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*Now I’m starting again…so, to begin with can you please tell me your full name*

It’s Rani Anne Heinson

*And can you spell it, for me?*

R-A-N-I, A double N-E, H-E-I-N-S-O-N

*Brilliant thank you, and can you tell me the year that you were born?*

Nineteen fifty two

*Excellent, thank you very much. Um, so, to start with, can you, tell me where you were born?*

I was born, um, in Highgate…and, um, my parents lived in Paddington…and, um, we stayed there a few years, as far as I know and then we moved to the Bethnal Green Mile End area, then when I was three my parents split up and so then I lived with my mother but, um, when I was five years old, um, I didn’t live with my mother any more, uh, because she wasn’t really capable of looking after me, so I went into a children’s home and I stayed in the home until I was seventeen and then I left and, sort of, made my way in the world

*Wow. Can you tell me a little bit about your parents?*

Uh, my father, um, was from Bangladesh my mother was from London, she was Jewish and he was Muslim…and, um…my father, I’ve learnt since but he was, um, a restaurant waiter when I was a baby, but um, a few years ago I did my ancestry, and I found that he’d had another family after, me, ‘cause I hadn’t seen him since the age of three so I didn’t know what happened to him. Anyway, so I found this, um, other family, and he, as well was living in Tooting, but the only reason that I found him, ‘cause actually he had died, so I found his death certificate and from his death certificate I found, this other family, as I say, so I’ve got four half siblings, all younger than me, and one of them, um, I’m quite close to now…and, uh, my mother, she died, um, about ten years ago at seventy five and, um, he, my father died when he was fifty seven, so fairly young, of a heart attack, um, I can’t remember the condition that my mother died of because I was somewhat, um, estranged from her by that time, because of what…the type of relationship I’d had with her over the years

*Did you have relationship with her?*

Uh, of sorts, but then, you know, when you’re a kid you always think that your mother is the greatest person on earth, but I soon realised that she wasn’t, so then it turned from love to hate…and then I never really liked her again after the age of about, seventeen, eighteen…I would say, we did have moments of togetherness, but I always used to call her by her first name which was Pamela, and once she said to me, why do you call me Pamela? Why don’t you call me mum?, so I said, well you’ve never really been a mother so I’m calling you Pamela

*How did she react to that?*

She just had to accept it because I wasn’t gonna call her mum, and, um, when we were estranged I…I think you have to go cold on somebody ‘cause otherwise you’re gonna be dragged into, um, all sorts of different emotions with that person, which I didn’t want, I wanted to get on with my life and I didn’t want to have to think about her, and she was under the care of Westminster Council, she actually live, um…in the West End, she had, uh, sheltered accommodation there and, um, my mother always landed on her feet so I wasn’t worried about her, you know, she was one of life’s, uh, what shall we say, takers, not a giver, she always landed on her feet and she had this, um, sheltered, uh, apartment, as I say, near Marble Arch and, um…Westminster Council rang me and said, you know, she’s living there and what do you want to do about it, I said I don’t want to do anything about it, I said she can stay living there and, um, I only want you to call me again when she’s dead

*So when*

And so, and so they did [laughs]…and I felt really strange when they did do that but, I thought, well this is the path that I’ve taken and, you know

*How much later was that?*

After

*So when you spoke to them and said, I don’t want you to call me again until she’s dead how, how, how long*

That was about

*Was it until she actually*

That was about four or five years I think…yeah, so…yeah, it sounds harsh but, you know, I’d had enough of her by then and, as I say emotionally you’ve just got to cut somebody out of your life and

*Did she, did she work?*

No she never worked…that’s what I say, in those days, they used to have long term mental institutions and you could basically walk up to the door and say, I’m not very well, I want to come and stay and they’d take you in, you didn’t have to go through several doctors like you do today if you’re lucky and be, sectioned…you just had to cause a bit of a commotion and in you went, so there was the famous hospital in Surrey called Cane Hill Hospital and my mother would often take herself off there, you know, in between doing whatever else she was doing and, uh, suddenly she’d be a resident there, you know, and we’re talking years, not months…so that was her life…but you could do that then, you couldn’t do it now

*And do you have early memories of her?*

Yeah I have early memories of her because, um, not very good ones, I won’t go into those memories because, uh, they’re not very good memories, but I can remember when I was in the children’s home and, I was in a small home of about seven kids, it was like a little family home and, um, I can remember…that was when I still loved my mother, you know, and if they said, oh your mum’s coming to visit you this week, you’d all sit on the wall waiting for that person’s parents to turn up, you know, and, um, when they did…you wanted all the other children to go away ‘cause it was your, your parent [laughs] but we all used to wait in anticipation and, uh, that’s how it carried on until I knew better…but she was always letting me down, she said that she’d come over and then she wouldn’t come and, so there was always that…so it was after years of being let down with her really and…you know…but, early memories, I can, the sort of memories I can remember, I’ll just give you one example, um, because we lived around the Mile End area, um, in various different places dependent on, you know, what boyfriend she had, etc, etc, um, there used to be a children’s home on the Commercial Road, um, near Mile End and, uh, when she couldn’t look after me, or when she didn’t want to look after me, she’d march me up to the doors…and just say, oh you, you have to take her I, I can’t look after her, I can remember that vividly…and then, one time she even, like left me there, knocked on the door and walked off and I was just like, stood there, you know, I can remember that

*Can you remember how that felt?*

I was just used to it…I think when you’re a kid you, you get used to things, you know

*Yeah. How old were you?*

I was under five…under five years old, when, when I was five years old, the council said that’s enough, we’re not having this anymore, she’s going into permanent care and that’s when I went into permanent care, went to the children’s home

*And where was the children’s home?*

The children’s home was, uh, in a place called Noak Hill which was near Romford…and that’s where I lived ‘til I was seventeen

*And what was life like there?*

Uh, it was ok, I had a good experience, you know, you hear about a lot of children in care homes that have bad experiences, I had, uh, a fairly good experience, we, had an aunty there, aunty Seymour her name was and, um…she, she was a very good house mother, quite protective of us and, um…there was six other children there, three of them were siblings, and, and the other, um, three were individuals, so we all stayed with each other for most of those years really, that I was there

*And are you still in contact with them?*

I’m not…no I lost contact with them…that’s um…so yeah, I had a good experience and

*And what was the house like?*

It was, um, like a big council house, and I can remember after so many years we had an extension built on, so it’s a very big house, but it was in a road full of residential houses, but they were all big houses…so, those, that, that was in the days when, you know, council housing you could get fairly easily and, um

*And was aunty Seymour the only adult there?*

She was, yeah, she, um…used to have a cook and a cleaner, that helped her, I don’t remember any of their names, but there were various people that came in and the shopping I remember was always delivered…in boxes and we used to help unpack it…and, um, it by the LCC which was London County Council, which came before the GLC which was the Greater London Council and you went out of care when you were eighteen, which I, um, it’s still the case now I think and, um, then you were on your own basically, but I decided at seventeen I’d had enough and I was going and she, I remember she didn’t want me to go and said, you know, what, why’re you going now?, so I said because I want to and I don’t want to live here anymore and, I went to get a bedsit in Ilford actually, near Valentine’s Park and, um, I had a room with a little one plate, um, hot plate and I had to share the bathroom and toilet in the house and it was three guineas a week

*Wow*

Yeah

*And why did you want to leave?*

I wanted to start my life I think…and I’d been working since I was fifteen by then…I went to work in a bank, the Midland Bank, which is now the HSBC and I wanted to be a cashier, I can remember and, um, in those days you had to wait until you were eighteen to be a cashier, so, being only fifteen, they put me in what was called the clearing house, uh, which was sorting out all the cheques and, um, I worked at Tower Hill, opposite the Tower, but, um, after a year of working there I decided, that I didn’t really want to stay another couple of years and wait to be a cashier, so I went to be a Girl Friday, which is what they were called then [laughs] somebody that does this that and the other in an office, you know, a bit of this and a bit of that, have you ever heard of a Girl Friday?

*I have, but I didn’t know, what it was*

Yeah, well a Girl Friday is somebody who makes the tea, can do the photocopying or do the typing, whatever, I never had to make the tea I have to say that, but I always remember, um, what made me laugh, um, I worked with a girl once called Corbinda, an Asian girl, this is much later when I was like a senior secretary and, um, she said, oh look at this job I here, Girl Friday, she said I’m gonna apply for that, only working on Fridays, so I said it doesn’t mean that Corbinda, Girl Friday [laughs]

*[Laughs] Why were they called Girl, Girl Friday?*

I think it’s because, um…was it something to do with, uh, Robinson Crusoe? I don’t know, you know…I don’t know why it was called Girl Friday, but it was

*Mmm. Yeah*

That’s what I was

*Maybe that is a, yeah, that does ring bells actually, Boy Friday*

Yeah, so, um, I think, um, it was something to do with that, but I’ve never actually looked it up to tell you the truth, but it’s not just working on a Friday, I can tell you that much. So this job, I was working for an insurance brokers, um, in Bevis marks, near Liverpool Street and, um…that was a really good job, I was Girl Friday, and in those days nothing was computerised, obviously, no computers it was all typewriters and blah blah and, uh, I used to have to sometimes type the insurance policies and they were on, a piece of proper, um, legal paper which had a five shilling stamp on it and you wasn’t allowed to make a mistake, typing, and I never did

*[Laughs] Phew*

So that, taught me to type, really, I’ve learnt to type at school but, then I was really typing, ‘cause I didn’t type at all when I was at the bank and, um…yeah, so, that was that

*And what were, what were the people that you were working with like?*

They were very nice, um, a mixed group of manly men I think, on the, um, clerical staff and all of the, um, secretaries, all the younger set, I used to have a couple of friends there and, um, we were all young and, um, we used to go for lunch every day, there used to be a place around the corner it was called, um, The Hot Potato and we normally used to go in there

