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*Okay, first of all can I ask you spell your name for us just so we can get it right?*

Yeah, it’s Val V-A-L and the surname is Shaw S-H-A-W

*And can I ask you your date of birth?*

Six-six-fifty two (06/06/1952)

*And where were you born?*

Uh, East End Maternity Hospital in Poplar

*Okay, so did you grow up in Poplar?*

Um we moved to, I think I was six months old when mum and dad moved to Dagenham then when I was ten, after they’d had my sister and I was ten, we moved to Barking. So I’ve always, apart from a little while when my husband and I met and we went to we had to move out of the area to find somewhere to live, I’ve always been Barking and Dagenham.

*Okay, so did you go to school in the area?*

Yes, I went to Five Elms, Manor and Park Modern which is now Barking Abbey but it was Park Modern when I was there

*And what was school like?*

I didn’t like it until the very last year, I loved the last year but now I regret not liking it more because they’re such, you don’t have any worries, they’re such good years but of course when you’re that age you don’t appreciate it, you know. I remember getting the cane once when it wasn’t my fault because I was accused of chat chat chat chat chat and it wasn’t me, I mean I know I can chat but that time it wasn’t me and I got the cane. Um ur oh and I’ve had the chalkboard rubber, not necessarily thrown at me but aimed in my direction but I left at fifteen I didn’t stay on or anything.

*Okay you said you liked the last year, was it about that last year your particularly enjoyed?*

I suppose you didn’t get as much homework but it wasn’t just that it was sort of just that was it, that was the last year. I mean for a couple of years I was, it’s not really nerves but I would be a nervy type and try to go to school and get nervous and come home but the last year I seemed to, that seemed to all disappear so you know I regret now not doing more when I was there.

*Was it a bit of a ‘the end is in sight’ type of thing?*

That’s right yeah [laughs]

Oh I was a prefect when I was at school; I enjoyed that because I could throw people out. When they’re hiding in a cloakroom in the winter and we used to have to go around and say “no you’ve got to go out in the playground” and that [laughs] horrible

*So what did you do when you finished school?*

I went to work for Kitsons Insulations Company on the bridge between Barking and East Ham, which, do you know where the Tesco’s is now? Its right opposite whatever that is now, it used to be a burger bar I don’t know if it still is but the building right opposite that used to be Kitsons and I worked there for four years nearly five years then I left. Where did I go after that? I think I did some temporary work; I worked at the post office one Christmas because I was out of work so I worked there. That was quite good because I went as a junior and I left and I could do audio typing and that so that was quite good. Then I worked for a couple of little firms in Layton, because we moved to Leytonstone for a bedsit so that was up that area. I got a job in the docks which I enjoyed, it was shipping accidents, I enjoyed that but the docks were starting to shut down so it didn’t last very long so otherwise I wish now I had gone in earlier. I went to Barclaycard, stuck it for a year but I didn’t like the people. And then that’s when I went to my last job which was a solicitors and I was there for twenty, about twenty two years and then I was made redundant.

*Okay, and what did your parents do for work?*

My Father was a policeman in the docks, PLA, police, he was a Redcap Police in the army and then when he came out, I think he done various jobs but then went in the PLA Police. My mum was, she worked at various places, one of them was, I can’t remember the name of it, it was in Lincoln’s Inn, it was like legal stationary things like that but then once she had myself and my sister she stayed at home for a while and then she went back when I was a bit older to look after my sister, she went back for Social Security which was then called the National Assistance Board in, oh where was it? It was somewhere in Barking I can’t remember now, and then she went to the Valuation Office and she also worked at the Town Hall and Barking Hospital, x-ray department when it was there, when it was the old hospital.

*She did quite a lot then?*

Yes she did quite a bit [laugh].

*Your first job was there anything you particularly liked or disliked about being there?*

I didn’t like the, because I was in the typing pool, I didn’t have any problems with that but we had a woman above us and although she was married she was known as Miss Smith and she was a bit of a dragon, and I met my husband because he worked there and she tried to split us up because it was the old school of it wasn’t right for office people to go out with factory people .

*Ah.*

You know it was class sort of thing so that’s what I didn’t like about it. I enjoyed things like, I would do various, I don’t suppose you would know what they are, there's a Getstetner which is like a printing machine and what they use to call a Bander which was a similar sort of printing machine . Switchboard, I would do a lot of audio typing and then when they needed me I would go and help out on the switchboard if I wasn’t busy and things like that. I enjoyed the switchboard side of it as well.

*When you say she was trying to split up you and your husband what was she particularly doing, just trying...*

She just, what she would say was, because he finished a little bit before me so he would wait outside for me after work and we would walk up the road together, and that and she would say she didn’t want him waiting there it’s not right that he was seen waiting for me, because office people don’t go with factory people. You know all this that and the other and I ended up throwing in my notice because I couldn’t, everybody is equal no matter what job you do. I didn’t go along that line. So I handed my notice in and then they tried to give me a rise to stay but it was something like, at the time about ten shillings a week, when you broke it down and I thought I’m not staying for that, I could earn, and I was paid a pittance as w ell, it was, I don’t know whether it was just because it was that job or they seemed to keep me being as I was a junior. I think when I left there I was on seven pounds something, I mean bearing in mind this was in the, when did I go there? Sixty seven, about seventy one, I was on about seven pound a week, seven fifty a week. I don’t know, I suppose it was comparable but it weren’t brilliant because I left there and, where did I go after that? Whatever job I went into after that my wages sort of doubled you know so... I didn’t know where I was then with all that money [laugh].

*So your husband was a factory worker?*

Yes, he done various things, he was in the insulation, he went into, he done courier, motorbike courier, he worked in the docks for a little while as cleaning containers and then he went, his last job, because he became disabled but the last job before that was with a canopy, in Canning Town, XXXX St, he was, he use to work in the factory but also he would go out delivering as well and maybe putting up on site as well. Like that sort of thing.

*Oh okay.*

But then he became disabled so he obviously had to stop that sort of thing.

*And did you have any children?*

No. no he had been married before so he had children but we didn’t but that’s, I mean it’s not a taboo subject you know.

