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*If I could ask you to say your full name please?*

My name is Christine Joan Taylor as it was erm my birth date is the first of the first nineteen fifty five. I lived in The Lodge from the time I was born until nineteen seventy-six. Erm my poor mum had a delivery in Upney Lane because she didn’t get put on time [laughter]. So that was leaving the park she didn’t get out on time. Erm, yeah I lived at the house, very happy childhood memories for twenty-one years, um, just lots and lots of memories. Do you want?

*Yeah, please do.*

Um, as I said we used to go park the park every day, we used to go on the little train which run by a bloke called Alec. Um, me and my brother used to go on the train and when our children were born we used to go back and sort of go on the train again; take the children have a ride up to the lake. Erm, there was a paddle steamer on the lake that used to be called the Phoenix. Um, obviously gone many, many years now. Um, we used to have motor boats and rowing boats on the lake. Erm, as I said we used to go to the park; my mum used to watch from The Lodge with her binocular and Mr. Wight who erm used to help with the swings and everything he used to push us over there. Um., my mum as I said watched with binoculars. Um, as I said as growing up we used to just liberally go and get the conkers of the conker tree [laughter] which you shouldn’t do. Um, we erm used to have a dog patrol in the park by a guy called Jock, a Scottish man with a big German Sheppard. Erm, as I said he used to come into the park er every evening and stop off before he started his tour for a cup of tea with that my mum and dad used to make for him and erm I as quiet scared of the dog but he assured me it would be fine. Er, that’s when the park was closed every evening erm before the outdoor bowls or the indoor bowls centre was built. And erm it was closed at staggering times throughout the summer as the light faded. Erm but that’s sort of erm facility was withdrawn after the indoor bowls centre was er built because obviously they had to leave the park open for the erm for the, the bowlers, erm I just shown Claire a picture of a, a picture that was drawn, erm and she’s got and she’s going to take a picture of that erm it was pencilled in pastels around about nineteen fifty I believe and then handed to my dad as a gift which she’s got that. Um, yes I grew up there, happy childhood went to Northwood Junior school, used to walk through the park erm and there was a little gate that is now not in the park called Fenton’s Gate. It was halfway between The Lodge and the lake and it was a cut through; you used to go across the railway, it had little gates and then out into the erm, residential area beyond that, in Park Avenue. But that’s no longer there now. So Fenton’s Gate is a little area that is no longer there. Um, and then obviously go to school. Erm secondary school I went Barking Abbey Comprehensive which was literally just at the other end of the park. Um, so, no I could see when I played hockey or whatever I played I could see the house from, from when I was at school. Um, lots of, lots of memory as said we used to spend time over the swimming pool every summer. Um, it was always open every day and that time it always used to seem as though it was sunny everyday. Um, I used to buy season ticket and spend lots, lots of afternoons after school in the in the beautiful pool as I said with two lovely fountains and a cafeteria and a freezing cold pool I might add but erm big diving boards in the middle. Erm though I think they actually took away in later years because they found the water wasn’t quite deep enough for the height of the board, yeah they did.

*Did anybody had any accidents?*

I don’t think anybody was seriously injured but I think it that it was erm a head of springboard and then they had a tiered diving board platform that was quiet high and I think it was too just too high for the depth of xxxx the depth has to be so much for each erm foot of height and they was quiet so they took that away and just left the springboard so that was something that was taken away. Um, years ago we used to have a lovely little xxxx putt course that we used to go on which is no longer in the park now. Um, there was a pavilion and flats er and a cafeteria that people used to congregate with their ice creams erm outside I think that’s, that’s no longer there. Um, xxxx other things in the park xxxx think off. The tennis courts used to be they were I think refurbished. Used to go and play tennis especially when it was Wimbledon. Used to have er fun times over there. Very popular when it was Wimbledon. Erm and generally just have fun in park throughout why childhood used to going skating round the park erm. In fact I learnt to ride my first bicycle without stabilisers in the park because my brother came and helped me. We stood outside The Lodge and he said “look I’m going to hold the bike, you walk along” he said “you peddle away” he said “and I’m going to be here” and I kept “are you still there Lesley”? “Yeah, oh yes, yes”. “Yes, I’m still here, yes I’m still here”. Peddling away and “oh, this is good, one day I will be able to ride this bike on my own”. And he said “are you still there”? So he said “yeah, I’m still here”. I turned around and he stayed at The Lodge, he’d let me peddle away around fifty or sixty yards [laughter] up the park on mu own. So, I don’t know how much more you want me to say at xxxx.

*Um, if it’s okay, I mean I’ll go back and ask a few questions*

Yeah.

*If that’s okay with you.*

Yeah.

*Um, going to back to, to your school days, um what do you have any sort of strong memories of any teachers or incidents that happened at school or any fun times?*

I’ll tell you a funny story that happened. ‘Cos, ‘cos part of dad’s job as assistant parks superintendant, under his jurisdiction came cemeteries, schools, erm and various other departments. So he had to sort of erm he was given he used to use his own car, give petrol allowance, he used to have to go and visit all the schools in, in borough and see that the workmen were working there. And I remember one day when I was in erm a class, because I, you’d probably never notice but I’ve got the most horrendous laugh. And one day in particular I, how I was in class and um someone made me laugh and just belly-laughed really loud and I got sent out of the classroom/ I wasn’t worried about that, but what I was worried about my dad was due to visit that, the quadrangle in, like xxxx modern which was a separate building and I was horrified ‘cos I was standing outside the classroom. And all of a sudden across the quadrangle was my dad came walking. But I sort of like xxxx he didn’t actually ever see me to this day I don’t even know if whether he did, he never said anything because I was horrified [laughter] you know, I sort of let the side down sort of thing but that’s just one funny incident. So, he was always erm visiting cemeteries as I say er the schools just to make people, you know he just liked things done just so, so that was one of the funny things yeah. So there was Barking Abbey Comprehensive, that was like Park Modern and Barking Abbey they merged. So, you had the site over in Sandringham Road which was Park Modern and you had the site which is just at the other end of the park which is Barking Abbey.

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

What did I do when I left school? I actually worked in um, a company, a shipping company down in Barking next to the Brewery public house erm called Kellick Martin. It was erm a shipping brokers and I worked there I was only stay for six weeks to get some holiday money and ended up staying ten years.

*Wow.*

[Laughter]. Until I had my erm first child. So that is where I worked. Yes, so.

*And how, how did you find that? Was it quiet handy being quite local?*

Well the trouble is I’m, I’m one of these people I that sometimes I’m better if I have to travel. The nearer I seem to be to something the worse time, I was never late but I used to leave “oh I don’t have to get up very early”. My mum used to “come on, you’ve got to get up for work”. And at half past eight - I had to be in at nine - I used to roll out of bed and into work but it was quite handy but, but my dad erm, it was lovely when I grew up because on his travels in the borough my dad used to erm come and pick us up from school and we always used to have lunch in The Lodge together. My brother, my mum used to make the proper like the main dinner at lunch time. And then my dad would drop us back at school and then go of on his travels again around the borough. So that was nice, I mean to be picked up from school as well so, yeah we he used to do that in the erm the infants as well and in the senior school which was lovely really we was sort of a really nice family unit.

*You mention there that you had a brother [clear throats] excuse, me, sorry.*

Yeah, my brother he was older than me.

*Okay.*

He’s still around, he’s Lesley. After my dad.

*Okay.*

Lesley Taylor. Lesley, well my dad was actually Lesley Charles Taylor. My brother was Lesley Frederick Charles after his grandfather so but yeah he’s erm, he lives n Upminster, he’s married with three children so erm I don’t see so much of him as I should do really but the thing is you’ve got, your lives are busy aren’t they? You know, I mean I still work so you know he’s retired now but yeah I so I had one brother that’s all, yes so.

*And how much older was he, sorry?*

He’s er, he was born in nineteen fifty-one so he’s four years, just under four years.

*And we talked, you mentioned your dad a little bit there but I wondered if we could go back*

Yeah

*And sort of talk a little bit more about your dad if that’s okay?*

Of course, yeah, lovely.

*Um, what was his actual job title in park?*

His job title was Assistant Park Superintendent. And they obviously used to head it under local government officer.

*And um before we turned the tape on we talked a little bit about how your father had gone to college to study horticulture.*

Yes, right, yes.

*Could do you know anything about that, could you tell us a little bit about that?*

I don’t actually know too much about that. I know he was an apprentice erm and he went to college obviously to learn all the sort of Latin names of plants and general he studied horticulture. Erm, I’m not to sure actually when he went to college. He must have gone I would have thought before he went to Italy in the war because erm he was what twenty something twenty-two when the war broke so he was born in nineteen he was born in nineteen twenty-two so he would have been twenty-two then, would he when the war broke out? Nineteen forty-four was it forty-four forty-eight?

*Er, it started in thirty-eight.*

Thirty-eight.

*Second World War no it started in nineteen thirty-nine here.*

Thirty-nine, Right, okay so he was only seventeen then.

*Yeah.*

Um, and he did go off to Italy. So whether he did a little bit of his apprenticeship before he went off to war I’m not sure I can’t I can’t be certain but I know erm those pictures in the greenhouse were taken in nineteen forty-eight which would have made him twenty-six so which was like post-war wasn’t it ‘cos that was forty, forty-five ish wasn’t it? So erm yes and he worked in the green ‘cos the greenhouses are all gone now, aren’t they I mean he was so proud of. They used to grow all the plants for the park were grown in the greenhouses they were never used to come in from outside. They were all home grown in the greenhouses. And I remember as a little girl going into the like the greenhouse there was three big greenhouses with all the plants in and you know used to like all the tanks with the water all like steamy conditions but and er yeah so he used to that’s where he started he started actually in the greenhouse I think that’s where he’s so then he obviously worked his way up and became like Assistant Park Superintendent. So we actually shouldn’t have been in that house, because that’s was where the Superintendent now you mentioned about was it Tom, Tom Boodon?

*Um, I’ve heard a Mr. Boonton mentioned.*

It think it is Tom, was it Tom Boonton? Tom Boonton. He had a brother but I can’t remember his name. Um, but yes so my dad obviously then went off to college and then went off to war and then came back and worked he worked for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham for forty plus years until he retired. He never went anywhere else. But he’s, he was a character in the borough. As you say many people have probably known my dad and spoken about him. I mean he was, he was a stickler for detail and, and horticulture just suited him because it was very precise like flowers are very precise things, aren’t they? And he was very much like that erm. I just wish I could remember more of the actual workers. But I did mention Derrick Moore, didn’t I? And er Dave Harrington where the people and Mr. Currie, T. G. Currie who has a son Paul. Um, so yeah, that’s basically it. As I say I can’t give you years and dates of the college but I know he did go off to college to learn horticulture. And was very proud of his Latin names he had for all these plant [laughter].

*You mentioned before I turned the tape on that your father used to try and teach you the Latin names of the plants?*

Some of them, yeah because we was, we were just very, me and my brother were just in very in awe of how in new all the names and it’s, it must have been a task and a half to learn them it was part and parcel of the, you know what you had to know. And he used to just you know we used to “oh, dad what’s, what’s the name for that”? And I think erm I can remember, I can’t even remember the name of it now but he used to tell us like the trees, all the trees. The London Plane, he had, he said “that’s the so and so, so and so” and but even on the back of one of those little things he put the Latin name on the back of the Magnolia hasn’t he?

