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*Okay, so it’s now recording, so can I just start with you, and can you just tell me your name, please?*

RK: Ros Kane

*And will you spell it for me?*

RK: Yes, R.O.S for Sugar, K.A.N.E.

*Brilliant, and can you tell me your date of birth?*

RK: No, I don’t do dates of birth.

*Fine.*

RK: I don’t do age.

RL: Fair enough

*Absolutely fair enough. Same question to you, can you tell me your name?*

RL: Richard Leighton, that’s – you know how to spell Richard, and its Leighton, it’s L.E.I.G.H.T.O.N

*Brilliant.*

RL: Birthday , 1st of the 1st 1949. I know I don’t look that young, but I am that young.

*Thank you very much*

LW: Laurence Wortley, known as Laurence of Leyton. Was named that by the local editor of a local paper, and I’m a war baby

*You’re a war baby*

LW: Yeah, August ‘39

*Fantastic. Thank you ever so much. So just before we turned the tape recorder on, you were just starting to tell me where it all began.*

LW: Well unless the others have something different to say, there was a Lister Goldsmith scheme, which was tunnel it, and put a – can’t remember… linier park, on top, and as the government at the time, I think at that time it was under Mrs Thatcher, erm, has absolute power, er it was obvious that they were going to try to build it, and they, people, the erm, focus of the plan at that time was in Wanstead and I believe Mr Goldsmith still lives there, I don’t know about Lister, anyhow, it went on for a number of years, and it was well supported by all the people, and well financed and everything else, and everything was done as per the book, but after several years, it was realised that there was no attempt to come together with the people of the area and the government, so then there was the campaign No M11 Link Road, er the local government at first, this is in our borough, Waltham Forest, which it was, didn’t oppose it, their idea was that the strength of the – I was told by the deputy leader at the time – the strength of the national government was so strong that they thought the best thing to do, though they didn’t want it, they thought the best thing to do was to get as many advantages out of it as possible, or as little damage and to be honest, there are several places that if, if we had not fought the road, we might’ve got a couple of odd little places a little bit better, but we might not have, so then the erm, the No M11 Link Road started, and Richard’ll tell you about that, when it started, erm, I joined it obviously, when I saw that the Government was not going to take any notice of the cut and cover scheme, which of course would have been greatly advantage to the area, because there would have been a lovely green sward(?) all the way down from Wanstead, all the way down to the other side of Leighton, and it would have been a lovely thing, but…

*Would it still have involved knocking houses down?*

LW: It would have. It still involved knocking houses down, because to cut and cover, you’ve got to cut down to build the road underground, well of course there were houses over it, though there again, you may have been able to build houses on top of it. I’m not sure about that, to be honest.

*But the plan was to have the whole of the top as parkland, essentially?*

LW: As parkland, that was the plan of the cut and cover of Lister Gold- Lister and Goldsmith

*And they were the architects?*

LW: They were the architects, yes and they – as least one of them is an architect, I’m not sure about the other one, probably the other one is –

*And do you know when those plans were proposed? When are we talking?*

LW: I can’t remember, you’d be able to look it up anyway, on the archives. Now what happened? Oh year, er… while…erm, the position with the local government was, as I told you, that they felt that they’d have to go along with it, but get as many concessions out of the government as possible, like better crossing points, but erm, in the end, under the pressure of the No M11 Link Road, and a new leader of the council which was Labour, Hugh Morgan Thomas, a very fine man, a very good man, new person to the area, he got the borough to vote against the M11 Link Road, so then of course, there was the local people and the local government against it, and I think maybe Richard should take over now, and I can go on for more, but…

RL: Well yeah, if we’re looking at the historical thing, the actual concept of the road goes back to Elisabeth 1st, alright, now she needed a road to go from London down to Tilbury, because she had a fort at Tilbury, right, so that’s when it first started, the first general idea, round about Elisabeth 1st. And then it all fell through. When the A12 was built in the 30s, there was always an idea that that link would go up, you know, along the A12, even in 1938 there was an idea that that was going to join up to London, in 1938. In 1950, my dad and other members of Colville Road, they heard the road was gonna come through, now the road was planned in the 1944 Abercrombie Plan

LW: That’s right

RL: Now what Abercrombie said was we’ve got a golden opportunity, the German’s have given us a golden opportunity to rebuild London, and he was looking for three ring roads in London: A central ring road, a middle ring road, which turned out to be sort of like the A406, and that, and an outer ring road which eventually became the M25, there was gonna be an inner ring road that the so called M11 Link Road, as it became was gonna be vital to that. Now the 50s started, my dad and other people said no, we don’t want it, knocking down the community, what the Luftwaffe had failed to do, you want to do, to the government, and it failed. They didn’t do it, the government didn’t push it, cos of the extraordinary expense, it was always going to be very expensive, so going through to the early ‘60s, and Stratford Depot was on its last legs, at one time Stratford British Rail Depot was the biggest depot for British Rail, steam engines, and building steam engines and stuff like that, I think not only in Britain, but the entire world. Well that was dying on its feet, so the idea was, was to revitalise that area, revitalise it. But to do that they needed a road, so they come up with the Abercrombie Plan, now as Laurie says, the Lister Goldsmith plan come up, to try and make it less of a gash in society –

LW: Here here

RL: - put this linier path on it, now that was stopped because the cost was just too much. Lister was the architect and he still lives in Wanstead. Then as the depot at Stratford declined, so the idea come, we need an east end west end, which could only be Stratford. Canary Wharf hadn’t been built, or anything like that, so Stratford was going to be the golden, the holy grail, so the plan come up. So the plan come up to build the M11 Link Road, so that’s where the Government started, we’ll build the M11 Link Road, now as it went on, the alliance of anti-roads campaigners and activists and residents, it suddenly become obvious it was not going to work. It was not going to put any value add in, now the government’s own CoBA – their Cost Benefit Analysis – said ‘rubbish. Won’t work. Way, way over money. Do not build this road’. But the government at the time, ‘no, we’re going to build this road’, and the government was determined to build the road come hell or high water, they were going to build that road. End of story. Never made any sense, and time and time again it made no sense, the cost was prohibitive, at one time the record for the costliest bit of road in Britain, was Canary Wharf, the tunnelling at Canary Wharf, the M11 surpassed that. It was never going to make money and all that it actually done and showed was the whole concept of the Department of Transport was roads. Roads, roads, roads, roads, and I hate to say it, the insidious nature of the Department of Transport, cos as soon as they got to be where they were, they left the Department of Transport they were employed by Marples Ridgeway(?), or by the developers, so that they were never – and no one ever looked into it. Laurie can tell you more about this, but Laurie was looking at the quality of Asphalt on the Link Road

LW: That’s right

RL: Which was dire, to say the least.

LW: Basic.

RL: They could have put better – but they didn’t do that because they wanted – so they, who was going to come along and do that? So, I’ll let Laurie come in again, but what it did show, yes alright, we lost, but we probably thought we was always going to lose, but it showed the nature of the government the fact that it was so insidious and I would say probably worse than that, with the road planners, and the road builders, the whole concept of road planning was flawed, you could never predict and provide, would never work. And that’s what they done. They said no, we’ll predict and provide, and a hundred years’ time that road still won’t be full up, and it also proved that thing – not only the predict and provide, it proved that the noise and the health, oh no, we’ll only give you double glazing if you’re looking over the road, but their own actual technical plans proved that the noise element went over, noise lifts, because it’s…hot, and then it goes over there, and it lands a couple of miles away, and people say ‘is there a motorway here?’, yes , there is. And so the whole thing was rotten and rotten to the core, and um… Laurie, do you want tom come in on that?

LW: Okay well there’s a couple of things I thought of, I went to one of the enquiries, where they were still debating the route, though they had it already in, in plans the M11 going through our area, it could have come down the River Lea, and I always remember somebody standing up, cos I was very young and innocent in those days on this sort of subject, and government, erm, somebody standing up and saying, ‘in the end you’ll have both roads, and this is also another danger, that there will be a similar road to the M11 Link Road, coming down the River Lea, and of course they’ve started because you can do it in bits if you’re clever, and they’ve done the Leyton Relief Road which goes from Lea Bridge Road to Ruckolt Road, there’s a road now built there which there never used to be, now erm, as regards quality, yes, Richard was quite right. At that time there was a thing called Porous Asphalt, there’s probably something better now, Porous Asphalt at that time was used on um, runways for aeroplanes it reduces the skidding, or, what’s it called? Aqua-plaining isn’t it? It reduces Aqua-plaining and it makes less noise than ordinary road materials, but at that time of course, it was dearer, you were building through a highly dense population, they wouldn’t do it. As regards the actual cost, as you know they didn’t want to do it. They didn’t want to do the covered thing because it would cost more, but we did try to get various parts covered anyhow, now the part near Connaught School, I did everything possible – that sounds big headed – *We* did everything possible to try to get it covered near Connaught School, because Connaught School as you know, is a girls’ school and it’s at at…let’s put it… the teenage area, and it coul- the adverse effect of pollution blowing on them, you don’t know what effect that’s going to have in the next generation of children. I kept bringing it up, but nobody wanted to know, and I do understand that the pollution level at that area is extreme, now whether it’s extreme on the Connaught School, I don’t know, but it certainly won’t be good and obviously there’s the noise as well. Erm, the thing which is often forgotten, that, well particularly in that instance, that was in Leytonstone, now Connaught School is in Leytonstone, and of course that’s part of Waltham Forest, and at that time it was a Labour Borough, and the area was Labour, which is another point to mention, the area in Leyton and Leytonstone where the road was built was all Labour councillors and guess what? The area in Wanstead, which is Conservative, they had a certain amount of cut and cover, but we didn’t, so that was very unfair. One of the things I would have liked to have said, we all knew that it would generate traffic, and I believe, to help put more traffic demand on that area, at this time, they closed the central line from Epping to Onga, now obviously they’ve got busses and alternatives, but people would use their cars, now when they got in their car at Onga, they drive to Epping, well once you’re in your car and on the road, you amy as well keep driving till you get to a cheap area, as regards fairs, to leave your car there, so of course there was more demand on vehicles coming in and more, so um, that was another pressure point which was unfair.

*Where’s Onga?*

LW: Onga’s out in Essex, it’s where the central line used to end, you’ll see it if you look at some old maps, okay, and the line is still there, so you look at any maps and you can see the line, the historical society and such…

*But you’re suggesting that the line was deliberately closed between Epping and Onga?*

LW: Well it do- you could-

*Or that that’s a possibility at least?*

LW: I’d say more than a possibility, I mean we all know, even then that Onga will get bigger, so if they were saying there wasn’t that many customers, you knew there was going to be more customers and the whole idea of transport etc. was to build, not just to cover the er, population at the moment, but the future population, so we knew that. Erm, I’ll hand back to Richard, maybe.

RL: Okay then. Well when we’re talking about costs and stuff like that, what the, as Laurie said, it was a Labour borough, and the view was we didn’t matter. That was the view. You talk to people in the Department of Transport and you talk to senior people they say ‘sorry old son, you don’t matter, nothing we can do’.

LW: That’s right

RL: Government.

*And you think that was because, because you were a Labour area?*

RL: No, no, because we were poor.

*Because you were poor.*

RL: It was a poor area. Now it’s not poor.

*So you’re saying Wanstead got cut and cover because it was a more middle class –*

RL: Yeah… now what Laurie’s talking about with Onga, now one time there was a plan, to increase the central line to Chelmsford, Chelmsford’s not a great distance from Onga, turn the central line into an over ground, like they do in Stratford, and run it through to Chelmsford, and then they would build up Chelmsford and you would have a double link rail link. You’ve got the British Rail link, Chelmsford into Liverpool Street, you’d have the central line link from Chelmsford, no says the government, too costly. It would have been a tenth or whatever it is, of the M11 Link Road. Now they weren’t gonna do that. And what the M11 Link campaign did do, from a residents point of view, and I’m going to use my mum as a thing, she couldn’t understand how a government could treat it’s people worth than the Germans. She thought that we were treated worse than… if Hitler had come, even Hitler wouldn’t have built the M11, we were treated worse than that, and she could never understand that, and I kept trying to say to her, it’s all to do with opening up Stratford land, that’s the important thing, it’s going to make a lot of money for people, now every time we went to the public enquiries, what it opened up to a lot of people is the emperor had no clothes on, for a lot of people they thought, public enquiry, yeah, we are the public, we’ll go there. No you’re not. End of story. You’re not the public. You’re nothing. Because public don’t exist, and a public enquiry, all it means is the public can watch it. It’s down to two people, that’s the experts, who have a right to speak, and the laity, the laity meaning the common folk, if it doesn’t say the laity can speak, you can’t speak. You voice… you can go up there like we did, all dutifully go up there and present a very good…and we had academic people helping us…

LW: That’s right

RL: People, LSE, people from, international people,

LW: Scientists

RL: Scientists, everything. Everything proved that we was right. Don’t matter. Nothing to do with that. So what? You know? And a classic example, and I’m using this as a personal thing, even I got thrown out of my house, now the day before, the High Sherriff had come to see me, the High Sherriff of London, very nice man, very nice. ‘Sorry old son,’ he says, ‘you’ve got to get out’, now the councillor come to see me – I was living with mum at the moment, at the time, said ‘you’ve gotta get out’. I said ‘okay, I know I’ve got to get out’, now the Council had talked to the High Sherriff and agreed that me and mum would move out. They’d got a house for us, and the council said, ‘pop round, see the house, if you don’t like it, we’ll find you another one’. But MacGregor, who was the Minister for Transport, Secretary of State, ‘oh no’, says MacGregor, ‘I’m going to throw them two out, just to show them what’s what’, and threw me and mum out.

*Without re-housing you?*

RL: Without re-housing me. What happened was, I’m sorry to say, why re-house somebody? There is no provision is law to rehouse you. Right. Plus the fact, what people don’t understand, and people find this a great thing, you can google this and check, you don’t have any rights to you property, now you might think, I payed me mortgage, got me thing, got deeds on the land registry. No. Because in 1066 William the Conqueror conquered this land. All the land became the King’s possession. In 1642, there was a civil war. All the land becomes Parliaments’ possession. You’re meanly sitting on it. The reason being we’re subjects. We’re serfs. We’re not citizens, we’re subjects of the Crown.

LW: That’s right.

RL: So there’s me saying, well, you know, can you do this? Yes, we can. Now, when the bailiffs come and threw me and mum out, under what right? Well it was under the right of the High Sherriff. Now when they picked the High Sherriff, what they do is they take a scroll of vellum to the Queen, she shuts her eyes like that, and someone guides her hand, although it’s meant to be that [LW laughs]. I’m telling you the truth on this one…

*Sorry, when you say ‘it’s meant to be that’…?*

RL: It’s meant to be god’s judgement

*It’s meant to be god’s judgement*

RL: Because the queen is god’s representative. She goes like that and she pricks a name with a gold – a silver bodkin, right.

*Is this true now?*

RL: This is true, right. Silver bodkin, that bodkin says ‘Laurence Wortley is now the High Sherriff of London, he has the power to turf the surfs out’, and the Sherriff says to me, he says, ‘I could kill you, you couldn’t stop me, because I’ve got that power’. Now you might think… and this was in the late 1990s, ‘hang on a minute, they can’t do that’, but they can. And when you go to court, I mean I took the government to court, because I wanted my compensation, I wanted to rub their nose in it. It didn’t work by the way. And do that. They say yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And the treasury solicitor didn’t turn up to any of the things, she didn’t have to. She was in the right. Do you remember the treasury solicitor, the one with the little lisp and the gimpy leg?

LW: I can’t remember that now, Rich, I’m sorry.

RL: Yeah, she had that. She could just turn up and do that. And that’s what people don’t understand, that’s why the activists were fighting, that’s why the people from the tribes and all the people from everywhere come, because it was suddenly their eyes were opened. Hang on a minute, this is 1990, we shouldn’t be acting like this.