*Okay. So if we move onto the park. So what are your first memories of barking Park?*

I should imagine my Mum and Dad taking me over there, I’m trying to think, I can remember going on the train, this must be, I think we came from Dagenham so it must have been before I was ten because we came on the bus. And I would go on the train and we went on rowing boats, I can remember the paddle steamer, I can’t remember if I went on it but I can remember it. I remember rowing, because well Dad was rowing you know. We went in the paddling pool they had there then. I did go in the, I don’t swim, but I would go in the swimming pool like with friends or whatever, not in the pool but in grounds of it you know, so I remember that. I remember it packed when it was hot, sunny and that and lots of people there and the ice-cream hatch where you use to buy soft ice-cream cones and that. What else do I remember?

*You were saying the ice-cream hatch was that in the lido grounds?*

Yes I think, I think you had the turn, I think you went in and there was a hatch and a turnstile, but you didn’t have to go in, there was like I think on that side there was like a hatch where they pull the rollers up sort of thing, I think it was there sort of thing, yes I remember that.

*That's come up in one of the interviews before and someone said they couldn’t remember there being anything like that within the lido grounds but it had come up in previous things and it was said.*

Yes I can remember sort of standing there queuing. What else do I remember? The kid’s playground, I didn’t mind the swings but I didn’t like much else, and I remember the old, which burnt down, the restaurant area, the cafe area sort of thing and the XXXX House. I use to think it was nice when I was little but when I want in when I was older, but then it might have changed from when I was little and that, yes. I remember the park keeper use to go round and you weren’t allowed to ride your bikes in the park. “Get off those bikes”. [Laugh]. And what else, I remember feeding, taking the stuff over and feeding the birds. The squirrels I don’t remember, maybe they weren’t there in the early year’s maybe they came later on but I remember feeding the swans and ducks and all that. And I remember the far end of the lake there was a little bit with motor boats, the little toy boats, motor boats whatever you call them, that area. I remember horrible story about the, I don’t know whether you want me to tell you this or not but you know the slide into the pool yes?

*Yes.*

They use to, I don’t know, the kids got in overnight and they put broken razor blades all the way down it...

*Ouch.*

Yes and somebody didn’t spot so somebody went down and, I remember that horrible story, that really...

*That must have scared you off?*

I mean I wouldn’t have gone down that anyway because I’m not good on heights and I regret not learning to swim, when I was, because they use to take us from school to Barking baths by bus every week and I use to have athlete’s foot and you couldn’t swim with that so of course I never done it when I was young and I regret now. I did try when I was older but the minute I felt myself go under I panicked and that so, but had I done it when I was younger I might be better with it . So I remember that, that horrible... I remember going over Barking Park courting [laugh], we use to, there was a area behind the baths, lake, you had the lake and a little hill and then there was a flat area and that was a good area to go because you were unseen sort of thing [laugh]. I’m trying to think what else I remember.

*With you saying how busy the lido was did you use to queue for quite a while to be able to get in or was it just once you got in it was packed.*

*I or was it just once you got in it was packed.*

Yes there were times when there were queues, yes. I can’t remember how long they were but I suppose when you’re a youngster and want to get in there even half a dozen people seems a long while sort of thing but yes, yes there use to be queues to get in there , I remember that. And I remember Barking Carnival because Dagenham had one and Barking had one and I remember Barking Carnival because I use to live down the end of Upney Lane, the block of flats there so that was handy because the Carnival use to go pass so we didn’t have to go outside, and I remember that use to go around and then end up in the park, I remember that, and the fireworks, they use to have that in Barking Park. I think they still had them last year. I remember standing on the roof of that, some kind of changing room building in there, standing on top there and watching them. Because the Round Table Rotary people use to do them so they would let us go up there, the kids go up there and look, watch the fireworks. I’m trying to think what else I remember. The rugby, I think they use to have rugby up there on a , yes I use to go over there with one boyfriend and watch rugby, it use to be along Longbridge Road , the pitches this side. What else do I remember? I’m trying to think off hand.

*You said you went to feed the ducks and the swans and stuff were there many of those sort of things on the lake?*

I remember we went over there and there were a couple of adult swans there and there were baby swans. I remember if you tried to go to near the adult s would hiss at you and that you know. But I enjoyed feeding the Canadian geese; well this is more later years I think because I don’t know whether they were there when I was small. Quite a few ducks and the moorhens and the coots’ I think they are called, pigeons obviously, pigeons are everywhere aren’t they. I can’t remember the squirrels when I was younger, they might have been there but maybe they weren’t as tame then as now and that, But I enjoyed, I know people don’t like them but I enjoyed feeding the Canadian geese, especially over in Mayesbrook Park as well because you would stand there and they would all come and I don’t know they must sort of have tom tom or something because there would be a few and then all of a sudden there was all of them and they would sort of like peck your leg in the end if you weren’t quick enough with the bread and that [laugh]. And sometime I would smack their beak because they would sort of like catch you, smack their beak and make them wake you know but I enjoyed, I liked the geese they’re nice. I know a lot of people moan about them but I like them. We had one out here once it was flying over I think from barking to Mayesbrook and the canopy was wet and they thought it was a lake and it came down, so we had it here for twenty four hours [laugh].

*I suppose that’s one of the things about living so close to the Park* that you end up with...

Yes, yes it was a shame because he was out there and he kept going between the gardens but he couldn’t get a run off but Pat rung the RSPCA and they said leave it overnight and it will go, by morning it will go. Well of course during the night the foxes, they didn’t get it, they did catch it but they managed to get rid of the foxes. And of course it wouldn’t go, it wasn’t injured but it just didn’t have enough take off so eventually somebody came down. But I suddenly thought oh I better put some water out for it because I’ve got a little drain out there where the washing machine, and it was drinking the water and I thought it’s all soapy water why is it drinking that and then I thought oh he hasn’t had anything to drink so I took a baking tray out because its beak had to go in something big enough [laugh]. So I took a baking tray out so it could get something long and he had a drink, but of course I gave it bread and that but I don’t think he wanted to eat so much It was most probably a little bit shocked and that you know but drink.

*Can’t really give it a glass can you.*

No [laugh] and then I got upset because it went when I’d nipped out and they came and got it while I was out and I couldn’t say bye, bye so I got upset [laugh]. Isn’t it stupid over a Canada goose [laugh].

*I suppose if you liked him that much it’s fair enough.*

Come back, where is it? Oh it’s gone, but I didn’t say ta tah to it [laugh]. It’s a bird.

*You can go and see it in the Park.*

Yes, which one of you was in my garden? Put your wing up [laugh].