*Yeah.*

On that, one of the trees on the photograph. Um, but yeah, you know he was erm, if he couldn’t do a job properly he wouldn’t bother doing it. He had to do it like meticulously right, that’s how he was, that’s the sort of man he was.

*Okay. Could - if you could remember - could you describe like a typical working day for your father. Would he have to rise early or?*

My dad used, my dad used to start work about nine o’clock. A typical working day of my dad was he used to use his own car be he used to get erm a petrol allowance. He used to go over to the little office over in the park which is no longer there where Dave and T.G Currie used to live, they used to have their little chinwag first of all in the morning, this was over a cup of tea. He used to drink about twenty cups of tea a day I might add.

*Wow[laughter]. He’s give me a run for my money.*

And erm then they’d set of um he’d set of on his travels he used to have I wish I still had one ‘cos it would have been lovely to have shown you. What he had to do ‘cos he used to get petrol allowance but he had to log all his millage in er like er carbonized book, you know you don’t have things like that now you just have like you used to have carbon copy and he used to right erm where he had been for the day so he might say erm Park Modern School and the millage then when he left there he had to write the mileages so it was a typical day for my dad was erm going round the borough erm looking at schools, making sure that the things were being done, the work was completed properly erm men were doing what they were supposed to. And as I said that included cemeteries, erm schools, erm and generally he used to keep a log of all his petrol and then obviously put in an expenses at the end of the week or month or whatever it was. But erm, yeah so he used to claim that back. So a typical day for my dad was while he was on his rounds he used to come and pick us up from school on his lunch break, he used to have his lunch from half twelve to half past one. Erm, we used to have a meal together indoors, main meal and then my dad would take us back to school then carry on in the afternoon for like looking at generally overseeing that the borough was being run properly by the workman that were doing their jobs and that was typical day really for my dad erm as I say he used to spend soem time over in the little office first. And that his day really.

*So would he spend much time actually in the greenhouses then or was he mostly travelling about?*

Well this the greenhouse the greenhouse work was when he was more of a erm junior I think that came after the college apprenticeship because erm in the days when he used to be in the greenhouse was before he was erm promoted if you like to sort of erm the park the Assistant Park Superintendent because erm then they used to have other people working in the greenhouse but that was where he started, that’s but no he didn’t so that in the latter years, that was in the early like post-college days he sued to his training and then he used like oversee things in, in the greenhouse. But then when he was promoted he’d, he’d had a more sort of erm like office like erm a suit job if you know er collar and tie job and then used to say go and erm go and erm oversee workers in borough but erm you know my, my dad was one of these that he didn’t mind people working and chatting but he didn’t like them standing and chatting [laughter]. He was one of those. But you know everybody, he was, you know everybody really sort of, he was erm, you know “oh, it’s Mr. Taylor, we must get on with out work” you know he was but he was likable with it if you know what I mean so people loved him because he was you know he gave you respect but he commanded respect as well, which is quite nice, isn’t it really? Yeah, so there you um yeah, that’s that.

*Erm, and with, with the nursery workers would you ever see them as a child would you ever go in the greenhouses and see them or?*

Um, it’s funny because I’ve must have forgotten to there was a picture actually of my mum actually in the greenhouse with one of the workers, I’ll have to try and find that. Yeah, so we could go over there, especially if my dad was erm working on something on a Saturday morning we used to perhaps go over and see him and you know if he was you know with some overtime or perhaps there was a project going on and he needed to spend a bit of time he used to go over to the office on Saturday mornings and I can remember saying “can I go into the greenhouse dad”? And erm we used to go and wonder into the greenhouse because I was fascinated by these beautiful like sort of plants and everything that was grown in there was fabulous like a little mini Kew Gardens it was wonderful really. Erm so yeah so and while just funny things you remember in the office just one of the things I do remember was this great big black type writer you know the old plonk-plonk type with a great big key you know key thing and you know it’s just oh I remember that, that’s something that stood, stood in my mind. But yeah Mr. Currie and I was quiet shy when I was little and he used to say and he a stutter Mr. Currie so erm he used like not torment me but you know used to make blush sort of thing and that’s quite nice really. But yeah so Mr. Currie, Mr. Harrington and my dad had this little office over the park.

*Okay. And Mr. Currie was the Superintendent.*

He was the Superintendent my dad was the Assistant Park Superintendent, yeah. But Mr. Currie, see Mr. Currie should have actually lived in the house but erm he didn’t want to live in the entrance to the hou... park because he thought it would be trouble so there was erm the council owned another erm over the back I can’t remember exactly where it was but he chose to live there so really we should have lived in the house he lived in and he should have lived in the park but he saw that there might be disturbances I think which it did but I wouldn’t have swapped it for the word I thought it was a fabulous house to live in, I wouldn’t have wanted I mean I spent twenty-one years there and to be honest I wouldn’t have wanted to live anywhere else because living in the park is wonderful I mean you can’t, you can’t beat it, can you really?

*I was wondering if you could describe The Lodge when you were living there could you sort walk me through the house as it were*

Yeah, of course.

*If that’s okay?*

Right from to back, yes?

*Yes please, that be great.*

So obviously you go into the little gate, the green iron gate and you go up the stairs, those, those ball things that were on the front sometimes they were loose and I can remember erm one day I played with them and knocked them and they went rolling down and my dad “what are you doing”? But no, right going through the front door you went into the big blue door, I think it is still blue, isn’t it?

*I think they have painted it black now unfortunately*

Oh black. Um, so they was a square hallway, erm a door on the left led you into what was our front room, erm which was a room which very rarely got used but then front rooms never did very much, did they? Lovely room with an old fireplace and lovely high ceilings and erm, yeah that was our, our best room. So that was on the left of the hallway. As you went the hallway was square and immediately the other side of the front door was the staircase that, that wasn’t just a normal straight staircase it, it sort of spiralled round and up to a landing area which was nice really and we used to play me and my brother used to play a game of climbing over the banister and without coming down the stairs we used to climb down the banister oh it was fabulous climb down the banisters and get to get the ground floor without touching the stairs it was a game we used to play which was you know I mean erm it was just fun it was fun house. So yes going up the stairs you went up and round and you came to the top of the landing which had erm an area with a front window which was like a square area with a big cupboard at the bottom and then going erm upstairs you had I think where Andy’s office is in the front, isn’t it, I think he’s got is it a pink room which was my mum and dad’s bedroom.

*Oh really.*

That was my mum’s and dad’s bedroom. That is where they stayed and then on the right hand side because the landing was like erm as you came to the top of the stairs you had this area on the left which was like where the big cupboard was and then it went straight up to my mum and dad’s bedroom and then it went round the corner and there as another bedroom here which was my brother’s bedroom. But years ago erm it didn’t have a bathroom upstairs it just had three bedroom because the downstairs it had a bathroom downstairs. So yeah that was little bedroom at the back. Um, now coming back downstairs again back to the sort of hallway you used to go through the door opposite the front door and it was our dining room Now that was where all the activity was we used to have an open fire and cook chestnuts and my dad I can remember toasting pork toasting the bread on the open fire er oh it was lovely and we used to things erm dead dangerous now these two like fire bars either side which was so modern in those days but terrible health hazard really [laughter] because they were not very guarded at all um but we can remember sitting by erm yeah the open coal fire with my dad used to put chestnuts on the fire and that, that was the room we sort of used to live in because it was off the kitchen area er which again was like a normal kitchen um and it had a big larder cupboard in it which was fabulous like a walk in larder cupboard it had like wholes in the door obviously to let the air out and yeah so my mum used to keep that as her pantry used to keep all her food and stuff in there and then there was erm he went through to the kitchen on the right was a back door, on the left was another doorway which was the bathroom it was downstairs bathroom and the toilet was outside which was eventually used as the coal bunker, that was the outside toilet. So they turned obviously when they built the bathroom upstairs the cupboard downstairs was just used as a junk cupboard. In fact I used to go in there and it was, it wasn’t erm I say it was a junk cupboard it was massive of things in there but my dad being my dad could turn his hand if you said to him “can you find so-and-so so-and-so” he’d go to the exact box and was it was erm a mine of lots like tools but all not just thrown in there all meticulously labelled and [coughs] so that was the old bathroom and that was erm a big walk in cupboard [coughs].

*So your father actually labelled everything?*

Well he was very, very meticulously as I said in his work and in his um you know [coughs]

*Are you okay?*

Sorry, excuse me. He used to have erm, he was, you know even his like work things he used to label everything. I’m just going to get a glass of water [coughs]. So basically the house was [coughs] so it was a three bedroom house without a bathroom originally and it was erm a bathroom was built upstairs what they did, they chopped the third bedroom which was the one erm pink room was mum and dad’s room, my brother’s room round the bend and it was erm a biggish bedroom but they chopped it in half and then made part of it the bathroom.

*Okay. So you left your bedroom them?*

Yes, really [laughter]. And that’s where as I said erm I lived there for twenty-one years. But once again I think this is where my love of, of the outlook ‘cos I overlooked the road going up towards the like where the garage was where the miniature railway is my bedroom overlooked that so I was so used to overlooking parkland and I think that’s why I like it now because it’s not left me, that look, that view, it’s lovely isn’t it?

*Yeah, so I mean you live in a fabulous location now but I can imagine living in the park must have been amazing as well?*

Oh, it was lovely, it was nice because I had a back garden on my doorstep it was the envy of all my friends really because they used to come round “cor, isn’t this lovely, I wish I lived here” [laughter].

*I’m still thinking that now [laughter].*

Yeah, it was a fabulous house. So much character.

*Yeah.*

I only wish it had been bought and, and I don’t know I suppose who, who do you get to live it now that’s the thing you, you can’t really, can you?

*It’s a shame. We were talking a little bit earlier about the flower beds and the amount of work that went into them.*

Oh yes.

*I wondered if you could talk about that a little bit for the tape now*

Yes of course

*If that’s okay?*

Yeah, as erm, opposite the which was the back entrance to the, to our house there’s erm a raised I think they just use it as a flower bed now but erm [laughter] every year erm the flower beds would be erm planted with rockery plants in a coat of arms or a crest of something in the borough I think Claire mentioned something about the scout movement or it was something you know somebody nominated themselves for you know erm the flower bed to be decorated in that way, and it use to take three men about a week to plant the flower bed and all the colours in the coats of arms it had to be done in and if they couldn’t find the right rockery colours all plants they use to dye them so that the actual finished product was a complete replica of a coat of arms or a crest of something that was significant in the borough and it was all sort of things that were relevant in that area, and that was done every year. A different project each year which was fabulous to look at and I don’t think anything like that is done now and it was fascinating to see it finished and as it sort of grew a little bit they had to clip it so it was close all the time it was there and it was left there for basically the rest of the summer so people, people use to come in and actually stand just to look at it because it was, it was a superb work of art, it really was.

*With the maintenance on that then, like you said you would clip it to keep it to keep it sharp...*

Yes because obviously the rockery plants then just keep, they grow a little bit don’t they, so yes somebody would like clip it with just, it didn’t take very long, just to keep it close so that you didn’t lose that sort of flat picture if you like because that's how the image was, it was like a flat picture. From a distance you would never think it was flowers it was beautiful, it really was.