LW: What about democracy?

RL: There is no such thing as democracy. We live in a democratic society, but we don’t live in a democracy. And that was hammered down to me on numerous occasions. So going back to that, that is why, there was something… now if the government had been sensible, or if things had been sensible, you had a world class artists’ community in that area, world class, people coming from Poland, New York, everything, a world class artists’ community, you could of took that, re-furbed the houses, and had an artists’ community, and that would have been better that your Banksys, better than whatever. Because people there had real talent. Instead of that, they scattered us like we was just nothing. Oh no. Never forget. Never forgive.

LW: That’s right. I agree.

RL: Yep.

LW: Hello, it’s Laurence again. Some things that we don’t want you to forget: we had, we won the argument, but lost the battle.

LW: But won the war.

LW: But the point was, we knew, and everybody knew, this is the point, that the road would generate traffic, which it has, and just after that… so, it generated more traffic going into London, and guess what happened a little while afterwards. They started charging to drive into London, now I’m being… I don’t know, but it’s something to think about. Maybe if the M11 Link Road had never been built, it wouldn’t have generated so much traffic, and maybe you wouldn’t have to pay now, to drive into London, you’ll never know that, but it’s something to think about. Erm, there was, as you can appreciate, it broke up the community, there was…I haven’t got a note now, of how many houses were destroyed, and how many businesses were destroyed, now the point was, there was lots of little businesses all the way along the road, cycle shops I remember, little restaurants, I did have a note of the number and it can be checked anyhow. So you lost the people that lived near all those places, you lost those places, and also, the community that was left further back from the road, where it was built, lost the use and the jobs of those little firms that had gone. So they also lost. Some of the things I suppose, we had chants, I mean we went to loads of meetings and walks and all sorts of things, which you can check out on, but we had various chants, which always went down well, and whenever we had a meeting we’d say ‘em again. One of the chants was ‘Homes Not Road, Homes Not Roads, Homes Not Roads’ and another one, which is so applicable, you used to put your finger to your chest and say ‘our road today’, And then point your finger outwards and say ‘your road tomorrow’, because what you’ve got to remember, wherever a road is built, it never stops, it’ll be extended or branched off, so the less roads that are built, the more chance you have, whoever you are, of having another new road near you. Another chant that they used to use is ‘Cardboard city, not here’. At the time there was all these cardboard cities in London under arches etc. and in parks. This is before the influx of er, across from Europe and everything else, and erm, the threat was of course, that everybody would have to live in – make cardboard cities locally. That was another thing. Erm, there was loads of news rail and programmes made about it my the television and the radio, but I worked in television at the time, and they said there was nothing they could do much before the actual building because in television you have to have something to look at, and of course you looked at people protesting against the road being knocked down, or a house being knocked down, incidentally, there are some films you can see, You’ve got some films about it.

*There’s ‘Life in the Fast Lane’ isn’t there?*

LW: There’s several. But some of the high points, was the tower was a very famous thing that was taken, they built a big tower and people used to live in trees and have food up there so when they came to knock down, chop down the trees, they were up there and they didn’t come down because they were hungry and thirsty, cos there was always supplies of food and drink, on these things. Erm, what good did it do? Erm, there was one thing that it did, after the Labour, er, the Conservative party went, the Labour party came in and to begin with they realised what had happened, and they looked more favourably on public transport than roads, but of course time has moved, you’ve got a different government in and if you check the budget at the moment, the budget for er, railways has been put down, but the budget for roads hasn’t, so there we are, that’s how time moves on, so it’s a good thing for us to talk about this and take the message on. Obviously there’s young Turks coming along.

RL: Well I think all I would say is there’s two things I think to remember, in no order. The second thing is that if the government at the time had been more like the government today, the road wouldn’t have been built, because the government is now saying let’s spend so many billions on HS2, do this and do that, whereas if you’d looked at what like we were saying, a long time ago, if the money on the link road had been invested on railways, you would have got your over ground link, you would have got this, and then other countries in other parts of the world, like the Dutch, the French, the Germans, the Spanish, the Japanese, all got high speed trains, all can go from point a to point 2, and we was pootling along 60 mile an hour trains, and if you look at, they say now, that vehicles are no more fast than they were in the Victorian times, so all the billions upon billions spent on roads hasn’t created anything, it’s created a big mess. And also what he’s done, it’s not empowered people, it’s enslaved people, cos what happens now? Your out of town retail, out of town, you can get your out of town retail if you got a car, everything else, if you got a car. If you haven’t got a car you’re a very, very poor third class citizen, and that’s it. Where I come from people have got 4 cars, they’ve got massive great, Porch Kians (?) built like a T34 tank, but what’s the point of it? And the second thing what it done, it showed the ordinary person in the street the viciousness of the secret police, because it wasn’t the ordinary bobby on the beat that was beating us up and setting fire to the houses, and breaking people like Pooky’s hands, and kinking people and trying to rape the women, in Wanstonia and all, it wasn’t them, it was the TRG, and the Special Forces. That’s the people that were doing it, people like my mum who had lived through the Blitz couln’t believe the fact, and when they come to chuck me and mum out, and they were so violent and so evil, and they dradooned the ordinary coppers, now the ordinary coppers come in, they couldn’t believe it. They were crying their eyes out when they pushed old mum out, pulled old mum out

LW: On a stretcher

RL: On a stretcher, cos they thought she’s had a heart attack

LW: Which she probably did. She probably had.

RL: I think she just turned…she was 80 then, weren’t she?

LW: Very elderly lady

RL: 79, something like that, and the coppers… I know for a fact that there was WPCs who just put in their notice straight away, couldn’t take it, and one copper said to me, ‘I didn’t go through school just to do this, didn’t go through Hendon just to do all this’. And then do you remember at George Green there was people in the old bivvies’ there? They tried to set ‘em on fire, they set next door to me on fire three times and they called me back from work, they said the house is on fire, I come back from work, mum was sitting there having a cup of tea with the dog and she said ‘they’re not going to drive me out’, and the bloke from the old fire brigade said ‘cor, your mum’s a sparky old thing’, I said ‘blimey mate, the Luftwaffe couldn’t get her out, they ain’t gonna get her out’.

*Can I just ask you about, you said ‘raping the women in Wanstonia’, what… can you just expand on that?*

RL: Well, cos they were sleeping rough in the tops of the houses and that, a lot of the police thought ‘what a laugh’, you know, ‘they’re only down and outs, they’re only druggies, have a little bit of fun’, and that’s why there was a bloke called Mick Roberts, you remember Mick Roberts?

LW: Yes, I know Mick, yeah

RL: He was the sheriff, now Mick kept all… you’ve got to imagine, there’s a whole diverse group of people ranging from what you would call staid citizens to …

LW: Environmentalists…

RL: Druggies…

LW: Local citizens

RL: Psychos, nutters, everything, but they all come together, and that’s another thing that the government wet itself about

LW: Yeah

RL: Because it was always saying, just like today, ‘they’re the other side, oh don’t trust them, ohhh, THEM!’ Whoever ‘them’ are, but no, they all come together, and you’ve got people like Jacky Carpenter, like Mick Roberts, a lot of the others, Dolly was there, she was a great thing.

*Mick Roberts, is Mick Roberts the person that often gets called Old Mick? I hear his name a lot*

RL: Yeah, he was the Sheriff. You’ve gotta have a sheriff, and he was the sheriff, what Mick told you to do, you did, because if you didn’t do it…

LW: He was a big bloke actually

RL: He was a big bloke [both laugh]. But yeah, people there like John the Axe, you had Green Dave, you know, all the old druggies and stuff like that, but they were the foot soldiers, they were the people that were up the towers, in the trees, day after day, weather whatever… raid, wind and snow. They were the people up there, and then there was the technical people that were digging the tunnels, there was people like Reg and that, Quarter Mastering, doing all the quarter mastering stuff and stuff like that, making sure they had the proper food, stuff like that, and then the police, TRG boys would come down… ‘oh I think I’ll break someone’s…’ Do you remember that female copper broke Pookie’s arm? She was only 11 or 12 at the time, broke her arm.

*Pookie, she was a child?*

RL: Yeah, yeah, and then you had –

*What happened?*

RL: Oh, just took the idea, why don’t I break your arm? And that was it.

*Was she doing anything?*

RL: Na, Pookie was never quite… y’know… what… because the government was saying was ‘oh, look at these, scumbags, look at these, druggies and that, standing in our way, you don’t want them’. When in actual fact ‘they’ were more community spirited, they were more nice to people like Dolly, more nice to people like my mum, than the police, well, the TRG and that, no, and then they brought in special forces to burn places down and kick people, I mean I come back once and there’s half a dozen, well more than half a dozen blokes, about 10 blokes, and I do mean big blokes, going through a whole pile of what I can only call *hors memoranda[?]* in the back garden and my mum’s sitting there giving them cups of tea, so I comes in and mum says ‘oh, he’s a charming bloke’, big bloke, they’re the SAS, so I said to ‘im, ‘’scuse us brover, what do you want the SAS down here?’ He said ‘sorry mate, we’ve got to go through all these plastic bags to see if there’s anything in there’, I said ‘it’s horsel what’s it’, he said, ‘I found that out’. [both laugh]. About 20 bags of horse what’s it, I’m gonna put in on me garden. What else do you put on the garden? And there’s all these…and my old mum’s going ‘alright dear, do you want…?’ and bringing a bowl of water, ‘oh thanks ma’, and all that, you know, giving him these cups of tea, and my old mum thought it was a hoot. I said, ‘you’re meant to be scared mum’, oh no, it’s a great hoot, great laugh, you know. Poor old thing. But that’s what they didn’t understand, the more they pushed against us, the stronger we got. Simple as that. And we’re still here today.

*I just also want to ask if Ros has got anything to add to the historical…because what I really would like to do soon is ask you all more about your personal involvement, but I want to know if you’ve got anything you want to add to the historical context?*

RK: Well I haven’t got anything like the other two have said, because I wasn’t so involved at all, I just remember a friend of mine Julie, and Robin and their two little boys living in a lovely old house in um, er, what road was it? Near Connaught School anyway, and I used to visit them and they had a lovely big garden and it was a smashing house and they were artists, and ACME housing association, I think they lived in one of those and they were for you know, artists. And just the idea that their house was just razed to the ground and they moved back to Scotland, they were Scottish, and so memories like that. And erm, in this road, I think when I wrote to you, there was a young woman whose boyfriend lived up a tree. I can’t remember, I think her name was Angie, and I can’t remember the bloke’s name, but he ended up in Pentonville Prison and she wrote to him every day and when he came out he was so shattered by being in prison that he wasn’t a campaigner anymore…

LW: Well, that’s understandable…

*Was he put in prison because of his involvement in the campaign?*

RK: Yeah, I don’t know what they charged him with.

RL: Just disorder, and not following orders, breach of the peace? I mean look at Anna and Rebecca, they got put away in the Holloway, didn’t they? For 3 or 4 days. Remember them?

LW: I remember them, but I don’t remember…well there was so much happening, wasn’t there, at the time? It was a long road, so you might have been involved in one part down one end, and something else was happening at the other.

RL: And of course at the same time there was no, there was… I won’t say there was no clear command structure, but there was a structure where you didn’t want everybody to know… because you didn’t know where the secret police were. And there’s that Mark Kennedy fiasco, the secret police had to be there, we knew there had to be spies, obvious.

LW: But we couldn’t tell who it was.

RL: Telling who people what where. You know.

*And has that ever come out?*

RL: We’re waiting for the 30 year rule, to let us know.

*So you still don’t know if there…*

LW: There was, there was

*I’m sure there were, but I wondered whether you knew who they were yet?*

RL: I’ll say another thing about the police. I delivered a load of coal to them in Wanstonia [activists, not police], when I had the old land rover and the copper said ‘do you want a hand mate?’, I said ‘if you don’t mind’, and the police came and helped us give the coal to the activists, and they said ‘you’re doing a good job, good boy, doing a good job’. Because they could see that that community was being ripped apart, for no good reason, so at the same time, yes, the community was putting up a fight, even the police were goin…and a lot of them police would now be senior coppers, wouldn’t they? Senior bods in the…

LW: Yeah, or even retired even.

RL: Retired or whatever, they keep that in there. They saw what the government was doing and they, the police was almost in open revolt against the government for cuts and stuff like that, you know, all those activists, you don’t just walk away and forget it, it’s up here.

RK: I remember being in Wanstead and some of the local people, I think I was on a bus with a banner, going to a march and a lot of the more conservative older people were very much against the campaign because they thought that most of the campaigners were the people who’s been in…was it Oxley’s? Other campaigns…

RL: Oxley’s Wood.

RK: Yeah, and they were outsiders coming in to try and, you know, campaign locally, but it wasn’t I mean there were some people from those, but there were a lot of local people and I found it very interesting on the marches because you had some really respectable looking elderly people marching along with all the kind of hippies and hairies and everybody else.

*So you’re saying that they objected to the road, but they also objected to the campaign?*

RK: I don’t know if they did object to the campaign, all they seemed to be bothered with was these outsiders coming in to our area, you know.

*And do you know why they thought that was a problem?*

RK: Well they didn’t explain. I s’pose people coming in and poking their nose into our business, you know.

LW: But it did alter, it did alter, because when they realised, the local people, you’re talking about the Wanstead area, when they realised that their environment was going to be bad, and the road was definitely going to be built, they suddenly realised that anybody that put up any resistance should be supported, and they used to come down with food and drink. They used to come with food and drink, because they realised that there had to be opposition, and of course they were at work and middle aged and god knows what else, they couldn’t do it, so somebody else did it for them and they were supported by the local people in the end. That part. They were supported by local people in Leyton and Leytonstone right from the word go, but Wanstead it was a little bit different.

RL: I think also at the same time, they suddenly took a step back and I think some of them took a step back and thought this is insane, you’re building a road at how many billions, and we’re talking about in the 90s, when billions were billions, if you know what I mean, and it’s insane it’s not gonna work, I mean, often people would come to me and say I’ve read this, I’ve seen this on the news, it can’t be right, I say, no, it’s absolutely right, that’s how much it’s gonna cost. And people were saying, but… the safety aspect… you’ll notice that when the road was built, at St Patrick’s Cemetery, there’s just a wide fence, everywhere else is enclosed brickwork. That wire fence had to be there because if there was a pile up on the road and many people got crushed to death or killed, there’d be nowhere to take ‘em out. So that’s to take the bodies out there. So hard luck if you had a crash up by Green Man, they’d have to card you all the way down to St Pat’s Cemetery. The whole thing was an insane design, but no, no, no, the government said, we are going to build it.

*What do you… why was it so important for the government to build this road?*

RL: I think the government, it started off, I think they just wanted to build the Abercrombie plan and open up the Stratford lands, that’s money, that’s profit. But when the activists got in they suddenly, being like Thatcher and that… we can’t have the common folk rising, oh no, otherwise the Tumbrels will be going down Pall Mall, and I think they just got genuinely terrified of the local people joining together, people like Laurie, me, Ros, people you would call Staid people, and then the activists, and then there was people who were like puffin’ and snortin’, and quite intelligent people, Dolly would take ‘em out a cup of tea. Mum would take ‘em out a cup of tea, and it was that juxtaposition of the elderly… it was a community that had suddenly been brought together.

*So it was the coming together of all these different people…*

RL: And a community, and all of a sudden the powers that be thought we can’t have that, we have to divide and rule. We can’t have people coming together, and you see the same thing today, ‘oh well, they’ve come from so and so, they’ve come from so and so, we mustn’t talk to them, cos they’re different’. No, they’re not different, we’re all the same, we’re all trying to scratch a living on this planet, and the government couldn’t deal with that, just couldn’t deal with it, and the more we was explaining, and the more we was proving, and getting quite intelligent people to prove that the government was wrong, the government was starting to wet itself, thinking ‘Jeez we can’t do that…’ just in case… because the Archway people had joined us as well. Now the Archway proved that they couldn’t build a road up the Archway Road, because at one time they were going to build a motorway up through the Archway, you know.

