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*Can you just erm… tell…can you just count to ten for me?*

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

*Perfect ok, so, today is the 3rd September 2015. Erm, can you just start by telling me your name?*

I’m Doreen Golding

*Can you spell that for me?*

G O L D I N G

*Fantastic and where are we now? The interview is taking place…*

Oh, in Wanstead

*In Wanstead, at your house*

At my maisonette

*At your maisonette [laughs] fantastic. Erm, ok, so to start with can I just get you to tell me a little bit about anything that you might know about you parents, about your grandparents*

Oh well my grandparents well they were English born, er, the generation before them, this is on my mother’s side, er, would have come from possibly Poland, or erm… my father’s family would have been Polish because there they was Jacobovitch, which is more Polish than Russian, but then all the borders were changed and they came over in the late 1880s, er when Jewish people were coming out of Russia and Poland, er so that would be my great grandparents. Er, I don’t know too much about them, I have an odd er couple of photographs but my grandparents were born here and they lived, erm, they were quite pleased, they lived in the new tenement buildings… er which are no longer existing off of Commercial Street. Er, in a very infamous street called Flower and Dean Street, which rather got a bad reputation as like a generation from a bit before it was all in the Jack the Ripper area. Er, but they were very respectable, quiet mannered people, they were very delighted that they actually had an indoor toilet, which was something very nice, mind you it was adjoining the scullery where they cooked [laughs]. Er, and the front room… where they could sit and have their dinner, and a bedroom, so that was in the tenement buildings in Flower and Dean Street. And where my parents got married, erm, my father had come from Tottenham… he… they moved there, they lived for a little while, erm, I believe somewhere in Tottenham, Clapton way ‘cos I was born in the Salvation Army Hospital in Clapton. So erm…

*Can I just stop you for one second, ‘cos I realised I didn’t ask you the year of your birth, which I should have done right at the beginning*

Oh right, I can tell you it now

*Can you just tell me now?*

Alright, well my date of birth, I have a very famous birthday, I’m born on the 10th June, which is the same day as the Duke of Edinburgh, definitely not the same year he’ll be 95 next year, I was 75 this year, so 1940 at the outbreak of the war, er, and by sheer coincidence my… that was the Second World War, my mother was born in 1914, at the beginning of the First World War. So sheer coincidence, and I often think how did my parents grandparents manage to survive having two world wars within 20 years of their life, unbelievable really

*Yeah*

You know, that they were young married, in say what, 1912, and then started a family in 1914, and then by the time their daughter, my mother, got engaged and married and I was born 1940, you know it… well, definitely it wasn’t any counselling those days, they certainly just had to get up and get on with it, and whatever you had you made the best of, so I don’t know what they’d think of today’s young people who I… I shudder to think [laughs]. But, as I say, I was born in Salvation Army Hospital in Clapton in 1940, I’m, all I… I only know stories, obviously I don’t remember far that far back, but the family, er, worked for erm a factory called Ellis & Goldstein which was based in Commercial Street, and the whole factory got evacuated down to Luton, so you went where your job was, the whole factory went they were… I don’t know whether they rehoused them, it must have done and the whole k… the whole family, the whole factory, went down to Luton and they must have had a factory where they all worked ‘cos I even meet people today, believe it or not, who actually remember being evacuated and living in, er, in Luton. They must be, good gracious, my mother would have been 100 last year, so these people are well in their 90s, er there’s a few still survived today. Er, and… nobody stayed away very long, you know, you read the books, people got evacuated but they wanted to come back, don’t know why, they wanted to come back. I’d suppose you’d have to live it to know why, ‘cos I know that by 1943 we were back and the only reason I know that is ‘cos I went to school, in… and I was 3 years old, you know, it was just one of those things and it was a school called Dill Street School. Er…

*So sorry, were you evacuated to Luton?*

Yeah, I was a baby in arms

*To Luton?*

To Luton. So I was… yes a baby, mother, father, grandparents, erm my grandmother was a tailoress, my grandfather was a, what we called a presser, ironed the clothes. My father was a cutter, my mother was a tailoress, and I was a baby in a pram [laughs], and er, 1943 we were back, went to school Dill Street School was round the back of… er, Hanbury Street in London, the school is still th… there’s still a school there, but at 5 I went to Commercial Street School, er, Can & Barnet School which is next door to Toynbee Hall, so all very, very… every… very close knit er community, all near one another, all within walking distance although I don’t think anybody had cars anyway [laughs]. And then in 1946 my parents wanted to come out of the East End, they then had a flat, not in erm, not in the Tenemant buildings in Flower & Dean Street, they were in the next street, Lolesworth Street, er but they decided time to move on to better themselves, erm my father had stopped working in the factories and had decided that rather than make clothes it was mainly coats, dresses and coats, he would erm… sew them… so he became a market trader er selling coats and dresses etc, and er in 1946 we moved and we came to, went to Gants Hill, which is not that far away from the M11 [laughs] down the road, er, when we got there er late ’46, ’47, er station hadn’t even been reopened after the war, because between Wanstead, Redbridge and Gants Hill you had the Plessey’s erm… munition factory underneath, they were building all the ammunition

*Mmm*

There was… that was sort of very famous, that they, Plessey’s who were, who did, made all the ammunition in the war, actually had a factory underground using Wanstead, Redbridge and Gants Hill, underneath in the station ‘cos the stations were closed, er, and that, when we moved to Gants Hill, the station hadn’t as yet been reopened. Er, and then er we lived there for… Gants Hill… 46-47, er I went to Redbridge Primary School, and then on to Bill Grammar which was in Ley Street, and then in coronation year, er 1953 at the beginning of the year unfortunately my father got killed in a road accident, by, near the Redbridge roundabout so my mother at the time, tried to make a go of it living er where we lived but decided that, no, we were going back to the East End of London, everybody wants to go back to their routes and go back to be with her mother and father, who was still living in Flower and Dean Street, so we went through very, very nice house and garden back to the tenement build… [laughs] it was a rev… reverse, what do they call it, reverse roll reversal, so we ended up going back and living in erm, er the East End of London, so I had to change my schools and I went to Central Foundation er which in, it was in Spitalfields Market

*So you were about 12 then?*

12, so yeah that’s it, yeah, yep 12 in yes. And er, but it was fated because er lived there for quite a few… couple of years and then of course I met my er first husband which I wouldn’t have met if I’d still been living in Gants Hill, so it was fated to be that I met him I was only 14-15 years old, he was going into the National Service at that time, every young man had to go in at er 18, and come out at 20 as a man, and they [laughs] and they had to do as their told, and I do believe they should bring it back! [laughs] and it’ll never come back ‘cos they went from stroppy teenagers, they weren’t allowed to answer back I think that’s what was the er, the beauty of it, you know, they had to do what they were told, it was ‘yes, sir’, ‘no, sir’, you know and they had to take to it, you know, it was compulsory er er and that’s what they er that’s what he did. And erm, when he came out we got engaged and married, and

*How did you meet?*

Pardon?

*How did you meet?*

How did we meet, at that time in the East End of London you had youth clubs so I… erm, he… belonged to I think Oxford and St Georges club which was in erm Fairclough Street, I belonged to Brady Street so erm it, Jewish youth there was a lot of Jewish youth clubs in that area because it was a… it was a population of mainly Jewish people at that time, obviously all immigrants all coming over and of course at that time you had more because of the Holocaust, you know, there was that other wave er Jewish immigrants coming into the, into the country. And er, yes, we met at the youth club, a youth club dance, as one would [laughs] and erm once we er got married and had family in 196…7, ’65 the boroughs changed, we had GLC and they had… it’s the fiftieth anniversary this year, isn’t it, of all the boroughs, er, that all, it was changing you know, Wanstead was no longer Essex it was Wanstead E11 and er, all the different boroughs were divided off again… at different areas er and ’67 then brought, they brought in an act of erm, slum clearance, where they want to knock down all the little old houses, little terraced houses, which is what we lived in at the time er near the Tower of London, and er… we were rehoused, we were ‘sposed to have moved to a block called Noble Court in Cable Street, it was purpose built and literally the whole little block of h… h.. was gonna move, everyone uplifted and moved to this block that was.. they had it all ready for us but it didn’t work out like that, people had a choice and it was time to mo… replan your life, I can only go for my, by my friend who lives in Australia, her father er worked at London Airport, he worked for the catering firm, I think it was one of the first catering firms that actually did the packed food on the aeroplane, ‘cos your talking, at the time, people we starting to go abroad. Er, and he said ‘right, everyday I’ve travelled from near the Tower to Heathow’ it wasn’t Heathrow then it was London Airport, you know, erm ‘we’ll move to Slough’. Another good friend of mine, her husband worked er with a, for a company that were in Hendon so we didn’t all, we didn’t, we really upset the apple cart actually ‘cos we didn’t go where we were ‘sposed to go, you know, they…

*But that was your choice?*

That was, we had that choice. I have to say erm, the council did try and er give you the old flannel, it used to be you have three offers and then we don’t offer you anything anymore, and it was a case of, ‘no, hang on, you may have given me three offers but your knocking my house down’ [laughs] ‘where am I going to go to? I’d like to go where I want to go to’

*And that was possible in those, at that time?*

That’s right. If you were prepared to pay the rent, now at the time we had a little house… right near the Tower now the rent for the whole house was £2.50

*A…*

Week

*Week*

But only one poun… no, £1.25 my mother-in-law lived downstairs, my father-in-law had passed away by then, and we lived upstairs. It was divided into two flats, so really our rent should have been £1.25, but because we paid for mother-in-law downstairs as well, ‘cos we wanted to, so it was £2.50. Mind you, the wages was about £8 a week, not that’s in proportion

*Mmm*

And, we said, right, we’d seen these flats being built er these were built in… ’65 but you couldn’t get away with it today, they were for the upper income bracket….

*Officially?*

Officially, I’ve got all the paperwork. The upper income bracket

*And what did that mean at that time?*

That you had to earn X amount, and you also had to have guarantors of two family, two people who owned their own property, property and if you fell behind with the rent they, well you’ll, you guarantor they had to pay it for you, you know, that’s what it was. Luxury flats, and the rent there was £7.50… these were £7.50, the flats opposite are £7.50. Their flats, these are maisonettes, houses were £8.50. We didn’t know how we were going to find that extra fiver, let alone an… we, in hindsight, if only I’d have found that other pound to go and have a house with a garden, just could not do it, could not do it. And the only way we could do it was literally cheat our way here. I mean, no one’ll put me in prison now after all these years [laughs]

*What did you do?*

No, I’m not… my husband did, he worked all the overtime he could earn and those, years ago you got paid weekly in a little brown envelope, little wage packet, with a wage slip, and inside you had, it was basic pay, overtime, total, and he said to the wages girl ‘Could you just put all into basic?’ [laughs] ‘just for one week’, so at least we could show a wage slip, that we could afford it and we really couldn’t, we reall… I mean, I, you didn’t work, I had three young children, you just didn’t, women didn’t work. It was a… a disgrace if your, you know, you had, whatever your husband earned, you had to manage on, and that’s all there was to it [laughs] you know, er, and it was a case of ‘yes’, you know, ‘no, you’ve got to go to work’, you know to actually cover the costs of the rent

*So you went to work at that time?*

Yes, that’s right

*And what did you do?*

Pardon?

*What did you do?*

Well very conveniently next to where I live, you may have passed it when you came here, it’s the George pub

*No I came the other way*

You came the other way, well next door is the G… I didn’t work in the pub, but next door they had just taken over erm what had been derelict for quite some time it was the old erm the old cinema which had become a b… erm a bowling alley but people had taken it over… er as… er a bingo club and they wanted a local lady to run it… so I just walked round there and I always remember the boss saying ‘come down with the other applicants, the lineup is at er such and such a, seven a clock whatever’ and I said ‘why is it Miss World competition?’ [laughs] That actually was gonna be on that week and I think they looked at me and thought, ‘oh my goodness’, well you know I mean they didn’t live anywhere near here. Er, within a month I was actually running the place [laughs] so, only ever worked there, I worked there for… from nineteen sixty… I moved here in ’67, they opened in ’68, it closed in ’88 but because the sign of the times became a ladies keep fit class, became… so I went to erm a health club, xxxx health club, the people who bought it over ran other health clubs, er Basildon, and all different places in Essex, I went down to… whilst they were refurbishing it, gutting it out as a bingo club, converting it into a ladies health club, putting in sauna and steam rooms, and a gymnasium, and aerobics studios etc. It’s amazing what you can do when you got builders, erm, I went down to Basildon, retrained, I’d always done the accounts, I mean I didn’t take the aerobics classes, I can assure you [laughs] mind you I was only in my fifties then [laughs] or sixties, erm, fifties. And er, went back in there, so I’ve never worked anywhere else, I worked there for 32 years

*So what did you do, so you retrained as…*

As.. a manager

*As a manager*

Yeah, I ran the bingo club as a manager erm I, one time the bingo club was actually er a subsidiary of M.. Mecca, so I became a a um, er, a chief cashier for Mecca er, self taught, self taught, accounts, PAYE, whatever I could put my hand to, I did, you know so er anything to pay the rent [laughs]

*So you managed to make ends meet?*

Oh yes, yes, oh yes, you’ll always get there in the end if you need to [laughs] erm, and as I say, ni.. erm in… twent… 2000, 2000 it closed, it’s been closed 15 years and would you believe yesterday they’ve just put all erm… er… I don’t even know what you’d call it, they’ve boarded it all up

*Umm hmm*

And I’ve had a word with the, the erm manager, the building manager and I said ‘what are you building in there?’ and they said it possibly gonna be a Waitrose

*Aahhh*

[laughs]

*Well that’s a sign of the times! Isn’t it?*

Yeah, yeah, innit? Right yeah, we’ve got Tesco’s we’ve got the Co-op and Sainsbury’s was supposed to be opening, we don’t need four supermarkets in a one street town like Wanstead. It’s only one high street [laughs]

*Wow, yeah*

And that, that’s took you up to date

*So that’s taken me more or less up to date, and can we just go back a little and*

Yes

*I just want to ask about erm what your experience was, what it was like growing up erm in that Jewish area and were you…*

Erm...

