

AGE EXCHANGE UK

INTERVIEW WITH MANNIE SILVER

Interviewed by Marjorie Monickendam.

Marjorie: This is an interview between Mannie Silver and Marjorie Monnickendam on 31st January 1987. Mannie is my great-uncle by marriage. Mannie, first of all, tell me about your parents. Where did they come from and when did they come to England?

Mannie They came to England in the early 1890's and they had a dreadful time in Russia. My mother came from (007) but my Father came from Kiev. There were pogroms and the Jews were persecuted unmercifully and they ran for their lives, got on a boat and spent the two weeks coming to England on the deck of the boat. And there was a young baby in her arms and how they managed that I don't know. When they came to England they landed in the East End of London in the river, in the docks. And they were taken to a shelter in Lemn St and there they were kept until they could find somebody to take care of them and to give them a home. Well at the immigration the customs people asked him his name and he said, "my name is Sheret." They said, "how do you spell it ?". He says, "Goodness knows, I don't know how to spell it in English." however he met a man there who's name was Goldstein. He said, "look my name is Goldstein. You be Silverstein", and our name has been Silverstein ever since. There have been one or two slight changes, now we are called "Silver".

However they found accommodation in (Wentworth St) which is in the heart of the East End of London. It's so romantic this Wentworth St, its an Aladdins cave of romance and beauty. And the aroma and smell of the food and the vegetables and the cucumber, the pickled cucumbers and the acetylene lamps on these stalls at night-. Today I think it is the most wonderful thing I can remember. However they found accommodation in a pent house, in one of the buildings, for three shillings a week. It was right on the top, eight or nine floors high, and my poor mother trudged up and down these stairs. Today I don't think they could do it, they haven't got the guts. These people had terrific courage, they came to England, they didn't know the language. The first job my father got, I was told, was in a cap-making factory. And he came home with great joy and gave my mother twelve copper coins. They didn't know the value of it of course. They exploited these poor people that came from other countries.

M Were these Jewish people he worked for ?

Oh yes, yes of course. And they were all Jewish people in the East End of London, all in the same position as my parents. I was born in 1909 and I was the last of quite a big family and we all lived in two rooms, in this penthouse. And they were so hard up at different times that they even took in a lodger.

M Where did the lodger sleep ?

On the floor. And they got so used to poverty that they didn't think anything of it at all. And they all lived happily together and helped each other in one way or another.

M So, tell me about your brothers and sisters.

My brothers and sisters, because I was the youngest, they were much older than me. And they all found jobs working in hat factories, making millinery hats.

M So what language did you speak ?

We only spoke Yiddish at home, that was the only language we knew. And as my brothers and sisters, went out in to the world, of course they spoke English and I became bi-lingual. And I still speak perfect Yiddish today.

M did you ever speak English so that your parents couldn't understand you ?

We never did that, we only spoke Yiddish to our parents because it was the only language that they could understand. They were very hard-working people. The pathetic thing was that when you walked up the staircase there were aromas from each house. You could smell what they were cooking. And then other places, if you went up a bit later at night, you could smell something much worse. Every room had what we called the red army, we called them the red army- they were bugs. And there were so many, the mattresses were swarming with them, and they couldn't afford to buy the powder to kill them so they took a candle and went along the mattress, right along the line ... and you could smell these damn things. It was horrible. And yet it had some sort of thrilling way about it, I don't know.

And then I must remind myself of this, I have lovely memories of Goulston Street - now that was a street just off the side of Wentworth St and at the top of the street was the Brooke Bonds tea factory and next to that was the Goulston Street baths. And for one penny you could have a bath. And being economical I went with my brother to the same bath- because I was a tiddler and he was a big chap. And for three halfpence we had this bath. And if you wanted hot water you shouted "hot water, NO.7 !" or "Cold water No7". And then you 'd hear "coming in now, be careful !" And that was really thrilling.

M Did you get a towel for the price of your penny?

Oh no, you had to take your own towel. You wouldn't get a bargain like that. However another thing that comes to my mind- there was a lot of missionaries in those days and they came to a thickly populated Jewish community and tried to convert them. And the only way they could do that was by giving them something. What they gave them was a medical service. In Goulston St baths there was a special room and there was long forms there and there was some very fine doctors amongst them and they gave you a sermon first, and while the sermon was going on (the Jewish people cursed them to hell!) and then they would be taken in to see the doctor. And they were wonderful doctors. And they would say "What's the matter with your child ?" And the mother would say in Yiddish, "From all missionaries may heaven protect my poor child". But they said it in Yiddish so that the doctors wouldn't understand. However I remember my mother taking me there and they gave me a bottle of medicine and they were very good indeed.