*And what about the other flower beds in the park how often would they need to be maintained?*

Well they were obviously planted up, as I said, all the flowers were grown in the three greenhouses over in the park, over in the nursery and distributed amongst the park, I mean you use to have like tulip beds and obviously they needed maintenance, they needed hoeing and weeding and I must say the park was kept beautiful, the flower beds, I mean even our front garden was always planted up with bulbs and you know it was just a sea of colour, the whole of the entrance to the park was. It was stunning, I mean perhaps petunias or winter flowering pansies in the winter, just a sea of colour, you looked out of the window and you would see like yellows and purples, just all these flowerbeds. In the entrance opposite the lodge those flowerbeds were just a mass of colour, winter and summer it was beautiful, absolutely beautiful.

*It sounds like your Dad and obviously his staff took a great deal of pride in their work?*

Well I think my Dad because he was very meticulous he never let standards drop and that was one of the things I think everybody use to say about how high his standards were of the maintenance in the park, and it was kept beautiful, you know I took it so much for granted living there, but people use to come just to look at the, especially the crest in the raised flowerbed which was, it was lovely, it was really lovely. Something I took for granted but perhaps shouldn’t have done but it was so use to it every year, I wonder what they’re going to do this year, you know we use to discuss it and then as I say three men use to plant it all up. But it was fascinating it was like a jigsaw puzzle because it started, they use to like put like the edging in and you could see the transformation of the crest or the coat of arms suddenly like emerging and it was fabulous, really, honestly it was lovely.

*It must have been quite a treat to watch as well?*

Yes, yes exactly because rockery plants are quite small aren’t they and as I say you had people starting at different areas, because they had their map to work from so their colours, so it was all done to scales so you knew exactly what to plant where. Its lovely isn’t it?

*The amount of detail is incredible isn’t.*

Yes, yes it’s lovely, very, and a different coat of arms or crest every year, and when you look at the actual original and the finished thing it was beautiful, it was perfect you know, there wasn’t, even if you had to, all the writing, all the Latin if it had writing in Latin that was all done as well in flowers, in like little rockery plants and things, it was amazing, it really was, it was a complete replica of what was the crest or the coat of arms. You would love to have been there wouldn’t you [laugh].

*I would, I’m very very jealous [laugh].*

It was fantastic honestly, really lovely, you can’t believe it really, but people use to walk into the park just to stand and look at that, like what the finished product was because it was work of art it really was.

*It certainly sounds like it was as well.*

Because I mean the mound is still there isn’t so, I mean when you go back there you’ll be thinking of these crests...

*I’ll be imagining them..*

Yes, as I say every year it was a different one, they chose a different one each year to do and they had their drawing and it was, as I say all the writing was done all the Latin, you know because obviously coats of arms have lots of Latin, beautiful. Only which I had pictures of that because they were something. You know I’ve actually looked at, through my Mum and Dad’s pictures and I haven’t actually found any of those yet, whether my, you know whether I will but I’ve looked through most of them but I think it’s because we took it for granted, we lived no top of it, we didn’t perhaps take so many pictures of it because it was always there and each year it would happen so it was a mind’s eye thing rather than a picture taking thing.

*Of course. I was going to ask how many gardeners do you think worked in the park?*

Oh that's a good question actually...

*Sorry*

I really don’t know. The flowers beds, because I think obviously they use to be allocated certain areas in the park. I mean I can remember as a little girl opposite the lodge, you know the flowerbeds over the little area that's in the entrance, there’s the big flowerbeds, I can remember perhaps two or three guys working over there, but I honestly don’t know how many guys use to work in the park, I really, really don’t know to be honest.

*Do you think the work was seasonal? Would more people come in at certain times of the year do you think?*

I think, well as I said before as the flowerbeds were never free from flowers it was, you know in the summer they use to be, they use to choose different flowers each year to put in it, it might be busy lizzies, or anything, like summer annual flowers but then in the spring they were always planted with tulips or daffodils so you had a sea of either reds or yellows in the spring and as I say in the winter you use to have winter flowering pansies so you know it was always a hub of people you know preparing that. Obviously when it was planted for the summer it was then left, just tended to, like anybody does their garden, like hoes and weeding and stuff, but to keep it lovely you had to cut the grass, so there was always people sort of tending to, it always looked beautiful, I mean it was lovely.

*I’ve heard that it was, how to word this, that the park keepers and things were quite strict about whether you could walk on the grass?*

Well you couldn’t actually walk on the, because opposite the house, the lodge it was railinged off, but people use to go and lay on there and my Dad use to, he did use to go and tell them off because the main area of the park is obviously where you could lay but you weren’t allowed to go in to that raised mound area obviously but people use to go and lay behind that and have a kiss and a cuddle [laugh]. So my Dad use to sometimes leave them but in the flowerbeds a lot of people use go into that, it was like a little wrought iron fence all around it, but people use to go in there to take photographs, of like standing there and then just sit down and think they could, but it wasn’t, it was purely for a visual entrance into the park. The main bulk of the park if you wanted to lay down and have a picnic I mean you could do it there but not in the actual railinged off area you weren’t allowed to go in, that’s why it was fenced off because it was just to look at as you walked into the park.

*Okay and what were the trees and things, would you often see people pruning or something?*

I never actual saw pruning to be honest I never saw that, yes I never saw that. I think if a tree became dangerous it was taken out by a proper tree surgeon but obviously as I remember the trees they were very established, I think most of them were London Planes in the entrance that went up the park and so they were big established trees and as I remember the only time a couple of the trees were taken down was when we had the sever hurricanes in the eighties and I think a couple of the trees became dangerous and they had to sort of take them down as I remember, because obviously if they up rooted there were massive trunks on them, they could do serious damage to people and property so... and that was one thing my Mum use to worry about because obviously the trees were like lining the park she use to say, “Oh I hope they don’t fall on the roof of the house”, [laugh].

*Do you remember anything like that ever happening?*

Not actually there no, but as I say I think a couple of the trees did have to be removed, I’m not sure if it was in the entrance, I think one of them did, I think in fact from memory I think there is a big tree trunk on the entrance there on you know where the lodge, you come down and you go out into the body, the main bulk of the park, I think there was a big tree on that part that had to come down for that reason, but not generally , because the trees were so old and established they were just left to grow. I mean I suppose they did prune them or whatever but I don’t remember anything much about that.

*If it’s okay with you I think we have obviously covered the plants quite well, if it’s okay with you I wonder if you can describe your experiences of going on the train or on the Phoenix, because you mentioned the Phoenix earlier*

The Phoenix I can’t actually to be honest, I remember it going up and down and I vaguely remember going on it but my memory isn’t serving me very well of that paddle steamer but, yes but more so of the rowing boats and the motor boats because they use to have, they use to have a double sort of rowing boat and then they use to have single rowing boats and motor boats, and you use to go up from one end of the lake to the other, so you started of, you could go down to Loxford Lane end and then you could go right up to South Park where they had like a, part of it was roped off, they had like a kid’s section where thy had tiny little boats for like little children to go in which was very shallow so that was quite nice. Because that is quite a lengthy lake isn’t it there. So yes we use to go on the boats and as I was saying when I came down to Barking I remember one severe Christmas it was very snowy and my Dad, he was very hands on, very clever man, he use to turn his hand to anything, and he decided he would build me and my brother a sledge which he did. And once again it wasn’t just you know a silly old sledge it was a pucker sledge, it was a state of the art sledge, he didn’t do anything by halves. So I remember me and my brother wanted to test this sledge out so we, it was thick snow, wellies on we plodded over to the park, because over by the lake it’s quite hilly isn’t it if you remember, like the road way and then you go down into the lake, it’s quite a gradient, and we decided we would set off with this sledge. My brother said, “Come on Chris”, he said, “Sit on the back we’re going to go down the slope”. The one thing I remember, the lake it was so cold it had frozen over so me and my brother we came down the slope gathered speed as you know and we went straight off the path straight onto the lake [laugh] and there we sat in the middle of the lake [laugh] and it didn’t break through, we just crawled back, and that’s something I remember and we said “Don’t tell Dad, don’t tell Mum and Dad because they will be really terrified and my Dad won’t let us come over there again, yes [laugh]. Because it was quite hilly, it was like, it must still be like it, it was like a hill, it went down and then there was a little roadway and then it went down again to the pathway to the lake. So we started off at the top and went down and down and as I say we gathered speed which you do don’t you on a slippery slope and as I say we went straight off the edge onto the lake, onto like the frozen lake [laugh].

*You were quite lucky really weren’t you?*

Yes, [laugh] my Mum and Dad never knew about that [laugh] we never told them.

*I’m just imagining how frozen the lake must have been to take the force of a sledge and your weight.*

Yes it was very very cold because I remember because it was bitterly cold and the snow was thick, thick snow. I don’t know what year that was but that must have been in the sixties I would think because we use to have really severe winters didn’t we years and years ago.

*I’ve heard there was a particularly bad one wasn’t there, I’m trying to think was it in the mid sixties?*

This must have been when I, because I think I was only about ten I think and my brother, or was it a little bit earlier and he was, no it might have been earlier, I might have been seven and he was about ten, yes it was the sixties, I know we had a particularly severe winters and that was when my Dad built us this sledge and it was a fabulous thing, you would never get, it was all wooden and he had runners on it, fantastic thing but that's the sort of thing he did and you know he built a go cart, well it wasn’t just an old pram wheels but it was a proper go cart , it had a seat and a brake, he use to make all these things, it was amazing, he could turn his hand to anything. But meticulous detail, if he couldn’t do anything properly he wouldn’t attempt it but everything, you know the go cart it was a fabulous go cart and my Mum made like a upholster padded seat, oh it was fantastic, really amazing, it really was.

*It sounds quite incredible; I was just going to ask did you have the courage to go back on the sledge?*

Oh no I think we were to frightened after that, I mean we use to pull it around the park and just push each other and our friends use to play on it but I think really that was a bit of a rude awakening really because it was quite frightening to be honest because you just gathered so much speed. But it was good fun, it wasn’t the only time we did that on those, like the first and second time we use to end up on the path but this particular time we must have by this time made up an icy groove and it just gathered speed and the last time we went that's how we ended up on the lake. But the lake was lovely because it had little islands in it and all the duck life you know, ducks and moorhens, you use to go on your motorboat or your little rowing boat, and I think they named the little islands, I think they had little names I think, but I can’t remember. But yes so that was the childhood years, it was great, that was our experience with the sledge so no more.

*You mentioned then about the ducks and the moorhens I’ve heard there was a particularly vicious swan on the lake can you remember anything about that?*

Oh the swans on the lake I know, yes there was actually and it use to hiss and flap at you, yes there was some swans on the lake. I don’t remember too much about them but I remember they did seem quite vicious but we always use to go and feed the ducks and then when my brother’s children were young and mine were young we use to go over to my Mum’s at least once a week and then go to feed the ducks and we always use to walk down to the lake or go on the train to the lake and then walk around and feed the ducks, and there was always loads of ducks on the lake, loads, and swans yes, it was lovely wasn’t it.

*It sounds like such an idyllic childhood doesn’t it.*

Oh it was fabulous you know I couldn’t have swapped it for anything better I really couldn’t. It was a safe location you didn’t have to cross any roads to get to where we wanted to be and we had everything there, we had there, we had the swimming pool, we had tennis courts, pitch and put, we had a little train, we had boats, I mean what more could you want it was fabulous.