*…practising, were you religious?*

No, no no my father’s family er are. Erm no it was just part of your life, coming from the East End as as today it’s all Asian, that the area was all Jewish people it was just… normal population, you never thought anymore of it, you know, if you had a non-Jewish neighbour, a Christian neighbour, they were the ones that were the, not the outsiders, but they were the odd ones out, you know so it was just a place to settle, as it’s been proven again er by Banglatown

*Mmm*

It’s been renamed and you know it’s, why they hone in on that particular area, there must be other areas I would imagine but it’s just the area that I.. I particularly know, know. No it was you had your erm, in Brick Lane now, which it is a Mosque now, prior to that you had a Synagogue ‘cos I used to go to a Hebrew classes, before that it was a Church

*Oh really?*

Yeah

*I knew that it was a mosque, I mean that it was a Synagogue, I didn’t know that it was a Church*

Yeah, church prior to that, yeah the one in Brick Lane, yeah, the back or er S.. er er Christchurch at Spitalfields

*Yeah*

No it was ju.. you just accepted all Jewish sh.. er say Jewish youth clubs, er the Synagogues, you know a Synagogue on every corner like there's a Mosque on every corner, no different at all

*As was it quiet integrated with the non-Jewish people around…*

Well there wasn’t many many non-Jewish erm people there… it’s like today is the same with the Asian people, not many er European style people live there now, I don’t know it’s all changing the whole time, I don’t know if the Asian people move out, will it be Romanians, Polish, don’t know. You know, it’s just an er area where everybody seems to settle

*Mmm*

And then you know the culture takes over doesn’t it, they just clear one area and do something else, yeah [laughs]

*Ok, so… maybe we should talk a little be about the M11 link road…*

Oh my goodness, my favourite subject! [both laugh]

*So you moved here in 196….*7

*7*

1967

*So… that, at that point was, were you aware of any inclining?*

No, well having, obviously being the er, now the last 12 years or so being the Chairman of the local historical society you look back at the old postcards and you see that when they built this road that is now the A12, it’s been renamed outside my door Kingfisher Avenue, without our, any consent, I don’t know why Kingfisher Avenue [laughs] it’s got no connection whatsoever with Wanstead, I don’t think. Erm, there was only a dirt track, it was called er it was George Lane, literally you had the pub, which is still there, er that was the new pub ‘new pub’ 1904, the big pub that’s there now er beside it was just a small street called George Lane and going down George Lane, down what is now towards the Redbridge roundabout was a whole isle of little houses, little shops, and where the central reserve when I moved here was er dual carriageway, but it wasn’t a dual carriageway then, there was obviously another row of houses opposite, very na… and as I say, it, I’ve got pictures of the 1920’s where they started putting in the Eastern Avenue. It was always going to be… but it have never materialised… because when they did start setting up er all the information about where it was going they said, it was al.. you know the link road was always gonna be, you were gonna be linked. Of course the M11 wasn’t built either, when I first moved, there was nothing, you know, it was just an ordinary dual carriageway leading down to the Redbridge roundabout, but prior to that it had been George Lane, not in my time

*So when was that, do you know?*

Erm, the Eastern Avenue I’m thinking was in the late 20’s, when I started putting Eastern Avenue in, so it’s it was always, when you look back on the history of it, if, in hindsight, if you look back you knew it was always gonna happen

*Mmm*

But it didn’t happen in the ‘20s, ‘30s, ‘40s, ‘50s, ‘60s… it started, it was obviously put into action in the 90’s

*And so when you moved here in the ‘60s you weren’t even aware of that*

No, I was hesitant only in the way that, ‘hang on, I live on a main road’, yes, if you’ve got a main road, you’re gonna expect some noise, you know, erm transport, excellent so that’s why everybody wants to live in Wanstead, I look out my window I can see the underground station, I walk round the corner, there’s the bus terminus. The bus terminus has actually moved over the years, that used to be outside the George and the club where I used to work but also before my time, in the, the late ‘30s and ‘40s. It’s now by the swing park. So we knew we were gonna live on a… weren’t living in the heart of country but coming out the East End it was country enough for us. That was it, we were out in the country, people thought we’d, they’d never see us again. We had moved from, from Aldgate to Wanstead ‘Why you goin’ out into the country?!’ [laughs] and I don’t drive anyway I did learn to drive once, er, so I need, I need public transport. But, was a dual carriageway, didn’t look bad at all you know, you had the central reserve, er, reservation, you know and erm… the wall here was much further back, we had a lot more green outside our front… out the… [tuts, takes deep sigh] this is our back, but it’s the front [laughs] funnily enough my front door is at the back [laughs] It’s a funny situation, but when you looked out at the erm, before they’d put the road in, it was just a dual… all lined with trees, and the wall surrounding the estate was much further out but I’ll open the balcony door and you’ll go out and you’ll see for yourself, and I have got photos of that time, before it was done. I’ve actually got the day that I first heard drums, I’d heard of Twyford Downs, I knew they were comin’ and I actually, I’ve always got a camera on me and I could hear the banging [starts clapping hands], the cymbals and I got the photo of the first protesters walking passed here in 1993 [laughs]

*Wow*

And then every month, for, till the road was opened, ’97? No, it was supposed to open ’97, I don’t think it opened till ’99, it was two years over. Oh my god, my memories are coming back! Good gracious. Erm… er I took er views looking down the Eastern Avenue, looking that way, looking that, I did it from all angles once a month so the photos I’ve… there’s a lot of photos

*Mmm, wow, yeah*

A hell of a lot of photos. Umm, they were very clever, they set up the link office, at the beginning of the high street, they recruited a local man, so everybody was familiar with them you know, and to tell you that it was all for the good of the community and we’d all get wonderful compensation er you know…

*Do you know, did you know the local man?*

Yeah, everybody, yes and then he came, we get, he actually er came and gave a talk at the local historical society it’s so cleverly done, erm, I’m not saying you’re duped, but you’re duped. Er, it was always going to be, there was different options, they, they had all these models in the link office and it was gonna be… now is it gonna be an underpass outside the window of the council estate dwellers or is it gonna be a flyover over the local golf course? Now hang on, we know straight away whose going to win here [laughs] it’s not going to be the, the er… the over.. er head thing over the golf course is it? It’s gonna be outside our door. We were all leaseholders but, well, the people who became leaseholders with the right to buy in ’88 had to pay for their own double glazing, which we should have had to because obviously they’d had compensation paid, the council must have had compensation to cover the costs of the double glazing. Having said that the double glazing is so diabolical it wasn’t worth having [laughs]

*Really?*

Really, yeah. We really, I don’t think anybody quite knew what hit them, erm, we had all scaffolding, we were, we were like prisoners there w… the whole estate it was scaffolded over, and you couldn’t look out, it was, you were in dark… we really, they took liberties with us when you look back at it, I mean we didn’t take it sitting down but it was like fighting a losing battle really

*And how long was it like that for?*

Oh, well you say, ’93 it started, ’99 it finished so it was ju…

*Er, but, the scaffolding…*

[both speaking at once] The scaffolding… I’ve got it on the photos I could look, actually look it up and tell you but erm as I say when you, it was like a relief when it was all done, but as I say so much happened erm , it was all done in stages so you didn’t really notice too much about it, and what with the protesters and the tree and… [laughs] and the dongos[?] [laughs] and Wanstonia, the book on Wanstonia? I have a Wanstonia book

*Oh do you? Oh yes*

Oh yes

*Is that here?*

Ah, yes, I especially got that out for you. Wow [sarcastically]

[both laugh]

*Wow! I didn’t even, I didn’t know about…*

Oh right well as I say, four months, we had six years of it [laughs] And erm, when they knocked the lovely houses, the big houses down, over the road you know further back in Cambridge Park

*On Cambridge Park Road?*

Cambridge Park, I’ve got a few ph… I did go over there a coupla times and climb over and get into the house and take photographs, they were taken at the, there was like a lot of Edwardian fireplaces er and I took quite a few, I mean the photos aren’t brilliant you know at the time I’m glad I was climbing over and… it was quite sensational I mean we’d never seen anything like it, I have to say I mean my friend in Australia I mentioned earlier, er she phoned me one day, she said ‘I’m watching the news from England’ she said… [phone starts ringing in background]… ‘I’ve just seen George Green’ and it was so funny, and I said ‘yeah’, she said ‘where are you?’ I said ‘I’m there’. Don’t worry

*I’ll just… I’ll pause this* [Tape pauses]

Ooh it was a different life, I mean, you know [laughs] it was definitely happenin’, umm, as I say it was just a phase in your life that hasn’t… that’s faded away now, like everything else, um, you forget I suppose how bad it is, only last night I had to actually gettin’ the books out again I thought ‘did we go through that, we must have been…’ but there was nothing else you can do, not really. I-I marched down to City Hall with few of them

*So, tell me, you just said it was sensational…*

Yeah

…*and you were talking about your Australian friend calling and wha…*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I…

*Could you describe that? What it was like?*

Yeah, I said ‘what do you mean?’, she said ‘oh, it’s on our news, it’s in Australia’, ‘cos she obviously visits here when she comes home, you know, and she said she put on the television and seen the George Green with all these police [laughs], ‘I can’t believe it!’ she says, ‘how come your little silly little Wanstead’, I always call it a one street town, ‘is on national tele… international television’! It really was sensational

*So what was it like? Did you go down there often?*

Oh yes, yeah yeah, we used… ‘cos it’s only over there Cambridge Park, we just used to walk over, but I think we got a bit indi… we got, we did get indig… indignant, because we had the Twyford Down lot, they didn’t live here, you know we just felt they was, they didn’t help us, our cause, they didn’t help our cause because they weren’t us, they weren’t residents they didn’t live here, what were they making all the hoo-har about? You know, there was a few that were for them, you know, saving the environment and not, you know, knocking down the tree. The tree was bloomin’ dead anyway the poor tree [laughs], I took enough photos of that blasted tree, and then it was just a, the trunk layin’ on the floor, you know what I mean? I know it became a symbol, I kn… I realise that but the protesters weren’t, there was a couple, but they weren’t the locals. We just felt that they were try.. Wanstead is quite… we’re quite quiet people [laughs] we don’t make a lot of trouble, we fight for our rights, but we just, we didn’t know who these weird people were, you know, they they were really… who are these people in Wanstead, you know, up trees with long hair and you know, they were a mess, they really were [laughs] I have photos of them, I’ve got photos of everybody [laughs] but erm, as I say, it was the fact that we didn’t know, and in fact, they’ve left it in a terrible state, in fact I wrote to them a couple of years ago and said, you haven’t even finished it off and they said that’s how we, that’s how it was meant to be left and that’s how it is, if you look out the window you’ll see it’s, it’s not finished off properly

*Can you describe it? Just for the tape*

Well it’s just, as I say, you can… I don’t how anybody hasn’t got killed they’ve tried to erm, er do a surround into it in like grey stone, they’ve never er er soundproofed any walls here, er they’ve put a bit of green weeds in but nobody looks after it, except the locals. We we’ve got a very nice group in Wanstead that tend the unattended greenery round here, and of course once you do it, the officials won’t do it because once you’ve done it that is it! You’ve had it. So there’s this… mess outside our door, you look down at it and it’s just not finished… you know it’s never been finished off properly, you could only photograph it to describe it, which I have and I’ve sent them photos and they said no, that’s how it as meant to be, well all I can say is if that’s how it was meant to be… another thing, we really got, I feel, I think it was the last motorway built, wasn’t it? The last time they, they ran out of money erm, or something like

*Well they spent a lot of money*

Well they wasted a lot of money, they wasted it. Down by Cambridge Park, opposite… where the houses, the big houses were, beautiful brickwork, outside here is rubbish [laughs] we really, this end really got the, we did get the end, bad end of the stick

*And so the tunnels on the other side of the green…*

The tunnels, outside? I’ll show you

*The tunnels right outside*

Ok, switch off if you want to

*No, I’ll leave it running and hopefully it’ll be able to… we just walking over to the window and we’re going to look outside*

I should have done this before you came actually... I keep the blinds down to put another layer of er protection

*Against the noise?*

Noise, I’m afraid it’s a bit dusty out there I do not go out there very often

[Sound of blind moving suddenly]

*Oooh*

Oh blimey, didn’t xxxx that tight enough. That shows you how much I pull the blinds up, hah. Don’t have a window open as you notice because if I went along that ledge where those photos are… you could go everyday. Sorry about this

*That’s alright*

That’s gonna pop down again, it’s not very often I put them up

*That’s just slipping*

We’ll get there, yeah, if it’ll just catch it just right. Even if I do it from theere it’s gonna plonk down on me head but let’s take a chance and see what happens…

*[laughs]*

…so we’ll get decapitated [laughs]

*Yeah, worse things have happened*

[both laugh]

Weeeell, blame, blame the M11 link road

*Blame the M11, absolutely*

**Archive Reference: 2015\_esch\_VoLe\_05**

[Sound of traffic]

It’s quiet today, funnily enough

[Sound of traffic]

There’s the tunnel

*There’s the tunnel. And that’s the green just there.*

[Inaudible]… And that’s the bit that wasn’t finished off properly, see the green in the middle, they had people throwing things off the top onto cars, so they made that…[inaudible]… and there was a roundabout.

[Interviewee and interviewer are outside looking at the road from the balcony, only snippets are audible. They are talking about the roundabout being altered to allow lorries to get round it, and the shrubs that have grown near the edge of the entrance to the tunnel that prevent people from throwing rubbish onto the tops of cars.]

*So, for the sake of the tape, we went out and looked at the tunnel, where the tunnel goes in…*

And here I am, showing you the photo, which was august ’93, there I am, sitting on… I was very glammy in them days.

*You were.*

Twenty two years ago…

*Beautiful.*

And that was where that house is over the road. This is a shop, this was where the house has been built, can you see?

*Yeah, yeah*

And here they are.