M So how did the doctors find out what was wrong with the child if the mothers couldn't tell them?

They'd usually find out what the trouble was.....Another lovely memory comes to my mind, was walking through the East End of London in the Lane, Petticoat Lane. Big sacks of bagels, they were hot, and the smell was gorgeous. Lovely fresh bagels, they

were about six for a penny. There were no bags in those days. You'd put them in your own bag and take them home. And they were fresh and crispy, the smell of those are still in my memory.

On Saturday morning it was quite a ritual. Saturday was very holy to us all. Particularly my father was very religious, he had a lovely white beard and he would be polishing up his hat. He wore a high hat to go to the Synagogue which is a little room really. He wouldn't go to a big synagogue because it wasn't holy enough, and I hated it because I wanted to go to the big synagogue. However we were walking along Wentworth Street and my father was so proud, holding me by the hand, I was only about five or six years old. And a stone came from we don't know where and the hat went flying. It was a wonderful shot really but my poor father was in tears. He cursed them up hill and down dale for knocking his hat off. And in those days ... today of course if a man of thirty or forty wears a beard you take it as normal thing but in those days only Jews wore beards. And you'd know if it was a Jew because he wore a beard, it was part of the religion to wear a beard. And you could always tell a Jew by his beard.

According to the religion you mustn't use a sharp instrument and it was the proper thing to do, to wear a beard. And I went to Hebrew classes - we called it Cheder - that was in Brick Lane, it was called Machziki Chadash (?). They were an extremely religious congregation. I went to Hebrew classes there and the rabbi, I was in his class, we didn't know whether he was a man or a beast. He was covered in hair, all you could see was the two eyes, we called him "The Teddybear". Anyway I couldn't stand it long because he had a big hockey stick and anything we did wrong we'd get a whack with it.

M That really does encourage you to learn doesn't it, and were you a very good pupil?

Oh I suppose I was but I never learnt a great deal because I never liked it. It was beaten in to me instead of it coming naturally.

M So, what can you remember about the festivals ?

Well, the most memorable and the most beautiful thing I can remember was just before Passover little boys would get an old bucket, make holes in it, fill it with coal and things and walk round to all the flats in the buildings shouting "Chometz". All the bits of bread left over they would burn and they get a penny or a halfpenny for doing that. It was quite a wonderful thing. It was really lovely to watch that. And then the lovely thing about the East End at that particular time was that everybody had some special way of showing their love of Pesach (Passover). There a Dutch stall which had great big barrels. Enormous things with great big yellow cucumber in it, they smelt beautiful. And there was all sorts of food sold for the Passover and this went on past midnight and as youngsters never went to bed, we were up at five or six walking through the East End of London in the muddy cobblestones of the road. And we loved it. It was such a thrilling sight that. And every stall sold something different. There was one stall that sold salt. She was this horrible old woman, she cursed all the time and when everybody came to buy something from her, a pennyworth of salt - she'd got a little saw and cut it off a block - and she'd curse them. And they were all characters. There was a Mrs Marks she sold herrings in the lane. She stood with about ten or twelve barrels around her. Winter and summer she stood there and she was skinning these herrings and cutting them up. It was a lovely sight to watch.

M Did she talk while she was cutting up ?

Oh yes, always telling you about her whole family. It was quite a family the Marks family. They had a wonderful shop there, sold smoked salmon, and I think they are still there this very day. She had two sons. One I remember was Mossy and she had a daughter that had a tragic death. The East End was such a close community, everyone knew the others' troubles and joys. There was three sections of the community in the East End of London. There was the foreign section which was Wentworth Street which consisted of Poles, (Litvaks ?) and Russians. The other side was the Tenterground, with all the Dutch Jews, the Dutch were spotlessly clean in Holland but they were the filthiest community of all the lot,) , there was never a whole window in there, there was always a cushion in it. And then there was the Irish, which was across Wentworth Street. There was three or four different communities there and one hated the other. There was always some sort of animosity amongst them.

M So tell me more about Petticoat Lane.

