

GROUP INTERVIEW: ROTHBURY FELLOWSHIP, CHRISTCHURCH, GREENWICH
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Interviewer: Rib Davies

R: ...Ladies Fellowship, in Christchurch in Greenwich. I'd like to start off by asking anybody - Could you tell me if you remember the day the war ended?

?: Yes. I was up in Greenwich Park, on the allotment. Because behind the Queens House, as it was then, all one big lawn - and it was let out in allotments. My husband had a double allotment. We were up there when the all-clear sirens went and the war was over.

R: What did you do?

?: Just glad. It was a wonderful feeling.

?: I couldn't believe it.

?: We were terribly glad. I remember everybody stood up and we all looked round at each other.

R: Did you know in advance that that particular all-clear meant the end of the war.

?: It was such a long, loud one. It went on for 20 minutes, perhaps half an hour. The others used to come on with a wailing sound and when the air raid was over you'd get this long continuous one to say it was finished. That was the one we got - the long, continuous one.

R: Did you just go back to digging the allotments again?

?: No. We all stood round in a ring talking about it, all excited. Really wonderful.

R: Can anyone else remember?

?: No..no.

X: Was Jack in the services? The army or anything.

?: No. He was on the Heath, on the guns.

?: My husband was on the guns.

R: On the Heath?

?: Blackheath.

R: Was that the anti-aircraft guns?

?: Yes. That's right. The Home Guard.

?: My husband was Home Guard. He used to go to work and then he would come home and put his uniform on, parade the streets.

?: The only thing I remember is the fact that - the war was nearly over - and my husband was on the Heath and about twelve o'clock there was a terrific...Of course we all jumped out of bed, the children and myself, we were upstairs. And when we ran down to the kitchen, it was a balloon. One of the barrage balloons had burst between the two houses. It made a terrific crack down the wall of our room.

R: Was that just before the end of the war?

?: It was after the war...(?)

R: Were there street parties.

?: Oh yes. We all organised street parties.

?: I have got photos of street parties, but not in Greenwich, where I used to live.

?: I remember the parties we had up Blackheath - Bonfires, baking potatoes in the old bonfire, everybody all dressed up in red, white and blue and goodness knows what. It was fantastic. Dancing in the street, and somebody brought out a piano and was playing the old songs.

?: We had long tables down the middle of the street and all the children sat outside. What we could find - Jellies, sandwiches. I don't know where we found the food from at the time, but we did. Everybody did.

?: Everybody contributed a little bit towards the party.

?: I don't think you could exist on what we had then. Two ounces of cheese. Two ounces of butter.

?: And that was the healthiest food, the healthiest we've ever been.

?: I bet you didn't have what we had - Mum and I were sitting down having our tea on a night and a shell dropped outside our gate. It was winter and we had the fire alight. All the soot came down the chimney, all over the table - And we was on the last of our two ounces of butter and everything went for a burton under this soot.

R: Were you in Blackheath Village or Greenwich?

?: No. In Oldover Road, Blackheath. Then we got bombed out from there and we went home just for a little while and then we were rehoused down in Greenwich. That was just after the war.

R: What part of Greenwich?

?: We were rehoused in Armitage. Then we got moved around a bit - Colliston, and Tyler Street with the various things where they were doing places up after damage. Each time they wanted to do something, they moved us somewhere else.

R: How many times did you have to move?

?: About six times altogether.

R: Over what period? About 5 years?

?: No, I can't say exactly. I know we were in Tyler Street here for just on the 5 years, and we got moved in to where I am now on the Plumstead Estate, but I think it was a bit longer in the other flats.

(all talk together)

?: Margaret, you was in a prefab, wasn't you?

M: Yes. I was there for 5 years.

?: They were nice too.

?: Were you bombed out of there?

?: We were bombed out in the beginning, in Old Oak (Dover?) Road. Then they moved us down to Armitage...

?: Were they prefabs?

?: No. They were the old fashioned flats - two and two and one big one up the top.

?: That was where we had Colliston Road going right through.

?: I'll never forget the beginning of the war - Used to make us laugh - My poor old mum. We had a couple of cats then. We heard the sirens, this is the first time we'd heard a siren. Mum didn't know, so she..."Where's the cat? Where's the cat? Where's the cat?" And she'd already put her gas mask on and all. We laughed about that afterwards. She got hold of the cat and the dog, so we took them down the shelter with us cos we thought we were going to get bombed straight away. We had a big shelter down below under the ground. One of those. We didn't have a level one on the ground. We were right under. I didn't like that in there.

