

AGE EXCHANGE UK

INTERVIEW WITH ALFRED MC LOUGHIAN

Recorded by Pauline Devaney. 23/6/87. Transcribed by Barnaby Browne.

Pauline: I think is the 23rd of June. Am I right ? This is Mr Mc Loughian.

Alfred: Yes, thats right.

Pauline: Sorry. Whats your Christian name Mr Mc Loughian?

Alfred: Erm, Alfred.

Pauline: Alfred Mc Loughian on Middle Park estate -talking, first of all, about Horn Park estate. O.K. so first of all actually you were born where?

Alfred: In Well Hall.

Pauline: In Well Hall?

Alfred: Yes. I lived in Well Hall, and spent my boyhood in Well Hall. Went to Gordon school. And then of course, as a boy, I travelled all round this Middle Park - the Westfields, the Ninefields, Horn Park and all round this area.

Pauline: So when was middle park built?

Alfred: We, Middle Park was built in 192..., round about 1929, 1930 time.

Pauline: And you saw it being built?

Alfred: Yes. I knew it as fields and er, hedges. And er, cattle grazing up here when er, before it was built, yes.

Pauline: So what was it like before it was built?

Alfred: Well it was just ordinary. As you came down from Eltham there was corn fields on your right and er ...

Pauline: Down from what road in Eltham?

Alfred: From Eltham church.

Pauline: From Eltham church down ...?

Alfred: Yes. From Eltham. Past the White Hart. Er, there was er, a farm on your right which was the er ... Er, I can't remember ... Lime Farm Park. Lime Park Farm. Lime farm ... that was it, on the right. And then there was cornfields going right down to Eltham Green. Then on the left there was all fields with hedges. And when you got down to the bottom there was a (019) where The Dutch House is now. Er, the Yorkshire Grey is now , there was a five bar gate with a lane, leading up to Middle Park Farm. And you could see the farm in the distance. Erm, Oak trees either side, big oak trees either side used to lead up there. And the fields came off of them. You could see cows in the fields and horses but he he did mostly horses I think. And erm, and er, from er, well it was all fields, just like any other farm.

Pauline: And were there private houses at all?

Alfred: Er, no, erm, the only houses - there were no houses there at all - the only houses I remember were at Cliff ... what is now known as Cliftons roundabout. At Cliftons roundabout there was a road leading up from the main road, the Eltham Rd, called Mottingham Lane. And it used to go under the railway bridge, turn right, and go up to Mottingham. But On the crossroads, at Cliftons roundabout now, there was two farm cottages one side of the road and three farm cottages the other side of the road. And then there was a track leading up the hill that went over a cow bridge at the top - up towards Tucks Farm or Horn Parks farm at the top.

Pauline: And what was peoples attitude to Middle Park being built then? The people who lived here?

Alfred: Er, well the only houses that were round there then was Eltham Green there - there was a few houses there. I don't think people really thought much about it, because all the estates were being built then you see. This was after the war and the estates were all in the process of being built - The Page Estate and The Middle Park Estate and The Horn Park estate were all built one after the other.

Pauline: And why were they built at that time?

Alfred: Erm, well I suppose er, war time, The First World War, they built the Progress Estate at Well Hall - to house the munition workers in The Arsenal. And they also built wooden huts. Well all the wooden huts were knocked down.

Pauline: Where were the wooden huts?

Alfred: On the Well Hall Road leading up to Shooters Hill. And er, all over Westmount Rd area, (046). Erm, Deansfield Road. All round that area. Castlewood Park.

Pauline: Did you ever go in one?

Alfred: Oh yes. Yes. I had many friends.

Pauline: What were they like inside?

Alfred: Oh quite good. They had about four rooms.

Pauline: What, all on one floor?

Alfred: All on one floor. Yes. Wooden hut yeah, with a coal bunker outside. And er, they were quite comfortable for munition workers. And I think they ...

Alfred: And were the walls plastered inside or were they just wood ?

Alfred: No. They were like a erm, asbestos inside.

Pauline: That was healthy.

Alfred: Well, nobody used to think of it then.

Pauline: And how did they heat them?

Alfred: Er, they had round fires, round stoves with pipes going through the roof.

Alfred: Sounds a bit Russian really ? Like a Russian house.

Alfred Yes, well they built them in a hurry didn't they for the munition workers.

Pauline: But they were quite warm and comfortable were they?

Alfred: Yes. Eltham was a village before that. Before the war. And of course it was a small high street - you know, that zig- zagged. And of course after the war, with the influx of these munition workers, made this area grow up. So er, all the fields that were round here, they started building these estates.

Pauline: And there wasn't - because in some places there was a very snobbish attitude towards the estates - were you conscious of that at all ?

Alfred: No not really because I was born on that Progress estate, which was ordinary people you see - Well Hall, Prince Rupert Road I lived in. And all the

people round there were ordinary people. You know ordinary workers that come from London, South London, and all that sort of thing. And they were all munition workers of course. And of course the huts were the same sort of people. Although they lived in huts they were you know

...

Pauline: Where did the munitions workers come from?

Alfred: Oh everywhere.

Pauline: Did they?

Alfred: Yes. All over London. And further out too. They come to work in the Arsenal - there were so many thousand workers ...

Pauline: Was that compulsory? I mean if you didn't go to into the army or something did you have to become a ...

Alfred: Oh no, no. No. it was voluntary. Yes.

Pauline: Was it? So it was a patriotic thing to do?

Alfred: Yes. Very patriotic thing. Yes.

Pauline: I see. And were people paid a reasonable amount of money for doing it? I mean was it a good thing to do or was it merely an act or patriotism to do it?