*With the, when you went as a child and went on the train and boats and stuff was that a special day out sort of thing, that you would come over and specifically go to*

We would bring a packed lunch; it was a whole day, well as far as I know it was a whole day. We would get a bus because we only lived near what was the Fiddlers but of course like then you could be going to Scotland sort of thing. It was get a bus and you’re could be going for a day out and we would come in the morning and have a whole day there and picnic and that and then go home and then we would even go like when we use to lived in Lyndhurst we would go over and that sort of thing but not so much for the day because you are only across the road from it yes. It was an outing you know and in a way it, although you had to pay for something it was a cheap, a cheaper day out shall I put it because you couldn’t afford a lot of stuff so it was a way of having a day out and not costing too much, especially during the summer holidays because when you’re at school because you’re alright for a couple of weeks and then, “Mum we’re bored”, “Well go and find a book or something”. You know you don’t know what to do with yourself and that.

*What was it like going on the train?*

The little train?

*Yes.*

I enjoyed that, I enjoyed that. I liked the boat but I’m a bit wary with, being as I don’t swim and that you know so I enjoyed but yes.

*Was that when it use to, at that point was it just going up and down the one side, it wasn’t at the back.*

Yes it just went from the gate to the, just that side bit to practically where the lake is now, sort of similar like that, yes. I don’t know if you, I can’t remember if you bought a return ticket, like whether you could come back for the sameprice or whether you bought, you paid each way I don’t know. But I remember you go down and then you go on the boats sort of thing. There use to be a queue and then there would be trouble with, they would have to call the boats in, “Come in number your time is up”, you know sort of thing, and sometimes you’d get kids playing about between the boats and that, throwing things or slashing and that. Not so much us but like when you’ve got two boats that boys or girls or whatever, yes.

*I suppose if you can’t swim that is a bit of a worry when there are people messing about.*

Yes, yes, well of course you know the boat only seems about that much away from the water. No I do regret not being able to swim because I think it’s a thing you could even do now like , not over there obviously but the baths, the swimming pools and that you know it’s something that stays with you really.

*Some people learn some people don’t.*

Yes, yes.

*It’s just one of those things.*

One of those things. I’m just trying to think what else.

*Do you remember anything about the bandstand?*

I remember the bandstand there, I’m trying to think if I remember, [pause] I’m trying to think if I remember bands or whether someone was up there, like a speech or anything like that. I remember it but , and the War Memorial thing behind, well I think it was behind it sort of thing, I remember it but we didn’t seem to go round that way so much sort of thing but I do remember it being there yes. I’m trying to thing what else I can remember. The fair coming,, I remember the fair that only use to come , you had the Barking carnival and that would be when the fair was. You didn’t get it all year round, it would come for two weeks in September and it always rained those two weeks because they always ended, because they bought the element you didn’t want so you just wanted it to come and go and of course it always rained and one year I think it was there for about a month because it rained so much they couldn’t get out, you know they had to wait for it to harden up. And you’d get, well like everything else you’d get the trouble makers come in from other areas and that but then you get that everywhere. And I remember the fair, I didn’t like fairs, I liked the fish thing, like the side shows but I didn’t like the , I’d go on the helter skelter and maybe the dodgems but I didn’t like the big rides and all that. I went on one of the big rides and I nearly came off and that, not when I was, that was when I was older but I never particularly liked fairs but I thought brave it and go on it and I came off this horse thing or whatever and luckily enough one of the staff came and grabbed me otherwise I don’t know where I would have ended up and I thought that’s it. No, no more fairs. [laughs]. I go for a look round, but, you know.

*Yeah.*

Yeah. I can’t remember if we ever won anything there.

*And um, you talked a bit about the park wardens, what were they like, do you remember any in particular?*

Oh, I just remember the one over there, he used to have like the dark uniform. Trousers, jacket and hat. It was a bit like, to me, I don’t know if that’s true or not, you know er, the bloke in on the buses? Um, Blakey?

*Yeah.*

He was, to me, he reminded me of him. He could ride his bike through, and he’d have a whistle, I remember the whistle. I think the whistle was more for like, he’d go round and you, you had to get out. But he would patrol other times and if he saw you, oi! No riding in the park! Get off the park, er bike, you’ve got to wheel it through! And all that. You know. Er, but I remember seeing him go round I think. And I think I suppose when you’re kids, although he’d tell you off you were grateful of something, like him being there to look out- if you were there on your own, to look out for you and all that.

*Yeah.*

You know.

*What about, any of the other park staff, like the nursery or...?*

I remember where they were. I mean I always thought the park looked lovely, especially those beds by the lodge and that. And er, [coughs], it’s a shame they really got rid of the nurseries, because a lot of people used to buy the flowers from, from like, er, what they didn’t want or whatever. And they, I think my friend in Shirley, they used to buy a lot of the flowers. And they’d last forever, and they were lovely flowers and all that, you know.

*Hmmm.*

And er, so it’s a shame they’ve gone really. Um, but then, I don’t think they’ve, did they go to Dagenham? But I don’t think they’ve got them at Dagenham now, I think they buy the flowers in, you know.

*Yeah.*

Just pay them, excuse me, and all that. Yeah. Yeah, er, but it always used to look nice. By, right by the, well, the whole park did, but especially by the gate when, when they’d actually have a flower beds and all that, you know.

*Yeah. Was that by the lodge?*

Yes, that’s right yeah, yeah. I always wanted, er, even though a couple of years ago, I said, if you sell this house I’d like to know, I’d like to buy it.

*[laughs].*

You know. I’d like, I, I like the house, it’s, it’s not very big, you’ve, have you been inside?

*Er, no, I haven’t.*

No.

*I’ve heard, sort of bits about the layout.*

Have you?

*But I haven’t...*

It, it’s lovely, it’s a funny, you go in, and the stairs go up, like three sided and that, so um, I think it’s three bedroom with oh, the bathroom is hideous. It’s, it’s a what? Sixties, seventies bathroom, but it’s bright pink!

*[laughs].*

Black and white chequered floor, and bright pink, xxxx, fittings, you know. And er, but still, that was somebody’s tastes then. Um, but it, it’s a nice, I just liked the house, just liked the shape and the unusualness about it. You know. I’d like to live there. [laughs].

*I suppose especially once they’ve done, they’ve finished all the work on the park...*

Yeah it’d be lovely wouldn’t it, sort of thing?

*Nice. Have that as your back garden!*

That’s be lovely wouldn’t it? It wouldn’t worry me being, being on the edge of the park, because I know, you’re gonna be any unsafer than here, sort of thing.