R: Was there any chance of you moving back to Old Dover Road?

?: I suppose we could have done if we'd asked, but we decided to settle where we were. We didn't want to keep messing about. We'd had enough of keep moving so we decided to make the best of where we were, and I've been in Greenwich ever since and I don't regret it.

X:Nana, you were evacuated, weren't you? Did you come back before the end of the war?

N: Yes.

X: Where were you evacuated to?

N: Exeter. Devon.

R: Was it a happy experience?

N: Well, I was with a lord and lady. Lord and Lady Rodd. The car drew up with myself in it and the 3 children. The eldest one was coming up eight. The maid came out - there were five maids there. "Oh" she said "She won't let you in". So I said "Well, we don't want to come in where we're not wanted". So they said "If she doesn't have you, she's got to have somebody else with a mixed family" - because she'd got a big place to put them. Anyway, one came out, and she was a lady. She said "Look, her bark's worse than her bite. Come in. Give it a trial". She said "I'm an evacuee as well as you. I'm from Australia". And of course she persuaded me and she took hold of the youngest one and we got in. Mind you, the old lady didn't have anything to do with us; but she was kindness itself after. She was in tears nearly when we went, cos we only stopped while our own house was boarded up. I wasn't bombed right out, I was blasted out and they repaired it and we came back but of course she didn't want us to come because she found out we were no bother at all.

R: How long were you there?

?: Nearly a year. The children went to school. Not the youngest one, the other two went to school. She was kindness itself after. But I would have got in serious trouble because the youngest one got measles while I was there and the cook came and she said "For goodness sake don't let her know or else we'll all be fumigated". She said "We'll all be in dead trouble". Well I would have got in trouble, not having a doctor. But luckily she got bronchitis with it. The old lady said "Whatever's the matter with that child?" Cos she could hear her coughing. So she said "Ooh, she's got bronchitis". She didn't say she'd got measles as well. "Go down town" she said. "Buy some flannel and camphorated oil to put on her chest. So she was kind in the end. But we never saw her. Only just walk around the grounds.

R: Why would it have been a problem about the doctor?

?: You had to pay trouble not having the doctor.

?: You have to let them know. I don't know about now but you had to let them know if you had measles, chicken pox, anything.

?: Yes. I would have got in trouble.

R: But why trouble? Would it have been trouble because your child was ill?

?: Cos she should have notified the medical health people.

?: You had to be registered.

?: I hadn't got a doctor in Exeter. I didn't need one.

R: would it have been hard to get one?

?: No, it wouldn't have been hard. It was just the fact that the cook said "Don't". Because she said the place would be fumigated and we'd all be fumigated. She said "She'll have a fit if she knows the child's got measles in the house".

?: What you must understand, fifty years or so ago, we had no national health service. You had a doctor but you had to pay. If he came then it was about half a crown which was quite a lot of money to us.

?: That's right. Three and six for a visit.

?: So really the chemist came into his own cos you'd go down there and you'd ask at the counter and he would put you right. Such as the camphorated oil and the flannel.

?: One of the doctors along the road used to run a club and I belonged to that. I paid every month for myself and the children.

?: It was so much different to how we are today. You didn't run to the doctors.

?: It was all home remedies.

R: what was the club called that you belonged to.

?: It was just his own private club.

?: I used to pay into the panel cos I was working. I used to put money on a stamp for the government. That entitled me to see the doctor.

R: What job were you doing?

?: I was working at Charlton. Down at Languinod Lane. I was making bakalite instruments - these press button things for airoplanes and all kinds of army vehicles and all that. I worked six to two, two to ten, and ten to six. I was conscripted into that. I had to go before a panel and asked why I couldn't join the army. Cos I was 21 at the time when the war started. So I offered to do that cos it was fairly local for me. They let me do that. And then even after the war they wouldn't let me leave. I had an awful bother to leave that particular job because they wanted it carried on at the time.

R: So when did you leave in the end?

?: About 1946, I think.

R: Did you want to leave to stop work altogether?

?: No. I've always worked. I went to another job. But I was doing the three shifts, you see, and was always working.

R: Was there a lot of work for women after the war?

