**2011\_esch\_BaPa\_05**

*Ok, this is Claire Days, interviewing for the Barking Park Oral History project. Um, the date is the thirty first of August, and I’m here with Mrs Howe. Um, if you’d like to say your full name and date of birth for the tape please?*

It’s er, Pauline Elizabeth Howe. Er, born sixteen, seven, nineteen thirty nine (16/07/1939).

*And can I ask where you were born?*

It was over the shop in Longbridge Road, one oh nine (109), Longbridge Road.

*And can I ask what your parents did for work?*

They were er, shopkeepers. Confectioners and, and um, ice cream, tobacco.

*That’s fantastic. And obviously, being in that location, um, were both your parents from the Barking area originally?*

Er yes, both. Um, me er, father, er, lived in er, well he lived in two or three different, but Morley Road, um, around that area. And then eventually they went in to Essex Road. Me mum lived in Lynton Road, and I don’t know whether she lived in Essex Road, er, Surrey Road with me Nan, because um, unfortunately um, she was illegitimate so she was brought up by her Aunt which was me Nan’s sister.

*Ok.*

And course, when me Nan did marry, she did, she was um, a young teenager so didn’t go with her mother in the end, she stopped with her Aunt. And then went to work, so of course she, I don’t think she actually moved in to Surrey Road at all. So they went from Lynton Road, I’m not sure whether they were in Suffolk at all, but I’m not sure about that.

*Ok, no problem. Um, so in terms of yourself, and being born obviously on Longbridge Road, what schools in the local area would you have gone to as a child?*

Um, I went to er, Northbury, so did me brother. Me older sister went to the Church of England, and then went to Northbury the latter part of the junior schooling. I went to, and me brother went to, Park Modern at secondary school. Me sister went to Gascoigne. Because I think Park Modern was, when me sister er, was there, was a um, a grammar school. And I think it changed over to um, what did they, secondary modern, when we went. Yeah, that’s right.

*Is there, are there any memories that stand out in your mind about particular teachers or, particular things at school that have always stayed with you?*

Er, Mrs Watson was my last teacher at Northbury, and I can remember um, well most of the teachers were very strict. Um, Mrs Jacksley, she was, she used to take us for er, needlework at Northbury School, ‘cause I was there until I was eleven. Um, now what was Mister...oh dear...I can visualise them but I can’t remember their names. Mister Phillips was the headmaster, he was a very, very nice, very strict but very, very nice um, headmaster. He was um, er, what else can I remember, can’t think of any, aint it funny, I’ll probably remember their names afterwards. Mister Fry, he was another teacher, that was one of me sister’s teachers, and er, when he found that I was a Howe, he said, oh, not Maureen Howe’s sister!

*[Laughs]*

So, you know, it’s, being a, having an older sister it sort of followed you round the school. Until I went to park Modern of course, she wasn’t there, so I was meself again! [laughs]. But the, um, and also we used to have a cinema at Northbury school, er, once a week they’d um, have er, like you know, Laurel and Hardy and all the old actors, er, Will Hay, and all that type of thing, Margaret Rutherford. All the old sort of films, we used to go there, during, once a week, we had Saturday, er, we had cinema at the school. That was very, I can remember that, that was very good I mean, but um, what else can I remember at school? Miss Sandwich, she lived in Park Avenue, she was a very nice teacher, um, but she was in the infants, er, in the um, infant school you know, the first part of schooling. She was very nice. You used to have to go to bed then, when you was at school, in the afternoon when you you first start school, they used to have canvas beds that you had to er, go to bed in the afternoon.

*So you would kind of have a little nap sort of thing?*

Hmmm, hmmm.

*Oh lovely! I wish it was like that now! [Laughs].*

Like that now! [Laughs]. Yes we used to have to do that in the afternoon, and course we sc-, stayed to school dinners, um, and er, during the war, or the latter part of the war, um, a lot, our sheds at the school, were filled up with er, um, food, that was I suppose kept there for keeping the er, schools running with meals. Um, you know, I assumed, must have been rice and potatoes and stuff like that, the sheds were filled up with, with rationing. Um, what else can I think...course you always had to do er, jogging on the spot and running round the platform in the winter when you was waiting to go in, ‘cause you weren’t allowed to go in to school until your class was called. You had to line up in the playground every morning, and er, if it, like in the cold weather he’d have you um, jumping on the spot and doing exercises while you’re waiting to go in to school. Because the bell would go, and you wouldn’t go in, you went by class in to the actual school.

*So who would go first, would it be the older students and then working their way down or would it be the other way around?*

The younger ones, working their way up I think.

*Right.*

I think, I wouldn’t say, whole heartedly but I think that’s what it was, by the way the school, and you weren’t allowed running up and down the stairs, they had a monitor on the stairs to make sure you didn’t play around on the stairs, because I suppose stone stairs are easy accidents and that.

*Probably wouldn’t be too pleasant falling down them would it? [laughs].*

No, no! [laughs].

*That’s fair enough!*

But er, I think that’s mainly all I can remember at school. At Northbury anyway. And then course, we went to Park Modern. But um, no, I think that’s it.

*And what did you do when you left school?*

Um, well, um, I’m afraid I must have been a bit, well I know I was, er, a bit slow on um, whether they class it these days as a slow developer, um, my father took me away from school when I was thirteen. Um, and put me to Pittman’s College in er, Fanshawe Avenue. Er, Miss Massy used to run the er, class there, and you had to, because of not being sixteen, because when I left school you had to be sixteen, the sixteen came in I think the latter part of the time I was in education. And um, as I say me father took me away when I was thirteen, I think I was nearly fourteen by the time, I would have been fourteen in the July, as I think I was taken away from school er, at thirteen going on fourteen. And um, he put me to Pittman’s for two years til I was sixteen. So he paid for me to go there.

*So what did you do at Pittman’s then?*

Er, well you done most subjects, you know, your English, Maths, um, short hand, um, also you did a language, Spanish, not that I got on very well with it. Well we did do French at Park Modern, but er, if you couldn’t, if you weren’t above a certain level after the first year they took you out. And only kept the children that could cope with it I suppose, at Park Modern. Um, but er...as I say, I stopped there until I was sixteen, at er, Miss Massy’s.

*Ok.*

Done me RSA and...short hand theory at, at the big, what isn’t there now, the South East Tech. Took me exams at the South East Tech in er, opposite the Robin Hood, what used to be the University of East London or whatever they called it, at the latter part of time. ‘Cause when I was at school, um, at South East Tech was what is now classed as Eastbury, um, the children went there, if they passed the scholarship they either went to the Abbey, or to the South East Tech. And then from the South East Tech they’d go up to the big one in, opposite the Robin Hood. What it was classed as a, laterally, a university, but er, it was always classed as a South East Technical College. When I was at school. Um...but er...I think that’s about all I can remember really at school.

*And did you work after you left Pittman’s at sixteen?*

Yes, I went um, er, from Pittman’s I went, my first job was in Leadenhall Street, West India House, next to the Cunnard Building. And I worked for er, a shipping company, that er, imported, exported er, Smedley’s, um, grocery foods, any foods really they imported them and exported them.

*And they were called Smedley’s?*

Er, no, the company was called er, Mann and Son.

*Ok. And how long did you stay there for?*

The first job, as I say, um, I was there one and a, about eighteen months. No, I’ve done it wrong, it was Brown, Brown was the company name. Mann and Son was me second job.

*Ok.*

Mann and Son was me second job. But they were the er, Brown and Son were the shipping company, it was shipping company, I done bills of laden and all that sort of thing. And then I went to Mann and Son which was in Whittington Avenue, which was um, off of Leadenhall Street. And they were, they were the company that started Harwich Container dock. I mean they, they did all the er, shipping of um, they had a couple of small vessels that used to do import and, and er, my boss, the chap, the gentleman I worked for, Mr Goddard, he worked on the Baltic Exchange. They went to the Baltic Exchange every day to buy, you know, do the um, chartering of the vessels, and I used to have to do the charter parties that um, done all the goods, like sulphur and all the different er, commodities. Um, as I say, it was right in the entrance of Leadenhall Market, it was Whittington Avenue is the, the entrance of Leadenhall Market, in um, Leadenhall Street. Gracechurch Street, all round there. Well it’s sort of, you can get in through the market most ways, or you could do then, I mean I don’t know about now.

*Yeah, I haven’t been down there for a while either, so I don’t really know.*

No, no, no. But er, they did have a sub office at Aldgate Pump, I used to work at the Aldgate Pump branch for about twelve months or more. Saracen’s Head House it was called. That was right on the pump, Aldgate Pump. And then, as I say, I went in to Whittington Avenue and then we went, um, I was there, what must be five years I think. Five, or just over five, and then I went to work for J.H. Rayner, who were then in er, Mark Lane. And they were a commodity brokers. [pause].

*Sorry, how old would you have been, roughly, about then? Would you have been about twenty two or twenty three?*

Yes, er, when I went to er, me last job, er, which was J.H. Rayner, um, I must have been about twenty two, twenty three. I stopped there until I was fifty two.

*Wow!*

And then I was made redundant at fifty two.

*You were there some years though!*

Yeah, yeah.

*What was that environment like to work in?*

It was very, very hectic. I mean you seen the markets on here, I mean, er, the er, commodity markets were in Plantation House originally. And we did move in to Plant-, from forty seven Mark Lane, we did move in to Plantation House. Fantastic office, I can remember when we went to see it, it was like a big, dark ball room floor, er, pink and grey tiled flooring, it was beautiful! And we was on the ground floor, and the commodity market was on the ground floor. And um, er, naturally they bought sugar, coffee, um, all them sort of commodities. And then they went in to metals, gold, silver, er, and then from there they went in to sugar. I mean when I started I was the, thirteenth person, it was only a very small company. They did deal with um, sweets originally, importing and exporting sweets, but that, when I started there that had more or less been wound down. And they just deal, dealt with the commodities. And um, they er, as I say, done all the commodities um, and the trading floor was where they bought, bought and sold. I mean the noise in there was colossal! Um, and my boss, Mr Margeles, he was the er, head of the company, er, when he went on to the trading floor, they knew something was going to be up because the, the price of everything would start rising, they knew that the only time he went on the floor was when something was going to happen. And er, the prices used to go, say, got quite a reputation for being, how to um, foresee what the market was going to do. And I mean, well, he made millions. He did. He really did. And yet he was such a down to Earth person.

*Was it quite exciting?*

Oh yes! The, the, I mean the money those um, brokers earned, you know. Six figure bonuses was nothing, what they do, like they say, you can quite understand why the banks have had this problem the last few years. If you saw what them commodity brokers earn, it’s colossal. It really was colossal money.

