrs. So they all leapt out, one guy got shot in the head but fortunately it was a glancing blow and he was alright. But one of the chaps who was there, he was in the lead Land Rover and he leapt out and leapt into what was a little drainage ditch at the side of the road but it was only about that deep and the earth to make this had been piled up. So there's a little ridge of earth only, well it was exactly the same height as him when he was lying down flat. That was the only cover he could have and just in front of this was growing a little bush, which had a rather strange horizontal branch just above ground level. They were being fired at for quite a long time and when they got their rifles pointing in the right direction, they just blazed away in the general direction from which they thought they were being attacked.

The terrs upped sticks and ran away, which they usually did, so a hit and run thing. And when this chap looked up from this drainage ditch, he found this little horizontal branch had got three holes in it from bullets that had been coming his way so when he'd been lying in this ditch, three rounds just went right over his backside more or less. So fairly typical of this kind of thing, which if we weren't there, then we became involved soon afterwards to go and help clear up the mess and things. As I said, this lead Land Rover had both it's front tyres shot out; we didn't have any spares so actually drove the thing on it's flat tyres back to base on these rubble roads, it wasn't tarmaced or anything. One slightly amusing thing is that they took these tyres off to repair them and found that they were perfectly alright, they just repaired the punctures and they pumped them up and the tyres were ok even though they'd been driven for several miles over rutted roads: Tough old Land Rover wheels.

I guess at that stage, people were really learning how to keep things going?

Yes, try and keep the civilian life going and make certain that the terrs didn't come in and effectively take over the administration. They had earlier attempted to actually go and raise taxes from the local people and things like that but a lot of it was just due to Internal Affairs people being in the bush and being seen to be "being seen." They gradually melted away to the point where after a while they would only attack something at night usually or go out at night and lay landmines down. But then also where they had to live usually

split up into groups of about six or seven and this was about the biggest that could sustain their existence together and then when they wanted to launch an attack and they needed more, these groups would join up to make a group of about twenty-five/thirty, that sort of thing, and then they'd go and carry out an attack of some sort. As I say, usually at night and they'd usually approach (00:54:57) their target just after dark so that 9.00 pm was usually the rush hour for attacks and then they'd go away and escape under the cover of dark. But then the next day they'd send out the trackers. It was always worth following up, tracking, and they'd track them as far as they could so that gave them an idea of which direction they'd gone and this all added to the intelligence that they were gathering on what might be happening in their area.

One other little anecdote: On my first ever call-up we were based in a group of buildings that had been built for Internal Affairs people when they were out and about; a little kind of temporary accommodation to avoid having to travel back and forth to the base each day and they'd sometimes live there for weeks at a time. This place had a fence put round it and made into a strong point and a group of about eight of us went there basically to provide security for the civilian staff who worked there but there was only one guy there at the time I think. We were doing sentry duties during the night, at least one of us was there all the time and it was a very dark night. It was about 2.00 am and I'd just finished a sentry duty or was just coming towards the end of it and we used to have a routine that when you had about ten or fifteen minutes to go, we'd go and put the kettle on because they had a little stove there. Then you'd go and wake the next guy and continue patrolling and by the time he'd got himself out of bed and got himself awake and so on, then he could make two cups of coffee and you'd have one each.

And this chap who was taking over from me, he and I were sitting there chatting having a cup of coffee when there was suddenly an almighty bang and then a long rattle of machine gun fire and then a lot of individual single rounds being fired. From where we were, it was on a slight rise but a fairly well-treed area and it seemed as though the bang had gone off as we were looking out, off on our right hand side. Then there's also a long rattle of machine gun fire and then a lot of single shots. It seemed to be coming from in front of us and that's the classic platoon attack so you get your machine gun or your mortar right off on your enemy's flank, then fire into their position. That makes them keep their heads down and in the meantime the riflemen, the infantrymen come up and close up and I thought this was one of these classic platoon attacks only we were being attacked. But anyway, all of eight of us didn't need to be told what to do, fortunately this place had a veranda and the veranda wall had been built up to about chest height so we leant on this and then just pointed our rifles in the general direction of where we thought the noise was coming from and just blazed away. But almost within about half a minute, all the firing stopped so we stopped and then there was just dead silence so we got on the radio, told what had happened, they said "well hang on there and we'll send people round in the morning," which they did.

A small Army patrol came round including a tracker, he was a white guy who I subsequently bumped into in Salisbury on several occasions and they went tracking and this guy did incredibly well. He tracked them for about three/four miles, including crossing a wide river and also after the locals had got up and moved their livestock down to the river to drink. So you've got all these cattle imprints on the track and yet he managed to track through this lot, across the river, find out where they'd come out the other side and continued tracking. He tracked it right up to the door of a hut, opened the hut and there was (00:59:49) this man sitting inside looking very scared and they found out that he did have something on him that they knew he'd come, from his spoor.