*Where was that?*

That’s opposite Liverpool Street station on Bishopsgate and you could get a hot potato with a filling and a drink for about a shilling and we used to get luncheon vouchers then and, um, I think we used to get a shilling a day luncheon vouchers, so we only had to put, I had a like, couple of pence if we had something else, that’s what we normally had and, uh, nothing

*How old were you at that point?*

I was, um, I think I was about seventeen or eighteen? Yeah, ‘cause I’d been at the bank for a year and then I decided to leave and get this other job, the good thing about those days is that you were never without a job…you could walk out of a job on a Friday and into another one on the Monday…none of the interview process that you have now, you just filled out a form, had a typing test and away you go [laughs]

*Wow. And were you still in your flat in Valentine’s Park?*

Um

*Near Valentine’s Park?*

Some of the time, after that place, um, I met a girl and I can’t remember where I met her now, but anyway we decided to get a place together, and we did, we got, um, like a small little flat, we still had to share the bathroom facilities though I remember, and I think we shared the kitchen facilities as well, but we had like, um, a room, a big room, with two beds in it and that was still at Ilford, that was in Sunnyside Road…which is up, do you know Sunnyside Road? You know, it’s all changed up there now, basically if you were going up Ilford High Road, um, there used to be xxxx on the right hand side and it was sort of round the corner from there

*Ok*

Yeah

*And what was the building like?*

It was, again, a big house

*Split into flats?*

Uh, no, rooms like bedsits

*Rooms like bedsits, ok*

Yeah, not flats, like they do today

*So, so you had, so was everything all in one room, apart from a separate bathroom?*

The cooking facilities were separate as well…so we basically had our bedroom…and…the shared facilities were outside of the bedroom, but you, you had your own key so you could lock the door

*And how long did you stay, uh, in the, insurance place?*

Um, I think I was there for, um, a year or so again…each time I was moving on and moving up the scale a bit and then, um…where did I work then?...I went to work in a couple of different places…there was another insurance…oh that was it, I went to another insurance company down at the Minories this time, which was near Aldgate, or is in Aldgate and I remember I worked in a big room with several other typists and, um…I stayed, must have stayed there a little while because I got, got quite a few friends there, none of them that I kept in contact with I have to say…and, um…you know, we worked in a big room and as the work came in you had to take it out the box and do it and then put it back in the box and somebody would come in, take it out the box [laughs]

*So, what, what exactly were you doing?*

Typing

*So what was it that would come in the box?*

Uh, tapes

*Ok*

And it had a spool, you know…it had

*And what were you, what, what, what*

You had to thread it onto your cassette machine and then put your earphones in and then you type whatever they were saying

*And what were they saying? What were they*

Oh just typing letters and, to people and

*Ok, so they’d just record*

Yeah

*Things that they*

Yeah

*Wanted typing*

Yeah, yeah

*And who were they, these*

They were the insurance, um

*It was still in insurance*

Brokers and assessors and, you know, um…yeah and I think it was normally people that had made a claim on something and they’d tell them why they couldn’t have their claim or that they were gonna get their claim and I enclose a cheque for blah, blah, blah and, uh, yeah, it’s a whole different ball game to what it is today [laughs]

*Yeah, it’s fascinating. And were they all, um, girls, all the typists?*

Yeah and mainly all the people, um, that did the letters were men…that was in the days of bowler hats, I can remember when I first worked in the city, you had men walking about in pin striped, trousers, black jackets and bowler hats

*Wow*

Yeah and I can remember…the Tube, the Underground, and I remember there was smoking on the Underground, so sometimes it could get pretty smoky and there was normally one carriage where you couldn’t smoke and, um…that was quite different then

*Yeah really*

Yeah…so, uh, well

*Amazing. And where did you go after that? [laughs]*

Oh dear, where did I go after that?...I think I went to work for a supermarket business, they were called Keeley and Tonge, T-O-N-G-E and, um, by then…they were in Houndsditch so I didn’t move very far, I sort of stayed in the same vicinity all the time, the Liverpool Street area and they were at the bottom of Houndsditch and, um, again worked in a large room, but this time we had a supervisor and she…we used to call her the witch and, uh, nobody liked her and she was quite strict, you know, if you were five minutes back late from lunch she was down on you like a ton of bricks and, um, I can remember one Christmas all the girls went out for, you know, it was Christmas Eve and, um, we were all drinking in the pub in Houndsditch and we all, jointly, said we weren’t gonna go back on time and we didn’t and we were all like half an hour late and she went mental and, um, ‘cause we’d all had a drink we didn’t care did we? [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

You’re half an hour late! Eh huh huh huh! You know

*[Laughs]*

And, um, I should sack you all! Anyway, she didn’t ‘cause she’d had lost her whole, her typing pool [laughs]

*But you were working on Christmas Eve!*

Yeah! Yeah, worked on Christmas Eve, yeah, everybody used to work on Christmas Eve then, it, you used to generally go home early, but you would work on Christmas Eve

*Did you go home early on that day? [laughs]*

I can’t remember, I can’t remember whether she made us stay half an hour later or what, um, but I remember she was really annoyed with us, but we knew that she would be, so we were five minutes late anyway, so we though oh sod it, we’ll be half an hour late [laughs]

*[Laughs] And what was it like, what was the kind of atmosphere around Liverpool Street at that time, what, how did it feel to be young?*

Oh it was great, it was in the days of the mods and the rockers and we used to go down to, um, Petticoat Lane and, two of the girls that I worked with were mods, I wasn’t really anything, you know, but I sort of went into the mods side of it a bit, but I wasn’t a real mod, um, but I remember buying, um…a dress…and I had it made for me, which a lot of them did, there used to be, um, a lot of little Jewish tailors and you could have things made, uh, people were very smart then, you know, much smarter than they are today and, I remember, there was a Jewish, um, shoe shop called Levitt’s, that was our favourite shoe shop, but you’d probably pay about three pounds for a good tailored dress, I think we were earning about ten pound a week, so that give you some sort of, um, idea of what we were paying and then, you know, if you went out for the evening you general went out with about three pound in your pocket and come home with change [laughs]

*Wow*

So, yeah

*Different times*

Yeah and, um

*And what did you do on your nights out?*

Oh we went to all different places, uh, we used to generally go in the pub and if there was a club, we’d go in a club afterwards, but I can remember, um, I met, um…one of my friends that I used to go out clubbing with, by this time I think I was going to the West End, Soho and, uh, our favourite club there was in Greek Street and it was called The Experience and it was an experience and we used to roll out of there at about five o’clock in the morning when it closed and wait for the first train home and, uh, then get on the train

*And what was the experience?*

And we never, we never paid our fare, our proper fare, we, it was not like it was no, automated, you could just go there with like thruppence or sixpence and give it to the ticket collector and they used to accept it, you know, so we just got on two stops ago, you know, um, yeah, The Experience was, um…yeah, it was a great place, good music and, uh, loud

*What kind of music?*

Uh, rock music mainly, yeah

*So you were hanging out with mods, but listening to rock music?*

Uh, this was, uh, moving on a bit further…down the road, it wasn’t during that period, I can’t remember what I did when I was, I think I was going out but I wasn’t going there, I think we discovered that place a little bit later and I think by then I’d changed jobs again, so [laughs] um, and then, I got a part-time job in the evening in, a place just past Ilford, in a club, it was called The Lacy Lady and, um, I liked it so much that I gave up my day job and just worked in the evenings in The Lacy Lady ‘cause with my two hips I was making as there as I was in the day

*Wow*

Yeah and, uh, so I worked there for about two years

*And you were, uh, waitressing?*

I was waitressing, yeah, only drinks though not food

*Behind a bar, bar, barmaid*

Yeah, bar waitressing it was to do with [banging] it was to do with the licence, they had

*I just dropped the*

Is it working?

*Yeah, no, it’s totally fine*

They had to have, um, waitresses serving the drinks ‘cause it was something to do with the licence that they had, they, y’, you couldn’t just serve drinks from the bar

*So you had to take them to the tables?*

Exactly

*And what was The Lacy Ladies like?*

The Lacy Lady

*Sorry, Lady*

Uh, it was on top, top of, um, another concern, um, I don’t know if you’ve heard of The Circus Tavern? Um, which is somewhere up the A13, but they used to have acts downstairs, you know, people that came in and did shows and everything and, um, so that was like the more theatrical part of it downstairs but upstairs was the disco and that was the bit that I worked in, so it was a disco and we had a DJ and dancing and drinking and, you know, all the rest of it I met lots of people there and I actually met my first husband there and, um, I got married when I was twenty one to him, but then I gave up that job, and went back to working in an office when I got married, and we got three bedroom council flat in Barking, I remember, and lived there and, um

*What, and why did you do that, why did you give up your job?*

He didn’t want me to do it anymore and I was fed up of it by then so, I think I left there on the Friday, again, after not being in an office for two years, just walked into an agency and got a temp job straight away, you know, but this time I got into the legal world and, um, I worked as a temp for about three years with the agency and I always had work, never unemployed and, um, I wound up, um, working for the job that I stayed at for over thirty years and, um, that’s the job that I re’, retired from a few years ago so

*And what was that?*

It was a big legal firm in the City, corporate lawyers and I ended working for the senior partner and, uh, so I xxxx became a legal PA basically…and, um

*And what did that entail?*

Well that entailed working for the senior partner who was the face of the firm. It was, um, a firm of about twelve hundred people, we had offices worldwide and, um, Janet my boss, she was one of the country’s top employment lawyers and I’d worked for her in the employment department before she was made senior partner and I had to work for a few other people as well, ‘cause you never just worked for one person, but she was my main boss and, um, so I learnt a lot there, I’d worked in all different departments while I was there actually, but that was one of my most enjoyable departments. And then I worked for her, when she was senior partner for five years and, um, I had to speak to different lawyers all over the world, different clients, deal with, things, as you would in a job like that and, um, basically do her typing, I typed a book that she wrote and, um…yeah and then she retired and then I went to work in the corporate banking department, for getting on for a year, for a lawyer, a partner, that was coming back from Germany and I hated it, absolutely hated it, I like jobs that I understand…obviously enjoy and I like jobs where I like the person that I’m working for. He was ok but he was…a little bit strange, he was one of these people that would never look you in the eye when he spoke to you, you know, he was always sort of looking up there around there and, I, once I said to him Steven I’m here, you know, speak to the face [laughs] and he oh! Oh ho! You know, I think got all flustered and everything [laughs] but I, I’m quite a forthright person and I though well, you know, m’, start as you mean to go on, if he can’t talk to me well then, yeah, but he wasn’t a nasty person, he was a nice person, he was just socially a little bit lacking, you know