*I can imagine, if you’re talking six figures back then!*

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, um, I suppose like everything, um, naturally er, when companies are making money, that unfortunately I don’t think they kept a tight rein on what was going on, because a couple of the staff did do, and you weren’t allowed to, um, manipulate the market for your own benefit, but I must admit two or three of them did do it, and did get caught. But they was never er, how shall I say, probably prosecuted. Because of the reputation of the company. They had to naturally, forestall whatever they could, and er, would be penalised, but they um, it was where money was made at such vast amounts, I mean, the company, as I say, when I went there I think I was the thirteenth person, there was um, three women including me. And the others were the men, which was the traders and the general manager, who used to deal with everything, Mr Wiltshire. And um, when I left I suppose there must have been on that trading floor alone, sixty, seventy people.

*And then obviously, office and support staff as well?*

Hmmm, hmmm.

*Wow.*

Well the er, the two biggest parts was the trading floor and the accountancy, because they had to keep records, and xxxx, and yet funny enough, the thing what, always amazed everybody, Mr Margeles, he never put pen to paper. He never ever put pen to paper. And yet he could tell within thousands, what his company was worth. He’d got a most fantastic memory. He could, this accountant came in and said, oh, he said, we’re say fifty thousand this week. He’d say, no, that’s not right. And he could tell within a little, and yet you never ever, I don’t think I ever saw him with a pen in his hand. All the thirty, what was it, I was there thirty one years, I think it was, and I never ever saw him with a pen in his hand. And yet he could mark them commodities, his main what’s name was cocoa and sugar, the money they made on er, cocoa and sugar, and then brought in coffee. I mean the, he could tell within what’s name’s, what the figures were. It was a, everybody was amazed how what’s name he was. In his job. Really.

*It does sound like an incredible talent!*

Talent, yeah, yeah. Yeah. He must have been a millionaire, a hundred times over. Well he went out to Israel, and bought up an area, to build a village out there. But er, something went wrong with the um, I don’t know what it was I know there was a big what’s name, in, in the end. Um, there was something where he had to come home, but he wasn’t allowed out of Israel at the time, because er, whether it was something to do with the making of this town, or something he wanted built. Or this area, I don’t know, but something went wrong.

*Did he have connections to Israel then, did he have...?*

Well, being Jewish.

*Ah right, ok.*

See it was a Jewish company, er, it went to um, from J.H. Rayner, and company, and then it went to J.H. Rayner Cocoa limited, and then it went to S and er, er, part of S and W Beresford. Which were um, er, grocers in um, now where was it? Um...not Xxxx street, the one that went at the side of it....God...not Philpott...well it was on the corner, and they, S and W Beresford were um, er, British Sugar. We took over British Sugar, we was part of that. We, our pension and everything was dealt with by British Sugar in Peterborough.

*Ok.*

Er, because they bought up British Sugar, that’s one of the, ‘cause they did buy up quite a lot of small companies, coffee companies and that at the time, and British Sugar. And our pensions and things like that was dealt by the company there, because they had er, I assume, a group that dealt with the er, accountancy side of that. Um, but er, then from Leman’s Street, we went down to docklands, and then that’s how it seemed to unwind. Things seemed to go wrong, whether he went from being on the market floor, to the boardroom, and they think that um, he didn’t have the tight rein on the market that he did when he was on the floor himself. And it seemed to gradually collapse. And um, the um, metal department, er, bought theirself out, they stopped in um, er, the, docklands. And the cocoa and the sugar and all the others seemed to just more or less run down. It’s a shame really when you think how big it had got, um, and as far as I know it er, it’s since closed completely.

*That’s very sad isn’t it?*

Yeah. Yeah.

*Such a long running company.*

Yeah, yeah. Once the director sort of moved out of the commodity floor area, it seemed to, and course they always said it was because they didn’t keep an eye on what other people were doing. But, like most things I suppose. Um...no it er, but it was very, very um, full on type of job. But er...but unfortunately they’ve er, two of the, two, the two that I knew when I first started they’ve both, since died, so, they’re no longer here. Though I think Marg, did, was buried out in Israel. That’s what he wanted, so things must have been sorted out after all! [laughs].

*[laughs] Had a happy ending I suppose!*

Yeah, for him yes, yeah.

*Did you marry or have children in that time?*

No, no,no, I never married.

*Ok.*

I kept in contact with me friends who, who I was er, at work with at Mann’s. I’d known her, she died er, two years ago. I’d er, known her since I was what, eighteen.

*Wow.*

We’d worked at Mann’s together, and then we went, she went to Rayner’s, and I went to Rayner’s about three, four years later. And we still kept in contact. She lived in Rainham. And er, as I say, we’d known, all that time. But I still keep in contact with me old boss, er, at um, Derrick Gargin, he lives in er, Blackheath. I ring him now and again. And me other friend, Reno, he moved out to South Africa, er, Kit and I went to see him a couple of times in South Africa. And Sarah, who was there when I first joined, um, Rayner’s, she lives in America, and we went there about two or three times to America to see her.

*Quite extensive travels!*

She moved out there when her daughter got married um, married an American, and once she started having her children, her mother and father moved out in to St. Louis’s, so we used to go out there and visit them out there. So...

*Sounds like an exciting life!*

I’ve kept in contact with all of them really, I suppose.

*That’s lovely.*

And worked with them, yeah. But er, hmmm.

*And when you got made redundant at fifty two, did you decide to take early retirement then as well?*

Well no, I didn’t, I tried to get another job, I mean I had an arch file of jobs that I applied for. But I just couldn’t get a job. I mean, um, even to the extent of the latter part of the time I tried er, most people when they saw your CV and where you’d worked, they always classed it as being over...um, qualified, that was their, I mean, I tried er, Boots, I tried Tesco’s, um, plus a mile of other companies that they sent me to. I think I had in that, from what was it, er...was it ninety two (1992), I was made redundant. Or was it ninety one (1991)? And I think that first three, four years I had six interviews.

*Crikey!*

And yet we used to have to go down and sign on every week. But they’d sent er, and that was in Wakerim Road, they sent me on adult training course over at er, insurance company building in er, Cranbrook. And I never realised, it was on a computer course, and it was all on the F keys. I’d, they didn’t have a mouse, I’d never heard of a mouse!

*[laughs].*

You learnt all the workings was on the F keys. That’s how you operated the computer, like done accounts or letters or things, it was all on the F keys. So course, each time I went for an interview, they’d say have you been on the, on the computer and I’d say, yes, I’ve just done this course. And they say well, would you, and they’d give you, give me this mouse and I didn’t know what to do it! [laughs]. Because I had, we hadn’t, I mean, why on earth they taught you on a, such an out dated system I don’t know!

*Yeah. It seems very strange.*

Whether that was the reason I couldn’t get a job because I hadn’t got that, er, what’s name, I don’t know. But in the end I did try to get jobs in Boot’s, in the er, filling up or doing the shop or whatever, considering I’d worked in a shop as a young person. But they said, oh no, you’re too qualified. And I think I had, I can’t remember whether it was five or six interviews in three years, and I had a, I only destroyed the arch file two years ago, and it was this thick with applications of where I’d written for jobs. There must have been a hundred or more in there. But course there, er, once you’re fifty, well in them, I mean I’m going back nearly what, twenty years isn’t it? Ninety (1990), and now were two thousand and eleven (2011). Um, there wasn’t the er, what’s it for work, I suppose.

*‘Cause I suppose that would have been, almost the time of recession as well wouldn’t it, actually?*

Yes, yeah, the first recession. Oh yes, that was about that time. So of course.

*Talking about seventy nine, eighty (1979, 1980).*

Yeah, yeah.

*Ok. Yeah it probably was quite a difficult time to try and find work...*

Try and find work, yeah. So I can understand how people um, middle aged and that, finding it now to try get work. [pause].

*That’s really interesting. So how did you find that after working so hard for so many years?*

I found, I, I think I did find it extremely hard to come to terms with, and I think that is, I should say the biggest problem with people retiring. I mean unfortunately, er, because my old bosses had um, left by the time I was made redundant, and unfortunately for my own situation, the chap who was in charge, um, got a ticking off through something he’d did to me, during my time. So he wasn’t at all helpful. And when you’re, I suppose, emotionally upset about being made redundant, I didn’t realise that I could have gone and insisted on having a full pension, because the thirty years I’d done. It entitled me to a full pension, but I didn’t realise it. And then when it came to my um, I was told, oh, I should apply for a full pension because the girl two years younger than me, they’d given her a full pension.

*Right.*

Who wasn’t even fifty. So they, somebody pointed, told me about it, and course when I went to the Ombudsman over at er, um, Epping somewhere it was, I had to go the, er, I can still see the gentleman now, he was very, very nice. He said, it’s a shame you hadn’t come a couple of years earlier, you could have gone through and insisted on having your full pension because you were entitled to it. But he said, this length of time is too long. They put me in touch with a solicitor and he said, you’ll be throwing good money after bad to, to take the company to er, court over it. But, so, really I suppose a lot of it was me own fault in some ways. I should have insisted on doing it, but you don’t think. You, you think, I think when you’re made redundant, you’ll walk in to another job, and that was the idea. Um, you er, because he said to me, the chap said to me when I, when I was redundant, oh, you can, your pension can either stay here or when you get a new job it can be transferred. Well of course I didn’t think no more of it. But, really and truly, he should have told me that I could have taken me pension. Because I was over fifty, and I’d done the thirty years. Because you was in um, our pension was um, salary related. So I could have insisted on having a pension on what I was, my last salary. But er, unfortunately, I suppose like most things, things don’t work out right, but as I say, I did find losing that um, closeness of working with people, er, to come home and find nothing, it was very, very hard to start with. But then I suppose anybody not go-, used to going to work suddenly getting cut off, it is hard. That’s why I can never understand the government, because of, when you think over the last what...thirty, forty years, the average age of a man living in to retirement is usually very short, to what a woman is. Well when you think they’ve got up probably from the age of sixteen to sixty five, every day of their working life, going to work, and then suddenly one day, they don’t go no more, I could never understand why they didn’t, when a person give the option of say forty, the last ten or fifteen years of their working life, cutting their week down. Until eventually, they’re not there five or six days a week, they’re there for one or two. Which allows the body to acclimatise to nothing.