But we found out that what had happened was that a group of terrorists had come through, they wanted food and about sixty or seventy metres from the base of this slope was the local shop. So they had actually broken into the shop, then they got the locals to carry food for them. They were just about to leave a "card," they'd fired one RPG, rocket propelled grenade into the wall of this building, then sprayed it with machine gun fire, then pulled a lot of loose rounds and then walked off. They were just about to leave when we opened up fire, and they hadn't. One thing that you do remember is the actual noise that goes off is absolutely incredible but we had versions of the FN rifle and they make a much, much louder noise than the AK47s and these people we found out afterwards were absolutely terrified when we fired back at them. There's one amusing thing that came out of it: One of these civilian locals had been told to carry a bag of sugar. The sugar there was sold, not like here in paper packets but in a muslin bag, about 5kg, and he'd been walking away from the shop like this and then when we started firing, he started running but one of our rounds, absolutely lucky, had actually gone through this bag in front of him and he kept running until he eventually found himself running through the bush in the middle of the night, tripping over things, just carrying an empty bag. So he dropped it, and the tracker told us that he had actually followed this trail of sugar and then found this empty bag at the end of it. So that was slightly amusing but it wasn't amusing when it was going on; and also to find out later they hadn't attacked us at all was mighty strange. I think that's fairly typical of the sort of thing that was going on although not all that often. Subsequently I went on a dozen or more call-ups and I never once heard a shot being fired in anger after that.

So you were living in Salisbury at the time were you?

Yes.

But were you going generally into one particular operational area?

I did initially, to an area called Melsetter. This is where this incident happened that I just told you about but after that…they're divided up into administrative districts and we got shifted across into the neighbouring one which is called Mtoko. Then I spent all of my other call-ups in the Mtoko area. This is before I got transferred to the construction unit, if you like, and I spent most of that time actually with the construction unit and not having to wander round in the bush so much. I had to be in uniform and carry a rifle and everything obviously but most of the time I was just supervising building work going on.

And when you were in Mtoko, were you generally based somewhere and then you would go out from there, or were you on the move?

(01:03:35) No, no we'd live on site. I'd go to the particular proposed PV or CV or whatever it happened to be and then I'd live under canvas there as did all the workforce as did other people from Internal Affairs. They provided security for us because I couldn't do it all.

So was this when you'd started the construction site?

Yes. So when we went in, we all lived under canvas and then gradually built these bunkers and things and sometimes I'd do a couple of successive call-ups in the same spot and we'd pick up all our concrete mixers and all the tools and all this sort of thing, get hold of a truck and a couple of other vehicles and then move on to the next spot. When we would arrive there, people with earth moving equipment had been there before us and they built the walls. Basically they were earth walls about three metres high and then we would have to go in and dig out, one at each corner, so there's seven bunkers altogether. We'd dig a big hole there and then build a bunker inside that and then backfill the soil around it. So these things were earth walls but then they had a strong point at each corner and halfway along each side as well. Then inside we'd build a block with showers and loos in it and a kitchen affair and then two little buildings, which was actually where they'd spend the daylight hours, a sort of recreation room. Then at night the bunkers were so designed that they had bunk beds in them and those actually served as bedrooms as well as being a bunker.

So you'd started working on the construction side of protected villages then?

Well many of them, there was nothing there at all except for these earth walls and we'd build those and then after we moved on to the next spot the locals would be told to go and put up shelters of some sort themselves inside these things. Then later someone would come along and put a fence around the outside, put gates in and they'd have sentries at the gates and control to some extent the comings and goings.

So you were just there at the beginning of setting up?

At the beginning, yes. Sometimes they tried to build these things either in a local settlement if you like, but placed within it a store or a school and perhaps a church and so on, and they were incorporated within the PV so that the locals weren't put out more than they had to be. Others were just a bit of open country and the locals would be told after we'd finished and moved out, Guard Force would move in and they would take over the administration of the protected village. The locals would come in and build themselves, usually little mud and pole huts and put a thatch roof on the top and then minimal accommodation. But they would live in there at night; obviously they did their cooking and things and then they'd go back to their homes during the day and go and tend to their cattle and do everything that they had to do.

(01:07:20) **So you were moved into that side of it at roughly what time?**

I think I started on the construction side round about May '77, somewhere round about there.

And was that still in this same area?

Yes, I did the first six months or so, the first two or three call-ups in the Melsetter district, then moved further north-west from there to Mtoko. Then I spent all the subsequent call-ups in the Mtoko area.

And so you moved around setting up these different villages or bunkers within the villages quite frequently?

Well, usually it took a couple of call-ups to do it. Often these things took up to three months or so to build before they got set up, then they'd move on to the next one. During that time I think I only did three eventually but they were all a bit different because of their locations, wherever they were.