*And that was you sitting on the front.*

This wall was further back. It would actually literally be where the wall is to the tunnel. In fact, we didn’t used to walk all the way round, we used to just over the…[laughs] It was quite a low wall. I was younger. And here, as I say, August ’93, that was the first…they boarded up the house, so we knew they were gonna come, and they the protests came.

*And these are the first protesters?*

That’s the very first photo – that’s the very first time we ever saw protesters.

*Wow. And can you tell what their banner says?*

Freedom to drive or freedom to breathe, Reclaim the streets. Yes, so where, I told you, the duel carriageway, this wall was literally there, so we’re looking down the Eastern Avenue, there’s out duel carriageway.

*Ok. It’s tiny isn’t it? Kind of insignificant in comparison.*

Yeah, so that was looking across, that’s looking down, and these photos I did every… when they started digging up the duel carriageway, started… and this is going right the way through…

*And this is ’93, yeah.*

Yeah, and then hell set in. Every time you came home something else was being built and dug up. This is every month. This is February ’94 now, and there’s the scaffolding going up over our buildings. And we are completely hemmed in.

*Yeah. Blimey.*

I know. People don’t realise really, what we went through. There’s the rest of the estate being scaffolded. It was every month for 6 years I took these photos. Same, obviously the position, looking out, the wall got knocked down, see.

*So there’s one looking out over the road and one looking to the left and one looking to the right.*

The other book is going the other way.

*OK.*

The dust and dirt, I cannot tell you.

*Blimey. This went on for six years.*

Six years. Whenever you went out you didn’t know how you were going to get back into your flats again, and they said ‘oh, you’ll get compensation’, I’ll have to look up the papers. It wasn’t much, not a lot, we really fought for it. The only thing is, all the um, lease holders, light the right to buy, we couldn’t buy the freehold, we lease it, you know, um they all had to pay, and at the time it was a lot of money, over three thousand pounds, for double glazing. I got my letter, I think it was £3,783 and I got my letter and it said £378, they’d left a digit off the end.

*No!*

So, er, I went to a solicitor and they said, ‘you got it in writing, pay the 378’. I said ‘well I’m gonna, and I’m not going to pay any more’, cos we shouldn’t… I think if I’d have had to pay the three thousand, I’d have fought it, I’d’ve fought it. You know, get people together to say ‘why should we pay for double glazing when obviously they’ve had the compensation money for it?’ And it was the only time when I thought, yes! I’d won something [both laugh].

*That’s brilliant, so did they argue or not?*

I just wrote to them and said ‘well, I’ve consulted a sol- who said as this is written… I got someone to write a very … and they said well that’s it, we can’t do anything about it. That was the only time I felt like I’d won something. But look, outside you window. Open your window and look what you’ve got. I mean I didn’t zoom, didn’t zoom in a t all, as you can tell. I just kept it the same. Our poor wall went, it was here and it came further and further back, and every month for six years. When people talk about knocking the houses down, I say ‘you should come and live with me’. The dust and the dirt. I can’t tell you. The traffic. Cos of course it couldn’t all go down the duel carriageway. As I say, six years, right the way through. Having to live with that for six years. No fair. It wasn’t. Honestly, it was not fair. You know, when you think about it, they were gonna build an underpass and an underpass it was gonna be, and that was it. You knew it was coming.

*Wow.*

That goes further…

*So by this point there’s starting to be a tunnel. Yeah, the structure of the tunnel’s gone up*

Yeah, yeah. The dust and the dirt. And they say, ‘well if you chose to live on a main road, what do you expect? It was always gonna happen…’ I’ll show you the other book. I think we were very brave. We were very brave.

*You were.*

What can you do, it’s your home, you know. Tah da! [pulls out a flyer for Grahame Miller’s artwork ‘Linked’] Linked, yeah, we were linked all right.

*You were, weren’t you?*

This was in our grounds, here. When you look out here, that’s a little opening where we walked through.

*Mmhmm.*

Rather than go all the way to the bottom to get into the flats. You drove here?

*No, I cycled.*

Oh, you said, yeah. So what happened was, years ago we had a very elderly person lived here, and she petitioned, she said, ‘my husband cannot walk all the way down and round’, and she fought till she got that little opening here and this was what they did here. This is from my balcony, just looking straight down… the scaffolding… same spot, where the little path is. Did you cycle down the little path? Or you went to the front of the flats?

*I think I came down the little path, yeah.*

Well there’s the little path there. I’m surprised anything ever grew again. I was …

*It’s awful.*

It really was, and I say, people say, ‘what you taking photos for?’ And I say ‘I like to just have a record of it! Know what they’re doing’. And of course all these photos correspond to the other one. They were in four separate albums, but I try to get them altogether.

*Did you have a particular day of the month that you would…*

I can’t remember…

*At some point in each month*

Yeah, ah! It’s August, let’s get out there. Let’s go out. You can see the walls now, of the tunnel. I suppose they did a wonderful job, I suppose.

*In what sense, what do you mean?*

You know, to build something like that, the engineering work of it. Now this, was looking that way.

*Ah, ok.*

So this, I came out of my flats and used to stand by the entrance, the actual entrance to the main estate, and just… this is the … there’s the block, there’s the main entrance into the estate, and there’s the duel carriageway

*And it’s a very modest little carriageway, it’s not particularly offensive*

No.no, no. And that’s when they came in and started digging up all the trees. And, as I say, we looked like cones. Same view, month after month after month [laughs]

*Year after year after year*

Traffic all diverged, go this way, go that way. When was that – ’96, whay! But the dust and the dirt, we did suffer, I must say. I s’pose… you spoke with people in Leyton and Leytonstone, different situation again, you know. But I have got the photos of the tree and all that as well. And they very kindly took us, the local residents into the tunnel. I walked the tunnel before it even opened, with a hard hat and a yellow jacket. Anything to keep the natives quiet! To show us what a wonderful thing they’d built.

*Did you ever go into the Link Road offices?*

Yeah.

*And talk to them…what was their argument?*

They were not there to… they were only there to just placate the natives I think, but it was a done job, wasn’t it, it was a done deed.

*But what did they say? How did they go about trying to persuade you that it was a good thing?*

It was already… it wasn’t a matter of even … you know, they were telling you what you were gonna get. You know, that was it. The decision had been made and er people were going in all the time, you know, ‘what’s happening next?’ More or less, what was happening was main…was coming across. But oh, no, most people…as I say, the local fellow, he was just brought in to, as I say, it was very clever to bring in somebody local, that was familiar. Didn’t know him personally, at the time, I mean obviously after 6 years you got to know him, but at the end I think he was the most hated man in Wanstead. Nobody was very keen on him! I can’t even remember his name…I can picture him. I think they moved away once it was all finished. I think they got very good compensation.

*So tell me about the compensation issues.*

I can’t remember. We all had to apply, we were told as council dwellers we wouldn’t get anything, I’m sure at one stage, but they said it wasn’t our property.

*But you had the leasehold.*

Yeah, but even...you know, even… I think they were trying to baffle us with science, you know, if they couldn’t pay out. I mean people down the road, way back… and it went by the value of your property, so whatever they gave, it was all in prop…a proportion of…you wouldn’t get the value of your whole property, because you don’t own the property, you only own your flat. Somebody down the road with a house quite set back from the road, they were getting thousands. I can’t believe…you know, honestly… somewhere in here is how much we got, but it wasn’t a fortune.

*When we spoke on the phone, weren’t you saying something about you got…less compensation than the people on the other side of the flat…?*

Yeah, flats didn’t, the houses did better than the flats. You know I don’t know whether it was in proportion, as I say they the baffled us there there’s all the paper work from day one. I kept it all.

*Wow, you’ve got it all.*

I kept it all, I don’t know if the book, you see this was the arterial road, so this is what this er WS Atkins were the contractors and this is the paper work you were first given and this as I say all about the how about all always anyway…they kept you well informed if you could understand what it was all about it, but it was a bit too technical for locals you know, it’s all about 1976 and this was this and this was going…

*The department published a scheme with a revised highway layout.*

[Moaning in agreement] we were contract four.

*Contract four, contract three.*

Yeah I mean, was you going to sit down and read it all I doubt it. When all we wanted to know we don’t really want it outside our window. And you know we knew, I mean it looked very simple there Gardner Close.

*Oh yeah, so that your that you*

Yeah yeah, any of this you know you want to borrow or takeaway your more than welcome, I am sure it will come back.

*I would love too.*

Yeah everything’s there that Atkins gave out, maps

*Maps? That’s wonderful.*

And high court challenge and every month they gave you something else to and cause it was the conservation area with Wanstead, there January ninety three and you got a newsletter every month, they were doing the right thing, they were letting you know [Laughs.]

*They were letting you know but in terms of consultation what was that like?*

No no no, it was a done deed.

*Right from the beginning?*

Oh I am sure yes, definitely looking back now and here we have one of the first meetings there they are all finished walking I came down out the flat and went over there and took photos and they were all sitting on the green.

*So this is on the George Green?*

Yes this is the Twyford lot.

*The Twyford lot.*

The Twyford lot [laughs.]

*So erm erm you calling them the Twyford lot and your also saying the word dongers what’s that about?*

I think they called them dongers at the time, yeah I think that was the name, it seems to have back into my brain and they were just…and here this is interesting what they were doing.

*Oh there’s a Road Breaker Magazine.*

The treeee, yeah whatever I could get hold of.

*Oh that’s the ‘Dear Tree’ pamphlet, I’ve heard allsorts about this, I haven’t seen one yet.*

Oh well, the Evening Standard here we are that’s the famous picture

*Everything yeah yeah.*

[Laughing.]

*Amazing.*

The bloody tree was dead anyway [laughs] oh dear.

*Demonstrators and police clash in Wanstead today angry looking…*

Well they lived in the tree, they lived in there, I kept all the whatever papers local papers mainly yeah.

*So what was it like living with this on your doorstep?*

Ohhh [laughs.]

*So there was the road, obviously that was horrendous .*

Yes.

*How did the whole protest side effect you?*

Well I think we we kept well away we didn’t want to be near them you know we just wanted to avoid trouble you know really, when you know they’re all going on about this tree you know alright and they’re all crying over the tree and I thought ‘oh my god you go away and I am left with the tunnel [laughs] how very logical we were the mess over the green argh terrible absolutely so…yes I’ve never seen so many Police in my life.

*And there…*

There’s the houses, this is my legal bit [laughs.]

*So so what what is this you…*

These were the big houses which aren’t there anymore erm.

*On Cambridge Park Road?*

Park yeah were they got nice brickwork and these just before the night before they pulled them down.

*And you crept in and took photos [laughs.]*

Crept in [laughs.]

*Brilliant, so we’ve got pictures of beautiful…houses.*

Yeah you know it was I mean I mean you can see that’s Ennerdale that’s opposite you can see were that’s that’s the notices so you know…got a feeling that was Alan Cornish’s son I think he was a councillor and his son was one of the protesters, I’ve got a feeling that was his [laughs] I must have been crackers I could of got killed [laughs.]

*[Laughs.]*

When I was twenty two years younger.

[Laughs] and that’s so this is.

This is where the houses were behind there, this is…

*So this is Cambridge Park?*

Yeah the other side yeah.

*And it says Wanstonia free and then there’s Leytonstonia.*

Leytonstonia, yeah you had Leytonstonia yeah towards there yeah…the bailiffs came in and they were sitting on the roof and they were waving flags and I quite honestly though ‘they don’t even live around here’ [laughs] we could have done without them all sat on the roof.

*So do you think it would have been easier to fight your cause without them then?*

We we could it was you couldn’t of won anyway but really I mean look you know, they didn’t help matters [laughs.]

The last stand for rebels in battle of Wanstonia.

Yeah, oh we had everything oh the reporters wanted all out stories and would give you know and I thought to myself you know they are gonna go away when it’s all done and dusted they are going to go away and we are going to be left with it and that’s how you felt.

*Hmmm.*

All they did was bang these blooming drums you know they were quite our you know.

*So there wasn’t much communication really between local people?*

Some people made pals with them, the lolly pop lady she she lost her job and they reinstated her because she was always over there with her lollypop fight lets save Wanstead, she was very much into it Jean, you‘ll probably find have you met Jean?

*I haven’t met her yet but I am really hoping to meet here.*

Oh yeah old Jean she goes on the bus sits, she’s retired now yeah I know Jean, well yeah oh no she was going to save Wanstead she really was yeah, she was very much into it at the time I don’t know if I have any pictures of her here, you see she got the sack and got compensated and they reinstated her

*She got compensated?*

I am sure she did but as I say she she, well that was remember I took a picture of me sitting on the wall, that’s was outside.

*That was okay just across the road.*

I went in there as well, I went it in there and fell and went inside, so they made it into a shop front with t-shirts and I took a picture of inside over at my flats.

*Oh so this just for the tape recorder, this is an erm.*

It was a shop.

*A shopfront.*

Yes.

*Opposite the flats we are in now*

There’s a new little house been built were it would have been there.

*Was it squatted then?*

Yes yeah they took it over.

*They took it over and it says Wanstonia rising it’s called Wanstonia rising apparently, and they’ve got*

T shirts.

*Anti-road t shirts and posters.*

It was like that for quite a while, so I just went in and said mind if I take a photograph [laughs.]

*And what were they fairly friendly?*

Yeah that’s them there, I just said you know can I take a photograph, this was my main project was the fountain I didn’t want to lose the fountain I fought to keep the fountain.

*So where was the fountain?*

The fountain is where it is now.

*The fountain’s still there?*

Yeah yeah but its where I said it should go believe it or not that was so funny, they moved it oh I must have gone on someone else’s flat, oh yes I went upstairs to Harry’s flat in the block and di a picture when they were digging the hole [laughs] No I’ve got all these.

*All these Road Breakers.*

But as I say that’s when they were knocking the shop down opposite, you can see roof to the house there, you see the shape of that roof, there it is there.

*Oh yeah.*

So it’s…

*Yeah.*

You’re more than welcome as I say there’s a enough there for you to everything there.

*There is a lot, you’ve got it all.*

And that’s when we from the historical society we put a little tree bag and.

