**2011\_esch\_BaPa\_03**

*Ok, so this is Claire Days recording for the Barking Park Oral History Project, on the twenty second of August, two thousand and eleven. Um, can I ask you to say your full name and date of birth for the tape please?*

Full name, Jean Elizabeth Mary Bruce, that is a mouth full [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

*And the data of birth please*

Ooh the date of birth, 11/12/24.

*Brilliant, and can I asked where you were born please*

Ooh, I was born in Barking

*And where abut in Barking?*

In Barking, um in Upney Hospital, Upney lane

*Fabulous, um can I ask what your parent did for work?*

Ooh my Dad was err, jack of all trades [laughing] He wasn’t a particularly healthy man he suffered very badly as he got older, with xxx [duodenalis] so he did a variety of jobs

*Ok, and did your Mother work?*

Ooh my Mother worked yes, she worked, very- very hard, I remember as a child, she wasn’t in particularly good in health, and as Doctors recommended that she get outside in the Air so, she heard of some other women, and she talked to them, and they went down to Upminster, there was a big farm down there, xxx[Pauls] farms, and she got a job working in the fields, she worked very-very hard, the whole group of them, there was a group and they will worked right through the Winter, and right through the Summer, err doing all sorts of jobs in the fields, err xxx[rhubarb] pulling um, salad stuffs and all that sort of stuffs. And I loved it you know, because in the Summer, when we had the holidays, I had my dream, she will take me out, and she bought me a pair of boys khaki shorts, a pair of boys xxx, socks and shirt, and I was a boy [laughing]I was very much a boy, and she we will get up at five o’clock in the morning, and take the train down to Upminster, and there will be a lorry waiting, and um they lift me up and over, and we would go off down to the farm, where we xxx they given our orders for the day, of which err area, it was quite a large farm, down at Upminster um, we were given our orders of where we were going to, if it was a distance then we would be taken by lorry, and um we used to get to the err field and one women would err take me and we had to pick up the xxx[tuige] we would light a fire, and get the tea on going, and um so that the women could come and had a cup of tea or coffee whatever they wanted, milk man would come along with his milk trolley you know, and err they would come and had a cup of tea and then they would go back to the field, and carry on working it was very-very hard work, but it was good for my Mum,

*Did it improved her health*

Yes it did, she became quite a sturdy women, she wasn’t a tall women, err but she was very sturdy and very strong ooh yes, she worked very-very hard, but then as time went on, err we moved from Harrow Road up to St. Awdrys Road, it was a much bigger house, err I had an older brother he was eight years older than me, and my Mother got a job in the shop, in St. Awdrys Road, it was bread and grocery there was a baking xxx[up there] so she got a job there, and um she loved it because it was only just across the road [laughing]so she liked that

*Ok, you mention than that you had an older brother who was eight years older, was he your only sibling?*

Yes my Mother had lost two babies at least, one was stillborn, and the other one died soon after

*Ooh xxx*

So it very sad

*So sad*

Yeah, he was completely the opposite to me where as I was medium height, and dark brown hair [laughing] not now

*[Laughing]*

And err he was, about six feet one, and he had blond hair, but we were the same Father I can assure you [laughing]

*[Laughing] it funny how genes split sometimes isn’t it so err*

Yeah it is, so yeah

*Ok and can I ask what schools you went to in the area what was your first School*

School, well first of all I went to Gascoigne Infants, but when we moved up to xxx [St.Awdrys] I went transfer to Westbury School, which was still there actually, it’s a very good School, and then err I went on to, East bury School. Now that is the School I loved, and it a very-very good School, in fact um xxx[am] one of the Governor of it now, I was asked to be a Governor a year ago, so I thought why not, and I always remember the Moto, xxx I tried to lived to it[laughing] not always succeeding, but I have tried [laughing]

*[Laughing] xxx*

Yeah and I loved it, that is where I became aware that I loved sports, being a bit of a Tom boy, and I really err loved xxx [sport] it was good,

*Would say that was your favourite sort of lesson or Part of School*

Ooh yes, I used to look out of the window, because we look over the field, sport field and I used to always been told off [laughing]

*[Laughing] Day dreaming*

Do your School Work, and um ooh yes I loved it there, and um then the War started, and um they came and put the Shelter in our back garden ,this um iron Shelters ,and ooh I hated the War, it was awful, because we lived in St.Awdrys Road, and the opposite side of the Road those houses back down to the Tilbury line err, train route there were two route ,one for the electric line, and one for the err ordinary engine line, and err we could hear this Gun coming up and down, the Tilbury line, you could hear it and you think ooh God here it goes again, and I always remember once my Mother, err the siren, when my Dad was a warden, air raid warden and we both of us got down the shelter, and um I was setting there praying, and my Mother poor Mother she was terrified, she said “look at you, you are not freighting of anything are you” and I looked at her, and said what you talking about, am saying it over and over again please God don’t let me die, I was I remember it, and um you know I was terrified xxx, and we had a big one of the big bombs, further down St.Awdrys and it err, bombed about half a dozen houses, wipe them out, and people were killed, and you see because we where near the docks and the river and xxx[Fords], they were making ammunition I think or whatever, and err that we were target, but we did had xxx some bad bombing in Barking, err yeah we finally got through the War, and err I had left School then. And err I started in the Post office, I wanted to be a Telephonist in the post office, but I had to go to School first, um sit my Civil Service Exams which I passed, and then I chose to go to xxx exchanged ,up off the East ends, in Convent garden, and um ooh that was partly during the war, because I also remember when the siren went, we were told by the supervisor to us two, because we were the youngest ,we were what fifteen the two youngest we had to go down the xxx and mind the emergency thing, and we just got down there after rushing like mad from the third floor up, and we just getting through the hole in the wall, and we heard this bomb go off, and we thought ooh my God we been hit, but we hadn’t but when I finished my shift in the afternoon, I went out and everybody been talking about it, it was the Air Ministry on the corner of xxx[Hornbeam] that was hit, and err I was absolutely terrified, there were all bits of cloth den and stuffs in the tress on the pavement ,where people had been killed.

*Ooh my god*

It was dreadful; it really was. But any way, I caught the train home and I told my Mother and you know she said yes you know, but err I should never forget that, walk coming out and seeing that, but that was the way it was then, you know we would be going along on the underground to up to London, and you would see West Ham, it only a small station, or it was then, and a bomb had dropped on those houses xxx and you could see that the err, the err shelters had come up the force of the blast ,had force them up out of the ground, and the sheet and things were hanging out either ends now whether they were anybody in them I don’t know, but often we would had to get off, and walked from one Station to another, because that Station had been hit, so it was quite hairy at a time you know, but then there were the Celebrations, but we were not allowed to go to them we had to go straight home [laughing]

*Why you were not allowed to go celebrations*

Well because the Canadians were in London, the Americans by that time had decided to joined in two years too late [laughing] And um they were having parties of you know the War was over and all you know, and we because we were young they said the supervisor said no you, we rather you didn’t go to them um, all the other older girls xxx[would] coming in the next day and tell us what a marvellous time they had [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

But, we were sent home

Xx so you left School in 1940 did you say sorry um

Yeah something like that, ooh I don’t yeah

*Ok so you working*

Yeah

*In the strand sort of like four or five years wont you*

Yeah,

*Ooh ok*

Ooh yeah, it was quite an experience it was frightening experience you didn’t know whether you gonna get killed or not, but when you are young like that you don’t think about that so much