And were you aware when the protected villages programme started?

We all knew about them because even before we were called out the government made it clear what they were going to do. This is an idea or a tactic that was copied from the Americans in Vietnam where they found they worked there. Chairman Mao said "you must swim amongst the people like fishes," so the idea of this was to dry up the pond and make sure the terrorists and other ne'er do wells couldn't be sustained easily by the locals.

Did you have an opinion of how it was working when it started?

I think we'd got an idea that this was well worth the effort. It was certainly making the terrs disperse and go in for smaller groups and also stopping them trying to partly take over local areas like collecting taxes, extracting money and meting out justice as they saw it to the locals, who they thought weren't supporting them or supporting them enough, or might be telling the government spies about us. I think we were aware that this was a tactic well worth doing but a long way from being 100% effective. But it was certainly having a beneficial effect from a defence point of view. As a counter insurgency tactic it does work.

Did you see much of how they were working once Guard Force had moved in?

Not really, because I was then moving on to other things.

Doing the next one.

Yes, but I think on the whole it did work reasonably well. It cost a huge sum of money but I often thought that after the war was over, these places could (01:11:00) be used. One thing about these bunkers: They were surrounded by earth and also the roof was a lot of gum poles on which we put plastic

sheet and a thin layer of concrete; we built a little wall about that high all the way around the outside and then filled up the bit in the middle, so it had about half a metre of earth on the roof then earth around all of the other sides except the door obviously. They were very cool places to be in. Because they had to have, not windows, but openings in the wall on the outer side up to about this sort of height so that people wouldn't be shot at from outside but they could stand on something, a bed, and then it was just the right height to fire out. But they were very cool and well ventilated and I thought they could have been used after the war. And also these little showers and loo blocks that we built in the middle, they could have been used for something or other; a local clinic or a school or something like that could have adapted them. There were miles and miles of fencing that could have been taken up and then let the locals use it for their own fields and things.

And this fencing would go round the entire village.

It would go round the entire PV.

Either once it had moved in or if they had situated themselves inside a village, it would go round the outside?

Yes, the timing of it was often irregular. There was one I went to, they actually managed to get all the fences up before the locals came into it but other ones that had been going for about a year or more and they still hadn't got round to putting the fences up so it wasn't synchronised at all.

What were your opinions of the Guard Force and how they worked?

As far as I know, it worked ok.

Did you see any of the Guard Force in action?

No, there was one camp I'd just finished constructing and the day we moved out, the Guard Force moved in. Obviously that's the way it had to be and I remember them getting off the trucks and these chaps were obviously new recruits; they'd just been through training. They hadn't had any experience of what it's actually like and they'd been told "it's fairly scary out there, you're going to get shot at" and I remember these guys looking and being told "oh you're going to live in here, these are the bunkers." I remember one chap's face it looked absolute total relief and his smile, you know, that this was a safe place to be. That was one reaction that I got anyway. What they did after that I don't know. We had to do things like, for instance, most of the roads in the area were all dirt roads or gravel roads, they weren't tarmac and they used do one patrol on foot first (01:14:23) thing in the morning, go from one PV to the next one, get themselves a drink of water and have a cup of tea and then come back but usually by a different route by coming along paths and things parallel to the road. The last thing one did is to go one way and then the terrs would find them and say "oh they're coming back" and they'd set up an ambush for them, so they'd always come back by a different route. So they'd go out of their main gate and turn right one morning and the next morning they'd turn left and do the other bit. So the roads were actually swept by eye

every second day so that also deterred the terrs from trying the landmine trick because when they put them down, most of them were discovered.

So somebody would do that on foot?

Yes, the best form of landmine detector is a pair of human eyes, just to walk along and find where the ground has been disturbed because it does stick out easily in a road that's normally been well trafficked. You can see very easily where someone has been digging. However carefully they tried to put it back you could see it, it was easily detected.

And had you had much contact with other sections of the security services in your earlier movements?

I sometimes met the police, they came round just to say hello. This is the regular police, and one chap from the Army, he wanted me to draw a little plan of the PV where I was at the time. So I walked up the local hill and looked down on it and then drew it out freehand as best I could. It wasn't very easy and I did take a couple of Internal Affairs guys with me and they knew "oh that's so and so's village, those six huts there belong to so and so's village," so they were able to put names of the village elder or the village chief against the various groups of houses.

Right, so you were scouting the ground in a way?

Well, we were actually there all the time so if anyone from other branches wanted to know what was going on then we could tell them but there were very few. Most of the time I was just with the immediate Internal Affairs people as I say, building these PVs and CVs.

And did you form any opinion of other elements of the security services?