*And I suppose it would also help to put things in place, like hobbies and things like, developing those.*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

*It would be a good idea! You should write the PM a letter! [laughs].*

[laughs]. Oh yeah! But that’s what I could never understand, knowing how they’ve know all these years, that the average man’s lucky, or he used to be lucky, if he lived five years in to retirement. But then you take it, if a man’s used to getting up at six o clock every morning to get theirself to work, work, come home, work, come home. And then to wake up one morning and you’ve got no where to go, unless you’ve made, been made redundant, you’ve got no idea how that feels to suddenly cut off. It’s like I suppose really, any, anybody doesn’t understand losing a limb. Until you’ve lost it, you don’t realise how much you depend on you’re being, do you?

*Of course.*

So, but there we are, that’s life, isn’t it! [laughs].

*[laughs]. You seem quite happy now, so...*

Oh yes, yes, I’m, I mean to be quite honest, I mean, though the job was very, very hard, and you were expected to work, I mean there was no, shying off and things like that. They were very, very good regarding pension, I’d got no worry about really when I, unfortunately, I never ended up with a company pension. That was the biggest problem, but, without that, you wouldn’t survive, on a, on er, um, government pension. How people do I do not know. Without having that company pension, it does make a hell of a lot of difference. I mean how some elderly people find paying their bills, I do not know.

*Must be very difficult.*

Difficult, yeah. And I suppose also, like they keep telling us, we’re all living too long! [laughs].

*We don’t mind that though, do we!*

[laughs]

*As long as the pension keeps coming in, it’s fine! [laughs].*

So of course, I had, took an annuity, when I was fifty eight. By then I could see I wasn’t going to get a job. So I took a, er, me pension, and er, lucky enough the chap who I saw over Epping, he was very, very good. He sorted the lot of it, and gave me some advice on, to make sure that er, things were done properly. So, I was very lucky that way.

*That’s good.*

Where me friend Kit, retiring at, er, before the company collapsed, she had a company pension. And I think in her um, years er, there, her pension went up I think near enough double. In her fifteen years. Where you see mine will never increase at all, it stops at the same of what I had um, when I was fifty eight, as I have now at seventy two. It doesn’t in-, increase at all, it’s at a set amount. But as I say, like, Kit used to say, how we would have survived without, I don’t know. But it was a very, very good pension.

*That’s good!*

So, so, there we are! [laughs].

*Well thank you for sort of telling me about your work, and obviously your life.*

Yes, yeah.

*Um, I was going to say now, if it’s ok with you, if we can just, just jump back in time a little bit...*

Xxxx park.

*Um, yeah, if we could talk about like, what would be your earliest memory of the park do you think? ‘Cause obviously you were living quite close to it, so...*

Yes, well, I suppose also, um, well the earliest thing I suppose is the guns.

*Ok.*

Er, because of the war, you’d hear the what we used to call “Rat Tat Tat” of the guns. And also they used to have a big silver, what we called a pig, it was a big silver barrage balloon, they used to have over there, periodically. Um, I understood from me father it was used to stop the um, the er, army being fired on, because they were situated over the park. ‘Cause naturally, I was born in the July as the war started in the September, so of course, the first six years of me life, we never, we weren’t in the park because the army was in there. Because of the war. Um, of course once the war was over we was always in the park.

*So you weren’t allowed in the park at all while the soldiers were based there?*

No, no, well, I don’t, to be quite honest, I suppose from the out, from the time I was born, I don’t know about me sister, being that, two and a half years older. But I shouldn’t have thought so, but um, naturally, during the war you weren’t allowed out because of the bombing, I mean I can remember a couple of times being caught when the siren went, because the siren was over the top of the police station, what is the old police station. If that went, naturally everybody had to be in their shelters or where ever. And a couple of times I can remember me mum, bringing us home from me Nan’s in Surrey Road, and course, with a pram, she’d have to come the long way around because she couldn’t go over the bridge, ‘cause you wouldn’t get the pram over the bridge. So she’d come round Ripple Road, in to Longbridge Road, and I can remember being um, running, with me mum running, with us, me brother in the pram, and trying to run with us to get home because the siren had gone. And er, I can remember another time being caught in Suffolk Road, approaching the bridge with me mum, we must have been older then, and the siren going, and one of the men coming out saying, come in love! And took us, me mum and us three children in and he put us under the stairs in their room until the siren, all clear come, and then we could go home. I can remember that, that’s mainly the war I can remember. I can’t remember much else, other than when ever as a child, you’d er, be under, put under the stairs when the siren went indoors. Um, another time, another thing we had um, what, um, um, wrought iron cage that we had in the um, ice cream parlour. That we slept in, because it was supposed to be safe, you know, they were sort of like, well it was like a cage, it reminded you of being in, an animal in a cage! It was a, I suppose about this high, four, for the four sides and the roof, xxxx for children. We was in, used to sleep in there every night, because apparently the floor was concrete in the parlour. It was er, ice cream parlour, not, not a parlour parlour. So the floor was concrete and tiles, quarry tiles, so of course, because it was so solid, he, he put it up in there. And xxxx sleeping in there, I can remember that. Um, what else about the war? Um, other than that, I mean we must have gone to school towards the end of the war, but I can’t remember any siren, or anything, but I can remember having to take our gas masks with us. We had little boxes of gas masks. Me brother had one, Donald Duck! I wished we’d kept it, I don’t know what happened to it, it was a Donald Duck face, because him being eighteen months younger than me. But I can remember having this um, gas mask, and putting it on, and it was er, you’d look through, it was er, cellophane. And it was sort of er, a yellow-y colour. When you looked through. But er, of course, and the bottom piece where you breathe through was sort of like, holes and it was green, green and white, I can remember that. But er, oh, and we was evacuated to, um, Manchester, why, the only reason I can, we gathered, we went to Manchester, was because my mum’s friend who they used to work over the park, in the Lido, in the restaurant in the Lido, were friends and she had a sister up in Manchester, so we went up to Manchester. But we was only there a week, me mum didn’t like it and we come home! [laughs].

*So it was kind of, more like a holiday really? [laughs].*

Really, yeah! [laughs]. Well there was a bit of disagreement with me, me um, Aunt and sister and me mum, so er, but that was the first place I ever had, and I must have been I suppose five, four or five, peanut butter. And they bought it, you weighed it, you bought it out of, they had a dish, and you bought er, two ounces or a quarter, of peanut butter. And that’s the first place I can remember having peanut butter!

*What did you think?*

And thinking it was marvellous!

*Ok.*

[laughs].

*I’m not a fan myself!*

No! [laughs].

*I think it’s one of those marmite things!*

Things, yeah, yeah! I mean, not that I eat it now, but I can remember as a child thinking it was marvellous.

*Wow! Just going back a second, to the soldiers that were based in the park, do you know roughly how many soldiers were based there?*

Quite a lot because I was going by the amount of er, ammunition, that, but I think the whole of er, what was later known as the cricket pitch, um, is it, er, what’s the walk at the side of the park? Is it um...

*I want to say...*

Edward’s! Saint Edward’s way, is it? The, the um, concrete path at the side that takes you to the tennis courts. Half way up the path. I think the whole if that was army um, ammunition er, they had big er, bigger than this, I should say higher than this, ten foot high where they must have caught, kept the ammunitions and the what’s name, er, metal bunker type things. And then course the whole, one whole what’s it, it was all pre-fabs. Where I assume the army were billeted. And they were later used for families that were bombed out during the war. Once the army left, er, also um, Loxford Lane er, the officers and that were I think billeted in er, Loxford Lane in the big old houses in Loxford Lane. [pause].

*And, I was quite struck that you called the barrage balloon a silver pig...*

Yes! Well it was, because it had er, two big ears, and a very big round tummy. And as a child you think of something big as an elephant. And it had these sort of like, whether they were sort of um, not wings, but sort of, that sort of, kept the thing in a particular direction or anything, I don’t know. But we used to call it a pig because it looked, without a tail or trunk, but it looked like a pig! ‘Cause it was so big. I mean, it’s, they’re more or less exactly, I don’t know whether you saw the one that went over a couple of weeks ago, Dunlop, had one.

*Um...*

Er, Dunhill was it, Dunhill, or Dunlop?

*Ah, ‘cause they kind of use them as like advertisements these days don’t they?*

Yeah, yeah, well it’s exactly like that, only it was silver. Completely silver in colour.

*Wow.*

Yeah.

*It’s amazing, ‘cause you’re the first person I’ve met that actually remembers it in the park, so...*

Yeah.

*You also said it was only there periodically...*

Yes, it did, well, whether we weren’t out enough during the war, because naturally I suppose um, at that age I suppose we wouldn’t have been wondering around a lot on our own anyway. Because as I say, I was, went through the, what is the war, six years? So I suppose I was six by the time the war ended. Um, so I’m assuming that that was why I wouldn’t have seen it that much. Whether it was there all the time or not I wouldn’t like to say. But I understood from me father that it was for keeping er, making it difficult for air raids, you know, for when the um, air raids come over. I mean, I don’t know why on earth the army was in the park, it wasn’t as if it was guarding anything was it? But whether it was there, one of their bases because of the docks, see the, like the er, down by the rushing waters, what we called the rushing waters, when we were children. The dock area you see, a lot of the er, stuff was brought in by barges and small vessels in to the town quay. When er, I assume, during the war, or there was a, I think ‘cause I know there was a lot of black market that went on in Barking, down, or I understood, I mean I didn’t know, but I, by what my father used to say, um, and xxxx, and er, down at the town quay so I assume there was a lot of, probably the food stored for the Barking area, I don’t know. Down there, but er, so whether that’s why the army was there, I don’t know. And then course, you’re not that far from Woolwich, where a lot of the ammunition was um, um, made, and whatever, so, I suppose you’re sort, and you’re in, not that distance from London itself, so I suppose the surrounding area’s are more likely, so I suppose they had to have odd places to er, fight off whatever was going. But I don’t know when the actual army went, and that, but um...er, but as I say, course naturally, me father being in the shop, he er, used to serve a lot of the army um, personnel. But um...but er, as for...army people, I can’t say that I can recollect much. I, I have vague feelings of seeing people in army uni-, you know, the kh-, khaki uniform, but not to that extent to know anything about it. Or, you know, not to specifically say. But er, course, once the army went the park was ours...and er...I should say we spent most of our life in the er, Barking Park. The er, ‘cause they didn’t demolish the er...