?: I think most women who were able to go to work like me, didn't have children and that to look after, they did go to work, they had to in fact, up to a certain age.

R: And you didn't have any children?

?: No, I didn't have any children.

R: As your house was bombed out, did you just come back from an air raid shelter and find the house bombed out or what?

?: Oh no. See, my children wasn't evacuated. I wouldn't let them go, not on their own. I wouldn't have gone myself but it was blasted out. All the windows came out and everything like that and I had to get out.

R: So where were you when that happened?

?: In Arsell Street, in Greenwich.

R: Were you inside the house?

?: I was in my own house at Greenwich. The bomb dropped along the road there, Walnut Tree Road. We were blasted right out. Of course I had to be evacuated, I had to get away, but I was the only one that went, all the other children went at the beginning of the war.

?: Did you have a shelter in the back garden?

?: Yes. We were in the shelter when the blast (came). The bomb dropped in Walnut Tree Road and all the houses in Arsell Street got the blast. The nearest ones was bombed right out.

X: So when you came out of the shelter in the morning, was that the first time you'd seen your house blasted? You didn't know? You heard something drop?

?: yes. Oh, we heard the bomb. We knew something had happened of course...

X: But you didn't know it was yours?

?: Yes, we knew that. And of course then I had to get out.

R: Were you able to get into the house at all?

?: My husband was. It was all boarded up. He didn't go away, he couldn't. He was in the Home Guard and all that. He still lived in the house as it was.

X: In the morning, when you came out of the shelter, were you able to go indoors?

?: Yes, you could go in. But all the windows and doors were blocked and all that.

X: Did you get the air raid warden round?

?: I know I was the only one from that, that went on the coach - we met the coach here, at Woolwich Road. I was the only one on my own with the three children. The others were already there, already gone. And then to get that bad experience when you got there, not let in and all that. But you can understand it - If you was a lord and lady and got five maids, would you want a family and three children put on you? You don't want all these people coming from London and have to share their houses. We wouldn't. But they had to do it. Put yourself in her shoes. She didn't know who she was going to get, did she? She might have got a terrible crowd in.

?: Yeah - a lot of rif-raf.

?: And she gave me three rooms and a down stairs room and all I had to cook on was a little open fire. But the cook used to, at weekends she'd get me a little joint and cook it and help me out. I got through it. And we used to go out. The two eldest ones went to school. The little one we used to push in the pram and go and walk all round Exeter. It's lovely all round there. I quite enjoyed it. Not going to say I didn't.

R: You were going to say something?

?: Yes. We used to be living down near Brook Road before we ever came down to Greenwich way. Living on the Brook Estate. There was shelter, a lot of green there, cos the houses were down that way. There was these houses and we had a green at the corner at the bottom of the road, and a shelter that side and a shelter this side. Of course one of our neighbours came to our shelter. Then she decided to move over to the shelter on the other side because, the apparent reason was it was too crowded in our shelter. Course it was the shelter on the other side what got hit. We was alright. I was only small at the time. I said "Mum". I was crying to mum "One of our neighbours got killed". I was crying all the way. She said "Yes. She should have stopped where she was". And we was alright.

?: It's fate, isn't it?

?: The houses that side of the road all got hit. We got hit but it wasn't actually burnt down. We could still go in after the war.

R: Was your father away at the end of the war?

?: My dad, he went into the army and he heard somebody say "If you make out you've got a broken toe, you can buy yourself out of the army". He was that sort of fellow, he used to pay up a lot because he was so lazy in his life. I reckon he must have stuck the army for about two years. That was the longest period he ever stopped. Then he made out that he had a bad toe and he went round to the sergeant and he said "Ooh, I've got a bad toe!" and he was demobbed from the army cos of that.

R: What did he do then?

?: Well, he used to go to work but he never used to lay his jobs down. He used to be in a job for about six months, then he was out. The longest job my dad ever had was in the Arcade. That was the longest period of a job my dad had. We used to have to keep saying "Dad, your breakfast's on the table..." "It's alright I'll be down in five minutes." Instead of him being down in five minutes, it was about half hour. One time - at a certain period of time, spring, summer, autumn and winter, my mum used to spring clean the house out. One particular day she spring cleaned the place out and my dad came down and his breakfast was still on the table. It had got quite cold. He said "What's this?" I said "That's your breakfast, dad". He just got hold of it and slung it all over the place. That's the sort of life what we had when we were kids.