*Oh did you.*

Then it knocked over and we had to put another one there [laughs] no it was symbolic its symbolic I had to be part of the history you know we did so ninety four.

*And was it also a sweet chestnut? Was it the same?*

I don’t think so I think it was what we could get hold of [laughs] oh jean hang on here’s jean, erm picture on the side of the queen is jean, she’s dressed up. I thin k she loved it and and husband Ron, she dressed up as a Victorian.

*What, why were they dressed up as Victorian?*

I just try and think why they did that, oh they did they delivered a speech first given by queen Victoria in Epping Forest on May the sixth hundred years ago, so hundred years prior to that the queen had given Epping Forest to the nation hadn’t she.

*Which declared the forest to be the property of the people.*

Of the people yeah, but it’s not it’s owned by City of London [laughs]that was on the television that time and who were we filming , that one of that’s somebody I knew and I think on that one this I don’t know if I think my niece was somewhere there but as I say.

*Was your niece involved in protesting?*

Yeah, funny I saw her at an engagement party on Sunday I said are you free on Thursday says why I say I could do with you so I am going to work I’ll tell you what you were, she was always climbing up trees, she was very much into the environment she lives in the village Walthamstow Village, she does the green the gardening every year she’s very much into the green, I mean those that believe in it they love all that environment and the green and the trees and they still build a tunnel[laughs.]

*[Laughs.]*

This bloke when he went and laid himself under the, oh dear, he laid himself under the lorry under the… he didn’t want it to move so he laid himself I remember that he laid himself underneath.

*Do you know who it was?*

I don’t know him personally no, just this man and they said he was quite by the wheel, but he bloody laid under there what did he expect [laughs] yes this is all outside our flats, why can’t they leave our neighbourhood alone. No as I say people were…what can I say erm I accepted the inevitable but when that’s outside your house you know you’re it it’s a done deal isn’t it when you see things like that [phone rings in background.]

*I’ll just pause this again.*

Another 0845.

*No okay we’re ignoring it. I’ll still pause it actually until it ends.*

Go away, I don’t know what happened there something slipped. Don’t trust pritt stick it doesn’t last forever.

*[Laughs] no.*

Taking it around

*Ohhh.*

There’s there’s the post, I’ve got the postcard anyways.

*No I haven’t got the postcard that’s excellent.*

There’s Jean again.

*Yeah.*

There’s Jean again, but I have actually got the, I’ve got that stuck in my post card collection.

*Okay, so there was…*

Postcards…they must have had good money, money behind them people were backing them

*Yeah.*

There you are.

*So who’s this from? This is a letter…*

This must have been from Jim, Jim XXXX I refer to your complaint regarding the fencing outside, we all went in every day that weekend Gardner Close and the state of your lawns, what does it say the resident engineer tells me that the gas and electricity mains are still blah blah whatever.

*Still to be re-laid.*

Re-laid probably the work will be going on for another three weeks, work…everybody went in every week and had some complaint about something obviously with it all going on, but how many times can you go in over the course of six years. Silence in the lands…now when I phoned you you didn’t expect to see this did you?

*I didn’t, this is amazing you are a true historian. You’ve documented everything.*

Well they did come from erm the Museum of London they scanned some of these photos, I must have complained again [laughs.]

*[Laughs.]*

Further to your complaint regarding what it is debris and accumulation of rain water in the area just oh, as they took up you can imagine look.

*That was just filling up it was trenches filling up with water.*

Yeah, see that was the wall.

*Yeah.*

The walls coming backwards…as I say it wasn’t fair but then again as I say I suppose if you live in a place that was further down the Eastern Avenue that’s Reydon [shuffling] yeah they always had gas leaks laughs.]

*Oh wow.*

Obviously they were digging, what happens in Kingsway the week wasn’t it the other month and there everything got ignited link road fire traffic your going to hit pipes and things aren’t you.

*Yeah.*

I mean they’re quite boring after a while the same with XXXX I don’t think I’ve got many more pictures they stayed in Wanstead I saw him the other day, he took over at the bottom of our road, it used to be the bike shop that’s right at the bottom by erm Snaresbrook Station used to be bike a bike shop and then came a music centre and he squatted in there and he lived there for ages he kept being thrown out but after he settled in Wanstead he was the only one that did settle in Wanstead, I don’t know where he came from.

*So do you do you have more sympathy for him having stayed in Wanstead, does that…*

Probably suited him you know I am very er there’s that little part you would have come down, no I suppose it suited him there he is yeah but as I say I saw him the other week he was walking down the high street and I thought ‘oh your still here’. Yeah Leyton… and yet the flats always looked nice they always looked nice from the outside.

*Hmm.*

What was this one? So the other book is all about mainly the fountain, what what happened with the fountain they had to move it to build the road, so to move everything so it got lifted all in one go what a job that was and moved back moved further onto the green whilst they were building and it was going to be stood there or so long. And of course when it come to putting it were it should be [laughs] cause I was the only with the photos who knew were it was going to go, it was funny this crane this blasted big fountain and all of sudden some said ‘Dawn where should we put it?’ I said ‘I won’t even answer that question’ [laughs.]

*So did you erm I mean what the significance what was the historical significance of the fountain?*

Well the fountain was put there for the erm…Diamond Jubilee I believe ninety seven yeah 1887, I think it wasn’t the golden I think it was the diamond and of course it so significant because as I say next week the Queens has just beat Victoria.

*As the…*

You know was the longest reigning monarch

*….As the longest reigning monarch yeah*

There’s loads, these two books will do [laughs] Just as I say, I am trying to find these [shuffling] I think what has happened now oh yes that’s when he took over that music shop, as I told you at the bottom.

*Oh yeah.*

They made it real yeah.

*Environmental, environmental centre.*

Yeah they made it into that yeah yeah obviously must have had some substance some type to erm. We actually put on the display the historical society just to let people know there I am, must have had a curly bob.

*[Laughs.]*

Just to show them what we were doing and we oh here it is here’s the tunnel there the fountain, everything is so near in Wanstead. That’s where I worked there’s the George my flats are next door.

*Right, so the…*

As I say the fountain has been move before even when the made the dual carriage way so they had to what a feet of engineering I mean to actually hoist it it he worked so hard this man I have to say, he he was one man on his own we used to take him over cups of tea [laughs]

*Awww [laughs.]*

And it was amazing…anything to get a photograph [laughs.]

*[Laughs.]*

Erm you know amazing ow they did it, too lift the whole thing not to you know take it to the thing like that they take it down bit by bit.

*But they just lifted the whole thing up?*

The whole thing up amazing what they did, I was down the hole we found quite a few erm I display afterwards because underneath there had at one time a little pond, er wasn’t anything of great significance underneath but there was broken crockery clap pipes usual thing you find, so that was quite good fun for us really to find some artefacts so there we are. They dug a hole here to move it into.

*So it literally moved a few.*

A few yards back yeah.

*…a few yards back.*

But what a feat of engineering to even do it you know so yeah look.

*Wow.*

To actually lift.

*So they scaffolded the whole thing and they lifted it on a crane.*

They gone underneath got those you know amazing absolutely what am I doing I doing in the van? I don’t know.

*Driving [laughs.]*

I don’t even drive, shell suits were definitely in that day [laughs.]

*[Laughs.]*

Funny how the fashion changes, look at these it was I mean at the time you didn’t have, I mean I had a cine camera but you wouldn’t be able to see you know, when you think now on your phone you can video the whole thing couldn’t you.

*Yeah.*

Look how they lift it, I’ve got photographs as I say know body else has got [laughs] or would have taken look at this.

*Yeah, you clearly just had a very particular interest in the fountain.*

Yeah that’s right.

*In the fountain yeah.*

Well I was living in what was happening erm people don’t think the road but it was other things involved. You know it wasn’t just knocking down houses or making our life a misery it was thrilled with himself.

*So why were you, tell me a bit about why you were practically interested in the fountain?*

Well I am as I say chairman of the local historical society and it was important to preserve the fountain, very important er as I say 1887 in queen Victoria diamond jubilee er we wanted it as conservation area believe it or not [ laughs] even though they build a tunnel outside. Er so no no at was something at least we could save, we couldn’t do much about the road, we we’d fought the good fight and hadn’t won erm campaign celebrating twelve months of protest, they were here a fair while.

*What’s this?*

I don’t know what that would be, the lost tribe some card somebody sent me, right what is it that’s promised as in the name of the compensation consultant argh yes now this brings something back to me. We were all we got letters, you know like how they do now on the television now with erm if you’d had an accident at work a solicitor so we were all bombarded with letters with solicitor letters I think my mine was this one I was no this one was I was going to say Devon no it was Somerset and it was a case of erm it would cost you nothing erm but they would obviously get there share out of the compensation so obviously I wonder who this person was because I can’t.

*[Di?] McGetric*

[Di?] somebody named [Di. A?} would like to see their letters please pop round any time. So erm

*It’s a it’s just to put it in context it’s a very pretty little card.*

…Card yes very nice card

*With a picture of a lake on the front and it’s all hand written lovely hand written card on the inside.*

…Card yeah

*It says ‘Dear Doreen as promised I have here the name and phone number of the compensation consultants we have registered* with’. So obviously, that was the people er they felt happy to be registered with erm.

A12 to Hackney M11 link road compensation claim, if you would like to see their letters please pop around anytime.

*Okay, so this is from a neighbour this isn’t from I see I see.*

No no they must have .

*I thought that it was very odd that I thought it from the compensation company*

Yeah yeah there maybe something in here you know, as I say there’s a lot more books, I will I will if you’re going to continue I will you know even for a later date I will find out more things erm .

*Wonderful, they wished us all happy New Year [Laughs.]*

[Laughs] what now why have I got a beautiful card with a I never ever opened it, I think they I think at the time erm people were in to taking photos and making cards of local areas because we were losing it so quickly and I thought people were probably erm doing things like this er you have rush were everyone does something and decided will it be with us forever lets a photograph and make a card er I’ll show you something else that I am still looking for where was this I have no dear [mimics a victory noise.]

*Now there’s the trunk, there’s the trunk.*

And nobody would dare touch it and it was there for years.

*Oh wow was it, yeah it’s only been removed relatively recently.*

Yeah only yeah yeah.

*And I just want to read this because I says I interviewed her Maureen Measure recently.*

Oh Maureen funny I’ve got her membership card, cheque this morning for the historical society, yeah the name says Maureen, Bill did you meet Bill?

*Yeah Maureen had a lovely time, well done Maureen Measure thank goodness someone has preserved what’s left of George greens two hundred and fifty years old sweet chestnut tree. Aw.*

Yeah because her and her husband are chairman of Leyton and Leytonstone historical society that was funny I got their cheque this morning because they re-joined our one yeah.

*[Laughs.]*

As I say that’s where they blocked all across there, they were digging underneath obviously.

*Hmmm.*

No no they fought the good fight I must say, I just felt erm as I say everybody I wouldn’t say has their own stories but it affected everyone in different ways. As I say I just felt I lived with it, I couldn’t of been any nearer if I tried, I am trying to find.

*But did you do any protesting or resisting in anyway? You said you marched…*

We went to city hall and I am trying to think what we went for, we sat oh oh I will find it, I think it was maybe the compensation, I went with Doreen have you met Doreen Jenkinson? Oh you will have to meet her she lives over the road. Oh she was a fighter.

*Was she?*

Oh yes yes you’ll to look Doreen you’ll have to find. Doreen Jenkinson I can gave you phone numbers [laughs.]

*Wonderful wonderful.*

And if you say you’ve spoken with Doreen from over the road.

*Yeah, she’ll know.*

She’ll know who it is, I am just trying to find oh this was [mumbles] as I say never seen so much Jackson fencing in my life, I said it’s got a different camera take panoramic photos.

*Oh yeah wow.*

That’s quite a few years ago and lots of things have happened to me since erm…there’s a lot more I must have the original letter that says we can claim for compensation erm and how we got it in the end. I can’t remember even it couldn’t of been a fortune. Oh yeah they complained about the widths of the footpath and it is still miles to narrow I mean one day a bus is going to come around there and knock somebody flying, but what did they say always an accident waiting to happen.

*Hmmm.*

Erm nearly there as I say this is the only two books I got out, what was this?

*[Laughs.]*

What do we do now? There he is, Brazier his name was.

*Brazier? Who is he?*

He was the man who was in the link officers.

*Ohhh.*

Just came back to me, what was his…I can’t think yeah because as I say I’ll fish out the photos were he took us all down the erm down the link tunnel to placate the the.

*Was that the guy you said…*

Yeah that’s the on yes he still lives in Wanstead.

*So David Thornton.*

Yeah.

*Thornton he faces jail with his efforts.*

Yeah but erm as in say it was me I am trying to think who else, there was a dozen of us who got invited to go down so I must have been protesting I must have my my voice must have been heard but I didn’t do anything drastic I don’t think as I say it was definitely a hard hat job erm when we went down. I had Doreen Jenkinson, Jean Gosling and Brenda XXXX she hasn’t heard don’t know what happened to her, I haven’t seen her recently but Doreen lives opposite and Jean yeah they went missing when some of the trunk appeared back again possibly wasn’t even the same trunk [laughs.]

*[Laughs]*

I am very cynical yeah because they were going to make a bench out of it.

*Yeah.*

They were only going to do with it the final stand.

*Wanstonia that was on Fille was that Fillebrook Road?*

Erm possibly yes yeah.

*Yeah.*

Yeah they suffered down there yeah as I say I am trying to think were you meant I’ve always called it [Farleybrook?] not it is *Fillebrook Road.*

*Oh is it Farleybrook?*

No no some people call it Farleybrook some [mumbles] *Fillebrook*. This is only up to say ninety five.

*Oh.*

The cows…the cows came we always had the cows always wondered into the estate because they from then they got rid afterwards they had to take them all to move them up in to Epping Forest.

*Where were they coming from?*

Erm they always roamed around here they straight from Walston flats, you could seem them walking down Blake hall road, I’ve got pictures of me and my husband and my eldest grandson chasing them outside moving them on. They always came wondering about, we were quite countrified at one side, that’s outside this window [laughs.]