*[Laughs]*

And, um, but he was good at his job and, um, so then I decided I couldn’t stand corporate law anymore so I said, Steven, it’s nothing to do with you because I think you’re a nice person, but I just can’t stand the work so I’m gonna look for another job and, um, he said fine, I’m sorry you’re going, blah, blah, blah and, um, then a job came up in, um, intellectual property…I don’t know if you know what that is, but anyway

*Well tell me anyway, for the purpose for the tape*

Well intellectual property is branding and trademarks and we had some of the biggest clients, um, working in that department, I went to work for a chap there and a few others and, um, it was a great job ‘cause it was sort of litigation based again which I like because it’s like a story, you have a beginning, a middle and an end, you know, and you can understand the story and it was quite interesting, intellectual property sounds really boring, but it’s not and, uh, so I enjoyed that and I was doing full, diary appointments and everything, organising, um, meetings, travel, same as I had always done, organising, um, events within our department, you know, for them to meet, uh, clients and things like that, as well as having to be fairly on, you know, on the ball to type up, uh, things that you, needed to go to court or something on the day and, um, but that was something I was quite used to, you know, turning something round really quickly and, um…so that was all interesting and that was the department, uh, I ended my working life really and, uh

*And what, what was the person you were working for in intellectual property like?*

He was very nice, he was a bit, people in intellectual property they’re a different type of client, they’re what I call, a bit robotic and, but, nice people but a bit, they, they’re normally from a sort of, um, science background because that’s their interest and intellectual property and branding can be to do with products, uh, like that, so he, his main specialism was media so we had a lot of media, uh, intellectual property, um, one of our clients, um, was Virgin Media, they were one of our biggest clients and, um…you had to always be, not just them, but all the clients, you had to be there for them and…um…there was no question of saying no, it was always yes…and, uh, he was really nice, Will, his name was, but he, um…he was very stressed out and I think from my time for working with Janet, he was a very high powered lawyer, I’d learnt from her about work life balance and I taught him about it, I taught him, ‘cause he was gonna go on holiday, when I first started working for him, he said his wife was getting pissed off because, you know, he kept answering the phone to all the clients, so I said well don’t do it, well you’re on holiday, don’t do it…you go on holiday d’, don’t then take your phone with you, or take your phone with you but leave it in the apartment or whatever and then just, you know, let somebody else deal with it and I think it was really difficult for him to do that, but then he called me in one day and said that he, he had listened to me and he was feeling a lot better about things and, you know, so I did teach one lawyer about work life balance [laughs]

*And Janet taught you about it*

She taught me, yeah

*So what was she like?*

She was, uh, really good, she compar’, compartmentalised everything, you know, and um, when I worked for Janet, although they don’t so this now ‘cause they’re corporate lawyers, but she had lots of high powered individual clients, people that were quite famous and, uh, if they got the boot from their job or whatever, we’d have to deal with the fall out, so that’s what we, I was doing for her, so that was a really interesting job and, um, you know, I’d get some well-known person on the phone like crying down the phone, yeah, and I’d have to…deal with them…and Janet would have to deal with them ultimately but I’d be the first port of call

*And were you good at that?*

Yeah I was very good at that…and, um, although once, and I never, and I never say this now, we had this um…quite high ranking, oh she’s been in the paper quite a few times, uh, director of a bank and she, got the boot from a couple of banks actually, and I, Janet and I started to think it wasn’t the banks, it was definitely her and, uh, she always had something to say about the next employer and, um, she rang up, it was one of those moments where I was just about, to leave, the office, it was a Friday night and I think it was about twenty to six and I normally finished a five thirty, Janet had already gone for the day, can’t remember where she’d gone but she wunt [wasn’t] there and, uh, the phone rang and I’m like, had my coat on, I though oh should I answer it, anyway it was her and she was screaming and shouting down the phone and I said, now just calm down, calm down?!, that was like, you know, let off [laughs] a nuclear bomb, well she went on one, told me to fuck off and, you know and, uh, I didn’t, anyway I rang Janet and I told her what she said, well Janet was straight on the phone to her, she said don’t’ you dare talk to my secretary like that and, um, how dare you and, uh, she gave her a rocket and, uh [laughs] anyway on the Monday morning I had this bottle of perfume sent to me with a big apology and she, uh, rang me as well and said I’m really sorry, she said, I lost it, she said, it was nothing personal, so I said that’s ok but that’s the sort of thing we had to deal with, you know, and uh, but it was interesting, it made life more interesting and so I learnt never to say calm down after that because that’s like a catalyst isn’t it [laughs] so yeah, so they were really good years, as I say there was only one time, or two times actually, funny enough they were both in the banking, uh, departments I worked for, um, some American lawyers and they come in as a sort of joint venture into the firm and nobody wanted to work for them, but I was sort of in between working for somebody and, uh, they said would you do it, so I said ok I’ll give it a go and, um…I had this boss, Tim his name was and he used to talk like that [deepens voice and lengthens words]

*[Laughs]*

And I though oh get on with it, for god’s sake man, you know [laughs] he had this very slight American drawl and, um, he was the best at what he did apparently, Tim Peterson his name was, don’t bother looking him up, but anyway, Tim Peterson, and I remember he had this brat of a child that would only eat this ce’, uh, cereal that you could get in America and it used to be, have to send, be sent over by courier, this kid’s cereal…and I went into him and I said Tim, really this is out of order, teach the kid to eat, you know, I said we have Coco Pops here you know and, uh, he said yeah but they’re not the, **[in drawn out American accent] they’re not the same**, he said **believe me it’s worth paying the money**

*[Laughs]*

You know [laughs] so I didn’t, uh, stay at that job for very long‘cause I, uh, couldn’t understand what was going on basically, this is really in, sort of, back office of, uh, finance and I didn’t know about finance, I’ll put my hands up to it my, favourite was litigation and, uh

*Because it was like a story*

Yeah and I could understand it and I enjoyed it and I think, you know, if you’re working you’ve got to enjoy the job haven’t you?

*Absolutely*

Yeah

*Yeah*

So, that was that, I never stayed if I didn’t like something, or someone, there wasn’t many occasions where I didn’t like someone because being a forthright person I would just say so, you know, put a sock in it and, uh, don’t talk to me like that and, uh, I did, um, I, that was funny ‘cause when I worked in intellectual property one of the guys there, he was a partner, and he is what you call a little Hitler, you know, he was very small but he had a big…loud mouth and, um, everybody used to jump, I think he liked that people were jumping, you know and, um, when I was working for my other bosses and more and more we were working for more people because the computers come in by then so people were doing a lot of their own, um, diar’, diarising and, everything and uh, less typing to do, more of an organising job towards the end and, um…they said would you work for him ‘cause his secretary’s leaving, we’re not replacing, you know, the people that she worked for…I think we were all called in actually, all the secretaries and they sort of looked round and said, well look, you can all have a go at working for him and I was first to go wasn’t I to have to work for him, they said if you didn’t like it, you know, you don’t have to stay, so I said ok, I’ll give it a go, so then he says to me, **[puts on squawky voice] oh Anne can you**, he had a voice like a little shrew **oh Anne can you come round to my office, I’d like to speak to you** and um

*[Laughs]*

I said ok and, uh, he said now **this is what I’d like you to do, when you come into the office in the morning, I’d like you to come in and say good morning to me so that I know you’re here** he said and then **when you go in the evening I’d like you to come in and say goodbye**...so I said, I’m not gonna do that…why not?, so I said well I work for six other people, if I go in and say good morning and good night to all the people that I work for, I said, I’ll never get to my desk, so I’m not gonna do it and, uh, I can assure you that I’m always at my desk at nine thirty and I don’t leave my desk until five thrity and he said, oh alright then [laughs] that’s all they need these people, is telling, you know, otherwise they try it on

*[Laughs] And so did that always work for you?*

Yeah

*Brilliant*

Yeah and, uh, that’s the way to go girl, if ever you’re faced with that

*[Laughs] I shall remember that good advice*

Yeah because they’re just bullies

*So apart from him, was he the only bully that you came across?*

Um, no, he wasn’t the only bully but the other one, um…I didn’t really work for, but I had to do some work for him because, um, we had a big client in the Middle East and we all went to work out in the Middle East and I had to work for, this guy there, um, amongst other people and he was a bully, but he was, like, highly thought of and…but I never really liked him. I can remember we went into a restaurant one night in Abu Dhabi and, um, it was called the fish restaurant and, what you had to do, these fish were swimming round in the tank and you had to pick which fish you wanted and then you had to tell them how you wanted it cooked and what you wanted on it and everything, then the, um, waitress would come round and ask you about accompaniments and he was sitting there, I was working with this girl called Sharon and, um…we were listening to him when the waitress got to him and, this is what he was like, he could be really funny actually and, um, he looked like Mr Bean, so this will give you a bit of a scenario and, um, he said to her, **[puts on high reedy voice]** **now listen to me carefully**, this is him speaking to the waitress, **I want plain boiled rice and I don’t want anything on it** and he said **have you got that?** And she said yes. Well we were all, starting to laugh anyway his rice came up and it wasn’t plain boiled rice he said **what’s that?** [laughs] she said oh that’s what you ordered, he said **no, no I didn’t order that!, I ordered plain boiled rice with nothing on it** he said **that’s got stuff all over it and I don’t want it, take it away! Take it away!** [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

Well he’s waving his arms and anyway the poor, um, ‘cause she had serve, um, serve about, uh, fifteen or sixteen people ‘cause the whole office was there and she went to pick it up and he said **oh leave it there then, leave it! Leave it!** [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

And so she left it and then he ate it and I though why make all that fuss, you know, it’s only a bit of rice, oh!