Well, Petticoat Lane was quite an Aladin's cave on its own. When we were children we didn't know poverty or riches or anything else, damn it all we got used to it. but our great joy was to go to Itchy Park, because all the tramps slept there, that's why we called it Itchy Park. At the side of Spitalfields church and at the back there was a burial ground and beyond there was a sort of covered-in thing where you could sit there and we played there as children. Quite an event that was in our lives. And then there was a market the other side of the road, Spitalfields market where you never went hungry if you walked through there as a child. You'd always find half an apple that you could eat, and so on.

M Petticoat lane ?

Petticoat Lane was full of romance. Each family who had a shop had some story to tell - the daughter ran away with so and so or the son committed such an offence. Everybody knew their business and there were some famous people there - became quite famous in late life - and I was fortunate enough to marry one of them. They were the Monickendams, they had a cake shop, and for a penny you bought 'stales' enough to last you all day. They were lovely stale cakes, they weren't really stale, they were lovely. Then there was Polly Nathan who sold chips. She was a lovely character on her own, and if you went in there and you looked rather seedy and poor she would say, "You've paid me, now take your penny worth of chips and so on."

M So she let you have them for nothing ?

Yes. Then there was Mannie Barnet ... wonderful butchers shops that sold salt-beef sandwiches and so on. And then the most famous of all was on a Sunday morning and you could hear these cries from different stalls, "okey pokey a penny a lump"- and that was quite a well known phrase that went throughout the whole of the East End and everybody knew the Essaniens that sold hokey pokey ice cream. Then there was the Garscher family. They called her Gypsy Garscher, she was Jewish, but she was so dark they called her Gypsy Garscher. And there was all characters like that. Then there was "Darky Dekoon", he wasn't really a black man, he was just very dark, very tall. Anybody who started with the Jew, God help them if he got to hear about it !

M What did he do ?

Well he went round blackmailing all the stall keepers. If they didn't give him a penny or twopence, then he'd lift their stalls up and then all their goods would go rolling about on the ground.

M Was he Jewish ?

I don't think so. Then there was another character who walked through the streets, particularly on a Sunday, he was about six foot five or six foot six. Very very tall, black. And he wore a feathered headdress and Indian garments, shouting "I got a horse". And he would sell tips for horses, that was his cry.

And then another lovely memory, on the corner of the lane was a shop called Dubosky and they were a big grocers shop, and outside the shop on the corner of the shop, as you walked in there was an enormous big sack. It seemed large to me, because I was only a little toddler when I was about five or six years old. And there was steaming hot peanuts in this great big sack, and if you couldn't reach it yourself you'd get somebody else to do it for you and give you a handful of peanuts. They were boiling and they were lovely, I can still remember the fragrance and the lovely taste of those peanuts. They were lovely. And then there was other characters there too. There was a man going with a barrow with all sorts of toffee he made at home. There was fig toffee and nuts in it and there were really lovely things at ridiculously cheap prices. Of course nothing was cheap to people who hadn't got anything, we were desperately poor. Then there was Goulston Street, where the baths are, and every day, particularly on a Friday, there were chicken stalls. Each stall had its own chickens, or parts of chicken - the giblets - for sale and a woman would come over and pick up a chicken and feel it here, feel it there. He says "you remind me of my daughter, she goes out with fellahs, they feel a bit here, they feel a bit there but they don't buy".

M Well what about school, where did you go to school ?

My earliest memory of course is from Jewish Infants School in Wentworth Street. One entrance was there and the other entrance you had to walk through a courtyard where there were cows. You could buy a glass of milk for a halfpenny or a penny. And that was a lovely school, to me it was something fresh and clean, different from the home surroundings, and I had a lovely teacher, she was charming. I was only a baby then I suppose but I really loved going to school it was nice and then at Chanukah time, all the children got presents from the Lord Rothschild family and it was really lovely. And that was the only toy I had had in my life up until then. It was a book, which I treasured. It had lovely pictures in and the smell of the lovely new print in the book. I kept it under my pillow in bed.

I was transferred to The Jewish Free School, which was for older children. And I didn't like it at all. I hated it because I loved this Jewish Infants School. However my brothers and sisters grew up and, well they've got to go courting. The Rothschild family, who were the most wonderful group of Jewish people in the East End of London ... there was a soup kitchen so that those who were desperately poor went round and got some sort of free meal. And then all the children who couldn't afford any sort of warm clothes, they would give green jerseys and boots with metal tips on them- so that they would last longer. And it was such a thrill to walk along with these tips along the pavements. My mum wouldn't let me wear the green jersey because then people would know it was a gift from Rothschilds and you wouldn't want to show off how poor you were. However it was quite a thrilling time. And then we only to this Jewish Free school for one week and my

brothers and sisters decided that it was not right. They were growing up now. And we had to move to a nicer area. And the only other area that Jewish people knew in those days was either Stoke Newington or Stamford Hill- and you had to have a visa to go there !