*I was just going to say could you describe a typical journey on the train, is that when the train still run along the back of the lake?*

It’s never run across the back of the lake.

*Oh okay.*

No the train has only ever run from what was my Dad’s garage which is now no longer there, so it’s the bottom of the garden and it use to go to the lake because there was a little turntable at the end and it’s still there because I looked at it funny enough a few weeks back. So no the train has never run, it’s only ever gone from the lodge to the boat house, it has never gone any further.

*And then obviously it would turn on the turntable and come back down?*

Well the thing is I think it was on the turntable because I think they use to put it on the turntable to put it away because it use to have a little house at that end. I think now, I don’t know, there looks like there are low buildings at the park, the lodge end, I don’t know. But years ago we use to fight for the best, because we always wanted the back carriage because, I don’t know, there was something about the back carriage. The little engine would link up, we use to get on the train and the ticket man use to give you a ticket on his little machine, I don’t know how much it was, threepence or something, 3d which would be like 1p now, or you could, was it threepence, or if you wanted a return it was fourpence or something which is like 2p. I know you gained if you bought a return ticket. So yeah we used to get on the train and we used have these little xxxx went across Fenton’s Gate because that Fenton’s Gate is no longer there now as I say halfway down they used to open the gates and used to obviously when the train was running then close the gates so it was like a public pedestrian pathway because I particularly looked for that little gate when I was in the park some weeks ago and it’s not it’s completely blocked in now with trees. And that was a little walk way that was half xxxx because that’s how I used to go to school through there and then yeah we used to get off the other end and if you were if you had your single ticket you’d pile of the other end and if you were coming back you’d stay on the train and then used to take the engine round and like bypass it and latch it to the front the train and off you’d go again down to the bottom.

*Did it change much from when you were a child to the when you took your own children on it?*

No, no it didn’t.

*No.*

No, it erm I think what happened it erm obviously the colours changed and Alec took it over in the later years I think he had all the little carriages painted again and the engine painted but it was one of these you know small engines and he used to like sit on it sort of thing rather than in it you know because it was a miniature railway, wasn’t it? Erm but no then he painted all the carriages and then because it was just a thing he just loved that aspect of the park not, you know not you know he wanted to keep that running because it was a lovely little you know thing about the park. So that’s what happened so and he never used to charge us because we lived in the park [laughter]. We lived in the lodge we used to go for free. We used to think we were wonderful. But yeah so erm but I don’t think Alec always had it I don’t know who I don’t know whether it was run originally by the park erm perhaps one of the park keepers because don’t think Alec always he never run it when I was a little girl obviously ‘cos erm I don’t know I think it was run more by the park and then when the funding ran out or they couldn’t afford it that’s when he came along in later years and used to erm fund it himself. So you know it was good because he used to run the boats and everything he used to do all the maintenance Alec did for the boats and the little train.

*What kind of maintenance would he have had to do on the boats, do you know?*

Erm, well I suppose really if they were they needed painting or something every you know so often so they would be erm and obviously the motor boats the engines needed servicing and stuff because the you know had a outboard motor on that needed tending to I mean and some of the erm I know it’s not a mechanical thing but erm there used to be quiet a lot of weed in the lake I think that is probably why they dredged it and, and if you had like a rudder sometimes they used to clogged up with weed you used to have to sort of de-weed the boats and things like that [laughter] obviously so they could function properly. So that sort of maintenance like that but erm like the diesel for the train I think in later years he sort of paid for that all himself. Which is dedication, isn’t it?

*It’s, it’s a real generous thing to do.*

Yeah, oh he was a lovely man, Alec. I’d you’d obviously when um my mum and dad moved form the park erm we used to see him while he was in the park but I don’t know he must I suppose he is still alive but I don’t know how old he would be now.

*Yeah, I’ve heard he’s still around. I found his address I am planning on writing him a letter actually.*

Alec, yeah because he was when my children were small erm thirty so he must have been away from that park about twenty or so he must probably he’s in his sixties now I would think Alec. But yeah if you can get hold of him I don’t know he’s surname to be honest but he

*I think his surname is Everett.*

Alec Everett, that’s it yes, well done.

*I only know that because somebody else has told me that.*

Alec Everett, that’s right. Yeah. And he would give you a wealth of information about the trains and stuff and the boats. ‘Cos I was quiet disappointed to see that the boating lake had been knocked down the boat yard and stuff. I know it was a wooden building and it probably wasn’t safe but you know all those memories there’s it was just so erm disappointing to see that wasn’t I mean I know they are doing lots of restoration work and xxxx get the park back with the lottery funding but just as I remembered it I still expect to see it as it was [laughter] and that’s silly really but it’s just how I remember it.

*Could you describe your memories of the boat house if that’s okay?*

The boathouse? Um, well I can remember at the bottom of the train like you got of the train and um you walked down to it was like a white sort of picket fence that bordered off um the lake path if you like um from the boating area and you had to go through the fence and buy your ticket. It was I black building I remember a black wooden building. It has a little ticket office and I think in latter years Alec’s wife used to be in the ticket office selling the tickets for the boats. Um, so yeah you used to pick your boat and it was erm it was like a ticket office but behind it was um like erm a separate sort of building where the maintenance used to go on if there was a boat that needed servicing then it would be dragged of up out the lake and servicing so it was quiet a big black timber framed building as I remember it but it was like er a think it might have been painted green in latter years but as I remember it years and years ago it was a black building I remember. But yes so it’s erm but I remember this white fence you used to have to go through this white fence course it was like fenced off from you know the actual other part of the park so you used to have to go through the little gate but I remember years erm the park was so popular on erm on a hot summer’s day you used to have to literally had to sort of snake round and queue so a boat on the park lake yeah. I can remember queuing for quiet a while when I was a little girl to go on the boat boats because they were so popular. And that’s when the old Phoenix paddle steamer was still there erm the Phoenix I don’t I don’t remember the going of that I know it was when I was a little girl but when my children there it was long gone so it was only a thing that was there um when I was a child. But er yeah lovely brown and cream it was the Phoenix I remember. Fabulous thing.

*Yeah, I’ve seen pictures. But unfortunately because of the date of it none of the pictures are in colour.*

No.

*So obviously I wouldn’t have known what colour that was.*

Brown and cream as I remember. Um, it used to go up and down but yeah so up and don the lake but that’s what I you know as said it had this little ticket office at the front you used to queue but for our tickets and behind it was like a service erm house or big like building oh not big building well mind you the thing is when you are child everything looks so much bigger, doesn’t it?

*Of course.*

You know like it was probably quiet a small building if I’m erm where used to where the boat were sort of serviced and stuff yeah but I can remember queuing yeah they used to have like a queuing system for the getting in the boats. Sometimes it was a long queue. You used to have to wait you know twenty minutes half an hour to get on the boat [laughter].

*It does seem like quiet a long wait doesn’t it. Especially as a child it must have been quiet sort of*

Yeah it’s, it shows you the popularity of the park in you know it’s heyday it was it was wonderful xxxx it had so many little attractions there people used to come as I say for the train and just for the general, general sort of appearance of the park, it’s, it’s beautiful park, it was, it was wonderful. Um, yeah, that’s how I remember the train journey yeah.

*If it’s okay we just jump back to the lido you mentioned there about queues would have to sometimes queue to get into lido as well?*

Yes, yes, definitely. That was queues, big queues outside for the lido erm as well. But if you had erm you know I think it if I remember if you had a season ticket I don’t know that you had to queue you just had to show your season ticket. Because obviously people queue to pay their money but I think if you had a season ticket as I remember I don’t think you had to queue. But no, you know because we used you, you know as a child we always have a fabulous erm six weeks holiday. It never seemed to rain it always used to be like hot sunny days, didn’t it? As I remember it. It’s just obviously erm it wasn’t like that but erm you used to have to queue the queue was right sort of thirty forty yards to get into swimming pool.

*Could you describe erm the pool in a little more detail if that’s okay?*

Yeah, yeah.

*If you say like from going in*

From going in you had um er like an iron turnstile erm system with a little ticket lady like little ticket office and as you went in as I remember the pool terraces were at the back you had erm two fountains either end um two shallow ends and then a deep end in the middle. So you had erm, you had a little cafeteria one side, you had the changing rooms and the lockers on like ladies one side and men’s the other. And obviously you used to come out there was erm a little foot wells to wash your feet before you got in the pool, um and as I said and all across the back was it was a stepped terrace and so it was a real sun trap and the whole of the length of the pool at the rear of the pool was a sun terrace like behind what would be so you went in here you had the two fountains, you had two shallow ends and a deep end in the middle and the diving boards were all at that side the sun terrace side. And as I said you there was changing rooms were locker rooms were men’s one side gent’s er ladies the other and a little cafeteria one side and then you used to come through there as I say little areas to wash your feet and then erm used to go and get in the pool or go up on the sun terraces which run the back of the pool so yeah.

*Did you ever go on the diving boards?*

I used to [coughs] I did actually I never dived off because I was only young then erm I used to jump of the springboard and I think I jumped of because it was platform board it had one and then it had it was staggered two, two tiered diving platform and it had eh I did jump of the top but it looked horrendously high when I was a kid. It probably wasn’t [coughs]. As I said I think they had a few people that not had any injuries but there was it just wasn’t deep enough for the height of the board so they took them down and just left the springboard there.

*And I’ve heard that there was a slide as well.*

[Coughs]. Now that rings a bell. Slide, slide, slide. I think there was but I remember much about it [coughs]. Slide, um. Was there a slide either end? I’m not sure, I can’t remember too much about that. There might have been a slide either end into the shallow end. There might have been but I can’t, can’t remember too much. I remember more about the diving area because of the depth of the water erm yes so I can’t really tell you too much about the slides, can’t really remember [coughs].

*That’s absolutely fine. I was wondering though if it’s okay sorry, are you okay?*

Actually I come back from Italy and I told you I had this cold and chest infection and now I’ve got this hacking cough that

*Oh no. I’ll let it out afterwards, its fine. Um, I was going to say if it’s okay because obviously the fountains were so iconic I wondered if you could give me a description as you remembered them as much as you can do.*

Right, as I remember them, erm they were, they weren’t small fountains they were of concrete construction quiet erm round and they just used to as I say the water used to shoot up through the middle of them but they, I think they were stone construction at either end. They were quiet ionic actually but they were quiet big, they weren’t sort of tiny little things they were quiet the diameter was quiet big erm as I remember them and yeah used to be just used to like send water up but it was you know it’s a nice little feature really.

*Yeah, I’ve heard that some naughty children used to climb in them and*

Yes, oh yes, yes.

