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*Ok, so this is Claire Days interviewing Mrs Harrington, um, for the Barking Park Oral History Project, on the sixteenth of August, two thousand and eleven. Um, if I could ask you to say your full name and date of birth please?*

My full name is er, Frances Harrington. Mrs. Um, date of birth, thirty first of the twelfth, nineteen thirty seven (1937).

*Lovely. And can I ask where you were born?*

Yes, I was born in Ilford, Maternity Hospital, Newbury Park, which has now been demolished.

*Ok. And can I ask about your parents, where, where were your parents from?*

My mum was born in East Ham, my dad was born in Dor-, er, Somerset.

*Oh, lovely.*

And they met when, my dad came up to London to get a job, and my Nan had lodgers in the house, she used to er, have lodgers for a few shillings a week. So, that was how they met.

*Ah, so he lodged with your mum’s mum?*

Yes.

*That’s really interesting.*

Hmm hmm.

*And what did your parents do for work?*

My dad worked on the railway, all his life, as far as I can remember. And my mum was a short hand typist for Wiggins, Teape and Company, the paper manufacturers.

*Ah. And where were they based?*

First of all in Aldgate East, Lehman Street I think she called it. Er, Aldgate East, and then later on they had a lovely building um, just in front of St. Paul’s Cathedral. It really was beautiful, they had Italian marble in there, and it’s now been demolished, and it was only built in the nineteen fifties (1950’s).

*Oh that’s a shame, isn’t it?*

I know.

*Like you say, especially if it was quite grand, you know, with marble...*

Hmmm, I did go there a couple of times.

*Oh you did?*

She took me up there, yeah.

*Lovely.*

Such a shame, I’ve got all the papers here about it. I’ve kept those because I thought she would want me to keep them.

*Yeah. Well, it’s a nice memory as well isn’t it?*

Yes, yes.

*So, so when you were born, in nineteen thirty seven (1937), um, obviously um, do you have sort of very early memories before you started school, of the area or...?*

Um...

*Any anecdotes?*

Well the earliest things I can think of was being evacuated during the war.

*Oh ok. Could you tell me a little bit about that experience?*

Um, yes, we went to, well first of all we went to Somerset to my dad’s parents. Er, father and step mother. But I can’t remember anything about that, ‘cause I wasn’t er, that was quite early years. I also have some letters that they wrote to each other, I found those when I cleared out. Er, and then, my mother didn’t like it there, I don’t think she got on with the other side of the family very well. And it was, was unusual circumstances really, um, to be there. So she tells me that she piled up a pram with as many things as she could get on, like whatever there was, clothes, the whole jolly lot, she walked four miles to Brooton Station, where Brooton is near, well, I don’t know, Brooton is near, Shepton Mallet shall we say.

*Ok.*

Er, and got on a train, came to, went to Swindon, I think I’ve got the story right. Went to Swindon, found a lady who would take in lodgers, who also took in soldiers for lodgers as well, I do remember the soldiers. Um, and we stayed with Mrs Russell, and Mr Russell and John. In Lansdown Road. Yes, that’s right. Um, and I, my, I’ve got a very clear memory about going, mum, wandering round places in Swindon, shops mainly, to find out who could put her up, herself and me, the daughter. And this lady was on a floor scrubbing, um she was scrubbing the shop floor, and she said, I take in lodgers, I’ll take you in, you have to come up and see me this evening. And she gave mum the address, and that’s how it all came about. And then, I, mum said I have to find a school for Francis, so where’s the nearest school. That wasn’t too bad, er, that wasn’t too far away. That was called King Edward’s School, in Swindon.

*Ok. King Edward’s...and what, what do you remember about that school?*

I don’t really remember, I tell you one thing I, I do remember which was really naughty, we had some new books delivered to the classroom, brand new books they were, I mean just imagine, during the war. And this er, teacher said, now, these are the new books, and this is where I want you to put them on the shelf. And she took the books and she opened the cupboard and she put them on the shelf. And I thought, oh, I could do with one of those! So when nobody was looking [laughs], I shoved them under my xxxx...

*[laughs].*

Under my skirt! [laughs]. Two of them I think, and I took them home and I hung about in the hall, now somebody must have answered the door to me, ‘cause I was only little, so presumably, the person that answered the door just answered the door and went back in to a room. And I hung about in the hall, and course then, I took these things from under my skirt, these books, and mum shouted out, come on, come in! What are you doing out there? I said, oh, I, I’ve just been given some new books by the teacher and I’m looking at them! And I thought, [laughs], when I was older I thought what a naughty girl that was! And mum never queried it, I mean, any parent during the war would query a child being given new books, wouldn’t they? But um, no she didn’t query it at all and as far as I know, I did keep them at home. And the teacher didn’t seem to miss them either! But maybe, I’ve got that part of it wrong, I don’t know, I can’t remember.

*Can you remember what the books were about?*

No I don’t. I don’t, they were obviously children’s books, but I don’t remember what characters or anything were in them. No. And I don’t remember much about the children either, you know, whether I was, I don’t think I was unhappy there, but it was as I say, unusual circumstances. Oh and another thing I did, when we were at Mrs Russell’s, I had this gollywog, which I’ve still got, it’s up in the loft at the moment, and um, I was cross with this gollywog, and I got out of my cot, as far as I can remember I was, I was still in a cot. Don’t remember it being a bed. And I threw this gollywog all over the place because I was so cross with him! And I chucked him [laughs] towards the mantelpiece and I broke one of Mrs Russell’s vases! [laughs]. And she wasn’t very happy about that! [laughs].

*I can imagine!*

Told my mother to keep me in my cot in future!

*[laughs]. So you were a little terror when you were a child?*

Oh, oh, what a naughty girl I was! Yeah. I can’t remember anything else, they had a very unusual house. Um, in as much as they had a cellar downstairs, but the cellar was at pavement level downstairs, where as the front door was at pavement level on the front of the house, you went down stairs and the cellar was on pavement level, probably because the house went down on a slope. And you could get out the back as well, you know, you could walk out the back. That I found very unusual, I’ve never been in a, any house like that since.

*No, it does sound quite unusual...*

Yes. And she used to keep things, used to have a sink down there, that’s all I can remember.

*So did they have like, a garden or space where you could play outside?*

Um, yes, the garden, yes, there was a garden, the cellar, and then a little bit of garden, and then a brick wall, and then an alley way at the back, a very wide alley way. What I call a Coronation Street alley way I think they’re fairly wide aren’t they, some of them.

*Yeah, well whenever you see them filming down there there’s always two or three chatting in a line or something isn’t there?*

Yeah

*So it’s got to be reasonable I imagine*

Yeah, other than that I cannot remember anything at all. We were supposed to, I don’t remember also we did live over at Newbury Park for a couple of years before we went to, before we were evacuated.

*So how long would you have been at King Edward’s School? Can you remember?*

We came back here, I think mum said about nineteen forty (1940) I don’t know, ninety thirty seven, about nineteen forty we would of come back here

*And that’s when you would of gone to Newbury Park?*

Um, presumably. Yes we did go back to Newbury Park, yeah yeah.

*Okay, so um obviously you were at King Edward’s School for only a short period of time then, can you remember what schools you went to once you came back?*

No, I’m just wondering if I’ve got this right because I would have only been three when I came back here wouldn’t we? So therefore I wouldn’t of, no it must have been later than that, it must of been about nineteen forty two (1942) when we came back here, sorry about that

*That’s okay*

Because I wouldn’t of gone to school from nought to three would I? Hardly.

*[laughter]*

*Unless you were a very advanced child*

Yes, very advanced.

*Which might be why you wanted the books*

[laughter]

Um, yes 1942 then when we came back here. Um. We went to Newbury Park then my nan and Granddad lived in Aldersey Gardens, over there and they were bombed out. A great big bomb fell [laughter] I was going to show you the photos, I’ve got them upstairs.

*Can you remember that then?*

No I don’t remember that but I’ve only gone by photographs of what’s happened, my mum tells me that she walked over, by this time my nan and Granddad went to Swindon to be evacuated so they’d all gone and Frank the son and Dorothy the daughter they all cleared off to Swindon and then my mum said, and I can never understand why, she came over to Barking every day with me in the pram um yeah a Tansad Pram, I remember the Tansad Pram, it was green. Um you could let it down at the foot of it. And she wheeled the pram over every day and cleared up after the bomb and just generally tried to salvage what she could out of the remains and there was a lot of looting as well by people because the front door was blown in so people would come and take whatever they wanted and things disappeared um the whole was pretty big where the bomb fell and I’ve got pictures of my dad and Mr Brian next door clearing up or just sorting things out in the back garden, what was the back garden. Um went to Ripple School which is over the bridges here and my mother didn’t go with me at all, children were able to go to school on their own in those days because by that time I was five and parents weren’t allowed in the school anyway.

*Were they not?*

No um so I had a very best friend called Dianne who lived in Milliford Gardens and I used to go with her to school.