We went to a place in Farley Rd, which was twenty-five shillings a week for a ten roomed house. We couldn't afford it - we had tenants, two tenants, for five or ten shillings a week whatever it was. And then I went to a school, Bethnal Road School - I was the only Jewish boy in the school. And that was very very nice there. I got beaten up three times a day, after breakfast and after lunch and after tea, tea-time. Of course I was the only Jewish boy and what made it worse the teacher called me up in class and said, "You're the Jewish boy, your names Silverstein?" "Yes" "You're the only Jewish boys here", he let it be known. However I stayed there for a while and I put up with my feelings because the school board in those days was very different from today, they were very strict indeed.

M Was the teacher beating you or the boys ?

No, no, the boys. The teacher called me up in the class - her name was Mrs Priest, I remember that quite clearly - she was a fat woman with a barrel, wore a black dress with thick glasses. And she said "I've got some very good news to tell you and I 'm very happy to tell you that your name is Emmanuel and our Lord's first name was Emanuel too". From then on I was her pet. However I couldn't stand it much longer. I went to another school where there was three or four Jewish boys. That was Chapel Lane school and I left that when I was twelve years old or so because we had to earn money in those days, you had to get a living.

My first job, well it wasn't a job really, it was helping to get a stall out of a shop and put the stall up and I was selling bloomers, in Wentworth St. The daughter of the owner of the shop, my brother was courting you see. Then my first job was, I loved antiques because it was in our blood - my mother had very little money indeed, and my father had to give her two and sixpence for Shabbas to buy Challas - that's special bread - and all sorts of things for the Sabbath. She walked by a stall, which sold little teapots, little ornaments. She loved those things - we called them suskies and a lot of them were very antiquish and old. And in those days you bought them for a song, she spent her money on that and then there was nothing to eat!

Lovely memories they were indeed. And from her I got the feeling for the antique world and works of art. And I still have it today I suppose ... I'm not a youngster any more ...

M So how did you meet Bessie

Well I was travelling along the road - I became a fur traveller -and I was travelling along the road and just up the road in Middlesex Street, not far from the shop, I used to go in there for breakfast in the mornings ... their coffee and rolls were too wonderful. Came down and paid the money - they all knew me there by then - and one day I came down from the tea room and Bessie was at the desk "where is your bill?" "Oh I don't have a bill, I just want to give you the money." "Oh you've got to have a bill". So she says, "Nelly this man wants to get away with something" she says, "what did he have ?" "Just coffee and a roll ". I said, "Now you're satisfied?" I said "for being so naughty, I was going to ask you to come out with me, I'll still ask you to come out with me." Her father happened to be in the shop and he says "Come on Bess we'll go out and have lunch." So I says "you don't

want to go out with an old man like him, you can come out with me." And I took her out from then on and that's how it all started.

M So how old were you when you left the East End?

I was about seven years old. I remember them loading all the furniture there was (well there wasn't much) sitting in front of the horse and cart with driver and going along and the wheels would get caught in the tram lines and the whole lot would sway to one side and you knew you were going to use the lot.

M It must have seemed an enormous distance to go ?

Oh it was in those days, it was an enormous distance to Stoke Newington, quite a thrill that was. And then I went to school there - (312). I went to Chapel Lane School and one incident that happened there ... its really frightful but I can't help laughing about it now when I think of it ... I had a friend who was up to all sorts of tricks, we called him the Chinaman. His name was (Kajinsky 315) and he had beady eyes. And any quarrel he would think of I would imitate him. He'd take a leaf of a privet bush and put it under his tongue and he would make the most fearful noises with it and imitate all sorts of animals with it. And I learnt this one little trick too. And one day I was in the school in the classroom and I had a leaf under my tongue and the teacher, his name was mister Munning I remember, and he was doing something on the blackboard with a piece of chalk. And every time he moved the chalk I made a noise with my mouth. And he wouldn't say anything, and then he'd move the chalk again, write something else, and I'd make this other noise. And so on, it would go on until he finished writing. When he'd finished writing he'd say "Silverstein would you be kind enough to go and get me the punishment cane and book... of course unwittingly.