*[Laughs]*

But that’s what he was like…and, uh…Sharon and I were killing ourselves laughing, but I mean, to the point where I thought I was gonna be sick ‘cause I was laughing so much [laughs]

*[Laughs] Did he know that you were laughing at him?*

I don’t know, but everybody was laughing they were…you know, listening to him and, uh, ‘cause he was the boss, but he was a bully

*Was he a bully to you?*

No, nobody was a bully to me

*That is what I like, that’s good [laughs]*

Yeah, even the, the class bully at school, uh, no not school, one of the departments that I worked at, uh, when I first started working for Janet…um…there were all these secretaries in the department and some of them I didn’t know and some of them I did and, um, there was one there, that came over that was very nice and, she sat round the corner from me with another girl and, um…suddenly I heard…that she didn’t like this other girl…but I didn’t hear anything beyond that…so then, a little while later…where I was sitting ‘cause we had, um, desks facing each other with a little partition, so it was like a square desk there and a square desk there, but I had these two square desks, because I worked for head of department and she had, like, lots of files and everything, they were already piled up on the other side of the desk, all the files and, um…I’d heard, that this Ros woman was a bit of a bully…but she wasn’t a bully to me, anyway one day she came up to me and she said Anne she said, um, I’m gonna come and sit on this desk…the other side of my desk…so I said, are you? why’s that then? she said because I don’t wanna sit round there anymore I, I can’t bear it, so I said well I’m afraid you’ll have to find another desk I said because, I like my desk being free and because of the type of work I did and the amount of work that I had, I didn’t really want any interferences, and I said I’m sorry but you’re gonna have to find another desk ‘cause I don’t want you sitting there and she went oh…she’d never heard the like of it before I suppose, but I thought no, I’m gonna put my foot down and I’m gonna tell her straight out that I don’t want her sitting there, or anybody else come to that and, uh, she did, she found herself another desk and then a little while later I’d heard that, um, all of this had been going through the personnel department, which is now known as Human Resources, and, um, the poor girl was made to leave because of her bullying, you know, she wasn’t made to leave, but she couldn’t stand to be in the job anymore ‘cause it made her ill

*Ooooo*

Yeah and I didn’t know anything about it until after the fact and she still carried on behaving like that…um…the whole time I was there, she had this like this little clique around her

*Yeah*

And, um, I could have been part of the clique but I chose not to be ‘cause I’m not that type of person and, uh, you know, I like everybody and if I don’t, well, you can’t like everybody can you? But it’s a working environment and you can’t behave like that

*Mmm*

And, uh, she got away with it

*Um, so I’ve got, I’m gonna go back a little bit, I want to ask you about, I want to ask you about growing up. So you were growing up and your mother was Jewish and your father was Muslim*

Mmm

*And neither of them were around a lot*

No, no

*After you were five, so did you grow up with a kind of sense of that as part of your identity, that kind of, Muslim Jewish*

No, uh, religion didn’t come into it at all actually because I didn’t see my father after the age of three and, um…because I’m quite light skinned and everything, nobody ever identified me as being anything but white…and so I never felt anything…but white I suppose you’d say…um, and it was in the days when it was quite unusual to have, uh, mixed…children, there wasn’t that many around and, um, but I, I supposed I got away with it because I was quite pale, you know, whereas some of the children that ca’, subsequently came to the home, you could tell…were mixed race. In those days they didn’t call them mixed race, they called them half caste, but I never got labelled and still, I mean people sometimes used to say to me oh are you half Italian or are you half French or half Spanish, but they’d never say Asian…and I’d say no, no [laughs]

*So it’s never really been part, something you’ve*

No, no because, um, if you go back to the war time, I mean lots of Jewish people were living around the East End, a hell of a lot, the same amount as the Bangladeshis now I suppose and, um, they were all varying forms of Jewish-ness and my mother and her family didn’t practice…so, we weren’t practicing Jews but, but in the Jewish religion if your mother’s Jewish, then that makes you Jewish, so…I s’pose I’m Jewish, but I’m not practicing…but then, you know, my father’s Muslim and…he never practiced either, so

*And are you religious at all?*

No I’m, I don’t believe in religion…if somebody wants to be religious, you know, they can do that, but don’t push it in my face, that’s the way I feel…and, uh, no I’m not religious at all

*Cool. Thank you. And then I also wanted to ask about, what, um, a bit more about your father actually, just like, did you have a sense of him while you were growing up?*

No, no I always remembered his face, but I didn’t have a picture of him at all and I only got a picture of him a little while ago, when I met up with my, other family…and, uh, so I’ve got a picture of him now and I’m the only one, out of all the children that looks just like him and they don’t [laughs]

*And, and who, and you said you’ve got three or four?*

Four, four half

*Four*

Siblings

*And can you tell me a little bit about them?*

Um, I can tell you about one of them because, uh, the others I don’t really have a lot to do with…um, but one of them, Shazna, she’s the youngest girl…and she…uh, has got her own business, she’s got a printing business in Tooting and uh, she’s just married again actually, she was married before, but divorced from the father, so she’s got two children by him, but now she’s got a much younger husband and, um, so she’s been married about a year to this new guy who…is ok, but he’s quite religious, so me and him are clashing a bit because

*Muslim?*

Yeah, because, she’s Muslim as well and, um, she does believe in the, you know, everything…she knows that I don’t and, um, she hasn’t tried to convert me or anything, but she tried to say different things to me, I mean, I’ve got gay friends and she said she’s put them on the same level as, not very nice people, I said, don’t talk about what you don’t know…I said, because they’re just like me and you, she said oh well we’ve, there’s a really nice one that comes in the shop and makes me laugh, so I said well what makes him nice then? what makes him nice, he’s still gay, she said oh he’s just really funny, so I said well yeah, he’s just a normal person, I said he’s not gonna, do anything to you that you don’t want him to do, the same as a normal person, you know, a non-gay person, so I do try to make her understand and I think she has to a certain extent, but then now he’s turned it all back a bit and, uh, we were gonna go on holiday together, but she mustn’t go out of the country now in case something happens to her and he’s not there…as a man…her next of kin man to help her, so I wasn’t very happy about that and I was gonna call him and give him a mouthful and she said don’t, don’t do that ‘cause you’ll just make matters worse and blah, blah, blah, so I said well how can I make matters worse I said because you’re changing before my very eyes and I said I don’t like it…I said, obviously things change when you get married I know that, but for him to bring all this Islamic rules and regulations, which I don’t like agree with, into our relationship…anyway, but that’s another story [laughs] so it’s really me and her that are the closest and, um, we got a good, uh, relationship…and, um, actually, I sent her, um, a copy of an article that I saw ‘cause we’d been tlking about this very subject yesterday, ‘cause we were gonna go on holiday, Spain or something together, for about three or four days, now he says she can’t ‘cause it’s un-Islamic and, uh, I don’t know if you saw this article, it was about a father in Dubai? and his daughter was in the sea, she got into difficulties and, uh, the two lifeguards said we’re gonna go in and save her and the father wouldn’t let them, he said I’d rather she, that she died because I don’t want you to touch her…and so she did, she died…and this, this is what this is all about

*What do you mean this is what this is all about?*

What Shazna’s told me now, that she can’t go abroad in case something happens to her and she can’t have another man touching her…so I said, well it won’t be another man will it, it’ll be me, but I’m not allowed because I’m a woman

*So that makes you cross*

That makes me very cross and it makes me believe that my non-religious belivings…are even more true and even more relevant

*Hmm…yeah, it’s difficult isn’t it?*

It is a difficult one

*Yeah*

So she’s not replied to my, um, to my text that I sent her, uh, with this article with it I, and I didn’t say to her, I didn’t, like, slang him off or anything, I just said I’d like to know your thoughts on this one…and, uh, she’s not replied to me yet [laughs]…yeah I think she wanted, um, because she wants to take the children away as well, including two of my nieces, uh, to Disneyland Paris, but she couldn’t go because, um, she didn’t have a man with her, a member of the family, it’s got to be a brother, um, or…a male member of the family to go with them…can’t be a woman

*Mmm…and the others, are they si’, sisters or brothers?*

Um, two brothers and a sister, um…one of them’s got five ch’, well the, um, the other girl’s got five children and, uh, she…has a husband that is very strict, so I don’t really have a lot to do with them…he never goes to functions or anything like that…oh I’ve been to one Muslim wedding with her as well and, uh, which I wasn’t very enamoured with…because, I don’t know if you’ve ever been to a Muslim wedding but all, the women are on one side and all the men are on the other and the men if they’re related to the women, they can come into the women’s side but the women can’t go into the men’s side and there’s no drinking or dancing, so I didn’t have much fun and I said to Shazna that I wouldn’t be going to another one [laughs] I could, I didn’t have to have the drink but I would like to have had a dance

*[Laughs]*

Two, two of the things would have been nice, you know, it’s a wedding after all [laughs] uh, but anyway, um, I didn’t really enjoy myself because, uh…they’re not very intimate affairs, they have like a cast of thousands, you know, in a Muslim wedding, it’s all about, to me it’s all hypocrisy, it’s all about…showing them how much money you’ve got…why are we talking about this? we should be talking about the M11 link road [laughs]

*[Laughs] Yeah, yeah we have talked more about the rest of your life, but it’s just so interesting [laughs] So my next question was, was about your first husband and then we’ll get onto your second husband and that will lead smoothly into the M11 link [laughs]*

Do we have to talk about my first husband?