Yes I thought on the whole, given the tasks that they were doing, they were doing a good job. These troops called the Fire Force who would follow up on contacts and the Air Force people who operated the helicopters, as far as I knew they were pretty alert and they would react quickly to anything, which they did. I didn't actually come into contact with Army people. They did their thing and we did ours, we didn't really need to meet up at all. I think on the whole, in counter insurgency warfare you've got to have enormous numbers of troops because there's no front line, (01:18:01) you've got to spread them out everywhere to make sure they're as effective as they can be. A relatively small group of terrorists can tie down an awful lot of defensive troops but that's just part of counter insurgency warfare.

Did you have much contact with…was it ComOps at the time, the unit who were overseeing all the different elements?

I didn't and I don't think my immediate colleagues did either. I think the District Commissioner obviously would attend and have regular meetings there and if anything was relevant to us, he would come and tell us "you've

got to go and do this or do that." But on the whole, he would just go into these meetings and he would often tell them what his problems were: Getting the PV construction going and all that sort of thing and any other admin problems that he was having with the locals. Otherwise, he would try and keep his finger on the pulse to find out what people were thinking and try and make certain obviously that life was going on as fairly normal.

One of the things that happened while I was on a call-up was that the local chief had died so they had to choose a new chief, which they did. They had three levels of chieftains in the thing, there's what people often call the village elder, the senior person within a little village and that's the most common one. Then there's one level up who was, if you like, over a group of these; and then there's a kind of paramount chief for that particular part of the tribe. So there's three levels of seniority and the most senior of these guys had died and the new chief was chosen and he happened to be an employee of Internal Affairs. I think he had the rank of – they gave them Army ranks although they were civilians – a Sergeant Major in charge of the local messengers; what had been district assistants or DAs, formerly being called messengers. He was in charge of that, and he then became the chief.

But what had happened centuries before is that this part of the tribe and another neighbouring one had often been at loggerheads so at one stage they said "right, well we've got to sort this out and get a permanent solution." Going back centuries, the chiefs of one of these sides also died and so those locals instead of choosing a chief chose a chieftainess and they had established a custom that they'd always have a chieftainess. When that one died then she'd be replaced by another chieftainess and then also this other tribe would always have a male chief. So when either of these people had to change because they'd succeeded, the previous incumbent had died, then they would then go through a symbolic marriage so that the two lots of tribes would effectively be married in their eyes. But when this happened, it was only every fifteen/twenty years or so, there would be huge celebrations because it's a marriage of two groups of several thousand people on both sides. They used to have the most almighty wedding party; they looked upon it as being their own wedding. Well this happened to coincide on one of the occasions I was in there and even though there's a war going on all around them, they had this most colossal party, it went on for about three or four days I think. And an awful lot of sore heads after that as well, loads of them.

(01:22:19) **Did that present any kind of security threat?**

No, it didn't really. This was a good thing for that sort of thing to be able to continue to take place even though they're in the middle of an uprising; well I suppose uprising is another word for it.

And I imagine, was Internal Affairs keen to support that kind of activity to ensure that local life continued?

This is one of the main things of having us out in the bush and keeping the terrs down and trying to keep everything else: the schools going; the cattle dips going; the cattle auctions going; and trying to get the bus services and

things back on. When the landmines started appearing of course the buses disappeared and they would only go very cautiously and irregularly, which then gave problems for the locals being able to go into town and do shopping and things. They did do it, some of them had cars so they used to drive very slowly in broad daylight, preferably joining on to the back of an Army or convoy of ours going along. Also, we almost never went anywhere unless there were at least two vehicles and a reasonable number of guys who were properly armed and so on. All the vehicles were mine-proofed and some of them were also armoured. They had 10mm thick armour plate on the outside, which we'd actually tried out and it did work. We fired an FN at one of these things from a range of about ten metres and the bullet hit this thing and then it splattered out. So when you looked at it, there's a bullet splattered because the outside was made of copper and the inside lead and in the middle, it was tiny globules of copper and lead splattered there. But it didn't dent the armour plate at all. So you could actually see the mark where all the paint had been knocked off but there wasn't actually even a dent, so that stuff did work.

In terms of your security and being presented with these quite threatening situations, how did you cope with the violence of it?

Well you didn't actually see much violence, I mean there were the two incidents that I've told you about and there were other incidents. Often when you get back from a call-up, people had been to other areas and swapped stories of what had happened and there's usually only one or two incidents to report on. Very often guys would go in for their six weeks and they would experience nothing and spend an awful lot of time on patrol or setting up ambushes or escorting these people round and about and nothing really exciting to talk about.

What did you feel you were fighting against at the time? What was your opinion of the opposition?