*Wow.*

Yeah so as far as I can tell you up to there…then that’s ninety five we won’t go any further [laughs.]

*[Laughs.]*

I think that’s enough for now don’t you?

*But I well yeah maybe enough pictures [laughs] but did I say I was going to about your other things*

Argh well that doesn’t go back quite as far.

*[Laughs.]*

Not quite as far, coming up the end of this year beginning of this year will be twenty years I’ve been doing the pearly work.

*So just to just to put that into context, I came into the flat a couple of hours ago.*

Yeah [laughs.]

*Maisonette.*

Don’t forget maisonette I shall make another cup of tea in a minute .

*And I walked into the living room, can you just describe the living room for me?*

Well it is a new you said the right thing and it has been called it before and when anybody comes I will say ‘welcome to the museum’ now it hasn’t been decorated in I cannot tell you how long, but it’s been kept clean erm because it started with one picture on the wall many many years, well I can tell how many years ago my erm granddaughter is the baby in arms in that middle photograph there with ladies and a baby. The lady holding the baby is my mother who would have been hundred next year if she, there’s me my contact lenses in no glasses, my oldest daughter and her daughter so we decided the four woman four generations were all the oldest, Katy is two there and she is now thirty two a married woman with two children of her own, so there photos of my great grandchildren. But the wall in my front room started off with one photograph, gradually grew to wedding photos erm my daughter, two daughters and then I was a young widow and I re-married so er there’s also my photograph for to my second husband, who’s obviously not the father of my children and then we got involved in the pearly work work charity work both my husbands had been cab drivers London taxi drivers who do a lot of charity work anyway, we are still aligned to erm a big taxi drivers charity that we support anyways but the pearly work came about my granddaughter the baby in the photograph when she was twelve er was a member of the Haverette Marching Band and they got invited to go to Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade as they token foreign band because American parades are all about America. Hundreds of people twirling and swirling and throwing people up in the air [laughs] they sent a video to Macy’s they been invited because they’d been national champions erm they said well there’s about fifty girls in the band that was maximum at the time but it’s a big parade we need er a London scene and of course the classic words was always ‘my grandma’s a pearly queen’. So we ended up that was ninety six so next year is twenty years that we set forth as pearly queens and kings to erm represent England in Macy’s thanksgiving parades, which was rather sensational I I must say. And even the parents of the girls in the band all put there pearl made their pearly outfits because they didn’t have titles on their back. Erm we worked hard for out titles my husband and I sound like the queen don’t I my husband and I [laughs.]

*[Laughs] well you are you’re the pearly queen.*

Yeah yeah yeah so street royalty we say street royalty. And erm we used to we were introduced into the pearly movement by pearly queen of Redbridge being the borough I live and she was a lady on her own, we used to erm give her a hand helping her at the time she was always doing singing at the time there’s great big massive speakers and you know all of her equipment that had to be taken into where every she went, residential homes she used to attend a residential home my late mother in law was and she asked if we would like to become her pearly prides that’s official pearly helpers and worked towards earning a title. Now earning a title you don’t just er put on a pearly suit, you can put something on trimmed in buttons which are very expensive but you’re on a two year probation so possible your first job would be here is a Sainsbury’s or supermarket erm we are collecting today for whatever charity and erm you stand outside there for a couple of hours goodbye here’s the collecting box don’t forget you mustn’t shake it , shove it in peoples face you just stand there and if people want to give they will gave. That’s usually the wettest day of the year [laughs] you stand dripping wet, the two hours sometimes become four hours could become six hours, your either breaking your neck for the loo or busting for a cup of tea and after about six hours they’ll come back and take the collecting box off you give it a shake and say ‘you haven’t done very well’ [laughs] and at the time you want to punch then in the nose but one has to keep smiling.

*[Laughs.]*

And that’s how they are really testing you out to see if you’ve got the stamina really and you can finish the day the same as you started erm they can be…

*So wat what year was that you started?*

Ninety sixish er yeah because it’s coming up to twenty years. You can only do full time charity work once you’re retired because you go out in the week you know in the middle of the week otherwise you’re a weekender when you finish work and erm no we worked hard to get our title and erm which we are very proud because er years ago it was always handed down, there family title but not always to your family used to be father, son, mother, daughter. A lot of people pearly kings and queens obviously move d out of London erm and didn’t keep up er the tradition so those titles have literally faded away er not a lot of people hand their titles to other people but you must er like everything else you want to bring it back again, don’t want it to die out you mustn’t forget the old traditions it’s a very important part of London tradition pearly kings and queens looking after self-help and looking after others you know, you’ve got to be willing to help anybody all the time.

*And do you know what the origin of the pearly king?*

Yes I can my dear [phone starts ringing] oh here we go. One double nine four [phone conversation] oh hi. [Audio Break] Right, oh yeah the history well east London people think South London and they are all wrong. Our founder is called Henry Croft, when you get back home I am sure you have a computer you can google Henry Croft you can google me if you like you’ll be…

*I will.*

It amazes me what and I think I am signing on YouTube somewhere and I don’t sing [laughs] and erm Henry Croft was born in Somers town, Somers town is back of Kings Cross erm just ordinary workhouse boy just very poor boy, poor family they all used to go in the workhouse and at thirteen he went out to work as a road sweeper, road sweeper for Camden and he saw that the costermongers, the costermongers being the market sellers. Cost of being an apple, monger, merchant a vendor a seller so apple sellers because that’s what they that’s what the first costermongers did they sold fruit and veg you know cheap and cheerful erm what you don’t sell you can always eat I suppose, that’s how I looked at that. And in every little community you had a market a hospital a church so you started with self-help, helping the people around you he swept in Camden Market saw the costermongers which er who did at the time was the fashion, they wore their waistcoats and a flat cap and a pair of trousers erm and they got into the habit a Victorian style of pearls, real pearly obviously poor people couldn’t. So they would trim their outfits with buttons just really draw attention to get people to come over and buy their wears erm were he got his ideas from nobody knows I mean he decided that he liked their concept, the way they were working I mean you know he was just an ordinary whether he could read or write I don’t we don’t even know you know it’s all hearsay and erm he encouraged them to help him to collect for charity. He wanted to give something back to the workhouse in seventy in 1974 they actually found one of his original suits in an attic in Romford. Because it’s not that long ago he was born in 1862 he went out out to work at thirteen in 1875, he died in 1930 so he was you know it’s not that long ago. His great granddaughter Donna and the children, Donna I sometimes see erm great granddaughter I see her at the train in Stratford going up she lives in Dagenham somewhere. But she has been doing it for quite a while, although her little girls have now grown up you’ve got to make three outfits then hers her husband would have to do his own. So erm it’s just something that grew, we could you can look up on the Pathe News of Henry Crofts Funeral, following the cortege is four hundred people dressed in pearly outfits, how it spread no idea but every market every borough had a pearly family a king a queen, princesses because they had such big families in those day, princesses, princess erm just giving for charity he really started something, I don’t he would of thought it would of grown so big but then again as I say you’ve got wars erm things die out things come back again and the pearly kings and queens today that I know erm apart from George pearly king of Newham whose father was a pearly king before him, we are all virtually first generation pearly kings and queens, but then we’ve got children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. So erm we can’t say, my parents as I told you earlier were in the markets, so that’s my only link to that type of life, that they were market people.

*Hmmm.*

And Henry Croft knew the costermongers the market people pushing barrows through the streets of London.

*But your parents weren’t pearly kings and queens?*

No no no not at all no as I say, George, George Davison pearly king of Newham his dad was pearly king of West Ham. Erm and if you come again another day I’ll get you a book and I’ll show you a picture of him and his father [laughing.]

*And are your children?*

They are my grandchildren on the wall, my daughter my eldest daughter erm has taken part in the New Year’s Day parade and Lord Mayor’s show, these are three of my grandchildren there.

*Oh yeah.*

Erm that my great erm that my nephew Dan erm Mark that’s Mark and that erm Michael, Matthew and erm Jemma, Jemma oh there they’ve grown a little bit there [laughs] erm.

*And your daughter?*

Daughter, my oldest daughter has a pearly outfit I’ve got her hat upstairs actually, put a few more feather son it [laughs.]

*Are they still around here or have they?*

What’s that my children?

*Your children.*

Oh well my daughter lives in they like Essex way.

*Okay yeah.*

Yeah yeah so erm I hope they’ll continue, if they continue on the pearly they’re still very charitable minded which you know is obviously nice you don’t have to dress up really.

*That’s a nice thing [laughs.]*

I have to say that quite erm we do support people at St Joseph’s hospice erm you know when you think of the volunteers I mean this young woman here just phoned me from an air ambulance erm they are all volunteers, they are most they are what you called what you call the unseen erm heroes you don’t see them we are a bit more flamboyant the idea with Henry Croft you dress up you showed yourself off. It was originally to say come and buy my wares but then it was we are collecting for a charity come and help us. So erm you know there’s a purpose to everything I suppose, but the volunteers but I see so many different volunteers erm and they all they are wonderful, without volunteers I don’t what this country would do quite honestly. You know so it’s a marvellous thing that they do do. [Hesitating] sometimes mainly so with a hospice yes you may have lost somebody and you want to erm it’s giving something back or it’s your last link to the hospice you know and that type of thing or variety you may erm know somebody or yourself got a child with special needs so you want to support them and its its all kind of charity work.

*But you’ll support any charity?*

Any charity well what what it has to be like a registered charity because many it’s you know they seem to set them up so quickly now with the you know people we are a charity ourselves, we belong to you erm have to register with the charity commission as well but we always say we will give our support to any charity that wants our support. As I say if it’s going out collecting or raising awareness erm or whatever yes no no we help anybody everybody [laughs] we try.

*What’s the strangest charity [laughs.]*

Strangest charity? Oh that’s an unusual, strangest charity? I suppose it would to be an animal one I would have thought, no not necessarily erm strangest charity? No no they are all mainly national charities that people know erm you know collecting for erm we are doing right now, thank goodness it’s nearly finished after eight years erm they erm memorial at Bethnal Green, I don’t know if you have heard of it? Stairway to Heaven.

*Yup yup.*

Erm after eight years I think I think we are nearly there. I mean that was a terrible tragedy when you think of a hundred and seventy three being killed going down the underground you know, one on top of another.

*What did happen? [inaudible.]*

They they gathered somebody tripped up and maybe possibly erm a woman with a baby in her arms and everybody has fell on top and suffocated. You know so they say there were no handrails or whatever.

*When was that?*

Well its seventy two years ago so I think seventy they had hoped to do it by the seventieth anniversary. They say people kept it hidden but in the war you wouldn’t have advertised to the army that you had a big tragedy, they would be laughing they would be think ‘oh good’.

*Hmmm.*

You know so but I do feel, we have got still a couple of survivors about there’s Alf and a nice lady we always speak to. Erm they were so young at the time, I mean they are in their nineties now erm it should of been done sooner but this things cost so much money and you know red tape and got important the stone and we’ve we’ve just paid the pearly’s one of the conicals erm on the erm actually on the roof of it erm to represent like stairs to heaven, stairway to heaven and dedicated to one of the people that got killed erm with the you know so its money all money. And I hope it will be kept clean and tidy. That’s a thing with a memorial is it’s got to be maintained after.

*Yeah, absolutely yeah.*

Yeah I should have to think on that one, you’ve got me thinking there [laughs.]

*[Laughs] wow it was kind of flippant question.*

In the two thousand that was at erm the millennium year, see my husband is sitting and riding and driving a donkey and cart because obviously that’s associated with the pearly kings. Once you got on in the world you owned a donkey and cart and we knew that we were going to Battersea erm for the millennium parade and it was fun and they said will you meet us there and we thought we going to walk alongside the donkey and cart and they said ‘no no up you go’ and little strips of seating I don’t know how he sat there my husband [laughing.]

*[Laughing.]*

I didn’t know what was going to happen next, we did it we did it. I’ve driven anything like that before he was always tap dancing and singing my husband.

*That’s your husband?*

Yeah yeah there and that photo was on the internet the other week, I printed it off I got someone to print it off for me and that was at erm I think that was they golden jubilee that photo, it’s about thirteen years old that photo. It was such a nice photo but I don’t know why it all of a sudden came up on the internet, I’ve no idea so I thought it’s such a nice photo of him but then he’s family they were showbiz there uncle was Alfie Bass erm erm a cockney actor he’s on sometime in black and white films.

*Okay.*

Also from a Bethnal Green family erm immigrants as I say their family story is really fiddler on the roof coming over you know.

*Yeah yeah.*

Settling in Gibraltar Walking in erm Bethnal Green, in fact I think it’s in a book on the east end somewhere. Books on books in this house [opening of draw] if not books we’ve got photo’s [laughs]. And I like I showed this to Larry’s daughter I told you about my second husband and he already [microphone is knocked over.]

*Oh whoops.*

Had to knock it over.

*Yeah it was inevitable wasn’t it.*

Inevitable going back and forth and in the book it actually says it lists Alfie Bass’s name as an east end Londoner you know east end actor and erm its funny because it says he was they erm youngest of the children and I said to my step-daughter yes well and the oldest of the ten children was your grandmother, so Alfie Bass and obviously her grandmother were brother and sister so I might eventually give her the book.

*[Laughs.]*

It’s nice to a bit of family history in a book yeah.

Absolutely yeah. And what was your husband’s name?

Larry.

*Larry.*

Larry Golding.

*Yeah*

I am going to be very careful this time.

*I am not worried about the thing, I am worried about if I can just move it over like that.*

And this was it, this came out in the Museum of London this book not so long ago and erm I picked up and I thought ‘oh Lilly’ it’s a lady I know. Lilly, she’s pearly king of Smithfield’s. Smithfield Market. And I thought ‘oh well’ let’s have a look to see if they put the photo inside…and somewhere I’ll find it in a moment. It was the full photo any there’s all of us at another Harvest Festival. This is a nice book have you ever…

*What’s this book? People in London no I haven’t.*

There we are.

