

**Ivy Gunter nee Biddle**  
**Born 12/07/1922**

| Time | Topic / Event   |
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| 0.00 | <i>Intro by interviewer naming Ivy Biddle</i> Interrupted and corrected by IG – name now Gunter due to remarriage ( <i>Chat between two re both names</i> )   |
| 0.28 | <i>Asked re year of birth and where born</i> 12 <sup>th</sup> July 1922, in a cottage next to The Assembly Rooms.   |
| 0.50 | <i>Asked re parents</i> Mother was at one time a companion for a girl in Bristol, who died aged 21. Not sure where mother and father met, possibly in Bristol as his siblings lived there. Think they married in Parkend, or possibly Bream. Lived in the Cottage where IG was born. Both also born there. Sister who was the eldest was born at Mark Lane at a farm where they had rooms.  |
| 2.07 | Lived at the cottage until about 8 or 9. Then moved next door to a blacksmith's shop, which is now a pottery. Youngest but one was born there – 10 years younger than IG.   |
| 2.48 | When aged 12 or 13, moved to council houses <i>Were they new then?</i> They were about 2 or 3 years old then as can remember the crossroads before the houses were there. There were two big oak trees with a gate in the middle.   |
| 3.19 | <i>Asked re school.</i> Same school father went to. Not sure where mother was born, but she went to school in London – has a photo of the school.   |
| 3.47 | Grandparents both had parents in Clements End Green, but they went to London to live. That's where mother was born. So don't know how father met her, unless it was when she was in Bristol.  |
| 4.15 | <i>Asked again re school.</i> Left the local school aged 14, started at 5. Started at four and a half or five depending on when birthday was.   |
| 4.29 | <i>Any memories of schooldays / teachers?</i> Headmaster was Mr Gentian, a very good man. Infant's class teacher was a Mrs Thompson. Her husband was a teacher (possibly the headteacher) when IG's father was at the school. Then a Miss Wittenden in Standard 1, which was in the same room as Standard 2. Then there was Miss Evans. After that it was the headmaster's class, which was at the back of the school. Of course, left at 14. |
| 5.38 | <i>What did they teach?</i> All sorts, not very good at arithmetic, could get second in exams but never top due to arithmetic. Had dictation.   |
| 6.03 | <i>Was school strict?</i> Yes, remember sister getting caned. Girls didn't often get the cane. She got it and a couple more with her.   |
| 6.30 | <i>Fond memories?</i> Never got into trouble,   |
| 6.42 | <i>What happened next?</i> Left at 14, ran wild for 12 months as so small as the doctor said! Helped a farmer's wife on a daily basis, near the church. In September went blackberrying with a neighbour. Got threehapence a pound for them. Got enough money to buy coats and hats and pairs of shoes at the end. Used to walk for miles. Other than that didn't do anything much!   |
| 7.37 | <i>Did the doctor say you had to grow a bit?</i> Yes. Then when 15 went into service. A neighbour's daughter was in a place where they wanted a kitchen maid. <i>Did many girls from the village have to go into service?</i> Some did, others lived with their families. No work around here. Sister went to work in service at Clearwell Castle. IG went in August, then went to Wimbledon as employer was a KC. They lived in              |