Well, basically to suppress Mugabe's lot and to a lesser extent down in Matabeleland. There was far less of it there because I think Joshua Nkomo was holding his men back so that when independence came then he could march in with a fairly well-equipped Army. What I think I (01:26:09) thought and I think most other people thought was we should suppress Mugabe's lot and then other parties, more non-violent people would come through. Obviously there had to be massive changes to the constitution and so on but anyway Ian Smith did try this for that brief period when the country changed its name to Zimbabwe/Rhodesia and Bishop Muzorewa, he was a Methodist bishop, it was his movement. Although he'd never advocated violence but he did advocate everything else and he had always been a bit of a thorn in the flesh and always came within inches of actually breaking the law, fairly draconian laws there anyway. So I think most people thought that something like that might work, that what he had started could gradually extend and then eventually there would be all-black rule instead of doing it with one big bang. It never actually worked and Muzorewa and everyone then became history.

Did you have any experience with the auxiliaries in the internal settlement period; that was in '78 I think?

I've forgotten what they call them, yes, I know who you mean. No, we had left about the time that that was about to get going, so I didn't know that but effectively that was a different group of people that were doing more or less the same sort of thing that we'd been doing. Well not what I'd been doing, I mean I'd been building buildings.

But yes, they did come in to…well they would have been guarding and so on, Guard Force?

Yes, they spread themselves out and basically carried out a military role.

But that was after you'd finished working?

That was after we'd left, as I say, different personnel but they were doing much the same sort of job.

And was it fairly disruptive in terms of your family life?

Yes very.

So you were going out on six-week call-ups?

Yes, and then my wife was at home for a five and a half week period on her own and she didn't like it. I remember on one occasion she wanted to come back to the UK for a short period to see her parents and family and so on, so we worked that out that she would be in the UK when I was out in the sticks and we'd leave our two servants at home to look after the house. And then later the reverse happened; her parents came up to visit us and they chose that to coincide with a period that they knew I'd be in the bush. In fact they arrived a couple of days before I left so I did actually see them and they saw me marching out the door with a rifle in hand and things, thinking it was a bit weird seeing son-in-law toting a big weapon around.

(01:29:40) **How had your family coped with what was going on? Did they encounter any changes or violence or a sense of threat in their lives?**

Not in Salisbury because one thing about all those campaigns, both Nkomo's lot and Mugabe's lot, they never actually attempted urban warfare. I think that's a deliberate tactic on their part because all their activities happened in rural areas, which is slightly strange because way back in the early sixties there were attempts – I've forgotten which group were responsible – to actually start that. They were doing something along the lines of what the IRA were doing in Northern Ireland; they'd put nail bombs in letter boxes and they did leave bombs in one of the big shops in the middle of town called "The OK Bazaar," which was roughly the equivalent to Woolworths here. But the police did get there and there were bomb disposal squads actually formed by the police, people trained to use these things. That went on for a short while and then I think they got hold of all the perpetrators and that stopped. But from the mid- seventies onwards there was never any trouble in the towns.

And what was your perception of how things were going for Rhodesia at that time?

I think the perception was that things were going downhill and that the situation was more of an economic one. From a military point of view, the government was winning, albeit slowly, and was on the up right until the end. Mugabe's people out in the bush were having a hard time; they were sustaining heavy losses but they hadn't been eliminated by any means, they were still pretty active. But it was the sheer cost of this and the fact that so many people were away from their jobs, white people and also Asians and coloureds were also called up. They didn't have to call-up Africans because they could recruit them directly into the permanent force. One thing that's worth noting is that at the height of the war there, something like 90% of the people who were on the government side were blacks. In the full-time regular Army, there was only one all-white infantry regiment, about one battalion strong, that was the RLI, the Rhodesian Light Infantry. They were permanent regulars and also there were permanent regulars attached to a small artillery unit, a small armoured car unit and in the signals there were a few full time regulars. But most of the manpower, they had armoured cars and everything else, they were all people either doing their initial two years' National Service, or on call-up. It is fairly astonishing that the bulk of the government security forces were black.

How did you get your information and how was your outlook formed at the time? What sort of media were you able to access?

Well there were the newspapers, they gave reasonably comprehensive, albeit very prejudiced, views – and often rosier views than we knew to be the fact – but anyway, there was plenty of coverage obviously. But mostly you just used your own eyes and talked to people who had been to these places and (01:34:00) chatted about what we'd seen and so on. By the time we'd got back to the office, I'd say about half of my colleagues were also doing call-ups, but some were attached to the Army and some went in the police. I think I was the only one in our immediate group who was in Internal Affairs, so we had different perspectives from the different forces.

And did you discuss the political side of it at all?

I think constantly, yes.

I imagine that because you were working together you must have been very conscious of the effect on the economy and so on?