*How far of a walk was that?*

Oh I suppose it was, oh I don’t know, um be a mile I think. No more than a mile I should think it seemed like a long way as a little girl but I don’t suppose it’s all that long. We went over the yard and bridges um I can’t remember anything. I was quite happy at Ripple School I was a bit scared of everybody but I’ll always remember that first day you know leaving your mum and she’s not allowed in the school, because now they allow their mums in the school to sort the school out don’t they and all this business and to see what the children are going to learn and what they’re going to play with she said she just sort of gave me a push at the gate and I was afraid that she wasn’t going to come back for me so I sat out in the playground and there were two girls in Aldersey Gardens Margret and Anne who lived down the other end and I thought ‘if my mum doesn’t come for me I’ll follow them home’ but that’s logical in a child isn’t it? If you think your mum’s not going to turn up for you, I mean she did obviously but going to school on your first day is a very new experience isn’t it so no I didn’t have to follow them home my mum came for me and then she did that for a little while and after that I was on my own. Had a teacher called Miss Light, who came from Southend every day she told us and she always wore a green cross over apron, you don’t see them now do you?

*No*

And she always bought black sambo with her which was the dog and the dog used to sleep under her table, never forget that.

*She brought her dog to school?*

She brought her dog to school and it slept under the table, now whether she exercised it during the dinner hour I don’t know but it always appeared to me as if the dog was always there, do you know what I mean? The dog under the table. But I don’t know whether she exercised it or not, I can’t remember she never appeared to go out of school and they have to have their lunch don’t they? Um what else was there? oh we had, what I now realise, I didn’t at the time were shoe boxes to keep our personal possessions in you know like our bits of paper and pencils and various rubbers things like that. And I was off for three days, I had a very good attendance at school, all the way through, I was away for three days and I was given back something which wasn’t mine. Not my shoe box and I was really worried about this, I don’t think parents realise how much children worry about things. My mum wouldn’t come to the school she said ‘well ask Miss Light yourself for your own shoe box she’s not going to bite your head off is she’ and this is all she kept saying and I though mum please come and ask her for my shoe box, I still remember that. Anyway eventually she did and I got my own shoebox back and I was quite happy, but it took a lot to get her to come down the school and ask for me, you know she was always one of these you fight your own battles or you got yourself into that situation you get yourself out you know?

*Very independent type*

Oh I still am as well, I can see myself falling off a ladder before long, anyway after that I went on to Ripple School then on to um park, oh yeah I went into the juniors of Ripple School and then on to Park Modern which is, which was it’s Barking Abbey now

*Okay*

I liked school, I didn’t mind going to school particularly the secondary school

*What was particularly good about the secondary school? Was it just that you were older?*

Yeah I was older I felt more important, I liked the lessons, I liked the girls there. it was all girls, it was no boys so it was just nice to be all girls in together. Yeah I quite liked secondary and I felt and I was always in the top class and I think that makes you feel good doesn’t it? [laughter]

*It certainly helps*

Well it makes you feel a bit, well you know

*What were your favourite lessons?*

Oh I loved English and spelling, didn’t like arithmetic. History and geography didn’t like those

*Really?*

No!

Couldn’t bare them, well we had boring teachers but English and spelling I loved.

*Can you remember any particular teachers who their characters have remained with you?*

Miss McGeal

*Miss McGeal?*

Miss McGeal, she was nice. Yeah. She went on to be the headmistress of um of a school in Collier Row

*Okay and I am assuming she taught English if she was your favourite teacher?*

Um do you know what I can’t remember who taught me English, no I can’t remember. I know who taught history because I didn’t like her at all, Mrs Hatton she died quite young

*Why didn’t you like her in particular?*

Well because, mainly I didn’t like her because her lessons were boring. Miss Frasier taught geography. Mrs Hedges always used to ride a big hired bike going to school, she only lived around the corner so you’d see her riding a long like this, she never said good morning to anybody, she had her hair tied back and done up in a bun, very prim and proper and nobody liked her very much but there you go you had your likes and dislikes don’t you? Mrs Pratt was a nice teacher, I liked her. Other than that I can’t think of anything about Park Modern that. One thing that does strike me is the fact that nowadays you get these great big packs out don’t you telling you the children blah blah blah they’re going to such and such a school and they have to wear such a uniform. Nothing like that happened, I came home and I said to mum “I’m starting Park Modern School in September, we’re got to be there by about such and such a date at such and such a time and we have to wear either pink or blue check dresses” and she went out and bought material and it could be any style and she bought material and she bought patterns and she made me a couple of pink and a couple of blue check dresses. But there was none of this packs that they get nowadays to tell you what goes on in school or what they’ve got to wear. So un, so uncomplicated [laughter] very complicated. Hum.

That’s about it for the school.

*And when did you leave school then? How old were you?*

Well here goes another story [laughs] my dad as far as I can remember when I was fifteen he had a nervous breakdown

*Okay*

So down in Somerset, his home town, there was this fella who was saying that people who he had stayed friendly with only he stayed friendly with this fellows father because they were coal miners together. He stayed friendly with Uncle Role because they were coal mining together so we used to pay frequent visits to Somerset for holidays and to see these people, Role and his son Frank and his wife Mavis, now both deceased, and Frank come to Somerset, come to Somerset you can get a job Clarkes were thriving then this was in the 1950s Um and so we packed up, the whole house was packed up and we all push off to Somerset. My dad couldn’t get a job he tried here there and everywhere. I remember when he came home he bought a bungalow in Somerset for £3500, when he came home that night my mum said “well did you” he brought my auction you see “did you get the bungalow we looked at” “yes” “how much did you pay for it?” “£3500” “you bloody fool” she said [laughter] because he tried to sell the house in Aldersley for £2500, he went right down to £2000 and he couldn’t sell it so he said he came to see the solicitor one day after no job for him, mum had a very menial job which is nothing like the wages or the variety that she had had up in London at all so he came in one day and he said “I’ve been to see the solicitor, they can’t sell the house” or the agent can’t sell the house “pack up” he said, we’re going home. So we came back and lived in the same house, we were only there three months, just imagine that packing up a whole house and then coming back again so I left school and then I went back to school and my dad went back to Paddington to work on the railway, he was like a messenger boy I suppose you would call it and my mum went back to Wiggins to work and everybody went back to normal again and it was an expensive jaunt you know just because of dad having to have this nervous breakdown

*Maybe he needed the three month holiday from London?*

Yeah, maybe he did, maybe he did and I do like Somerset and I go down there every year so I had no complaints about it in the mean time while we was at Somerset I worked in a haberdashery shop, haberdashery and clothes shop I suppose you’d call it and then, oh before that, this comes before, I went to work for a doctor for three weeks to look after his children but I wasn’t really suitable so he asked me to leave [laughing] I didn’t have the experience did i? Three weeks and I was fifteen years of age, I didn’t have the experience and he took me into the living room one day and he said “Francis, I’ve got something to tell you. I don’t think you’re really suitable, I think you’d better leave” so I went to live in the bungalow with mum and dad then I took on the job in the shop and I’ve still got the XXXX here as well from when I left there and um then I went back to school as I say and Miss Griffiths, she was the head mistress, she was lovely, she was strict but she was lovely, had mauve coloured hair and she used to stand on the piano with her arm on the piano each assembly and somebody would send two excellent pianists in school and they would play us out, as she would call it , play us out of assembly and she’d stand there throwing her head back like this and making all of the movements that one is supposed to make when one is listening to music, she was lovely I did like her.

*She sounds like quite a character and obviously her mannerisms have stuck with you*

Yes, she was nice. Some of the teachers I liked, some not so nice. Miss Dove, she was the, she died in 1990, she was really my favourite teacher I suppose apart from Miss McGeal yes because it was her who set me on the path to my future.

*Okay, it what way?*

Oh she taught hygiene and nursing and that sort of thing so

*So when you finished school for the second time obviously, because of when you went back*

[laughing] not many children do

*Not many finish twice*

No

*So how old would you have been then?*

I was about seventeen and a half I think

*Okay*

Oh I worked in Woolworths on a Saturday, I had a Saturday job

*Was that quite a common age to leave school for the school?*

Yes, I think so. I think most girls would of left at about sixteen, sixteen and a half something like that usually you leave in a summer term don’t you so as they came up to their summer term, I think it was sixteen then, as they came up to their summer term then they would of left on their sixteenth birthday either had a having had it or coming up to it because some children have birthdays in the august holidays don’t they?

*Yes, it’s funny I was speaking to Tony over the road earlier and his birthday is in August so he was one of those*

August 1936 he was born

*Yes*

I’ve never found out how old Rose is but no

*No, I’ve got no idea*

Was she there this morning?

*Yes*

Oh she was

*Yes she did join in a little bit because obviously she had memories of the park*

She comes up here occasionally, not I can’t find out her, I don’t like to ask her because I do ask a lot of questions but that’s just not one of them.

*Never ask a lady her age!*

[laughter]

*Apparently, that’s one of the rules isn’t it.*

*So what did you do directly after you left school?*

Directly after I left school what did I do? Um. I’ve got a job at, oh yeah, I wanted to take up nursery nursing, you know the little children, my mum had an interview with Miss Griffiths and I said to her whatever you do don’t persuade Miss Griffith to take, there was a job going at Islington, now just imagine getting from here to Islington every day and I said don’t let Miss Griffith persuade you to take that job over in Islington because it’s not on, I’m not going to do it so of course when she came home she said “oh I’ve accepted that job at Islington for you” [laughter] I thought “you so and so” and I threw a paddy that evening, I really did throw a paddy I was screaming and shouting and calling her a few names so I thought I’d do this on my own. I can’t remember if I saw the job advertised or how I came about it but there was a job going on in Banardos homes in Barkingside but they weren’t Banardos children the house was let out to Ilford, what used to be, Ilford County Council so I applied for the job and Miss Sandringham was the matron and I got the job at the first interview, I can’t even remember anyone else being at that interview I know I went to a house in Valentines Park to be interviewed anyway. I got the job and I started in September 19 ninety where are we it was ninety just gone wasn’t it. Ha! I’ve lost it! It was fifty-four what would it have been? The end of it was 54 not 19 what would it have been. Yes 1954. Yes that’s right.