R: Did your mum bring in any money?

?: Yes. She had to work full time in them days to bring us two kids up. There was no help at all. No Social Assistance. Nothing in them days. In fact my mum went without to bring us two kids up on nothing.

R: What job did she do?

?: She used to work in a transport factory making all these little oddments for planes and buses and things like that. She used to work the same hours as Lilly - 2 to 10, 6 to 2 and so on. It was really hard for my mum.

?: They did have creches for free children. The women were put into either the services if you were single, or munitions. You had to do something. You couldn't just not work. So most women with children went out to work in the munition factory. They had really good things for looking after the children. Much better than they do today.

?: In fact they did want to seperate us when the war was on and my mum said "No, I'm not having my kids seperated".

R: Seperate the two kids from each other?

?: Yes. They wanted my brother to go somewhaere else and me to go somewhere else. My mum said "No. I bring my two kids up on what I got. My two kids are not going to be seperated".

R: and you weren't evacuated?

?: We was during the war. I was evacuated at Northampton. I can't remember where my brother was evacuated. After Northampton we both went to Somerset..(?). But at Northampton was where I met my accident. I was run down by a car. Thrown from one side of the road to the other, nearly killed.

?: I was evacuated in Northampton. Kettering.

?: So was I.

?: Not in Kettering.

?: Yeah! My goodness!

?: So was I. I was only down there for a week. I got homesick and I wrote a long letter to my mum and she had to sell the gramophone to get the fare to bring us home.

?: I was down there for about six months and then from there I went to Somerset, Sam Bay Camp (?).

R: Did your mum sell the gramophone to get the money?

?: Yes. We were very very poor. Mum brought us up on her own. She was seperated from my dad. When I wrote her the letter I said "I want to come home". There was a second hand shop along the road and we had a wind-up gramophone and I think he gave he two or three pound for it and that paid the fare. She come down to Kettering and picked me up and brought me home. She said "If we go, we're all going together!"

?: That's what my mum used to say to me, funnily enough "If we go, we'll all go together".

?: Do you remember the relief tickets we used to get from the RO?

?: That was years and years before the war.

?: I was born during the war, 1914.

X: Billy, do you remember when the land mine dropped in Blackwall Lane?

?: I was standing in Milner's doorway. It was Milner's the chemist then. Where I worked the firm used to organise holidays to go and work on a farm for a fortnight. There was 60 to 80 of us. We all went up to Bedford, Biggleswade, picking peas and digging up potatoes.

R: Was that during the war?

?: Yes. That was our holiday. We went two or three years running. They had a big field with tents. The men were on one side of the field and the ladies were on the other side. And you can imagine what was happening. The chap who ran it was an army officer. He was a major. You wasn't to go outside the camp and you wasn't to stay out late at night and you wasn't to climb over the back wall. You had to be in at a certain time.

R: Did it happen anyway?

?: Yes. We were all young, you see. We were all in our twenties, and there was a United States airfield quite nearby....(laughter)

?: We all had a good time, didn't we?

?: Although the war was on we were young and we had a good time. I was married, these ladies were married, my husband was abroad.

?: We had these soldiers, they were staying in Clyde House. and they used to do all their exercises...It was great fun. We also had a big cellar and there was a part of it that was the air raid shelter to the 1914 war. It was all iron and it was still there. The door had these great big iron wheels on it and you slid it along to close it. Well, during the war there were about six of us lying in a row in that shelter and when one turned we all had to turn! And John used to go under there in his cradle, and one laid on the top, a person who had to listen in while the others slept in case anything happened. First of all, Jack's mother, she was very deaf, and we thought we'd put her on there cos she wouldn't hear anything. And of course the first bomb went "Ooh, I can't stand this" she said. So we took her off. Then we had someone there to signal. Then in the other part there was a double bed under the stairs with something else. And between the stairs and the larder there was another bed. And we had neighbours from all around. And the minister from Rothbury at that time. And they all used to take turns in the street when the grenades or something...But when it was the minister's turn, he wouldn't go. And I thought that was funny, cos he ought to set an example. Obviously he was frightened.

END OF AUDIO TAPE, SIDE A

SIDE B

R: At the end of the war when the men came back, were there problems with families reintegrating?

All: Yes.