*Um*

Not until it comes really close, but err that was it, and then xxx I met um at the youth club, Eastbury School had a youth club running, they started up youth club for the kids you know, because they didn’t had anything to do, and um I was over the gymnasium one day, and um this two boys came in and one of them I knew, and the other one he was new and err, I was introduce to him I felt um he looks nice [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

And err he was, he was been demobbed because he gone in to the Forces, in to the Air Force, way before his time but he was my future husband

*Ooh lovely*

Yeah and err, we were going together, for ooh about a year, and we got engaged and then I had a nervous breakdown [laughing] the Doctor said it was a result of the War years, um living in shelters and going through what I did go through, when I went to the and my Doctor said [laughing] it was quite funny really, well not funny he said to me “get married” he said “you got nothing else to do” he said “you got no responsibilities no worries” he said “get married have a baby straight away”

*[Laughing]*

I looked at him I said that a bit drastic, he said “well you need something that relies on you” so as a result that was our Son [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Xxx somewhere [laughing] and um so, we had a Son and two years later we had a our daughter, xx that is the war years which were horrific at a times, they leave a lasting memory on you, and when you xx think about these riots today, you think to yourself my God this kids, don’t know what it is to be alive and living, xxx[they] think it all laugh, but they have been used by somebody on Computers and that is what is all about, it not because they are bored or anything like that, it just they been raise up, I feel sorry for them, that they can’t find something more useful in life, to do really xx[but] that’s it

*Yeah it quite sad init it is sad*

It is sad yeah when I think back, xx [think] to the young fellas that went to War some of them were only seventeen, and gave their ages as nineteen or something like that, to get in the Forces

*So I gonna ask you did your husband do that then because you said that he went in to the Army*

He went; yes he went in when he was about seventeen I think

*Cranky ok*

He shouldn’t had done

*Was that quite common then you think for boys to lie about their age*

Ooh yeah, yeah a lot of young fellas did, he couldn’t wait to get in the Forces you know

*So what year did you got married sorry*

Forty six

*Forty six*

Yeah

*And so obviously then you had two children rather quickly*

Yes

*Um so*

My Son was born in forty seven years xxx he will be sixty, sixty two something like that [laughing] yeah

*Then your daughter was probably about forty nine is she*

Yeah, my daughter

*Yes your daughter*

No she is sixty

*Ooh sorry she was born in 1949 no*

Ooh something like that yeah, yeah xx her birthday is coming up in October. And his is September.

*Right ok*

Yeah, so quite a young age, and um then my [laughing] I always remember my Mother, we had the front room in my Mums house, it was not a bad size house actually, so we had the front room, down stairs, and we had err xxx settee, a court and a court you know, the wooden ones that a bit stronger, and err it was a bit xxx [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

And um, but my Mum xxx[went] chasing off to the Council, and demanded to see the housing officer [laughing] ooh xx she tell him off you know, she laid the law down, and in consequence we were sent a card, to say err would we liked to go and view, one of the new flats in Long Bridge Road, and err down on err, the Green down on the A13 they were prefabs, and I went down to the office and I said they were xxx[gonna] give me the keys, I said can we have a prefab [laughing]xxx[quite] innocent you know, and err he said “you wait till you seen this flats” he said “go up and had a look at it” and my husband and myself we came up here and had a look at it, and I look around I said wow I said we got nothing to put in it [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

It huge, it a huge to our self, after living in one room bringing up two children, my daughter was about what three month old, or something like this, and err two, or three month old, and I said it enormous, but we were pretty lucky because one of my husband brothers, he worked at the garage and he brought home this small xxx [truck] and put it outside their house, and my Mum went up and down, saying if you got and furniture you want to get rid off [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

And people were like that, in those days you know, they was so generous and so good hearted. Looking out for one another, I mean sometimes you could hardly see any body here you know, but xxx[times] I know certain amount of them, but err people were coming out with a xxx[bed] for Colin when the err xxx[iron ones] and we all ready had a court for xxx, and um somebody had a table and four chairs, and somebody else also had something, and somebody else had a couple of carpet xx[and] it was hilarious, we bundle them all in the bark of this lorry[laughing]

*[Laughing]*

My husband came up, and err it was black xxx man floors and these was a xx[tile] this is a tile floor under here, but the other rooms were all just painted, and err my husband came up err, a couple of days before we moved in, and painted it a nice tile red like this, and then of course as time went on, we acquired the money to [laughing] to buy carpet and people gave us present you know for things, and we gradually over the years acquired different things you know, new things [laughing] which was nice, so that was that and we been very-very we had been very-very happy here, but unfortunately as I said he died of cancer, thirteen years ago August the First

*That very sad*

But the funny part about it was, I taught him, how to cook a roost dinner, how to do the ironing, how to clean, how to used the washing machine, all those thing. Because I was convince, that I was going first, he was such a strong, studded man and then when that hit us, I couldn’t believed it, and I talk to him a lot, and I say to him[laughing] the other week I had to put a bulb in, I couldn’t get the xxx[blasted] thing in, and am standing at the bottom of the steps, and am saying to him, look I taught you how to do things, why didn’t you teach me how to do things[laughing]

*[Laughing]*

And when am playing bowls, I talk to him; I bet you are having a good laugh up there, because he was a good bowls player [laughing] but he is still alive in my memory, which is nice

*Yeah*

Yep

*It lovely, you mention early that um, sorry that you got in to teaching how did that come about*

Ooh yes well, as I said I went on lot of courses, err coaching courses, ooh countless of them, I went um round here, to the evening classes and that, xx[passed] them there, and then the Borough were going to period of a shortage of teachers, and one of my friend she was a PE teacher, and she was in at this meeting of the Barking err organiser, and the Redbridge organiser, and err my friend xxx they were saying about, they needed desperately need PE teachers, and my friend spoke out and said, “ooh what about Jean Bruce” and um the one from Redbridge said “who” err and err the one from Barking said “ooh had she applied” my friend said yes ,and they phone up down stairs, where the Education Department was, and they had lost my papers, so the one from Redbridge, give me her telephone number and off course xxx[she had to put up] she had to give her my telephone number, she went straight back to her office phone me up, she said “can you come over to Redbridge err Town Hall and had an interview with the head mistress of um xxx[Fairlop] girls School” so I said yes, xxx I was over the moon, I taught my god you know, and I went for this interview, and um she was wonderful head mistress she is very outgoing flamboyant ,she drove a sport car you know, very modern

*[Laughing]*

And she said “I had enough” she said “we half way through August” she said “it will be err returning to school xxx[time] soon” she said “would you be prepare to start on September what ever it was” third, or fourth whatever, and I said yes [laughing] I was frighten to said no, and err that how I got it, and I was sixteen years at xxx[Fairlop] girls School

*Ooh wow*

And err

*Sorry what year was it you started there then?*

[Cough] ooh xxx

*Sorry making you think now xx I [laughing]*

You are making me think god knows I can’t remember now, well

*Do you know roughly how old your children were at the time?*

Err the two kids were at junior school then,

*Ok*

And my neighbour who lived there then xxx[Palm] she said xx “take it, take it” she said “I would take them, they can come home and I will give them some tea and keep them there until you get home”, because I didn’t drive

*Ooh*

And I had to get over there, back again tow buses, and um I was only class as part time for a start, but then as I start to progress I got more hours, so it wasn’t too bad, and err so that was that ooh god must been xxx[about] what fifty years ago