M You didn't know it was for you.
And he'd give me four on each hand, which I would remember for the whole week.

M Well, you were usually a good boy though were you ?

Not really, we'd go scrumping over other people's gardens, taking the fruits off the trees, it was quite an expedition. And we got up to a, ll sorts of tricks because we were so desperately poor. And we sold programmes in the park and if we had 1/3d it was a lot of money in those days. And I remember buying ...

M Which park was it ?

Clissold Park in Stoke Newington and I earn't 1/3d commission, I did so well.

M What were these programmes for?

The bandstand. And a friend of mine, he did quite well too. In Church Street there was a fish shop and we bought a shillings worth of chips - which was as much as you could carry in those days - we went in to the cinema, the Apollo cinema in Stoke Newington - and as we sat down they'd walk around with a big spray, spraying the cinema because the whole cinema smelt of chips. Lovely memories they are...!

This horrible friend of mine, the chinaman, he made himself a catapult and of course I copied him, I made a catapult too. And I became a deadly shot with it, really

good. And there was an old man called Yossel, and he'd walk about with a sack, buying old clothes and he'd shout along the road "buying old clothes" and he'd swing this sack over his shoulder. And he wore a funny sort of hat, it wasn't a high hat it was a shorter one. And Fred says to me, "I bet you can't knock Yosel's hat off?" I picked up a little pebble and I was such a good shot I knocked his hat flying. He came running after me, swinging his sack, and if he had caught me he would have killed me. I kept out till about eight or nine o'clock until it got dark before I went home. I was scared stiff.

M And what happened to the chinaman when he grew up ?

Oh the chinaman when he grew up ... I lost touch with him after a few years. You know you do lose some of your friends.

We were never over flush with food and we always eager to eat something out of the ordinary. So, my sister was about four or five years older than me, I said to her "what about going to this Mozart house and having a look and seeing what's there ?" She said, "You can't do that." I said, "we can, we can try." So I borrowed my brother's suit which was about ten sizes too big for me, and my trousers kept falling down. And my sister borrowed an older sister's dress and we marched into this place - it was already taking place - and we went in and we had the most wonderful meal, it was really lovely. And I even had the cheek to dance with the bride! The father of the bride I think said, "Do I know you ?" I said, "I don't know whether you do or not." And then on another occasion he said, "Do you know the bride and bridegroom, do you ?" I said, "Yes, of course." He said, "Well you can get out of here quick, this is a Bar-mitzvah."

I first started work - there was no such thing as being unemployed in those days - everybody found something to do to exist. There was no government help at all, and I got a job at five shillings a week in a fur factory. And I worked damn hard there.

M Where was that ?

In London, in the East End. We had a shilling an hour overtime, I remember that very clearly. Because the busiest season was always in the Summer when we made our furs and they sold in the winter. And we worked overtime, we worked seven days a week and I earned thirty shillings and it was a hell of a lot of money in those days. And then I thought, "I'm working in this factory, with these damned skins and they stunk like hell. And a traveller walked in looking so smart, a nice overcoat and umbrella, rolled umbrella, a bowler hat. And I thought I'm a mug to do this so why don't I do that? So I had a friend of mine who worked for another furrier in Hanbury Street in the East End of London and he says, "Why don't you go up there up there and try and get a job as a traveller?" "That's not a bad idea. I've always wanted to do that and I could look smart. I'm working like a black here." So I bought an army surplus overcoat, I think it was five shillings in those days, and I walked out and I looked horrible in it. However I got my mother to turn it up. It was too long, but she couldn't cut it, she no scissors big enough to cut the bottom off. However I went in and I saw Mr Moskavitch. He says, "I'm going to give you a chance, you know why?" I said, "Well, you can only try." He said, "You look me straight in the face when you talk to me. And anybody that can't look me in the face when he talks to me, I don't trust them. You, I trust." Then there was a driver named Billy. And he says to him, "He can come in on Monday morning and you can take him out with the goods. He says, "See how you get on with him. See if he's any good." Well he loaded his car up with fur ties, with a head on them you know - to go round the neck - and I went in to every big shop in Kensington, Oxford St, everywhere with this over my shoulder, to try and sell them,

couldn't do any good. I finished up in Tottenham, in Ballards Green, and the name was Stewart. I went in to his shop with a bundle of ties - think they were 12/6d each - and there was twenty four in a bundle. And he liked them and bought the lot and paid me for them. Oh I was tickled pink. My first sale. And when I got back he said to the driver, "Is he any good?" "Governor, he's marvellous. He went in to every big shop, he knows the lot." And I succeeded very well in this job, I earned a lot of money and I did very well indeed there ... and through some unfortunate incident that happened, he went bankrupt. It was not our fault - it was something he did privately. And I was out of a job. Well the next thing to do was to find something else to do. I got another job at a furriers and that was how I met my wife - I used to go in there for coffee in the mornings, with my bag, travelling. And that's the story of my life.