*Archway in North London?*

RL: Hampstead, yeah. Up that way yeah, and they joined us. That’s where Colin Bex come from. And the others, I’ve forgotten their names now the people…

*So was there a protest site there as well then?*

RL: Oh yeah, that’s where we got all the technical people from. They was like the Jeremy Corbyns of the day, left wing, very intellectual people, very rich. That’s what the government couldn’t stand, it couldn’t stand intelligent people, you know? And then when you had little old ladies like mum and Dolly and that, standing around going ‘well, Hitler didn’t catch us, you won’t’, they couldn’t stand it. They couldn’t stand people standing against them, so they had to crush them.

*So it was a show of power, essentially?*

RL: Well it was a show of power without a shadow of a doubt. You bring the high sheriff of London in, and the bailiffs, all the bailiffs done was steal everything, and the police were standing by saying… I remember my brother, my elder brother coming in saying ‘you can’t steal that’, and the bailiffs saying ‘I’m a bailiff from the High Sheriff; I can do what I please.’ And even the Chief Inspector was saying, ‘well, I don’t want you stealing that’. And he told him to get lost, or words to that effect, if you know what I mean. And the guy said ‘look, off’, said, ‘what?’, said ‘I’m a bailiff’. And yet we proved that some of them were on the doll, claiming doll money, cos we took their number plates and we had friends everywhere, friends in government, friends in the police, friends everywhere. And they were reading the number plates, ‘oh, well that bloke’s been claiming doll for 10 years’. ‘Oh yeah well I’m a bailiff ‘en’t I? I don’t need to pay tax’. And a lot of these people were quite well off, these so called bailiffs, yeah, cos they were thieving everything. When people saw that the emperor didn’t have any clothes, and that is something which is engrained in the people that were in the M11 Campaign, and engrained in other people. Alright, we might have been spread far and wide, but that was engrained in ‘em. And as I say: never forgive, never forget.

RK: I think it would be interesting to see what has happened to all the people who were in the campaign, whether they’ve gone off to other campaigns. And the legacy thing, as I understand, that after all this, um, there weren’t too many new roads being proposed, because the government knew that there’d be this protest again.

RL: Yeah.

LW: That’s right.

RK: So they gave it a bit of a pause, but maybe after the pause they’ve started up again, because that’s what they do isn’t it?

LW: The government altered as well.

RL: I don’t think you’ve seen any major road built through a conurbation, like the M11. I think the M11 was the last road that has ever been built through a major conurbation. Could you imagine them building a motorway through London now? Wouldn’t happen.

LW: A couple of odd little points, erm, the local community was destroyed of course, obviously, because of the width of the land they took, and the houses they took, and of course in those days, you’re going back, a lot of people had lived there a long while, now-a-days people move houses far faster than they did then, so the local community was broken up, and what was also sad that the older folk, it was too much of a strain of them and they all died very shortly…no disrespect to you Richard…

RL: No, my mum didn’t last too long afterwards…

LW: And there was several older people that died very quickly after it because the change from the local community, and they knew Mrs… they knew most of the people in the street, because as I said, people didn’t move so much, and they felt relaxed, they’re old, but they felt relaxed, and they go to a new place and of course the strain on the old folk meant many of them died…

RL: Well it was that, and also, what it was, is that they, like with my mum, they couldn’t believe that the government did what they did. You know, they couldn’t believe it. They couldn’t believe that in this country, you would be treated like that. And we’re talking about the 1990s, they just couldn’t believe it. It was almost like, you know, my mum used to say, ‘well I could understand if Hitler come in, but I bet he wouldn’t have built the road’. Couldn’t understand how the government, and in Colville Road there was quite a few elderly, Edwardian ladies, and one that was close to us, she said ‘I can’t believe it.’ You know, ‘I just can’t believe it.’ And then she died before the road come through, a lot of the others, like… I forget their names, Whinny… she died cos, before the road come through, she… they kept pressing her to sell, to sell, to sell…and she just couldn’t understand it, and then there was strange men walking all through her garden. ‘What you doing there?’ ‘Oh, we’re surveying, love’. She couldn’t understand it, and she died.

*In the email that you wrote to me, you said something along those lines. You said ‘I remember someone listing all the people who died as a result of the struggle’… were those the kind of people that you meant?*

LW: Dolly, it was Dolly, wasn’t it?

RL: Dolly, yeah, Dolly. Mrs… I forget her last name.

RK: Well, I don’t know if it was you Laurie actually, saying all those years ago, all the people who’d died. It was in a meeting I think. And whether it was just these very elderly people you mentioned or other people as well, I don’t know. Do you remember other people who’ve died?

RL: Oh yeah… there were quite… I mean mainly it was the elderly people, but there were quite a few, because Dolly died, you had erm, mum died, then Mrs. Win died, I don’t know what her last name was, but then you had, erm, I think that family in Grove Green Road that had the autistic boy, erm, the police come in and…

*Was that an artist family?*

RL: I think it was yeah, had an artistic boy, and he was in the front garden, the police stormed in, they said ‘what are you doing here?’ And he, ‘what?’ and before he could say anything else, he was bundled in the Black Maria and off he went. And there was a lot of other people that were, as I say, with Pookie, she was beaten up, there was others that were beaten up. And you’ve only got to look at some of the films to see the way they drag ‘em off the trees and drag ‘em off, trying to cut the wire underneath ‘em so they fall down and kill themselves. Dropping bricks of ‘em, which was a frequent thing with the old police, broken the old chimney, drop a brick down, ‘oh sorry, gov’ner, did I drop that brick on yer head?’ You know, that was the TIG that was doing it.

LW: The ordinary police were reasonable.

*TIG?*

RL: TIG’s the Territorial Response Group? Or something…

LW: I’m not sure that they still exist, because they got a bad name, so they altered the name.

RL: They got rid of them.

LW: They deal with Sellafield, you know.

RL: They was the riot squad, the heavy thug boys. And they were basically designed to beat the bejesus out of people basically.

RK: But I think this is sometimes how people learn about what the world is really like when, you know, they’ve been a bit naïve before, but then…

LW: I was, I was naïve…

RL: We were.

LW: One of the… anybody listening to this, or writing about it, it just shows how important that you do have community environmentalists who are active to stop this even happening. I remember when I went to some of the original meetings , long before there was a no M11 Link Road Campaign, and the people who came to the meeting stood up and said ‘oh, they’ve been talking about building a road through this area since the war, it’ll never happen.’ And that was it. People, a lot of people thought it would never happen, but it did.

RL: Well I thought it’d never happen because as time went on you could see the insanity of it.

LW: But, er, what was I going… sorry, I lost it.

*That’s alright, we can come back to it. Can we just go back, and I’d like to hear about all your personal involvements, because I’m getting glimmers from what you’re saying, but it would be really useful to just hear about how…*

RL: Well I think you’ll find that the true story will never be told.

*What do you mean?*

RL: Well because there’s many things we did and done…

*Okay. I’m not particularly asking you to reveal any criminal activities that you may or may not have done…*

LW: No! No criminal activities!

RL: No, prosecutor, no criminal activities. We’re all honest gov’ner.

[All laugh]

LW: Obstructive, yes.

*I’m more interested in your personal histories, you know, how long… I mean I’m hearing lots… I know a little bit about you because I come across you in research a lot, I read your name here and there, but it’s be really useful just for the sake of the tape to hear about your history. Were you born in the area?*

RL: Well if you want the… do you want the funny side of it or not?

*I want the funny side and I want the serious side.*

RL: Well the funny side is that me, er… I was the second boy, of three, and I was born of the 1st January 1949. Of which was a great surprise to my mum, a considerable annoyance to my dad. Reason being of course, my mum got the twinge, and she said to my dad, ‘oops, I think he’s coming’. The old fella took her out, 1st January, no busses. So the old fella says ‘well we’ll have to walk’, all the way to the mother’s home at Clapton. My mum declined, needless to say.

*Where was she living at the time?*

RL: At Colville Road.

LW: IN the house that was knocked down and she was dragged out of.

RL: So my mum gave a cheery quip, of which we will not say, so the old fella noticed a fire brigade, a fire engine come along, says, ‘s’cuse us gov’ner…’ pushed my mum on, says ‘see ya later girl’, so the bloke says ‘aren’t you coming with her?’, so my dad says ‘well this is her second, so she knows what to do’.

[All laugh]

LW: Things were different in those days.

RL: Totally different. Needless to say, the bloke ease my old fella onto the fire engine.

LW: You were born in the mother’s hospital?

RL: Yeah, I was born in the mother’s hospital at Clapton.

LW: At Hackney.

RL: At Hackney, yeah. No, Clapton! Don’t dare call it Hackney.

LW: Oh right, well I always call it Hackney, and I was born there as well.

*Is that the Salvation Army…?*

RL: Yeah, Salvation army

LW: And my brother was born there as well.

RL: And the funny thing about that was, as soon as they dropped mum off, my dad done a runner, cos he said to the bloke on the fire engine, going back Leyton Fire Station, ‘going back mate?’, Going back, yeah, ‘drop me off. Thank you very much’. So my mum’s wheeled into the thing, and all the girls, everybody born there was girls, so my mum said ‘great, I got a little girl’, [makes raspberry sound to denote the birth of a child], out I come. ‘Oh no, it’s a little boy.’

[All laugh]

RL: And that’s how I come into the world. Lived in Colville Road all my life. Super place. Had a nice big garden.

LW: Near the station, to get to work.

RL: Near the station. My old boy, worked on the railway, my dad. So he used to wait until the steamer come along, ‘any chance of a lift mate?’, ‘yeah, hop on mate’, over the back garden, get the old steamer to Stratford Depot, that’s how he used to do it.

[All laugh]

RL: He loved the railway.

LW: So we all did, and do.

RL: And that’s where I was born, born in Colville Road, and then I’d heard stories of my old dad telling me about the M11… not the M11 Link Road at that time, but the road, and the old boy was a great union bloke, and he was a great Labour bloke, and one of our family, supposedly, had helped Kier Hardy in West ham, so the old boy was cut my heart Labour through and through. So he said, ‘no. If the government want it, I’m against it’. Seems perfectly sensible to me. So that was it, him and the others had fought, there was a Mr Gunn as well. They got enough money, went all around the houses, got ten bob which was a lot of money in them days, to pay for a QC. QC went up and argued his thing, plan was dropped. That’s what the old fella done. So when the M11 come along, my mum said to me, ‘well, obviously you’re gonna fight it’, which was true, and that’s how it started up, so we could have took the money and run, cos they was buying off the house owners, the home owners. Owner occupiers were the main thing to get rid of, because they had a little bit more legal clout than the others.

*So were your family owner occupiers?*

RL: Er, at the time I was, yeah, well actually I paid off the mortgage the day they threw me out, which was very good.

LW: Yeah, but you’re still an owner occupier.

RL: Yeah, we started out as renting, then as owner occupier, and that was it.

*And so they offered you the money, and you refused?*

RL: Declined politely, I think the…

*Politely declined…*

RL: Yeah, I was never gonna take the money.

*And did most other people…*

RL: Most people did, yeah. I think I was the only owner occupier left I think. I think I was. I might be wrong on that, but I think I was.

*Was there ever a compulsory purchase order on your house?*

RL: Oh yeah, [LW joins in]: they were all compulsory purchased

*But as I’d understood it, and correct me if I’m wrong, but I thought that a lot of them were… they reached arrangements outside of compulsory purchase order… and then…*

RL: Some did, some didn’t. What you did, before you get the compulsory purchase order…

LW: Offer to Treat, is that the word?

RL: You get Notice to Treat.

LW: Oh, notice to treat.

*Notice to Treat.*

RL: And what happens is, the government gives you a notice to treat, and the notice to treat basically says, ‘we would like to buy your house, this is the price we set, and if you don’t so it, we’ll come and knock it down, throw you out. Put you on a compulsory purchase order and throw you out’. Now the difference between this country… I’m talking about then, I don’t know about now, but the difference between this country and other countries like France, is that in this country they only give you 85% of what the house is worth, because the other 15% is their cost for throwing you out. You pay them to throw you out. Whereas in France, they pay you something like 125% .

LW: Yeah, that’s right. At this time, we’re not sure now, ‘cos we’re not on battles like that, but at that time, in Europe, er they always used to pay people more than the house was worth to get you out

*As compensation?*

LW: Yeah. And in this, in our country, as Richard said, they’ll pay as little as possible.

RL: What the plan was, if that’d been the case, I had a cellar, and the plan was going to be that I’d take the money, move out, and then silly old me, inadvertently leave the coal hole open, silly old me. And then someone would – naughty boy, or naughty girl – would lift the coal hole up, slip in through the cellar, and squat the house.

LW: Squat the house!

*So did that happen?*

RL: No it didn’t

LW: But it happened… it must have happened to loads of them.

*So they threw you out. So tell me about the day that they evicted you.*

RL: They day before, I think it was a Friday or something like that, but the day before, or a couple of days, no the day before, the Sheriff had turned up, and had said to me, ‘look, look, look, all credit, you don’t a good job, but you got to think of your old mum, and you’re not going to win this one’. And the Council had come to see me and said, ‘look, we got this house, gonna put you in a house, you’re not going to win this one’, and unnamed sources shall we say, had said ‘no problem, no worry, we know how to get in, and we’ll get in, and we’ll squat the place, make sure you get the kit out, and we’ll squat the place’. No problem. So then that was on the Thursday, and the council had come to see me, and had arranged, they said ‘look, what we’re going to do is we’ll put everything into storage, you can go and live in this house, and if you don’t like it, we’ll find you another one’.

*And where was the house?*

RL: I don’t know, it never occurred to me to ask them, you know. So I said well okay then, fair enough, and then on the Saturday, bear in mind I got thrown out on the Friday I think it was, on the Saturday we was going to go and look at the house, and I said to mum, ‘look, let’s go and have a look at the house, if you don’t like it, we’ll find somewhere else’, because the people that were advising me, the surveyors, the lawyers and everything, said ‘look you’re not going to get your money straight away, but we will screw ‘em, because we can screw ‘em’. Great stuff. So that’s that. Well on the Friday, because the activists had gone and sat on top on MacGregor’s house, and upset Mrs. MacGregor, having tea…

LW: He was a department…

RL: He was the Secretary of State for Transport. MacGregor said ‘Right, I’m going to throw ‘em out. End of story.’ So at 7 O’clock in the morning, they smashed the front door in. Easy way to get into a place, you know. No bother about locks or anything, just smashed the door in.

*That was on the Friday?*

RL: Yeah. Smashed the door in. 50 odd cops come in with riot shields and things like that, smashing the place up, as they do

*Your mum was in the house?*

RL: Mum and me was in

LW: They were in bed, yeah.

RL: In bed. So my mum gets up and says ‘hello love, what’s going on?’ So I said ‘I think we’ve been raided’. At that she wasn’t that bothered about at first, but the shock hit her, you know?

LW: And so she had to go out on a stretcher

RL: Out on a stretcher

LW: That was all on the news.

RL: On TV and that.

LW: On the news.

RL: And all the coppers were crying and that. Some of them were crying their eyes out. Even the men. They said ‘oh we was told there was a load of squatter in here’, and that, and the TRGs going [put’s on thuggish voice] ‘oh yeah, we were up for it’, and mum was saying, ‘well don’t you think you’re really silly boys?’, you know, you’ve got an 80 year old lady saying to these hard [makes noise] ready for a riot, ‘don’t you think you’re silly boys?’, and they went, ‘well sorry, ma’, and that was it. That’s how they threw us out. So I went next door with John and Elaine, they took me in, and my brother come from work, and he put me and mum up for a year until we could get a place in Ilford.

*And so they didn’t rehouse you?*

RL: No.