*[coughs] Excuse me!*

The er, army places we used to go er, you know, use them as hide outs and games and that. I, I suppose really, officially we shouldn’t have been, but...[laughs]. And then course, as I say, a lot of the um, most of the um, pre-fabs were um, housed a lot of the population that had been bombed out from where ever. Er, was used as house, because also our um, three closest friends were bombed out of Lyndhurst Gardens, and put in to the er, what was known as the um, restaurant in Barking Park. They lived there for the majority of the latter end of the war. Um, they was er, and course the two girls, and Dorothy, Hilda, and Jeffry, we played with as children over the park. So, we was in and out, they had the flat above the, um, you went in the side way, where the ladies toilets are now, and we used to go up in to the flat above, and play with the children from there. Until they went back in to Lyndhurst, once they were re-, rebuilt after the, the war. But as I say, we spent most of our childhood in the park, with a group of children. Also, one of the boys I used to know was in the pre-fabs. He, how he came there I don’t know, ‘cause he come up from Wales. But whether certain people er, got family members in the area, or whether they were er, what’s name, er, but he lived in the pre-fabs for quite a while when we was at Northbury School. Um, the er, and course naturally, er, we used the park as our play area, as a, especially during the six weeks holiday, you spent I should say, ninety percent of your time over the park. But we did visit all parks we didn’t just stick to, we use to go to Greatfields, to South Park, Wanstead. I don’t think there was any park in the area that we didn’t play in and that, but we preferred Barking because it had more I suppose swing facilities, Mayesbrook had got a few, South Park hadn’t got much at all other than we use to go there fishing you know, because also naturally you spent quite a lot of our young time over at the lake, the stream at the back of the lake. When the railway use to be along the back there cause we use to use this end the South Park end, the railway never came up that far it only came part of the way of the lake and we use to use that area for tadpoling, because a lot of the back piece where they’ve built, although there are still some there I think, or is there any now, I think they have built all along there, were all allotments because naturally everybody grew their own food during and after the war so all that back part of the park, not the , from the stream, the other side of the stream , so in other words I suppose Loxford Road till the back of the park was all allotments, not where they are at the moment, I think they are at the side of the park aren’t they just behind the Abbey, yes allotments. Well that was all allotments there, because we use to use the trees to swing across the lake and we use to get tadpoles and our fish out netting and everything in there.

*With your Father’s shop being so close to the park, because I’ve heard people use to buy little fishing nets and things.*

Well he sold fishing nets and that yes.

*Could you tell me a little bit about your Father’s relationship with the park because obviously being that kind of shop quite close?*

Well also he made his own ice cream so he naturally during the summer months he , the carnival we always had a beautiful carnival so of course he use to sell all the fishing stuff, nets and that and ice cream was the biggest thing, he was well known for his ice cream. Of course the general thing was sweets and tobacco and then you had all your coupons, you was only allowed sweets on coupons when I was a child. Your D2’s and E2’s and E1’s. D’s you could have two ounces, E’s you could have a quarter. And he use to make his ice cream, the latter part, or some part of the time because of not being able to get the milk and the sugar and everything, Cow & Gate’s baby food I can remember seeing the tins of that, must have used to make his ice cream. Doing wafers and cornets, what else, and then of course you got the, started to get the bubble gum machines and thing like that but Barking Council weren’t keen on people having things on the forecourts. I mean goodness knows what he would say today if he went down Ilford lane and saw the amount of stuff, you weren’t allowed, I mean one little bubble gum machine they would kick up whatsname and wouldn’t allow it, very whatsname. What else can I say about this shop? Course during the war the window was blown out, I suppose with the blast because the house on the corner I can remember him saying one day after the bombing because they had a string of bombs come down Longbridge Road along, the end house had the whole of the side of the house blown out and he said he came out of the shop and the lady was upstairs in her nightgown and the whole of the one side of the house had gone and she was up there...

*She was okay?*

Yes, yes, yes, and we had a fish pond when we came here because naturally I was born over the shop and we stopped there till I was about seven, I don’t think I , seven or eight I think I was when we came here, they had a fish pond and apparently the fish pond where it was , was where one of the bombs had dropped that hadn’t gone off because there was a string of them and only one, I don’t know whether it was one, two, two of them went off but the others didn’t go off for some reason I think. I don’t know exactly the whatsname of it but. So the first two houses on the corner of Wilmington I think had to be rebuilt and also this house, the lady who lived over, who I knew for a while, over on the corner of Sherwood she said there was a stream run across here before this house was built because she said her and her brother use to play in the stream so I assume it was a stream that went into the farm where Barking park is so the stream must have run along there somewhere.

*That’s amazing.*

Yes so, and of course naturally we knew les in the whatsname, well course when I was a child Curtmans [?] was the dairy which is what is now the veterinary whatsname.

*And that was a dairy you said?*

Yes Curtmans was a dairy right up until we moved into it, and we moved into it, what was the year we moved into there, I think we was in there about eleven years, because the whole block other than Curtmans belonged to my uncle, was Elbins [?] the garage so Curtman was what is the veterinary one, next to that was the butchers which was Oakhills and my aunt lived in the flat above there, she wasn’t the butcher but Oakhill he lived in Shirley or Lndhurst but he had the butchers. Next door to that was Rawlins which was a greengrocers, then came me Dad the sweet shop and then came Albons which was the car showroom, when I was a child it was a showroom. But I think my Dad originally where he was, wasn’t the sweet shop I think it was slightly further along which was run by me uncle’s son in law before me dad took it over, because me dad worked at Beckton during the war because you had to be in a, he was a brick layer down at Beckton Gas Works. They use to re build the retort houses that done the gas for the area. He worked at Beckton during the war but before the war he worked, he was a brick layer in, anywhere, you know, he done brick laying anywhere, I mean he worked at, on all of the royal docks, he worked on the BBC, he said he saw one of the most fantastic things when he worked there when they built the BBC, they were putting in sound proofing, it was a new thing for sound proofing and his boss and I don’t know whether he said there were three four men moved a whole wall literally moved it because apparently the architect had got the facilities or the planning wrong and it was , I don’t know six inches or a foot out, they moved a whole wall in the BBC for this thing to be done to make it sound proof and he said it was the finest thing he had ever seen, and he was a young man, and he said he never ever have believed it feasible, but of course nowadays you see them move whole things but when you’re thinking in the, I should think, he came into the shop in the nineteen thirty six I think he came into the shop, so he was working up the city, he was born in 07, so from a boy of fourteen he had worked in London in all the different areas, and also he worked as a, one of his first jobs was on the Bull pub.

*Oh was it, what was did he do there?*

He was doing some brick work there when they were doing a modification or an extension or something, he worked there, but one of his jobs was on the Bull pub because he got into trouble. It was one of his first whatsname he got told off in.

*What did he get told off for if you don’t mind me asking?*

He was, apparently one of the bar staff was getting undressed and he was looking through the window and he got caught and his boss had him and put him over the coals for it and said to him, “Don’t you do that again otherwise you shall not be working here anymore”. So he said it was something that really stood in his mind, he never ever forgot it [laugh]. But as I say on and off from the time he went in the shop he didn’t do much brick laying at all really. I suppose naturally my sister was born in thirty seven so from then he started having a family so, brick laying then, fog you didn’t work, rain you didn’t work, and it was very, you didn’t get paid if you didn’t do the work, it was a sort of, frost, all during the winter you were later and later starting, earlier and earlier packing up because of the dark, you didn’t have the whatsname so course that side of it was very sort of hit and and miss, it wasn’t sort of like a stable, and that’s how he went to, bought the shop or rented the shop of off his uncle to start with and took over the shop.

*I suppose that was more of a livelihood...*

Yes it was more of a permanent working job.

*Was there much competition between obviously your father’s business and the...*

Yes

*Cafe.*

Well not with the cafe so much because that cafe wasn’t there, I suppose probably closed down before the war started, and I can’t remember when we were children other than our friends living above it that the cafe was ever really open much. I think it probably only opened during the summer period and also quite a bit of the time, because I think quite a lot of the restaurant in there never ever seemed to make a go of it, there was so many people taking it over and not being able to do alot with it, Often that corner piece was the only thing that ever, that sold the drinks, ice cream and lollies, that I can remember as a kid being open a lot but the actual restaurant side of it where it done the teas and the whatsname it never ever seemed there, in my mind a lot, whether it’s because naturally I suppose children don’t go in buying cups of tea, probably it might be that, that you didn’t, you were more interested in the ice cream and the whatsname but I suppose it must have been busy fro time but it often seemed to be shut a lot of the time but it might have been because it was seasonal, that you only had it between the summer months, like say from Easter to the summer holidays and then that was probably why we didn’t associate much with it. Though they had another shed there which was an all enclosed one, all glass, you got the two lots of seats here, two lots of seats at the back and two at the side, and they had all glass whatsname between, where this one was only just the four corners and the roof when we were children it wasn’t like that. It was only the roof and four corners and the seats in between. Whether it had been dismantled because of the army or what I don’t know but the other one, the all glass one was opposite the restaurant, between the restaurant and where the indoor bowling alley is, that was there, and also they had a drink, you know where you press the button and got your drink, because naturally as kids we didn’t run around with a bottle of water in our hand, you used the taps.

*Oh they had a water fountain did they?*

No, well...

*A drinking fountain?*

It was this high I suppose and all you did, it was sort of gray and it had a top with a brass button and you press the button and the water came and you just put your mouth under it. That was by the shed and by the restaurant, that was there, and of course the toilets were at the back of the restaurant, I don’t know whether there still there now, because there was two lots, because there was a lot over by the tennis courts, that as kids you were forbidden to go in.

*Why were you forbidden to go in them?*

Well they were a bit frightening, they smelt terrible and it was always known that men went in that and it wasn’t a place where children should be, where the ones by, where my friends lived in the flat above had attendants kept there where the others weren’t they were, you just walked in and out.

*I didn’t realise they had attendants at the toilets in the park.*

Yes , yes.

*Do you remember them at all did they have a uniform or any details?*

I don’t think I can remember a uniform, no, no I can’t, no I can’t remember if they had a uniform at all or not, I mean though I suppose the lady might have had a white apron or something like with me Dad and with the often the ice cream whatsname had white coats and whatsname, so whether the lady, but I can’t remember the man, well naturally I wouldn’t have gone in the man’s ones so, but I can’t imagine my brother passing comment, well knowing my brother he would probably use the other ones where he could please himself but, and of course because they were under the shrubs and that there because the tennis courts were there and also the, where they done, grew all the flowers and that were at the back there...

*The nurseries?*

The nurseries, it was a whacking great, from the back of the tennis courts right the way towards the lake, well naturally not to, but the whole length of the swimming pool was where the park, not the park keepers but the gardeners kept all their tools and their, done their planting or cuttings and everything there...

*Did you ever go in there?*

No, no it was very, very, xxxx. Well I’m not saying we didn’t go over the whatsname if our ball went over there but I mean not officially went into them, no I can’t at all, well I know I never put it that way, I wasn’t that, well I suppose dare devil to do it, my brother, well I wouldn’t say there wasn’t a part in the park he didn’t get into. Like bunking in the lido and, although we didn’t call it, we just called it the open air.