*Wow*

Yeah, and um I stayed there then, and then err they asked me. They build Redbridge Technical College, down um, ooh what the name of the road down there

*Um*

And they asked me to go, if I would like to go there because it would be nearer at home, err they were starting up a PE department there, they got a man, and they wanted a woman, so I said ooh yes please, I had an interview over there and ooh xxx [he] was a funny bloke the um, xxx and err very xxx was the one overrule you know, not the one in the PE department

*So was he the full headmaster or was he just head of xxx[school]*

Yeah, yeah

*All right ok*

And err very xxx and err any way, he seem to like me, and err he told me more or less, my hours and err that was, I went there and err it was good I got a raise in money

*[Laughing]*

And in between then, I was also asked by the Labour Party, to go on the Council stand as a Councillor, and I though ooh my god you know, all this in between, that was in xxx I was on the Council thirty two years, xxx take thirty two [bla, bla, blab la] And I had been off the Council five years, thirty seven years, back [laughing]

*So we are talking sort of nineteen seventyish*

Yeah about seventy, seventy four

*Ok*

And err so. Any way I didn’t xxx {think} I would get in, but I did I got in xxx[Abbey ward] which is the town centre, and err I went on the Council, because it was mostly evening meeting then, and I couldn’t attended anything in the day time if I was working, so that’s how I worked both of them[laughing] And I gradually, graduated to the women who was Chairman of libraries, she wanted to stand down because she felt she was getting older, and she said “I had my eye on you” so I said ooh yes, so she said “I think you would be good Chairman of err libraries” and I got elected Chairman of libraries

*Ooh*

Which was wonderful ,any I thoroughly enjoyed it, I mean I do I loved books, and then xxx [of course] as time went on, err I done twelve years, and I was nominated by the other members to be a Mayor

*Wow*

[Laughing] and my husband had the opportunity to take early retirement from Fords, that where he worked, and err so. I said yes ok xxx [had] to be elected, and at the same time I had to give back my Chairmanship, and I thought I was gonna go back on to it after the year had finished, you drop down to Deputy Mayor, and then you come out, err at err. When I came out um, I thought I was gonna go back to Chairman of libraries, but the leader then George Broker he had other ideas he said “you gonna be Chairman of high way and planning” and I looked at him I said there is no xxx [women] take those jobs it strictly for the men, he said “you would xxx[make]”he said “ you got a brain on you and you would make a dam good Chairman of high ways and planning” and that what I did up till the day I retired.

Um

So that was that, I thoroughly enjoyed it thou, I really enjoyed did enjoyed it High Way and Planning, planning xxx mostly and then err high way, was taken away from me, and um given to somebody who was Chairman of rubbish [laughing] not rubbish, rubbish

*[Laughing]*

You know err, Roads and picking up things like that, so to make it a bigger community, so I concentrated on regeneration, and err and planning and I loved that, I still go in now, and have a cup of coffee, with the men in the Planning Department, and err we have a chat, and err [laughing]

*Back to what you were saying a moment ago about how you consider it to be a very male role how did you find fitting in to that being a woman was it xxx*

Ooh I was very open, open you know meeting you know [laughing] on their level I did xxx well when I went up to my first meeting in London, it rather funny that was, um I went in this err , it was over the back of Westminster, and I went in to this big room, and it was god smoke everywhere , all men not one woman, so am standing there, and this fellas came over to me, so he said “are they lost loved” [laughing]

[Laughing]

So I said, I don’t know, he said what xxx [d’ya] want, a Northerner, so I said err is this High Ways? So he said “aye” I said well, am the Chairman of High Way and Planning in Barking and Dagenham, he said “xxx Barking and Dagenham” he said “they lost us to the election” apparently we did, not me

*[Laughing]*

Personally, but the London Boroughs, Ken Livingstone lots you know, when they were [cough]they xxx[class] the Northerners were really hanger with the London, like who were, they said they were communist, they won’t Labour Party, they were communist, and they got the ooh dear,

*[Laughing]*

And so of course I was classed as part of it, I said no, no I said our Borough Is a very moderate Borough, a middle of the road Borough, we are not left wingers, “ooh aye” and he walked away and left me [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

So I went out, and found the room where we had to go, and had the meeting proper, and they wouldn’t talk to me first of all,

*Ooh really*

But any way I would keep asking questions, I look through all the agenda read every word, and get questions to asked, and I keep asking questions, and they gradually got to know me, then they started to take to me, and in the following years, when the Community Clark, they doing the IGM he opened up the meeting, he said “right nomination for Chairman” And it was this chap from Newcastle very nice man, headmaster actually, and then he said “right nomination” and am xxx away on my agenda [cough] so he said err “nomination for Vic-Chairman” the bloke from Liverpool shouted out “Jean Bruce” And I looked up and I said xxx what? And they all clapped

*Ooh*

And I was in [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Ooh I had made my mark because I stood up to them

*Yeah*

And talk to them, on their level you know, xxx did worry me

*So where you the only woman on that Community at that time*

Yes, yes

*Wow*

For a long- long time I was yeah, but I thoroughly enjoyed it, I had to go up to Newcastle, we used to travel around going to other Borough and finding out, what they were doing, and um you know the in and out of everything, it was really good. I learn such lot, I really did but

*Did you sorry I was just going to say did you appreciate your role as such of a xxx for woman in that*

Ooh yeah I did, yeah I used to laugh you know, when the men started, I just said to the women come on we not letting them get away with that, are we [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Yeah

*It was really good*

I think it because I had always been sort of Tom boys xx [laughing]

*Did you find generally you got on?*

I found it easy

*Yeah, you got quite well with xxx men anyways so*

Yeah I did, yeah I liked men, and there is some good looking men their [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

I liked men [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

But yeah, ooh yes

*Ok that really interesting*

I could have had you know few [laughing] but no one for me, [laughing]

[Laughing] You are a good girl, that’s good

Yes, yes [laughing]so that was, that was all of that

*And you said you moved into this road in 1951 didn’t you on Long Bridge Road ok*

Yeah, yeah

*Do you know what this area was like during the war years?*

It was all farm land

*All right ok*

Ooh yeah, it was all farm land, there were big farms because, um over where the park is, was a big farm house, and that was still there, when we moved in, I don’t know who lived in it, but it was still there, but then of course it got pull down because, they wanted to build the big College there

*Ok so the big farm house was where the College is now*

Yeah, well they building houses on it now

Ooh right

It did turn, first of all, it was xxx Further Education College, it xxx[was a] basic School College, and then it was Further Education College, and then they err thought they will be a bit more ambitious and be xxx[um] well yeah University

*Ooh ok*

But I think Newham wanted it all in their Borough, because it originated there, so they started building, a new University along the river, over there

*Would that be part of University of East London?*

Yes

*We had xxx*

That was University of East L London, and they xxx [vacated] this one, and they sold it off, but they couldn’t not sell off the main building, because that historical, so of courser somebody bought the land and they building housing on it, several I think several farms are involved, err I had being in and seeing a couple of them, but they seem thinning rooms to me, um

*We had this discussion about new build early didn’t we [laughing]*

Yes [laughing]

*They do seem to be very small this days don’t they the new built*

Ooh xx do yeah, especially the um, the ones that xxx[they are] building down Thames view, Barking Reach

*Ooh ok*

There still lot of land there to be built on, but I hope they don’t put any high rise on them, that was ment to be housing, and housing only, we sat week after week after week, Georg Broker and myself and the housing Chairman, the officers planning all this down at Barking Reach, and but we couldn’t get the finance, apart from the fact we wanted to get the um, cables turn down and burred but we couldn’t get the Government to fund it

Ooh

So unfortunately they are still there, but people got worried you know about their children the effect on their children if they living too close to this power lines, but if nobody is prepared to fund it you can’t do it

*Yes there is not lot you can do if there is no money for it xxx*

Nope, they find money for something don’t they?