*So what were you doing there?*

Just looking after children and you know learning, I went two days, two days to college to the south west tech at Walthamstow, um. That was for two years just learning about various things about children

*And that’s something you enjoyed?*

Oh yes, yes. The nursery closed after in 1956 yes the early part of 1956 then I was transferred to Goodmayes nursery, that’s no longer there that’s been demolished. That’s now a library.

[pause]

*And how long did you stay at the Goodmayes nursery for?*

Two years

*Two years*

That finished in 1954 about the summer holidays time some time around about then

So from there and doing that I got my NNEB - Nursery Nurses Examination Board, you know.

*And that was a standard qualification for all of the nursery nurses?*

Yes

*Okay*

I’ve got the certificate somewhere. Um and then from there into nursing at the old King George Hospital, now demolished, everywhere I’ve worked has been demolished.

*I won’t take it as a reflection on you, it’s okay*

[laughing] no please don’t!

That was at Newbury Park that hospital

*And was that still with children or was that...*

No that was general, medical, surgical, there were children there being nursed um that was three years then I stayed on I can’t remember the SRN because they don’t call it that these days it’s RGN isn’t it? SRN State Registered Nurse.

*And was that on the job training or was that with college?*

No no there was no, because our lectures were all in house with just a tutor who I understand is still alive, she’s in her nineties so I’m told. We didn’t have to go out, we did go out on a couple of educational visits but not very often which I think is better now if you can get out on an educational visit it’s much better isn’t it. Um because you know if you want to follow something else further than nursing you know what else you can follow don’t you? But you wouldn’t really know then would you? So that was that then I stayed on for a few months for staff nurse, that was 56-60 that’s right. 60 when I got my exam and then I stayed on for I suppose about six months, yeah for six months to...

*Okay*

To do staff nursing I thought I better get a bit of experience.

Then I did something I really liked and that was midwifery

*Oh lovely*

Yes I really really enjoyed that.

*It seems like you definitely wanted*

Oh yes I definitely wanted to follow the, mind you when I think about the way I brought my own children up I wonder if I was a good mother. [laughs] I often tell them I wasn’t.

*I think all good mothers say that though don’t they, they wonder so you know*

I was a bit naughty at times. So I did part 1, it went in parts in those days I think you do it all together now, part of mine was done at Barking hospital and I was attacked to a midwife who lived in Ashburton Avenue in Ilford so at least I had to ride my bike out to Ilford to do any deliveries because she was the midwife based there and she was very good, she used to leave me on my own and I had, I think, one baby born before I got there because I’d gone home to have something to eat that was my priority, had to go back to the hospital. But you know some of these woman are really good, if they’ve got somebody looking after them they’ll make a meal or make a sandwich or offer you to eat but I don’t think that was the type of house that did that sort of thing so, but strangely enough everything worked out because the doctor was there but I don’t think he knew as much as I did. [laughter] because he seemed a bit dithering by the time I got there, then the midwife turned up erm Miss xxxx she didn’t seem cross or anything, like she said these things happen you know, it’s best to be there but they do, it does happen. That experience um other than that everything else was alright, I mean there weren’t all straight forward births were they? One of the last I went to I said “I’ll knock on the wall or bang my leg on the floor if I want anyone to come” because people didn’t go in in those days and see the babies being born so I said “I’ll knock for you if I want you with my foot” and then the woman had to

[DOORBELL RINGS]

Yes, what was I saying

*We were talking about rubbing bellies*

Yes, you have to rub them after a contraction to stop the bleeding and the baby needed sucking out as well so I’ve got the baby in this hand and you put the tube in your mouth you see and you suck out the baby and spit it out on the bed or where ever and I’m rubbing up a contraction with this hand I’m banging on the door like this for someone to come and help and when I went outside they said “everything alright? What was the baby a boy or a girl?” I thought “you could of come and helped”

*XXXXX you didn’t have enough hands*

I didn’t ahve enough hands no because you’ve got to make the baby breath and cry haven’t you otherwise the mum wonders what’s going on doesn’t she? But yeah that was one of the last things I had. Other than that it’s very straight forward and it is a nice feeling, the first one I went to, the very first was I do know the area because I had been because I was living in the area, the house that we had when I was when I practised on the district went with the job, so we had a house in broad street and the first ones I went to, these people, I didn’t know them because they were somebody else’s patients Nurse Bambrook’s patients and I said “what’s going on” and they said they wanted they’d got two girls they want a boy so I went upstairs, everything was quite straight forward, quite normal and I rushed downstairs and I said “you’ve got a boy, you’ve got a boy” and I’m thinking afterwards she could of been bleeding to death upstairs couldn’t she! [laughs] But I’m so excited ‘cause they’ve got this boy that they wanted. Yes, and that, part two I, I didn’t mention, that of course comes straight after part one. That was done in Old Church Hospital. And it was quite nice there, not bad.

*And whereabouts is that one?*

Oh, have I got it round teh right way? No, I haven’t, I’m really sorry I haven’t got it round teh right way, I should have had my thing in front of me shouldn’t I?!

*[laughs]*

Part, I did part one first, that was at Old Church Hospital, that was after I left the, after I left the er, King George. And then that was six months, that’s a six month course, and you have to get a certificate for that. And then part two, was done at Barking Hospital.

*Right.*

Six months, certificate for that, and that is when you’re attached to um, that’s when you’re attached to the ladies outside, the midwives outside. Yeah, Nurse Lovett her name was. And then after that, I got married, in nineteen sixty two (1962), and then we went to live in Broad Street, in Dagenham. And that was when I started in the district, I’ve cut, I rather put the cart before the horse there, haven’t I?

*[laughs]. So the district was a hospital?*

The hospital, wait a minute...

*Sorry.*

Wait a minute...

*I’m being awkward aren’t I?*

No it’s me really, I’m being a bit silly, I ought to know about these things didn’t I? Xxxx [sound of ruffling papers]. Right here we go. Xxxx. Right, let’s go, let’s go backwards. You’ve got all this, but I’ll go backwards.

*Ok.*

Nineteen forty two to fifty four (1942 - 1954), school. September nineteen fifty four to fifty six (1954-1956), student nursery nurse with Ilford County Council. September nineteen fifty six to sixty (1956-1960), student nurse, staff nurse, King George Hospital. September nineteen sixty to March sixty one (1960 - 1961), student midwife, part one, Old Church Hopsital, yeah I did get it wrong didn’t I. March nineteen sixty one to September nineteen sixty one (1961), student midwife part two, Upney Hospital, Barking. September nineteen sixty one to April nineteen sixty two (1961 - 1962), staff midwife, Barking Hospital. Yeah, I did stay on for a little while. Then in May sixty two, marriage, changed name to Harrington, it was Read, R E A D. May nineteen sixty two, to December nineteen sixty six (1962 - 1966), district midwife, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Nineteen sixty five (1965) was when we changed over to being Barking and Dagenham, before that we were separate councils. Um, December sixty six to January sixty seven (1966-1967), gave up work to raise a family, full time mum...January seventy six to April seventy eight (1976 - 1978), staff nurse, two nights a week, Rush Green Hopsital, Romford. That was on the gynie ward, I liked, I enjoyed that.

*Right, ok.*

I like, I like anything like that. May nineteen seventy eight, to July nineteen eighty eight (1978 - 1988), no...that’s wrong, no, that’s wrong.

*[laughs].*

Er, May, er, no, nineteen eighty eight (1988)? Seventy eight to eighty (1978-1980), to May nineteen seventy eight (1978), golly I’ve never noticed that before, to July nineteen eighty (1980), staff nurse, two nights a week at Barking Hospital.

*Right.*

And then August nineteen eighty (1980), until, eighty until...er, two thousand and two (2002), that’s what, er, eighty to two thousand, that’s twenty two years, yeah, school nurse. Barking, Havering and Brentwood Hospital Trust, now Barking and Dagenham Primary Care Trust. And then retirement in, I did work for two days afterwards, after I retired.

*Ok, was that voluntary?*

Um, xxxx, for well, which still with Barking and Havering, I asked if I could work because it was a sort of um, easing off time, wasn’t it. You know.

*Yeah.*

Easing down time.

*Wow, so you had quite a full career then!*

I have I suppose, yes. But it’s nice to look at the good times, and, you know, just think, oh I remember so and so, and so and so. And sometimes people would, come up to me and say, oh hello Nurse! You delivered my baby blah, blah, blah. And I’m thinking, well I only know your tail end dear, I don’t know your face! [laughs].

*[laughs].*

Yes, and I met a fella around here the other day, working on the roads, and er, I had some er, ear bits in, and I was laughing. And he was laughing back at me, and I said oh, I said, this is funny! I didn’t recognise him, he said, here comes my Nurse-y, that gave me all my injections in school! [laughs]. I did remember the name, but obviously I didn’t remember the face but, I said, if ever you want to come in and have a cup of tea...I’ve seen him working on the roads before. And he’s got quite a nice face as well, you know, so I said yeah, come in and have a cup of tea!