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|              | Wimbledon most of the year, to (the Forest) at Christmas and for a month in the summer. Went to Wimbledon - can't recall how long was there.   |
| <b>9.20</b>  | <i>So he had several homes?</i> Yes, we went where they went. <i>You were 15 then?</i> Yes.  |
| <b>9.33</b>  | <i>Work duties?</i> Washing up, cleaning pots and pans. The other girl who was older did the upstairs work, IG did the rough work in the kitchen. <i>Query re pay?</i> Can't remember. It wasn't very much! At the Christmas one of the family gave money, which could have been doubled if they guessed the amount. Maybe half a crown!   |
| <b>10.37</b> | <i>Was there time off?</i> A half day a week. IG's was on a Thursday. Had to walk from ( <u>Interruption from family member – 'Llanvair Discoed'</u> ) Yes, used to get off the bus at Caerwent, then walk just under 3 miles, because there were no buses. Coming home had to walk to Caerwent to catch the bus, to Chepstow, then a bus to St Briavels, and go back the same way.  |
| <b>11.50</b> | <i>Hours of work?</i> Not sure, went from working there to Cheltenham. <i>But what time did you start and finish?</i> Six in the morning to ten in the evening. <i>Where did you sleep when you were with them in London?</i> In the top of the house, They had a three or four storey house on Wimbledon Common. There were three staff. Was nervous as had only been as far as Charlton Kings before, to stay with grandmother who had moved there.  |
| <b>13.07</b> | <i>Did you go by train to London?</i> Can't remember.  |
| <b>13.15</b> | <i>Asked re employers.</i> Very good, didn't see them all that often. Would to all the necessary work, but not see them after that. IG didn't serve the meals. Can't recall how long worked there, but came back then went to Cheltenham.  |
| <b>13.59</b> | Only IG, had to do everything – cooking, cleaning etc. <i>Who was the new job with?</i>  |
|              | Don't remember their names. Grandmother lived in Charlton Kings, so could visit her on the half days, as it was only a ten minute walk. Got half a day a week and every other Sunday off. <i>Did you have any chance to go home?</i> Not really. Couldn't do it in half a day. Employers were kind, enjoyed it. Then brother wrote a letter to them which resulted in IG leaving. Some misunderstanding had arisen, possibly re IG being a love child. |
| <b>15.58</b> | Then came back to Gloucester to work at the top of the Promenade in Cheltenham. Another house, but took ill there – repeating tonsillitis. An aunt who lived with grandmother took IG to Cheltenham Hospital. Sent home, taken by aunt on the bus to St Briavels. Never went back. Must have been 17 or 18 by then.  |
| <b>17.08</b> | <i>Very young when first in service...?</i> Also very naïve - sister was more worldly wise. <i>Did you miss home?</i> Yes. But only option was to go into service. A lot of people locally had servants. They were called the Poor Gentry – had money but not lots of it. That could be how grandfather and grandmother met up – she was from Tondu (Wales) so must have been working round here.  |
| <b>18.34</b> | <i>Were there other girls from the forest working in Cheltenham?</i> Yes, but didn't meet up with them, because went to grandma's on half day. A lot of girls and some boys from the forest were working there. Used to go down the Prom on Sunday night and might talk then to other forest people.   |
| <b>19.33</b> | Once home started working locally for Jess Daley on the Lower Road. There around 12 months. Then worked for Mrs Andrews, who lived in what was called the Back Street. ( <u>Comment from relative 'Pystol Lane' now</u> ) who owned cottages. ( <u>Second relative 'and she used to own these fields'</u> ). Then the war came so IG worked in the woods.  |
| <b>20.44</b> | <i>So talking around 1939? What work were your sisters and brother doing?</i> Sister was in service until the war. Whilst working in the woods, she got married but still worked as it was war time. Brother went into the air force. Other brother couldn't   |