*No. Um, have there been, has there been much trouble within the park then, you were talking about people coming for the fair and things like that?*

I think they’ve had a few like, er, maybe the odd stabbing, or er, fights and all that. But I don’t suppose it’s any worse than, I mean it’s not like the riots we’ve just had, it was nothing compared to them. I mean, I suppose basically on the whole it’s not bad, you, the mela comes, every August I think it is. The Mela. Which is fine, but it causes chaos up, it’s only for a day or whatever, but I know the, a couple of years ago we were coming back along Longbridge, as the Mela was sort, starting to turn out. And it was like gridlock. You didn’t know what, you know, cars couldn’t move here there or everywhere. But I mean, they xxxx xxxx sort themselves out and that. So that comes. The parade used to leave, the carnival used to go round Barking, come back in, in to the main gate, and you’d have the Queen would be crowned, the carnival Queen, and all this that and the other. And then in the evening the fair would open. Where as now, it’s sort of, it’s always there. I think it’s there at the moment I think.

*Yeah.*

And it was here in, where was it? May. And it was here a couple of weeks ago or whatever. It always keeps coming and that. Um, but then it was for the two weeks, and then after that they would go in to their winter quarters then. That was like the last one of the year there. Um, but I don’t remember...I can’t remember a lot of, you get the odd fights, and people come in for the carni-, er, the fair and er, trouble and all that, but no, nothing drastic I don’t think. You know.

*Hmmm. Ok. Um, when we did the reminiscence session, and someone brought up a memory of a man who used to dress as a cow boy and ride...?*

Oh Les knight!

*Was there anything that you can, remember? ‘Cause um, yeah we tried to, we tried to have an interview with Elsie, who was talking about it, but she’s not able to do an interview with us.*

Oh is she? Right. She er, he lived down Wilmington, down the main, what I call the main park. The part that goes out to Longbridge Road. And he used to be a window cleaner. And, er, he was smaller than me, um, but it didn’t matter what the weather was, he had black trousers, white t-shirt.

*[laughs].*

And that was it, no coat, no jumper, no nothing. All year round. Um, and I remember xxxx going, he used to do like the shops along Longbridge, he done me mum’s windows once, I can’t remember, here I think it was. Um, and he, he sort of, I, one day he saw me and I said, oh, sorry I haven’t got time to talk Les, I’ll talk to you later. And he turned funny. Eventually I apolo-, I said, what’s wrong? What have I done? He said, you were short with me the other day. But he stopped doing me mum’s windows for it. And I thought, oh well if you take umbrage of that, that’s down to you, but yes he was a weird, always very smart, very, very highly polished shoes, crease just so, very, very smart but he always, that always sticks in my head, all year round, black trousers, white tee shirt, never ever a coat or anything. I mean I don’t know about when he went out, but when he was working that's how he, you know and he would walk along, he had a sort of limp, he had limp and he’d have his, he only had one of those short ladders, he had his bucket and you would see him walking down the road, yes. He had a brother, he was shorter than him and he use to work, when Woolworth was here, when it had the old wood floors years ago, he was a very little man and he had, he had this broom, you know one of those wide brooms, well it was wider than he was tall sort of thing and he kept kicking my Dad’s feet with it and my Dad said, sort of turned around and said, “You do that one more time I’ll break that broom in half or what ever”, and he called me Dad a rude word and my Dad said, “Don’t let me hear you call me that again”. But he was a weird man but I didn’t realise until later years that that was his brother and he was a very, very little man, very short, very skinny little man, very small.

*So the story about him on his horse* xxxx?

I can’t remember, I mean he might have done but I can’t remember that.

*I’m trying to find that out.*

Find that out, he use to wear black, he could have done because he use to wear these highly polished black sort of boot things and they had like the Cuban heel, so whether that is, he could have done and that's a off shoot of that, but I, I mean personally I can’t remember seeing him with a horse but that's not to say he didn’t [laugh].

*Sounds like he was enough of a character.*

Yes,yes.

*So the story could well be true.*

I would imagine yes more than likely would I think. I can’t remember how, if there was just the two of them, I can’t remember a lot about his family because I didn’t have so much to do with him until later years. Whether he moved or whether he passed on I don’t know but obviously I haven’t seen him, if he’s moved I haven’t seen him for a few years now. And the brother I would imagine would be dead because he was quite old or appeared old then sort of thing you know, yes.

*You mentioned the , the cafe part of the, was that the pavilion?*

Yes.

*And it looked a lot different when you were older. What was it like when you were younger?*

I remember it, it use to have table and chairs with tablecloths, it might have been the plastic red and white chequered ones but they were tablecloths. I think they done, I think it was just sandwiches, things like that, sandwiches, rolls, maybe sausage rolls, pies. But they use to have ice-cream, milkshakes, milkshakes and that. and when I went back it didn’t seem, there was a few table and chairs but it was very stark, compared to when we were younger you would have like, I think they use to have the tomato sauce bottles on the table and salt and pepper and that, but when you went back it was very, very stark, there was nothing on the tables and that, very bland. They had ice-cream and that but not, it just weren’t as nice as when, unless when you’re younger you see things differently but I didn’t like the feel of it so much.

*Okay.*

Don’t like the toilets in the park, they’re a bit eerie sort of dark. I don’t know if you have ever been in the park have you?

*I’ve been in the park but I haven’t been to...*

Maybe you haven’t used them.

*I haven’t been to the toilets no.*

The ones where, they are where the cafe use to be, the cafe and the toilets there by the, you‘ve got the tennis courts here sort of thing, the toilets there and I don’t know if I ever went into the other ones or whether they were just the gents like the Victorian ones over there, I never went in there but these ones were very, they are all grey and marble sort of, they’re not marble but that's what we think. Very cold, metal doors and that, very cold and all that you know so not very enticing, a bit eerie [laugh].

*As you went to park modern did you ever do things as a school in the park being that close?*

I really can’t, I can’t, no, we went over Mayesbrook to the, I remember going to the yachting over there. I don’t know whether you have been in Mayesbrook, they have got the lake with; I don’t now if they have still got them but then they had yachts. So I remember like going over Mayesbook but I can’t remember going over Barking Park. They took us to, we had a tour round Fords from the school, and where else did we go, somewhere else. Might have been the Houses of Parliament or somewhere like that but I remember going to Fords as a class we went round Fords but I can’t remember, I really can’t remember going as a school going to Barking Park. Might have used Mayesbrook, because we used part of the running track for our P E like running lessons and all that as well. So maybe they took us there because it was a bit closer maybe. They use to take us from there to the Barking swimming pool baths as I say by coach from Sandringham Road.