*Quite a handsome fella is he?*

Yes he is handsome actually! Although he’s grown a beard.

*Nice to invite round and have a look at!*

Yes! Yes.

*Isn’t that lovely though, that people still sort of recognise you...*

Yeah I suppose it is, yes, but...

*Because you’re probably this pivotal figure in their lives that they remember.*

[laughs] There was a nurse round here called um, what was her name? Nurse Goodacre I think...no, xxxx one minute, there’s a Thoroughgood and a Goodacre, no it was Nurse Goodacre, she used to ride a bike in the nineteen forties (1940’s) and fifties (1950’s). And she used to go round and say, Morning Mother, Morning Mother, how are you today Mother? How’s your baby today Mother? And I can still see her now, riding around on her bicycle. She xxxx came from Upminster.

*Was she someone you knew quite well, or was it only just a...?*

Oh yes, yes, because I did a little bit of um, of er, baby experience with her. Like going to clinic for, when I was at school, going in to clinic, they let me out of school, and , an see the babies weighed. That’s all it amounted to really, it wasn’t very much.

*That’s really interesting. So did you always know, even when you were at school, that you wanted to work with children then?*

Um, well my mum looked after children for a pound a week during the war. That’s all she charged ‘cause that was all that was necessary to charge. And I suppose it started there.

*Ok. And how many children of your own do you have, if you don’t mind me asking?*

Three.

*Three?*

Yeah. Deborah, John and Angela.

*Ok. Well we probably should talk about Barking Park a little bit now! [laughs].*

[laughs].

*Got a bit distracted there, didn’t I?! I was going to say, what, what would, what was your earliest memory of Barking park?*

Well...er, where are we, where did I do this? Ah...oh dear Jackie, please find enclosed, that’s not it is it!

*[laughs].*

I do quite a lot of things in rough first. Oh Frances, why didn’t you get this ready for earlier? Ah, my earliest memories are, my mother must have taken me over the park before this happened, because I do vaguely remember going in at the main gate, but the earliest memory was going over the park with my best friend Diana, in Netherfield, who lived in Netherfield Gardens, and I must have been about seven or eight. And we saw the bunkers which housed the guns, search light and barrage balloons. Which was quite a surprise to me, because I didn’t know that, you know, that this was, that these things were over there. Um, I’d seen, you know, I’d seen barrage balloons. Now there were also some Nissen huts over there, on the same field. They were backing on to the side of Barking Abbey School.

*So were there soldiers stationed there at that time?*

Well, this, this is, I’ve said in the next bit, we couldn’t, I could never determine who occupied these dwellings, some people say it was the soldiers, who manned the artillery, and others say it was private people, who were homeless. But I never found out the answer to that one.

*Ok.*

I did ask.

*It’s quite interesting, because I have heard that some people who were bombed out during the war moved in to the Nissen huts.*

Ah!

*So it could have been a mixture of both?*

Yes.

*Could have been a mixture of soldiers because they had no shelter, so they just...*

I didn’t think about that.

*Yeah, it’s only something that I’ve heard I don’t know how true that is, but like you say if you’d heard...*

It’s possible, it’s quite possible isn’t it?

*Yeah. Yeah, it’s definitely...[pause]...so what can you remember, what, visually in your head, could you describe the sort of, scene to me of seeing obviously the barrage balloons and...*

Well there weren’t any, they were empty bunkers when we went over there, there was nothing in them. We used to play down them, they weren’t very clean.

*Ok.*

They had steps obviously, ‘cause you had to go down in to them. But there were no guns over there as far as I can remember, they’d all been removed. Nothing at all, just the concrete buildings.

*So were there any remnants of where the guns may have stood or...?*

Um, I can’t, I don’t think so. I don’t think so. I think by, what would it have been, a couple of years after the war, I think they’d all been removed.

*Ok.*

Um, after that, I’ve sort of been round the park really, if that’s alright?

*Yeah, that’s fine!*

From there we went to the side of the swimming pool, which I’m told opened in about nineteen thirty (1930). So I’m told, and was finally closed in nineteen ninety (1990). And after that it became disgraceful. Um, after the building was closed, it attracted, no, wait a minute...after the war, sorry, after the war, the building attracted many, many swimmers, from all areas on a daily basis. Particularly if it was a hot day. [pause].

*Did you ever go in the Lido yourself? You did?*

That comes next!

*Oh sorry!*

[laughs]. Particularly, oh, it was here that I spent many happy hours in the Lido myself, also my children. And particularly refreshing after a twelve hour stint of night duty. Um, that’s about it I can say about me personally, but here’s a bit more about the swimming pool. The building, like the surround building, also housed a very shallow pool, where mum’s could sit on the side and dangle their feet and splash their babies. So, it was really a tiny baby pool.

*Is that something you did yourself with your young ones?*

No I don’t remember doing that! At all. I, I, because we had that outside pool didn’t we, the um, the other one, where the children er, but I never really, no I don’t remember going over the pool at all with the children. Not the little one. Um, now...where do we go from here? Oh yeah, the public were admitted through a turnstile, and if you were um, less honest, you would get over the turnstile on top of it and climb over. Which I never did. ‘Cause I’m not a boy! Boys used to do that! For a nominal amount of money, you were given a key for a locker, which was um, to put on your wrist, you had to hold it on your wrist.

*So did they have, kind of like a rubber band or something attached to it?*

Yes, yes, it was on a, on a rubber band sort of thing, or a piece of material. Then you put your clothes in the locker. Now I can’t remember what the changing rooms were, whether they were communal, whether all the girls in together, and all the boys on the other side, or whether they were separate cubicles, I only remember the lockers, I don’t remember any cubicles of any description. But anyway, um, and the pool, the Lido had fountains either end, and wow betide anybody who dared to climb them! The lifesavers, men usually, sitting on either side of the pool would blow a whistle very loudly.

*Ok, sorry, were there more than one lifeguards then, ‘cause I’ve heard some people say that they thought there was only one there?*

Well, I don’t remember there being more than one, one either side perhaps. Yeah. Just imagine trying to keep your eye on all this, all these children.

*I should imagine it got quite busy there?*

It did, it got very busy, it was sort of standing room only on a hot day. And then you’d put your towel on the side and somebody would say, oi, somebody’s pinched my towel, and no, no, that was my towel! No I had that colour! [laughs]. So he’d blow the loud whistle for the offenders to get down at once. And if it occurred a second time, they were told to leave the pool. Whether they did or not, is left to the imagination!

*It’s interesting, because obviously if there were so many people in there, they probably wouldn’t have been able to...*

No! No, they can’t watch everybody can they, unless they’ve got eyes in their backside! [laughs]. Er, there was also a chute, a water chute, but I never attempted to ride down there, so I was too scared. [pause]. And then over the back of the Lido, towards the wall, there was a flat paved area, where one could spread out their towels and lie down to sunbathe. And it was a sad day when it was closed, and allowed for the next twenty years to become quite disgracefully overgrown with bushes and trees, self seeded of course. [pause]. And then outside the swimming pool, I think I’ve finished with the inside now, as far as anything I can remember. Outside the swimming pool was a free paddling pool for children, and many happy hours were spent here when my children were small. I suppose it was about...the size of this room, out to the pavement, and as big as, as wide as two houses perhaps, it was fairly large, yeah. It was quite good, I enjoyed that going down the pool, my friend Pauline down the road, and myself, I had a big Royal pram with a big bottom, you know, and Pauline had a swan and we marched over there with our cabs together you know, and think, think we were the Queen I think sometimes! [laughs]. Oh we did enjoy that! And then I, I used to dump all the, dump all the children in the pram, ‘cause you could take out the bottom, you could take out the middle, and they could put their legs in you see, so you could get any amount of children in to [laughs]. And then looking the other way, yes, the pool there’s not really a lot to say about that, there was lots of trees round there, I don’t think they’re there now, in fact I know they’re not. There was lots of, so the mum’s could shade. And there were seats as well, where you could sit down, it was really good! And then, down towards the lake, um, if you, looked, this really goes back a bit, if you looked, when we, Diana and I went down beside the swimming pool, and we looked right, there was barbed wire across the lake, that was obviously something to do with the war. It was from one side of the lake to the other. This really should have gone when I said I went over the park with Diana and we saw the um, the bunkers for the guns. Um, there was...

*So that would have been about nineteen forty six (1946) you said?*

Yes, yes, it would have been. There was barbed wire right across and there was a hut at the end of the lake.

*Ok. It would be interesting to find out why that barbed wire was there wouldn’t it?*

Yeah it would, yeah. I feel sure that that was some, but the funny thing was, the guns were no where near there. Not at all. The guns were this side of the park, and that was right up the South Park Drive end. And at the very end of the lake there was a hut, I don’t know what it housed, I haven’t got a clue.

*And that’s the South Park Drive...?*

And that’s the South Park entrance, yes. Now I did something here about the boathouse, what have I done about the boathouse? Because then er, after that I put, that was looking right, and then looking left, you would have seen, walked your way towards the boat house, coming along towards the Loxford end. Now, I don’t know too much about the boat house, um, at all, because I never went on the boats as far as I could remember.