*No we don’t at all*

Let’s cut him out completely, it was a, a good marriage but, I fell out of love, let’s just put it that way, I think I got married too young

*You were twenty one*

I was twenty one and I was still enjoying myself really, so, we split up when I was, um, twenty seven…and then, um…I bought a flat…Ilford…bought two flats in Ilford, one after the other and, when I was just on the verge of buying the second one when I was thirty three, I met Derek, my husband now, so…we’ve been together nearly thirty years and, uh, we just got married this year after being together for nearly thirty years and, uh, the reason we got married, apart from the fact we love each other is that, um…inheritance laws, ‘cause this house is…now worth quite a bit of money, we don’t see it as, you know…something financial, this is our home…um, but if we both die, it was gonna be clobbered with like loads of tax so if we wanted to leave it to somebody they were gonna, the government was gonna take forty percent of it in tax, so we didn’t want that to happen, so he said the way round that was to get married…and that’s one fo the reasons we got married, if we could have had a civil ceremony I would’ve done, but we couldn’t ‘cause we’re not gay [laughs] so…that was the main, one of the main reasons and plus my private pension…um…Derek is on, was always on it as my next of kin, but again because we’re not married it’s not guaranteed, but now that we’re married it’s guaranteed that he’ll get some of my pension if, uh, if I went first, so…it’s, uh, that was the main reason for doing, one of the main reasons…he said you shouldn’t say that, you know, we love each other, I said yeah, I know but that was one of the main reasons we did it and, you know, I find that lots of people in our position, that’s the reason why they get married late, or get married at all because of the property…and, um, yeah, but the living in the other house, it enabled us to buy this house, in a way, because we were only paying what I call peppercorn rent at the other place ‘cause it was under, um, under the death sentence wasn’t it so [laughs]

*Ok, so let’s go back to you buying your second house in Ilford, your second flat in Ilford, how did you meet Derek, you met Derek around that time?*

Yeah I met Derek, um, in a club at Forest Gate, um…and…it was the end of the night and he was with quite a few guys and I was with my girlfriends and our two groups collided and he was going to a barbecue the next night and asked me if I wanted to go to a barbecue…so I said yeah alright then and, uh, that’s how we met and we’ve been together ever since and, uh, he was living in a flat in Plaistow, in the same road as where his parents lived and where he’s been brought up, he was born and brought up in Plaistow and, um…he still had the studio at Stratford than, you know, the big Victorian school, um, but then a little while after that, um, he lost it so he was without a studio for a matter of weeks, and he applied to Acme, um, for one of these properties, you know, that were under the death threat and, um, to our amazement he got one, he got a while house in Colville Road at, part, on of the roads was to access his studio and, which it did, so that was a three bedroomed Victorian house which backed onto the Central Line, at the bottom of the garden was the Central Line and, uh, we could be sitting in the garden some days and the train would stop, you know [laughs] at the bottom of our garden, so that’s quite interesting, but you, you got used to the trains, you know, and as I say, it was a great house and we had great, uh, neighbours and, uh…I, I think he was s’posed to have that house for about two years but it ended up having it for six years ‘cause it kept going to the European court, you know, the protesters, um, they were taking legislation into the European court and it kept getting delayed, the start of the M11 link road, which was great for us, you know, as well

*Can you remember what year you moved in?*

Um, I think, uh, we met in eighty six, and I think I must have moved in, in about…eighty nine, ninety, something like that

*And he, wasn’t living there before that was he?*

Yeah

*So when did he move in?*

He moved in, in, uh, shortly after we met

*So eighty six, eighty seven*

Yeah

*When you moved in*

Yeah

*Around eighty nine, ninety*

Yeah, um

*Can you describe the house for me?*

Uh, the house was a Victorian house and the interior, uh, still had the nineteen seventies brown and orange wallpaper and curtains to match, I remember that

*And it was*

It was on Colville Road

*Still Colville Road, I might not have that, I’ve got a few maps here but maybe that one doesn’t go far enough down, I don’t know [rustling of paper]…yeah I think that’s probably the*

Well it was probably about here anyway

*Ok*

‘Cause just here is a turning, ok? So that side of the road is all still up that, those houses, it’s just this side that came down

*Mmm*

Yeah because of the road now runs along where the gardens used, um, used to be was it, have I got that right? The…oh the railway still runs along there…yeah we were losing the whole house…yeah ‘cause, that’s it, the M11 link road runs next to it and then there’s the railway station, so it’s the whole stretch

*Mmm hmm*

Of the house and the garden that was taken for the M11 link road

*And does, and, can Claremont Road, where did Claremont Road used to go? Do you know that? Did that, was that like along here? Is that*

Claremont Road was up here, it was sort of at the back

*It was at the back*

Yeah

*Ok*

It’s where the tree huggers were

*Ok, so let’s go back to, to the house, sorry I was asking you*

Yeah that’s ok

*About what your house was like and then*

Right, so it was a three bedroom house and, um, didn’t have any central heating and, um, single glazed windows, seventies wallpaper and seventies curtains that were still from the previous owner and, um, it had a small front garden and, um, normal, sort of normal, you know thirty five, forty foot garden and, um, it had, um, a living room, a dining room with a small kitchen attached to the back of it…and it just had this gas fire in the living room, a gas fire in the dining room, no central heating, um, we used to have this portable heater and, uh, I remember Derek wheeling it around upstairs, you know, if there was a, if it was winter…um…he’d go turn it on so it was nice and warm in the bathroom and I used to like, leap out of bed and run into the bathroom and [laughs] the fires used to go on when it was winter downstairs to warm the, sort of, kitchen and, um, dining room

*What like log burning fires or*

No gas fire

*Gas fire*

Yeah, gas fires and, uh, no couldn’t be bothered with, uh, burning [laughs] coal fires, it did have a cellar I think but we never went down the cellar, well I never went down the cellar, I’m sure it had a cellar…I never went down there and, um, separate bathroom and toilet, all in, apart from the toilet were in one, but they was separate, um, to everything else, yeah, and then one, the biggest sort of, uh, room at the front, upstairs bedroom was, uh Derek’s studio that he used as a studio, so we had the smell of paint in the air and, um, yeah good old days and, uh, I don’t know if you know Leyton station at all do you? In those days, it, it, at peak times it used to have two entrances, one at the back and one at the front, uh, the one at the back went years ago and, uh, but I always used to use the one at the back, which was at the bottom of my road, so I could literally fall out of bed, get ready, you know, get washed and dressed and I don’t think I used to eat any breakfast in those days, I just used to buy something on the way to work and eat it in work and, um, I could go, fall out of bed at quarter past eight and I, I could be at work, you know, well in time for half past nine

*[Laughs]*

And on a good day, I could get to, you know, on a good day I could get to Liverpool Street in ten minutes, so it, ‘cause it’s only one stop from Stratford

*It’s on the Central Line isn’t it*

And, um, if the main line train was coming into, pulling into Stratford to go to Liverpool Street sometimes I used to jump off the Tube and jump on that and that only used to take five minutes, so that was quite good and, um, yeah, I remember, uh, you know when we had the…the hurricane thing in eighty seven?

*Mmm hmm*

Um, we used to have these oak, big oak trees in Colville Road that had been there for hundreds of years and about three or four of them blew over in that wind

*Wow*

And the whole road was blocked off, the fire brigade had to come and chop them up and, um, I remember Derek getting up, ‘cause I was staying with him, um, overnight and I remember the, um, Derek getting up for work and suddenly he appeared at the bedroom door again saying, there’s a tree on top of your car! And, uh, it looked worse than it was, ‘cause it was actually only the branches and, uh, I remember only the windscreen wiper got broke, but the car was fine and it was sort of underneath all the, the branches and the leaves and everything and, um, ‘cause a lot of people used it for parking, that road, but nobody could get in that morning ‘cause it, it was blocked off, so that was quite funny, but um, yeah

*So the point at which, oh uh, how much were you paying for your house on Colville Road?*

Um, I think it was about ninety pound a month

*Yeah, wow, um, and, so when you moved in, were there, was that, was, was the area mainly, either still local residents or at, or xxxx, artists*

It was, I would say it was probably

*Squatters and activists?*

About half and half or maybe a bit less than that with the artists being the lesser, um, but I know in Claremont Road, which was round the back of Grove Green Road, um, there, a lot of the houses there were, um, what do you, what’s that word when people move in illegally?

*Squatting*

Squatting, there were, and the, that’s where all the tree huggers were, as we used to call them, but we, we liked them all because they was delaying the road, which we didn’t want, ‘cause once we’d actually moved into the house and got to know people, um, it was a nice place to be, you know, we were hoping the road didn’t go through, or we were hoping that they’d build the road underground

*Mmm*

Like a tunnel, which they could’ve done, ‘cause the amount that they spent on that road, you know, just for the couple of miles stretch that it actually is now, they could’ve done it all underground, they had to do it at Wanstead because of the trees on Wanstead Green, don’t know if you know about that?