*Going back to the lido what were the lifeguards like, were they quite strict?*

That's a point, I remember one or two use to have the hats on, the swimming hats, yes I remember one or two. They, I can remember them around but I can’t, I think they were sort of like; they would sit there up on those chairs and watch and all that and come down. I’m surprised they didn’t pick up the razor thing but that might not have been their job.

*I suppose you wouldn’t think to check.*

No you wouldn’t think anybody would do that would you really.

*No, quite a malicious thing to do.*

It is isn’t it, I mean how long ago, that must have been about fifty, sixties, a long, long while ago now so hopefully not a thing anybody would do now. I remember like, I walked through there, now and again I walk through there to go to Ilford, well not now the works are going on, before they started the works, but when I had my friend’s dog a couple of years ago I would take him over there and the other friend’s dog I’d take him over there. I’m always a bit wary because you don’t know what other dogs are like, because if it was my own dog fine you know, but when it’s somebody else’s you don’t want then to get bitten or anything to happen you know.

*Do you tend to get a lot of people dog walking over there?*

I think they, yes, I think there are quite a few and I think they have started their own little, like friends group, a dog walker’s group as well, as far as I know, I think they have because my friend round there goes, she’s got a dog, I don’t know if she goes to this group but I know through the Friends of Barking Park they have said there is this group. The dog walkers have set up there own little group which is good you know. They had a bit of trouble with they, well not trouble, well there was trouble but not in the park. These dogs lived in one of the houses down that side of the park, I think they were xxxx; they are like a Japanese fighting dog or something. And they look very nice but I think they can be a bit, and they were getting into the park from their back garden, and I think they sort of got a couple of dogs so they have them taken away now because they had mum and dad and some babies and they have all had them confiscated now. They shouldn’t attack other dogs but there again you don’t know whether they are going to attack people as well.

*How did you get involved with the Friends of barking Park?*

Well was it about two thousand and whatever, a few years now, I think something was put through the door about being a friend, so I went over, joined, because, although I don’t use it every day, I sort of live in the area and all that, I just wanted to help them so we went to a meeting there. I think it was in the bowls area originally. And like everything else there were lots of people in the beginning, and then it gradually dwindled, until like now there is a few, I think it stopped for a while and then set up again you know. So just really to help, if I can help them and help the community and that you know, try and keep an eye on the park, yes.

*Being such a big green space it’s quite important for the local area to have that*.

Well yes, because there are so many flats now in Barking so it gives people a chance to get out into; you know to get respite and that. And also I heard somebody say, a councillor say, when there was an open day in Vicarage Fields and I wasn’t on the stall but a couple of people were and when theysaid, “What are you”, and they said,” Friends of Barking Park”, he said, “Huh give me Barking Park and I’d build forty thousand homes on there”. And you think there’s enough homes here anyway you need a bit of green space.

*Yes, you can’t just have rows and rows of houses.*

No you need it sort of thing yes. Well it’s alright for him he won’t live, I mean A. I would like to keep it as a park and B. he doesn’t live opposite or near it anyway you know.

*Sorry to keep jogging back to two things. When we were talking about the boating lake, when was it that there stop being boats on it?*

I can’t remember when the big boat went, the paddle steamer, well I call it the paddle steamer, I think it was a paddle steamer...

*The Phoenix.*

Yes that's it; I was going to say I couldn’t remember the name of it. I couldn’t remember when Alex stopped doing it, he hasn’t done it for a few years now, since, because I think he put a lot of his own money in it and it was just eating it up. You can only put so much in can’t you sort of thing, so it’s been a few years since there has been boats on there. I remember rowing boats and motor boats. I can’t remember, and the big boat, but I can’t remember any other than that. But when we had the meeting, the Friends meeting it might be nice to have pedaloes, different sorts you know. I can’t remember if they had, I don’t suppose they had it there, but maybe over Mayesbrook they might have had kayaks as well. But I can’t remember them over there. It’s been a few years since, obviously once you grow out of boats you don’t really take much notice of it sort of thing you know. I’d walk along the front there, A. for a walk and B. to look at the birds and all that. Because the minute they see humans they think of food don’t they [laugh.

*Especially swans*

Yes [laugh]. I don’t know if they are back yet because they took them away while the work was, like the swans anyway, the geese and that have just gone to other parks you know. But the swans went away somewhere, whether they are back yet I don’t know.

*The geese have probably flown to the nearest park, the nearest bit of water.*

Yes you can hear them, well if they come the right way you can hear them of an evening going honk, honk as they go across when they are going home to bed or wherever. You never hear them going out, but then they could go early as soon as its light, they could go out, but coming home you sometimes hear them [laugh].

*They do tend to do things by; they go by light rather than...*

Yes xxxx clocks and all that, if its light they will go rather than, its too early, its too late or whatever, [laugh] yes looking at the watch, yes. What else is there I can tell you about I’m tying to think.

*Living this close to the park is it somewhere that you would go for if you just needed a respite from sort of...*

Yes, I’ll tell you what I do a lot of, when I’ve been to Barking and I’m, because, I don’t know if you know but I do a lot of my friends and my Mum and all that, so if I’ve gone to Barking, many a time I’ll walk down, especially now they have got that new road, that new path inside, I walk back through there to my Mum’s say because she’s up there in Longbridge, because it’s nice, its just you feel you have gone somewhere different, its peaceful and its nice you know, yes, yes, I enjoy it, its very nice. I might try and get on a back [?] walk if they do another one, but no it is nice to walk through there just to, you just feel like you have been somewhere different even if you haven’t you know, peace, and I like, I like walking through leaves, that noise and that.

*It getting to that time of year.*

Yes it is, like that next door [laugh].