*Ok.*

But there used to be, oh yeah, also going back to the little um...going back to the little paddling pool, there was no EU directions about water born diseases in those days, so you couldn’t say, oh I can’t let my child go in there! Because it just wasn’t, you know, the kids used to do all sorts of horrible things in there [laughs], I think! Nothing, no nothing to do, yeah this is the, this is the next bit. Diana and I, this should go back a bit shouldn’t it? Diana and I walked past the swimming pool and came to the lake, looking to the right was a section of water which had barbed wire across it from one side to the other. At the end of the lake was a building which resembled a hut, don’t know what it housed or what it was used for. In later years the end of the lake, this end of the lake was used for the paddle boats for children. Um, at the other end, yeah, having been cut off, it was, it was, obviously the barbed wire was taken away. At the other end of the lake, walking, I think you call it westward don’t you? That would be westward if you go towards Loxford, because that goes towards London, that end of the lake doesn’t it? So I’ve called it walking westward, was the boathouse where one could hire a rowing boat for a small fee. [pause] And then later on, motor boats were introduced, I never went on the boats as far as I can remember, perhaps I was too scared. And also, if you go on a, if you go on um, rowing boat, you want somebody to row it for you [laughs], I didn’t intend to do it meself! Then after the war, we could ride on Phoenix I, which was a big paddle steamer, I enjoyed that. And later replaced by Phoenix II. [pause].

*Could you describe a little bit more about that experience of going on the Phoenix if that’s ok, as a child?*

Um, it’s quite exciting, there were seats on there, and I suppose you thought you were somewhere else. Do you know what I mean? Being on the lake, because it used to go up one end, round the islands, and back down the other end, but it was very, very simple, I mean there was no down below, or anything like that, it was just one, all one level. And with seats, really, it was very simple. Not really much to record about that.

*Were you quite fascinated by the paddle though?*

Yeah, I suppose I was, you could look, look over the side, there was no, there was a rail at the side obviously, but you could look over the side and see the paddles going round, yes.

*And what was the water like at that time, ‘cause I’ve heard that in later years after the motor boats, it got quite dirty?*

Well, it wasn’t particularly, I don’t think the lake was ever particularly clean.

*Ah ok.*

Not filthy dirty, as it has been in recent years, but it was, er, you couldn’t see to the bottom. [pause].

*That’s interesting.*

That’s all there is really, about the Phoenix. There have always been swans on the lake, and more recently hoards of Canadian Wild Geese! I didn’t know whether I should describe them as hoards because obviously a collection of geese have got a name haven’t they, but I didn’t know what to put, I thought that was a bit disrespectful to them! [laughs]. Oh they are, they can be quite vicious you know! And I seen them, if you’ve got bread in your hand, and you, out of a plastic bag, you give it to them out of a plastic bag, and then you’ve finished, you put the plastic bag in to your pocket, they’ll go down your pocket! And, and see what they can get. I’ve seen them do that. Er, hoards of Canadian Geese, feeding these birds and pigeons, as well as little birds as well. It was a big attraction and still is for the children, particularly the younger ones.

*Is feeding the geese and the swans something you would do quite regular with your own children?*

Oh with the children, yeah, we used to go over there and feed the, feed the ducks and the swans. I said to Deborah when Ellie was born, do you take Ellie over the park at Romford? ‘Cause she’s always lived at Romford. So she said, no. So I said, how about taking her over the park to feed the ducks and the swans and whatever wildlife there is over there? And she said, she’s got plastic ducks, she can swim in her bath!

*[laughs] Not quite the same is it?*

No! [laughs]. No it isn’t! Erm, do you want to break off for a bit?

*Oh, of course, yeah of course!*

Do you want cake, do you want a cup of tea?

*Oh I wouldn’t mind, if you’re having one, I’ll have one too.*

Yeah.

*Lovely. I’ll just pause the tape for a minute.*

Yeah, take a cake...

[tape paused and then resumed].

*Ok. Um...*

I only sort of got so far. I mean you might want to say something at the end.

*Well, I’ll let you carry on, and then if it’s ok, I’ll ask a couple of questions if that’s ok?*

Yes, go on!

*Could you just repeat the story about um, knitting, knitting the swimsuit though, if that’s ok?*

Oh yes, when um, I was about ten I suppose I was, mum used to look after children, and Carol was a rather fat, podgy little girl, and I knitted her a swim suit. I don’t remember getting measurements from anywhere, or putting a tape measure around to her to find out what her measurements were. So I just went on knitting and knitting and knitting, and then um, she went, er, I took her over the park to go in the children’s play area. And the swimsuit just disappeared down her legs! [laughs]. Because it was wool obviously, it was too heavy for her! [laughs].

*Just took on all the water straight away?*

All the water got to it yes! Yeah.

*Like a sponge almost, or something?*

Yes, she didn’t seem all that um, upset about it though [laughs]. I mean little children, all sorts of things happen in paddling pools don’t they?

*Yeah.*

So yeah, she didn’t seem all that upset.

*Lovely, ok!*

Anyway!

*Sorry, we were up to feeding ducks!*

Yeah, we got to the feeding ducks. And we’ve gone along the lake, haven’t we?

*Yeah.*

And then if you go a bit further along towards the boathouse, as I said I don’t know very much about the boathouse at all. Um, you come to the little train, which ran as far as the lake, down as far as the lake, from the main gates. But this hasn’t always been the case, this engine with attached passenger seats used to run along the small strip of land at the back of the lake. You know, there’s the lake, and there’s the strip of land and then there’s a little stream isn’t there?

*Yeah.*

Well that’s where it used to run. Once upon a time.

*Can you actually remember that?*

Yes I can, and Tony said he can’t, but then Tony wasn’t here at that time was he, he can only remember it from this end. But yes, I can remember it being, and I used to go on it as well.

*So that was about forty six, forty seven (1946/1947) again?*

Yes, probably about then. Maybe a bit later, try, try that a bit later.

*Let’s say forty eight to forty nine (1948/1949)?*

Yes, probably. Yes, ‘cause I would have been getting on then. Er, and it ran from er, to Loxford, and then it ran to about...now Pauline said the end, she said it ran up to the South Park end, but I don’t think it did. I don’t think it ran that far, I’ve put the end to about two thirds the length of the water, along beside the water and then head back again. [pause].

*Can you remember roughly when it would have stopped running along the back then, or is it just something that went away...?*

I can’t, I really can’t. It’s been up this end a long time. A very long time. But no, ‘cause as a child, you’re not really interested in dates are you?

*No, you’re just enjoying the ride!*

Yes, exactly! No I can’t remember that. But I do remember thinking, even as a child, what an improvement it was. Because more likely, people, more people are likely to see it this end aren’t they, than they are right over the back of the lake. You might not have even noticed it over there. Um, I don’t remember a turntable at either end, so I assume it boasted two engines, one at the back and one at the front. That’s all I can think. Then, because, it’s such a narrow strip of land, there wouldn’t have been room for a turntable would there? It’s very narrow over there, isn’t it?

*Of course.*

Have you been over there?

*I’ve not been over the back, no, I’ve, obviously, been over to the park quite a few times recently, but um...*

That’s where Warren said he wanted to act as a stud to the ladies! [laughs]. He was a so and so he really was! [laughs].

*Could you tell me that story again for the tape, if that’s ok?*

We had a fella living down here, I felt sorry for him actually because he was a boy, and there were two girls in the family. And the parents always seemed interested in the girls more than, than Warren. And um, he was telling me, that I said, well, Warren, you’re, you’ve got no, you’re aiming about, you’ve got no, or you’re wandering about, you’ve got no aim in life have you? What are you doing? He had, had had a job over the cemetery. Um, but he gave that up, er digger I think. And then he said, no, my aim in life, he said, is to be a stud for all the ladies! So I said, really? He said, yes, and do you know what, I nearly got caught on that strip of land over the park, between the lake and the stream. He said, I heard somebody coming and I had to dress quickly! [laughs] Oh dear, oh dear!

*It’s a bit of a saucy one, isn’t it!*

Oh he was! [laughs]. He was terrible! And I hadn’t seen him, he used to live just further down the road. I haven’t seen him for a long time, and I just wonder if he, he was married, and he had children. I said to him when I saw him with these two little girls, what came first then, the children or the marriage? So he said, oh marriage! I said, oh, you surprise me! But I haven’t seen him, and I’m wondering if he’s moved. And I don’t know anybody down that end to ask. I know he didn’t get on with his mother in law, and she died, and he was very pleased about it! [laughs].

*Crikey! [laughs].*

Oh!

*Was that strip of land popular with er, courting couples?*

Oh I imagine there was a lot went on over there, yes, because it’s fairly isolated. [phone rings], Oh excuse me!

*That’s ok!*

[Phone continues to ring] Yes it’s very isolated. Xxxxx [Leaves room to answer the phone, talks on phone before returning, laughing].

*Getting a lot of mileage out of that one aren’t we? [laughs].*

Xxxx [laughing loudly]. She was calling from, and she had a very sharp voice, I didn’t hear where she came from, and I don’t want to answer that sort of thing anyway! I say, I’m quite happy as I am, thank you! Er, so that’s the train, don’t, can’t really say any more about that, only that, as I say, it came up to, this end later on in life, as it were. The carnival, the main gates of the park have seen many celebrities enter their portals over the years. For me as a child, and teenager, the most exciting event was the yearly entrance of the fair and carnival floats. Now I didn’t know what word to put here, xxxx might not be, you xxxx, what is it when you have cars, vans, trucks, lorries, what do you call the whole lot?