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|       | go in, and youngest brother ( <i>Interruption – ‘had Downs Syndrome’</i> ) yes, Down’s so he couldn’t go. There was ten years between IG and next brother.  |
| 21.47 | <i>How did the woods thing happen?</i> Sister already has the job and suggested IG. One of happiest times of life. Loved it. <i>Who did you work for?</i> He was oldish, can’t remember his name. He gave instructions. The job was to follow the men felling the trees, and burn off brush in long lines. Oddments of timber went to pits for pit props in 9’ and 6’ and 4.5’ lengths. <i>Was there a uniform?</i> No. had to buy own.   |
| 22.59 | <i>Was it the War Office or Forestry Commission who paid you?</i> Don’t know. It was timber supply, part of the war effort. Have a badge from that time. ( <i>Aside, whilst relative fetches the badge plus discussion with relative about it having come from Gordon Brown</i> ).  |
| 23.41 | He decided all the girls should have a badge for having been part of the War Effort.  |
| 23.51 | <i>What did the job involve?</i> The men cut it, we went behind clearing and burning. Sometimes would go on a lorry to Parkend. The pit props went in the trucks at the station. Job involved counting the props onto the lorry, and again into the trucks at the station.  |
| 24.33 | <i>Which woods did you work in? (aside, discussion between IG and family)</i> Trying to think of first one. Clanna. Rodmore, part of an estate. Later was down Staunton, and Hadnock Forest. Did this work until marriage, when IG was 22. Don’t ask! War was still on. Was there a couple of years.  |
| 25.54 | <i>Why was it the best years of your life?</i> Lovely atmosphere. There were other girls, who were in the Land Army. They were part of the Forestry, but we were in Timber Supplies. ( <i>Aside with family – not yet found the badge</i> ).  |
| 26.15 | <i>Asked again re work / enjoyment?</i> Used to cycle down to Clanna, or to Staunton – this meant leaving at 6.30. The men tushing were from Yorkley and Bream and places like that.  |
| 26.53 | ( <i>Badge brought in</i> ) <i>It is signed by Gordon Brown.</i> It had never been recognised. He thought it should be. ( <i>consent given for interviewer to take photo of the badge</i> )   |
| 27.21 | <i>Asked re terms used e.g. tushing?</i> Didn’t know it was a Forestry term. Used horses and chains. There were the James’s of Yorkley.   |
|       | <b>End of Part 1</b>  |
|       | <b>Part 2</b>   |
| 0.00  | <i>Asked again about the Timber Corps.</i> On Saturday nights – mentioned the Playing Fields (the pavilion wasn’t there then). The school held whist drives and dances when IG was younger but in the war they held sixpenny hops at the Assembly Rooms. The Americans were down at Clanna. Some of them would come up. People would come from Whitebrook. Always had a proper band.  |
| 1.11  | <i>Did you see a lot of Americans?</i> They’d come for dances, but otherwise not in the village much. Don’t know if they had money – didn’t have much to do with them.  |
| 1.35  | Also used to go to dances in Sling Club when single. Lots of young boys. ( <i>comment re Mother in law</i> ) Used to go to pictures every Monday and Saturday night in Bream. There were usually half a dozen boys. The Bream Cinema was where the club is now. Some boys went on the bus if they didn’t have bicycles. Brother and another boy also went. IG got home from work at 6.30 and after a quick tea and would be in Bream Pictures by 7 p.m. brother and friend would get IG’s ticket, so IG could go straight in. would ride home on their cross bar and one of the boys without a bike rode IG’s bike back. IG was the only girl. IG’s friend’s grandmother usually didn’t let her go. |
| 3.49  | During the week, IG would chat with the local boys in the Square. All were just friends. Used to go to Coleford pictures later with one of them. Would ride to Clearwell, leave the bikes there then walk into Coleford with another friend. Might  |

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|       | go on to Sling Danced Hall on the way home. Never any trouble with any of them. None ever made a pass at IG. ( <i>Mother in law didn't like this!</i> )   |
| 4.42  | <i>Asked re when met husband?</i> At school. They came to St Briavels when he was 7 or 8, to a farm. Had nothing to do with him until about 12 months before marriage. His name was Dennis Biddle.  |
| 5.11  | <i>Asked re his background?</i> He was a farmer. He was a butcher to start with, but also drove a tractor. First one to have a tractor locally. He was exempt in the War. He shut the shop and used the tractor to work all the fields locally. He was also in the fire service but was luckily never called out.   |
| 6.01  | <i>Asked re length of courtship?</i> About 12 months, but had known him all his life. IG 24 and he was 3 years older.   |
| 6.24  | <i>Asked re FoD during war e.g. meeting any Prisoners of War?</i> Didn't really, as married and down on the farm. There were POWs working in the village. They were Italians. <i>Did you ever hear bombing?</i> Had a bomb drop on grounds, at Millend. Didn't cause problems, there were two fields before another house. <i>Did you hear it fall?</i> No don't think so. Didn't take much notice of the sirens. Could have been one dropping a bomb on his way back. Just one of those things,  |
| 7.49  | <i>Asked re rationing in War?</i> Gosh yes, missed an awful lot. Not allowed to take any cream off the top of the milk. Had own cows and sold own milk. Everything was rationed. Somebody came round to take samples of the milk. If got to a certain level weren't allowed to sell it – if there was too much cream on it. ( <i>Discussion with daughter re frequency of the inspections – a couple of times a year at least</i> ) More often than that, every two or three months. ( <i>Would also check a bottle from the van</i> )  |
| 9.00  | <i>What was difficult to get during the rationing?</i> Everything – sweets, sugar, had a little bit of butter, margarine. You couldn't get any fruit to make a cake. When sister married, people saved up fruit for her cake. It was very tight. If there was rationing now people would be healthier! Were healthier with the rationing than as we are now. It was enough to keep you going.   |
| 10.01 | <i>Asked re any black market for goods?</i> Yes, on the quiet think there was!  |
| 10.12 | <i>Asked re going out of FoD at all during the War?</i> Might have gone out for a day. Couldn't if on a farm.   |
| 10.33 | <i>Asked re the 'ankle competition'?</i> Only remembered it the other day! It was before the war when IG was 17 or 18. Would have a whist drive and a dance, then went up on a stage or something. Girls stood behind a curtain with just ankles showing. Someone would judge them. <i>Who was the judge?</i> Can't remember that!  |
| 11.28 | <i>Asked re conditions in village then e.g. electricity?</i> No <i>How was radio accessed?</i> IG can remember father's first radio, when living next to blacksmith's shop. A Saturday afternoon, were in the back garden. Radios had accumulators. <i>Like a battery?</i> A big battery. Eddie Price kept the garage and shop, so may have bought the radio from him. Used to take the accumulator back to get it recharged. Can't recall what was on that first day, possibly a cricket match. It was own wireless, but needed the accumulator charging. <i>Asked re any of the programmes on then?</i> No – a long time ago! |
| 13.17 | <i>Asked if this was during war.</i> It was long before the war, when IG was still at school.   |
| 13.23 | <i>Asked if heard (broadcast of) declaration of war?</i> At farm then ( <i>Aside from daughter – 'no'</i> ) what year was it? 1939. ( <i>Comment from relatives – 'you weren't married then!'</i> ) Of course, was still at home then! Might have been in service then.   |
| 14.02 | <i>Further question about services in village e.g. lighting the house?</i> Lamps and candles. Torches and lanterns. Didn't have electric until after going to the farm. No electric there to start with, Dennis had own generator – to do the milking. His  |