M So what did you do after the fur trade, what was your next job?

Did I tell you about the sale room the experiences about the Stevens Sale rooms. I borrowed some money from my mother, this was before my experience in the fur trade, and I used to go a round all the sale rooms to see if I could buy any bargains. I knew nothing about anything and there was a scientific instruments saleroom in Covent Garden, the name was Stevens, and I borrowed seven and sixpence from my mother and I stood in the front of this saleroom, and there was three boxes lined with metal (lead), they were tea chests really. And they were full of little boxes, all little antique boxes, and I thought "Oh my goodness I'd love to buy that and sell that lot." And the first bid was half a crown and went up to seven and sixpence and I think for some reason or other the people there must have taken pity on me because they let me buy it. The problem was the chap said, "Have you got a van outside?" So I said, "Yes, got me own." I went outside and thought how am I going to get this home, to Stoke Newington. Well there's a lot of barrows in this market and there was one with slats across it. And I remember walking across the road and borrowing it! A chap helped me load them on it. And I walked from there to Stoke Newington with these three big cases of little boxes. However I got them unloaded and I thought "What do I do with this barrow?" Best thing to do is to leave it on Hackney Downs, which I did.

M What did your mother think of you spending her money ?

Oh she was terrible, I ruined her. But when she saw I was selling them and doing well out of them she was very happy about that. Then she loaned me some more money and I did very well. I bought parts of a fur coat in a sale room - parts of a mink coat it was - and I made my mother and sisters fur collars and cuffs and sold the rest of them, and earned quite a lot of money. And then when I was about to get engaged I thought to myself, "I'm a fur traveller and I can't see any great prospects in that, I better get married and I can't keep a wife on what she was used to." So I had a friend of mine in the furniture business, he was a traveller in the upholstery business. And I talked it over with him for a long time, I said "What about it George? We'll start this business and have a go at it anyway." So I found a factory in Artillery Row, it was called Parliament Court. It stunk to high heaven, the cats had made a home of it and I found a four-floor factory with hoists just ideal for the job. Fifty bob a week. I took this factory and I started work and I worked from eight in the morning until eleven/twelve at night. My wife used to bring me sandwiches at eleven o'clock at night. We didn't know the meaning of stopping Saturday and Sunday work. And as an idea I made a suite of furniture for six guineas and I had it circularised to every furniture shop in London, and outside in the seaside resorts. And there was a firm called Plumber Rogers and they looked at this circular of this suite and they ordered twenty four as a sample. I sent them in ...

M What, twenty four suites of furniture ?

Yes, and they were so delighted that they gave me an open order to deliver. They would send their van down every Monday, to fill up this van. And I did very well out of that, and then every new thing that came on the market I would translate it in to furniture. And the Queen Mary was built and launched - I made a suite called a suite called the Queen Mary - with lovely fronts to it, like a funnel. And I sold them and I did very well out of it, they were all circularised. And I became known in the business ... I only specialised in leather furniture. And I had the biggest cheek of all, I called it "Parliament Upholstery". And on the front of a van - for which I paid a large amount of money, fourteen pounds, for this van - I had it done up and had a great big thing made ... I got a very good artist to paint the Houses of Parliament on a great big disc, and that was one on the front of the van. And there was also one on a swinging bar outside the factory, called Parliament Court Furniture, and I did quite well out of that, up to the War started.

Of course I lost all my staff then, about forty people working for me. And just one or two people kept on. And I thought, "Well people go down to the tubes they must have something to lie on." I thought of an idea of making a three tier biscuit - which is made in three sections buttoned, and cushioned to lay on. Which folded up with handles at the side and then go down to the tubes carrying those. We did quite well out of those. Of course it kept us going through the war. I went in to a factory to buy some rezzine just off Great Eastern Street, and I had a little car there - a little Ford car - and when I came out, as I came out, walking to the car, this factory was bombed and it was laid flat, and I just missed it by inches... there you are.

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