*And you tell me anything about that?*

I don’t remember to be honest but I do know the children were quiet often erm turfed out of them, yes erm to be honest ‘cos you know they weren’t a paddling pool they were a fountain [laughter]. Um because we used to have a paddling pool in the park as well outside the lido do you

*Okay, yeah I think I have heard of it but if you could tell me about it that would be great yeah if that’s okay?*

Erm, outside the pool the lido coming back towards the tennis courts on the right hand side was eh was a stone paddling pool erm it was, wasn’t very deep it was like paved at the bottom as I remember and stone as you like just like as I say a big stone paddling but it was quiet big erm and had like erm a sort of area all round it where you could sit but once again I think that was I don’t even know if they dug it up or what they did in the end but erm it was sort of like it wasn’t very pretty really it was quiet concretey if you know what I mean it wasn’t it wasn’t pretty paddling pool but it you know we used to go over and it was about eighteen inches deep I suppose but it was quiet big, it must have been twenty foot by ten something like that it was quiet perhaps even bigger. It was quiet a big paddling pool to be honest. Maybe more than perhaps thirty foot long it was like a little mini swimming pool really but it was stone I remember it being like concrete. So yeah, that’s how I remember that. Um.

*Did you ever use that at all?*

Erm, sometimes yeah but then I think we used to go more over for the pool as they got older erm and I think by the time my children ere old enough to use the paddling pool I think it gone I don’t think out children ever used it. Well my children never used it because it was I think it needed a lot of erm cleaning it took a lot to clean it really I think ‘cos erm as I said it was a concrete and stone construction. But yeah, that’s um what else can I tell you about the park [laughjter].

*Erm, I’m just trying to think actually because obviously your memories are so good about it. I was wondering in terms of oh actually there was one other thing I would like to ask if that’s okay. You mentioned that Derek lived above the Pavilion*

Yes

*I wondered if you could tell me a little about Derek and why he lived above the Pavilion or anything like that.*

Um, well um when Derek erm him and his wife Patricia er they came from Manchester they lived in Manchester and he, he got a posting down in erm like London Borough of Barking erm with the parks and I think he lived in the Pavilion flat until he could arrange housing . So he lived above the pavilion flat which was a nice flat. It was quiet roomy I remember going over there a couple of times erm and he lived in the flat above the er Pavilion erm I don’t know how many years he lived there but then he moved on to Willesden er and got a job over at Willesden I believe and then he as I say he left erm there and went to work for Redbridge and that’s where he lived I think he might still be in Redbridge now. But the Pavilion falt I don’t know how many years ago but it burnt down it had caught fire.

*You’re joking.*

The flat above and that was a quiet a sort of sad sort of sight.

*Do you know anything about that? Can you tell me any more details?*

I can’t really remember too much. I just remember that I think it wasn’t nobody was living there I think I don’t know if it was set on fire or I’m not sure but I know erm the flat above was set alight. And I think shortly after that, that’s when they decided to knock that down I think. Because it was never restored the flat above as I remember it wasn’t restored and then the cafeteria down below was just obviously closed up and erm I think in latter years they, they knocked it down. But years, I know I can’t remember dates or years or anything on that.

*No problem. The cafe that was underneath it do you remember that ever being open or was it all*

Yeah, yeah, oh yeah.

*Oh right, okay,*

I used to we used to buy ice-creams. Lyons-made ice-cream.

*Oh right, okay.*

Erm, yeah they had like um a seating area outside because it’s eh like had a concrete sort of frontage if you like or a tarmac frontage and there were table and chairs out there. Used to sit and have your ice-cream erm and I think you get sort of snacks erm like chips and things erm but we never used to do that because obviously living were I lived we didn’t have to eat over there because I used to just go back home. But yeah so it erm as I remember just eh like a lot of glass windows on the front and all the doors used to open so you could open it right up the cafeteria and as I say used to sell ice-creams one end. I know there was like a little seating area the other were you could sit and have something to eat.

*What was the actual structure of it was it quiet a nice looking building?*

Not particularly if I am honest.

*No.*

No, it was erm, it was cream like square panes of glass and cream doors and they were like erm like patio doors if you like or French doors if you like it was that sort of building but it wasn’t it was run by somebody independent it wasn’t run by the park I don’t think and I, I don’t think it was kept up to the standard of other things in the park really. It wasn’t, it wasn’t erm the cleanest of places as I remember as a child I used to think it looked a bit scruffy.

*Okay.*

That’s the appearance but we still bought our ice-cream there and then used to walk along eating our ice cream and that’s where you’re saying about the erm the competition with xxxx Pauline’s dad used to have the sweet shop and that’s what he means the competition with the, the ice-cream people in the park because people used to then buy their ice-cream sometimes and go into the park and then find the pavilion over, over there the cafeteria.

*Okay. Did you ever buy ice-cream from Howls’ or sweets or*

Oh yes, all the time.

*Yeah [laughter].*

‘cos he used to have er, the sweetshop next door it used to have erm the main door like was on the slant and then he used to have a window right on the front and it was there ice-cream window. He sued to sell ice-cream, fresh ice-cream, from you know it wasn’t just like lollies and things he used to like I don’t know whether they used to make it on the premises, I think they sis, sis they make it yeah that’s right. And they used to have thesebig tubs of ice-cream and they used to like you’d right at this window and somebody used to serve you sometimes I think Pauline worked there and Sid I think her name was his name was Sid, wasn’t it?

*Sid Xxxxx that’s his name yeah.*

Yeah, me god, that’s going back a long time [laughter].

*Do you remember him at all?*

Yes, yeah I couldn’t pick his but I remember him and I remember his erm his wife I don’t know her name. But I remember Pauline. Sid Howl. I can remember her face very I remember curly haired lady with glasses. She used to sit in the shop a lot. Um, yeah I used to go in there and buy my it’s funny how you remember things. How it has come back like I said the ice-cream from the ice-cream tubs erm I think it was made out the back on the premises wasn’t it?

*Well, apparently they used to have this um parlour which was all concrete so it was really cold down there.*

That’s right and that’s through the back, that’s right.

*And actually during the war they actually used that room for their shelter as well because it was all concrete*

That’s right.

*So it was quiet safe.*

Because I used to as I remember these um steel tubs are tubs of ice cream used to fit into these slots like round circular tub things in, in this like a refrigerated cabinet. As I was saying they used to open up this window and serve the ice-cream from this hatch which as I remember yeah lovely ice-cream like a Cornishy sort of ice cream that was lovely. But I remember going into the shop and it’s really weird because I can remember buying lucky numbers. There was sweets called lucky numbers. And they were just like erm it was a bit like a Quality Street type of selection but they were just had different centres in them but they were called Lucky Numbers. And he’s the only shop I knew that ever sold them.

*Oh, okay.*

But that’s eh, that’s going back a long Howls’ the sweetshop oh Pauline how old is she now?

*Oh crikey, um, I think she was born in nineteen thirty I want to say nineteen thirty-nine um but obviously she remembers the park during war times as well so*

Yeah, that’s brilliant, isn’t it? See I was obviously born fifty-five so I was all but yeah her mum and dad. Because they used to live in Cranleigh Gardens.

*Um, she, she actually still lives in Cranleigh Gardens.*

Does she really?

*She lives in her parents’ old house*

Oh my goodness

*Because they retires and moved there*

That’s right, yeah.

*Um, so yeah, she still lives in the same place.*

Wow.

*Yeah.*

Cranleigh Garden’s. Because it is just opposite the park, just tucked round the corner.

*Yes, yes.*

I think I went there once or twice I think as a child for whatever reason I don’t know. But yes Sid Howl yeah, crikey because that turned into vets in the end Goddard’s bought it, didn’t they? And I actually worked in the vets.

*Oh did you?*

Yeah. At that time I was allergic to I am not allergic to them now but I was allergic to cats and dogs and I had to give up my little job there.

*Oh, that’s a shame.*

[Laughter]. Yeah, I liked it was good but Howls’ sweetshop yeah it was um it did have like erm I beautiful stone floor as I remember as you went in. It was like black and white sort of like almost like a marble sort of stone floor. Yeah, Howls’ sweetshop crikey that is going back. Yeah, oh Pauline my goodness me yeah because she lived I remember she lived with her mum and dad when they were alive and then obviously I didn’t know the going of them but I did know they loved in Cranleigh Gardens. Yeah so that was yeah they did have a bit of competition with the cafeteria.

*I know it um probably one of those questions you are not going to know the answer to but I was wondering if you do you know who was cheaper? Was it a completion or was it just that Howls’ was better?*

Erm I think as I remember Howls’ used to be very popular for their ice-cream cones because erm it was like the freshly made ice-cream I think the Pavilion and the Cafeteria was more like a lolly based Lyons made type of thing.

*Right.*

So there wasn’t really the erm the price thing it wasn’t really a question of price it was just like choice because the ice cream from Howls’ so lovely ‘cos you, you know and I don’t know whether they sold fresh ice-cream over the I think it was more like Lyon’s made selections sort of thing.

*Right, okay.*

Yeah so, but Howls’ crikey that was used to go there sort of a lot it was next door. You didn’t even have to cross any roads or anything.

*No, probably could have just knocked on the door xxxx knocked on the wall couldn’t you?*

That’s right. But it was lovely because it was like one of the I remember as they all were all the jars of sweets well you only get like specialized shops doing jars of sweets now they used to weigh all the sweets but that’s they’re all gone aren’t they.

*It’s quiet funny because Pauline’s still got a set of the old scale.*

Oh fabulous aren’t they? To weight the sweets. It’s marvellous oh it’s lovely I love those sort you know sometimes there’s erm I thinks there’s some oh I don’ know some sweetshops that now still do the old sweets but I just love the old two ounces of this and two ounces of that. Um, but no Howls’ yeah that was they were there for a long time though.

*Yeah, I think, I think, I think they bought the shop obviously just before Pauline was born because she was actually born in the house.*

Yeah.

*Um and I can’t remember if she said they finished I should imagine it probably would have been the seventies or eighties I should imagine.*

Yeah, I think it was before the seventies.

*So was it? Okay.*

Um, because oh seventies, I know my son was born in eighty-one and that was a vets then so it would have might have been sixties something they, they went from there so it was sad though really it was nice having a sweetshop. I mean what more could I want? I lived in the park and I had a sweetshop next door it was heaven, wasn’t it? [Laughter].

*I’m amazed you ever left [laughter].*

Well I stayed there twenty-one years until I moved and then erm and got married and sort of moved in like a different area but always went back to the par. I mean mum and dad was it was just it still my house even though I had left home [laughter].

*Even though they made your bedroom the bathroom? [Laughter].*

Oh yeah, they cut half well actually I think that was done er before I came along obviously um it was done I think it might have even been done bore my mum and dad moved in there. Because they moved in there in fifty-two, I was born in fifty-five but I think erm it must have been done before my dad moved in there because that, that wasn’t done I’m sure that wasn’t done before erm before it wasn’t done after my dad went in there, It was done before.

*And I was going to say comparing your childhood with obviously taking your own children down there, what was it like taking them to the park? Did you find that you would want them to do the things that you had done or?*

[Coughs]. Well we used to do as I say we used to do the things like the train we used to take them on the train and we used to take them on the boats. Swimming pool was obviously gone. Paddling pool was gone. Um pitch and putt was still there then we used to take the kids when they were older on the pitch and putt.

*Where abouts was the pitch and putt? Do you remember?*

The pitch and putt if you if you came back from erm walking towards the tennis courts from [coughs] the swimming pool the pitch and putt was directly you know you got erm a roadway that goes down to Central Gate you know like coming back from erm coming back from the swimming pool round here and the tennis courts were here weren’t they on like three or four tennis courts and the pitch and putt ‘cos there was a little roadway that divided the tennis courts up now like an open field. The pitch and putt was on that corner.