*Yes.*

I remember the other, was it last year or the year before, we were doing a clean up day in the park, well not day, a couple of hours, in the park, and we were doing along, in the park but the railing side and there was a xxxx and various people, so I had gone off with this Robert and we were going, we were doing the railings, going all the way along the railings, through the leaves, picking up anything, any rubbish, the glass and all that. The leaves the machine could pick up but we were going underneath. And of course we are going along working away together and all that and all of a sudden we look round and there is only us two. Where’s everybody else? And they were all back, they hadn’t come and told us, we were up the other end, we had done the whole way to Faircross and that's when we were looking around thinking where’s everybody else, where do we go now. so we said we would go back towards the Lodge and find out. And they had all gone in for tea and left us to it [laugh]. We thought we could have ended up doing Mayesbrook as well no one would have come and said, “Oye there’s a cup of tea in there”, [laugh]. But that was nice. It annoys me, the other week I went over there with my friend, she’s got two dogs, she runs, she goes various places, but I had gone over there with her one night and we were walking around and there’s people here and there’s rubbish there and the bin, you know. And we were going around with the dogs, picking up rubbish and putting it in the bins and that, and that annoys me, take it with you or there are bins there, put it in the bins you know.

*Yes, instead of putting it next to the bin.*

Yes, yes, that's right, you know. So that annoys me.

*Is that something the friends group do, a lot of those clean up day, is that with the Friends that you did it?*

Why did we do that? we done that as, I don’t know if that was a one of in the park.

*It had got particularly bad?*

Yes, you know, I have helped when we have done along Longbridge by the flats, I’ve done a clean up there as well. I would like to help, because I do so much other stuff I’m limited for what I can do with the park but maybe when its up and running I could help with the, in the hub thing, something like that, plus the fact I’m getting older, I can’t dig, whereas maybe the younger ones can do more heavy work and that you know, yes. I would like to, I can’t stand litter everywhere and all this that and the other. It annoys me, I’ve seen people drop things and say would you do that indoors, go and put it in the bin or take it home with you or whatever. If everybody picked one thing up you wouldn’t have any of this litter. Anyway that me off [laugh] I don’t need to burden you with that.

*No I think its one of those things about the park over time that peoples sort of attitude to how they treat it has changed. Especially with the wardens and things because you were saying when you were younger and there was the wardens who not so much crate fear but there was something to be respected and you didn’t mess around with them and then now...*

I mean like when I was young, not because my Dad was in the police, but we were always told if you were out and something happens, you know, go and find a policeman or ask a policeman, if you were lost or want to know the time or whatever. But you know now I don’t think people, well most people would but you get the odd element that would rather kick their head in rather than, they have got no respect as you say or failing that we were told like if you think you are being followed go and knock on some, where you see a light go and knock on the door, you know and say can I, but you know you can’t tell kids to do that now can you. Because you don’t know who is behind that door and all that you know.

*Yes I suppose there wasn’t the fear of who was behind the door.*

That's right, it was different wasn’t it.

*Even when I was growing up you could do things like that and it wasn’t...*

It was safe was it sort of thing, yes. I mean its like, was it yesterday on the bus, this little tot, and of course the bus jolted and of course I steadied her, its just you know there was a little kiddie in Vicarage Fields the other, a few months ago, crying, lost, “Oh Mum”, I went up and got hold of her and said, “Whats wrong where’s your Mum”. I automatically do it but of course some people say, “Oh you shouldn’t do that”, but you don’t, because I don’t mean any harm I don’t look at it like that. It’s a shame when you can’t help a lost kiddie or whatever you know.

*I suppose it’s just a general feeling of fear and it makes thing like that worse.*

Yes that's right.

*You said you use go courting with your husband in the , was that something a lot of people did, would you often see couples walking around.*

Usually in the park yes. Weren’t loads and loads but yes there would be a few of us would go over there like sort of thing. Because sometimes we would go, you know the bushes along Longbridge you could get in the middle there, like find a tree, whatever you know [laugh]. But yes, just somewhere, because you couldn’t go home or this sort of thing so you just go there sort of thing, bit of privacy. I remember we would go out and we would come home from wherever, go up the chippy and get some chips because it was still open and then maybe go over there before he took me home and that you know [laugh].

*So would the did you used to go to access the park so sort whenever or was it*

Yeah because we I you know wouldn’t be the type to climb over or break in and that so it was either, either there was a gap in the fence and it was open you know we never I am sure it must have been open sort of thing the gates open maybe if they’d forget to lock one or miss it or whatever you like this sort of thing so but we never, never sort break in or anything like that just or climb over you know I don’t think I could [laughter]. [Clears throat]. But yeah we’d, we’d you know get in usually I would imagine it is from this the entrance this end by opposite Faircross I’d go in from that way sort of thing erm and walk across and that, yeah I am trying to think what else done over there.

*In the reminiscence sessions someone was talking about a house that used to be that opposite the park and they did Christmas lights.*

Yes, Mr. Xxxxx that was it was on the corner of either Aldersey or Strathfield I can see the house I can’t remember what road it was on the corner of.

*Yeah.*

And he used to have the front the garden all he had a wishing well and er lots of lights and displays up and that that and that was lovely and we used to come from we’d been we you know we used to come from Dagenham as well and lots of people come from quiet a way to see it when he used to its been about twenty years I suppose since he’s done it. Yeah it must be twenty, twenty something years er because he got older erm but he would raise money for er where did he raise it for? There was a holiday home at Clacton he had a holiday home at Clacton he had a holiday home the Aldice because he’s don’t know if he was connected but one of his sons who we lived near had all the this is xxxxx furnisher shop whether the dad the dad might have been part of it as well I don’t know but they used to have a furniture shop at well I think it was in Barking but then they went to Dagenham and that been on the trading estate but yeah Mr. Xxxx used to do it up every year erm I don’t know I suppose in December or whenever it was it used to be lovely you know and see kids faces like you know like I would just stand there and watch some of the kids you know their the awe in their faces. It was lovely. Used to put money in the wishing well and he raised money for the home and that erm and then it was we was I mean yes he got older I admit it must been getting a bit much for him but the last time he done it he had the money taken you they so that was it you know and I suppose age as well ‘cos he must have been a rare old age so but used to enjoy that was part I used to love that every Christmas oh he’d be doing is garden up so you know we’d would go and see it. You know even as an adult I’d like to see it, yeah.

*Its was a bench like sort of a bench mark to when Christmas is coming.*

That’s right yeah., yeah. Yeah I mean now they do the trees at Faircross oh the last couple of years and that you know which is fine but it’s I suppose because of the ties with being a kid as well with Mr. Xxxxx is one of those of things it’s so pretty and you’d had things year on year and new things he’d have like I think he had a post there so the little kids would bring their Santa letters and that you know which is all part of the magic isn’t it because that’s, that who it’s the kids that Christmas you know, you know it’s lovely watching them and yeah, yeah, it’s nice.