*[Laughing]*

Yeah, it marvellous I mean, the things like the park you know, I remember as a kid, my Mum and Dad taking me over there to the fairs, ooh it was great I used to look forward to it, and I was nor great shapes at going on roundabout I was sick [laughing] but I loved it, and then there was the boxing, they invited people men to come up and try their hand you know against one of the boxes

*Ooh*

And err all sorts of side shows, and things, and popcorn and stuff like that, and um ooh it was [cough] it was so happy you know everybody was laughing and joking and um it was, ooh it was crowded over Barking Park, I used to loved, ooh once they had a big Viking thing, um men dressed up as err Vikings, terrified I hide, heed behind my Dad [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Ooh and they got these spears and xxx and things and then they decorated some of the long boat in the lake, and they were going up and down, I really thought they were Vikings [laughing] but they xxx and ooh it was marvellous, you know but during the war the park, they build prefabs over there, right down near the Abbey School end, you know where the school is? They build prefabs because they had troops, and guns in the park, and they had to had this prefabs for the troops to be in, and god when they used to let xxx and err [cough] you could hear them guns bang, bang you know in the night and

*Could you even hear them from where you were living?*

Ooh yes, xxx St. Awdrys roads that opposite Barking Station

*Ooh ok*

Where xx[you] go down steps and through err, a walk way

*So not too far at all then from you*

No, no and um, but err what am gonna say yeah. And any way they moved, when the troops moved out and took the guns, when the War was over, they even put people who they couldn’t house in those prefabs, because there was a family moved up stairs here, out of one of the prefabs they were giving, then they moved off to a house, um but err ooh yeah they were, those guns god, and then the gun opposite, on the opposite side of the road, at the back at the end of there, back gardens god when that let xxx frighten the life out of you

*Um*

But um, it was lot of things going on in the park you know, all sorts of things. I used to loved going, xx as a kid, when I got to age off ten, eleven, we would go over there, and they won’t be any fair of anything happen to you, you know I doubted very much this days, that people allowed their children to go over there on their own, but we would go over there, and we play on the swing on the roundabout and thing like that and it was great fun

*Can you remember your very –very first memory of the park do you know roughly how old would you have been when you first went there*

Ooh, what it would be when my Mum and Dad took me to the xxx[fair] I should think, yeah because it would be weekend, because as I said my Mum and Dad, worked

Um

So I wouldn’t get much chance of been taking over there during the week, and when they built the Lido, ooh that was marvellous we thought it was marvellous, when my children were little, I xxx [would] make a picnic, and we go over there, and sit on the back park which was the Lido you know, and had a picnic and you would see all your friends, with their children but the water was enough cold

*[Laughing]*

It was freezing, and yet it would be a hot Summer day, but it was a lovely swimming pool and I felt it was such a shame when we lost it, see Dagenham had lost theirs, I suppose they figure ooh well, and Barking could lose their [laughing]

[Laughing]

I don’t know if xxx

*We can edit that out if you like it funny [laughing] we edit that after*

Yeah [laughing]

*Can you remember when the Lido actually opened then because I was told it open in 1931 so obviously?*

Something likes that, yeah

*Yeah*

Yeah it would had been

*Can you remember it opening was there a kind of xxx?*

Well I didn’t go to the opening, but I went over there as soon as I could to see it, um

*You know roughly how much it would have cost to get in at that time?*

Ooh xxx[blame] not a lot, I shouldn’t think [laughing] about six pence I should think something like that, when you think about today moneys [laughing] yeah xxx[I would think]] round about six pence something like that

*And I wonder if you could describe say um you were walking in to the Lido what would your sight be what the scene bee?*

Well if you are going in with two toddlers, you holding them like [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Come here you know, and um, because they couldn’t swim and I wasn’t , I wasn’t every a great swimmer I could swim, but I wasn’t a great swimmer that was one of the sport that, as I got older right ,I got into swimming, but err ooh no you had to keep a strict eye on the children, otherwise the attendance would tell you off, you know they didn’t like the children running around, they all be shorting at them, stop running stop running, because it was all you know paved and that, and err if they did dropped they go down err quite a xxx, and it was so lovely to see the Mums and the children and the older people sitting in their deck chairs, you take a deck chair with you and put it down, and then the shower were great and err that, ooh no it was quite a xxx[gathering] place yeah lot of people used it, and they came from East Ham, and they didn’t just came from Barking and Dagenham no, they came from East Ham and all sort of places, Ilford, to used it yeah it was good, spend all day over there, yeah and when of course we moved here then, and it was only just a short walk down the road, yeah it was lovely

*Most been very convenient for your children*

Ooh yes , it was yeah, they loved it, yeah we had some good times over there, some good things but err then once again money, the important thing you know, it always these ooh well how much it gonna cost, ok you got to xxxx [ allowed] for the cost and you got to allowed for the maintenance that should be put by every year, but err ooh saying about not going over to the park, I remember one day it was three of my friends and my self, and we went round to the end of the Lake, the other side and there was sort of a river, this river out here run under the thing, and we went down the other side we thought we xxx been adventurous and go down the other side and had a look see what was round there, and I most xxx[have] been about ten, maybe going on eleven I don’t know, but err there was four of us, and we were walking along the edged having a look, and there was two or three boys, in Rowing Boat, and one of this boys came over and said, “do you want to come for a ride” and I always remembered been hammered in to me [laughing] “aye I got some money here, come for a ride in the boat” I said no thank you, we xxx[most not] and the other girls looked at me you know, I said no come on lets go, and we hurried back. Well when I got home [laughing] stupidly I said to my Mum, my Mum said “where did you go, and what did you do” and I said ooh we went round the back of the Lake, to see what it was like, and there was some boys in Rowing Boat, and I said they wanted us to come in the boat, and offered us money ooh and I my Dad was sitting in the armchair and short up, he said “they offered you money” I said yeah ooh I realised ooh “come on get your coat on” he dragged me up the Police Station, and I was in tires, “tell the Sergeant what you told me” and I had to tell the Sergeant ooh I was crying, I said I didn’t go, we didn’t go honestly, because we been told we xxx[most not] go, we didn’t go [laughing] um the Police Man he said “well that was good girl” you know, but ooh I thought to myself ooh god the shame of it[laughing] and then we went back, and he said “you are not going over to the park any more” xxx and I thought ooh why did I tell my Mother[laughing]xxx

*It most been quite and intimidating experience having to go to the police station then I think*

Ooh yeah it was, yeah I learned quickly [laughing] ooh God yes

*So they were obviously these boys they were obviously up to no good*

Well xxx

*Obviously been ten or eleven you probably quite innocent about*

Yeah, yeah xxx[of course] you are, yeah I didn’t know any thing [laughing] but err I always remember that experience, funny that. But as I said we learned and we learned quickly

*Yeah*

[Laughing]

*It most been quite scary*

*[Laughing]*

[Laughing] ooh I was really upset, I thought to myself I didn’t see my Dad sitting there [laughing]