*What do you mean by bunking in the lido?*

Going over the wall.

*Oh did he.*

Yes, yes, the boys would if they could get a chance but it wasn’t very easy, because it was quite high, oh I should say, because the way the thing sloped, but of course you had the turn stile to come out and of course that wasn’t quite as high as what the walls were so, but oh yes I can’t imagine him not wanting to be able to get in without paying because he would want to spend his money on ice cream or something else, but, and you would spend hours in there during the summer.

*Could you tell me about your memories of swimming in the lido or...?*

To be quite honest although I use to go into the lido a lot I wasn’t very adventurous regarding swimming. I would go in the shallow end but I don’t know whether you know that swimming pool went down into the middle so where the, I mean I never ever went down the slide. My brother and sister would but I wouldn’t, I was too scared but the slide was quite, but some, because the water use to come down with the slide, when you come down, the water would run down the slide so naturally they had the diving boards but they were in the middle where the deep bit was so of course they would go off the diving boards but I wouldn’t, well I wouldn’t even attempt to go up there. and then of course they had the little paddling pool at the back where people use to lay out on the flag stones, they were there then, and then I think they did have a bit of grass right at the back and then of course there was a period when it was closed because we had an outbreak of polio and...

*Do you know when about that was, what year that was?*

Forty nine, fifty odd, I should say it was in the fifties, I wouldn’t like to say what year because one of of my Dad’s customer’s boys caught it, and he was left with an iron, you know had to have his leg in irons, but I think, though not to do with the swimming pool, I think that we must have had an outbreak of that prior to that polio but I mean that was the last time I can remember polio being an outbreak, and I would have thought because Trevor must have been about six or seven and he was that much younger than me so I would say it was in the fifties but I wouldn’t like to swear to it but they had an outbreak and of course nobody went swimming for that particular summer at all. Because naturally we had the fever hospital which was Upney Lane, that was the fever hospital where whatsname because my sister had diphtheria when she was seven I think, six or seven. My brother and I had scarlet fever but they said a lot of it they thought might have been bought, we might have caught from the army people in the park coming back from abroad and things like that, or that’s what they always surmised, it was because we were in the shop, in and out the shop and the army people that were there, they assumed we caught it from because I can’t remember anybody else having it but then of course we were put into the fever hospital at Upney Because that’s what it was originally, was a fever hospital. The park really when you think of it, the amount of football, rugby, the latter part of the time you had cricket, but of course it wasn’t such a big pull as Valentines Park that was where you got the majority of the cricket.

*Sorry you mentioned earlier that your Mother worked in the lido...*

Yes.

*Could you tell me a little bit about that for the tape?*

Yes she use to work there selling the ice cream and also worked in the restaurant part of it and also I didn’t know until my sister told me, I suppose being that much older, that they use to hold functions there to do with the council, my sister thought it was to do with the Councillors and they, and she said apparently they were quite in them days, quite lavish things. I suppose they wouldn’t be classed that today, and they use to do like the waitress service for the meals and things like that. More waitresses than anything, but as to the actual, who put them on or what I don’t know. Because there was some talk at one time of putting other functions there but whether it was things they were thinking of doing because the indoor use to hold the wrestling matches because my Mum use to go down to there some times. Boxing and wrestling matches at the old indoor swimming pool. They use to cover the pool area and have football and wrestling, certain times of the, during the winter season. Naturally during the early part or the middle part of the year and that was used mainly by swimming and that. But during the winter xx when it wasn’t now and again they would have err wrestling or boxing matches, because I used to go there, but in the actual, because they had sort of like um whether it was where my Mum used to work they had also and outside area for you to get drinks and things, that you didn’t have to be in the pool area they had a kiosk court what you would called today I supposed she worked I think there for quite a period, but as I said I think during the err off season xxx[areas] they had this lunches according to the system they worked as more or less glorify um waitress there for the functions, but I don’t know of any particular function or anything that went on or what I don’t know, but err so that must had been in the probably err before the War, because I cant imaging it after the War so it must had been before the War, must had been before she was married, so or just might had been just after she was married so it must had been between like err thirty five and when the War probably started in thirty nine [phone ringing] so it must had been in that particular era [phone ringing]

*Ooh sorry*

[Hello ooh can I ring you back Margret I got somebody here at the moment, I will ring you back, are you at home? Ooh ok then, yeah ok then bye]

*Sorry about that [laughing]*

That’s ok, so really I don’t know much about that my Mum didn’t talk other then that where she met my auntie in there so, she most be working, and I should say to you probably only there for two or three years on and off you know during the seasonal part so I should say it must had been in the nineteen err thirties to thirty nine, the war era some where there because as I was saying my Father I think went in the shop in thirty six or thirty five so I could had been, round that period, but um as I say I cant remember because I can only remember the um fountains, the two big fountains in the err Lido and the um they had err a sort of a café bar this side as you went in, along this side of the err what is the name, it was a glass, a bit like a glass house, um like a glass house inside the actual swimmer pool area, so I assumed the kiosk bit must had back on to it some how , but the actual glass area so as you went into because the entrance was that far end, err you went through the turn table there and the turn left you went, you could go to this and have a sandwich and cup of tea or coffee I supposed more for the parent I supposed the children in the Lido, that way you went to the lockers and the changing rooms, and then you went through fountains into the actual pool area, so um and you could go to this restaurant from the pool area, so I supposed there was, it must had been a path that went through that part of it, because you wouldn’t have gone through parent wouldn’t have gone through the fountains to get to it, so they must have been a side way I as well, and that was there and of course then you got the err, pool and the two fountains and then the other side of the pool you got your um diving board and your um, um I cant think of a name for it now the err, slide

*All right*

And then the other side you got the children paddling pool, I mean not the big paddling pool, which was outside of the park, outside of the err the Lido but they had a small one inside, the younger children the members of the family went in, um

*And did they have lifeguards in the lido?*

Yes, yes, they always had a lifeguard there

*Can you remember the lifeguard at all, um in any way like you know?*

Well other then that, they would be in a white trousers and a vest or something that was all, I mean I cant remember anything, and also they had err a rod, you know they would hock you out, also you had cut off areas like um I supposed where is suitable for younger children to be in, and you could used the xxx to sort of balance yourself on

*Ok*

You know because they were what is the name, and also I think they did have xxx [cut mates] there, that you could used you know to sort of help your self, um I can’t and

*Where the lifeguard quite strict or were they*

Ooh yes, I mean I think, I should say um yes because err you could, you play about but you could only go so far you know, if they thought something was a miss they would have you out of the water and you would go out, whether you pay to go in or whatever wasn’t matter they thought you wont doing what you were told, like the diving board and the um, um the slide um you wont allowed to play about I mean am not saying that you didn’t , because naturally they cant keep their eyes on every body, or running around err you know, you round around to but naturally when it was packed because sometimes that used to be, you would queue more or less down that side bit of that, was the name to get in, and once a certain amount, if err that you been queuing there half hour just your had luck if you cant go in because I supposed they, I mean I don’t know as a child but they are supposed once all the because you used to have err a metal tag, they you put in your hand, they gave you err locker number and key, you had to keep that safe, and so I supposed they must have know by the amount of ticket or tags whether the place was getting too full or what I don’t know, but sometimes it used to be packed because naturally people had there towels and what’s the name on err and you would be out there, I think I cant I have a feeling they did had one or two deck chairs, but not that amount whether it was where the cafe area was, because there was a railing because you won’t allowed into the water unless you have paid your money to go in, so whether some parent could go in with young children but couldn’t go that side of it I don’t know, but there was err the concrete um garden bits because they had um flowers or whatever in concrete, they had metal um barrier so you had to go through the fountains if you done as you were told, there was metal um railing and you had to go into the fountains because the idea was washing your feet before you went in to the water, that was I grew to understand after wards, but now just as children you don’t realised that, but the idea was make sure your feet were clean to go into the water, but whether that was properly or not I don’t know, um of course naturally people took their picnics and everything and over there and they would be over there whole day

*Did you ever do that take a picnic over?*

Err well I supposed we, I cant remember in the swimming that much in the actual park it self we always took err we would go out for the day, see you take it when we were children, um because as I said the war ended, what sixties so I must be about six, seven you took sandwiches a bottle of lemonade or xxx and you would be gone for the day, and you would had to take that bottle back, because of your money on the bottle

*Right*

So you didn’t leave a mile of litter everywhere, well I don’t like to say what we did with this the paper of our sandwiches [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

But generally you didn’t, you sort of um had your um, but you always went out with something and you are gone for the day, I mean um whether you stayed in Barking Park went un to um Mayesbrook or went over to South Park we didn’t go to South park much, because there wasn’t much there, but we often walked to Wanstead

*Wow*

Or another thing we used to do which we really, which we done a few well one particular Sunday we did it, we err because we were made to go to Sunday School every Sunday we weren’t allowed not to we went to the Baptist tabernacle in Linton Road, thou we were christening at St Margret but we because our friends lived over the Park went there, we went there and err um we did on a few occasion walked to Woolwich to go on the ferry, and this particular Sunday we did and God by the time we got home our parents were out scouting for us, because we had walked there we spend what the money we had and I can remember coming up the Becton bypass and one of us I cant remember who it was found a six pence and said ooh we are nearly enough home we could have get the bus [laughing]

*[Laughing]*

Because we used to go down by the rushing water quite a bit through Becton through the rushing water in to Barking

*Ok*

Over the err um what I supposed I don’t know whether they called it part of the A13 now or not, Becton where the big concrete pillars the bridge [noise] the um because when I was a child err back of the rushing water they had gipsy often there, not all the time

*Ok*

But the old types gipsy you know where they had them wooden caravans, I don’t mean caravan like you see today, but on wheels, we used to err often err cut through the err rushing water there where all the um, it must be where the sewage farm is now, we used to walk through there on to the Becton bypass and we used to often play down by the rushing water on the err barges, that used to be tied up at the town key

*[Laughing] it doesn’t sound like a very safe game init*

Yeah, we were fortunate enough as children to be able to be out and about with out our parent I supposed worrying to that extent

Ok

Also we were I supposed in a group, err we were never sort of on our own there was always well three over the park, two girls and there younger brother and then there was my sister and me and my brother, so it was six of us and a couple of friend, one of the boys in um his elder brother didn’t used to come with us much, because we used to get so I supposed dirty and what is the name, he was a bit what is the name xxx[Tidy] his younger brother belong to the um British legend

*Ooh ok*

Because he was one of the last one, to go on to National Service, he went out to um the jungle of err where was it? He went out xxx or somewhere, he was the last age group to go on to National Service which is my age, so he is seventy two, the eighteen stopped that after he done his National Service because my brother never went National Service but um as I said um there wasn’t many places in Barking I supposed we didn’t go level crossing we used to go over the two bridges what the name on the level crossing because then you had to wait for the level crossing to open and shut those big wooden gates like you see in villages now we used to have to wait for the train to go through before, you err went across the level crossing but err as I said I supposed that is it Barking has alter such a lot, would you like another drink?