*Was there any ever any sort of Christmas displays in the park itself? Did they ever do the trees up or anything?*

I can’t remember any but that’s what we had discussed as a friends group maybe we could have a little Christmas either do what’s up there or have a display you know like I don’t know somewhere just a little display with Christmas tree and bits of pieces actually in the park maybe like when the hubby is up do outside the hub or something like that you know that would nice something like that in the park.

*Yeah.*

Would be nice. Especially if you are going have less classrooms there erm so it would be a thing that you can do and if they are bringing the kids over you know like at Christmas bring them, bring the classes of especially [clears throat] excuse me. Especially the little ‘uns , they’d, they’d enjoy that. Wouldn’t they?

*Hmm.*

Yeah.

*Erm you mentioned a bat walk what was*

Yeah, the friends I’ve never I’ve not been one yet but eh Emma the ranger she’s, she’s done a bat walk. Well not her she’s got some she has been there but somebody has come down and done it and there’s supposed to be several different varieties of bat in there so I would mind like going sort of thing to erm obviously it’s a evening like I don’t know what time of night it is eight, nine, ten o’clock at night whatever time is appropriate I suppose but that would be nice to hear you can hear the er clicks and that you get a machine to carry around and you can hear them clicking away and all that so that would be nice yeah see that. One of the men er friends he hasn’t been at the last couple of times but one of the friends made some bat boxes and some bird boxes and they put them like done it all voluntary and they’d put them on trees and where ever is appropriate sort of thing but you have to place them in a certain way Emma knows she’s really up on it you know where to them and how to place them and all that yeah so that would be nice.

*And erm do you have any is there anything that we haven’t mentioned any funny stories about things that have happened in the park or anything like that?*

Ooh. I can’t, I can’t think of any. I’m trying to the I used help out at the oh Longbridge Youth Club it’s finished now but I was there and they were either benches or trees they were um bushes gonna have put some things in whether they ever did I don’t know but with some money that they raised they were going to put some things along the what they call the monkey parade. Erm either benches or more trees with a plaque on and that. I am trying to think of anything funny I can’t [pause] no I can’t of hand sort of thing [laughter].

*That’s fine.*

Um trying to think what else I can tell you about if there is anything or is that.

*If there’s anything that we touched*

Covered

*And that yeah.*

I can’t think of any off hand what in the park or

*Just*

Generally?

*Yeah just generally if there’s it all goes down as sort of your oral history.*

In the archives anyway.

*Yeah so if there is anything that*

I’m trying to think now what, what I can [laughter] little bit on the spot you are trying to think there is so much going round sort of thing I remember sort of thing I remember the old shops in I remember the library burning down in Barking, they the library was round yeah they had the library round back and they rebuilt it, beautiful building. Beautiful. It was like an old house erm I don’t know whether it was a vicarage or what it was an old house and they rebuilt it and inside it hadn’t been opened only a couple weeks. I’d been inside to look at it all wood and all that and then what happens in the summer holidays ‘cos I was a bit older we’d, we’d get on a bus and mum and dad, mum and dad were at work because dad done shift work and that we’d go up to my aunts at Popular on the bus and the bus used to go round through Barking like eh done and then round er the one way system that way and we went passed one day and there’s the library burnt down. Only been open a couple of weeks and that was, was really ups… not upsetting but you know what I mean a bit sad it had only been open a couple weeks it was a beautiful building. I remember other things like the shops er I think it was Princes, called Princes like haberdasher’s and that and they had the old where you put the money in and it goes zooming up er you wouldn’t remember that you put the money in put it a thing and it zoom up upstairs and that and then they’d send your change down

*Oh okay, yeah.*

You know that sort of thing. And there used to be opposite where MacDonald’s is opposite the corner there used to Bewley’s er a jewellers. Lovely jewellers, really lovely but as you went in it was it had a big, big glass clock in the floor you know that was lovely. Xxxxx go in apparently well the xxxx going I don’t know what they’ll do with the building but that would be a shame if that goes.

*Hmm.*

Because it’s a lovely place. What else can I remember? I’ve been up the curfew tower at St. Margaret’s up the tower there that is a bit it’s lovely but it’s very, very narrow and spiral and there’s no like no banisters or anything so it’s a bit, it’s nice, it’s nice up there. Not very big there is a room up there with chairs and that. Er what else can I tell you? They’re doing station just started doing the station up again.

*Erm there is one last thing I wanted to ask about the park. You say that your family used to come for days out was things was something that a lot of people would do from sort of the surrounding area and even maybe further afield that people would because it was such a sort of well known and well in terms of facilities it had*

Yeah I found

*Was that something that people would do that they would travel for the day.*

I think that they would because they were oh I trying to think what because the cars were very I mean my dad when we moved to Barking my dad had to sell his car to it was like a old it was nice car but old but he had to sell that to get the last deposit last for the deposit

*Hmm*

So things were quiet tight so people didn’t have cars like now erm er and if you had one per house that was you know it’s not like now where some houses have got three or four and all that erm so I think a lot of people would come from the day because er come for the day because er one time like up the lane was I mean I can’t remember this but it was purely a lane when you see photos of it and that so I think yeah a lot of people would come from h I am trying to think if we ever come ‘cos we moved into Dagenham when I was six months old so I doubt if we would have come from Popular to barking but we used to come from Dagenham which I know now is only round the corner but then it would be you know like quiet a journey sort of thing so I think a lot of people would and I think it used to be a beautiful park you know flowers and trees and it will be again but it was just a nice park sort of thing you know yeah so I lot of people would come for the day and it was as I say when we were in Dagenham it was a day out you would have picnic erm sandwiches, biscuits, crisps whatever, you know whatever I don’t know what we brought then er bottles of er flask I remember we used to have bring a flask of tea and all that. A blanket sit on the ground and that [laughter] so yeah I think a lot of people would have done that yeah, yeah.

*Sort of day out xxxx*

It was yeah, yeah. Yeah, because I mean like er xxxxx when I youngster Southend would be like a real treat.

*Hmm.*

But now people commute from Southend but then it would have been a real, real treat to go down the seafront.

*Yeah.*

And yeah you’d have the fair and candyfloss and all that so yeah.