*Um i was assuming it wasn’t the last time you got to go over to the park xxx wasn’t it [laughing]*

Ooh no, no I used to go over, no because it was our park, so you know we go over and things, do lot of things, go over and xxx my friends their Mothers sometimes be with us um all that,

*Ok*

Yeah, so we xxx [did nothing] you know do any thing bad [laughing] we were pretty good I must say

*Where there any kind of um sort of made up games or made up adventures you would had in the park with your friends that you would like to share*

Err, ooh yes, ooh we used to pretend [laughing] err what was it err something and Indian

*Ooh like cow boys and Indians*

Cow boys and Indians, ooh there we hide in the bushes, because they are quite thick the bushes, and you could hide, we are the cow boys and you are the Indians, you got try and find us, and err we would count xxx[see] how many xx we would count before they caught us, and err ooh there, all sort of things, xxx[some of the ] tress we would try and climb up, and got told off by the park keepers “don’t you there xxx[tear] those tress” xxx[not] about you [laughing] don’t tear the tress[laughing] ooh yes we play all sort of games, if we could get a lump of wood xxx[and] Tennis ball and play Cricket and things like that you know make thinks, ooh yeah lot of things, we would do, then there was a tea bar over there, xxx[we used to say] how much money have you got [laughing] how much money can we put together for a xxx [laughing]

*Xxx and share one cup of tea [laughing]*

Yeah [laughing] ooh yes, xxx[get to] go home filthy dirty, most of the time my Mum used to say to me “what have you been doing over there” nothing [laughing] but err ooh yes, it was a lovely park really was, I think we are one of the Borough, that got quite a few parks init? We got quite a few parks when you know stop and count them up

*And they are quite sort of sizable park as well*

Yeah they are

*And they got few sort of green parches in Walthamstow but nothing to the scale xxx*

No, no we have got some; I mean this xxx [Mayer brook] park that is a big park

*Yeah*

Xxx they gonna, ooh ecologies gonna, are you involved in that?

*Um I am afraid not, no unfortunately*

[Laughing]

*But xxx*

I keep asking them question every time I see a little group come round you know, um they put a notice up on the fences out here, the xxx [bloody thing] err somebody most had taught it, one of the holes slips of course it was handing down, so I went xxx [laughing] rolled of sailor tape, and sailor taped it all [laughing] so it stayed there

*It certainly not coming off now its [laughing]*

No, no, ooh yeah we did, and of course I couldn't afford it, my Mum couldn't afford a Bick for me, but I had um, whats the, ooh the other thing you could buy xxx [push] scoter,

*Err Ok*

Yeah, I had a scoter that was my horse, that was every thing, and we played like that try and play Ice Hockey on it [laughing] find a bit of flat ground and try play Ice Hockey, take err wooden stick or um somebody’s err chair you know, xxx and err ooh also, it was the era when you didn’t had a lot of money, and you had to make [coughing] you had to make up things, and that you know really did it for you, of making up. Not now where kids, I want so and so, and the Mother go and buy it

*Um*

You know, they don’t used their imagination, sad really I think yeah

*I definitely agreed*

If kids could you know, if we had a play leisure scheme years ago, and that was pretty good and every park, had a play leisure scheme in it ,and that was marvellous because the people who were paid to be there, one or two people then they get volunteers Mums to come and helped them, they used to play organised games and things, and hide and sick that was favourite and um, xxx[but] err because of money that was chop back some years ago

*I believed now Barking Park actually have and Education out reach manager um and I know that they do organise um*

Yeah they do

*Xxx certainly during the School holiday because that nature xxx for children*

That right um

*And thing like that xxx*

Because am a friend of Barking Park

*All right I see*

I sit on that, I don’t always had time to go to the meeting, and especially in the evenings when it start to get dark, I do not go out in the evenings, but um I got friends who go to it, but you know there you go

*I was going to asked you actually about because you obviously told me a few stories about the staff in Barking Park when you were a child like the attendance at the pool sort of shouting at people and the Park keeper shouting at people climbing trees and things is there any particular characters in particular that you can remember and think even if you only had Nicknames for them or what ever some one who was particular standout in your mind*

Well there is one chap; he is retired xxx [Peter xxx]

*Um*

He is, he was head of the um, bowling Green, and he is retired now, h e was very-very good at his job, and I see him on a Tuesdays and Thursdays, when I go in and had lunch in the Church, he goes in, he doesn’t have a full meal, because he got two Sons who had never married and the three of them you know lived together

*Oh that's nice*

And err they do the cooking, and Peter said I mustn’t eat too much in case I don’t eat my dinner [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

But um yeah well, I don’t remember exactly any names, I probably did had names

*Were the Park keeper quite intermediating characters to the children did you every feel like I don’t know they where watching you and xxx*

No, I had the feeling that, they were responsible and that if, any thing went wrong you could go to them, I had a certain amount of trust yeah as a child, ooh yes that was there job part of their job, um especially after my Dad [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Ooh there, ooh yes yeah I loved Parks and trees, I loved trees and um looking at them and I think it comes from seeing the films, what the films xxx been on, where the trees talked?

*Ooh crikey um the first thing that pop in to my head then was Pocahontas that was xxx films but I don’t think you mean that [laughing]*

No, it was err there was three wasn’t xxx

*Talking trees, I can’t think xxx*

Err the trees talked and then rise up, against the people, ooh xxx what is it?

*[Laughing]*

There were three episodes of it, where there are dwarfs and little people

*Ooh um*

Lord of the rings

*Lord of the rings [laughing]*

Lord of the rings, ever since I have seen that, when I go down to my daughters and we walked through the Forest, and err I walked through Forest you know xxx I feel like saying come on then talked to me [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

It is daft I know but

*But you can almost imagine them doing it with your head cant you*

Yeah, yeah in the Lord of the rings, you know that, that episode there, and I thought to myself yeah [laughing]

*Is there any particular Wild life that you are particular fund of that is in Barking Park ,for example on the Lake or the squirrel or the trees in particular or*

I just loved watching them, xx [there is]alot of squirrel there

*Yeah*

No foxes err

*I have never seen a fox, but am sure they probably come out at night don’t they*

Ooh yeah, we used to get alot of foxes, come out here, xxx [the back] here come through the fencing of the Park

*Ooh ok*

But now that stream it there, I haven’t seen them, I haven’t seen the foxes but there is plenty of squires there

*Um*

I think they are funny; xxx people don’t like them, do they?

*Ooh I loved them*

I found it, I found it sad I go over there and take you know things and shake it among the bushes

*They are very entertaining watching squirrels isn’t it [laughing]*

Ooh they are, xxx [laughing] and you know when you are walking in the park, and they come running up init?

*[Laughing]*

[Laughing] I haven’t xxx [brought anything] ooh am so sorry, I haven’t bought anything [laughing]

*It almost like they can understand you as well*

Yeah, yeah

*[Laughing]*

Yeah, yeah [laughing] ooh yeah I loved animals you know, and err God you see some dogs coming in there, but most of them are kept on leads xxx some of them xxx[are furious] don’t they? But err they are ok, my daughter she got a staffy, she did had one before that and err, it died got to fifteen and it died, and she was broken hearted, and err I said to her leave it for about a year, and then go in for another one, but she didn’t listen, it what about four months and they got another one, somebody was getting rid of it, it three years old so they got another one, it like a great big xxx

*[Laughing]*

Yeah, but they are so strong you know, I couldn’t take him out for a walked, take it out for a walked, xxx[he] pull me over

*Xxx Like normally hugs my own but big dogs are still much stronger then I am so*

Yeah they are, yeah, yeah

*I was just gonna asked you um, another quick question about the Lido sorry am jumping around a little bit xxx*

No it ok

*Um but I have heard that there was, um kind of like fountains and water sliding xxx [in there as well]*

Yeah, it was lovely, there was some you know big bowl fountains yeah it was lovely because I thought not to have the xxx [bowls] kicked out

*Ok*

Did you see it when it was there?