?: I wasn't married. I was courting my husband through letters during the war. We met before he went abroad. I was about 14. And then he was staying at an embarkation place and he went abroad from there. We communicated with letters so when he came back we took a year and found that we were compatible, cos he went as a young man and when he was in Italy and everything he saw a lot more life than I had seen. Then we got engaged and we were

engaged and we were engaged a year and then we got married. Which you used to do in those days - You used to have a period of time for an engagement and it was rather nice. But my sister was married with a baby before her husband went abroad, and I think for 18 months they found it very very hard. He'd had his freedom, you see. So had she. She'd done exactly as she liked. And he came home and he couldn't settle down just to the one and one. He'd been with other fellas and had quite a good life. He used to just go down to the pub and have a drink, and they didn't have any money really for him to drink. And they found it very very difficult and I'm sure a lot of people found it difficult to take up the reins again after the war.

?: Especially the men.

?: And the women. The women had grown into more independence. They'd been to work. We'd got our own money. We'd sorted our own lives out. If I'd been married, I think it possibly... The first flash of them coming home was probably nice, but after that it must have been...

?: A real six years for some of them that were taken prisoners quite early.

?: My Harry was abroad four and a half years anyway. I think it must have been very difficult. I think a lot of things broke up. Plus the fact, there'd been affairs. A lot of affairs went on, because the women were lonely, the men had affairs abroad. There were babies born that shouldn't have been born, of course.

?: The American soldiers fathered a lot of children, didn't they?

?: It takes two, doesn't it? But yes, there were an awful lot. And I expect our men did where they were, I expect there were a lot of children born. For me, being a young girl, and I wasn't in Greenwich so I shouldn't be telling you this, but it was a case of things came off coupons, the dresses came off clothing coupons, and a new look came in. We'd had it up to there and the new look came in and it went to the calf because there was more material that could be spared. I remember going and buying my first new look dress and I thought I was the bees-knees. I probably looked dreadful. It was great.

?: It had a little peplum round here. They were fashionable at the time.

?: We were on rations for quite a long while after the war.

?: Lining up at the sweet shop to wait for rations.

?: When you were married, were you still on rations?

?: I was married in 1947.

?: How do you cope with the cooking?

?: You learned. But you couldn't afford any mistakes with the little bits you got.

?: If you made mistakes you had to eat it, didn't you?

?: That was it. You couldn't throw it away. I think you'll find that is why people of our age today do not throw anything away.

?: That was my first job - Clearing up the ration books over at Blackheath Concert Hall. I was 14.

R: When you say "clearing them up" what were you doing?

?: Get rid of them. I forget what I was doing now. But that was my first job. After the war.

?: Rationing didn't stop right away did it?

?: It went on until 1952 I think it was.

(all talk together)

R: Anyone's memories on ration books?

?: I remember lining up at the sweet shops. Particular sweet shop we all liked. There was a certain amount of coloured sweets. There was a long queue from one end of the street to the other. We all lined up with our ration books getting the sweets.

?: The shops was only allocated so much and the word used to get round "So and so's got oranges in today". "They've got a few eggs down there". And everybody just made a bee-line for it.

?: And everybody was only allowed so much.

R: So even if you had the coupon it didn't mean you'd get the stuff?

All: No..no..not if they run out of them before you got there.

?: When you had your ration books, when they first came in, you had to go and register with a shop. Say Liptons, Home and Cologne, whatever you wanted. And you registered with that shop and so you went and done your weekly shopping there and gave your ration books up. I think that's how it worked here. That's how it was for me anyway.

?: If you'd got a book and you had an extra nice butcher, if he had sausages in he'd save you a couple under the counter.

?: I had my firstboy in 1949 and I remember being in labour with him and Harry and I went down and got our bit of meat which was like that - so we were still on rations in 49. I never did cook that cos I went into labour and went into hospital!

?: You never got much fruit either, did you?

?: My John, he's about 49 now, my sister's boy, and he can't eat bananas cos when he was a little kid he never got bananas so he's never been used to them.

?: Never knew what they were.

?: Things were very short even after the war. My husband had been out of the army quite a bit and he was on the buses. I wanted some Farley's Rusks - they'd just started making them again - for this baby. I remember him coming home with this thing of Farley's Rusks, so pleased. We thought it was smashing. He'd actually seen them in a baker's, stopped his bus, got off the bus and gone and got these Farley's Rusks!. That was the sort of thing you done. Or if you got a few bananas you gave one or so to your neighbours. You wouldn't have them cos we hadn't been used to them.