*Did you get any kind of compensation?*

RL: Oh, compensation was, ‘we were going to give you compensation, but actually it’s cost us a lot of money to throw you out, so we’ll wait and see.’ So by this time I’d got lawyers involved, obviously and we went to the court and we was arguing with the judge, and the judge just looked at all the paper work and said ‘I can’t believe this’, and I said ‘well it’s not me saying this, it’s, you know,’ and he kept asking for the treasury’s solicitor to turn up, no treasury solicitor turned up, so in the end he got fed up, said ‘right, [inaudible], right’, so he granted me position of all the stuff, so then the lawyer started arguing prices and stuff like that, and true to their nature, they did screw the government. So at the end of the day the government had to pay more, but there was a think that really did make me laugh, because next door, John and Elaine had the same sort of house that I had, so the official bloke from the government come in and says [puts on plumby voice] ‘oh I’m coming in here to survey your house. It’s a three bedroom house…’

RK: That was John Ellis?

LW: Yeah, famous musician that lived next door…

RL: ‘Three bedroomed house!’ Actually it’s a four bedroom house, but I’ve knocked down one of the walls. ‘So it’s a three bedroomed house’. I said ‘okay, please yourself, it’s a three bedroomed house’, ‘ohh, I’m going to charge you…’ whatever it was, I think it was 72,000 or something like that, which was, the house was really worth something like 85,000. 72,000. So I said ‘na, I don’t think I’ll agree with that’. ‘oh,’ he said, ‘three bedroom, blah, blah, blah. I looked at all the survey, the estate agents, and a three bedroomed house…’, I said ‘yeah, but I tell you what’ I said, ‘brother, find me a house with such a big front room, cos we’d knocked the two bedrooms into a front room’ I said ‘find me a big house with that, and I’ll go with your valuation.’ I said ‘actually, it’s like next door’, he said ‘arrr, I don’t believe in all that’. And that was it, everybody was totally nuts, you know, there was no joined up thinking, and as I say, when they threw us out, they put all the stuff in storage, course the storage companies said…they were only paid a couple of weeks, and the storage companies said ‘no, can’t be bothered with that’, so it was all out in another unguarded place, and a lot of the stuff go soaking wet and a lot of valuable stuff got soaked wet. The bailiffs were weeing on the mattresses, weeing on everything, you know, you cannot believe what it was like. And you cannot believe that we’re talking about Britain in the 1990s. It worse than some…

LW: Absolute power corrupts, and the government at that time had a big majority, you know, it was Mrs Thatcher’s mob, and they had a big majority and they could do what they like, and the fear is, of course, what’s going to happen at the next election.

RL: Well it’s that and also, you know the fact is they’ve not learned anything have they? They still think ‘oh, why don’t we build roads? Predict and provide. Why don’t we just treat the people…’ You know, like they treated the minors and stuff like that.

LW: Oh yeah, that was going on of course at the same time.

RL: Yeah. You cannot treat people, if you treat people like that… people have said to me after the M11, it was a miracle people didn’t rise up, you know.

*And was there much kind of, joined up thinking between what was going on with the minors and the roads, was there any kind of…*

RL: No, I don’t think the minors were that interested in the M11.

LW: I er…

*I mean the road building programmes…*

RL: Twyford Down and Oxley’s Wood, and all the others, a lot of the others down on the south coast, yeah, we was keeping, when some of them had done their service on the M11, they’d go to Oxley’s, or they’d go to … and then they’d come back. There was a constant stream of foot soldiers, you know.

LW: There was a tie up with the minors, because there was a march in London and I know I went on it and I had the banner, I was with the banner, and people couldn’t work out why No M11 Link Road was tied in with the ….it was the minors wasn’t it?

RL: It was the minors and us and a whole lot of other people against Thatcher’s cuts, cos at that time even Thatcher was doing cuts. She was cutting things and that, time never changes.

LW: I know people said ‘well what have you got about this?’, and they said ‘well you know, that’s the alternative to er… er… it was the…no it must have been the railway workers. I think, I can’t remember which one it was.

RL: It was something like that. It was a major…massive great left wing sort of oriented march. It went to parliament didn’t it? Thousands of people went to parliament and it was against I think it was against the cuts and stuff like that. But it was a show of people power and the tories weren’t having any of that.

RK: Um, cos I’ve got to go in about 10 minutes, I just wanted to say, the person who lived in this house when I first moved in Marshal Coleman, do you remember Marshal? I think he designed the Tunnel It! Poster. Now he might be happy to talk to you, he’s in St Albans now, and I just remember the, you know, where we had those little events at the Leytonstonia, there was something very artistic and creative, you know, when people on the left get together they’re very good at creating art and wit and I hope that comes out in what you do. There was something else I wanted to say, what was it?

*I’ve got loads of notes from your email. You’ve talked about Angie, erm, you said that they had a baby, they lived in a tree and that they had a baby…*

RK: Well he lived in a tree but after he came out of prison they kind of settled down as a conventional nuclear family I think.

*Okay, so he lived in a tree before he went into prison.*

Yeah, he was, yeah.

*Erm, you said something nice about erm, going to Leytonstonia and singing They’re Going To Build A Motorway Through My Back Garden.*

RK: Oh, that song, do you remember it?

*I wanted to ask you all if you remembered that song.*

LW: No.

RK: I just sang it once. I mean I can send it to you, it’s by Leon Rosselson. But I don’t know what made him, whether this campaign was what made him write it, but we can ask him. I can give you his details as well.

*Oh, do you have his details? You know him?*

RK: I know him, yeah.

*Okay, great, because I did find the clip on youtube, and I watched it and I couldn’t work out if it was related originally.*

RK: Remind me to give you his details.

*Okay, I’m just whizzing through the things that I wanted to ask you about, erm before you have to go. We’ve talked about that… dying as a result of the struggle. You talked about a wonderful evening you had in St John’s Church.*

RK: Of yeah. That was only a few years ago, there was a vicar called Raymond Draper who was a bit of a lefty, his church was used for things, and I forget what date it was, that event

RL: I think it was something like the… was it…

LW: It was an anniversary date, and I got them doing the chant in the church. He didn’t mind.

RL: It was an anniversary, and it was either the 10th or the 15th year or something like that. You know, the beginning of the campaign, not the end of it, but the beginning, ‘cos the campaign lasted quite a few years.

RK: And I don’t know whose idea it was to have this event, but it was very moving, and people were standing up with their memories and they showed none of these films didn’t they?

RL: That’s it, yeah.

RK: So that was great.

*Do you remember any of the memories that particularly stood out from the evening?*

RK: I don’t think I do. I don’t know if you do.

RL: No. There was another one at the Gannets, where that bloke wrote… one of the guys… he was supposed to be on the M11, but he wrote a book…

LW: Oh, that’s right, yeah, I’ve got it somewhere. It was at Gannets, so Gannets might be able to have some details about that.

*Gannets?*

RW: At the Hornbeam. You know, gannets café. In How Street in Walthamstow.

*Yeah, I know. So Gannets in at the Hornbeam, is it?*

RK: It used to be called Gannets Restaurant. But it’s not called that anymore I don’t think.

RL: But he was there, and I remember it vividly, because I was blaming the tory government for all the woes of road building and some guy at the back says ‘no it wasn’t, it was all filthy labour’. And everybody… I thought, this bloke’s gonna get lynched. And they just said to him something like, politely, ‘do you wanna go elsewhere mate?’

RK: I remember Thatcher was against trains. Which could explain this passion for the road. She hated trains didn’t she?

*Do you know why she hated trains?*

LW: Yes. I know why. Mrs Thatcher thought that everybody who wasn’t a sponger had to own their own house, and have their own car and drive to work, because they’d made it. Well, whilst first of all you can’t have more than one managing director, so, when you think about it, it was a silly idea, plus I mean in a city, you’ve only got to travel on the underground, if you had everybody on the underground in London and most cities in this country, if they all drove in, it wouldn’t work. So she was bally wrong, but… the soldiers won the Falkland war for her, and what I can’t understand why the Conservative government at the moment have cut back on the military, because they saved the day for Mrs Thatcher, I just can’t work that out, but I suppose it’s the same old story, the people that were in charge in those days aren’t in charge anymore, so it’s different thinking.

RK: Research shows that whenever you build a road, more traffic happens.

LW: Oh yeah. But that was known…

RL: Since Roman times

LW: Yeah, that’s been known, that was known at the time, as I mentioned to you.

RL: See I think with Thatcher, if you’re gonna take the ridiculous to the sublime if you know what I mean. If you go back through political history, way, way back in political history the conservatives promised to destroy the triple three, the triple alliance, that was minors, electricians and the railways. The dockers. Dockers, railway and the minors. Cos those three could hold the country to ransom. She got rid of the dockers, they got rid of the minors, then crushed the railway. And that’s what they did. [?]come along, got rid of all those things, crushed the railways. And as for why she don’t like the railways, someone once said to me, and I’m sure it’s absolutely true, she must have been stuck in one of those ladies only carriages, only to find, she wasn’t a lady and got fined. In them days you had women only coaches, d’you remember them?

LW: Yeah, I do actually.

RL: And that’s what someone said to me. I think he wasn’t a fan of Margaret Thatcher.

LW: There was a lot of things that happened, I mean there was art exhibitions, there was an old house that was going to be knocked down, inside, all the walls and everything were painted and it was absolutely fantastic, you know, painted on the bare plaster, you know, it was an artistic site.

*Where was that?*

RL: Claremonty

LW: Claremont.

*Claremont Road.*

LW: Odd things happened, I mean there was the… there’s an old film called Passport to Pimlico, when Pimlico tried to become an independent country, it’s a very old film, a very funny film as well, Ealing Comedy, worth maybe a look. And we… well, I wasn’t involved, but the campaign as such, and the active members erm, they tried to declare Wanstonia as an independent country.

RL: Well they did. It was.

LW: And then again we all linked arms around the …round it. There was all sorts of ideas.

*And did you have passports as well? I read somewhere that…people made…*

LW: Did they actually make…?

RL: No, they did make little passports.

LW: I didn’t have one. I didn’t have one.

RL: Little passport… because the bizarre thing is that you can declare an independent country, and if it’s recognised by the UN you are an independent country, so Wanstonia became independent.

*Was it recognised by the UN?*

RL: Yeah, it was. It actually was. These are clever people I’m telling you about. And then, because when the tree, they had the bivvy up the tree….

LW: Wanstead

RL: They said well… on Wanstead, George Green… they found out that if you get a postcode it became a residence

LW: And they got one!

RL: So they got one. They got a postcode.

LW: And postmen delivered letters there. Up the tree.

RL: And then when they come to get rid of them, the guy quite accurately said you’ve not sent me a notice to the tree. You’ve not sent me a compulsory purchase order. ‘Go back and do your paperwork’. So they had to go back and go through all the long thing of doing this, before obviously they cut the tree down. But that’s how they were doing it. There was an awful lot of clever people.

RK: Yeah, I think that’s what I’d like to emphasise, that whenever you get a campaign on the left, there’s a huge amount of lateral thinking, of wit, of skills, of artistry and this was very much the case.

RL: The sheer brain power involved was phenomenal.

*That’s really coming through on this project, the creativity, the wit, the humour.*

RK: Well people have got photos…

RL: Apparently my older brother found a lot of photos on the web somewhere, but the one thing that was missed was that in Claremont there was a house with I think it was three or four… Maureen might have a photo of it…

*Maureen Measure?*

RL: Yeah. There’s three or four prancing horses that were…

*Yeah. She…I’ve got a photo of those horses from Maurine, its lovely.*

RL: Send it to us, if you don’t mind. As Ros says, there was so much creativity, and at the same time there was people coming from Poland, New York, all this sort of stuff, it was just….it just formed didn’t it. It wasn’t planned because obviously there was a campaign to stop the road, there was a campaign to cheese the government off, but other people were coming in and to look at a lot of ‘em, they were sort of like dressed sort of like tramps and sort of like that, brain capacity was phenomenal, phenomenal brain capacity. When you got all that people together, bouncing off of one another, I mean nowadays they call it hothouse or something like that don’t they, I mean you had all those brain capacity, and they was intelligent people that had been to university and done Masters and all that. And then there was the old foot soldiers like us weren’t there.

*So you were part of the official…*

LW: He was the Chairman. The chairman of the No M11 Link Road.

RL: Homes not Roads!

LW: That’s right.

*So can you just describe to me what the relationship, or the dynamic was between the official No M11 Link Road Campaign, and the environmentalists, the activists? Were you working side by side, or…?*

LW: Well they were all together.

RL: We talked to one another, then they did what they wanted to do, and we did what we wanted to do.

*Okay, so there wasn’t that much…*

RL: There was a lot of meetings, co-ordination meetings, but because we were obviously very aware of the secret police being around, and bearing in mind that the police, not the bobbies, but the TIG had shown just what they were like, and bearing in mind people had been set on fire on George Green, and people had been…

LW: Cars vandalised. Remember when they went down the road, someone went down the road and vandalised all the cars.

RL: People had been… and there was an awful lot of nastiness, so we kept very quiet about what we was doing, and who was doing what. So there was quarter masters that were collecting stuff and getting food in.

LW: We had our own chef

RL: There was people going to see the trades and asking the trades ‘can you do this, can you do that?’, and we were getting people helping us, there were people giving us donations.

LW: Majestic Wines at Wanstead, we had a demo there, and they gave us a crate of coca cola, cos we were all talking through mega-phones [laughs]

RL: I don’t know if people… you’d have to check with the people if they were wanting to be known, but Erith and Co. which is still at Leytonstone, they were superb at giving us an awful lot of stuff.

*Erith and Co? What did they do?*

LW: Building supplies.

RL: Building supplies. There was people down the old cash and carry at Drapers Ground that were giving us food, and there was an awful… I mean we was producing …we had military guys there and they have us a thing of how to produce a 7 day pack. So we was producing 7 day packs

LW: Which you put of the trees

RL: Stick on the trees

LW: Because if the people… and in the attics of the houses. You see what happened was, they used to surround the place with yell- we used to call them yellow bellies, which is the security guards because is cheaper than paying the police, because oh god, you gotta pay union rates for the police, when yellow bellies you can get cheap. And you had the yellow round, so you couldn’t get in and out, you had the people in the trees and in the houses, obviously, they’ve got to eat and drink, if you haven’t got anything in stock, you know, you’re starved out, aren’t you? So we had all these…

RL: …7 day packs.

RK: Sorry, I’ve got to go, I erm, can give you Marshal and Leon’s contact details if you contact me. As I say Polly, what I’d be very interested in would be the legacy, what people did with all this experience, if it’s led onto them doing other things of other sorts, if that can come up.

*Yeah… You want me to pause the recorder. Okay.*

[Some conversation not transcribed – asides. LW leaves the room]

RL: Like Laurie says, about the yellow bellies, when they were on Trelawn Road, which is a road near Colville Road, these poor blokes were like, quite scared because we can, on mass, we can project like the, er, presumably what the emperor saw when he saw queen Astrid coming along from the huns, ‘oh! There’s the huns over there!’ and these poor blokes were a bit worried, so we said ‘don’t worry mate, we’re not interested…’ and it turns out they’d come from Sierra Leone, and the government was employing guards from Sierra Leone, now what happened was, is afterwards, the government said ‘well you’re illegal immigrants! Go back home!’

[LW returns. Some conversation not transcribed]

LW: You’d better have a look at this stuff and see …

[LW Produces a bag of leaflets, placards, newspaper cuttings etc. to show interviewer]

RL: I was just saying to Polly, you talking about those security guards… they come from Sierra Leone!

LW: Well, no. They were all sorts. There was Irish, there was all sorts. You know, people who were short of a job. You know.

*But a lot of them were kicked out of the country after that?*

RL: Yeah, that’s what they say, whether it’s true or not.

LW: I don’t know. I don’t know.