*I think that is all I have got to ask about the park unless there is anything else but.*

I am trying to think if there is anything else. I went over the other week they done a Paws in the Park and they are doing one Saturday I think where or they had erm a little area it’s a shame it was a horrible day but they had an area where dogs were doing going over the jumps and all that, that was nice. I like things like that. I can’t remember we’ve have horses we used to have a circus in the park

*Hmm.*

I used to enjoy the circus.

*Was that part of the fair?*

No, it was another time.

*It was separate?*

Yeah, separate from that and I used to enjoy that because I like the animals. I know people say it’s cruel but I used to like seeing the animals.

*Hmm.*

But when it became all erm trapeze acts and all that I lost interest I’m not, I’m not in trapeze. Yeah, I like athletics but not like the big top things and that, I am not interested in that. Clowns, I like clowns but I don’t like their routine in, in the big top and that. But they I used I like the animals, the lions, the elephant, we had tigers as well I suppose you know that sort of thing. Horses when they used to do the dance you know parade around and that so once they got rid of the animals that lost I didn’t want to know anymore then.

*Did that come once a year?*

Yeah, that was once was it erm Billy’s Smart Circus, that’s it. Billy Smart Circus. Er, because the thing was September the fair was September so this I don’t I can’t remember when the circus would be it would be summer time I suppose you know May, June, July maybe, yeah but I remember Billy smart Circus yeah I remember that coming. But they’ve had a little circus since but it’s there’s no ani… I’ve been over there because I don’t like

*No.*

If there’s animals yeah fine but not otherwise [laughter]. They have various things er the other week they had the erm what was that cycle thing they had where they cycle round? And they had like erm a few animals from the it might have been Wellgate City Farm or one of these a few animals from the farm you know? But other than that they don’t apart from people taking dogs and what lives over there you don’t get many animals over there now. Foxes I suppose but

*Hmm.*

Yeah mind you I think foxes are more round here than in the park.

*More bins for them to go through here.*

Yeah exactly, yeah. Yeah, yeah you would get more food. It all right while people over the park once that’s exhausted and then yeah they’d come round here for food and all that. Yeah I can’t yeah Billy Smart Circus I can’t remember what else they would have had. I suppose because is the bandstand still there?

*No.*

It’s gone, innit, it’s gone. Because was that the one they moved to Barking and then it went again?

*Yeah. I think.*

It was that one weren’t it?

*It was, it was in the High street area of barking for a bit, I think.*

That’s right. Yeah.

*Because there it was shut in the park and then it moved down to*

Down to there.

*Yeah.*

It’s a shame really because in a way because what you could do erm well I suppose you could still do it mainly by the war memorial though is maybe do a carol concert.

*Hmm.*

You know like obviously at Christmas and that and do, yeah it’s not big enough because they do like a concert down on Abbey Green don’t they? But I suppose this is, this not quite so, quiet big enough for that sort of thing.

*No.*

But yeah, so.

*Maybe they could do one around the hub when that’s open.*

That would be nice, wouldn’t it? Yeah, yeah. Because I said what would nice on the Abbey Green area is if they could do like an amphitheatre thing.

*Hmm.*

And then people would could sit up and you’d have the what you know that would be nice as well.

*Yeah.*

Something like that. I remember going in the bake NatWest in barking with my no Barclays with my friend. I didn’t like bank machining we were in the queue and there was erm Chip Hawkes I don’t know if you remember him now Tremeloes

*Okay, yeah.*

If you’ve heard of the Tremeloes he was one them I liked him and he’s son I can’t think of what his name is but he’s very much like him but anyway when I was like in my teens he was there was various he was one of them I liked and we were in the queue and saying ‘that’s Chip Hawkes in front’, ‘no it’s not’, ‘yes it is’, ‘no there’s not’ we are having this argument well anyway he went I said ‘he’s’, ‘no he’s not, he wouldn’t be in here would he’? So he went up to the counter she went up to her counter and I went waiting over on the side and as he’s walked past he’s said ‘tell your friend I am Chip Hawkes’. And I was really I was annoyed about it [laughter]. I said ‘that was him’ I said ‘I could have got his autograph’ and he’d gone you know and er I walked down the road and said hello to er Brian Paul because his mum used to live in well he might have done as well bit I remember his mum living in Wilburton.

*Hmm.*

And he used to come back and see hers like I walked past one day he got out the car xxxxx you know I went in Spotted Dog met used to meet Rod on a Friday there

*Hmm*

‘Cos he finished a bit earlier than me on Friday and we’d meet there and then go shopping and I walked in there and there is this bloke there all on his own and I feel really, really wicked now because he was like sort of listening and trying to join in and that and you know what it is like when you’re talking you, you don’t what other people at times and as I say I really regret it now as it was Bobby Moore and I thought ‘oh god, the poor man is dead now’ you know like, you know so

*Yeah.*

But yeah Bobby Moore was in there. I suppose because you don’t you click at the time it was Bobby Moore.

*No.*

It was afterwards you think ‘oh god, that was Bobby Moore in’ you know. Er we went we used to the Royal Oak in Dagenham er because they had the bar and the stage was like behind the bar and there was the that was The Tremeloes in the whole group there then. But yeah.

*Er, because Bobby Moore was used to play football over in the park xxxxx*

Yeah, yeah he must have done sort of thing I think. My I mean it is nothing to do with this but niece is working at the new Westfield.

*Oh.*

Er when she went there a couple weeks to set up and when it opened she’s got a photo I haven’t seen it but she’s got a photo with Colin Jackson with his arm round her you know ‘cos he opened it and all that you know so that would be nice to see I hadn’t see it yet. Yeah, anyway I am boring you [laughter]. I am trying to think if there’s anything else. But don’t let me keep you if you’ve got to

*Oh, no*

Get going or

*I’ve got an empty afternoon.*

Have you? Um. It’s hard to think, isn’t it?

*Don’t*

Don’t rack me brain?

*Yeah, don’t xxxx I think everything we’ve got is fine.*

Is that, is that yeah.

*Especially the*

A few bits you can use anyway maybe.

*But yeah erm everything will go to the park itself once the project is done anyway so they’ll have all of the*

There’s a friends meeting next Wednesday I don’t know if you can come to anything like that if you are interested?

*Yeah, erm.*

Or a member of staff anyway.

*Yeah I think because we are doing this with, we are doing this with Andy so it is being done with the park.*

Right.

*Themselves so I think they are sort of trying to set up some more reminiscence sessions at the moment and there is talk of maybe doing one with the friends group.*

Oh right, right.

*So ‘cos erm I’ll pause this.*

**End.**