*Ooh am fine thank you*

Are you sure

*Am ok if you want to get your self*

No, no am fine ok

*Before we turned the tape on you told me a lovely story about the giant chess board*

Um

*And I was wondering if you could tell me that again*

Yeah, err the giant chess board was um naturally played by retired gentle man, well naturally everybody else I supposed would had been at work but they used to come there often late morning, early afternoon, and play chess and of course we used to get told off if we was making a noise round there because or often they used to sit there and xxx[meet] and chat I supposed as elderly people but the board it self they had like to us it look like a xxx , it a long green box, that they had the err round disc in which might, well heavy to pick hold off, because they were um, I think they were concrete with a wooden what the name with a metal handle that you could pickup with , but naturally they had um special pools that they naturally shifted them about the board and it was a chess board or whether you class it as chess err

*Or draught*

Draughts it a draughts board because well chess and a draught board are very similar but of course naturally with the draught board it black and white and of course naturally as kids we didn’t care which square we put it on, but you would get this big and they were long and I should say they must have been, four, five or they might have seen four or five feet long this pools, to lift up you try and lift one of them disc, so of course we often used to pick the disc up easier, by hand of course we didn’t understand draughts then, but we used to play, but the men used to play draughts quite a bit, but at one period I think they used to keep the thing locked, whether it because they were more, whether the children took the draught and put them elsewhere or what I don’t know , but they did locked it for a period, but how it come that we could get access to it at a certain time, whether for some reason it hadn’t been locked or what I don’t know, or whether after probably finding the children playing with them probably might have lost one or two of the draught I don’t know, but we used to play with them, and of course because it back on to the bowling ground, you always got the park keepers round that area, because you were not allowed in the bowling green because that was specifically kept for, and it was beautiful that bowling green really it was, um I mean they spend hours on that lounge in the bowling green, and you would often try and look over the xxx to see them playing, but err and also they had a big fountain round at the back there I don’t know whether that is still there, it was err what can I say, it was a xxx um err can I say the colour was, it wasn’t pink and it wasn’t red, it was sort of like a deep pink but not um not flash, it was a bit xxx and it had sort of like gray or black xxx bits in it, and it was ooh I should say a good xxx[eight foot or more high] it had a big err and the water used to come out in four places, and they had metal cups on a chain

*Ooh*

And err I mean naturally I don’t know what, I can’t remember them been there all the time, but you could feel you xxx and the water come out of a man’s mouth, and you could and it lad in the err basin of the err what the name, and the fountain was very -very similar in shape form what I can remember, as the ones in the swimming pool, in the um open now swimming pool, only tile is different colour, because I think they where white colour where this was this sort of deep pink, and sort of it had xxx[speckle] in it like black or gray in it, and err right next to it was another one of those water fountains that we used as kids, because naturally um our parent wouldn’t have drinking out of a metal cups, err other people might have been using where you could used the little gray one, because you press the button and you had to put your mouth over it and usually ended up with more water on your face then anywhere, but that was right near that, but that was right by the bowling green there, only the err where the railway is now, you know where the um side gate was? When I was a kid that was open, that was never ever closed, that side gate err the level crossing when it was moved from the back of the park to here, because I don’t know when they moved that

*The railway*

The railway, why they moved it from the back of the park, because it was over by the err um stream between the lake and the stream originally, err lox ford end not South Park but Lox ford end, used to turn on the turn table there and then come, because you had the water what we used to called water fall you know where the water flow from the stream, from across the road, do you know where the Mosque is?

*Um*

There is a stream running by the Mosque xxx [Tanner Street]

*Yeah, yeah*

Where Tanner Street and xxx [Fanshawe Avenue] meet

*Ooh yeah*

There was a stream we used to often play over there, because the stream used to feed into our stream, and I don’t know whether that was what top up the lake, kept the lake, the water there because there was another um where the train used to end up the other side, there was another stream where often you couldn’t go because it had a railing, now what we used to do, was hold on the railing and go round the outside of it, it was a concrete um thing, so whether they were err gates or places to monitor the flow of the water, because the water then goes in to South Park drive, and goes up the side of South Park drive, so whether it was sort of a monitoring xxx [what the name] of the water I don’t know, but of course we used to go round it, or over it um because we used to go over there, and of course also we used to xxx part time we used get the courting couple over there, because of the long grass, because they didn’t keep that cut like they did the rest of them, I mean they used to keep them lounge absolutely perfect in that park, where the err, round um where the memorial is, they had um round um big round beds of flowers, and err they had the seat there where you could seat and err also along the lake you also had deck chairs, you had xx of during the summer period, I mean where they put them, during the err, I think they had a shed along there, along between the boat house, and what was where the back of the err the gardeners place was, I had a feeling that had a wooden shed where they kept the deck chairs, but all the summer, the deck chairs would be out down by the on the grass xxx between the grass xxx and the paving before the lake, you would had family sitting there, picnicking and everything, I mean that park was packed as xxx when we were kids

*Yeah*

Really was

*I mean you mention then about err how it sort of neatly manicure everything was, do u remember any of the gardeners that used to work there*

Well as I said, the only, well I can remember seeing the gardeners

*What did they wear uniform at all*

Yes, yes they wearing um black trousers black jacket and peak caps and it had park keeper across the cap, but whether they had names on them I wouldn’t like to say, I didn’t know any of them, but we did had one, and they rode bikes, err used to go round the park on bikes, because the time we used to, whether they where signing on or signing off, their days work or what I don’t know, but they had, you know like police man used to have xxx[cap]?

*Yes*

Naturally if it is raining, I supposed they wore a xxx [cap] and if you got caught or doing something you shouldn’t which we had on the grass, ooh the grass there you won’t allowed on any of the grass where the flowers beds and the xxx were, but naturally as children you wanted then xxx to play hide and seek, I mean you didn’t want to play hide and sick in the middle of the grass where you were allowed, because there is no way to hide, but in them xxx they had little metal thing about, I supposed two foot off the ground, keep off the grass, and you were not allowed on there, and the park keepers where very strict, and it was kept nearly well I supposed as good as the bowling green, that grass was of course if you got caught on there and they chase you off, or call out you would run for it, and then you would get one of them that we knew, and he was quite a xxx, and I can still see his face, he was known to us as bent nose, he got a broken nose, well it looks as if he had his nose broken, because it was bent and we used to say bent nose is coming, and we had to run for it, and of course how, but if come near you, xxx that xx[cap] if he got it, or sometimes they would have it rolled up in their back, on the back of their seat on the bicycle but if they thought they would get hold of, they hit you with it, if they could get near you, but of course you, there would six, or seven of you, xxx here and there and everywhere, the poor chap park keeper wouldn’t know where he was going, would he, but the park keepers where there the whole of the time I mean, I shouldn’t had thought you would have seen much of that park, after an hour visit not seen one or two park keepers, they were walking around all the time, well also they might have been doing jobs but you didn’t realised it, err but they were there all the time, to keep an eye on children I supposed, well I supposed you xxx, also like picking the flowers if you wanted to pick a flower or anything got caught, you know or whatever, you got err what the name or they would say, and if they said it you take no, you wouldn’t err what is the name, you know that they would report you, to your parent because the problem is naturally park keeper, you probably didn’t realised it, they knew you parent, well unfortunately been in a shop, we couldn’t go anywhere without been what the name, because I know my brother was always mourning to me, ooh I can’t do anything it always my fault

*[Laughing]*

My Dad used to say, well you are known, well known, your mates they don’t know where they lived, do they, but they know where you come from

*[Laughing]*

And of course he used to get really upset over it, because he was always in to trouble, you know doing things you shouldn’t be, or being somewhere where he shouldn’t be, but that was it, park keepers I supposed kept an eye on you for your family sake or whatever, but err I should say they must have been quite a few park keepers over there, it wasn’t just one or two, I wouldn’t have thought, but um no, but err

*It was really lovely story there it is quite amazing*

Yeah, and of course then there was the lake, we was always on the lake, you had the err, the length of the lake, the children end was the end by South Park Drive, and they had a little boat shed there, a small one where the paddle boat where kept, and the err breaking of point I think is still there now, from what I can remember of it err, I went through there last Thursday I think it is still there because, you see the xxx you were only allowed in that small triangle

*Ok*

Children were, unless they were with an adult err, so that, this the South Park end was for paddling boat where you used to um, used your hands and they used to turn round little paddles in the side of the boat, when you used to used your feet to you know like a tricycle I supposed or a go-karting type thing, but this where small boats, and they have a err boat keeper there, and um he would had a pool and he had to give you lots half an hour for you money, and then he call your number in because each boat was number, and you would have to come in, and if you didn’t he would had long high length xxx and he would get in the water and make sure you come in, because naturally there would be a queue for the boat, the other end of the um lake was, um where the rowing boat or xxx we used to called them, which often well the xxx only seated one the rower, and what they used to do the actual seat used to go up and down as it is rowing, this sort of what is name err but then they had bigger ones where you could have two in them, and you used to able to swap over rowing, with your partner, you had um ropes on them that guarded the err um as the rowing facing you, you are got your back, and you got the two ropes that pull the err little paddle thing at the back, that turned you right or left, and you used to have to go right way round the islands, you were never allowed to go other than clock wise, if you did they have you out of the boat, and out off the lake, you had to go the right way round, and then of course I don’t know when they came in, the motor boat came in and err course that really delighted everybody been able to do it without any effort, but the same with that, but that I think the motor boat you are only allowed pass the first two islands, or up to the you had to turn at the end of the third islands, where with the err rowing boat you could go to more or less to where the children started, but with the motor boat you won’t allowed to go, because they always told us the depth of the lake wasn’t deep enough for the motor boat, whether that was true or not but that’s what they told you, you was only allowed, to go that point, then you had to turn round and come back, and then course when we were very-very young they had to xxx[phoenix] the big paddle boat, um I understood the last one was two, but I had a feeling they did have a xxx[phoenix] one as well originally whether it was err replace with the xxx[phoenix] two whether the xx[phoenix] one was when the lake first open or what I don’t know, but I think the one we had as children was the xxx[phoenix] two

*I had heard from someone I can’t remember who, um but there was original a xxx [phoenix] one and unfortunately it got burnt so they replace it with the xxx [phoenix] two but I don’t know depth of the truth in that*

It is quite possible, could had done but I don’t remember any of that

*Do you remember riding on the paddle steamer then?*

Yes, yes it was

*Can you describe that?*

Well it rather reminded me as a child, err rather like going on the ferry across the err Woolwich ferry, because of the rush of the water, the paddle was at the back of the boat and if you were at the back of the boat you could see that paddle going round and bringing up the xxx of the water, as you went round on it, and err naturally of course you had the bend wooden bend seat that you sat on, but at the back end as I say, you could see the paddles or the xxx of the water, but I had a feeling that it did had paddle either side of it, but whether they course the flow of the water or what or whether it was only back one, I can’t remember err really, but I can remember I mean been there that long, so what happen to it whether it was the up keep or what I don’t know, because it must have been the only the early part of my child hood that was there, or were it went or what I don’t know, but err no I should say I might have been on it, what I can remember once or twice not that much, and of course they had the little err kiosk by the err boat house where you could get ice cream and drink, they used to have couple of ladies there serving ice cream and drink by the lake itself, it was a little wooden hut and funny enough there was another fountain there, but that wooden hut, the same little grey fountain, so there must of been quite a few of them little fountain place

*They kept you well hydrated*

Hydrated yeah, yeah so we didn’t need the bottled water erm...what else can I remember...?