?: How many clothing coupons was it for a pair of nylons? You had to go without nylons. They used to make up a cocoa solution and paint their legs with that. And a line at the back.

?: You'd do this on your legs, like this. If it rained, god help you.

R: Made from cocoa?

All: Yes.

?: I don't know what the pencil was...

?: Eyebrow pencil wasn't it? To make the seam.

?: So those days we had fully fashioned stockings which were gorgeous. Bear Brand fully fashioned stockings. And so you'd get a pencil and do your line right the way up your leg.

R: Didn't it make a horrible mess of your clothes?

?: We didn't think of that!

?: We had carbolic soap.

?: You wouldn't notice it that much. It just looked like stockings.

?: We just thought we were real glamour girls, didn't we?

?: We were glamour girls. Everything you had, you had so many clothing coupons - I think it was 2 coupons for a pair of nylons.

?: Stockings. We didn't have nylons.

R: What's the difference between stockings and nylons?

?: Silk stockings. Nylons - the GI's brought them over. The Americans. Stockings were thicker.

?: They were pure silk.

?: not in the war. We didn't have pure silk stockings in the war, did we? I can't remember. They were Bear Brand. Lysle and all that. We really went bare legged more than anything.

?: and you had to save up for ages if you wanted a new blouse or something. You were allowed so many coupons a week or month. You went all these weeks saving up your coupons till you had enough to buy your blouse or whatever you wanted.

?: I had to go to the Town Hall to get coupons for furniture. I had 2 club-type armchairs and a bed, and I managed to get at the beginning some second hand bedroom furniture that I'd bought from somebody that had been bombed out and was moving. They didn't want to take the furniture with them so I bought it off them. But that was all I was allowed when I was...

?: If you go around you will find in lots of houses "utility furniture". There was a mark.

?: Do you remember the old copper fires?

R: Was this government made furniture?

?: It was something like that, the utility furniture.

?: Utility radio, the little radios.

?: Copper fires.

?: You could always tell when men had been demobbed and they had their utility suit on.

R: Were they given them?

?: Yes. When he came back from abroad he had to go down to Woolwich to finish up his time. They went somewhere and they were all given a demob suit and a hat. They weren't very nice

but that's how they came out, with the demob suit and I think it was five shillings. That is what they got for being in the army for all those years.

R: Were there any experiences of children having a hard time getting to know their fathers again?

?: Oh yeah. It was hard.

?: I know somebody who was in the army with my husband. His baby was being born just as he was going to go abroad. They were in Egypt for about two and a half years and then they got a month's leave. So this little girl was about two and a half when he came home. That wasn't too bad, but then they went back again into Italy for 18 months so by the time he came home she was about four and a half. And he said he had the most awful time trying to get to know her. She would not come near him or anything. And that girl is now 40 or 50 odd. She's never been very close to her father, couldn't get close to her father at all. You see, he hadn't seen the baby born and she was four. So all she'd had was her aunts and her mum round her. It was very difficult, relationships. Very difficult I would imagine.

R: Anyone else?

?: I was only a baby when my father went away from us. My brother was born in 39 and I was born in 37 so I was only a toddler when my father went away. It was really hard.

R: Do you remember first seeing him when he came back?

?: Not off hand but I can remember we had a hard time of it getting to know one another again. It was really hard.

R: Did you feel jealous of him?

?: I did in one way, yeah, because I thought - him being in the army, he's bound to know somebody else, things like that. You know, you can imagine what we actually thought of. But after time when we did get to know one another we got on pretty well together until the trouble started between mum and dad. But all the time we was young, we was quite a happy family.

?: There was a lot of couples who got married 'on the quick' during the war - You know, they met somebody and they thought "He's going away. We'll get married". And they didn't really know each other, not like they did before the war when you had a long engagement. Because when they came back you had to readjust to the circumstances. A lot of them came back and they had nowhere to live. They'd been married and been living at home with their parents and there just weren't places available.

?: It was very difficult after the war to get a place. We all lived in rooms, didn't we? A lot of us.

?: Yes. We used to have the old tin bath in front of the fires, the old copper fires.

R: But in rooms rather than a house?