Well I think everyone was conscious of the effect to the economy. You see when we were on call-up, we were paid, not very much but we were paid. But I knew of several people including one civil engineer who had lost his job and because there's no unemployment pay or anything, what he did to get by was to volunteer to be on permanent call-up so he could live fairly cheaply while he was on service. Although he was not paid very much, it was probably just about enough to meet his mortgage and a few basics. There were several

people who were like that. You didn't need vast media coverage anyway, going out you could see it with your own eyes.

And what was your opinion of how things were going amongst the African population? How did you differentiate, for example, between the guerrillas or terrorists that you were fighting and then black Rhodesians?

Well I don't know that we did, the terrorists, if you can call them that, they didn't come into contact with anyone. If we knew them or suspected a sympathiser, there was no way of knowing if the black you were talking to was pro- or anti-government, you just didn't talk to them about that sort of thing. I think the only reason why we didn't do that is just that it didn't crop up but I think everyone was concerned with what was going on, especially in the economy and it was putting a stymie on life because it was a wonderful lifestyle before all this started. We used to go for instance camping quite frequently, every weekend, and of course during the dry season it doesn't rain at night. We used to take a tent with us and then not bother to put it up, you just sleep on the ground in the open air and that was an enjoyable thing to do; and cruise around in the car during the day. But all that sort of thing stopped whilst things got serious out in the rural areas and a lot of country hotels had to close down because people just didn't travel to them. There were wonderful places, especially up in the eastern highlands where there were resort hotels and golf courses and things attached to them. Not that I ever played golf but anyway, a lot of people do and to go up there just for walks and things, it was a very pleasant way of spending a long weekend.

But they were just affected…

(01:37:44) Well they just dried up I think, some of these hotels. Most of their customers were the local security forces and they kept the bar takings up and in fact the bar takings probably increased when the war started. But they didn't get many staying guests at all.

I hadn't asked you, in your work in Internal Affairs, had you learnt any languages? Or even in your time of going out?

Well from my childhood onwards we'd been close to the Africans and we did learn this funny language called, which they called Chilapalapa, simply because the word "lapa" just means "there." It crops up in about every sentence so they called it Chilapalapa for that reason. It's basically imported from South Africa where it's a kind of ultra-simplified version of Zulu. And because I went to school in Matabeleland and lived there, people thought that I could speak Sindebele, in fact it wasn't, it was a slightly modified version of this Chilapalapa language. Then we went to live in Salisbury, which is in Mashonaland and I used to speak by substituting a Shona word for a Sindebele word so for example the word for water or rain in Sindebele is "manzi." In Shona it's "mvura" so by gradually getting round, I thought was eventually talking something that was more like Shona than Sindebele. Although sometimes I just didn't know what the word was and just used the one that came into my mind or the easiest of all was just to revert to English.

So yes, I did learn a bit. I also bought a very useful little book on the how Shona is actually constructed, which was quite interesting.

And was that useful in your work, or just generally?

Well not a lot because nearly all the Af's I knew spoke good English so I didn't have to.

Did you encounter much use of local language or African culture in the work that you were doing?

I used to take an interest in what they were doing, especially when I was doing jobs in the contracting business including this one at Bukwa, the iron ore mine. It was fascinating just to be there and watch what the locals did; how they got around and what they got up to. And also when I was on call-up, the same sort of thing because I was quite interested in how others coped with the daily round and so on. So yes, I took an interest in that.

Did you see any use of Spirit Mediums?

I never saw any of that but then this use of Spirit Mediums, I think it was fairly unusual for people to do it because basically in religion, and this is the same for the Matabele as well as the Shona, there is only God, that's Mwari who was the creator; but you can only communicate with Mwari through various ways. So if they wanted to pray for something in their own family, they would pray to one of their own family spirits or preferably the spirit of someone who had died recently and then the spirit would then get (01:41:53) through to Mwari. And then if it was a whole village matter then the tribal elder, the Sabook they called them – another Shona word because the government told them they ought to have a book so they were then called Sabooks locally – then he would then communicate through one of the tribal spirits. And then if it was a more serious matter for the area then the more senior chiefs would do it, and that's how they got through to God.

Did you see that being used at all in the war, or in tactical use?

I never saw it being used. We were told that this is how it happened; but how frequently they made use of this sort of thing I don't know. But each African does have some spirits and these are usually his relations possibly going down to about the fourth generation. They might not have known the person, say about three or four generations down the line, but they'd probably been told about it by their parents or grandparents so they'd know of this spirit. These were usually just family members. They often also had a kind of favourite spirit, who was a very clever thing and very often they'd have a Portuguese name so you're going right back centuries from when the Portuguese were in Mozambique because they did a lot of travelling throughout what was now Rhodesia. They would trade for a small amount of gold and because they had weapons and certain building skills and so on, they were thought to be fairly clever at certain things. When they died or left or something then very often the spirit would be taken over by someone who

knew them. And that would carry on from generation unto generation, a couple of hundred years or so.