*Yep*

There’d been some old oaks there, one of them actually has come down, been there for hundreds of years, but that was one, one of the reasons that they went underground, just at Wanstead, because of the trees…um, but we couldn’t have that excuse because, uh, it were just people’s homes and their back gardens, so, um, and also, it went through because the Labour Par’, uh, because Conservatives got in that year, if the Labour Party would’ve got in it wouldn’t have gone through, um…the M11 link road was part of, um, a group of different roads that were gonna be built and one was gonna be built…in the west of London, but the Tories didn’t want that, this is what we said at the time, and they stopped that one from going through, but they went ahead with ours, ‘cause it was in the East End

*So why do you think that they, so, I mean seriously, I, I mean you’re saying that it’s the tree, that it was just the trees, do you think that’s the real reason that, that they went under Wanstead and*

Oh definitely, that was the reason

*But*

Originally it was gonna go

*What about people’s houses?*

Originally it was gonna go through it, there were no houses there, that’s what I’m telling you

*No but I mean, where it did, I mean in Leyton and Leytonstone*

Oh they would have had to come down, they would have had to come down

*But why were the houses valued less than the trees [laughs] that’s my question*

Because the trees were old and they were like listed trees, or something on Wanstead, you know like Seven Oaks? the oaks in Seven Oaks that there’s, that no longer seven oaks ‘cause one of those got blown down, or two of them got blown down, they were like listed trees and they won’t destroy them and that was the reason, that was the reason

*Um, ok, but there, so then there was lots of resistance around*

Lots of resistance

*Where you were*

Yeah

*And how*

There was, um, lots of resistance through the European court, ‘cause it went all the way there and, um, I remember there used to be this Portuguese lawyer, that kept saying no, he can’t have it, he was one of the main people that said yes or no

*You can’t have the road?*

Yeah, to the government, and he kept, putting it off and putting it off when it went to the European court and, eventually, they won, you know, ‘cause there was more money being spent, by the people that wanted it, i.e. the government and, um, we didn’t have that money to fight our case

*And so was that already under way, was that*

Yeah

*Resistance already happening when you moved in?*

All of these roads were planned before World War Two, apparently, this is what I heard, and they’d been thinking about having these roads since after the Second World War and, um…when Derek and I moved in, all the ho, houses were owned by, well taken over, compulsory purchase by the Department of Transport and so they were all on licence to Acme and Derek had a licence to live there, it wasn’t a proper tenancy agreement and, um, it, we knew because it said in the licence, that it probably be short term and they said it’d probably be about two years…but it ended up being six years, but we kept hoping…that it wouldn’t got through at all, we knew nothing about the road until we moved to that area…but, um, we quickly came to like that area, so

*And did you, um…oh, what was my question? [Laughs] Sorry, my question was, was it legal that you mo’, were you allowed to move in?*

Yeah, I was allowed to move in, I wasn’t on the tenancy agreement, but Derek had moved me in because I was his girlfriend, yeah, there wasn’t a problem there

*There wasn’t a problem with that*

No

*And, um, what did you do with your house?*

I sold it and, um,

*Your flat sorry*

Yeah, ‘cause we decided that we were, that if the house didn’t got hrough, this was the other thing that was happening, if, um, they decided they didn’t need your house for the road, you could buy it at a cheap rent and we could’ve bought that house ‘cause some friends of ours did, buy they house on xxxxbridge Road, they just lost about a third of their garden to the road, but the rest of the garden and the house they got for forty five thousand, three bedroom Victorian house, they’re now worth six hundred thousand, ok?

*They did alright then*

So, well, they didn’t stay there, that was the other thing and, um, I’ll tell you the story about them in a minute, but, um, they didn’t stay there but, um, those houses, I mean most of the houses round here now are worth half a million plus and, um, we didn’t pay anywhere near that [laughs] and, uh, we were, we bought in the days when everything was a bit more sane, you know, not like it is now, you know that story anyway, so um, no I feel sorry for young people today, you know, ‘cause I think it’s all wrong and, uh, the way it’s all gone and…Boris selling…central London properties to property developers, investors from overseas, that are never gonna live in them…makes my blood boil…I think if I saw Boris I’d have to slap ‘im

*[Laughs]*

I’m not normally prone to physical violence

*[Laughs] So we’re you, um…did you get involved, did you, what was your relationship with the, kind of, with, well with tree huggers, as you called them?*

Well

*Or did you have any relationship with them?*

We had a happy relationship with the tree huggers, ‘cause I remember when we actually did move, um, they were still there ‘cause, what happened was, when you said that you were moving out, they came in, um, Squib and Co. were the, uh, the company that was hired to, uh, demolish the houses, um, and they’d be there, with the security guards at the door on the day that you said you were leaving, or at the minute you said that you were leaving and they’d be in smashing everything up, taking everything apart and making it uninhabitable so that squatters couldn’t live there and then they boarded it up, it was all done in a matter of hours and, um, I can remember that we’d move into this place and course, I used to have to go past Leyton on the Tube and they’d all be in the trees and everything and, um, if not in the trees then visible from the Tube, you know, most people on the train were saying load of nutters, you know, but I used to like wave to them and [laughs] they really happy and go whaaaay! you know, as I went past on the Tube [laughs] so although I never really knew any of them I was, we were all in support of the road not going though and the, um, the destruction of what we saw, people’s housing and, uh communities really ‘cause, uh, we got to know the community, they were, a lot of them, you know, people that had lived there for years, had known each other for years and they were all being dispersed out to different places, that they didn’t really want to go to, including the two old ladies our next door neighbours, who are now no longer with us

*Tell, tell me about them*

Well, um…one of them had been married to a policemen because, I think I told you, but um, we were told by her that one time they were mainly policemen’s houses

*On Col’, just on Colville Road?*

In that area, yeah, not every house in the street but in the Leyton area that was, you know, a lot of them were for there and, um, one of them was married to a policemen that had died, you know, years ago and then her sister came to live with her and they’d been living there for lots of years and it wasn’t their own house it was a rented house and nobody really owned their own house then, everybody rented, you know, [cat comes into room] hello pussycat

*Hello*

Hello Patch…and, um, yeah so it was all, uh, upsetting especially for them, you know, ‘cause they’d lived there a long time and, um

*And what were their names again?*

Clara and Siss (sp?) and

*Clara and Siss (sp?)*

They were both in their eighties and they were offered council flat, this is gonna make you laugh, one of them was quite infirm, could hardly walk and the, um, Clara she could walk and she used to look after her sister a lot, um, but they were both, as I say, in their eighties and they’d lived in that house a long time and one of them had lived in it most of their life and they wanted to move them to a tower block to something like the twentieth floor, yeah, anyway she did have a son, Clara, who, um…went to the council and said, you know, you can’t put them there, it’s impossible blah, blah, blah so after a lot of fighting and, um, toing and froing they were offered a ground floor corner flat which they both went to live in and we visited them there and they’d made it nice and everything, but they says it would never be home

*Mmm*

You know, they made it as nice as it can be, it’ll never be home…and, uh, I think they lived in their for a couple of years and so

*So was that in Walthamstow?*

Yeah, that was in Walthamstow off of, um, Lea Bridge Road

*Mmm*

And, uh, it was quite noisy there, round where they lived, um, what’s the name of that junction, um…I can’t remember the, but there used to be a bingo place on the corner…but that’s Hibbert Road they moved to, it was called Hibbert Road in Walthamstow and it was a nice little flat but, you know, moving people out at that age…is never good when they’ve lived there all that time, and, where they wanted to move them to originally if they didn’t have anybody to speak up for them, you know, they’d have ended up in a, in a tower block on the blimmin twenty second floor or whatever it was

*Yeah. Did you know Dolly Watson? Do you know of Dolly Watson?*

No

*She was a woman who lived on Claremont Road and she’d lived there all her life*

Ok, yeah

*Um, and she…she was removed by, she refused to leave when they compulsorily repurchased her house and she was removed, uh, she did in the end leave for ill health because I mean it was kind of*

Mmm

*She was ninety three, she ended up leaving and going to a care home and she died shortly afterwards, but it’s a similar kind of*

Yeah

*Thing that she was just, sort of, she didn’t want to leave ‘cause it was*

No

*Her house*

It was her home all along and it was nice Claremont Roadbecause, um, it was nicer than Lea Bridge actually, I’ll tell you why because Claremont Road was just houses on one side

*Mmm*

And the other side faced the, um, railway lines and the sentry was beyond that, the Catholic cemetery which was beyond where we lived as well, which is still there, the Catholic cemetery, I’m surprised they didn’t take any of that away, but they didn’t and, um, so really, like us she didn’t have anybody on the other side, they didn’t have anybody on the other side of the road

*Mmm*

‘Cause it was just houses facing that way…so, it was nice and leafy and that’s where all the tree huggers sat

*And did you know any of them? Did you get*

No

*Did you ever do, did you ever visit*

Well we went to lots of meetings and everything and, um, gatherings but no, I wouldn’t say I personally knew any of them, we used to see them

*What kind of meetings did you go to?*

Um, to say, you know, that we didn’t want the road to go through, um, I was working full-time then so it wasn’t always possible for me to get my, really fully involved, but I did keep up with what was going on and I was for the tree huggers and the people that didn’t want the, um, road to go through…and we wanted our communities to stay the same and, uh, well it didn’t so we had to move, it was always our intention if we could, if the road didn’t go through, to buy that house, to stay there

*And do you, do you regret that that wasn’t the case?*

I do regret it, but Leyton now, Leytonstone has, uh, the funny thing is, it’s Leyton station but it was Leytonstone and up here is Leyton but we’re served by Leytonstone station, so it’s a bit, you know

*Bit confusing*

The back xxxx ‘cause at the moment Leytonstone High Road runs up there I suppose and Leyton Road is, High Road is here, but anyway…um, what happened to our friends, they lived on Grove Green Road, they were in the same position, Colin, Colin got the house ‘cause he was an artist and he had his studio in the house…they were allowed to buy their house ‘cause it wasn’t demolished in the end, they only lost about a third of their garden and they were allowed to buy that hose for forty five thousand which they did do and, so, they did it up, she was half Spanish, Terry, so they decided that they were gonna live in Barcelona and that’s where they’re still living now, but the place they bought in Barcelona for cash, uh, I think they stayed in Lea Bridge Road for a couple of years after they bought the house and immediately doubled the money because it was worth more, even then and I think they sold it for about ninety, ninety five thousand and, uh, with that they were able to buy, um, an apartment in Barcelona which they did do and, uh, they went to live there, but then, property prices…in Barcelona…crashed…and at one time I think their property probably went up to about three hundred thousand, I’m not sure if that was Euros or pounds and, um, then…’cause they desperately wanted to come back to London and they couldn’t

*Mmm*

Because they couldn’t sell their flat for the money that they needed, so they’re still there, but I think they’ve made the best of it now, but we don’t see them anymore ‘cause we, um, fell out with them and, um…so I don’t know what the current position is, but from what I know they’re still there and they can’t afford to come back now…or not live in London where they want to