*Oh that’s beautiful.*

*[Laughs.]*

*And that’s, you’ve got that framed on your wall haven’t you?*

What’s that? No no it’s another one.

*Oh no it’s a different one*

This is St. Paul’s Covent Garden. So we’ve got Pat pearly king of Crystal Palace erm that’s Peggy. Peggy, I am going see her Saturday she’s erm Highgate. Harry pearly king of oh I’ve lost track of him Bow Bells he’s erm Crystal Palace , Carol, John Scott Mile End. Arthur is Upminster, Lilly well you know that person [laughs] and Roy.

[Laughs]

Roy and Lilly that’s er mother and son

*Aww lovely*

[Laughs] And they’re looking down at the Harvest Festival offerings

*And all of the, you were saying that all of the designs are…*

Yeah all traditional, the v’s are the ups and down of life er flowers are friendship, bow bells, horse shoes good luck. They are really just good luck signs.

*Hmmm Hmmm*

Erm you know so er

*…These trousers are amazing*

Hearts clubs and diamonds and spades yeah so the more the the wheel of life but also the wheel of the donkey and cart.

*So what’s the significance of the donkey and cart?*

Just its part of their life of when they got on in life they could afford a donkey and cart so erm yeah so that’s what you what you want to do with them you know. I am quite…I don’t go over the top.

*So so I am just going to get you your jacket down*

Certainly my dear

*[Laughs]*

[Laughs] my dear

*God this is the most fun afternoon at work I’ve had in ever [laughs]*

Am am we are going to stop in a minute because we are going to have another cup of tea

*We are yes, we can stop whenever you like, and I am just enjoying myself [laughs]*

Oh right then, what’s that save the date oh I’ve got other bits for us

*Do you want to stop and have a cup of tea?*

No carry on and we’ll have tea

*So I just want to ask you I just want to… I want to I want to just I am so I’ve got erm*

Are you cycling to Clapton when you finish?

*Yes I am, I am cycling to Clapton*

It’s alright then yeah

*So I’ve just got erm Doreen’s jacket here*

Which is quite heavy.

*Which is quite heavy so I am not going to be able to hold it for too long but*

Well put it on the door knob if you want

*Tell me, just tell me no I‘ll hold it for a minute*

Right so erm, we normally always get our suits erm from the charity shop [laughs] no it’s a jacket anyway. So so of the men buy a suit but I mean it’s quite good enough because that’s not my original jacket, my original jacket unfortunately either out grew it and also the neck line gets very rubbed were the feathers you know go on them. So that’s another jacket erm on the photograph behind me the Anita Manning is wearing my original jacket and my daughters hat [laughs] erm so what we’ve got there is…I wanted to keep it as plain as possible to see the design, when you see a suit completely covered in buttons, it’s called a smother smuvver suit. Smuvver, s-m-u-v-v-e-r smuvver suit.

*[Laughs]*

But a skeleton suit is when you can actually see the outline of the pattern. And I thought it was too nice to go too much over the top.

*Hmmm*

Because apart from the buttons and bow bells erm the shoulders what have you, people do you give you their badges. Now the latest badge there should of been the Air Ambulance last week. There you are ta-da and then I went down to the Seaman’s Mission who are going to be our supporters, you know we are going to support them from our Harvest Festival but so people give you their charity badges to wear or if you’ve done anything for a borough. So I think that is that Lambeth? No that’s St. Josephs. Should be Lambeth, if we support help the mayor of the time

*There's Lambeth*

There’s Lambeth so this one must be Newham

*Newham*

Newham erm that’s when I became freeman of erm Freemen of the City of London

*And what does that mean to be a Freemen of the City of London?*

Freemen of the City of London, we normally somebody from a livery company will nominate you, but normally if you do charity work errr it’s a little bit of status thing you know but it’s just nice to know that you’re are freeman erm the old one you’d always say people say you can drive your flock of sheep over London Bridge when you’re a Freemen of the City of London. Meaning that if you were a merchant you wouldn’t have to the pay the tax or the toll to cross London Bridge to sell your goods in the City of London. So if I have had a flock of sheep [laughs] I could do it without

*[Laughs] you wouldn’t have to pay though*

I wouldn’t have to pay and as I say it erm we opened The Shard. Went up to the top of The Shard er and had pictures taken of London looking over London. I have vertigo so the first picture of me is hanging onto the wall [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

And of course it was the seventieth anniversary of V-day erm what was this one here. The diamond jubilee of the queen.

*And the sleeves, oh these are bow bells*

Yeah yeah bow bells and the v’s ups and downs of life and the title on your back

*So tell me about the title?*

Well, normally of the back of the pearly queen’s jacket you’ve got pearly queen of, well you see I haven’t got pearly queen because I actually have two titles. One is Old Kent Road because my late husband was born south of the river, in fact he was born in the same hospital and same year I believe as Michael Caine as as St. Olaf’s which is no longer there

*[Laughs]*

South of the river, St. Olives everybody called it and erm bow bells is St Mary-le-Bow Cheapside, look cracked a button I’ll have to sew that before the weekend

*Oh whoops*

Yeah it’s when you’re sitting back or on the train. Erm and yes I do go on public transport in my gear, it’s too heavy to carry I’ll wear it.

*Do people come up to you constantly and want to take your picture and?*

They do but the only thing is if you get on the train erm a crowded underground train they’ll put the newspaper up and pretend they can’t, your invisible they’ll not give your sight unless sometimes over the tannoy a very good driver would say ‘a pearly queen has just come in the carriage will someone get up and give a seat’ [laughs] it doesn’t happen very often but when it does everybody jumps up [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

Erm don’t always get a seat, I don’t think some of them quite make out you know people say ‘are you in fancy dress?’ and I’ll say ‘it’s not a costume’, it is actually a working outfit’ and just seen another cracked button [laughs] oh dear

*Oh dear*

I must have leaned up against something, it was probably was when holding onto the wall up on thee erm on the erm what you call it the helipad, I was holding on like this [laughs]. So no the rector of erm St Mary-le-Bow erm conferred the tittle on me and I am very proud of that title, the Old Kent Road is obviously given by the chairman of your society pearly king and queens society but erm bow bells I thought it was very very nice

*And why so so I understand why why the Old Kent Road, but why the bow bells?*

Erm only because I’ve organised the Harvest Festival with my late husband for seventeen years well as I say he’s been gone for four years so erm and we done a lot of charity work in the City of London. The pearly king I work with alongside he is erm pearly king of bow bells erm which is erm a proper title from the church and he felt he’s I working with him as his queen that I should er have that title conferred on me so I am very proud of that really [laughs]

*Sooo how often, yeah wow and quite rightly and how often do you re-do your jacket then?*

Well you’re always well as I say I’ve just spotted two buttons gone yes yes

*Yeah*

So that’s a fairly new jacket actually, it’s a couple of years old. But erm…

*So you’d start from scratch every few years?*

Yes yeah you can’t can’t do one sleeve, it got to be a pair of cuffs and work upwards

*Yeah*

And you always need a jacket in reserve for going out erm my hat had to have new feathers on so I er put put the jacket down or up up or down whichever is easier

*….I am going to put down up, up there yeah*

Erm yes when my hat had to have new feathers because if they get wet you like you’ve got a dead chicken on your head [laughs]

*I am just going to get your hat as well now, so you can just tell me*

No that’s sadly in need of re-doing

*It’s very beautiful though isn’t it?*

The shape is still there, the buttons will cost fifty pound each you know but I am very fortunate that I am friends with the erm owner of the button queen shop in Marylebone Lane and his idea of giving for charity and I can show you the letter because a bundle of button came the other day erm if he always said every September this time f year before the Harvest Festival he always sends a big packet of buttons and that is his donation to charity my buttons, they are much appreciated [laughs]

*Absolutely*

Feather the ostrich feathers erm someone gets me but they look a bit tatty because it’s been raining lately and we pour er that’s going I‘ve gone a bit skewiff there

*So we’ve got red white and blue ostrich*

Yeah red white and blue I’ve had different colours for different time but we’ve had such a lot of royals things that erm its seemed appropriate red white and blue very very loyal erm are the erm pearlies, very erm patriotic we try not to be political

*You’re not political?*

No very very proud that er as I say we drifted off the subject of the front room

*Yeah, let’s get back to the subject of the front room*

[Laughs] but the photos on the wall erm very proud of the ones of the royal family. Er the first one I think was Prince Phillip my erm husband is saying to him ‘Sir I was out in Pacific the same time as you in the second World War erm can I call you shipmate?’ which Phillip replies ‘I suppose so’ [laughs] it wasn’t very happy told that day but never mind

*[Laughs]*

Princess Anne you can see in the photograph, she was master of the erm Guild of Freemen one here and Prince Charles’s one there on erm I am being presented to him at Guildhall Prince Charles by the Lord Mayor of London I think that was Savory yes Sir Michael Savory was Lord Mayor of London and with him is erm the Chief Commoner William Fraser and erm I think that was the erm hundredth anniversary of air aviation, my husband was in the erm Fleet Air Arm in the wars so it’s a ... [phone ringing in background] hmmm who’s that?

[Audio break]

Museum

*Yes yes, we were talking about the museum*

Yes so erm yes so the walls now grown with all the photographs, all the royal photographs and the Queen Mother that was when it was a surprise one, I was it was the Queen Mothers hundred and first birthday. The hundredth birthday we’d all the pearly kings and queens had gone up, we had gone to Clarence House, we’d gone to the entrance and we had presented her with an enormous great big card black card with all pearl buttons stuck on it, you know Queen Mum Hundred and the lady’s in waiting open the door they must have been about three hundred years old

*[Laughs]*

We presented the card, we never saw the Queen Mother. Er thanked us very much and we got a thank you afterwards for er, yes and I’ve got the thank you I keep everything

*[Laughs] you do*

Anyways so erm the year later was her last birthday erm we were sitting here me and my husband, we were watching it on television saw the Queen Mother Blah blah blah and I said ‘why on earth am I sitting here? Let me get’ I went straight on the train, straight up to erm I think went to Green Park, cut through the park and just as I got there they opened the gate and out came the Queen Mother in her buggy and she drove around stopped by the Chelsea Pensioners came around and stopped and what happened is I’ve always got something here so I’d I used to have, I haven’t got now erm they used to erm have a little erm like erm heart but erm Mother of pearl heart, so like little souvenir and I used to buy a few if I went to a hundredth birthday or or a wedding I used to take it, a little souvenir from the pearly queen so I’d stuff one in a bag and of course I am literally she’s literally snatching the bag out of my hand [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

And of course she got to me and she to erm er very famous man at the back, with what do you call him? Backstairs something he was a valet er Ekery the man behind her ‘stop the buggy pearly queen’ ‘hello’ and straight away ‘who are you supporting? What are you doing? Didn’t know me personally, but knew pearly queen charity ’oh your doing your good work yes yes, what have you got ‘I said ‘oh yes I thought’ [laughs] and my husband said he was quite surprised because like half an hour I was sitting here

*Did he not go with you?*

No no [laughs] then half an hour later he said ‘I am watching you on the television’ [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

Someone in the crowd was taking photos and they send we will send you the photo and I thought ‘yeah okay’ and I got the photograph and I stayed friends with them ever since they’re actually erm they live in North Devon and they sent me the photograph and I think that photograph went everywhere

*Yeah yeah*

Yeah so erm yeah so erm I think that’s my old jacket actually, yes it’s got the hearts on the sleeve *yeah*

Yeah and erm as I say that was and it was funny funny because it was getting embarrassing, she was holding my hand and I think you know all these cameras on you and you think ‘there’s other people move along move along’ erm this was one that was erm the golden jubilee because that’s the gold train the DLR

*Ohhh yeah*

And that Sophie and Edward there, Harrys wearing the smelter suit can you see all very heavy

*….Yeah*

He doesn’t wear it now, he can’t wear he’s nearly ninety cant it’s too heavy now and

*It’s quite beautiful though*

And erm she got there and we’re laughing and what we’re laughing is she says ‘is there a toilet?’

*[Laughs]*

I said ‘no’ so she had go back and they had to take her all the way back to the beginning of the line so she could go to the toilet

*[Laughs]*

Yeah there’s quite a few of them so Margret, Peggy that’s Peggy who was our sponsor originally. Hmmm Brian’s no longer with us, he’s no longer with us these two aren’t either so there’s this there’s George I was telling you about his Father was pearly king of West Ham er that his brother he was pearly king of Wapping and and Larry Barnes he’s only recently deceased he was virtually very similar times he was erm belonged to the magic circle as well, he was a professional entertainer magician singer er did a lot for Hackney Empire. Whenever they had all time musicals so they so he always used to invite us oh XXX in the background [laughs]

*In your in your pearly?*

Pealry yeah oh yes yes so he always used to invite us along so the wall just grew, couldn’t put every photograph on the wall so Ian McKellen and Roger Allam is it? The one who’s in Endeavour?

*Okay*

Yeah the detectives that was at the Hackney Empire. That was we went to invited to one of their big doo’s, Harrys got another suit on can you see?