*Er...*

‘Cause I couldn’t think of a word!

*If I was thinking of a word off the top of my head I’d, to, as er, a group of...?*

Yes the whole lot used to come through the town, and I’ve left it blank, I couldn’t think of it.

*I would say vehicles, but I mean...*

That’s a very general word isn’t it?

*Yeah.*

There must be a word.

*The whole caboodle? [laughs].*

Yeah! Anyway...the whole lot um, for want of a better word, would consist of cars, vans, trucks, lorries and organisations all advertising their own particular wears or trade. And in the middle of this the er, this whatever, pardon me, the carnival queen would sit on her throne flanked on either side by her attendants. I can not remember when this event was disbanded. The train, used to, the train of, if that’s what you call it, of all these vehicles used to start in Mayesbrook Park, travel along Lodge Avenue, Ripple Road, Longbridge Road and on to Barking park. And one year, one of the high floats crashed in to one of the pillars at the top here, you know there’s white pillars isn’t there?

*Yeah.*

And I was ever so upset about that, I mean I must have been a teenager, and I was really upset, I thought, how are they going to mend it? You know, but within um, and it came down to the pavement. This was soon repaired and within the next month it was restored to it’s former glory. So they didn’t have much trouble putting it back. But I was, I was, oh, quite upset because I, I suppose I thought it can’t be repaired, do you know what I mean? But yeah, it’s alright now.

*Do you remember what year that was...?*

No, don’t remember, sorry.

*No worries.*

Can’t remember that year. Um, the activities in the children’s play area on the edge of the fields, I’ve put edge but it isn’t really, is it? The children’s activity area has always been situated in the place behind, no, that’s wrong...on the edge of the field, the children’s activity area has always been situated in this place. Um, behind the swings and roundabouts there used to be a cafe, where one could buy ice cream, tea and sandwiches. [pause] But I don’t remember any cooked food being offered, I’m sure you couldn’t buy, just tea and er, things that didn’t have to be cooked. Now this is where the skateboard now stands. And then above the cafe, I remembered that fella’s name, I couldn’t remember it when I saw you before, above the cafe were living quarters for Derrick, wife and two children. And I saw them at the funeral as well, of, of er, Les. He’d be somebody to tell you something...Derrick. If you, are you in touch with Christine?

*Um, Mill, Millard? Er, Les’ daughter?*

Les’ daughter.

*Yes. Yes.*

She’ll, she’ll know where Derrick lives.

*Ah ok.*

Because um, he, he came to the funeral so she must know where he lives, or one of Les, little Les as we called him, he would.

*I’ll be seeing her on the twenty fifth (25th) actually.*

Yeah ask her, see.

*Did you know her father quite well then?*

What Les?

*Yeah.*

Oh yes, we, we used to go, David and I used to go in the Lodge occasionally.

*Ok.*

And have a cup of tea with Les and Rene. Yeah.

*And he wasn’t the superintendant was he, he was the under...?*

No, Mr Curry was the Superintendant, but somebody remembers, before Mr Curry was even the superintendant, but I don’t go that far back.

*So Les was just kind of like, a nursery worker?*

Yes, yes.

*Ok. And Derrick didn’t actually work in the cafe?*

No, no, he didn’t work in the cafe, he worked in the park.

*Right ok.*

Doing something. Er, right, before xxxx wife and two children, we’re nearly coming to the end now. Er, Derrick worked in the park, I’ve got that. I think this flat suffered a fire and the whole building, and eventually the whole building was demolished. Beside the cafe er, were, and still are the tennis courts, where one had to pay for a game of tennis. And further over, in front of the swimming pool was a golf course, once again, a paying activity. Um, and then there was, the big, I don’t know what you call it, chess, chess players, for the men.

*Ok.*

I expect you’ve heard about.

*Giant chess set?*

Giant Chess board for the elderly men, now Pauline remembers a hut in front of that, but I don’t remember that. I just remember these big chess things, like weights that you would have on a, on an old fashioned scale, but much bigger you know. Huge like the size of a big saucepan and they had these poles and they used to life them up and put them over, and life them up. I do remember watching that occasionally. But not knowing how to play chess, I didn’t know who was winning and who was losing. But as I say, Pauline remembers a hut, I don’t remember that. Um, what else, I can’t really think about anything else...Bandstand!

*Bandstand?*

Yes I used to go over there every Sunday, well, every Sunday when a band was playing that is, with my Nan. Then within the bandstand fence you used to pay and you could sit down. If you didn’t do that, you had to stand outside the fence, fencing to the bandstand.

*Was it quite an expensive....?*

I can’t remember how much it was, no, my Nan probably paid anyway. We used to like that, I used to enjoy that. Can’t remember when it was demolished, I expect somebody might have been able to tell you that.

*I believe someone told me it was around the nineteen seventies (1970’s) when they um...*

Possibly, yeah, or even before perhaps.

*Then they built a car park or some...*

See and also, once I got married, I went away to live for five years, um, and we didn’t come back here until nineteen, er, sixty six (1966), when we came back here. So really I wouldn’t have been all that interested in what was going on in the park. I used to come over here, even after nineteen sixty six (1966), and I only had one day off in a fortnight, that’s all you were allowed xxxx, that was heavy going now I look back. And I used to come back here and see my dad, so I used to spend time with him, not go over the park.

*Of course.*

Even though I used to bring Deborah with me. So I really wasn’t, after, once getting married I wasn’t all that interested until the three of them were all growing up. And, I could take all three of them out together, because sometimes it’s not possible to take one baby and one, another one that’s almost a baby, and another one walking. So I had to wait.

*It’s hard to chase after a toddler if you’re holding two babies isn’t it? [laughs].*

Yeah, exactly. Yes. Yeah it was a bit difficult. But we, we had some nice times, and I used to find as many parks as I could around here. We went to Cotton’s Park one day, and I thought oh, I can’t er, this is in Romford isn’t it, and I went to, I said um, I’m not going to sit and do nothing, they had a paddling pool, all, all the parks had paddling pools, there was one over Greatfields Park, down the bottom. I remember that one. And we went to um, Cotton’s Park, and they had a paddling pool, and I thought, I’m not going to sit and do nothing, and I needed a dress, that needed hemming up, so I thought oh, I’ll sit and do this hemming up you see. And then Angela came up to me, she’d been in the paddling pool and she seemed perfectly alright, and she said, oh I do feel sick. So I said, do you? And I went oh! Like that, she was sick in to my dress [laughs], I don’t know why I lifted my dress for her. But she was sick in to my dress, so I went in to the toilets and somehow or another I managed to get my dress off, and put the one on that I was, xxxx [laughs]. There was a lady sitting next to me, she said, did you come prepared for that?! [laughs].

*[laughs].*

I said, no, I didn’t, I happened to be mending it! [laughs].

*Just lucky!*

Just lucky yeah! And another occasion, I think that was the same occasion, Angela xxxx said that she put her, she went in in her knickers ‘cause she didn’t bring, she didn’t, she wasn’t going to be the same as everybody else and go in the paddling pool. She was only about four. And so I said, you’ll have to go in in your knickers. So of course when she came out her knickers were wet weren’t they, and I said, you’ll have to go home without any knickers on, but you’ve got a longish dress on, just keep your dress down, that’s all you’ve got to do. You don’t sort of, go flouting it. And she bloomin’ well sat next to this elderly gentleman, and she said, look man, no knickies!

*[laughs].*

I could have killed her! [laughs]. I could have killed her! And he didn’t know where to put his face!

*You can’t trust a four year old! [laughs].*

Oh dear, I didn’t know where to put his face, and I didn’t know where to put mine [laughs]. Right, other things in the park, I don’t think I can think of anything else. The allotments have always been over there, as far as I can remember, but I’ve not, wasn’t really interested in those. Oh, and there was a TARDIS over there, we were talking about the TARDIS. I wonder if you could find out from somebody, ‘cause Pauline and I are still having this difference of opinion, I say it was inside the park behind a brick wall up at the Loxford end. She says it was out on the pavement.

*Hmm, and that’s, just to clarify for the tape, by TARDIS you mean the blue police phone box?*

Yes, and it means, for Time And something...

*Relative Dimension In Space!*

Relativity, Direction In Space...yes that’s right! Yes, yeah.

*Ok, so Pauline it’s outside, and you think it was inside?*

I think it’s inside, and I think there was a low brick wall. There’s railings there at the moment, and she said to me, well how would they have gotten over the railings? And I said, well there weren’t railings there, it was just a little low brick wall. And it went with a dip as well, railing, you know the wall went like that, it was curved. And I said, well, they, there was, there was er, a problem with the police, and they just jumped over the wall. That was my thoughts on it. But I could be wrong.

*It would be interesting to find out.*

Yes. Somebody must know. What about the police station, they must have records.

*One would hope so, I can definitely look in to it for you. And I’ll ask at the local studies and archives centre as well, because they might know something about it, they might have like a map of locations of phone boxes from the fifties (1950’s) or something. I have no idea.*

Yeah.

*But, it would definitely be worth finding out.*

It is.