*Mmm*

They’d have to live in Dagenham or something [laughs] if they were lucky

*If they were lucky. Um…so tell me about the sense of community in that, in the area*

Well the sense of community was very strong and, um, we knew all our neighbours more or less in the road and if we didn’t know them by name we knew them by face, so there’d be, I’d say, about two thirds of the street that had already been living there before

*Mmm hmm*

And, um, the government finally decided that the road was gonna go through and then there was quite a few artists that lived there on the short term, um, tenancies, including one called John who, funnily enough, probably moved into this place ‘cause he’d moved, uh, a little while before us, but in the end he didn’t, that house didn’ come down it was on the other side of the street but it was in a bit of a, um, bit of a mess, so, but at that time they didn’t know which houses in that street were gonna come down, so, um, they decided to move out. We moved in here and then, we weren’t really friends with them, when they lived in Colville Road but when we moved in here we found out they lived over there, they’d moved over, over there and now we’re still friends now, but they don’t live there anymore, they moved out and, uh, they’re divorced actually, she was Swiss, she went back to Switzerland and, uh, John, I think he’s on his fourth marriage now and, uh, but he’s just about to sell his house in Lewisham, which is where he moved, he moved to South London, so, um, yeah, so that was quite funny and then, a lot of people, the artists we knew around that area have all sort of stayed in this vicinity in, um, Leyton or Leytonstone, but in different places and, um, most of the people that weren’t artists didn’t own their own houses either, they rented, so they were offered council accommodation in different parts of Waltham Forest, so they was all dispersed

*But most of the artists chose to stay in the same area*

Yeah, because at that time, as well, um, apart from being the good connection, you know, the Central Line, uh, property prices were quite reasonable and Derek and I, actually, we just started buying this place and Acme offered us another house in Wanstead, just by Wanstead station and, um, we though oh we’ll go and have a look at it, but we’re already buying this, but we thought we’d go and have a look at it and see what it’s all about, it was a two bedroom sort of cottage type house and, uh, I said to Derek really morally we can’t take it, you know, ‘cause we did think about buying this and renting it and living in that one, but I said from a moral standpoint I can’t, we can’t do it, you know, let somebody ese have it if they need it, so we didn’t take it, but we could’ve done that and some people did, some people did, and I even know somebody that’s got a house, uh, that’s most of the year in Germany, an artist, he rents it out

*Still Acme?*

They bought it, from Acme

*Oh ok*

Yeah, they was allowed to buy it, as we would’ve been allowed to buy it after a certain amount of time, but we, uh, we decided not to

*You thought that was the right decision?*

Yeah, I still think it’s the right decision

*Yeah*

Because, you know, it allowed another artist or couple of artists to have a place to, to live

*Yeah. Um, and just for the sake of the tape, tape, obviously I can see lots of beautiful paintings? around but can you just tell me, uh, what kind of, so Derek’s obviously a painter*

Yeah

*Um, do you think, I mean based on what I can see around me, I’m not sure if this is gonna be, if there’s, if, if it will be the case, but do you think, did the area that you were living in kind of have any impact on the work that Derek was producing?*

Um, I don’t think it did, but it did, it enabled him to do the work, um, he was always into painting the figure

*Mmm*

Xxxx painting. And, uh, he still does that to this day, so I don’t, he does, um, look at his surroundings, he’s always doing sketchings [sic] from life, but the people that are around him, but…um, I don’t think the location affected what he did, it was just maybe the characters that he drew, so he still…painting and drawing the figure in one way or another…but he’d probably do that anyway without

*Mmm. Was it a, was it a, an exciting place to live?*

Yeah it was exciting, I mean everything was different then, it’s not like it is now, I have to say that, um, Leytonstone High Road was…a nor’, an ordinary, English high road, if you go there now, it’s not what I call an English high road, there’s Polish shops, lots of, um, Eastern Europeans living in that area, um…so in a way it’s completely changed

*Mmm*

In the way of its English community, the same as probably Hackney has, well Clapton has or any other part of London, quite a few places out of London, but yeah definitely, um, not the same as when we first moved there and I would say not the sense of community because a lot of the people who live there are transient so they stay there for a while and maybe move on and, you know, um, I would say probably a lot of the Polish people or Eastern European, don’t buy their homes, they rent, so really…they don’t love those homes, its somewhere to live

*Mmm*

But there’s a new kid on the block

*Who*

I don’t know if you know that, but now, you’ve heard of Walthamstow being called Awesomestow have you? Well it’s spilled over to our area now and so all the people that lived at Stoke Newington and Islington that can’t afford to buy their house there because, you know, now their having babies and everything, where are they moving to? Leyton and Leytonstone, I’ve seen quite a few of those, I’ve been on to, um, a group, a foodie group on Facebook and a lot of them have come from Stoke Newington and Hackney, um, you know, that had flats there, but they wanted to buy a house and, um, they want, uh, nice food and I think a lot of the time they’re talking about new shops that have opened, you know, nice places to eat ‘cause it’s definitely becoming gentrified [coughs] I think it will definitely keep the mix because…there’s lots of, um, council places still so…and a lot of people were there before it started changing, so I think they’re’ll still be that good mix for a long time, but definitely it’s changing. But if you go to some parts of Walthamstow, it doesn’t even look like the East End, you know, the way it’s been gentrified and the prices there, you know, two bedroom house there, you’re looking at six hundred thousand or, if not, more?

*How do you feel about that?*

I don’t feel very happy but then I don’t feel very happy about the whole labour market, how it’s going in this country because I think, um, Europe was a mistake…and if they, um, let us vote for it I want to vote to come out, not because I, I’ve got anything against immigrants, ‘cause I haven’t because, I mean, my family came from immigrants, it’s the amount, it’s the amount of people and also, um, the amount of money that they will work for, they can afford to live on a low wage in the main and so therefore they’re sharing flats sharing, sharing houses, they don’t have the same expenditure as somebody whose born here who wants to start a family

*Mmm*

That’s what I think, that’s what I think, so they’re driving down wages…while they’ll accept a lower wage

*Mmm*

What do you think about it?

*[Laughs] We won’t go into that, especially not on, not while this is on*

You can tell me when it’s turned off [laughs]

*This is me doing the interviewing [laughs]*

[Laughs] ‘Cause you’re a young person aren’t you?

*Role reversal here*

You’re a young person and you must be really feeling the effects of it, I mean contracts, ok? there was no such thing when I was working, you had a proper job…I know because, I mean, even in my firm, which was a professional firm, we had to start giving out contracts to para-legals and, um, we even had interns that worked for nothing

*Yeah, I mean, yeah. Hmm. Um, but just to get back to the M11 [laughs] um*

Did you want another drink? Maybe a cold drink?

*I wouldn’t mind some water, can I just pause, I’ll just pause this for a second, ok?*

Mmm

[Recording stopped]

[Recording started again]

*Ok, so, I’m, I’m nearly finished with questions, but then I’ll just ask you if you’ve got anything else you want to say, but, I did want to ask you about the four nine one gallery on Grove Green Road? Did you know that?*

Um, I know it’s there, I’ve never been there

*Never been in it?*

No

*Ok, fine, it’s just something that I’ve come across and something and I haven’t managed to ask anybody about it yet and I wondered if there was any relationship with the whole*

No, no

*Anti-road thing*

Um, there is another place on, um…Church Road, near the church that’s run as a gallery, it’s part of the library, I don’t know if you know about that place? Um, so they have a lot of artists there and some of them, um, Derek had a show there a few years ago actually, but some of them, uh, people who did live in some of the housing, um, not that I’ve ever met any of them, um

*What did you, what did you say it was called?*

Um, I’m trying to think of the name of it now, but it’s part of the library

*Ok*

There, so if you went along there you could see it, but they have a new show about every three or four weeks in there and it’s normally local people, so

*And with the artists, was there, do you think there was a general sense that they were supporting the road not going ahead, as opposed to the road going ahead?*

Um, I think most of the artists, if you know any artists, I don’t know if you do know any artists, they’re normally quite, I would say, selfish people…and all their thinking about is their art and how to produce it [laughs] and, uh, so, yeah I’m sure they had sympathy for it, um, in some cases they might have acted…um, but whether it would’ve been a full scale, um…action I’m not sure, if they could’ve kept their houses and their studios at a really cheap rent that would’ve been something that interested them and, um, I’m sure from that point of view they would’ve wanted to keep it…but

*But it wasn’t political?*

No, no, I mean with, with Derek and I, I was more political than him I think and from, I suppose, a selfish point of view as well, you know, because we came upon this really lovely house in a good place and…it was convenient for us, but also we had a lovely community but, as I say, I’m one of these people that talks to people anyway, so I always, even if my neighbour doesn’t wanna talk to me, they’re gonna talk to me, you know?

*[Laughs]*

Whether they like it or not and I make them talk to me and, um, all my neighbours know me and I know all my neighbours…I could name everybody that lived…to the end of the block…and some beyond

*Mmm, wow. That’s impressive*

Yeah, ‘cause if I see them moving in as well, I’ll make a point of going up and saying hello I live at number blah, blah, blah, but sometimes they’re shocked, you know, and, but they’re pleasantly surprised, but unless you go and say that and introduce yourself, ‘cause you’re only introducing yourself aren’t you? you’re not like giving blood [laughs] and it’s quite nice thing to do, in the olden days, they would’ve brought you round something to eat or, you know, give you a flask of tea or coffee, but people don’t tend to do that anymore, they don’t need to do it so much now because they normally catered for it but, um, in those days they wouldn’t of, there wouldn’t of been the fast food places to go to and just grab a quick hot meal

*Mmm*

And, um…so, things are changing, I mean, I can remember over the years having, uh, street parties, some of that’s coming back, people are trying to bring that back

*Did that happen in Colville Road?*

Uh, we didn’t have a street party there but we did have a bit of a carnival thing there, um, on the, um…where was it…I can’t remember what the occasion was now, but I remember having something where we all took food out into the street and, uh, we were chatting to each other, but we all chatted to each other, anybody, anyway, you know, so, um, it was a, a community

*Mmm*

And we liked to, you know, but it was a different time, even though, you know it wasn’t a million years ago, but things change quickly don’t they?