*Ah, okay.*

So it was an eighteen court eighteen hole pitch and putt course.

*Was it like erm*

A putting, putting course.

*Oh right okay.*

It wasn’t er pitch and putt actually it was a putting green. That’s right. Pitch and putt was over in central park. But erm so it, it was it is gone but you can actually see where the fencing was

*Oh can you?*

If you look carefully. I can you know obviously because I remember it. But so when my children were older we used to go and play pitch and putt now that was my son’s thirty in xxxx oh Monday so twenty, twenty years ago so that putting course putting green is still in existence in the eighties.

*Okay. So it wasn’t like crazy golf it was*

No, no it was all grass.

*Okay.*

It was erm with erm sort of proper greens and proper flag poles and everything. No, it wasn’t erm crazy golf it was proper putting green.

*Okay*

So it was good it was the kids like it because er yeah we used to go over there and had a little hut in the corner where you could hire all the golf and like the little putting clubs and stuff and you had to put an deposit one which seemed astronomical but you got it back at the end [laughter]. But that’s as I say that’s gone now but erm the tennis courts I think they did the tennis courts up as I remember some of them where erm a little bit rough some where better than others I think they have done them up I think in the latter years they looked quiet decent when I was last over the park. Erm yes so we had the big memorial on you've got the picture of and I think what they did with that erm because the erosion took away all the lettering I think they got I don’t know if they got sponsorship from somewhere to erm have all the names on the memorial done in gold leaf so I think that was erm restored to it’s former glory because I mean you know you could read the names but you know obviously the, the sort of rain and the erosion it takes it away doesn’t it so I think they I don’t know where they got the funding from but that I remember that was put back and it was beautiful ‘cos this big you know xxxx the picture there you’ve got the big memorial and all the names are the people that fell in the war were all like named on this memorial. It was beautiful thing, beautiful thing.

*What would you say was your most enduring memory of the park is, the thing that always as soon as someone says Barking Park to you what is the first thing*

I think it is the train, it has got to be the train. Because I it was just so different to anything that any other park had I mean erm yeah the train and just and as I say the swing the playground we used to love the playground erm and just generally yeah the train I think if somebody says to me Barking Park it’s train I think of the train immediately. ‘Cos it was such a it was so different to anything any other, no other park had a train, did it? It was that’s the memory I think. And to be honest I think these erm coats in the arms in the flower beds because they were very unique as I say that was something I will remember and I wont ever forget that.

*There’s just something that I forgot to ask earlier, if it’s okay. In terms of erm uniforms and things like that did the park keeper’s were uniforms? Did your father wear a uniform?*

My dad didn’t wear a uniform you know when he was on his when he was promoted he obviously wore a suit a to work and my dad always wore a tie funny enough even when he was relaxing he sometimes wore a tie I don’t know why.

*Men knew how to dress then [laughter].*

I think they did, they did though, didn’t they? Um, but obviously the park keepers and the workers who tended the flower beds just wore like overalls for work erm they used there was no specific uniform. I think it might have had perhaps London Borough of Barking like on it writing wise but there was nothing no specific just like overalls really to work in.

*Other people have told me that erm actually it is probably a bit before bit before your time that they used to wear sort of peaked caps and capes and things [laughter]. Maybe that’s much earlier.*

Maybe.

*Yeah.*

Erm, I think well I think the park keepers used that, that’s that is correct actually I think even now thinking back they used to like the workers like the park keepers tended like erm like the putting green erm and the tennis courts because they weren’t like working on the land if you like the parking attendants like the park keeping attendants I think they did wear peak caps actually. Now you’ve said that. I was thinking more of the people that attended the flower beds.

*Oh right, okay.*

But the actual park keepers, yes, they did they used to wear like erm a think it more or less like a black jacket I think.

*Okay.*

Um and they did wear peak caps, you’re right. It’s even testing my memory now [laughter].

*Yeah, I don’t know for sure I only know what other people have said.*

Yeah but now you have said that, yes they did. But I was thinking more like the workers obviously there was overalls but no the park keepers as such like the flower bed the gardeners - that’s the word I am looking for. The gardeners used to wear their overalls but the park keepers they did used to wear peak caps you’re right. They did. Yeah, and like a black buttoned uniform as I rem.. or a jacket as I remember. Not like a suit but like a working jacket if you like with a yeah they did that’s right. Somebody you told that’s absolutely right [laughter. She you forget things don’t you? Minor sort of details. Yeah they did.

*I also heard they used to cycle around the park when they did their patrols. Do you ever remember park keepers on bikes?*

They did yeah. Oh yeah park keepers on bikes that right. That’s where we used to get found out if we were picking the conkers [laughter]. When we shouldn’t have bee.

*Could you tell me about that is that’s okay?*

Yeah well I just remember that erm, erm we used to go there with our friends and erm just used to go certain times of the years it’s about now isn’t I think October time the conkers and erm we used to throw the ball up to try and knock the conkers down of the trees or if, if they were branches the boys used to go and climb up and then that is absolutely right sometimes “it’s a parky” we used to call them parkies [laughter].

*Oh right, okay.*

“It’s a parky coming, quick, quick, quick”. On the bike yes. And they used to patrol like ride around the park on the bike yeah that is right that is absolutely right. Because we used to scarper when [laughter] when we xxxx when parky was coming. Parky, why we used to call them parky? Yes, so on their bikes yes.

*Because your father worked there were you ever more conscious that you had to be good?*

Yes. Absolutely. I never wanted to get caught out because I was always going to be but I to be honest I mean I am making myself sound like I was little wretch but I wasn’t really. I mean I was a good, good, good little girl really. Just er yeah we just used to think it was adventurous to knock the conkers of the tree but you know it was mild in comparison to what they get up to know isn’t it [laughter]. Erm yeah, that’s right so I can remember erm me and my brother used to collect the conkers because obviously

*Okay*

We used to go over the park and I remember you know they fall of in their shells, don’ they and we used erm obviously de-shell them and I remember my brother used to have funny enough a sweet jar probably from Howl’s and he used to have a jar full of conkers from the trees in the park but yes they used to go round on their bikes and they used have their little bell on the bike and if you know they ring their bell if they erm thought somebody was up to something, yeah. Yeah, they did that’s right on the bike. Erm what else can I remember about the park. There’s so many things probably that I can’t remember but er but obviously

*You’ve got an amazing memory, I’m getting loads here [laughter].*

Erm anything you

*Um, I was going to ask about the bandstand. I am not sure if there was still using it to the extent they would have in the early years but I am wondering if you can remember*

The bandstand I think was the bandstand was I think they used to have music from the bandstand when I was very little but I don’t remember anything much about it and it seemed as though it died out very erm very quickly and then obviously when the out or the indoor bowls centre was built and my dad was horrified about that building because it just looked like a box dropped in the park because it was all sort of beautiful buildings as I said about the black boathouse and even the bowling green with that like the little picture there with like the colonial type house you had in the erm the clubhouse there. And they knocked the bandstand down to make a car park for the bowls club which as a absolute travesty. You can imagine, can’t you?

*Yeah. I think that has caused a lot of commentary.*

My dad was horrified about it, it was just to knock this I mean I’m mean we’ve got a picture of it actually there. I mean to knock that down to make like a sort of gated round area car park and it, it just seem right you those sort of building should have been preserved really and that should have even know should be have been there in some ways shouldn’t it I think. Because it is part of the heritage of the park it’s you know it was part of it but my dad wasn’t very happy. In fact to honest he wasn’t very happy about the, the indoor bowls club being built there anyway because it just, it just too something away from the look of the park. I was so old and colonial in lots of ways and then it had this big like corrugated prefabricated building that just gets covered in graffiti even now just dropped behind the outdoor rinks. I just never seemed right and then obviously erm my dad said the park would never be locked up because it was erm open an they had keys to lock the gates so the last bowler that could be in to the eleven, eleven thirty they used to have to lock it up but you know nothing nicer than having the park closed up by the park keeper. Yeah on his bike he used go up with his bicycle. It was lock the park and then erm later on as I say Jock used to come in with dog and patrol the park with his dog but used to always come in for a cup of tea first.

*Oh [laughter]. So how late would Jock work then?*

Erm well bearing in mind the park erm used to open they it used close at it used to be staggered closing time. So obviously it was later in the summer because obviously the day light as the days got longer the park stayed open later you know for daylight hours but as soon as hit dusk or you know and so the park would be closed I think in height of summer about ten o’clock, just after ten and then very soon after that Jock would come erm with his van with his I just remember the van with the grill at the back for the dog to be kept in [laughter]. And, used to come in to the park erm and as I said my dad got to know him very well and he used to as I say come in for a cup of tea but see that’s erm and then obviously do his patrol and then off he’d go and if he didn’t find anybody then obviously that was fine. But erm as say latter stages people used to get locked in the park after the dog patrols was stopped when the indoor bowls centre was built because people used to come into come into the park even later one at night and if a bowler was the last one they didn’t know perhaps people were in park and then it was locked up and then people couldn’t get out of the park. [Laughter]. So you know they used to knock you know “can you let us out Parky we are stuck” [laughter]. Oh my dad’d say used to say “I am not a park keeper but I will let you out but you must, you know you must look at the times on the gate it does tell you when the park is closing”. When the park was that was before people used to still locked in park when it was erm had the dog patrols erm in between Jock and people erm like park being locked and then people would get locked in the park. But they used to get locked in more frequently when the bowls centre was there because as I say people just used to come in and then they found they couldn’t get out anywhere and then my dad let many, many a person out of the park about eleven o’clock at night or whatever. Sometimes he was even in bed and had to get up. He didn’t have to do it but he always he moaned little bit because they didn’t want them to think was just a thing that they could get away with but he did always let them out [laughter].

*They didn’t have to camp under the bench or anything.*

Well no, that’s right it’s and it was invariably they were in car parks or something it was funny being locked in the park. But yeah so that happened quiet frequently really to be honest. But I think that is one of the reasons why the superintendant didn’t want to live house because with that house as beautiful as it was came those sort of problems but yeah so erm but no nobody would that the bowls indoor bowls centre has caused quiet a many a argument I think down the years as whether it should have been built there or not to be honest. And I don’t think it should have I think the park should have been left as it was. I’m not against indoor bowls but I don’t think it should have been built in the park I think it should have been built found somewhere else wherever it is but there you go that’s just, that’s just my opinion. I think I sort of followed my dad a bit on that one I did agree because it did you know it wasn’t very aesthetically pleasing on the eye ‘cos it was just like a monstrosity like box sitting there wasn’t it so.

*When you think about how meticulous your father was about making everything look good xxxx I should imagine*

Absolutely and then ‘cos you know you used to get the graffiti from kids from the kids used to graffiti the walls because you know a big great expanse of wall or whatever “ooh, lets just draw something on here” you know that’s something that happened.

*If it’s okay with you there is just one more thing that I would like to ask about*

Yeah, of course anything

*If that’s okay? Um, and that’s the carnivals and fairs.*

Oh the carnivals and fairs.

*Yeah.*

Yeah. Right, the fair it used to be Holland’s Fair used to come in every September. Erm for ten days I believe they used to erm some of them used quiet sneak a little bit before because they used to love being in the park because it was a lovely setting erm once again my dad didn’t like the fair [laughter].