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|       | brother had milked by hand but Dennis put the machines in the cowshed. IG helped install the plumbing etc. he put electric in the shed and the house, run off the generator. The electric arrived a couple of years later. It was already in Clearwell and Coleford, but nothing between top farm and Coleford. Had to pay for it to be brought down from top farm to them. Got an electric cooker, paid for alongside electric bill. Previously cooked with a Raeburn.   |
| 16.18 | <i>Asked if with the generator the farm got electric before others in village?</i> Yes. Dennis did that. When the electric was brought down his work was all passed, so all they had to do was connect up. He had no training but was a Jack of all Trades – plumbing, electric, woodwork, could do it all himself.   |
| 16.57 | <i>This was before the NHS – what happened if you were ill?</i> You had to pay the bill. <i>Who was the doctor in this area?</i> Dr Nanda, then Dr Hunt, and then Dr Eskill. <i>(Background noise- phone)</i> Dr Nanda was lovely, a good doctor, people came from all over the place to see him. <i>He was popular?</i> Yes. I think the village people helped him buy his house. <i>Why did they need to do that?</i> To keep him here, though IG wasn't born when he was in the village.   |
| 17.59 | <i>Query re paying for the doctor / payment in kind from a farm?</i> Not on the farm at that time – were in the cottages. <i>Did it affect if people called the doctor in?</i> It must have done. Would imagine you only had him if you really had to.  |
| 18.37 | Before the NHS, the Dilke and Lydney Hospitals were paid for through money from the miners' pay packets. The hospitals belonged to the miners. Every Whit Sunday people waked from Cinderford to come to the bread and cheese at the church. While it was thrown out you could go and collect pea sticks in the woods. Had to stop when this ceremony stopped. It was so popular, with so many people there. People walked and about twenty buses came up afterwards to take them back to Cinderford and Bream and so on.   |
| 19.43 | <i>Why did they come?</i> The money collected went to the two hospitals. When the NHS started there wasn't a need to collect for the hospitals. Numbers started dropping after that.  |
| 20.05 | <i>Your father was a miner?</i> Yes, but worked on the lifts, on the surface. People complained as he wouldn't take people up when they brought false notes. Would call IG's father an 'old bugger'. <i>What is a false note?</i> It gave permission to go up, but if he thought it was false he wouldn't take them up! <i>He was in charge of the lift?</i> That's right! At Park Gutter Pit at Bream <i>Did he work there all his life?</i> According to sister just after WW1 worked at Chepstow shipyard. She seemed to know more about parents when they were young. IG never asked so never got told! |
| 21.43 | <i>How long did father work at Bream?</i> Until he retired. Suppose would be after the War. Dennis has been dead 32 years this August and dad died two or three years before that. <i>Did he enjoy work at the colliery?</i> He cycled, never went on the bus. Quite a few from village worked at this pit so there was a bus. His bike was a back pedal – no brakes, you backpedalled to stop the bike.  |
| 23.00 | <i>Did a lot of men in the village work in the colliery, not on the land?</i> Wouldn't say most of them. A lot of the older ones worked in the colliery when IG was young. You got so much coal free. A man and wife with a pony and cart picked up the coal from the pits, and drop it at the gateway. It was part of the wages.   |
| 24.10 | <i>After the war, you went to the farm?</i> We lived in a couple of houses first. It was the family farm. IG and husband only owned it about four years before he died. <i>Was it different for you, working on a farm.</i> Yes, might have been out in hayfields when they were cut, playing. Always seemed to get nice summers for the hay making. Father always used to go to husband's farm, and help with haymaking when children were small.  |