*Um I didn’t see it while it was there but um one of my colleagues actually interviewed a chap a couple weeks ago, for a different project and he was a member of that club and he dropped round um a film*

Yeah

*About it and he was like um he video all of the club and was like you know*

Yeah

*It was kind of like a campaign to save it*

Yeah, say that the Lido

*Um*

Right that how it is there, now this Conner ,when that all went to the wall, this Conner was taken over by xxx[short mate bowl Centre]and they spend alot of money, alot of their own money, and this Conner , they took out this Conner just this little bit on the Conner

*Ok*

And as I said, they worked very - very hard they painted they put things in they build a nice kitchen, one err, one wing went down this way, and about three wings went down that way, now on the outside they were plants climbing up the outside and it look really pretty that Conner, this was all wipe away the actual swimming pool, was drained and it was nothing, err that bit down there was xxx[shut] off, that bit, that bit , that bit was xx[shut] off, this you could get in but it was not used er this Conner was used, and the bit at the bark, the bit at the bark here, was turned into a community room, where the community could seat and do things, and papers were kept you know filing cabinet, so it sort of extended there just a little bit, now they kept it absolutely first class clean and everything, they had a good attendance very sociable anybody could joined, they even started up err a disable

*Ok*

Group and they were wonderful, absolutely wonderful, I used to go in there sometimes because xxx um I knew her very well good friend of mine, and I would go in there and stay and watch them, and they will say “you come in you play bowls” so I said no I can’t play bowls you teach me [laughing] you know

*[Laughing]*

And they said “yeah I will teach you, I teach you” and it was hilarious I would deliberately make a mistake, and it would roll off of the carpet, and they would fall about laughing and they come and put it in my hand xxx and then I will get one strike, and they go ooh yeah xxx[look, look]

*Ooh*

And they where been in xxx you know they taught me to bowl

*Yeah*

And it was lovely, and every any time I went in there, they will recognise me, and talk and they played in this one going up this way, and the other one was the ordinary people, there was three wings, two or three wings I don’t know can’t remember, and err it was great, it was for the people in the area they paid for it everything themselves, and there was no reason for them they could have knock all the rest of it down, taking the pool out, or filled it in with earth made err nice green with seats and for the old people and for toddlers and that top play in, put some nice bushes xxx[things] there all the rest of it could been pull down except for this bit

*Um*

And that would seat there, it was nicely decorated, nice pretty flowers round it, and it could had stayed there

*Right so you fell that it was unnecessarily*

It was totally unnecessary, and I told the Councillor that, and I told the Council, but somebody there wanted them out

*Right*

And I think that was so bad, they gave them room up at the new complex up at XXX [Becontree Heat] I mean, why? The people lived round here, you know and they didn’t asked for anything, they didn’t cost anything but now they got to pay for their time there

*Ooh really*

And I don’t know whether the disable still go there or not

*I heard that they had to keep the original 1930xxx so that might have hinder any plans they had to knock down the rest but I thought that was part of the heritage lottery funding*

Ooh they put the xxx the whole lot down

*Ooh, no the original front entrance wall xx they kept that*

Have they?

*The bit down the side, I think they taking out*

I haven’t been up there, I would have go up there and have a look

*Yeah and they preserved the fountains as well which is why I ask about the earlier*

Yeah that is right

*So they have preserved bits of it but I don’t know obviously they extent to what went on with you know the bowls club unfortunately*

No, I fought tooth and nail over them and I was so upset, when they had to go because xxx has work her socks off I mean ,she is same age as me probably, and she work her socks off, and they made money and build thing there and it wasn’t necessary, that Conner could had been kept there

*Um*

As a historical reminder, and err I was really angry. I said who has decree that this is gone nobody would tell me

*Um*

But there was a reason, there was a reason I think

*It will be interesting to find out what that reason was xxx*

I would loved to know, because am angry, I am really angry because it broke xxx heart

*Really*

She put so much work in to it, and she doesn’t xxx [that] nobody likes it, where they are, I think they have lost members. But there you go, if I had been on the Council they wouldn’t had lost it

*Um*

[Coughing]

*It quite sad*

But err I think that was, that was bad, very bad

Um

They said why couldn’t they have gone into the ordinary bowl centre, it wouldn’t have gone, it wouldn’t have fitted in, you can’t have short mate in with full length of mate you know, it would mean crossing over and wearing out the carpet

*I think the person who gave me the film of it said u, I think it was a section of the film; the mates were really, really heavy so obviously if you laid them out on top of something else you xx sort of rolled them out and put them back up again*

No

*Where as in the place they had apparently could leave them out full times so*

Yeah that right

*So it was just easier for everyone I think that what I heard any way*

Yeah

*It sound kind of xxx [laughing]*

I think it was so sad, but what can you do? And if I had found out I would had [laughing]

*[Laughing] it would have been best pleased*

Ooh yeah, but that’s, that

*I was just gonna see um I have got some photography here and I was wondering if you would like sort of go through them and just talk about any memories that come to your mind when you look at them If that ok*

Yeah

*This is one of um the chater celebration days in 1931 and I know you were around then but am not sure if you remember any of it apparently xx [Anna Neagle] who was quite a famous actress at the time*

Who?

*Anna Neagle*

Ooh god yeah, ooh cranky, ooh yeah, that’s her init?

*Can you remember the Boating Lake at all did you ever go on it?*

Well I can remember the boating lake yes, we had um one of this steam things with xxx big wheels going on it

*Um*

Ooh yeah I went on it, one of my cousins said err I don’t know how it came about, but I couldn’t swim I was about nine, and she was about um thirteen, fourteen I think

*Um*

And we went over the park, and we taking our costume, swimming costumes and towels and she said come on, am gonna teach you to swim, and I looked at her and I thought ooh God you know I don’t know if am gonna like this[laughing] but I thought ooh well. So any way and it was a dirty xxx well it wasn’t so dirty those day, and err she said come on get in, jump in, jump [laughing] I wasn’t sure [laughing] gonna go, but any way I got in, there she was she was xxx[strict] do this do that, err it xxx[enough] cold [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

But I learn to swim

*In Barking Lake that’s incredible*

Yeah in Barking Lake, would you believed it, God dear

*Sorry some of the photos*

Xx swimming pool was built [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

God I felt as if it was filthy, ooh that right yeah. God look at that. That was a paddling pool

*Ooh do you remember the paddling pool at all?*

Yeah, yep

*Could you tell me little bit about the paddling pool if that is ok?*

Well, that was where the Mothers would take the toddlers it wasn’t very deep, and if they wanted to they could take off their shoes, and then walked up and down with the children, ooh yeah that was very popular

*Did you take your own children there?*

No, I didn’t [laughing] comes to think of it, no I took them in here, and err taught them to swim

*Ooh they xxx*

It is a big of a job, because as I said it was freezing it really was cold

*So your children learn to swim in the Lido itself did they?*

Ooh yeah, yeah my daughter became a very proficient swimmer and she swam for her school which was Barking Abbey [laughing]

*Ooh right*

Yeah she became very good, ooh yeah I remember this

*That the xxx [phoenix] stick paddle steamer*

That right yeah, I went

*Did you ever go on that?*

Yes, yeah that xxx [when] my daughter was born, 1950

*Ooh really*

Yeah

*Could you describe the experience of going on the paddle steamer?*

Well it was just good fun, you had to watch the kids you know that they didn’t go too xxx [bezar] um ooh yeah it was good fun there, yeah I can remember that, and the ones when you are on the sides we would wave to them, ooh that is the lodge yes, God that been there some years, that where we had the meeting, friend of Barking Park meeting

*The lady who donated that photo actually used to lived in that house with her Father*

Did she?