*Could you tell me why if that is okay?*

I tell you why he didn’t like the fair. Because erm my dad as I said he loved things meticulous he loved greenery he loved lawns he loved erm a nice you know as I say the lawn being the park being green and when they used to come in erm they used to park in there and start building all there erm the fair parts of the fair and it used to go right up to Fenton’s er used go up to the middle gate. It was the whole of the first field if you like. Used to be a funfair. Um invariably we used to get just dreadful weather in September and by the time they left the field the last one where the stalls and the stands had stood there was erm the grass was like lime green and the walkways were like mud baths so you know from having a lovely green area outside to look out for you know for a few weeks after the grass was it was just like a mud heap. It was just and ‘cos that didn’t please my dad looking at something that should be green where the stalls were stood was like the colour of that bag because the grass didn’t have no light there. And then the walkways as I said it was just like just like mud, mud bath so that took you know that used to upset my dad that the park he felt had been abused in that way and you that’s as said ‘cos he was a stickler for things to be right he didn’t like the aftermath of how the park looked after they left. I mean they used to clear up and everything and then erm and they put erm because obviously bring droves of people into the park it was very popular this funfair and they used to have put like a chestnut fence all outside our house like and the entrance both sides so that nobody would get into the flower beds or would get into our house, even my dad’s garage was all erm like erm a chestnut fencing all across it and he used to have these little door he used to have to open up to get into his garage just so that they erm they couldn’t get into like the garden because you know people when you’ve got droves of people and they get excited they tend to do silly things like climbing fences and you know that’s what they did they used to have to put all this chestnut fence so it was quiet expensive to actually sort of mount like maintain that really for the time of the park er the fair erm but then he was always pleased when it went and the grass started to grow back again but and it was Holland’s fair it used to be a yearly thing. Every September. But I loved it [laughter]. I mean I was kid you know I, I know he’d moan at the park I had a park you know I had funfair on you know every September for ten days I had a funfair in my back yard so I liked it but my dad didn’t really like it. Only because of what it did to the ground that was the only thing he wasn’t against funfairs per se it was just what the damage did to the filed afterwards because you know driving over a muddy like, a bit like erm what’s the festival they have down in

*Oh, Glastonbury or something*

Yeah, you imagine [laughter] like having a lovely field of green and then it looks a bit like that when it is finished so.

*How long would it take them to get it back to erm*

Well, erm, well you just obviously would leave it I mean grass to be honest does rally quiet quickly because you know what came from September was like the autumn sort of rains and sort of it would rally quiet quickly I don’t think they ever had to re-turf it or anything but it just didn’t look very nice for the, the next couple of months until it sort of grew back but yeah that’s just thing how my dad just likes he didn’t like things being used for different reasons. I think he liked the park just to stay as a park. I mean he was a bit old fashioned in that way I suppose but yeah and the carnival, yeah the Barking carnival. Um, they used to er I think the park’s department used to have a float because all the floats there used to be about procession of about thirty floats I think and er we used to sit on the, the balustrading in the porch area of the lodge and had like a bird’s eye view ‘cos people used to be like six or seven deep along Longbridge Road it used go and it used to meander all the way up to Mayesbrook I think Mayesbrook Park and I think Barking and Dagenham they used to have all the named floats there was like advertisements in local like shop keepers used to have a float but I know that erm Barking and Dagenham like the park’s department used to have a float and they use to have a carnival queen.

*Okay.*

Sitting ah she was chosen and she would sit on the sit on the float on her little throne and you know it was all bedecked with flowers and stuff so that was quiet nice I don’t know how they chose the carnival queen I’ve no idea [laughter]. I suppose it was done something before carnival. And the carnival was always in September when the fair was on because people used to go to the carnival it was on a Saturday in September and then go over to the funfair afterwards.

*Okay.*

So it was every September the session. But yeah that was something that was you know you used to look forward to that as a kid I used to love carnival day we used to have marching bands and, and like I don’t know like the sea cadets and then you’d have all erm all different sort of processions of different erm xxxx had scouts or just different sort of things you used to have like marching bands and so you know the floats and used to have local shops used to do their little advertising of their float but it was all fun things it was all very colourful and once again I haven’t got any picture of that really because it I think because it happened every year I never used to take any picture of it silly isn’t it?

*Of course.*

[Coughs]. Um, yes so that was very September. Um, I think it used to start down at Barking Town Hall somewhere down there and make its way down Longbridge Road, over what was Barking station and come down past the lodge and go up and I think it used to finish in Mayesbrook Park

*Okay.*

Which is just er past erm like in Longbridge Road further along and that’s how the procession used to go.

*Did your erm father or staff have to provide any of the flowers for the floats?*

Yeah, they used as I said they used to have erm, erm er like a trailer of float they used to call them float and they had to erm sort of bedeck it with flowers and make it look as colourful as possible because I think [coughs] a lot of the, the other erm er I think I don’t whether Redbridge I think a lot of the boroughs entered a float into the erm the Barking carnival because they used to sort we used to always think I wonder which one is going to be best this year you know and it was always as I say bedecked with flowers and you used to have the carnival queen sitting on her chair with her yeah with her sort of tiara on it was funny when you think about it now I thought how strange it was really. Yeah, carnival queen she used to sit on her sort of as I say this bedecked flower throne and that was yeah, that was lovely really wasn’t it? Like fairytale I suppose.

*Um, someone I interviewed actually donated erm a couple of fabulous photos of the Dagenham Girl Pipers performing at the bandstand in Barking.*

Oh, there you go, yes I knew there was music there, yeah.

*That was part of Barking Carnival and also the crowning of the carnival queen would apparently happen at eh bandstand in Barking Park as well.*

Ah.

*I am wondering if that was probably before your time?*

The thing is as I said to you I knew they had erm a carnival queen and I didn’t know how they, they chose it but obviously they must have done it over in the bandstand and choose the queen and then she would obviously sit on the throne of this float and then travel with the procession but I didn’t know how they chose her but now you’ve enlightened me that’s good in affect

*Well, I don’t know if that is how they choose her but I just xxxx this photo of them sort of putting this crown on this young, I think about thirteen or fourteen and she very proud obviously but*

Yeah, lovely, isn’t it.

*Yeah, it was really, really nice.*

Yeah that’s xxxx but we always used to have a carnival queen. Always. Never, never didn’t have Barking had didn’t ever have not have a carnival queen every year we used to have one, yeah.

*And going back to Holland’s fair did you ever meet Tommy Holland or*

Yes, because he’s erm yes because obviously he used to have erm you know behind the raised mound where I told you they used to have all the crests flowers, Tommy Holland used to have his caravan just behind there in the same pitch every year and Tommy Holland I think he’s father was Tommy Holland see my dad knew his father as well.

*Oh, okay.*

Um.

*So it’s the younger Tommy Holland that you knew?*

I knew the younger one.

*Oh, okay.*

His father was erm I think a round when I as a very young girl bit I think he died erm and then obviously his son took over the funfair but my dad knew him very well. I mean you know you used to sort erm in fact I think he used to because he was in the park he used to we used I think I think I’ve got this right he used to let us go over and say “oh look here’s some tokens use them”

*Oh okay*

“In the fair” because obviously we lived in the park. So me and my brother used to have some tokens to use on free rides and things. Erm they used to have but he as always in the same pitch, always that like little spot behind the mound like behind that raised flower bed yeah so erm but they used to love coming into Barking park because it was you know it’s it wasn’t just like erm it was a nice site and what better as I say a lovely park to live in for ten days these travelling people it was a nice spot wasn’t it for them.

*It could be a lot worse, couldn’t it? [Laughter].*

Absolutely.

*I wouldn’t mind I would bring a tent round at the weekend [laughter]. Um Andy was saying they found a bench in the xxxx they moved the benches because they refurbishing a lot of the park and they found one bench which was a memorial to Tommy Holland. Now he didn’t realise that was to Tommy Holland that run the fair did you know anything about that and memorial bench for Tommy Holland?*

No, I don’t know anything about that.

*Okay, no worries.*

No, no, I don’t. That must have been donated perhaps by the Rotary Club because there used to be is the Rotary Club of Barking I think.

*I’m not sure.*

I don’t know, I don’t know anything about a bench to Tommy Holland.

*Okay.*

But there were various benches dotted around the park that were dedicated to various people because I think in Barking was there the mayor or Mayor of Barking was it somebody Boar somebody Ball I think have you heard come across that, no.

*I haven’t, no. But I mean it’s not to say that that’s not*

No, and I think there was various benches that were xxxx donated around the park by various people for sort of prominent figures in the borough. Because at one time obviously before the bowls the indoor bowls club erm came about erm people weren’t really allowed to drive into the park it was you know as my dad said the park is for pedestrians and you know there shouldn’t be cars in there but obviously when the indoor bowls centre was build erm which I think another things that horrified my dad he was a stickler for old fashioned things I think erm because the cars were allowed to drive in around to the car park where I said it was then suddenly you had lines down like white lines that whitened in the sort of drive but obviously they had to stick between these and even my dad said “ it doesn’t look right does it a park with white lines going down” like the main sort of area to the so I think there was these little things that used to niggling him about it be honest. He said “ the park should be for pedestrians and it should be safe and they shouldn’t have to worry about vehicles”.

*That is a fair point, I think.*

I think it is actually, yeah.

*I interviewed someone who is married to someone who goes to the bowls club and it’s quite its quiet funny to hear the contrast between what they say and what a lot of other people I have interviewed have said. Because they really like that you can drive into the park because they’re like well a lot of people that come to bowls are quite elderly and you know they can’t walk very far so it was quiet nice they can just sort of drive in the park and then everyone else is kind of no, we don’t [laughter] think cars should be allowed in the park at all.*

No, my dad didn’t like it, he didn’t like it and as I said when these lines were drawn white lines down the from the main gates down to like where the bowls club car park was erm because there is a new car park now they’ve done away with one of the outdoor xxxx haven’t they now there is a different car park. Well that never existed then it was just two rinks of outdoor bowling and the car park was round where the bandstand was they had to drive all the way round to the back of bowls club and then park in that circular area where the bandstand was so you imagine these white lines ere put in right the way round erm and it just my dad just said “oh, it doesn’t seem right to have white lines in a park” you know in a park you know [laughter]. But yeah I it’s I think the bowlers were al for it and as you say you are going to get contrasting interviews because there are people that were bowlers and loved it and people that play bowls and like my dad and erm well he did play on holiday but not over the park but who thought a park should b just for people to walk around in and enjoy and not have to worry about being mowed down erm I think I think actually going back xxxx I actually I think somebody was knocked down in the park.

*Oh crikey, really?*

Years and I only I think it was only ever once but I think a little kiddie was knocked he wasn’t seriously hurt but erm and that sort emphasised to my dad why he didn’t you know that’s what he was saying. It should be that kids or parents should have to worry about their eh their children running around but I’m sure er a child was knocked down by a car in the park.

*Do you know if that child was okay?*

Yeah, it was, it wasn’t, it wasn’t, it wasn’t a serious injury or anything but it, it is something that as my dad said it shouldn’t, it shouldn’t have happened because the vehicles shouldn’t have ever been in there. I think it was the only incident but do I recall something and that’s going back quiet a while when the bowls club was you know it was built.

*Ok.*

Anything else?