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| 25.20 | (Father) worked in the pit but also worked as a gardener in the Castle gardens, and own gardens and helped other people  |
| 25.37 | <i>Asked re being a farmer's wife?</i> Always said would never marry a farmer. When 14 had helped out at the farm by the church – had to get the coal etc. Turned around and married one! <i>Was it hard work?</i> Yes. Less when the children were little. Had own milk rounds, bottled it and sold it. <i>How did you take it around?</i> In the van. (Also) had to help outside. One winter would have to clean out cow shed with pitchfork, while husband was on milk round. Had to clean out the drains if they blocked up. <i>Was it mainly milking cows on the farm?</i> Yes  |
| 27.21 | <i>Asked re children?</i> They just came along. Lost the first one (shouldn't say this) - was expecting first one when married. In laws sent Dennis off dancing with someone else so IG couldn't go. IG loved dancing. Next baby, Daphne, was about 18 months after first one. ( <i>Aside from relative 'That was 1946'</i> ). When Daphne was about 2 1/2, had Gerald. Born in April, moved to the farm in July. <i>Were the babies born at home?</i> The first two yes, one at mum's council house. <i>Did the midwife come to the home?</i> No not for that one. The district nurse did come for the second one. Can't remember the name. <i>Discussion with daughter 'Mrs Tweedwell'</i> . The second one was from Bream ( <i>Daughter asked 'was that when Gerald was born?'</i> ) yes. Usually were kept in bed for about a fortnight, not like today. Daphne came upstairs during this time – IG asked for a cwttch, which nurse didn't understand. It's an old welsh saying. ( <i>Aside re daughter looking for a pillow with cwttch on'</i> ) Then had Nicky down at the farm. There was a farmer's dance at Speech House, and that was it! |
| 30.52 | ( <i>Comment from daughter 'you had him in Lydney Hospital'</i> ) Yes – that's another Doctor Eskell story. IG went to Dr with tonsillitis ( <i>referred to a photograph</i> ). Told Doctor husband wanted IG to go to hospital for the baby. Doctor agreed, had a joke with him. Never took offence at what he said.  |
| 31.48 | <i>Asked re bringing children up on the farm?</i> No different to bringing them up off a farm! Didn't have to work the farm when they were little. There was a man or boy working on the farm too.   |
| 32.09 | At end when Dennis was ill – for three years before he died – before that IG cleaned the cow sheds. There was a big concrete yard where the cows, about twenty, waited to be milked. Somebody had to clean the yard too. Did it with a hosepipe and a hard broom.  |
| 33.06 | <i>Asked re contact with other farmers?</i> Yes, there was a Farmers' Union. Years ago held a farmers' dance at Coleford, in the Town Hall. It was pulled down, from the centre part of Coleford. All the buses used to come up the side, to pick people up and behind was the Town Hall. ( <i>discussion re when the hall came down – 'after the war' – daughter went to dances there - 'came down in 1960s'</i> ) Also had a butcher' dance every year at Parkend.   |
| 34.17 | <i>Asked re help during husband's illness.</i> Just had the man who worked on the farm. Husband who had cancer carried on working.   |
| 34.39 | There was a comedienne on TV had the same illness. She died before Dennis was taken ill. ( <i>Daughter – 'Non Hodgkinson's lymphoma'</i> ) Don't like to think of it because he had a terrible death. Last saw him the afternoon before he died. He was burning from inside out. Wanted fan turning off – thought it was burning him but it was on cold. Couldn't get there in time the next day. Picked up at 7 a.m. and got to Cheltenham Hospital, passing lorries but he died before family's arrival. Already laid out. IG's auntie knew a nurse's mother, who was from St Briavels. She told her mother it took six of them to hold Dennis down as he died. He wasn't a person who deserved it. Would never to harm to anybody. He was so generous.  |