RL: There’s a lot of um, is it allegorical things? You know what I mean. A lot of myth and mythology.

*So this is a beautiful plastic bag…*

RL: I got cardboard in it because …to hold it up you see. There are what we used to hold up.

*‘East London says No to the M11 Link Road’*

[Some backwards and forwards conversation about the material not transcribed]

*‘Peaceful direct action, stop the M11 Link’*

LW: We had our own newspaper, it was called The Road Breaker.

*And who was responsible for the Road Breaker? Was that the official campaign, or was it…?*

RL: No, it wasn’t us, it was the activists that were doing that. Obviously we all put stuff in it and that.

*So there was a friendly relationship between you and the activists…*

RL&LW: Oh yes.

LW: It was…

RL: we were never against one another, we were always erm… obviously there was people that was… you know there was …cos obviously the activists realised that owner occupiers were at risk of losing everything, because they could have just, as they tried to do, make you pay for the entire thin, you know? But it was great fun.

*And Laurie, what was your…can I ask you the same questions that I asked…Yeah, it’s back on now.*

RL: [whispers] Now Polly’s got you, cop.

LW: Go on then Polly, you say what you want to ask me.

*I want to ask you basically the same questions that I asked Richard, about your more kind of…what the campaign meant to you, so I guess I do want to know…you said that you were also born in Clapton…*

I was born…most of the people of our age group were born in the Mother’s Hospital, I always call it Hackney, but there you are, Clapton, it’s now been converted into flats and things, and I went round there some years ago and I said – somebody looked out of the window and I said ‘don’t worry, we’re not casing your house to rob it’, said ‘I was born here and I just come here with my brother, he was born here as well’ And he said ‘oh, we have people all the time, coming here to look at the place where they were born’. I got involved because the road was – well, is now – but was… build up in the air by the side of my house, the side of my road, Westdown Road, and I thought it was atrocious that they’d build in this day and age, or that day and age, an open motorway, up in the air, by the side of a heavily populated area. I thought it was absolutely crazy. And I thought to myself, what can I do, I’m only an ordinary person, and that of course was part of the problem, that the area, Leyton and Leytonstone area, at that time, was occupied by just mainly artisans, and just ordinary artisans that had only gone to ordinary schools, and left school and got on to ordinary jobs, so you didn’t have lots of middle class and upper class people living there that could fight the system, because they knew the system, we were at a disadvantage, and I realised that, and I thought Well what can I do? Or should I do anything? And I thought to myself, I thought to myself, I’m going to lay in my bed and the road will be built and I will always say to myself, If I tried I might have made a difference. Now as it happened, I spent a hell of a lot of time on it because I became redundant from work, my firm was closed my Mrs Thatcher, and my father cracked up, so I was a carer and Richard had the same trouble, it’s very dangerous being a carer and opposing the system, because if they like to twist was you were doing and put you in prison, of course your father or mother became, erm, the state took over and you might never get them back, so you had to do a fine line, which I did. I went up and down the link road practically every day, the whole length of it giving support, passing on news giving them a bit of food, the people that were living there, all sorts of things, but I never did any direct action, and what I used to do was, when there was direct action, which was regularly, I had a professional mic- not microphone, horn…

RL: Mega-phone

LW: Mega-phone, that’s it. And I used to explain to people that were in the area what people were doing. So erm, they had my name, because when I went on a demo once, in fancy dress, a senior police officer, you know, with lots of pips on his shoulder, came over and said ‘Oh, hello Mr Wortley’ And I thought Well how the hell did he know my name, when I’ve got fancy dress on, covering half my face? It was a trunk of an elephant, you know, it was just fancy dress, so they knew what they were doing. Erm, you were saying… anyhow, back to what I was on… I put an awful lot of time and effort into it. And as told you, we won the argument but lost the battle. But, when I roll over in bed now, though my father obviously got polluted, and he died young from the pollution from the M11 Link Road… well, not young, but he died earlier than he should have, from the M11 Link Road, I know that I did everything possible to make it better for my family and the local residents who I’d lived with all my life, because I’m a third generation of a Leyton family, and like Richard, we’ve stayed in the house. As one part of the family die, the next part of the family take it on, which applies with me. My granddad had my house, then my uncle had the house, then my brother had the house, then I live in the house.

*And you’re there now?*

LW: I’m there now, yeah.

*And what road did you say it was on?*

LW: Westdown Road.

*Where’s Westdown Road?*

LW: It right by… can you place er… Leyton underground station?

*Yeah*

LW: Have you been there? Right, there’s only one now official exit. That was something we lost, we lost an exit. Which was very bad, and that’s one of the things we could have argued more about, but if we argued about the things that they would give us, when the road was built, you’re accepting the road.

RL: That’s right.

LW: So we decided we would never do anything like that. And also, you’re using effort, you’re going and having discussions, and writing diagrams, you put your effort in stopping the road. That was… and people have criticised… some of the things could have been done better, maybe they would have done the, er, somehow done another exit permanently, in those days when they built the road on the other end of the station, they’re now beginning to do it, because of the pressure of people going in by public transport. But going back, I know that I lay in my bed, and if I… I don’t think about it now, because it’s there and I can’t do anything much about it now, but I know that I did my best to oppose it for the betterment of everybody, including myself. Including myself. But everybody that lived along it, and that’s why I fought it.

RL: You did a good job Laurence.

LW: Well you know, we devoted our life to it for a number of years.

*So it was a major, major part of your lives.*

LW: Oh, it was a big thing. This is the trouble. People, you see, times have moved on, it’s a long time ago now, but it was really big. I mean very big. That’s the sort of thing it was like [looking at archival material from the bag]

*Yeah, they’re lovely, aren’t they?*

LW: This was the chap I told you, Councillor Hugh Morgan Thomas, he was a very good man, he got the borough to oppose it properly.

RL: He started out the environment…he went all the way to Europe, didn’t he? Remember that?

LW: Oh yeah, he went to Europe for us.

*And he was a Labour Councillor was he?*

LW: Yeah, he was a Labour Councillor, he became the leader of the party and the leader of the council, because Labour got, Labour was in.

RL: The council took it through an Environmental Impact Assessment, which the government was legally obliged to do, which it didn’t do. And that was it. Was it Lucy Bagley that went with him? They went all the way to Luxembourg.

LW: [looking through archival material] these are all things about it… we had our own magazine, or paper, The Road Breaker. If there’s two of something you can take it.

*Thank you so much. Oh, that’s excellent.*

LW: And you can see, that’s the sign, I thought it was a brilliant sign.

*Yeah, it’s a very good sign. So, for the sake of the tape, this is a poster, it’s like a photocopied poster that says ‘Public Enquiry, No Secret Filming’, and then there’s a logo at the bottom, with a lorry driving through a house.*

RL: That’s the M11 logo.

*That was your logo for the whole campaign?*

Both: Yeah, yeah.

*I haven’t seen that before.*

LW: What the logo? Oh you must! Look, see

*Oh, right, there it is. Oh, I have seen it. I haven’t noticed it, obviously.*

LW: This is the point see, time goes on and people forget.

RL: Homes not Roads.

LW: Mrs Thatcher wasn’t too keen on history being taught at school, because if you forget your history, it repeats itself, and that’s why it’s so important. What you’re doing and hopefully, you might be able to get it publicised widely, so that people know, if you don’t know your history it repeats itself. We don’t want to see what happened to us to happen to the next generation. Have a look through that stuff and see what you… if there’s anything twice you can have it, and if it’s only once, show me what you would like, okay.

*Okay, thank you. I’m going to look at that in a minute, because the recorder’s still going and I’m conscious of it making lots of rustling sounds. Erm… so I want to ask you more questions.*

RL: Fire away!

*So after you left you went and stayed with your friends next door, and you went and stayed with your brother for a year, is that right?*

RL: Yeah, that’s it.

*And then you got….*

RL: By that time… I mean it took ‘em 18 months for them to pay me any money. Cos they were determined to break me, but erm, it took ‘em 18 months for them to pay me money, and by the time that come, the money come through, and erm, I bought myself a house in Ilford, because mum wanted to be near to Robert, who lived in Ilford.

*Robert’s your brother?*

RL: Yeah, my older brother. And no sooner had we moved into the house, we moved into the house in June, 1995 I think it was, and in the October she died, pretty soon afterwards. Every time she… well for me as well… every time you heard a bang it all came back, the smashing down of the door, it was like you know, post-traumatic stress or whatever it is. Whereas I got over it, it took me about 18 months to get over it, mum couldn’t get over it, she just couldn’t understand. And the more she dwelt on it, the more she couldn’t understand how they’d taken everything away. You know? Because the house wasn’t a house, and she used to say to me, which I suppose is possibly true, as a man you don’t understand, but that house, Robert had been born in that house, and that house had been her house where her and dad had first made their little nest, so they got married, moved into there… my mum had known my dad since she was about 8. She got married when she was 22, ‘praps a bit earlier, and er, they lived in the house all their life, you see, so the house was full of memories.

*Where did they live…*

RL: In Colville Road

*…Before they got their house, were they…?*

RL: Mum lived in er… you’ll edit this out cos it’s total rubbish, but the central line was the border between the ‘Prots and the Catholics. And my mum come from a Catholic family. My dad come from a Protestant family. Okay? How do you resolve the problem? You have a brick fight. So the Caths used to go up the top of the er, hill, the Prots’d come up the other, an’ they’d throw bricks at one another. As you do. Seemed sensible. And my uncle, Richard, who I’m named after, he, erm, threw a brick, and hit my dad on the head. See. And all of a sudden, my mum, rushed from behind – ‘cos obviously the boys were at the front, the girls were at the back as ammunition carriers – my mum rushed across the border, grabbed hold of dad, and said ‘are you alright, mate?’, my dad said ‘you’re supposed to be on that side’, not realising of course, that that was the secret, if you know what I mean. And my uncle Richard come over and he said ‘why are you looking after him?’, so my mum said ‘you shouldn’t have thrown a brick at him’, so Uncle Richard said, ‘oh, sorry mate!’ and they were only kids at the time, and my dad said, ‘that’s alright mate’, and that was the end of it. They were friends ever since.

*Really?*

RL: And it was only years later, that my dad, he wasn’t very well, he took a long time to go, he said to me, ‘I hadn’t sussed out that that meant something’. And my mum said to me, ‘course what he should of realised was, I was in love with him’.

*When she was how old?*

RL: She was 8. And of course, the old boy… and when she was telling me, I tried to explain to mum, ‘yeah, but mum, I don’t think a bloke at 8 would have realised that. You might of understood…’ My mum was a year younger than my dad, but you know, she was 7 and he was 8. And Uncle Richard was a bit older, and as I say, bounced a brick off his head. But he hadn’t understood that my dad, and they’d been married 40 off years and he said, ‘I still don’t understand it’, and my mum just said ‘ah, don’t worry pop’, you know, ‘okay, don’t worry’.

[all laugh]

LW: Have we covered everything that you want to know about?

RL: I don’t know about you Laurie, but I’m happy to sit here.

LW: Yeah, I’ve got to go somewhere, but that’s alright, this comes first. Have we covered everything you want to be covered? You ask the questions.

*I think we’ve covered all the kind of history, I mean, I could go on asking you questions about your lives, because what I want, because it’s an oral history interview, I want a bit of a bigger picture about the context of your lives and how it fits in.*

LW: Well ask!

*Well I mean, I am. I was just asking about….*

LW: Oh, sorry.

RL: I’ll have a rest.

LW: I’ll have a biscuit.

[Some biscuit chatter and small talk not transcribed]

*So Richard was just telling me about how his parents met…it’s funny interviewing two people at once, it’s difficult to know who to talk to.*

RL: He’s the educated one.

*So you said your firm was closed down. What were you…?*

LW: I worked in Themes Television. Do you know the history of all that, cos you’re in the media really aren’t you? At a stretch…

*At a stretch*

LW: Well in those days, going back Themes Television was the dominant independent TV station, and the dominant one in London, and of course, in news, the job of the press and the media is to criticise the establishment, on that side, the political side, and of course they criticised Mrs Thatcher, er, this is my opinion, by the way. Well in the old days it was okay because the opposition was very pleased about that, but the government wasn’t too happy, but then they changed fairly regularly, but now a days, and those days, they didn’t, Mrs Thatcher was in for a number of years as you know, and she got fed up with it, and we did Death on The Rocks, out at Gibraltar, and our – I won’t go into it – but our idea of what happened was the opposite to Mrs Thatcher and she had a private enquiry on it and our company was right and she was wrong, this is all personal opinions, when the business of altering the television franchise happened – I won’t go into it, it’s all a bit technical, but if you want to know one day I’ll tell you – we lost. ‘Tis funny isn’t it, that… to my mind it was all done very cleverly, how the power can do things, and it looks legal when- well, to a certain extent it is legal, but fiddled it so that we lost, and so I became unemployed… I don’t know what you want to know.

*I’m pausing while I think of the next question… so when was that that you became unemployed?*

LW: I can’t remember, it was years ago now.

*Just in terms of the…*

LW: It was at the time when the M11 Link Road was being built, well it had started, sort of thing, and also, I’d become a carer for my father because he’d become too old to look after himself, so… that’s why I had to play things very carefully not to do anything that they could catch me out, because I wouldn’t be able to care for my father.

*Mm Hm. And where was your mother?*

LW: Mother had passed on. Years before, yeah.

*So you were living just you and your father?*

LW: Just me and my father, yeah. Looking after him. I mean he was capable at the beginning, when all this was on he was alright, but going out, doing shopping and cooking and all that sort of stuff would have been difficult for him.

*He needed your help for that. And Richard was saying that his father was involved in objecting to the road right at the beginning in the 50s, do you know if your father had any involvement?*

LW: No, no. They weren’t involved then, no. They weren’t involved then, no.

RL: To be honest, it wouldn’t have… where Laurie lives…

LW: It probably wasn’t known.

RL: Well even if it was known I think they’d have said you know, it’s nowhere near, cos at one time they weren’t thinking of going down Colville Road, they were going to go down Grove Green Road, that was the idea of it, to go straight down – you know, go Ruckholt Road, down Grove Green Road, Fillebrook, into it that way. And then the government had the idea of creating what they call transport links, so you had the railway there, so we’ll put the road next to the railway.

*Right.*

RL: And that was the idea of it. Y’know.

*And you were telling me about…with your professional…what did we call it…. Mega-phone… was that through your work in TV?*

LW: No, no, no, it was nothing to do with a company. I erm, I had this professional mega-phone and I used to go to all the action things with it and stand on the pavement and explain why it was happening, what was happening, and why.

*So you’d almost be giving a commentary to the people… can you remember any of the actions that you went on?*

LW: That’s right, yeah, well of course there was all the knocking down of the houses, as they…they didn’t knock every house down together, but they knocked down some very won… funnily enough, some of the houses were absolutely fantastic. You know, they were architecturally interesting, you know, you had the arries(?), they were always workers’ houses, if I can put it like that, artisans, there were houses, particularly in Leytonstone and Wanstead, where erm, sort of going back at the beginning of railways etc. very rich people lived, because it was within range of the city for going in on a horse and carriage and a lot of these old houses actually had room for the stables, there was gaps and room for stables. And they were beautiful houses. I went into one at Wanstead, it was unbelievable. You went in and there was a balcony all the way round inside.

*Were these on Cambridge Park Road? Those ones?*

RL: Cambridge Park Road, and Fillebrook Road, because as Laurie says, if you look at the history of the area, in about 1850, when the railway come, there was about one man and a dog and a pub. And that was Leyton, but by the time 1900 had come, the rich merchants were on their way out, but when you look at the fact of Leyton, the number of people living in Leyton went from sort of like two men and his dog, to like thousands because like the rich merchants…when you look at Fillebrook Road and things like that, these were the rich merchant houses, they’d been allowed to go to a bit of disrepair, because the government had brought a lot of them up, they’d been buying them up since the 60s, actually since the 50s, but you could have made them very nice houses.