How interesting that the names were passed on through history.

Pedro something or other, yes. But also another thing with the spirits, if someone had committed suicide because they'd got upset about something that someone else had done, then that was very bad for the actual person who did the upsetting because the spirit of that person who had committed suicide would come and create a lot of nasty experiences for this particular person who either was, or was thought to be the guilty person. So there was a lot of that. But some would say that most of the Africans are Christians of some sort. And let's say they don't believe all that nonsense, but someone once said "if a fully fledged Bishop was walking through the bush in the middle of the night, on his own, he'd suddenly start believing in the spirits again." He would find that they aren't far away; that these things might exist, it would be apparent.

So it was a very powerful influence on what was going on?

(01:45:17) Yes, they were all affected by the spirits although I never really discussed this. We were given talks on this and sometimes something an African might say or do, you'd think he is conscious of this; it's not at the forefront of his mind but he is conscious of this spirit world that surrounds him. I suppose that's why they think it's so easy for them to take up Christianity because they already believe or they know that spirits live after death: That's not the end of it, but the spirit or soul of that person lives on. Then explain the trinity to them, that it's not just about the teachings of Jesus Christ but this is the Holy Ghost, the spirit of Jesus Christ living on, and they say, "well yes, what do you expect? Everyone's does." So you don't have to impress upon them that the spirit lives on, they already know that.

And so can you tell me about the end of your time in Rhodesia because you finished serving in Internal Affairs in '78; but you also left Rhodesia then?

Yes it was the middle of '78, but we'd been planning for some time to return back to the UK. We sold the house and moved into another little rented property nearby and then had everything packed up. So I did my last call-up and then wrote in to them and said, "it's been nice knowing you but we're off." I had to go and hand in all the kit I had and then left soon afterwards.

And what was that like? You were legitimately allowed to leave in terms of the call-up and so on because you'd served your time?

Oh yes, well if anyone wanted to leave the country, that was it. The government didn't have any rules about that saying, "no, you can't go because we need you to man the barricades" as it were. They never had any laws like that so people were free to come and go, but while they were there in the country, they had to do their call-ups. The security forces were expanding considerably – they call it the "Dad's Army" after the television

series Dad's Army that was also shown there – so all these older people were called up, mostly to patrol around the towns at night. And then there was also the neighbourhood watch based on the same schemes that we have here and they sort of merged; many of the people who did the Dad's Army stuff were also effectively the neighbourhood watch as well.

There were quite a high number of people leaving the country at that point weren't there?

There were, a heck of a lot. When I went in and arranged with the removal firm to come along and pick up our furniture and put it in a container, it was part of a queue and the removal company had it almost down to a fine art, they knew exactly what to do, how to do it and ship everything out.

And how did it feel leaving?

I was very, very upset. The children were too young to know much or grasp it, they thought they were going on a big adventure to (01:48:52) England. But the wife and I were very, very sad because it's July, that's more or less mid-winter there and I remember going to work possibly in the last week that I was there: A colleague and I used to take it in turns travelling together in the same car then took it in turns to use our cars on alternative days and it was his turn, he was driving. This must have been about half past seven in the morning and the sun had been up for about an hour and it was just a cloudless sky, shining from the east on all this dried golden grass and on the trees and everything. I said "I don't want to leave this, I really don't, this is just wonderful, especially this time of the morning and this time of the year." I do remember that thought going through my mind, even to this day I remember the scene.

And did you feel people had an opinion of you leaving?

I thought there might be and when we put it about that we were leaving, they just took it as "ok, well you need to do it, well go," and others would say, "well we're staying." No one actually used the words "deserting the sinking ship," but I know some of them were thinking along those lines. No one ever actually said it and there weren't many of them who held that opinion because I think many had thought maybe they'd have to do the same thing sometime in the future, they just hadn't made their own plans yet.

What do you think the war had done for Rhodesian identity?

I don't really know the answer to that question. I know this is one of the things that you sent me but I think most people were saying, "they're proud to have been Rhodesians and enjoyed their life there and proud of the country." Apart from the present government, they still do, it's a wonderful place to be.

What was it like coming to the UK in '78?

Well I suppose because we'd only been out for eight and a half years, it was a little bit like coming to something that's familiar, but also quite strange

because things had changed. The currency for example had changed; it took us a while to get used to the different bits of coinage.

Yes, that must have been very confusing.

Yes, they'd gone decimal while we'd been away so things were not in pounds, shillings and pence. Also with the small things in the shops, I took my daughter out to go and get a bag of sweets once and I was flabbergasted to find out how much they cost: Coca cola was about four times as much as we'd been paying in Rhodesia for the same thing and a pint of beer at the pub was the same, it seemed ridiculously expensive. But otherwise, I think we'd planned the whole thing and had slotted in where we were going to stay initially while I searched around for a job.