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| 37.11 | <i>What happened after loss of husband?</i> Had to leave the farm 18 months before he died. Sold it and moved to Hewelsfield Lane. Only there 18 months before he died. <i>How old were the children then?</i> Daphne was married. Nicky had been working on the farm. <i>Did any of them stay in farming?</i> There was nobody to take it on. If Dennis had lived he would have struggled because he was an old fashioned farmer – all these rules and regulations – he wouldn't have stuck them. . |
| 38.33 | <i>Asked when moved to present home?</i> Came back to St Briavels 18 months before he died. IG's father had died in the October. 12 month after IG's mother took ill and died in the January. Dennis died 12 months after that, or the same year in the August. Nicky was still doing the milk round, but buying in the milk as it had to be pasteurised. A lot of forest children were brought up on Biddle's Milk – Milkwall and Sling. Had a slogan 'Biddle's Milk builds Bonny Babies.'          |
| 40.03 | <i>Asked re changes in the village?</i> It has gone back from what it was when we were kids. Could get everything here then – didn't have to go out to get what needed. Had four grocery shops, three sweet shops, had painters and decorators, an antiques shop, and four butchers at one time. And that was before houses were built on the cross! There was a shoe shop and a garage.   |
| 41.03 | <i>Was there a carnival?</i> Yes, every year. Have a photograph with brother dressed up as the Bisto Kids. It was for George V silver wedding. <i>That was before the war?</i> Yes, when IG was 8 or 9. <u><i>(aside to relative looking for the photo)</i></u> It was on the opposite side of the road to the pottery, as that is where we lived. That and the other cottage is now one big house. <i>There were a lot of smaller houses then?</i> Yes.   |
| 42.12 | <i>Thank you and close</i>   |
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*Italic* = Interviewer

Normal font = IG – Interviewee

*Underlined italic* = discussion involving Ig and relatives.

Glossary

Accumulator

[www.vintageradio.co.uk/htm/museum.htm](http://www.vintageradio.co.uk/htm/museum.htm)

Valve **radios** required electricity from batteries, a large High Tension battery giving about 120 volts, and a Low Tension **accumulator**, which could be recharged like a modern mobile phone or laptop battery. The difference was, it weighed several pounds and could spill corrosive acid. Most **radio** owners had two, one to use and one being charged (e.g. at Cycle shops and garages)

Timber Corps

<https://www.womenslandarmy.co.uk/world-war-two/the-timber-corps...>

The Timber Corps was a separate branch of the Women's Land Army and was started in 1942 due to the German occupation of Norway causing a shortage of imported timber. This branch received even less recognition than the typical Land Girl. The WTC uniform was slightly different as 'Lumber Jills' had a 'beret' instead of a hat and had a different arm band. Their badge showed a fir tree,

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Bisto Kids

<http://www.bisto.co.uk/about>

Created by cartoonist Wilf Owen, nobody knows exactly who came up with the idea for (the marketing cartoon characters) Bill and Maree but they soon became loved by the nation. Their legacy lives on to this day with their catchphrase - "aah! Bisto"

Park Gutter Colliery

[www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results\\_Single.aspx?uid=4472&...](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=4472&...)

Park Gutter Colliery and Flour Mill Colliery were owned by the Princess Royal Collieries Co. Ltd. Princess Royal Pit was located 450 metres to the north-west of this site (SMR 10877). Princess Royal Pit was disused by 1900 and it seems likely that the Park Gutter Coal Pit became known as the Princess Royal Pit once it was the only remaining colliery run by the company.