*That’s fantastic. Um, I was just going to say, um, is, is there anything that you would like to add, that um, anything about you know, your life, or your family, or, because we do like to do like a you know, full life history so if there’s anything you’d like to add about...?*

Um, well I er...

*Or the park, if you can think of any other funny stories or...*

Um, well as I said about the sledge, that was one thing, and the conkers we used to um, get down. Um, yeah, I don’t think there’s anything, it was just, it was just happy times really. I just um, I just think it was just happy times, I mean um, my mum and dad lived there for goodness me, forty eight years. Um, and I, you know, I used to obviously visit them when I moved away, but um, and my children were grown up, my, with the park and used to go to nanny and grand-dad’s house and, and the train. And it was just full of happy memories really, as I say, I couldn’t have wished for a happier childhood because it was just perfect, I mean um, yes, um, no we had a very sort of, stable upbringing, because of those, for those reasons really. Um, but no, it was lovely we were very, very happy there and, um, I mean as my, because my dad when he retired he, he stayed on in the house. Um, because he retired, he retired early my dad, he retired when he was about sixty I think, sixty two. Which would have been, oh, how old would he have, sixty two, so that would have been yeah, he retired in the late eighties (1980’s) I think. And he stayed in the house until two thousand (2000). Um, and then obviously the house became too, you know, got a little bit too much for them actually, to be honest. Because it was a house that, the windows were very difficult to, like, even this landing window, it’s over, over a banister, so you had to sort of balance on something over.

*Crikey.*

It was quite a, and course my mum used to have do all these things, and I think in the end that [coughs], they realised that the house was you know, it was too big for two people to live in. And then they eventually were re-housed in a little um, bungalow in Moss Road. Which was very nice actually, it was like a purpose built and they lived there, um, well actually my mum died in two thousand and two (2002). [coughs]. My dad died in two thousand and six (2006). Or two thousand and five (2005) should I say. Um, yes so it’s um, but they, they loved the house, I mean they, it was a beautiful house.

*Hmmm.*

[coughs]. I think various things were, they wanted to do various things to the house like when the windows needed replacing, I think they, some companies wanted to come in and rip out all the old timbers on the bay windows, and my dad said no, just [coughs], the upstairs windows were, I mean, replaced, but you know, there was no way my dad said, those bay windows are a part of the character of the house, you’ve got to repair them, and do, and I think they did in the end listen to him.

*So we should thank your dad for that then shouldn’t we?*

Yeah, because that’s all part of the, the, the wooden structure of the, the, you know, it’s so elaborate over the windows and the, all that wooden panelling all round. [coughs]. But no, I just want to say that, you know, I couldn’t have wished for a nicer childhood, and with two lovely parents.

*Yeah.*

And that was perfect.

*It sounds fantastic, it sounds like a wonderful idyllic childhood.*

Oh it was marvellous, I can’t emphasise how lovely it was. I mean, [coughs], and as I say um, I lived there until I was twenty one.

*Where did you move to at twenty one?*

I moved um...[coughs]...

*Did you get married at twenty one as well?*

I got married when I was twenty one, um, I moved to Chadwell Heath. Um, a little house, um, that my dad helped to, um, it was an old, old house. Needed a lot of refurbishment. And as I said, he was very clever, he turned his hand to most things, and he helped refurbish the house, or, renovate the house I should say, not refurbish, renovate the house. Um, and then yeah, and then obviously I moved to Hornchurch. I’ve lived in Hornchurch now for twenty nine, twenty nine years. Thir-, well thirty years actually, almost.

*In, in this location, ‘cause this house looks quite new isn’t it?*

Yeah, not in this location, I’ve lived in two other houses, one further down there, I haven’t lived far, I mean when I come to Hornchurch, I lived in a house just a little way further down.

*Ok.*

And then I moved to a house just round the corner and then I moved to this, ‘cause you don’t need, when your children don’t live with you, you don’t need big houses, that’s the thing. So and as I said, when I found this little house overlooking the xxxx...

*[laughs].*

...I thought oh wow!

*You can’t go wrong can you! [laughs].*

[laughs]. No, that’s right! So.

*It’s lovely, you’ve got a nice big garden yourself haven’t you?*

Well it’s not bad, it’s yeah, not a bad little garden really, it’s not too big, but um, but my dad kept the garden of like, the lodge, it was beautiful.

*Do you know what, a lot of people in the area still call it Les’ garden.*

Yeah.

*And they’re like, oh, it’s a shame Les’ garden doesn’t look like it used to.*

Yeah.

*‘Cause obviously, you know.*

Oh it was beautiful, yeah. I mean, it was, it was full of flowers and you know, apple trees we used to climb up, and pear trees, I think there was a pear tree in the garden, an apple tree in the garden.

*So you were allowed to climb your own trees...*

Yeah.

*Just not the ones in the park! [laughs].*

Well yeah, that’s right! And er, yeah, we used to have um, a cooking apple tree, and a little cox’s orange, pippin tree at the bottom of the garden. And as I say, my dad’s garage ran at the bottom of the garden and he used to have a little door that used to go down in to it. But er...

*There’s just one thing, it’s just sprung to my mind now, if it’s ok for me to ask, um, one of the ladies I interviewed, Mrs Tingey, seems to think that your father used to come to her house and do her gardening. Did he ever do private gardening for people round the area?*

No.

*Ok, so she’s probably, I mean, this ladies sort of ninety five, so um...*

Yeah, no, he never used to.

*She might have been confused, ok.*

No, no, he never used to do, he used to keep his own garden, but he never, never did it um, as a private thing. I mean, he loved gardening, but he never did private work in that way.

*Right ok.*

No, I mean, perhaps, perhaps one of the gardeners from the park might have done.

*It’s, it’s quite possible, I think she, she had it in her head that um, whoever used to do her garden was um, you know, a, a gardener or something in the park.*

Yeah, possibly.

*And I mentioned, I’d asked her if she’d known Les, because you know, and she was like, yeah he’s the one that used to do my garden. And I was like, ok. So I [laughs]...*

No, he never, but she’s probably, I mean she probably had somebody, perhaps a gardener did a private sort of, work for her. But no, my dad never ever did that.

*Ok.*

Um, but the garden was beautiful I mean, it’s a shame I haven’t got any pictures of the garden, it was beautiful.

*I think um...*

You got, might have pictures.

*Yeah I think I’ve got a couple of them, because Andy gave me copies of all your...*

Because I did show, yes! Yes! Because I remember showing Andy the pictures of the garage and um...

*And it looked absolutely stunning. It’s so beautiful.*

Oh, it, he was so proud of his garden. He was, you know, it was perfect, the lawn was like a bowling green. And, but that was because of his love of horticulture was just in him, he just loved, as I say, that’s why he used to be so upset with the field when it was churned up from the fair, because it, you know, it goes against the grain of how it should look. And I suppose it’s like somebody coming and just churning up your own garden isn’t it?

*[laughs]. Yeah, you wouldn’t be too pleased would you?*

No! So that’s how he viewed it I think. Um, but no, the garden was beautiful. I mean it just had er, yeah, it, it was just lovely and obviously over the years the garden was altered in lots of ways and, um...but yeah it’s, it was a, a fabulous childhood. And I only stumbled across Andy because a friend of mine works for um, Barking and Dagenham, so she works at the civic centre I think.

*Oh right ok.*

And she met Andy on a course.

*Ah!*

And he was talking about, oh we’re doing this project up the lodge, and she said, my friend used to live there! And that’s exactly how this all started.

*Fantastic! Well, is, isn’t it wonderful though that it is such a small world sometimes!*

Yeah! And he said, really? What was her name? And er, xxxx said, well I’ll give her a phone number, and then she said to me, Chris I’ve given your number, I hope you didn’t mind, to this guy I met on a course. And I said, oh why’s that? And then of course we started!

*[laughs].*

And then I, I went to the house and met Andy, and I went a couple of times, ‘cause I was dying to go back in to the house, ‘cause I hadn’t been back in there since um, my mum and dad left there.

*Right.*

Which was two thousand (2000), so I hadn’t been back in the house, I hadn’t been there for, well, when I went there, it must have been last year sometime. So I hadn’t been in the house for ten years.

*Wow!*

Minimum, like minimum.

*How did it feel going back in?*

Well it was, because it was different, and um, it, it made me feel...well I did say to Andy, I said, it is really strange, ‘cause one the bedroom that my mum and dad had is still pink.

*[laughs].*

And the bathroom is exactly the same, still with that, ‘cause I actually said to Andy, um, when I spoke to him on the phone, I said, don’t tell me that bathroom has still got that bright pink bath in it. He said, it’s exactly the same as it was! And it was! It was exactly the same, so they hadn’t done much to the upstairs at all. It was still with the, the woodchip paper on the, on the walls with like, colour. But downstairs had been altered quite a lot, because the, the main living room had like um, a bench thing up for, I think they’d converted it like for disabled access and all sorts of things. I think the kitchen had been done as well. But the front room was exactly the same, so it, it was very strange going back in there, um, but it was something I, I’m glad I’ve done and seen it now, ‘cause it’s, it just makes me think of the park and the happy memories I have.

*Of course. That’s fantastic! Thank you very much!*

Oh, I hope I’ve been of help to...

*You’re a star! You’re amazing, you’re memories are amazing, and I’m so grateful, thank you very, very much!*

Oh that’s brilliant, I’m glad, I’m glad you came round! I just hope those little pictures, but as you say...

*If it’s ok to borrow these, I can scan them in the office, is that ok?*

Absolute-, yeah, that’s fine. Absolutely fine!

*That’s fantastic.*

But they, as you say, and it’s nice to see original pictures isn’t it?

*Of course.*

You know those pictures are what, nineteen forty eight (1948), what we are now, two thousand and eleven (2011), they’re sixty odd years old aren’t they?

*Um, if you like I can put them all on a disc for you, so if you wanted to blow them up, that you could, because we would scan that at a high resolution.*

Oh right ok!

*And then if you wanted to make them bigger so you could display them or something, we’d be happy to put them on a disc for you?*

Yeah, that’s be good, if you didn’t, if you wouldn’t mind doing that.

*Not at all, what I’ll do is I’ll scan them in the office, and I’ll do them at as high a resolution as I possibly can.*

Yeah.

*And then obviously you can just sort of...*

‘Cause they’re, they’re original pictures around the park, and they’ll never be replaced will they?

*No of course not, well, we’re never going to see it looking like this again are we, because things do change.*

No, I mean I know they’re tiny, but they are just certain areas of the park.

*One of the things I like about computers, you can blow things up bigger! [laughs].*

Yeah!

*And that’s the only thing I like about them! [laughs].*

And um, as I say, that Loxford Park entrance, with the old house, I mean that, the one where the lake is in it, I mean that’s...’cause I remember in one of those um, we went to the meeting, there was an entrance of the um, Loxford end, but it probably isn’t an old a picture as, as perhaps that one is.

*I, I doubt it. No, so...*

So, by all means take them, there!

*Thank you very much!*

[laughs].

*I’ll er, I’ll stop the tape now anyway, so er [laughs]...*

Well....

**[Tape ends].**

**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee:**

**Project: Barking Park**

**Date:**

**Language: English**

**Venue:**

**Name of interviewer: Claire Days**

**Length of interview: 114:43**

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