*Mmm, mmm. Ok, so the artists weren’t particularly political, by and large, from what you were saying , they weren’t particularly politically involved, but do you think they had an attitude to the tree huggers or the activist-y type people, do you, do you think they*

Well I think they were for it because of what I’ve said before, ‘cause they had cheap accommodation and cheap studios so therefore they wanted to, um, keep those but in some cases like Trevor, our immediate neighbour who was, um, um, Scottish, he decided, the idea that he didn’t want to be in London anyway so it was, uh, a means to an end for him as well, um, he actually got a job, um, working up, um, not in Scotland, I think it was in Newcastle, as a curator, but it enabled him to do what he wanted to do at that time, you know, a lot of the artists might have been newly out of college, you know, not a lot of money, um, that type of thing, so it helped them, you know, on the rung of the ladder I suppose

*Yeah, yeah, that makes sense, yeah*

And, um, a lot of people, as I say, didn’t buy their place then, most people were renting…even then

*Mmm, yeah*

It’s only, since then that…the British, I would say and since Margaret Thatcher, sold off council housing, um, wanted to actually own their own property, everybody was happy sort of bobbing along before that and jobs were, you know, plentiful…yeah, I grew up in a good era I think, the best era

*Yeah [laughs]*

Yeah I wouldn’t want to be a young person today…I don’t think, does that sound a bit harsh? I think it, it, it’s a terrible struggle for young people today, you know, because, I mean the other thing I never went to uni but Derek did, he never had to pay anything to go to uni and now they’re left with a debt before they even start work

*Yeah*

And you probably know that

*I do*

Yeah, so I don’t think that’s a good start for anybody is it, you want to start with a clean slate

*Mmm*

And you want to work, you know, but you want to work in a job you like and enjoy and you want to have decent wages so you don’t have to struggle, you know, we’re not talking millionaires here, we’re just saying a decent…way of life and, you know, not struggling all the time

*Yep*

Although, you know, my younger life, it was a bit of a struggle, I came through it…and, um, I nearly, apart from my mother, had a good experience…maybe I wouldn’t have been where I was if I’d’ve stayed with my mother and I often think that

*Do you?*

Yeah, yeah

*What do you reckon, what do you think?*

Well I just wonder what sort of mother she’d’ve been, I mean she would’ve carried on the way she was and I don’t think she would’ve been encouraging or anything like that, or supporting

*Did she want to keep you?*

She only wanted to keep me when she wanted to keep me

*Mmm*

And nobody knew…when that was and that was the problem [sound cut out] but I don’t get upset about it because [sound cuts out] you know, it’s all in the past that’s what [sound cuts out]

*Is there anything I haven’t asked you about the M11 link road that yo…have got to say about it?*

Um… the amount of money that was spent building a couple of miles of link road, to me, is immoral, but money as I know um, goes in the hands of a lot of people that you don’t know about, working in the jobs that I did, for very important people, whose names I won’t name, but they’re all quite famous, I know how much money they het, and I know the hidden money, so where you see the likes of … a head of industry losing his job, he doesn’t really lose his job, he’s getting hundreds of thousands of pounds, if not millions to go, even today, and perks on top of that, as well, and I think if they’re getting it, why can’t everybody else have it? And that’s why I support the tube drivers. They’re talking about work/life balance that’s what they want. It’s not about the money, and everybody should have that. You shouldn’t have to work until you’re feeling so wretched that you aren’t enjoying your life. You should be earning a decent salary. Everybody that lives in London should be on thirty plus, as far as I’m concerned. I’m not into communism, but… it should the bottom wage, but you should be made to work for it. You can’t just walk into a job and say, oh, I’m gonna earn thirty thousand and not do anything [both laugh], so that’s what I feel about it and I don’t think that road should ever have gone through, and if it did it should have gone underground. They’re drilling big holes in the earth anyway now, for channel tunnels and um, you know, all this cross rail and everything. Billions and billions and billions. It’s just er… something’s gone wrong somewhere, hasn’t it. I think. So, I was brought up in nearly a perfect world, I think. We got free dinners at school, free milk. I’m not sure if they get any of that anymore. Don’t think they get milk anymore, no I know they don’t get milk anymore, and they’re lucky if they get free dinners. We got all of that. Got free university. And er, my final word on the road is, it just brought more traffic into London and out of London. And when they should have built better transport, the central line, it has improved, because I remember when it used to break down all the time, for electrical…something wrong with the electrics or something wrong here, or something wrong there, if they’d have spent that money on the central line, can you imagine what it would have been like? Be so much better, and everybody wouldn’t mind travelling on it then.

*Yeah.*

The only people that need to drive a car into London are trades people, carrying tools. They’re the only people, and maybe disabled people.

*Or they could have disabled access on tubes.*

Well they could, but they’d have to make it a lot better, wouldn’t they?

*Well, yeah.*

You know, at Leyton, and Leytonstone, some of the worst stairs I’ve ever seen. Even I have to hold on when I’m going down those stairs sometimes, because they’re really slippery and steep, so imagine going down there with a pram or something, and er… or even a bike, which you’re not allowed on anyway, are you?

*Oh, one more thing, can I just ask you one more thing?*

Yeah.

*I just…that’s a photo of Claremont Road residents, but this is the photo of Colville Road residents that you sent to me, so can we just, can you just point out.. so this is you, is that right?*

No. This is me.

*Oh,* That’s *you. Oh, I thought you said…*

I was to the right of the man with the crazy jumper.

*Oh yeah, you were to the right. Sorry.*

So, her name was Liz, and that’s Trevor. They were our next door neighbours and they came from up North. They’re both artists.

*And Derick is…is that Derick?*

That’s Derick. And um, this lady here, I can’t remember her name, but she was a long term resident, as was this lady, with her children that were all… she had children from different fathers, this lady here.

*So that’s the lady with the long hair and the leather jacket.*

Yeah. I still see her around now. She lives in Walthamstow. Um… they’re her two children and they’re both grown up now. And er, that’s Clara, don’t think Siss is there because she couldn’t stand up properly, but that’s Clara. Um… he was one of the main people against the road, but I can’t remember his name now.

*He’s the man in the middle with the stripy top.*

Yeah. Everybody else, um, were people that I just used to say hello to, that I didn’t really know. Some of the people that I knew better are not in this picture.

*Hmmm. But these are all Colville people?*

Yeah.

*Hmm. Excellent.*

Yeah. My house was just up here. I think that was my house here.

*Oh, look, there a No… do you think was a No M11 Link Road…*

Yeah, No M11 Link Road

*…Poster in the window…*

And they used to say other things as well, because some of the artists did their own version of what it should say

*Like what?*

Homes for People, Not for Roads, and you know, that type of thing. No swearing or anything like that, because we were all well behaved then, but [both laugh]. We didn’t protest enough, did we? We were on the verge of it not going through, then it did, because the government changed. Yeah, so that was a good little article, tells you quite a lot, doesn’t it?

*Mmm.*

And erm, yeah, seems like another time. Well, it was another time. Everybody looks fairly happy, don’t they?

*They do, yeah. It’s nice, it’s a nice picture.*

Yeah, this is me. I’d just come home from work when they were taking the picture. I’ve got my work outfit on, my jacket and dress.

*Yeah. It’s nice… and this is the more rag-tag…*

That’s Claremont Road is it?

*That’s Claremont Road.*

And where did you get this picture from?

*Somebody that I interviewed recently gave it to me. She’s not in there actually.*

Their houses were in a bit of a worse state that ours I think.

*Were they? Were yours not too bad then?*

Well Claremont Road, you could see those houses from the tube, you know, we went right past on the central line. In front of them were the trees, and on the other side of that was the cemetery. Was that the old lady you were talking about?

*That’s Dolly, yeah.*

I seem to remember her actually, yeah. Yeah.

*And that’s a woman called Jacky, I think. She was another local. And I think most of the others in that picture were um…*

Artists?

*Activists. Squatters.*

Yeah. But we did support them and um, I think Colin and Terry, they lived on the other side of these people…

*OK…*

Lea bridge, because it run parallel with Lea Bridge…

*When you…do you mean Grove Green?*

Oh, sorry Grove Green.

*Lea Bridge is Walthamstow.*

Yeah, sorry, Grove Green. Yeah. Getting you confused now

*[laughs]*

Yeah, Grove Green Road. And erm, so one you’re around here it’s fairly quiet because you’re off that main road, which is where all the traffic used to drive down, before the M11 Link Road. And we said well, it’s gonna open it up to even more traffic, and that has happened. Especially round about half past four, five O’clock, you see it all building up, and erm, sometimes it comes to a complete standstill and you go past on the bridge or on the train, and you can see it all, and you think, yeah, told you so [laughs]

*Yeah. Hm.*

I’m sure they would have built something now that was more environmentally frieldly. I mean we even came up with the idea of building a sort of New York type of highway over the tube. That way they wouldn’t have had to interfere with any of the houses. It wouldn’t have been very nice for the houses living underneath though. I’m sure I wouldn’t have wanted to do that, but I did think that they could do a tunnel, for that short amount of distance, relatively speaking, you know [laughs]

*OK. Well unless you’ve got any last words…*

No, I think I’ve said everything I can say about it. I’ll probably think of something when you go, if I do I’ll let you know.

*You can always email me.*

Yeah.

*OK. I’ll turn this off then. Thank you ever so much.*

You’re welcome. I hope it interests somebody.

**Name of interviewee: Rani Heinson**

**Project: Voices of Leytonstone**

**Date of interview:**

**Language: English**

**Venue: Interviewee’s home – 157 Colchester Road, Leyton, E10 6HG**

**Name of interviewer: Polly Rodgers**

**Length of interview: 02.04.12**

**Transcribed by: Kirsty Parsons**

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