And your wife had been back to the UK in that time?

(01:52:18) Yes, we came back for Christmas '73 I think. Lucy was a small baby, so we'd only been out there for nearly three full years. We came back for that as a family but then on several other occasions, my wife and children came over here and also the parents-in-law came over to us. But also my wife's sister came out twice I think for about three or four weeks on each occasion and I had various other relations who happened to be passing through Africa and they dropped in. So we did see a lot of her family and we actually worked out that her parents, in terms of numbers of contact days, had seen more of our children than they had their other grandchildren who lived here in the UK up in Lincolnshire where they just used to visit for the odd long weekend. So contact days, they had more with us than with them, which came as a bit of a surprise when we worked it out.

Sometimes you make more of an effort in a way don't you, the further apart you are?

Yes, and also it wasn't worth going just for a week or so, you needed to stay three and half/four weeks or so to make it worth all the hassle.

What sort of war do you think was being fought? Perhaps it changed throughout the time you were there, but did you feel that it was a racial war or a civil war or ideological war?

No, I didn't think much on the ideology. I mean I can see Mugabe's point that you've got to have a majority rule and if they've got to fight for it then they do, so you can see what they were getting up to. But it was the tactics, especially the way they treated their own people once they got inside. You might well have come across the atrocities, which if they thought someone had been talking, giving away intelligence, they used to grab their upper lip with a pair of pliers and cut the top lip off and other people had their tongues ripped out for talking too much and all sorts of atrocities that they imposed their discipline with. So yes, I didn't like that and really, I think most people would have preferred some sort of negotiated settlement to come through, but possibly come in slowly in phases rather than in one bit hit. I think possibly the

Africans that thought about it were thinking along those lines as well. But anyway it certainly didn't happen that way.

What finally initiated your decision to move?
I think the main thing was that we'd promised the parents-in-law we'd only be gone for two years and it ended up more than four times that so that was one thing. The other thing is that I was concerned about work.

Because you said things had started to trickle out at that stage?

Yes and in fact about a year or so after I left, the department that I'd worked for wasn't so much shut down but it was completely re-organised and I think several people who I'd known lost their jobs or were induced to (01:56:05) retire or move sideways or something. So it was coming my way anyway, at some stage anyway.

And finally can I ask you, do you feel that the war was worth it?

I think in a way it was because by that stage, if you like, the kind of communist influence on Mugabe was waning. He's an out and out Marxist – probably still is – but it was seeing that you don't go in and take over a country and muck up its economy by nationalising everything in sight and putting party ideologists in charge of each industry and this sort of thing. So I think in delaying this take over by Mugabe, yes it was working. And also by that stage, the early 80s, it could be seen that the Thatcherite reforms were working or we thought they were going to work in this country and all other countries: The United States and everywhere else was beginning to take notice and also copy the ideas that were essentially pioneered here, by the '79/'80/'81 UK government. So I think because it was delayed to there, that long, then yes, it was worth doing.

I think it might also have added a certain amount of confidence amongst Mugabe's senior people. Once they moved in, they knew that their efforts had been successful and that gave them some degree of self-confidence about the way they'd run the country. When he first took over, he actually came in with quite a lot of goodwill from the whites as well as anyone else and the country was doing extremely well during the early 80s because suddenly they didn't have to pay for the war and things could get back to normal very quickly. And the government was making the right noises about the administration of industry and about making sure that the farmers stayed on the land and produced food and so on, which they all did, it all worked very nicely. We could have regarded that country from third world to second world if it had gone on like that through all the 80s and early 90s. But then, well not so much Mugabe, but the people around him all wiped it out. They got their hands dirty in the Congo and so on by sending the Army up there to essentially steal gold from the Congolese which is virtually what they were at. So yes, I think it was worth that delay because the world changed while all this was going on, and for the better.

So it meant that there was perhaps a slightly more realistic way of working when independence did come?

I think that it was more realistic on both sides that the incoming government then had a clear idea of the way they'd have to run the country, but not the way that they'd originally envisaged. And also for the whites and the non-Mugabe faction, they realised that he and his colleagues were in charge, they'd better accept it and make the most of it. In fact, there were still a couple of white MPs in parliament and they formed a separate group which was effectively supporting the government but they never had been Rhodesian Front MPs before and then they changed. I won't say they changed their spots, but they changed to suit the new circumstances and actually gave quite a lot support to the new government. So from that point of view, things did work out.

(02:00:06) **I think that's just about everything that I wanted to ask. Is there anything else that you want to add?**

Couldn't think of anything else, I think we've covered this fairly comprehensively actually. I'll probably think of a whole load of things I should have told you in an hour or so's time but anyway.

Well I'll stop this now then. Thank you.

End of interview