LW: Oh they were wonderful houses, they were beautiful, they were class houses, they were rich people’s houses. They were lovely.

*Do carry on…I’m just…*

LW: Oh, as I was saying, when those, and ordinary workers’ type houses, which I live in, erm I used to be there with my mega-phone, and erm, explaining - course, crowds used to come to see houses knocked down and you know, register their vote by boos and things, and tears, and of course I used to explain what was happening, and asking the people that were doing it, not to do it, because I remember walking in front of a gang of yellow bellies that were going up Grove green Road, and I was walking in front of them with my megaphone saying ‘you don’t have to do this!’ but of course, they were being employed, so if they didn’t do it, they wouldn’t get any money.

RL: And a useful thing also what Laurie was saying is that you could use that megaphone when we went on demos to er Department of Transport, which was near Westminster.

LW: Oh yeah, we used to go up there.

RL: You go there and of course all people’ll see, there’d be about 20 or 30 people all outside the front door…

LW: Doing the demo

RL: Doing the demo, and then you’d get the megaphone and you’d say to the people in the offices, this is the reason we’re doing it. And occasionally people’d come to the back door of the things and go, ‘oh, we didn’t know that’, and a couple of times they’d been…we acquired people in the offices that would say to the leaders, for want of a better word, ‘oh, do you want to know this, do you want to know that?’ And people’d be stuck in and people’s go take photocopies and stuff like that of all these documents that the government was telling the department of Transport what to do, and just how vicious to be. There was a lot of senior people in the department of transport sending notes up to – these were letters, before the days of email – sending notes up to Thatcher and the Secretary of state, which often changed from Transport, saying you know, We’re not happy with this, we don’t think it’s legal, we’re not happy with it. They were just told, Got on with it, man up, you know, otherwise you’re out of a job, and people were taking photographs of all these and photocopies and stuff, so there was an awful lot of people in government that were not very happy about what things were doing.

LW: And mobile phones were in their infancy.

RL: Yeah, you had the brick.

LW: Mobile phones were in their infancy, and if it happened today, which it won’t at the moment, erm, it would have been totally different with all gizmos of the computer age, cos there wasn’t computers.

RL: No… you could have got crown source or something like that. But even if it happened today, I honestly, p’rahaps not, but I honestly think that the actual spitefulness of government hasn’t changed, you see at the moment with all the cuts and stuff like that, the spitefulness of government hasn’t changed. The actual, fundamental, p’rahaps the tory pary, but the actual fundamental thinking of the government is, ‘you’re just not worth it, you’re insignificant, you don’t matter, so we can cut benefits, we can force people out of jobs’. I remember what Laurie was saying about that Death on the Rock. I remember watching it on the TV, the IRA was sent to assassinate someone weren’t they? And the special…

LW: No, not the IRA… no. The IRA… oh yeah, that’s right, the IRA were out there and the SAS went out there and killed em

RL: Caught them at a petrol station, and just gunned them down

LW: That’s right.

RL: I mean, that’s what the SAS was told to do. Same with like, the Iranian thing. Those blokes in the Iranian Embassy said ‘we surrender’ and they filled them up with 35 bullets. That’s the way the system operates. But that system was turned against us on the M11. We had the same sort of viciousness and , as Ros says, we were somewhat naive, we thought well the law…

LW: We were naïve, I was naïve.

RL: Then you suddenly realised the law’s not going to do anything about it.

LW: I was naïve.

RL: And that’s where a lot of the activists, a lot of the activists, as Ros was saying about the legacy, they went on to... do you remember… I’ve forgotten his name now, but Transport 2000, we had John Stuart from Transport 2000

LW: John Stuart is a very fine man. He’s a committed environmentalist, and at the moment he’s very active in not having a third run-way at Heathrow, and he is a wonderful man. I really appreciate him, he’s put him life into the environmental side of the London area mainly, he does do other things as well, but he’s very active on that

RL: And you had Roger Geffin didn’t you? Do you remember Roger Geffin? And there was another bloke, Stephen Joseph, Transport 2000.

*What was Transport 2000?*

RL: Transport 2000 was an umbrella group that was set up basically I think, after the road campaigns, to campaign for better transport, but not road transport, but just better transport.

*Rails…?*

RL: Rail…cos a lot of people that were in favour of us were saying ‘well obviously you’ve got to have roads, you can’t have a non-road, non-car environment, but they also understood that when you look at places like London, the street system’s medieval, now you can’t push 20th Century traffic volumes into a medieval city, and that was proved in the Victorian times with horse and cart. The same thing where I come from now. They’re doing a bit of work on the A406, and the busses are delayed an hour. You got cars 20 miles back, it’s just not going to happen. A car based -society will just not… and what I said before, instead of giving people power, it’s enslaved then, because where I come from, you’ve got people with 4 cars, and they say, ‘it proves my status’, no it don’t, because every so often the lease holder comes, takes a car back because they’ve not been paying the rent on it.

LW: Well, that’s different.

RL: ‘Oh, don’t worry about that, I’ll get another one’. It’s… ‘I’ve got to project myself, I’ve got so many cars’, and if you don’t own a car, I don’t own a car, Laurie don’t own a car, if you don’t own a car, people think ‘you’re nuts’

LW: Well Richard used to own a car, and he can also drive, which I can’t.

RL: I haven’t driven in 12 years.

LW: Have you renewed your licence, though?

RL: It don’t run out till I’m 70.

LW: Oh, right.

RL: I’m not going to renew it, cos I’m never going to drive again.

LW: You never know Richard, for the amount of money you’ve got to invest on that, it’s worth doing, just in case, you know.

RL: I might drive if I win the lottery or something.

LW: No, no, no, but you might need it for something …other people or something.

RL: People’ll think this is silly, but the only time I would love to drive, is a tank, down to Parliament, do a couple of rounds through Parliament.

[all laugh]

RL: People say that I’m extreme! I’m not extreme. Sounds simple to me.

LW: He’s just being silly. Anything else you want from us?

*Um, MacGregor, the action that took place at the Department for Transport’s home, that was a banner drop, yeah? Is that right?*

RL: Banner drop from the roof, yeah

LW: And also, we, I think we had more than one demo there, didn’t we?

RL: We went to see… who was that bloke that come after MacGregor?

LW: Oh, we went round to one of the Transport Minister’s houses! Oh no, we did it twice!

RL: We did it twice.

LW: One in London, and one in Cornwall or somewhere.

RL: No, no, well, that was …Colin went there. I went with Colin to the planning inspector. He wasn’t very happy when we turned up on his doorstep.

LW: That was down at Devon or Cornwall, wasn’t it?

RL: Yeah, Devon or Cornwall.

LW: And we went to the minister of transport in London. And did a demo outside his house.

RL: Who was the bloke that come after MacGregor? The bloke that had about 6 or 7 mistresses…

LW: No, it wasn’t his house, it was the one before him.

RL: Well we went to the one that had 6 or 7 … oh I know the one, the bloke that had the, erm, the wife… he had a house somewhere

LW: Somewhere in North London, wasn’t it?

RL: He had a house in Epping, and another house just across the road in Epping, and we turned up in one of them, it was like a farm, converted into a house, we turned up and the farm people made it clear we weren’t happy, so we’d been told, given these addresses by people in the department of transport, spies, shall we say, and we turned up there and he was well embarrassed, you know. Pretty little thing there, and we said, ‘oh are you the current one, love?’ And she says, ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’m just helping him, I’m just his secretary’, yeah, yeah… I know this is sexist, but I said ‘yeah, you’re pretty, you’re quite nice, you might last a couple of weeks, then you’ll be out and the next one’ll be in. It’s like revolving doors’. Poor little thing was saying ‘oh, I don’t think it’s like that!’, and he was getting more and more annoyed. And then a couple of blokes come along from the farm and politely told us to go, then it was about a week or so after that, we went to a place, I’m sure it was Harlow, or Essex, and he was there with his wife, and he opened the door, we said ‘we saw your other one, saw your fancy piece’, then she come down and she was a proper lady, a proper, like, aristocratic lady, she was a lovely lady, she said ‘I know, we all have a cross to bear, d’you want to stay here, want cakes, want tea?’, oh, if we’re not annoying anybody, we’ll go home.

[all laugh]

LW: I think that should be…a lot of that should be…erase a lot of that. I hope you haven’t extended that with your imagination.

RL: No, it happened.

LW: Oh right. I wasn’t in on those. I went…

RL: No, I’ll tell you why Laurie, because in a lot of instances, a lot of people didn’t want to get involved because they had parents…

LW: That’s it. I went to one where they put…I’m trying to remember, it was somewhere in North London I think, and we put down a sort of artificial road up to this minister’s house. Were you in on that one?

RL: I wasn’t in on that one, no. That was the Archway people doing that.

LW: No, no, but it was for us. For our benefit.

RL: Yeah, but it was the Archway people

LW: They put down this sort of suggestion of a road knocking down this person’s house, and I can’t remember if it was a minister or…

RL: No, it was that erm…

LW: Was it the inspector?

RL: No, it was the head of the Department of Transport.

*I’ve got, there are lots of photos of people on the top of, I thought it was the head of the Department of Transport’s house, and they dropped a very long road banner through the middle of the house as a kind of symbol of …*

RL: I think that was…cos the head of the department, I’ve forgotten his name, the top bloke, the senior bloke, not the politician, but the senior civil servant, and he was extremely dismissive at first, but then towards the end of he said, look, you might be right, but …I have to do what my political masters tell me to do. And I think a lot of them at the end of the day suddenly realised, s’pecially when the cost went up and up and up and no one was questioning the cost.

LW: Well, this is serious. Nobody ever knows how much the M11 Link Road cost.

RL: That’s true.

LW: Nobody ever knows, there was an estimate. Of course obviously it was under estimated, but they sort of wangled bits of this that and the other, but you will never find the cost of the M11 Link Road.

RL: it ran into billions.

LW: The point is, of course, the government done it like they do, with Sellerfield (?), alter the name, um, it was called the M11 Link Road, it’s not called that now, it’s called the A12… what’s it called?

*Just the A12.*

RL: A 12 Relief Road or something

LW: Yeah, it’s not called the M11 Link Road anymore, and that’s the same that they did with Sellerfield, you know they alter the name when something is, if you keep mentioning the names it brings back unhappy times for the establishment, so they alter the name so it, you know, people forget, very clever.

RL: But if you talk to Colin Bex… Colin Bex was at both of those er, demos.

LW: Don’t know how to contact him. No idea.

RL: I think Doreen might know him, because someone told him about Katy’s funeral.

LW: That’s right, that’s right. He turned up.

RL: So someone must be able to contact. A lot of the activists turned up at Katy’s funeral.

LW: Of course nowadays they’ve got mobile phones so all you’ve got to do is just know their phone number and you can just drop them a word.

RL: Doreen Jenkins must know him

*What kind of long term effect do you think it’s had on the community? The people that were involved?*

RL: What in Colville?

Both: well they’re not there anymore.

*No, I mean more the people that were… it’s just interesting. Okay, I’ll backtrack and tell you what made… I did an interview a whole ago and somebody told me that up until a few years ago, people were still gathering every single anniversary of the day that the tree on George Green –*

Both: That’s it.

LW: That’s right, but that’s curtailed because , well, look at us. We’re not young anymore. I mean we used to go, and if it was pouring with rain, we’d still celebrate that night. But I mean, well, he and I, we couldn’t afford, while our parents were still alive, to go out in really adverse weather, cos if we were ill, we might pass it on to our elderly parents, or if we are ill, we’re not looking after our elderly parents. And of course, people get old and they can’t, and a lot of them moved on, well of course, of if your house is knocked down, you’ve definitely moved on.

RL: and a lot of people, you know, it’s… the tree’s no longer there. I mean the fact is that they took the tree away because the tree was…I mean I collected 3 nuts from the horse chestnut, it was a horse chestnut, three seeds, and I got Notcuts to grow them on, and they were grown. I went to the council and I said …the council said ‘no don’t plant them anywhere, they’ll be torn down’, I went to the city of London, I said to the city of London ‘can they be put somewhere?’, cos George Green is part of Epping Forest, ‘No,no no’, so eventually we come to an agreement where they’re put in a secret location, now those three chestnut trees still exist, they grow, they live. They’re a living embodiment of the M11, so when we’re all gone, when the Department of Transport’s a bit of mist, those trees will still be there.

*Where…oh, you’re not going to tell me where they are, are you?*

RL: No, it’s a secret location.

LW: He can’t tell you.

RL: That’s what it is. So they exist. And when someone …when the tree had been burned down, I don’t know if it was Maureen or someone else, there was a little spark of life, a little green thing, and someone said oh, it’ll die, cos obviously the tree was …and someone got someone to get in touch with someone from Kew and they come along and they put it out, put it in a little thing. That still survives, in a secret location. So the tree, people may think the tree has gone, the tree ain’t gone. The tree is out there.

*And why does it have to be a secret location?*

RL: Because people’ll come along and cut them down.

*When you say people, who?*

RL: People who were against the M11, they will do it, because you know, it’s like anything else, the government will say oh, we don’t want that brought back, because it was a lie to show people what they could do, if they got together. United we stand, divided we may fall. Well the government don’t like that, and that’s why it’s in a secret location, because who go there will cut that down. People can’t understand just how vicious the system was against people, fighting for their property, fighting for a community, and for all the nonsense that politicians speak about, ‘we want a synergy, we want a homogenous…er, we want a community’ it’s all complete garbage. They don’t want it. They want people to be against people, because then people don’t get together. Because if people get together, they suddenly realise, ah ha! You’ve got no clothes on Mr Emperor. And that’s what we were doing.

LW: We were more powerful than the establishment. What do you want to ask? Go on, you ask us a thing.

RL: Yeah, you ask the questions, cos we could drone on for years.

LW: Yeah, well he could anyway.

*Laurie, if you need to go, that’s fine. Okay, I’ll stop this now.*

LW: Yeah, have a look through that [the bag of archival material]. ..

RL: Sarah Wishart… she interviewed me last year about all this.

*Was she from the Museum of London project?*

RL: She might have been, something to do with Graham Miller’s…

*Yeah, yeah. I listened to your interview that she did, a couple of weeks ago I went to the Museum of London and had a listen to your interview. It was great, really good.*

RL: Oh god. We live on Laurie! In the ether.

*One of you was just about to say something then…*

LW: We were saying that there were very old buildings of architectural interest, and one of the buildings was the local sorting office, which was in Fillebrook Road, and that was a very interesting building, I think I might have just gone into the entrance once, but I never went into see how they sorted stuff, they refurbished it just before they knocked it down, I don’t know what went wrong there. They spent a lot of money refurbishing it, the post office did, and it was the post office in those days, and then along came the Ministry of Transport and knocked it down.

RL: Well, see now I’ve been inside that, very nice, but I remember when we went inside it, the guy that was there, he said ‘oh yeah, we have refurbished it, because we’ve been told the road won’t come through’.

LW: Oh, I didn’t know that!

RL: I’ve got an idea it might, mate! Not one hand knowing what the other hand was doing.

*And was it refurbished as a sorting office?*

RL: Oh yes! In fact it was upgraded, they were upgrading it to be more of a hub for sorting, you know. People… these were the messages being given out by different parts of the government.

LW: that might have been done purposefully now you look back on it.

RL: Oh, I’m sure it was. They were wasting public money hand over fist.