*Because it’s quite an interesting sort of, thing that nobody else has mentioned, so, it would be really interesting to find out where abouts that was. Might ask Andy actually, maybe he knows. But yeah, that is interesting. I was...sorry...*

Down by the boathouse, I do remember, just a little way away, was um, er, a small hut where a man sold ice, from which a man sold ice cream. I do remember that, how he kept it cold I really don’t know. [pause]. Then the children used to fish in the lake for tiddlers, there was always lots of tiddlers then. And shops nearer the park, would always sell this six penny er, fishing nets for the children. They used to put them outside in a pot, and then you pick up your net, and they were colours, choose your colour and go in and pay for it. [pause].

*Um, I think you were telling me at the session that um, a lovely story about you used to bring tiddlers home in a jam jar...*

Hmmm.

*Could you repeat that for the tape if that’s ok?*

Yes, I don’t, but I don’t know where they got the jam jars from, I mean, you wouldn’t buy a jam jar from a shop would you? Maybe they came armed with the jam jars, but they didn’t have the nets to go with them. So along would come this army of jam jars, and buy their nets just outside the park and then um, go and get their tiddlers. And come home with them. What they did with them when they got home I don’t know. I can’t ever remember doing that, but we had a fish pond over there in, in Aldersley.

*Oh really?*

But I can, oh, and we had loads of frogs as well! They used to scare the living daylights out of me! But I never remember coming home with any tiddlers at all. That wasn’t really my mother’s activity, I don’t think [laughs]. Um, also, in carnival time, and I don’t think I’ve got any pictures here, I used to collect for the mayor’s fund, outside the park gates. Um, have a tin, dress up, in a nurse’s uniform. Can’t remember where I got it from. Unless it was a red cross uniform? I can’t remember. And collect for the Mayor’s fund, and then at the end of the session they would tell you how much money each separate person had collected. Um, I can’t ever remember how much I ever collected, but I enjoyed that. ‘Cause, the, life was so slow then that people would get talking to you, you know, what are you collecting for, and are you a real nurse and all this sort of thing, you know. And I enjoyed that. And there was a man called George who came from East Ham, and he used to sell peanuts to anybody going in. And I used to have quite a few conversations with him.

*So you would just have um...?*

A tray of peanuts, yes, he always had a tray around his neck.

*Did he sell them outside because he wasn’t allowed to sell them inside do you think?*

Now that I don’t know. I’m not sure, whether he had a li-, I don’t suppose he even had a license in those days. I really don’t. Because um, that sort of thing wasn’t thought about, were they? I mean anything to do with food and selling, you have to have a license nowadays don’t you?

*Of course.*

But I liked George. He told me he lived at East Ham and he had a disabled son. But he never said what was wrong with him, probably they didn’t know. Didn’t give things names in those days did they.

*Not necessarily, no.*

And then of course, once I’d left home, you know, all that went by the board. I didn’t do it anymore. Now my mum had a photo of me, dressed up, I don’t know what happened to that. Because I remember there was a fella, that, how stupid is this, this fella and I don’t know who he was either, took a photo of me. It was somebody official, like to do with the council. Took a photo of me collecting outside the park, and this fella was looking over my shoulder. So it looks as though I’ve got two heads!

*[laughs].*

And my mum wasn’t very pleased about that, so she cut out just a picture of me and put that in a frame. And that was on the sideboard for years but I don’t remember seeing that when we turned out [coughs]. Oh! [coughs].

*Are you ok?*

[coughs] Hmmm [coughs].

*Do you want me to get you some water?*

No, I’ll get it, don’t worry! [coughs] Get it...[coughs], swallowed a bit of dust or something... [leaves room]...xxxx xxxx.

*[laughs].*

[returns to room after brief absence].

*Are you ok?*

Mmmm. Oh it’s lovely and cold! I love cold milk.

*Are you over heating again are you?*

I’m always hot and sticky, particularly in this weather. I have a shower before I go out in the morning and jump in the shower again, by that time the water was cold but it didn’t matter.

*[laughs] Almost prefer it cold!*

Hmmm.

*To cool yourself off a little bit. I was going, sorry to jump around a little bit, but I was going to ask you, I know you said Derrick worked in the park, and he lived above the cafe, but what did he do, can you remember?*

I’ve, I don’t know, I can’t think. Christine best, is best to tell you about that.

*Ok.*

I’m sure he did work in the park. I remember that, my mum and dad were quite strict as to who came to our marriage. Um, and, they said they wouldn’t have anybody under six years, and they had two little children and my husband wasn’t very happy about it. I mean, like my dad paid for the wedding, I know it sounds a bit, erm, not very nice, but my dad paid for the wedding, so we had to stick by his rules, you know. The two little bridesmaids, one of which was Christine as you know, and the other one was a little girl called Linda Greenhowe, don’t know what happened to them, um, they were both six years of age and able to you know, be good as it were.

*Yeah.*

But their argument was, mum’s argument was that everybody waits at the table until everybody’s finished. Well if she’s going to sit and feed two babies, and they were quite, quite close together in age, then, then mum and dad weren’t prepared for that, so unfortunately. But I saw them er, at Les’ wedding, er, Les’ funeral, and um, they never mentioned it. They didn’t say anything, I mean it was sixty two (1962) to present, to two oh six (2006), so maybe they’d forgotten all about it. I don’t know, hopefully they had!

*[laughs] Maybe they even remember being there?*

No, no.

*Who knows!*

I didn’t recognise her because obviously, I, she’d got a lot older, but um, she said, do you remember me? And I said, oh, I’m sorry I don’t. She said, do you remember Derrick that lived in the, Derrick and I forget her name...lived in the park? And then of course I did remember. Yeah. I did remember who they were. Hmmm.

*I remember at the sessions we were talking about um, the park keepers and the park wardens, as well and what they were like...*

Don’t remember anything about Park keepers.

*Oh ok.*

Only that they used to ride about on a bike making sure you behaved yourself. But I really don’t remember anything about them at all.

*Yeah.*

No. And also with regard to being environmentally friendly, I mean we weren’t in those days were we? We, we don’t, we weren’t supposed to go round looking in er, the birds, or the bees or the flowers and the trees like they do now.

*In terms of wildlife in the park, um, is there anything in particular that you particularly enjoy in the wildlife, like the flora or fauna, any particular flowers, or...squirrels? [laughs].*

I do like the flowers that they put out every year, yeah.

*Yeah.*

And particularly the Lodge, Les’ garden is really beautiful. Um, and also there used to be these signs, no walking on the grass, didn’t there, once upon a time. And the flower beds were always nice, very, very nice. Yes, I did like that part of it. But with regards to anything else, I wasn’t all that interested, that isn’t to say I didn’t like it, but we weren’t encouraged to, to like these things, you know. And that’s what I think is good about today, very good isn’t it, that children can learn all about the wildlife.

*I was going to ask you about the renovations and developments they’re doing in the park at the moment. What kind of positive aspects do you see out of, you know, along with the you know, the education suite that they’re building, and the fact that their rangers do sort of tours and things for the kids?*

Yeah, I think that’s a good idea. I think that the um, the education centre will be very, very good if it, if the children can treat it properly. You know, and not abuse it, yes I think it’s an excellent idea. But then I think, there’s always people like me, and Tony, that will say, oh, I wish we could go back to the old days, you know.

*[laughs]*

But alright, have the old days as we had it, and the education centre, that, that would be a bit of both, wouldn’t it?

*Yeah. It would be nice.*

It would.

*I think Tony was saying earlier that what he would really like is um, for them to sort of re-instate a bandstand on one of the islands or something.*

Hmmm, mmmm.

*And I thought that was a really, really nice idea actually.*

So do I! Definately! And once again, I don’t know who the bands were that played, like, I think you or somebody asked, well who were the bands that came to play? But I honestly don’t know, as a child, you’d go over there, and I loved brass bands so we just used to listen to the brass band.

*And just enjoy...*

My Nan and I. And that must have been, before nineteen fifty three (1953) because she moved to Worthing in nineteen fifty three (1953) so it must have been some time before that.

*So you were still very young at that point as well.*

Mmm, yeah, well I was about fifteen, yes. Yeah.

*So did she enjoy that, was that one of her, sort of....*

Mmmm, she like it, yeah, yeah she enjoyed it. My dear old Nan, she was nice.

*I was going to ask you, in terms of playing games in the park when you were a child, obviously with your little friend Diana or whatever, would you sort of make up games or would you just...?*

Just wander round the park really, from what I can remember! [laughs]. Used to take skipping ropes over there and skip.

*Ok.*

But other than that, I don’t remember playing, oh, and probably hide and seek or something in the bushes, in the middle of the grass where we weren’t supposed to tread!

*[laughs].*

But um, yes, I do remember playing hide and seek. Um, other than that, I can’t really...I suppose we just used to wander round the park looking and perhaps annoying people, I don’t know! [laughs].

*[laughs].*

No I can’t, can’t remember any, any games at all. I think the attraction for me was the swimming pool, over there. Definately. And the little paddling pool.

*When you met your husband later, did you ever sort of go to activities together in the park or...?*

No, not really. No. No, all he wanted to do was stay in his house and do, well, where were we first? In Broad Street. He wanted to just do, what I call bodge jobs! [laughs].