*What about things like wildlife in the park? Do you remember any...I don’t know erm ducks or swans on the lake?*

Well I suppose the only thing I can remember is the ducks or the swans, ducks and swans there wasn’t any geese, not when I was a child, or not that I can remember them, it was mainly swans and signets and ducks and drakes...erm as to...I can’t even remember as a young child squirrels even

*Really?*

No

*[Laughs] there’s no shortage of them now*

No now, well I’ve got a mile out here erm…birds naturally I suppose you don’t take that much interest in, in birds erm but naturally I think, as, as a child really I mean, even in my own garden when we were children there was the green finches, the erm robins, thrushes, blackbirds, naturally the sparrows, starlings, your woodpigeons and your pigeons, but as for erm...woodpeckers and erm kingfishers, though my father says he can remember seeing kingfishers and also...erm they used them at kingfishers at Beckton when they were building erm, not Beckton, Ford’s when they were doing that

*Ah*

The bottom of erm there, they...he said the stream there running along there where Ford’s was, he can XXXX, but at Beckton he said he can remember them, but I can’t say I ever remember seeing a kingfisher, I think...heron’s erm funny enough I saw one...well right up until they drained that lake there was one that used to come...whether it was the same one naturally I don’t know, but I used to at least...every two or three weeks see a heron at the bottom...at the back end...at South Park Drive end, before you come to what I used to call as the children paddling pool, used to...it had a nest there funny enough, or it had a big...looked like a nest, whether it was a heron’s nest or not I don’t know, but it used to be there and sometimes I used to see it actually in the stream, in South Park Drive

*Ok*

But whether it was the same heron or not, but two or three times, just...this last year I’ve seen it until as I say they drained the lake, and then I haven’t seen it since, though the water is now back in it, I can’t say...I go through there Monday’s and Thursday through the park...and...But I haven’t seen it back yet, but then probably...it might take a long while for it to come back erm...of course they did have rats

*[Laughs]*

Though luckily enough I can’t say I ever saw any though my sister fell in the lake...erm...and my cousin Peter who, who...XXXX said XXXX a rat chased her out of the park, she said it was a rat, and so did he, but whether it was or not, I don’t know, but I mean...but funny enough erm...last year I did see a rat in there and I thought oh coming from the allotments, but touch wood that’s the only one and time I’ve seen it...

*[Laughs]*

Cos I wouldn’t go near there again if it was...but erm...as for squirrels I can’t remember squirrels...erm...I can’t remember any other...you know water animals in the lake or anything XXXX...used to get moorhens now and again...

*Sorry what are moorhens?*

Erm they’re the little black one I think with the erm little red mark on the beak I don’t whether it’s the male or the female that has the red mark and the other one is...plainer but you...you used to get them now and again the moorhens, what we called moorhens, whether they have got a different name I don’t know, but we used to call them as moorhens, little black...they’re very feisty, very fighters...course you use to get the ducklings and the signets when they were in...What’s name cos they...the swans that’s why at certain times you weren’t allowed near those islands because the swans used to breed on the islands, the ones near erm Mayesbrook park end erm, Loxford Lane end, they used to often, well they did they lived...they had...I have a feeling they did when we were very young, have wooden...shelter places on there, those islands...or something whether it was for them breeding or what, I don’t know, or whether they monitored the egg, what’s name or not I don’t know, but I can’t think of any other...what’s name animals, course you used to get like, when the fair come, you used to have your donkey rides and all that sort of lark, when we were what’s name, they had the donkeys over there

*Could you talk about the fair a little bit, if that’s ok?*

Yes erm...course the fair when I was a child come every September and it always rained, we had the carnival...erm...the fair usually come in the Sunday before, and opened on the Thursday, was the first night....and it was Holland’s fair, Mr. Holland used to run the fair and erm....erm...they were the regular fair...family and they had the big caravan...beautiful wooden caravan it was and I don’t know whether...do you go in the park at all?

*Yes*

You know where the raised bed is before you come onto the grass...his caravan was always there

*Right, so by the main lodge gate entrance*

Yeah, yeah

*Right ok*

By there, the first piece of green on the park was where the Holland’s...erm own what’s name, they used to have these lovely big canteens what they had their water in, polish you could see your face in them, you know it was...really a fantastic...caravan they had, I mean some of the others were just as good I suppose, but naturally they were often smaller and course you had erm all your different rides, screaming Lizzie, your octopus, your XXXX walk, erm all the main things, the erm...Dodgem cars and your whip and your chair...chair-airplanes that went and of course they always had when I was a child, all the music was done by those erm...cards you know like they have for the organs, they had proper organs, like the horse...erm merry-go-round had the big painted erm figures on them and they had that music that was played by the organ and it was done erm, erm like you’d see the cards going up as it was playing through erm through the music through the wood and they were looked like big cardboard...pieces of cardboard with holes punched in and you’d see that going up...and the noise it was, well I suppose it was an entirely different, um, sound, than what you get today, because it was more like an organ sound. And course naturally they had all the little children’s rides, you know, the little ones where they weren’t usually done on motors, they were pulled, you know. They used a, er, get hold of them, they had probably six or eight metal strips and they’d pull them round by hand.

*Crikey!*

And the children would be on a, um, er, then course they had the um, er, bearded lady and the er, side shows. But the latter part of the time I don’t think, that sort of gradually seemed to dwindle out. But they had er, different side shows, that you’d see. Um...er...what other things? And course naturally they had the um, candy floss, and the um, sausages and things like that. Um, you’d smell the onions and the sausages being cooked, and you’d go right, and when they used to pour that er, crystals in to the little round dish in the candy floss to make the candy floss, it was sugar, and you could smell that um, strawberry sort of perfume smell. Um, and course naturally they had the carnival, they always had er, an actor or actress open the carnival.

*Is there anything, names that you can remember that you’d like to mention for the tape?*

Um...isn’t it funny how you can’t, remember the names?

*[laughs].*

My sister...

*Sorry!*

...probably would have done. If I ask me sister, and she can remember any of them...well the latter one of the one was when her eldest boy was only a little boy, and it was one of the singers, um...

*[coughs].*

He had a photo of er, him with this singer. Though I didn’t know her, but er, ain’t it funny...how you can’t think of them, actress and yet we had two or three from what I can remember, well known ones. If I asked her and she can remember of them, I’ll phone Francis and give her the names. In case she might be able to remember them.

*Well if it’s ok, I mean I can pop in sort of next week to return the photo’s anyway, if that’s ok?*

Oh yes, yes, yes. And I’ll ask her and see whether she remembers any of them.

*Do you know when the carnival stopped happening? In Barking Park, and the fair?*

[pause] We came out of the, what was Curtman’s, or what is now the pet shop, the year after decimalisation. And I think that was nineteen seventy...was it seventy one or seventy two (1971, 1972)? Decimalisation?

*I’m afraid I don’t know!*

I think it was, or was it sixty one or sixty two (1961, 1962)? No I think it was seventy. Whenever the decimalisation and I think they’d more or less started to dwindle then. Whether they’d stopped by then, I don’t think so. But I don’t think they went on for much longer after that. I think, I think what might have stopped a lot of it, because I don’t know when Holland’s stopped running, because I don’t think Holland’s do the fair there now. Now when I was a child, Holland’s done the fair every year. It was always one of the Holland family, either the father was there, or, I think his daughter took it on afterwards. But it was always run by Holland’s and they um, at the end of the fair, always had to clear the, the area and pay for the re-what’s name of the grass.

*Crikey.*

To get it back for the er, football season to start and that. They had to pay so much up front, to pay for the re-what’s naming of the park.

*I can imagine...*

Because it was a big area. That, the carnival, or the fair when I was there, went from that gate, er, from that er, flower bed, right the way up to um, that walkway is, is it St. Edward’s walk way? I think it’s St. Edward’s, ‘cause I think he opened that. ‘Cause me dad said he could remember Prince Edward coming to the Town Hall.

*Oh, for the charter day?*

Yeah. For opening...

*In nineteen thirty one (1931)?*

Yeah. And um, also I think one of the, I don’t know whether it was Edward or George, or one of the Royal Family opened the um, Ford’s um, estate. The er, not Ford’s itself, the er, council estate, come to the council estate. Um...

*I’m just, in my head, I’m kind of imagining all the park keepers almost in tears that all of their grass had been ruined...*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, and er, but as I say, the floats were very, very, very big, ‘cause they went in to Mayesbrook Park, and came out. Er, I think the prizes were, I’m not sure whether the prizes, the latter part of the time were given in Mayesbrook park, before they started. ‘Cause the, the carnival went round the town, and came in to the park...and of course then there was the bandstand when we had all the bands over there, the dancing, all the deck chairs used to be round the bandstand and you had to pay to go in to listen to the bands, erm...