*Yeah, her Father Xxx [Lace Taylor] I think he used to work in the green houses*

Ooh yeah

*I don’t know if it a name you familiar with xxx [Lace Taylor]*

No, I don’t think so

*Ok*

Ooh yes I remember this, we used to put our arms under it [laughing] you do as kids don’t you?

*Under the fountains*

Yeah under the fountains

*All right ok*

Yeah. God look that view there

*That image is quite dark unfortunately init*

It is in it, yeah

*You can make out, what most of it are*

We used to had um xxx on the carnival community

*All right*

And um we used to had a gala there, as a thing of getting err money for the charity, you know the err the carnival was all about err getting money from the Mayor funds

*Um, so you used to have a swimming gala in the Lido*

Yeah

*Ooh ok*

Yeah, yeah [coughing] ooh yeah that was great fun, and we had, we would had a net ball rally, we play on the tennis court in the park

*Um*

It coming back now

*[Laughing] it a great thing about photos it tend to bring stuff back init*

Ooh it xxx, doesn’t it? Yeah, we would had a net ball rally and the boys would had err five side football competition

*Um where will they held the five a side?*

Err I think it was where, the xxx not xxx golf thing was

*Err*

And then they turned that into err, I vaguely remember that, the charter celebration going round, with my Mum and Dad, XXX [Lace Taylor] ooh handsome looking bloke

*Was a very handsome man*

Yeah

*It such a wonderful picture as well xxx actually working with the flowers*

It is init? Yeah very good, ooh am up there somewhere, or the kids might be there [laughing] 1950 ooh no, they won’t be there fifty xxx [Lin] was just born then [laughing] ooh that was great fun, I was surprise that the number of people that came from East Ham

*Really*

Yeah

*Was there a xxx quite xx [high] portion of people used to come for the Lido then*

Ooh yes, yeah you say where you from xxx on the boat house, that was fun. God that old init 1910

*Am not really expecting any one to remember that [laughing] particular one*

No, you can tell that cant you? By the xxx over the top

*I just thought they were quite lovely images so I thought I would bring them along anyway*

Yeah they are, yeah it was always a meaning of photos wont it?

*[Laughing]*

Barking Park entrance

*I have been told that the Park Avenue entrance*

Yeah, I was going to say, that not the main entrance

*No*

Berceuse the house was the main entrance

Yeah*,* yeah, yeah Anti Aircraft Gun here, here ooh look

*Can you remember where the Anti aircraft Guns where in the Park where about*

Yeah they were down near you know the School?

*Of course yeah*

Err it was the original Grammar School Barking Abbey, it still part of the Barking Abbey that is in xxx [Sheringham] Drive now, walk down that end, where the fence is, between the Park and the School, down there they build prefabs rows of prefabs, for the solders. And then the guns would be there, I don’t know approximately where, but it couldn't have been far from there, so that they got to them quick, ooh yeah I remember them they looks as if xxx houses over there doesn’t it ?

*It possible yes,*

Yeah

*I believed that particular gun*

Ooh that gun looks a bit old init?

*I believed that one was from 1918 so that xxx that the only picture I can find of*

Yeah 1918, ooh that's yeah, ooh dear xxx

*[Laughing]*

Xxx [ooh that is it] yeah fairy to Hong Kong [laughing] was that a film?

*I believed so yes*

Yeah, I was going to say

*I think is was um*

Most be

*A bit of appetizing*

Yeah, yeah I remember that boat

*I do actually have a picture of it but I was wondering ooh is a picture of it in the front of the leaflet thou I was wondering if you know any thing about the band stand or if you had attended any thing at the band stand*

Well we used to go and listen to the bands playing, and people used to do a little xxx round [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Yeah

*Can you remember the names of any of the bands that used to play at the band stand?*

Ooh no, no I can’t xxx

*Because I have heard they um band obviously lot of the big company at that time would have had their own band places like Ford*

Ooh yeah

*So I wonder with your husband having work at Fords whether he knew if their band had every played over there or anything like that*

No, I couldn’t [noise] we used to have a tug of war contest too

*Ooh really*

[Laughing] yeah

*Was that during the carnival or was that*

Err am just trying to think, no that was Dagenham town show

*All right*

That was the town show, we use to have, I used to be drag in to help run the net ball rally

*Ooh*

And the boys used to have five a side football competition in the town show, I don’t think they have it now, which I think is a shame, I suppose they haven’t got the volunteers

*I think the Dagenham town show is still happen because I went to a*

Ooh yes it those

*Yeah*

Um ooh yes that, wouldn’t stop [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

No, no it a lot of things you know, you think to yourself xxx [God] things happen and it suddenly click, ooh yeah I remember that

*Um, looking at those photos sort of spark any other memory that you would like share about Barking Park or the wider Barking area*

Well, Barking area, how it changed [laughing]

*Would you like to talk about that for a little bit you know describing what way you think it changed?*

Well it changed, because of the high rise flats in the Town Centre, which I don’t all together like, its taking away the shopping things it close down, we haven’t got any nice shop in Barking decent shop, we did had a Marks and Spencer , we had a Woolworth, Woolworth was here for years, and when I was on the Council, when Marks and Spencer closing and I went in, I saw the manager, and I said please don’t go, and he look down he xxx at me and he said “we don’t take enough money here” he said “the people don’t spend money you know” he said “we are going to sell it off and put the money in Ilford Marks and Spencer” I said err thanks so that killed Barking

*Um*

I said well if you had some a bit more err assortment of things, I said but you are very restricted I said you could spread, you could spread out quite a bit, I said but you haven’t but he wouldn’t listen to me he is very xxx

*Um*

And I think that, I think that was a shame, but err and of course you know it not enough, there is not enough space now, to put any decent development, I mean xxx[what is the ] biggest shop we got this um Wilkinson, am glad that stay, but um when the market is not there, it is dead

*Um*

Really

*Can you remember any of um, may be small independent business that were like family own or anything xxx in the area*

Ooh God, the shops we used to had, we used to have a Sainsbury, we had um xxx, we had err, xxx err Boots is still here but there was xxx and Tailors that was a Chemist, we had a xxx[Williams] lovely tea shop where you would go in the front part, and get your bread fresh bread, all the nice smelling things, and then you would go through the glass doors in to a restaurant, that was very posh, and xxx[you would ]had err on the Saturday my Mum used to take me in, and we will had um, cream cake and a cup of tea, real living then[laughing[ and um we had all sort of shops that were in xxx[existence then] all the old grocery and that, xxx [Maypole ]you probably don’t even know about that[laughing]