*Right ok...*

Not finish jobs that he was starting to do. And John came, I never thought I’d heard, hear John say this, he said, he looked round, and he doesn’t come here very often, and he said, this place looks really nice now, he said, I never thought I would see this day, and I wonder what dad would say. And it’s true. Compared to what it did look like, it was really, I mean they used to look at television and say, oh there’s a house being demolished there, oh I didn’t know the TV had been round our house, did you?! [laughs].

*[laughs].*

Because it was so bad! With all these unfinished jobs and I wasn’t interested in doing things. I’m much, much more interested now. Because all the jobs have been finished.

*Yeah. It’s much easier to sort of visualise once the jobs been done!*

Of course it is, of course it is! It’s much easier to keep clean and tidy.

*Of course. Was he a bit of a DIY enthusiast without the skills?*

Oh yes, he was a DIY enthusiast alright! Yes definitely!

*And what, what did your husband do for work, sorry?*

Oh he worked, he worked over the park, but he was on the, they didn’t have enough rooms at the town hall for him to work, to do paperwork. Um, what did he used to do? The men’s wages, he used to sort out the men’s wages. And so they gave him a room over the park.

*In the Lodge, or...?*

No, no, in the, where the nurseries were.

*Ah ok.*

He had a room in where the nurseries, I used to go over there and see him occasionally.

*What were the actual nurseries like then?*

Um, well they just used to really provide the plants that were needed all the way round borough for any special event. Er, they were quite big, I don’t know what area, but they were quite large. And then anything that was needed to go out for the carnival or any other event, and oh, pardon me. And the flowers for the beds of course. And I think the other parks as well, I don’t remember any other nurseries being in any other park. So I think that they must have provided flowers and plants for the other parks as well.

*And did they have like er, quite a few full time staff in there then, constantly tending to flowers?*

Um, I suppose there was about half a dozen people working in there, yeah. But I never ever, I don’t know who they were.

*That’s really interesting. Ok. Um, I think we’ve covered quite a lot then haven’t we?*

Yeah, we have!

*Um, I was just going to ask if there’s any other sort of enduring memories, or anything that sort of stands out in your mind that you want to make sure I record, whether it’s about the park, or about you and your family, and your life in Barking?*

Hmmm, life in Barking!

*[laughs].*

Actually people say they, oh, fancy coming to Barking. But this end I think is alright. And we never get any trouble down here at all. And the neighbours are alright, they might not speak, but they’re alright, they’re fine. There is one thing I miss and that’s when we came down here, all the people that have either died, or gone to live elsewhere, walking up and down. ‘Cause my front door was always open, it was never closed, and I’d have children standing beside me, can we play in your paddling pool? ‘Cause we had one of these big square things out the back. Um, but I, I do miss the people that are, were down here, or were down here in the nineteen, what, sixties and seventies (1960’s, 1970’s). Because like, nobody, sort of like, very much talks to each other now. But I’m a bit of a bugger because I, I do my front lawn see, and then I’ve got a strimmer and I strim the front lawn and I look up and I smile. Then if they don’t smile back at me I say, you can smile you know, it doesn’t hurt! Or, you can smile there’s no charge this week! [laughs].

*[laughs].*

Yeah I do, to everybody! [laughs].

*Well good for you!*

Yeah! Because some of them, and I said this to a fella the other day, he saw me wheeling my chairs, my din-, er, conservatory chairs, which were down Angela’s cellar, but I took my shopping trolley and I wheeled them all back. And of course he heard me xxxx, wheeling xxxx had his back to me, he was an Asian fella. And er, he just gave me one dirty look and looked the other side. And I said, you can smile you know it doesn’t hurt! And then he looked at his son, I presume it was his son as though he didn’t know what I was talking about. And the son didn’t know what I was talking about and I got so, I went, oh for goodness sake! And I just walked off! [laughs]. I know I’ve got a bit of a temper.

*It’s true, you know, there’s no excuse for no manners is there, I mean, I was kind of raised where if someone greets you, you greet them and smile...*

Yeah, but it doesn’t hurt does it to smile!

*No.*

It really doesn’t. And I feel like sometimes like a Cheshire cat because I, hello! Hello! [laughs].

*Well better that than with a frown isn’t it, so...*

It is! Of course it is.

*Of course.*

And sometimes people say hello, and I say, oh, I’m ever so sorry, I was day dreaming again, um, I ‘m really sorry I had my head down, or something like that. I didn’t mean to ignore you.

*Yeah. Oh that’s lovely. I think it’s a lovely way to end the tape as well. So...*

Yes.

*End with a little bit of positivity!*

Yes, a bit of positive yes. A bit of positive.

*Doesn’t hurt to smile, there you go! [laughs].*

What is it they say, smile though your heart is aching, smile though your back is breaking, smile though a tear may be ever so near...

*Oh I’ve not heard this one.*

Haven’t you? I haven’t got the words right!

*Oh right!*

I know there’s more words to it, um, smile though a tear, may be ever so near...and I can’t think, I can’t remember the end, but um, it goes along those lines.

*Yeah.*

That’s why I like some of those poems in the, in the scrap book. One of them starts off, what are the things that count in life, another rise in pay to rule, or something about to be the head of government someday. No these are not the things that count in life, and then of course, I haven’t learnt any further.

*Yeah, you’re doing quite well!*

I tell you what I have learnt, yeah, I’ll tell you what I have learnt but I haven’t done it all, erm, I really do like this. Is there anybody there said the traveller, knocking on the moonlit door. While his horse in, while his horse er, chumped the grasses of the forest ferny floor. A bird flew up out of the turret, above the travellers head. Is there anybody there he said. And then I haven’t really got any further than that. But I would love to know what xxxx Walter DeLaMere was thinking about when he wrote the poem.

*Yeah.*

But we’ll never know ‘cause he died in nineteen thirty seven (1937)! [laughs]

*[laughs] A bit late to ask him now!*

Yeah, a bit late to ask him, unless I go and dig him up! [laughs]. Oh, I, yes, I need to learn a bit further down. And when people say they don’t like poetry, I think, how can you not like poetry? But...

*Well, it’s so broad though, I mean I still think to say “I don’t like poetry” is kind of, that just sort of indicates to me they haven’t found the right poem yet.*

Yes.

*Because there’s so many different types and styles of poetry out there.*

Yes, I agree.]

*There’s bound to be something for everyone. I mean look at song lyrics, song lyrics are basically poems to music aren’t they? And everyone’s got their own taste in music so...*

Yes.

*Yeah, but that’s my philosophy anyway, I don’t know how much sense it makes, but...[laughs].*

Yes, I suppose that goes in with liking English, and spelling and all that sort of thing really doesn’t it?

*Of course, of course, yeah, language and the way words fit together.*

Yes, that’s right.

*Definately.*

The only thing I find now, is because I don’t have reports to write, I’m thinking er, do I put two “r’s” in that, or does that need two “l’s” ? And the dictionary is beside me all the time now, where as before I could read, reel it off.

*Well when you haven’t seen something written for a while it can be a bit confusing can’t it?*

Yes, yes it is!

*Always catches me out! I was trying to write “intelligence” the other day and I forgot if it had one “l” or two, and I had to write it out about three times before I got it right! [laughs].*

That’s got two “l’s” in it?

*Yeah!*

Yeah, I thought it had. Yeah, but I get xxxx, and one word that always fobs me off is necessary, is it two “c’s”...

*Yeah...*

But it isn’t two “c’s”!

*No, it’s one collar, two studs!*

Ah! That’s a way of remembering!

*That’s how I remember it! [laughs].*

That’s a way of remembering. That’s got to be good. Hmmm.

*I’m full of useless bits of information like that! [laughs].*

Yes, yeah there are ways of remembering things. For instance in nursing we had to learn hyper, which is above, and hypo which is under, which is below. So, hyper has got H Y P E R, that’s got five letters in it. Hypo has got H Y P O, that’s got four letters in it. So that’s underneath. Or you can remember the po under the bed, I mean it’s just as simple isn’t it. It’s both ways xxxx, that was easy for me. But it’s not always so easy. My favourite is saying to somebody, oh you reckon you’re a god speller, spell xxxx then! So what does that mean? That’s the blood pressure machine, spell it! And of course, you can’t but it...

*I wouldn’t know where to begin!*

Once you know, it is easy to spell, you know, once you get the hang of it, it’s not difficult.

*Yeah. Ok, well I’ll stop the tape now anyway so er...*

Have you got to get back to Walthamstow?

*Um, no my office is actually in Ilford, so I might pop back there. Actually what time is it?*

I’ve just thought, have you left a car outside?

*No, no, I get the um, I got the overground, because obviously being in Walthamstow, it’s quite easy to get the Overground straight to Barking.*

Oh, I see.

*So it’s...*

What do you go, platform one?

*Um...*

Is that the one that goes to Gospel Oak?

*Yes, yes. That one.*

Yeah, my dad used to catch that. So, you’ll go back to Ilford now, and then you’ll go back to...

*I don’t know, it’s getting quite late now, so I might just go straight back to Walthamstow.*

Quarter past four is that?

*Yeah.*

Quarter past four.

*Did you have any photo’s? Did you say, that you wanted me to take some photographs of?*

I did, but do you want to wait until you, you come again?

*Oh yeah, sure, no worries!*

To see those, because there is quite a few. And also I’ll try and, do you know I was looking for that tape of mum talking to the....

**[Tape Ends]**

**Interview Details**

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