*Yeah*

His society he’s got Tower Bridge on it on that one

*Oh yeah*

And erm they said ‘oh Sir Ian can we photograph?’ and he said ‘oh only if I can have the pearlys with me ‘ I thought ‘oh well I don’t mind’ [laughs] and that was erm erm Philip Scholfield and Holly Willoughby before she had the last baby and that was This Morning television erm a man was allergic to buttons oh dear so they had psychiatrist sit with him and talk with him and then they brought us out you know waiting to see him [laughs]

*What he had like a phobia?*

A phobia for button yeah he only t-shirts and this psychiatrist chatted with him and was alright after

*[Laughs]*

I take everything with a pinch of salt, very cynical [laughs] very cynical. So erm I am saying Ringo Starr that was at Chelsea Flower Shoe

*Oh yeah where’s Ringo Starr?*

That was on the way out we were just going because it was three o’clock at the Chelsea Flower Show and you have to go you know because the Queen is arriving erm and as we walking out he was there for the George Harrison memorial garden and as we went out he just called out you know ‘oh you must be the best dressed people can I have a photograph with you’ and er where and someone else came out can I take the I’ll take the photo and I’ll send it to you, so it only snap but we’re pleased to get that. And that’s the Juke of Kent I think I think that was at the Palladium. Hugh Grant

*…Hugh Grant*

And of course the most famous was Elton John’s erm that’s out the Hello Magazine erm and that was erm…a surprise before we’re never know what we’re going to do, that is the fun of doing it. It doesn’t matter how many hours this was someone I mean obviously our secretary is in this modern world which I am not and it was an e-mail it was erm a surprise sixtieth birthday party in Shoreditch in the evening I said ‘no thank you’ I am not going it winter its miserable and ergh I said ‘Harry go one of the others’ because we interchange we work whoever is available so he said ‘no no I’ll meet you at Liverpool Street and we’ll get a bus down to Shoreditch Town Hall’ and we got there and I have to say I thought ‘Whats going on?’ we saw people outside taking photos and we went up the stairs to Shoreditch Town Hall just had it refurbishment then and straight away wristband and would we sign that we won’t tell our story to the newspaper and you think ‘whats going on?’ and you go in and in the foyer there was a big table me taking everything at face value all these cards, name places you know cards laid out ready to go on the table and I am looking Paul McCartney Daniel Craig Kate Moss all the I cannot you mention them they were there everybody and I thought ‘was it a look-a-like party is it fancy dress?’ no concept of no party somebody’s sixty so they said we’re combining it to make it a hundredth party and that’s Sam Taylor Wood in the middle she was forty and obviously David Furnish and the girl comes out who’s been touch with her secretary to say they said erm ‘right what we’re doing we want you out on the pavement as the limousine arrives, see very nice and yes and erm and all these A-listers are slumming it, literally slumming it East End Shoreditch wanted to be out there ‘ hello darling welcome to the East End’ [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

Okay if that’s what you want that’s what you get and can you go down now because Elton’s just arrived, so when I picked [laughs]

*So at this point you still had no idea?*

[Laughing] yeah no no idea, so we’ve gone out on the XXXX couldn’t have my photos done you can see I’ve not even got I thought to myself ‘I’ve not even gone that near to him I can’t believe it’ you know he goes in and as they arrive and of course they’re loving it they want pictures with us, Hello Magazine it’s all with them you know erm and they’re sending out glasses of champagne I could of stood there forever, it was just an hour meet and greet get them in check for charity bottle of champagne and somebody comes out and they said ‘they’re all asking after you would you like to join the rest of the party? We [gasps] we were in [laughs] couldn’t believe it we honestly couldn’t, in fact at midnight we always laugh Harry says ninety be ninety oh what I said I’ve got to because my husband is home you know, just disappeared off the face of the earth you know I said ‘I’ll only be an hour dear seven till eight, I’ll be home at nine’ erm he was definitely tap dancing with Kate Moss singing I’ve got a lovely bunch of coconut [laughs] David Frost came over thanked me for a lovely party [laughs] unbelievable and they say you know civil we worked into the private party six hundred lines and they said you know ‘please carry on what you were doing outside’ so I said well I am with variety and I know they are networking they talking about their next job they want to be they said ‘no this is a private party, they’re relaxing please go up introduce show they want to know who you are why you doing you know chat with them and I was going the funniest I always say the funniest thing was erm erm er your spawns her name the mother erm ohhh

*So terrible with these things*

With the ginger hair

*Yeah I know exactly*

Kelly Kelly’s the daughter

*Kelly’s the daughter*

So she was there oh I can’t think I can see her face now…I can’t think

*Neither can I*

Anyways so there’s the three of them standing there so she she says’ oh you know’ so I says that’s delightful to me oh its lovely she says and I say I know and went you looked very nice Kelly and I’d had enough champagne by then and she went to me ‘by the way this is my husband’ now I mean I think you can tell Ozzy Osbourne [laughs] yes I know dear [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

But David Furnish he absolutely drove me crackers he was going ‘we should go over to Elon, tell him’ because we’re sitting like this ‘tell him its wonderful’ I am going ‘Elton your party’s wonderful’ ‘do you think so? ’ because they all read my bags oh its wonderful nobody’s going to believe this [laughs] honestly everyone know A-lister was there say Paul McCartney Hugh Grant all of them everybody was there for this party. Anyways I said to Harry ‘I am terrible I never except a lift’ and they said to Harry you he said I can say he was quite happy with the dolly birds you know

*[Laughs]*

And erm not that we recognised half of them, she’s just coming back now its Natalie Imbrug… [tongue twisted]

*Imbruglia yeah*

She’s coming back now and she was just she was popular at that time and erm er he said’ they’ll send me home with a cab’ you know back to West Wycombe and I said ‘ no I am going go ‘ I said ‘I’ll get a cab outside back to Liverpool Street’ I mean I can’t help it Liverpool Street Wanstead I walk out the door I am home it takes longer coming home by car than on the underground you know you sit in traffic I don’t want all that and I’ve got the gear I went to get it home and get it off. I’ve got out got to out they’ve walked me to the outside and of course you’ve got the steps going down again so who goes flying down the stairs oh dear and I thought this is going to be the picture that goes in the paper the one where someone falls out the nightclub with their legs in the air because thank goodness it wasn’t, the police came running I went down I feel on my hand like that and all the light on us and I felt like Princess Dianna all the light flashing from the cameras and the police said ‘are you alright?’ ‘no just get me home’ which they did.

*They took you home?*

Oh yes and I ended up at Whipps Cross because I broke a bone in my finger in the morning

*Ohhh no*

Erm in the later afternoon I was at my next job which was opening a pie and mash shop in Romford and I sat there in front of with this table this tatty old table with this plastic table cloth [laugh]s and I thought ‘how have the mighty fallen’ [laughs] literally from the Elton John party one day to pie and mash the next

*Oh it’s lovely though that you’re able to interact with those two extremes of society and completely at home with both of them*

Ohhh I have to this we I work with a another pearly king now Bob, very nice I must mention Bob because he’s done so well in the last of couple of years he was one of the keepers of the crown jewels at the Tower of London and he always supported Hackney hospice St. Josephs and he was coming up to retirement two years ago and he raised for hospice about thirty six thirty eight grand. Erm making fundraising evening at the tower in the private bar there, got a private bar at the tower its lovely [laughs] and he said ‘I’d like to carry on with my charity work’ so I said Harry and I will introduce you into the pearly society erm you know. You’ll have to write you credentials of what you’ve written what you’ve supported who you supported over the years how much you’ve collected, just a presentation and I said ‘I am sure they’ll take me and Harrys word for it anyway after twenty years yes’ erm but no we’ll introduce you into the pearly world and that would be nice you can become Harry and I’s pearly prides no different to…and has really worked hard erm Bob to get to that stage and I must say erm I always it’s not what you know it’s who you know. The fact that he worked at the Tower of London and his wife still works there, last year when we had the poppies who was invite into the mote, into the mote for the poppies and then on the Armistice Day we were there erm it was wonderful I mean what privilege as I say it’s not what you know it’s who you know and it’s all these different people you know and I always say to me ‘you always tell me every jobs different’ and I say ‘you never know who you’re going to meet’ and it doesn’t matter I say ‘it can be an old biddy of a hundred in a pokey room you know with her neighbours who made her a sponge cake for her birthday’ but you still go with you hundredth birthday I always take cards you know and a little present…and you’re meeting people and it’s so different in your retirement it’s a wonderful way to spend you he’s loving it, he’s bored stiff this week because we haven’t been anywhere [laughs]

*So how often do you have engagements?*

It could be every day at sometimes it can be every day erm but as I say what happened here with the room is the fact that my husband was so ill that er people wanted to do interviews or photograph I couldn’t always go out, I couldn’t leave him for that many hours. So, obviously that’s how the front room became strewn with red white and blue pillows. The throws were bought for me erm you know all the knick knacks people mainly what people have bought me actually

*I mean there are just hundreds of pearly king and queens things*

Things yeah [laughs]

*Erm knick knacks, models*

Models novelties

*And pictures novelties and pictures*

Yeah yeah

*And Union Jacks everywhere*

And Union Jacks that was my that used to be my thing, when I first become pearly they all used to have, have got pearly handbags obviously numerous ones but something to brighten it up I think it must have been something maybe to do with the golden jubilee I decided a red white and blue scarf. Ohhh I know what I did I bought a red white and blue shirt in Walthamstow Market, I couldn’t get a waistcoat and I did my usual, I just cut the sleeves out of it still got it now and wore it as a waist red white and blue and I bought a red white blue handbag, they weren’t so popular as they are now so that was my thing. Everyone the pearly queen with the red white blue handbag and red white and blue has become my thing [laughs] but its bright its nice you know so erm that’s why the front room is like a museum

*And the front…*

And of course chairmen of the local historical society all the history books as well

*Yeah yeah yeah and you obviously just keep and archive and catalogue absolutely everything*

Yes I I I have to say

*It’s amazing*

I have to say I have upstairs a hundred and forty album family photos [laugh]s I have books from 1996 of all the pearly, every event we’ve ever been too every page has either the information a leaflet and a photograph to prove any story I can tell you I can match it to a photograph [laughs] I’ve always taken photos, I’ve always I’ve always had a camera on me you whenever know who you might meet or something might happen erm it just and I visits now everybody’s got cameras on their phone. I can remember my children my grandchildren my children saying ‘oh no not a photo mum’ you know at family gatherings, now now what with the selfies [laughs][ everybody’s taking photos. But having said that I print my up, every photo as I literally every event gets printed up straight away straight in an album, there’s no mucking about [laughs]

*Wow wow*

And it’s nice there will be a time when I can’t go out, I don’t know when that’s going to be erm

*Doesn’t seem to be any time soon*

No no no I have been indisposed I have been out of action for some time on different occasions

*Okay*

But as I say even when my husband was very ill they never limited me because I used to have six o’clock every morning was the district nurse came around and I was always washed and dressed when they came, I am not one with strangers to be in my pajamas erm you wouldn’t want to see it er [laughs] and then at seven or eight o’clock the carer would come into shower my husband take up his breakfast, by about eight nine o’clock he was happy for the day. He was fresh nice pajamas had his breakfast got his newspaper and it was usually ‘haven’t you gone out yet?’ he wanted peace and quiet had his television upstairs. So I could do a morning job

*Hmmm*

Erm if I knew I would be out over the lunchtime I would have the carer come back, I would prepare the lunch sandwiches have it all ready just for the carer to pop in take the tray up and have a little, quite happy with a male carer talk about football whatever erm sing a cockney song. I must say the district nurse and the nurse who had him to the very end, they said l they missed was him singing every morning to him, didn’t matter how ill he was he would sing a cockney song to him

*Will you sing a cockney song to me? [laughs]*

You’ll be sorry and erm I still carried on with my cockney my pearly work er wouldn’t say I was limited but I made sure I time it and I was very crafty then because he used to say ‘what time will you be back then?’ and I used to say ‘er four o’clock’ knowing I would be back at three

*Hmmm*

Always stuck on an extra when I came back ‘oh your back early then’ yes yeah got here quick as I could’ kept him happy. You know sometimes you’ve got to tell a little lie, keeps kept him happy no he suffered towards the end so erm you know it’s been four but erm as I say you know I am one of those, I don’t I I do get very annoyed with people when somebody passes away they never mention them again, like they never existed and I think that is dreadful, you know alright I've got photos all around couldn’t forge if I tried, not particularly him but anybody you know you you can talk about the person who’s gone it’s not like a subject you must because there dead you mustn’t talk about them , it’s like they never existed and I think that’s horrible.

*No it’s nice to keep them live in a way isn’t it*

Yeah definitely oh definitely, right let’s make that tea [laughs]

Forget what’s it called

*It has*

Oh dear, talk about an afternoon

*[Laughs]*

Oh well

*[Laughs]*

I didn’t see tipping point or they did the yellow badge first erm so he could earn a living then he did his green badge and then when we had some money together this …just before he died in 74 this is we had the whole house whole place done out with this, this is Axminster XXX this is forty odd forty odd years old and it’s just wearing out mind you considering me and second husband had five kids between us I am surprised it was wearing out

*Wow [laughs}*

But erm this was the whole flat from top to bottom, you had fitted carpet when you we got a few bob. So erm that’s the last now as they say I don’t even look in this room [laughs]

*I wouldn’t want to change this room it would be…*

No no it’s it’s for the kids, it’s your problem you know [laughs]

*[Laughs] oh yeah amazing*

Have another biscuit

*Would you like one?*

No not for me I am quite happy

*Okay I’ll have another one*

Yeah, so where’s your bike?

*Erm*

You padlocked it to a railing?

*Erm slightly disorientated now, but yeah I padlocked it to a railing*

Oh right when you came you say XXXX downstairs

*Hmm*

Yeah so no its got a I can’t tell you how many times the walls been photographed by different company [laughs]

*I am sure I am sure*

I mean there’s lots more photos with other celebs buts it’s just the ones that er must get a picture with Bob actually now that I am working alongside him erm very nice man, he’s got his title he done two years at Forest Gate he lives in Stratford so

*So he’s Forest Gate?*

Pearly king of Forest Gate yeah very very nice man very pleasant…his wife unfortunately because they’ve shifted the goalposts now erm she’s sixty in October yes erm cause we all in my time retired at sixty she’s got to do sixty seven so although she’s officially his queen and she has started making herself an outfit which is nice erm course you know it’s only well I can’t say she can work at the weekend because at the Tower weekends are their busy time and as you can imagine

*Yeah yeah*

So she doesn’t, I think she will be with us next no not this Saturday the following Saturday is Maidstone its Hop Festival time. So she will put on her outfit then.