All: Oh yes.

?: In somebody else's house. In their rooms.

?: Most houses had somebody living downstairs and somebody living upstairs.

?: Quite a lot of people didn't like children as well.

?: We lived in rooms when we first got married. That was after the war - 47. We lived in a little back bedroom and a little room and we had to come all the way downstairs to get the water. Even when I had a baby I had to come down and take the water up for the bath.

?: We shared the toilet with the people downstairs.

?: The toilets were outside.

?: I lived in a row of terraced houses and the bomb had dropped in the middle. They'd all been shored up. It was just along the road here, about three turnings along the road. It's not there now. Selcroft Road. Then the Council came along. Some of them were privately owned on a lease, not freehold, leasehold. There was fourteen years to run on the one that we had. The Council came along and they said "We've bought the ground and they're all falling in on top of one another where the bomb damage was in the middle of the terrace". And of course, eventually they pulled them all down. Instead of building along the streets they built across them so that those roads are not there any longer. But we've got the names in two modern buildings, blocks of flats - Colliston House and Selcroft House. We've moved twice.

R: Were you upset by the houses being pulled down?

?: I was very sorry to lose my house. I always have been. Because just me and my husband together, when his mother died - the house belonged to her in the first place - they wouldn't give us the house, just one or two bedrooms.

R: Was there any compensation at all?

?: No, we didn't get anything. I think we got about £600 in nineteen sixty something - about twenty years afterwards. That was another thing, they took our wages away during the war, half of our wages, and they kept that about twenty years before they...

R: What was that for?

?: Income tax it was. And then, we didn't get it on an adding up basis, we just got it on the value of what it was worth at the time, we got another two and a half percent, round about sixpence in the pound given on top. And it was worth nothing then.

?: There's an awful lot of money lying around that should be due to a lot of people in the war because that happened an awful lot. I think if you go back you can hear something about this. None of us, I don't suppose have put in for it but some people have - I heard it a few months ago. They put in and they get quite a bit of money back. But I mean, it's fifty years...

R: For having been bombed out?

?: No, I don't think so, not for being bombed out.

?: They took a percentage out of your wages. They need it, you see? The country was in an awful state. The same as they took everybody's railings and gates and everything else. They would come round with vans asking for your saucepans and everything to melt down.

(all talk together)

R: Could anybody give a description of what Greenwich was like as a place after the war?

?: It's changed a lot.

?: All the old shops that we knew are all gone.

?: Gradually after the war, the old shops that we used to know have all died out. Do you remember Roses? Woolworths? Maypole? Maypole was a grocery across the road there.

There was Mullins, the wet fish shop. All those have gone now. Tousons the pawnbrokers. We had pockets of pawnbrokers years ago.

?: That was years after the war.

?: No, no.

?: Most of them are still here on the main road. (?)

R: You don't think Greenwich has altered a lot?

?: No, it didn't alter a lot.

?: Look at Greenwich Hospital. That has changed a lot.

?: The actual Greenwich, hadn't altered a lot after the war, had it?

?: No, it didn't.

R: What was the situation with hospitals after the war?

?: The old Millers Hospital used to be down, going towards Deptford, it was a little hospital they used to call the Millers Hospital. And there was the Seamen's Hospital. They've closed all them down.

?: That one over there used to be a workhouse (?).

R: Where the District Hospital is now?

?: Yes. Where the District Hospital used to be, it was half hospital and half workhouse.

?: ..(?).. they put you in there.

?: Now they've made it into one big hospital.

?: They closed the Seamans down. Then St Beatrice's Hospital for mothers and babies, they closed that down because they ..(?). They've closed a lot of hospitals down after the war.

R: What about the way that people relate to each other in Greenwich? Did streets operate as streets in those days in a way that's different from now?

?: They used to be more friendly. You could leavew your front door open or leave your back door open, talk to the neighbour on the other side of the fence, have cups of tea, go in people's houses.

R: did you know everybody in your street?

?: the old atmosphere has changed completely.

?: We've lost a few streets too. We've lost Selcroft, Colliston. They used to go straight down between here and Tunnel Avenue but the Council flattened them all and thy've built across where they were.

R: You were going to say something?

?: Yes. We used to be all friendly down the street. In fact, where we lived in Selcroft Road, it was called Pools Avenue because Poole's was a large family. They'd married everybody along the road.