LW: The important thing is though, is to say that they never said how much the M11 Link Road cost. My closing speech, I think I’ve already said, is I hope a lot of people, young turks and not so young turks will acknowledge what’s happened here, the power of the state and etc. and as Mrs. Thatcher as I said already, didn’t believe in history, if you don’t know your history it’ll repeat again, now you’ve learned the history of this action, most of the people are passed on or dispersed etc. so obviously there’ll be similar challenges, when we went to national environmental conferences etc. you ,et people that had the same problems where they lived in Newcastle, Manchester and all sorts of places, and they knew about our problems, because we were well advertised because it was big it was in London, it was a huge, huge effort and we had plenty of press on it, but not all people have that, there can be small developments which are equally disadvantageous to the local people and we hope that maybe this will help, but you’ve got to stand up and be counted and never agree initially with what they say because they always have something in reserve as a little bribe, so if you create adverse publicity and say you’re not keen on what they’re doing, they’ll probably offer you some little perk. It might not be much, like double glazing, but it always pays not to agree the first time.

RL: Totally agree.

*Do you have any last…is there anything that I haven’t asked that you wanted to talk about?*

RL: No, we’ll probably have another conversation, but as Laurie says, you have the power to make things change. If you want change it’s down to you. As Laurie says, we die in the gutter and they step over us. It goes on, it’ll always go on.

*Okay, I’ll pause this again now. Laurie, thank you so much…*

LW: That’s okay.

[Tape is paused, and LW leaves. Interview continues with RL]

*So just er…go back to…you said…well, just…*

RL: ask the question.

*I can’t remember exactly what my question was…*

RL: Your question was something like ‘what was going to happen afterwards?’ The true story, you know… The true story’s never going to be told because certain promises were made by people to people that will be kept. I mean a lot of people helped us that are still in Parliament, still in the civil service. A lot of people helped us and those are confidential, it’s as simple as that.

*So I did want to ask about… because I hear a lot of people talking about connections being made with the police, with security guards…*

RL: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

*Bailiffs. So without naming any names, I just wondered if you could talk a little bit about…*

RL: Well a lot of that was done. I mean Jacky Cottent (? – inaudible), whose dead now said the same, her husband was a world renowned sculptor, but Jacky lived in York Road, by Leyton tube station and she had the ability to talk to anybody and get people to agree with her, so she’d go and talk to the security guards, talk to the police. A lot of the police, the met police were horrified at what they were seeing. Not what they joined up, not what they went to Hendon for. So there was an awful lot of people horrified. A lot of the security guards were horrified, a lot of the civil servants were horrified, a lot of the politicians were horrified. A lot of people just couldn’t believe what they were seeing. And the general image that a lot of the politicians were trying to put out was here was a rough bunch of, er, ner-do-wells, druggies, all this sort of stuff, you know, sleeping rough. Lock em up, put em in the army. They weren’t. They were very intelligent people. A lot of the women there were very, very intelligent, they’d been to women’s colleges, women’s universities, extraordinarily… and the great leaders, in my opinion, were the girls, the women. You had Rebecca, you had Emma, you had some of the others, great leaders, because they had that sensible thing of saying okay, this needs to be done, and Jacky always used to go around and say ‘oh, you can smell the testosterone’ and that, cos all the – ‘yeah, I’ll go up that tree’, and all that, and often you’d say ‘well, I wouldn’t actually go up that tree, might not be sensible’. I think it was a very female oriented, orientated, command structure, which showed a lot of the young girls just what they could achieve, cos we’re going back to the early 90s where there wasn’t all this sort of thing about, y’know, that, and it showed a great deal what you could empower people to do. And it did do an awful lot of joined up thinking with an awful lot of people. There were connections. There was a lot of very intelligent lawyers coming in. A lot of people who were one minute talking to us, the next minute you’d see them on the telly at Davros[?] or something.

LW [briefly returned]: Also there were scientists.

RL: Yeah, there were scientists.

LW: ‘Bout the quality of the land.

RL: All very clever people, they could see a genuine, people based movement. And as I say, the artistic input was unbelievable, and people were exhibiting at Whitechapel Gallery, at other things, under railway arches and stuff like that. Really good quality artistic stuff. I think some of the artists have gone on to be world renowned, people know them, and they command high prices.

LW: Some of the things you want to know about what’s on now, and what’s happening in the area, well, first of all, we completely lost an exit and entrance to Leyton underground station and we’re still fighting to get one re-instated on the south side of the station. Another thing locally that we’re very active in is the hall farm curve, trying to get so that railway trains can go from Stratford to Chingford, via Walthamstow Central, and there’s a short curve called the hall farm curve, should have been built for the Olympics, now the excuse is that they’ve got to build an extra platform at Stratford to cope with it, but we’ll keep the pressure on that one. And one of the things that I think everybody in this area is under estimating, like at the beginning of the M11 Link Road they didn’t think it was coming, Heathrow, with the development of the third runway, the extra capacity will be 220,000 flights a day, and they don’t have to say flight corridor until they’ve build the runway, so it could be coming over you. I bet it’s going to come over this area, 220,000 extra flights a year, I mean it is a very serious environmental point, plus of course you have the danger of the moor planes there are up in the sky, the more likely there is of one having an accident, and of course, if you have it at Heathrow, whether you have it at all is a question, but if you have it at Heathrow, if there was an accident anywhere near the airport, you’ve got maximum population around London as everybody knows. What is it, one in five lives in London, or something like that, in the UK? So um, the battles go on, even on the same area, as I said. But um, hall farm curve, which I think all of it is in our borough, the flight paths, over the top, and we’re still trying to get a second entrance to our eastbound Leyton underground station re-instated, and none of us can remember how long ago the M11 Link Road started, so…

RL: It’s the 20th Anniversary of it being finished. It went on for …I think about 1989 or something like that it started, I think it went on for years.

LW: So we’re looking for the next generation of young turks and old turks who’ve got the energy, and got the time. But you must make time. If there’s a petition comes by, or a meeting locally, don’t sit in doors and say ‘oh well, you know, Joe Smith down the road’ll go’, or ‘I don’t know much about this, there’s no point in me going’. Just go because one thing it shows support to the activists, cos if they get a lot of people turn out at a meeting they realise that people are interested and that encourages the people that have got the knowledge and enthusiasm and energy to do something on your behalf, on all our behalfs, to continue, and of course petitions have limited consequences, but again it shows the amount of people with interest, so you know, fill in these things and do what you can.

RL: Which I agree with, and as I point out to my council, America On Line, AOL, and that to me is anonymous, off-set, and [louset? – inaudible], because that’s what they are, the youngers of today, they’re tech-savvy, they crowd source, they do this, so you’ve got anonymous, off-set, [louset?], all these people, and that’s it. They’re the politics now. So the crusty old souls sitting up and saying oh, get a petition, which they ignore, you know, do a deputation to the council, which they ignore, I mean we done all this and I think we’re talking about a thing down my way, council said of we don’t bother about petitions. You know, no matter how many people sign a petition, we only count it as one petition.

LW: Yeah, that’s true.

RL: Then have a deputation in the council so everybody duly sits there in front of the council, they asked em questions like school master. Ignore you. You know, it’s as simple as that.

LW: Yeah, but it still brings pressure. They do realise…I mean sooner or later, everybody, the establishment generally they have to be voted in, and voted out.

RL: This is where it comes to it, because then they say okay, we went around, got all the residents to argue that they didn’t want what the council was up to, the council said should we worry? I said, well every one of them is at least one vote. When the greens got more votes than the council thought they was going to get, oh dear me.

LW: this is at Waltham Forest, by the way.

RL: It’s not Waltham Forest, its Redbridge. Got all wibbly wobbly, change their tune a little bit, they’re listening to the residents. People have got to understand, that’s the power they’ve got. If you just sit around and say nothing to do with me gov’ they’ll walk all over you. Get together, talk to your neighbours, have a community spirit, and once you talk to your neighbours you find out they’re pretty much the same as you. They might be Mrs. Khan, or they might be Mr Kawasaki [sp?] …all the same

LW: Doesn’t make any difference.

RL: Get together, talk and empower yourself.

*And so now, what do you think the legacy of that communal spirit is, today? Does it still exist? Is there still a sense that you achieved… that you worked together for something?*

RL: The government’s doing its best to destroy it.

*But I mean, in the local area if there still a sense …*

LW: I think there is. There’s local groups cos, you see the people that are activists now are younger than us, obviously, and they’ve got fresh things to fight for. I mean there’s a group called The New Lamas Land Defence Committee, that opposes building along the old Lamas Land, which is the green belt, roughly, along the River Lea. There’s lots of… there’s two historic societies… well, there’s more than two, but there’s one in Walthamstow and one in Leyton, Historic Societies that are very active that try to stop buildings of historical, buildings of architectural interest being knocked down. And some of those people in those societies are ex-M11 Link Road folk. Or activists. Or people that opposed the M11 Link Road. But of course you can’t fight the M11 Link Road, it’s there now, whether they’ll… I think they’ll have to cover some of it anyhow, because of the pollution business. I think some of it’ll have to be covered. But I suppose until people drop dead and children have…and women have deformed babies etc. It’ll happen then, you know, like it did with the great fog and smog, didn’t it. They had fogs and smogs maybe for years, I mean I’m talking about something I have little knowledge on, but they must have had fogs and smogs for years in London and thenb suddenly there was a real bad one where loads of people died and they did something. But the point in life really, as I said, is don’t forget your history cos it repeats itself. You should try to see it in advance to try and stop it, but that’s another story isn’t it.

[Tape stops. LW leaves again]

*Okay, we’re recording. So I think this is going to be our last instalment, this is 4 of 4 instalments. Urm, I haven’t got a particular question that I want to ask…I probably have got lots of questions that I want to ask you, but it’s been quite a disjointed interview, so where did we get to? Is there anything that I haven’t asked that you feel we should touch on particularly?*

RL: No, not really. As I say, there are a lot of people that are, a lot of people you should be talking to, like Rebecca Lush, Emma Must, John Stewart, Colin Bex is always useful although he’s a bit … erm, Stephen Leicester, I think he’s from Transport 2000. There’s Roger Geffin if you can find him, and as I say I gave Ros Doreen’s email address, now Doreen knows the lady in Wanstead that was the school…

*Lollypop lady*

RL: Yeah. She got the sack for sticking up for the M11. Now there’s people like Pasty and Sue and that, and all that sorts. You see them around. There’s Green Dave, I don’t know what happened to John the Axe, there’s Pookie, she died

*That’s the young girl that got her arm broken?*

RL: Yeah, she died of a drug overdose [N.B. everywhere else Pookie appears to be a man – From what I can surmise, Richard is confusing ‘Pookie’ with a young girl called Fi, who had her arm broken by the police and later died of a drug overdose]. There was Bongo. If you can get in touch with Bongo, Bongo knows all the activists, so if you can get in touch with Bongo, and the last I heard of Bongo, she was a care assistant somewhere. There’s um, I can’t remember her name right now…a lady called Morley, I think her name was, I can’t remember her first name now, Maureen knows her and she knew, she’s not been very well, she knew all the activists as well. If you go up to the Walnut Tree, up at Leytonstone, but MacDonald’s, there’s a lot of the old crowd in there.

*Activists?*

RL: Yeah, there’s a lot in there, still in there. But they’ll all do it, if you know the location of the Witches Brew at Greenman, put your hand in there, just ask everybody to come, and they’ll come. I’m not too sure about that one though, myself.

*What’s that?*

RL: There’s supposed to be this thing at the…there was some Wicca who had these three wooden healing paddles, and they were hidden at the Greenman, so should the day ever come, we will be there. Throat keeps going. I do get really emotional about this, I must admit. I shouldn’t, but I do, it’s um, too many people have gone and they shouldn’t have gone, you know? They went quickly and they shouldn’t have gone. But there was a lot of, obviously, people there on the edge that could have been looked after, but the government didn’t give a toot about them, so you feel sorry for them, you know. We were one big family, linked by blood, it’s as simple as that. That’s why I say you want to get in touch with Rebecca and Emma. It’s as simple as that. It was something which you had to be there to live through it. I don’t think you could ever covey it to people. Perhaps a hint of it, but you had to be there to do it. Perhaps I should say finally, if there’s a road protest near you, join it! You’ll have fun. It’s as simple as that. But erm, that’s it, you know. I mean my dad always used to say a funny little thing, and I might choke up a bit on it, cos I nearly always do, but years ago when they were blitzing , he was standing at the top of the hill by Leyton tube station and you could see the whole of London was on fire, everything was on fire. You could smell the burning people, you could smell everything, the heat was terrible, and er, these two fire engines come past, one had come from Blackpool, and one had come from Glasgow, so the bloke says to my dad, ‘which way’s London, mate?’ My dad pointed to the whole of London on fire, this was the big blitz, and erm, the bloke just says ‘jeez.’ He says ‘we’re finished’, and the old boy said – I do get cracked up at this – the old boy said ‘no. They can bomb us, but they won’t brake our spirit’, and I’ve always remembered that from my old dad, god bless him, ‘you can bomb us, you can throw us out of our houses, but you won’t brake our spirit’. Sorry about that, but that’s all it is, it does make me tearful, because as I say, all them good people that went, they’re all dead and that. We had a community there which was destroyed by our own people, the enemy within, they were destroyed by our own people and people like my mum that had faith in the system believed that a sacred covenant was destroyed at that time. We thought the elite would always look after us, the elite just spat on us and treated us like filth. That shouldn’t have happened. Never forget that. Never ever forget that we were treated like that. My old dad was right. You can never break our spirit [laughs]. You’ll have to delete this.

*I won’t. I won’t.*

RL: Cos, it is a bit silly for a grown man to cry, but that’s how I feel about it. You will never break us, you’ll never break the M11 spirit, alright, so there’s a road there, so what, ain’t broke us, there’s still the trees, symbols of the M11. There’s still people out there, symbols of the M11. There was a community spirit. Yeah, they scattered us to the 7 winds, it won’t break us. We learned so much on that M11. There’s different people, people that believed in ley-lines people from Wicca, the dongas, the dragons, all these tribes.

*What are these dongas and dragons?*

RL: They’re tribes, dongas were a tribe. They went back…you know tribes, going back to the real old days, before there was like, all these politics and that so you had tribal gatherings, dongas were one tribe, dragons were another tribe, there was other tribes, and you had that tribal spirit, the tribal belief of nature, you know, nature is our spirit. Whether you want to believe in a god, or whatever, that doesn’t matter. There’s a tribal spirit, a nature spirit, and that nature spirit looks after us, now we treat that spirit with contempt, the majority of people, because I think it was Chief Seattle said to the Americans once, ‘well you built on all the land, what you going to eat?’, and that’s it, you can build roads, you can build houses, build airports, what you going to eat? What you going to eat? What you going to breathe? Where are the kids going to play? When I was a kid, you could go and play in the parks, kick a ball about, no you can’t, too many cars, so you’re just, you’re not empowering people, you’re enslaving people and that’s what happened, you know, they thought, Churchill and the others thought the Blitz’d brake the East end. It could never brake us, you can’t brake our spirit. Simple as that. It’s impossible. You could kill me, but what does that matter? I’m just one bloke, of no importance what-so-ever. Like we said, you step over our body and you go on. We throw you the batton, and the others now, like the activists again, ‘fair enough mate, yeah, I’ll catch it’. Never brake the spirit. That’s what community’s all about, that’s what the government and other people are scared witless about. They don’t want the community. They don’t want us to talk to the Muslims or the Poles or the Africans, or anybody. They must be the enemy. They don’t want us to talk to us because then we realise, ‘yeah, okay, just the same as us’, and all that sort of stuff. ‘Yeah, great, you got a kid, yeah, you want to potter about? Yeah, you got old folk, yeah’, what are they doing now? They’re treating the old folk like dirt, they’re breaking up the NHS, the old folk are being abused, oh, have zero contracts, live on dirt poor pay. The rich are not doing it, the rich are richer. They fear the mob. They call us the mob. We’re not the mob, we are the people. This is our land and we’re going to keep it. End of story. Sorry about that [crying and laughing] that will have to be edited out because it’s silly for a grown man to cry. But that’s it. I’ve only ever cried three times in my life, but when I talk about the M11 I have a little grizzle. So that’s it, you know, that’s how I feel. You know, my whole family come from Leyton, going back yonks, years, going back into the 1800s we come from Leyton, that was our birth place, I would love to have lived in the place, all my life, but I was prevented from doing that by a government which knew the road was not going to be profitable, but just some spiteful person somewhere said ‘I have the power’ well actually, you just proved to us you didn’t have the power. Power should be exercised gently, not harshly. You talk to someone in a gentle way, you don’t shout at them, you use your brain and your actual conversation to educate people you don’t come down with the TRG and burn people in their bivvy’s and smash people up and all that sort of stuff. Break little girls’ arms, kick people’s heads in, try and rape women. That don’t work, just makes us stronger. And that’s it. And Laurie might say I’ve glossed over a few things, I don’t think so. My memory may not be as good as his, who knows? You’ll have to double check everything, it’s what I can remember and I’ve got a pretty good memory, so that’s basically it, you know. Sorry about that.