*So you were saying anybody can have an outfit but only officially a pearly king or queen when you have a title bestowed on you?*

When you have a title, when I am saying that we have had people in the the past get in touch with us say ‘we’re doing a show me and my girl we want to dress as a pearly queen’ because that’s you know ‘is that alright with you’ And we say we can’t say no you can’t say ‘no you mustn’t put on that’ I mean how many times where was I the other day when somebody said ‘oh when my girl was at school we had a fancy dress and dressed as er er pearly queen’ you can’t say to people ‘no you’re not allowed too’ its [stutters] you just can’t you know erm some of them the people you know territorial if you pearly queen of an area or what have you, it it’s your little domain isn’t it in fact because next I don’t know I couldn’t do erm a interview the other week [stutters] for next week I had to do it already is a radio station somewhere in Romford I think and they’re doing for the Queen..erm succession not succession length of time she’s been on the throne erm he’s interviewing pearly queen a drag queen erm queen of the jungle [laughs] as many queens as he can get

*Queen of the jungle?*

So its erm I am a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here [laughs] [mumbles] oh she was o today on tele Stacey Solomon

*And a drag queen brilliant [laughs]*

Queen of the jungle there aren’t many queens are there different queens [laughs]

*Yeah well it’s a good idea though, I like the idea*

Yeah but people come up with different ideas yeah, well I am at lunch next erm erm er Wednesday and its erm I belong to the Royal Society of St George and they’re doing just like a lunch at the Union Jack club which is near Waterloo. So it will be nice to go to it, that’s why funny enough I’ve got they erm rosette out that rosette is not normally there

*Oh right*

He phoned me and he said Harry said to me ’have you still got your rosette?’ so I said ‘yeah I've still got pictures of the Queen at the diamond jubilee’ and he said ‘are you going to wear it on your jacket?’ I said ‘if you want me to’ so I’ll stick that on next week so I brought it down stuck it there to remind myself [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

Oh I’ve got loads, there bags and bags of all different things, those were made for me by a lady in St. Josephs Hospice

*There knitted*

You know the knitted dollies

*Yeah*

And I said to her when I once chipped in and I said ‘have you ever got pearly’ she said ‘I only made them once and that will be for you’

*Did did she know you?*

Yeah

*Yeah*

Only through she’s a volunteer

*Okay*

Yeah so

*They are lovely little little…*

Of course my husband was the pearly king with a beard so the beard and those that one over there the beard yeah

*And the baby is amazing*

Yeah that was I went to that was a school in Chingford erm what they did very clever, people come up with such lovely ideas and what they did erm they sent a note home to all the children that they [laughs] unbelievable I’ll take another pearly queen with me erm every child in the school would have an individual photograph with a pearly queen and they would give a pound… there was over a hundred children [laughs] so can you imagine all these kids…me and Christine she sat on another chair and every child come up and we had to smile and she went ‘I want to die with these kids’ [laughs]

*[Laughs]*

Listen it was a very nice way of raising money that is an original erm etching there that one that sketch

*That’s beautiful*

That is absolutely… this is erm now who is it by? Percy Smith. I’ve got his history upstairs and what it was erm someone wrote to me I put in a frame it’s in a massive big erm surround and erm she wrote a uncle of hers had erm been an artist this Percy Smith and she got she found his portfolio erm from the twenties and he had this picture of XXXX can’t see erm I don’t think so

*It says ‘finally proof at tops, fault at top’*

Final proof is the final yeah yeah

*Fault at top, can you see a fault at the top?*

Goodness no

*No*

Well as I say…

*The castle the does it say? The castle the*

The cost of queen, costa queen

*Ah the costa queen yeah yeah yeah*

And erm she found this portfolio and and this was one of the pictures in there and she wanted to know who she was and she didn’t know and it so happens I did know who it was through the historical connection I did know who she was so I could give her a name and she thanked me sending by sending me the picture which was very nice [laughs]

Aww

I have had that made by someone the school…

*Your husband had that made?*

For me yeah

*That is I mean that is gorgeous*

The funny thing it looks like my daughter my eldest daughter and that’s very that

*What is it? Is it ceramic?*

Yeah oh so heavy

*Yeah*

No he had that made, the children at the school gave me that when we had his photograph taken

*I mean that’s just brilliant*

I know and that I think I picked that up at erm some antique craft fair or something

*Yeah*

And erm but but my granddaughter was here Friday and brought the children’s starting school today and erm I said what’s you know I know I am not in this world but have a look on eBay and she saw there was a plate with all pearly kings and queens dancing around, what was the other thing? There was something else pearly oh I’ve always been after the I was promised them once but they never reached me erm was the toby jugs the pearly king and queen

*Hmmm*

So she said they’re on there you know bid for them and I’ll keep an eye on them, what other things have we got this lets take off us [laughs]

*[Laughs] very very lovely*

Erm dear…oh no they’ve someone s put this back to front, there pearly stuff

*[Gasps] wow should we turn it around, do you want to turn it around. Shall I out my tea down and turn it around*

That’s alright, tell me if I am going right way

*Yeah you’re doing fine*

I am doing I am doing fine

*You’re doing fine you’re doing fine [laughs]*

Doing fine

*There you go*

What time you got to get home? [laughs]

*Sometime*

Sometime [laughs]

*I should probably head off soonish but…*

No no you can this this must be mouldy I can’t tell you how many years old this is, this it is actually chocolate but I wouldn’t open it. That’s it kings and queens someone had it made up when it was first thing you could its

*Oh wow*

I mean its easily done now on the computer but years ago it wasn’t so there erm George, I told you his dad suit, now I am wearing one of Peggie’s hats my hat wasn’t even made so that tells I was wearing one they she had she wore see there they’ve got different XXX there’s Peggy, Joan she does and Mame that’s Georges sister. And this must be its chocolate it must be all mouldy

*Can we see what, does it have a date on it? I am just for the tape this is a…what would you call it a?*

A selection box of chocolates

*A selection box of chocolates and each one has got a photo of a curly…a pearly king or queen on it and it says the kings and queens of England by milk chocolate and erm Doreen and Larry are there and what’s the…does it say the date*

It must by the sell by date 02

*A sell by date yeah the tenth of July 02 best before so it’s probably made quite a long time before that*

Yeah so at least thirteen years

*Beautiful beautiful*

And other things that I’ve picked up or people a lot of things people have given me these shells funnily enough that was a taxi driver he wanted to me somehow get it on the front of my hat but you can’t always do these things and if you drew a hole your frightened it would be split

*Yeah yeah*

And that’s erm

*And erm you were you did tell em this earlier, but you there all handmade and you do it all yourself?*

Yes yes they’re all handmade

*It must take it must be hours and hours of sewing*

Yes they do, they take months. If you talk with Bob, he’s the latest recruit his suit took him a good three months

*And he does it himself?*

He did well always with a little help from somebody you know with wives and husbands most of the men have done very well I mean Harry’s got Harry got harry had It like Henry Croft, Henry Croft had a suit for every day of the week we’re told Henry Harry pearly king of Bow-bell must have had about five suits. A man on his own he was quite happy to sit at home, men are quite peacocks I always think they want to dress up don’t they

*[Laughs]*

And erm but of course they’re too heavy for him now because he’s got problem with his his back so he has to, oh I just saw Alfie Bass I just saw what I was looking for earlier. Alfie Bass 1916-XXX was the youngest of ten children born Gibraltar Walk Bethnal Green to a cabinet maker. Most of Jewish immigrants were either tailors of cabinet makers right. erm so he was the youngest and as I say his oldest was erm Lisa who’s there, that’s Larry’s youngest daughter, her Grandmother so her Grandmother and Alfie Bass were brother and sister and he was oh just so young he was in Bootsie and Snudge on the television erm quite well known in his time

*Well know yeah, well I am terrible with these things because I don’t really watch tele but…*

Yeah but no as I say on London Life channel eight erm they’ve been doing Ealing Studio films black and white films just after the war and he been featured in quite a few. He was never a star star

*Hmmm*

Oh there’s the other one with Gemma sorry

*It’s lovely*

What happened is the kids, this arrived a few weeks back, it’s a bit small

*It’s enormous*

No they wanted bigger I know [laughs] they would have their update so erm yeah [police siren in background] so I say hope she’s got three children yeah and Larry had two girls. There’s my three children that’s a while back and erm we’ve just got all children [laughs]

*So I probably should go soon*

Well enjoy your tea

*I’ve just seen…yeah I am enjoying my tea I am enjoying my tea*

Have a biscuit, no as I say I am very fortunate Wanstead High Street they have a very nice erm nice Turkish run I would call it an English café so you can either have a free up which is not good for you or you can have er a proper dinner and quite honestly I end up I do stock my fridge up I end up being on my own still frozen everything, if you open something you’ve got to eat it all week haven’t you as one person on your own

*Yeah*

So I find I east out quite a lot because as I say I am out this weekend I am at hotel, so I’ll be eating out

*Of course*

It’s no cheap to be a pearly queen I have to say [laughs]

*Do you have to pay for everything yourself then?*

We pay for everything, very I have to say last week I was very cheeky and I I suppose because it wasn’t for myself I actually we got a very good donation for doing this XXX I say very good to us we were satisfied with it erm but I actually went up to the girl there and also a nice young girl like yourself and I say erm ‘Lizzy I said Lizzy I said erm you know we’ve come in two cars best we could do’ I said ‘any chance for a bit of petrol money for the lads’ lads and mentors [laughs] ‘ oh oh we’ll see what we can do you’ you know they’ve got petty cash so I got them twenty quid each for their petrol but if you don’t ask you don’t get

*Quite*

And BBC give nothing

*Absolutely, really?*

Oh dreadful the BBC are absolutely diabolical erm you literally have to beg you know they look at you like your crazy and you say ‘you don’t work’ I would say ‘you don’t work for nothing’ [laughs]

*Yeah*

But you’re a pearly queen you give you services free to charity [laughs]

*Yeah quite*

Oh its craft honestly…no as I say you know erm no listen the minute you get in the car and drive away no matter who’s driving you know tis costs you but in your retirement it’s a very nice thing to do you get you put something back into the community you hear so much of people taking out its nice to know we can say ‘no’ we are senior citizens we’ve got our pension but we’re still willing to help and do thing s erm for other people and why not and why not you know its

*Quite and there are perks aren’t they? I mean not everybody gets to go to Elton John’s sixtieth birthday party [laughs]*

Of course we always say we always it doesn’t happen very often free pie and mash [laughs]

*When it does, quite yeah just as important I might add*

No no no we always say you know what as the I mean even as I say going on the Helipad that was quite an experience

*Yeah*

I mean I have to say I might of got a little bit closer as I say I was holding onto my hat the wind was [laughs] what am I doing the weather that’s been . And at the start I opened the curtain again and funnily enough there’s not a lot of traffic out usually at this time of night it’s starting to build up [traffic noise] but come on just to get a noise…

*So maybe we should finish on one last thought on the M11 Link road or maybe just the sounds of the M11 Link road*

The sound erm no traffic the roads empty [shouting] last week the slip road to the M11 was being repaired and this from the Green Lane roundabout was solid so as I say I had that wedding Saturday so I phoned XXX don’t even come for me it was just you know go down the station and I XXX [traffic noise] its quicker than train and it was but this was as I say from the window now to about all the way XXXX [traffic noise too loud]

*Yeah yeah*

All happened here my dear

*Yes*

That was the beginning that was the beginning, but I will do if you come again I’ll fish out the photographs and we’ll walk the tunnel

*Yeah that would be fantastic*

That was so funny half a dozen I guess to walk the tunnel and we walked from one end to the other and walked the whole length of the tunnel to show us what it was going to be like so I went down the tunnel…I think he was just really to keep us all fairly happy because look now look at the dirt I wouldn’t be going out there to clear it up [closes window]

*Did you ever consider moving?*

No [laughs]

*No nope*

Oh that was the option you know why don’t you move, why should I move? I’ve lived here all my life its suits me

*Hmmm, it’s my home*

It’s my home yeah I’ve been here forty eight years now I mean the kids have been married [closing blinds] from here, we’ve buried a few from here as well quite a few funerals from here as well. No I wouldn’t want to no, definitely not I always say to the kids you know they’ll take me out only one way from here [laughs] No I am not a mover really you know I am quite happy where would I go to? Wouldn’t even consider going to my children I mean why they go to work Monday to… I look out there see that station keeps me here [laughs] when I come home, come out of Wanstead Station I am home.

*Excellent, well that seems like quite a good place to stop, unless you want to sing me a cockney song?*

No that’s fine no I am when you you erm come again your more than welcome and I shall rake you out loads of photos [laughs]

*Fantastic*

I shall do when they erm fountain went back, I’ll find the conversation letter I can’t honestly I can’t remember how much it was it couldn’t have been much very insignificant. I can’t remember if it was a few hundred or a couple of thousand it wasn’t anything brilliant erm yeah as I say I say I’ll find the letter I’ll find the letter, if that’s ninety three to ninety five I’ve got six seven eight nine, ninety seven It was supposed to finish

*Yeah*

Ran over two years over ran

*Two years*

Yeah so erm as I say I am quite happy you’ve brought back memories actually I think we went through hell [laughs]

*[Laughs] you did you did*

And I’ll also find out why on earth we went to city hall, we went with councillor Burgess we went we were in there you know and I am sure Boris was sitting there and we all went round and stood up we’ll all told to sit down [mumbles] and protested in a small way I think really I just didn’t feel connection with the protestors…they weren’t my type of people when I am you know they were weird and wonderful way out people erm you know and they didn’t live here and what were they protesting for. It didn’t really affect them. I know they were fighting for the environment save the trees and all the rest of it but we just I just thought they were trouble makers really and not really not helping the situation

*Hmm*

But you know get hold of Jean she was oh she love talking with you, you think I’ve talked your ears off wait until you get hold of Jean and the other Doreen

*I would love to yeah I would love to speak to them*

Yeah

*Erm shall I turn this off then?*

You may indeed

*Unless there’s any last?*

No that’s I have no last wishes

*No last no final words [laughs]*

[Laughs] no final words

Thank you very much

No no as I say the books re here any time you want to.

**Name of interviewee: Doreen Golding**

**Project: Voices of Leytonstone**

**Date of interview:**

**Language: English**

**Venue: Interviewee’s home –**

**Name of interviewer: Polly Rodgers**

**Length of interview: 02:37:15.0**

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