*I have not heard of Maypole no*

No the Maypole ,that was a grocery shop, we had a lovely Sainsbury, and err I used to stand the other side my nose would be just above the xxx[laughing] my Mum take me shopping and I used to be you know my eyes, would pop out when xxx,xxx,xxxx [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Doing this xxx or something, we used to be going every xxx [where] [laughing] ooh dear, I used to loved going in Sainsbury, they supposed to be building a new store but whether when and where, I think North Street or something I don’t know, but it not like it used to be, we had two lovely dress shops, err Coat and dresses and things like that, I can’t think of the name of them now, but I also remember going in one and the children were only young, and I wanted a new Coat, and I went in [laughing] and err didn’t had xxx[them] with me I don’t think, and I tried on this Coat that I rather liked and I said um, am so looking at it in the mirror [laughing]this woman came over to me, she is a lovely woman, and um she said “yes” she said “that suite madam xxx” she said “and when madam had her hair done that would look even lovelier” and I took the Coat off[laughing] and I handed it back to her, and I said madams hair always look like this[laughing]

*[Laughing]*

I walked out [laughing]

*That is brilliant*

And I said I can’t afford it any way [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Ooh I was really angry [laughing]

*Well no one wants to be insulted when they are doing a bit of shopping*

No,

*[Laughing]*

Ooh dear, it was so funny, but there was the High Street as it is now, and then you went down Ripple Road, there was shops all down there too there was quite a lot of shops which we lost now, it only just one main street init, well there a few round the Conner Ripple xxx [Road] but err none to really speak off and err I was, I was xxx [called them] 299 cheap, cheap labour shops

*Um*

It nothing of any consequence, the only shop that is worth anything, is the shoe shop, now what it is name it been there xxx and he sells good shoe, he is on the Station Parade

*Ooh Station Parade*

Yeah, and err apart from any other shops, I go over Ilford if I want something nice, Romford is xxx ok but um I don’t know

*Sorry is just one thing I forgot to asked you earlier both your parent they were actually from Barking were they*

Yeah

*Ok*

XXX [well I think they were] ooh my Mother she, she was born in err outside Cambridge

*All right ok*

Her Father was the village Blacksmith

*Wow*

They were lot of kids, and when I heard my Mum talked about, why they came up to Barking was one of her sisters, married somebody and they lived in Castle School down on the A 13 err castle in the castle they were ooh very upper class people, she married him and he persuaded them, for the family to come up to Barking, why I don’t know, but they did now where my Dad was born I don’t know, I haven’t got a clue, I know he had relatives in xxx [Barnsley ]xxx [my name is xxx] by the way

*All right ok*

And he did talked about his cousins been miners, so they must had come from South Wales so I would imagine

*Ok*

But where he was born, I don’t know, I have never thought about trying to check, I am gonna go up to what the house; up in London where you could look bark through your ancestry xxx [cant you?]

*Um*

Yeah get off at xxx

*Am pretty sure you can do um local study and family history at Valence House as well*

Can you?

*Yeah, they have an archive and local studies centre there now so they got quite a lot of record and thing xxx*

Ooh, am friend of Valence House

*You should pop down it a lovely archive as well actually*

Yeah I know xxx [I helped on the sales of the books]

*Oohs do you?*

Um

*Ooh lovely*

Yeah xxx, ooh yeah ever since I went to Valence Ward, because I had to um I could see a lot of the Asian were moving in, to Barking xxx [Glenny Road] all round there, and then they started expressing a desire to be on the Council, and I could see who is going to get kick off, because they were two young men

*Um*

With me, and err I think I thought to myself um, so I put the word round and I had six, invitations four in Dagenham and tow in Barking ,was three and three I don’t know which, and I thought to myself, I went for a walked round Valence Ward, and I quite like it, and I like Valence House

*Um*

So I said I will pick Valence House, and I was there for twenty years

*Ooh wow, so know there very well then you already know lot better than I do [laughing]*

[Laughing] yeah I know the extension that they build yeah, and I loved Valence House, am not so sure whether I like what they had done in the inside Valence House well it was old, and it really wanted doing up I supposed but there you go, but I go and she phone me up yesterday xxx

*All right ok*

And said “can I help out at September book thing” I said well there is one day I can make it but am not sure about the other one, and I would let her know

*Um that fair enough init, one out of two isn’t bad [laughing]*

And I had the one, in the middle, all the books on Barking and Dagenham and places adjacent in London, so I got all that big area which is about, you know round there, all the books pile up [laughing] and I stand there saying come and learn about your library [laughing] come and learn about the history of the Borough [laughing]

*So probably the right job for you because you knew the area obviously really, really, well because of what you been you know you xxx life and work*

I said I shout out and they killed them self laughing, come and have a look, come and have a look, learn about your Borough, learn about the history all the history of Fords motor company right here [laughing]

[Laughing]

And I practically cleared my stool, I said god dear, I said well it is because you joined in, it is the fun of it

*Um*

You know

*How was your voice at the end of the day?*

Ooh it is all right

*It is gone [laughing]*

PE teacher and you can’t shout [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Yeah, ooh yeah so

*Lovely, it is really lovely xxx*

Yeah I enjoyed doing it, get two buses round there so [laughing] yeah I loved doing anything like that, history and that, am really into it I loved it history

*Ooh good*

Yeah

*If you have access to the internet you might be interested in our website because we got quite a lot of audios*

I did had a computer

*All right ok, you didn’t like it*

Well it would have taken up time

*[Laughing]*

And my time is out there

*Yeah, we do have some lovely audios clips and pictures and stuff on our websites if you ever get access to err*

I gave it to my daughter, and she, she never wanted one and err, ooh my god you can’t stop her now

*[Laughing]*

And err I did think about going back ooh don’t, don’t let the Council hear you see

*No*

I did think about going back in to planning, and saying have you got another computer [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Because they changed them every now and again

*Yeah*

You see if they got a decent one they xxx they said ooh they only xxx on the tip

*Yeah*

Which I think it is a great shame

*It is very rear that xxx*

So if I want one they keep their eyes out for me, don’t tell them that

*No, of course not [laughing] we will edit that bit out as well is fine [laughing]*

When I got time to seat down and xxx around with one, I like to be out and about and talking to people

*Um*

You know it is lovely that, what is all about talking init and communicating, you see my trophies up there [laughing]

*I do see the trophies; it is a lot of trophies*

Yeah, I got boot boxes [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

[Laughing]Up there [laughing] with the small ones, medal and things

*Wow*

But err, and the big one up there, I got to give that back to this xxx[year] because that was the ladies singles last years

*Ooh ok*

I worn it

*So you had your name put on it*

I got a few of xxx in there but he was a very shy man, he wouldn’t err worry about it too much, yeah

*That fantastic, I can probably stop the tape now if you like actually [laughing] um*

Has it finished?

*Ooh no there is still time on there*

Ooh go on then

*If it is anything else that you would like to say*

Err probably something will come to me but, I don’t think anything at this stage [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

I have said enough too, I get myself into trouble

*Don’t worry I will make sure you don’t get in any trouble is fine [laughing]*

[Laughing] no

*I would just stop it now then thank you*

*END OF TAPE*

**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee: Jean Elizabeth Mary Bruce**

**Project: Barking Park**

**Date: 26th August 2011**

**Language: English**

**Venue: Interviewees Home**

**Name of interviewer: Claire Days**

**Length of interview: 99:37 minutes.**

**Transcribed by: Hal fig Barry**

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