*Don’t be sorry. Shall I stop it?*

RL: Well, whatever you want to talk about. Until you go I can just sit here.

*Sit here and chat.*

RL: It was a time…I hate to say it was fun, but it was a learning experience because it was real time you was in a conflict. We kept saying, it was battle experience.

*Did you ever expect to get so involved? Did you know how involved you were going to be?*

RL: I had a rough idea I would because I’d always been an activist, I’d always been interested in green things and the natural world and stuff like that, and a lot of my aunties and uncles were alive at the time.

*So you were political before the…*

RL: Oh yeah, oh yeah. For sure, for sure.

*Can you tell me a little bit about that?*

RL: Well I’ve always been a Labour supporter, I’ve always been…I won’t say left wing, but I’ve always you know, been, shall we say, left wing. And as I say, the family history is that one of my, if not my dad’s dad, his dad helped Kier Hardy, up at West Ham. Kier Hardy being the first Labour MP, and bearing in mind that William Morris, who was Arts and Crafts, he was a Walthamstow bloke, and he set up, like the other people, the embryonic Labour party, so it’s a thing that’s steeped in history. And my granddad on my mum’s side, he was a great Labour man as well, so we’ve got that family history, and so when this come along, it was so patently obvious that it was unfair, I could have just packed in and said ‘give me the money, I’m off’, but there was other people in the street that couldn’t, you know. There was elderly people and there were people that’d lived there all their lives, older than my mum was at the time, and my mum said ‘no, I don’t want to go. This is my house, why should I have to leave?’ Be different if it was a railway, mum always said to me if they wanted to build a railway, yeah, I’m all for it cos your dad’s for the railway. But dad had died by then, he’d been dead some years, so I was looking after my mum, so yeah, that was it, it was always going to be the case. And as soon as it got thing, it was a chaotic scene but then people come in and you suddenly realise, ok, you’re not going to be able to organise the whole thing, which would have been fatal because as the top civil servant said to us, the thing that made us strong was the fact that we didn’t have a unifying command system, so they couldn’t pick off the leaders and all that. It was in the chaos became order, and that’s another thing that the government didn’t want, it didn’t want the chaotic order that we had. And as I say, a lot of that was down to Mick Roberts, because he was the Sherriff, and you needed a strong sheriff and he installed order amongst the activists.

*Is that what he was officially known as, The Sherriff?*

RL: Yeah, yeah. Politely officially known as, yeah. But other than that he was something else. He saw himself as the Governor. He was a tough old gypsy guy and he knew what he was talking about, so he looked after all the activists. Cathy Morley is the lady I was thinking of, Cathy Morley and the others looked after…and the older ladies looked after the younger girls, and it was a very…amongst the women was a great bondship, the women were very…I’m not talking feminism, or suffragettes, but just the power of women, what women can achieve. They looked at the boys and said ‘okay, that’s it, let them go on their testerone [testosterone] and let them do this and do that, but we have this power, and I think it was the first time I’d ever seen the power of women in that way. You know you can’t, it’s difficult to explain it, but it was a force which was there and everybody sort of like, there was – not like in work, you know, your boss tells you what to do and you tell your CO what to do, but there it was women getting together and discussing, and doing things, not compromising, but getting together and it was like older ladies, young girls, druggies, hippy types, people that are spaced out, they were there and it woked, and it worked in a way that no one was giving orders or anything like that, it worked. It was hard to explain, but it was …you know, when you saw it you suddenly thought pffffff….

*So you’d never come across anything like that before?*

RL: No, because you know, you’ve got your mum, you’ve got your aunties, but that’s not, and in work, I very rarely had female bosses at work, they’re always better than the blokes though I might say, the female… but your boss was telling you what to do, so your boss tells you what to do and you tell your Cos what to do, so…

*And what was your work? Sorry…*

RL: I worked for BT.

*As a…?*

RL: Well I started off in the legal, semi-legal department, I started off in scrap lead and copper, which was a marvellous job, and then I worked my way up through contracts, and then they needed a contracts bloke to sort out the leases and licences on their high towers so I was on the high towers team. High towers being you know the big eiffelised towers with all the big radio on that? Super job that was. I stayed in that for 20 odd… I worked for BT from ’65 to 2006 then they retired me early. I got to say, for the record, BT was brilliant, they done two marvellous things, to the credit of the country and hopefully it’ll get an award. One is it took me off the streets by employing me, and the second thing is, when they knew the game was up, they retired me. Early retirement.

*How did they take you off the street? What do you mean by that?*

RL: Well they gave me a job.

*But were you on the streets?*

RL: No, no, no it’s a figure…

*Figure of speech. Sorry.*

RL: When I left school, my dad said to me, ‘okay, you’ve left school’, so I said ‘yeah’, he said ‘well when would you go back if you was going back to work?’ So I said the 6th September, being a Monday, so the old fellow said to me ‘fair enough’, and I knew what he meant, I had to find a job. So me being me, I went up to the careers bloke and the careers bloke says ‘what kind of job do you want mate?’ I said ‘well, office, easy, pays me lots of money, and I don’t have to think too hard’, Post office. They sent me round to the post office, just next door. So the guy there, the head post master there said – or HPR as they called it – ‘Can you read and write?’ ‘Yeah’, ‘oh no, too clever for a postman’, which I thought was strange because they have to read the envelopes, ‘don’t worry about that, son, go next door’ Post office to telephones. Lovely lady there called Miss Bedner, lovely lady, Welsh lady, she was Miss Bedner, ‘can you read and write?’, ‘yeah’, so she gave me a little test, I could add up, read and write, ‘oh, well you’ll be a temporary clerical assistant’, and that was it. Temporary clerical assistant. And I stayed in it for 40 odd years, over 40 years. From 1965 to 2006, and then when I went home, my old dad said to me on the Monday, I was still in doors, the old fella came back to me and he said, ‘not at work?’ I said ‘I’m starting tomorrow pop’, he said ‘why’s that?’ I said ‘there’s a telegram up there’, and they hadn’t heard from me so they sent a messenger around to talk to my mum and my mum said to dad, ‘of there’s a telegram out there pop, but I was scared to open it’, see from the days of the war, second war and the first war, telegrams meant something horrible, somebody’d got killed, my mum had a superstitious fear of opening telegrams, and I’d forgotten about it, she said. So the old fella opened it up and said ‘you start work tomorrow’, ‘oh.’ So I went to work. They said to me ‘oh what…?’ So I explained to them about the telegram, of course they’d all been in the war, and said ‘oh I understand, it must have been a shock to your mum, we didn’t think about that’. So I said ‘that’s okay’, then the first week I got paid a fiver, which was more money than my dad earned, I was shocked at that, and they paid you cash, so he said ‘no go back and tell your boss I want it in an envelope’ , so I said ‘fair enough’, so I went there and I said to the bloke ‘my dad don’t want it in cash, he wants it in an envelope’, so the guy said ‘fair enough’, because then you handed it to mum, mum opened the envelope, dad would hand his money to mum, mum opened up the envelope, took out what she needed, she had a pile of jam jars on the mantel piece, put the money in all that she needed, and if there was anything left, that’s what you got because she worked out your ticket and all that sort of stuff and I always say I was under the best Chancellor of the Exchequer ever because my mum always worked out exactly what was needed for the gas and the electricity

*So she had different jars*

RL: Oh yeah, well in them days you put a penny in the gas meter and turned the gas, we was on the gas, we weren’t on leccy, we didn’t go on electricity till 1956, and my gran, she didn’t trust the electricity, cos it could kill you, so when she switched the leccy on she used a broom handle, so she put the broom handle on to switch the electricity on, cos it was dangerous, but she didn’t bother about worrying about the gas. And the old boy, when he changed the gas mantles, had his ciggy – he always smoked, and I said to him one – ‘isn’t that dangerous pop?’ cos the gas coming out the gas mantle, ‘no I don’t think so’. Well of course it was! Cos he’d take the mantle off, put the gas through, and stick his ciggy there and a couple of times it blew back and took his eyebrows off, but the old fella didn’t care, na, been through the war, mate.

*So that was going to be my next question actually, did he go through….did he…?*

RL: He didn’t join up cos he was on one of these exempt things, he was on the railway.

*Okay.*

RL: But he got shot at, and he was bombed. He was at Silvertown when they blew up the Silvertown – Tate and Lyle at Silvertown, just managed to miss that. He was shot at on the railway lines by German sneaker raiders, I mean they had German sneak raiders down at the back of where we lived, you know. And he was there once when Gerry come over, gave him and the boys a bit of a shoot-up, then all of a sudden, out of nowhere , this spitfire come alone. ‘Course, the Germans see the spitfire, he heads for home, and the old spitfire shot him down. But the German managed to bail out, and the boss of the railway said to my dad ‘shall we go over there?’, he said, ‘don’t be stupid, someone else can sort him out, you know, don’t be stupid, going over there’. This Gerry landed way over there, presumable someone picked him up, but the old fella said ‘oooh yeah, that’s the way to do it, yeah’. But he survived a couple of things, yeah, he was a lucky old soul. But he was in what they called a deferred thing or whatever it was. Railway, you know?

*Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

RL: The old boy loved the railway, you know? He didn’t want us to join the railways because he knew they didn’t have a future, wanted us to be in an office, which, good on him, you know. Can’t moan at that.

*Served you well*

RL: Well I think as I say, good old BT, BT’s done… yeah, I loved the job, I loved the people I worked with, and er, but I knew the time was up when I took early retirement, it was just starting to go a little bit…I’d done my stint, I’d put in my years, other youngsters could take over, great job, I loved it, but that’s it really. As I say, you learned lessons on the Link Road that you could apply to life really.

*Do you want to say a little bit about that, before we stop, because that’s quite interesting.*

RL: What, lessons?

*Lessons that you learned on the Link Road.*

RL: Well you learned that you’re all the same. Mum had already explained that to me, that we was all the same, but you saw a community in actual life. The Link Road – I know it sounds weird, but the Link Road became a living entity, it lived, it breathes. It became a living thing, so – and then when the tribal people come along, with the dragons and all this, it’s the spirit that dwells inside the earth, that spirit can look after you or it can get rid of you, but you’ve got to acknowledge it. And I’m not saying about, oh no, that’s superstition, oh no, that’s the dark side or that, no, it’s just that if you go back yonks and yonks, go back distant past, our ancestors knew all about this, they knew about the water spirits, the spirits, how the spirits can keen you or go against you, and you’ve got to be respectful to them. I mean when I go out bird watching I’m always respectful to the spirits. If I think there might be some spirits about, you’re polite to them, you don’t trash the place, you don’t leave you litter anywhere and you don’t, you know, you’ve got to be respectful to nature. Nature will look after you. And that’s what I think a lot of people learned from the tribes, that you know. And then the Wiccas come, the Wicca explain that and the healing, a lot of the people on the M11 would be treated homoeopathically by the Wiccas, and a lot of people had horrible things like exam, they treated it, they cured it, using the old methods. And they weren’t sort of like rubbing it in your thing saying ‘of we’re….’ and that, and a couple of times we would go to spirit meetings where people would say to the sun, on mid-summer’s day. We went in Epping Forest once, and we were saying to the spirits in Epping Forest ‘good morning spirits’ , sun comes up, noon goes down, good morning, you know, all that sort of stuff. It does empower you. It makes you think, it cleanses you, you know? I’m not saying that you sort of like do wacky stuff or anything like that, but it does, and that’s what a lot of the people on the M11 thought and takes with them. You’re not going to forget about that. And there’s people out there I’m sure people’ve got married, had kids, they’ll explain to their kids about how you’ve got to respect nature, I mean today I was at this thing about the Council, it’s about 200 school children come in, in the park to understand what nature’s all about. Well they’re the future those little kids, but they’re all mixes and that, they’re all different mixes, you know, but they all know one another, they all get together, so they’re all going to come, they’re all going to learn about birds, cos that’s me, I’m a bird watcher, so they’ll learn about birds, they’ll learn about the food cycle, they’ll learn about the energy of the spirits, in the world. Now they’ll go back, they’ll still prey to Allah, they’ll still prey to Jesus, that’s alright, but nature is there. You trash it, it’s going to come back and bite you. If you build all the houses, you build all the roads, all those gardens that were destroyed by the M11 Link Road, now they’re talking about building more gardens for a carbon sink, well they got rid of it. There was streams that they had to dam, and they didn’t care where the water went, you know that was land that had been there for thousands of years, the houses were only a temporary structure. The road will only be a temporary structure, in geological terms. In a couple of hundred years’ time there won’t be any cars, there might not even be any of us. But nature’ll still be here. You know, you go and look at a rock, it’s been around for a couple of million years, you’re but a blink of an eye. We come, we go, end of story, you know? Hopefully to a better place, but we come we go. But the M11 Link Road, the spirit can never die. You can’t kill what doesn’t live. The Spirit of the M11 Link Road will always be there. Them trees will be there, the four trees, they’re there. The other little trees that people took little things, they’re there, out there and they grow, that’s it. Just as my dad stood on the thing, watching the Germans bomb London, he knew London was the beating heart of this country, you couldn’t kill it. Alight. Flatten it, burn it, couldn’t kill it. Like my granddad watched the Zeppelins come over and bomb Leyton, my granddad wasn’t scared, he didn’t go around ‘ooooh, oooh, ooooh’, my granddad got as many army blokes as he could and shoot at them, my granddad was in the army. Alright, pointless exercise, 303 wouldn’t bring down a Zep, but it made people feel ‘that’s it mate, we’re having a go at them’, and then when Leefe Robinson shot the Zep down at Cufley, granddad held a minutes’ silence for the poor blokes that had dies. Alright, they might have been the enemy, but the poor devils went down in a horrible way. That is what the community was about. That is a community spirit that was put into us east enders, or people around that, the poor, you know, like the working class. Now the government might want to crush the working class, it might want to smash it and grind us down, can’t do it, it’s in there, in your heart. Can’t do it. Can’t break us. Just not possible, so that what the, that I think the legacy of the M11 has gone to a whole load of people. There was people coming from Poland, from Canada, from New York City, they would take that away and think, ‘oh yeah, I understand now, yeah sure, sure, I understand that.’ They would see – can’t break us. Alright so they built the road, that’s their fault. That’s a curse for them, it’s not a curse for us. That’s their, cos everyday people look, every time I go past the M11 I look and say, ‘well that’s your curse mate’. And the wicca people cursed the people that built the road. It’s a curse, that road has not solved the problem. It’s only made the problem worse. So you can’t beat us, cos we can’t be broken. Simple as that. That’s the message, I would think, of the M11, you know, and we’ll come back one day and bite you on the backside, cos we ain’t gone away, only waiting for the day. I think that’s it.

*Okay, I’m going to stop it now*

RL: Right.

**Name of interviewee: Richard Leighton, Laurence Wortley and Ros Kane**

**Project: Voices of Leytonstone**

**Date of interview: 08.09.15**

**Language: English**

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**Name of interviewer: Polly Rodgers**

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**Transcribed by: Polly Rodgers**

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