*Could you describe the band stand to me? ‘cause I heard it was quite original.*

Yes I, I d-, I assume the round piece must still be, the concrete base must still be there ‘cause it was a, er where this is, it was at the er, the right er looking at this, the shed there was at right of it, and it was more or less I should say in line with er, the bowling green and the indoor bowling green and it was...let’s see there was one, two, three, four, must have been five pillars. Five or six concrete pillars with this big dome, green it was, er dome and part of it was glassed. You know like you have er, glass erm shutters or something on half of it, not the whole thing. Er, whether they were used to according to the erm wind or whatever I don’t know, and er, the band used to be up on the platform and the concrete round area was used for dancing. You could dance round on the concrete bit and then the rest of it between the concrete and the fence was grass, and they’d used to have the deck chairs out and you could sit and listen or whatever. And erm, I think like the Salvation Army and I suppose some of the ch-, er the erm military bands. Erm, I mean they weren’t there every week like, I think they only had them at probably weekends during the summer and things like that. But er, an ‘course it was fenced off, well because naturally you, er because the fair, you never paid to go in the fair, the fair was always free run, you didn’t pay to sort of like en-, enter in to that area, it was all open, what’s name, where like the band stand you pay, if they had got a band on a deck chairs you paid to go and sit down, and of course a lot of people used to stand on the outside and listen and what have you and watch erm...

*I heard that they used to do the prize giving for the carnivals...*

Oh yes, prob-, in the band stand

*Ok*

Yeh, yeh.

*Could you tell me a little bit about that if you can remember..?*

I can’t remember a lot about that, but I suppose they must h-, I can remember people being there, I suppose the mayor and er mayoress and one or two of the councillors and, and that and Hollands used to be down, ‘course the, whoever was the erm, er, notoriety that come in the, ‘cause they used to have a car and they u-, the person, as I say h-xxny, funny how I can’t think of one of them.

*[Laughs]*

Used to sit up on the back seat and ‘course naturally xxxx ‘course the whole of Longbridge road had be lau-, lined with people and children with streamers ‘cause they used to erm, used to have a mile of these paper streamers that you used to shake erm, penny or tuppence I suppose they use thrupence they used to be. But the erm, and he used to cut or she whoever it was used to come in the er back of the limousine, whose limousine it was I don’t know, but used to come in the car and the floats would be ahead and you’d had the band’s, you’d had the young erm, scouts, the er, erm, boys brigade and their bands and, and that used to be in between, and the, I think one of the forces band used to be there as well sometimes.

*[coughs] Excuse me.*

It was quite er really big turnout, well they used to, well the whole of, you’d have a job to move up Longbridge Road, either side with the amount of people and children ‘cause they’d come from all around the area because I don’t know of anywhere else that did a band. And you used to get all the erm, carnival queens from Billericay, er Southend, they’d all be included with their floats and it’s so you can imagine the amount of floats. You’d have probably three or four carnival queens beside your own and her, ‘cause naturally the Barking one would be the head of it and she’d have two ladies in waiting and the cart would be grassed, flowered and that they’d b-, be in their long dresses and that.

*Sounds incredible.*

It was really more like a “Disney” turn out. But they were at-, but ‘course I suppose as children you make a mile of it. I suppose probably it’s, elaborated in your mind because your, but they, the whole of the town would come to a halt that Saturday. And then they used to do the presenting of the er, prizes in the err, pavilion, erm, in the erm, well that’s what they u-, they didn’t call it the er, restaurant, they called it the “Pavillion”

*Ohh*

Was always known as the Pavillion.

*It’s quite posh [laughs]*

Er ha yeh, no it was def-, it’s only concrete inside and whatsaname but and it was always so dark in there, I can remember as a child. Any way the band stand was always there and they always had the, whoever was given the prizes out in there. ehh ‘had forgotten that side, of ‘course as children I suppose you, you weren’t interested in that side of it, you was more interested in the fair.

*[laughing]*

[laughing]

*‘Course!*

Toffee apples and your hot dogs and your, your candy floss and ...

*All that good healthy stuff..*

Honey comb

[laughing]

Yeh, you didn’t have burgers and all that sort of thing, erm, inn’t funny how I can’t think of one.

*You’ll probably remember all of them tonight after I’ve gone [laughing]*

Hmm, hmm...I don’t know whether Dudley Moore did one of the latter ones, I think he did.

*Well he’s local so...*

Yeh, yeh

*...You know*.

Yeh I have a feeling he might have done, I wouldn’t like to swear to it but I’ve a feeling he might have done one of the latter ones...Dudley Moore.....[pause]...erm, can’t think..[pause]..anything else in the park.

*There is just one, I think we’ve covered quite a lot actually, you know, it’s amazing, so thank you very, very much! Um, but there’s just one thing , there’s this mystery of the blue police phone box, that Frances was telling me about!*

I still say it was outside the park.

*Could, could you talk about that a little bit if that’s ok, sorry.*

Well, as, as children I mean I s’ppose er we used to use naturally, we used to walk to Ilford. I mean it was a lot different then I s’ppose as, as a child. But we didn’t use that end of the lake an awful lot other than if we was on the other side of the stream side, erm but that blue box was I’m positive outside the big park gates.

*Outside the lodge?*

Funnily enough I should of asked me sister whether she could remember it, but it was er, it was er, er policeman’s box, I mean not that they could go in it, it was erm, it was an emergency er, if there was problems or whatever, you’d sometimes see a policeman with it open and be on the phone, so I assume, well there was, there was a phone in it. Though as children we could never ever get at it, but I mean it wasn’t that we didn’t try I suppose to open it but it, I have a feeling it had a little handle on and they use to pull it open and they used to phone and I think the police use to use it as a, a calling if there was a problem or something like that. I mean, I don’t know exactly what it was for, but it, I assumed it was a police box for police men to use, because naturally I suppose, not having a walkie-talkie, I suppose they’d be on their beat, but it was. But um, Frances said, she thought it was inside the park. But I can’t remember it ever being, and I can’t see the point of having it in the park, how did the police men get to it?

*[laughs].*

If he wanted to use it of a night.

*So, so what was the position that you thought it was, you, by the main gates...?*

Yeah.

*By the lodge?*

Er, er, more or less on the pavement edge.

*Ok.*

By, on the road edge more, I mean I don’t suppose it was right on the edge but it wasn’t, er, because them er, gates, I think set back a bit. You know, they’ve got the pillars and they set back. Er, but I have a feeling it was er, in between the pavement and the roadside. Of the what’s name, and er, I can’t even remember it going. But it must have done, ‘cause it’s not there!

*[laughs].*

But whether they took it once they started using, erm, different um, communications what’s name’s, but I understood it was there for emergencies.

*How early can you remember it being there, like what age would you have been?*

All the, all the time. I can’t remember it not being there.

*Ok.*

But then I couldn’t stipulate, well as I say, I, I wouldn’t have been out and about until I was at least six because the war. Me parents wouldn’t have had us running around during the war, on our own, I shouldn’t have thought. So I mean, I must have been six or seven. So as far as I know it was there the whole of the time I was growing up. But as to when it was put there, or when it was taken away, I don’t know. Um...because the garage, is been there...course the um, the Triangle, which is the er, well it’s not a gardens now, but when I was a child that was gardens. That, they, I think just recently paved it over and just put two or three trees, but that was Tanner Street. Because going to Northbury School, because er, Queen’s Road, you come down Queen’s Road, but now it’s sort of more like a cut through for cars in to Ilford I think. But when we were kids, Queen’s Road was quite a wide road, and you come down in to er, Loxford, Tanner Street and the Triangle, what we call Triangle, ‘cause a couple of me school mates used to live in the houses which one is now um, was where Ms. Massey, where I went to school the latter part of the time, which was er, um, Pittman College. But is now the driving er, test station.

*Ah right.*

That is there, where me two friends lived, one lived next door, and the other one lived next door but that, and they went to Northbury School with us. Um, that was the Triangle, went in to Queen’s Street, where the pub was and the sausage factory, and, and that was up that end. Um, but the, as I say, we used to naturally walk to Ilford. Also the trolleybuses used to go to Ilford. Well, see, naturally as kids, we didn’t have pocket, that amount of pocket money, we always walked to Ilford. Now and again we’d get a trolleybus, um, if we was with our parents. They’d er, what’s name. Well course, the trolleybuses went up to Ilford Broadway, and course er, most of that was really, er, just shops. And course you had the Pioneer market, um, and course that was the way we went to Valentines Park. ‘Cause we used to go other there now and again. Er, ‘cause the latter part of Valentine’s Park, that was when Steve was young, I suppose he must have been about five or six, was the first and only time I’ve ever witnessed a whirlwind.

*Oh really?*

And I was in Valentine’s Park with him, and er, we was in the swing yard and there was a la-, er, a lake just in front of, well a little while away from the swing yard, and the dog started barking, people had one or two dogs, and they started howling. And when everybody turned, you could see this whirlwind coming across the park, and it come across the lake, and it went in to the swing yard, and by then the children were screaming their heads off, and you were absolutely covered in dust, in your eyes, in your hair, everywhere. And you was in this whirlwind, as it went out of the, the other way.

*You must have been terrified!*

And it was the first time, and the, it was, it was a bit frightening, though I can’t say I was terrified, well of course I was a woman in me, what, well I must have been thirty.

*Right.*

So I wasn’t a child, but I’d got um, me sister’s youngest boy with me. And I, it was something I’d never ever experienced in me life. And it come right across the grass, across the lake, and you literally saw it moving along.

*That’s incredible.*

But it couldn’t have been a big one, but I mean it was, but as I say, it was the dogs that warned you to start with ‘cause they started howling and making a funny noise, and then course everybody looked.

*Dogs have a sense don’t they.*

And course you could see it approaching. And there was nothing you could do about it, ‘cause it was going at such a speed, but it seemed as if it was going in slow motion [laughs].

*[laughs].*

But er, and I think that was the latter part of the time, Steven, what is he now, he’s...thirty eight, so I suppose that was about thirty years ago.

*Wow.*

Yeah. But um...

*That’s incredible.*

Hmmmm.

*That’s fantastic, thank you very, very much for spending the afternoon with me, I really appreciate it.*

Yeah, yeah, no, that’s ok!

*And I really have taken up your whole afternoon haven’t I?! [laughs].*

No, no! But I mean, would you like another drink?

*Oh I’m fine, thank you.*

Or a cold drink?

*I’ve got some apple juice in my bag actually, so...*

Oh, I’ve got some orange juice if you’d like that?

*Oh no, I’m fine! But thank you very much!*

Oh are you, yeah, no, that’s ok.

*Um, I will stop the tape now if that’s ok?*

Mmmm.

*Yeah, I’ll just stop that.*

**[tape ends]**

**Interview Details**

**Project name: Barking Park Oral History Project**

**Interviewee: Pauline Howe**

**Interviewer: Claire Days**

**Transcribed by: Claire Days**

**Date: 31st August 2011**

**Length of interview: 147 minutes**

**Archive Ref: 2011\_esch\_BaPa\_05**