Alfred: Well, the money wasn't great. No the money used to work out at about two or three quid, that was all. So you couldn't say it was big sums of money. But both my brothers worked in the Arsenal, in the danger buildings, filling bullets and things like that.

Pauline: So it wasn't done because it was employment or you know or a good thing financialy or anything - it was done to help the war effort was it?

Alfred: Well it was employment-wise because there was a lot of out of work then and people were very very poor. I mean when I was a lad you had a pint of milk a day and a loaf of bread a day and, you know, you didn't get much more than that. Our main food during the week was bread and marge for breakfast and porridge. And the only one in our family that ate butter was Mum.

Pauline: Thats not usual is it?

Alfred: Well people were very very poor. You know, they never earned a lot of money. I used to go to Well Hall on Saturday and get a pound of apples, cooking apples, from Well Hall itself, Well Hall Manner - where Kathleen Nesbit used to live. And I used to go to the back door and get a pound of apples for our Sunday afters. The only day we had afters was Sunday.

Pauline: How did you come to go to Well Hall and get the apples?

Alfred: Well they used to sell them there - there were apple trees in the orchard. There was also a farm there, small farm, Well Hall Farm. And I used to go to school with the children that lived in there, actually. It's changed a bit now. (090).

Pauline: So there was no, as far as you were aware, of snobbish attitude towards the council estates being built?

Alfred: Oh No. No. I don't think so. No, the people of Well Hall, they lived round Earls Hall Rd and places like that - Drayton Rd. No I don't think they were snobbish at all, no.

Pauline: And there was no snobbish attitude towards the huts?

Alfred: No, I don't think so, no. No, they were more or less the same people. Either they lived in the houses - we lived in houses, nothing snobbish. Because er, in the huts themselves there used to be a couple of shops that we used to go to.

Pauline: What were they? What shops?

Alfred: Well, there was one half way up Well Hall Rd there. Er, on the very corner by the bottom of Admiral Seymour Rd there was a greengrocers called Bings. And there was a fish shop called Kendricks on the other side of the road. And then you got to had two or three huts. And then you had two or three huts. And then you had a hut called "Blakes" that used to sell groceries and everything else that went with it. And then you went up a bit further to the next road and down there, which is now the Rochester Way, there was another hut, Howards, he used to sell everything down there.

Pauline: What, a general store?

Alfred: General store yeah, we used to deal with them.

Pauline: Did you?

Alfred: Yeah well the Co-op was at Well Hall but er, to save you going to the Co-op you used to go to the shops opposite.

Pauline: So how did it come about that you moved from where you moved from to Horn Park estate?

Alfred: Well, when we first got married we lived in - I was living at home at course - but when I first got married we got two rooms in a place at Glenshield Road which is up near Eltham Park. But er, it was a twelve-roomed house, huge house. And it was er, my wife being on her own - because the people that owned the house had a hotel down at Cliftonville. And the wife was left on her own in this house, twelve roomed house. And I used to - being a milkman - I used to go to work at three o'clock in the morning. And she was a bit scared at being in this huge house that used to creak and everything at three o'clock in the morning. So when we heard the council houses at Horn Park were being built we put in for one. And we got the - we were the first ones on the estate. When we moved on to Hornpark estate there was no fences, no roads as such, just the kerbs laid down. But no roads, no pavements, no fences. And at the back of the houses there was cows in the field. Apple trees and cows - a good mixture. That was in 1937. And our rent was er, seven and eight a week, plus the other odds and ends they put on for ...

Pauline: So was that more than you'd been paying or less?

Alfred: Oh, we paid a pound at New Eltham.

Pauline: Did you?

Alfred: Yes, for a private landlord. Pound that was.

Pauline: So it was actually, unlike most people, you were paying less than when you moved to the estate?

Alfred: Oh yes. With the iron that the council supplied, and the kettle, it came to nine and a penny a week.

Pauline: Gosh. And you had a garden?

Alfred: Oh we had a garden back and front.

Pauline: You had a garden back and front with cows and apple trees.

Alfred: Yes.

Pauline: Was that nice? What was that like? Did you like that?

Pauline: Oh, yes, we liked that. But of course we were only there two or three years and the war broke out. Of course that altered things.

Pauline: Made a difference. Yes, of course it did.

Alfred: Only half the estate was built then before the war. And just above us, the top half of the estate, towards the top of Westhorn Avenue there was still trees, apple trees, orchards, and there was a barrage balloon depot put there during the war. And they stayed there throughout the war. After the war the second half of the estate was built. Er, (? Sibthorpe Rd) and all round that area. Er, so er, we moved over to there. And it was quite nice. But unfortunately a bomb landed on the outside of the road there and cracked all the walls wide open and damaged our furniture. And our furniture was moved down to, what's the name of the place now, near Vandyke Cross, on the Middle Park estate, on the Page Estate. I can't think of the name. Anyway we were moved out there and that was blown up completely, and my wife was injured.

Pauline: Oh dear. What about when you first moved to the Horn Park estate, what sort of neighbors did you have? I mean you were the first in?

Alfred: We were the first in yes.

Pauline: Well when people came where did they tend to come from?

Alfred: Erm, Woolwich. And Bermondsey. Some come from Bermondsey. Some come from Woolwich.

Pauline: And what were they like as neighbors? How did you get on?

Alfred: Well erm, they seemed a little bit distant when they moved in. They weren't inclined to be too friendly when they moved in. But with the coming of the war, all that changed. Everybody was friendly to everybody else.

Pauline: And, before the war, you as a milkman ...

Alfred: I was fifty years with Unigate.

Pauline: Was your round round on Middle Park ?

Alfred: Er no. I didn't have a round actually. At that time I was working at Green Lanes depot, before the war. But when I came back after the war, after being in the services, I went to (? Rd) which served that area.

Pauline: Oh I see. But before the war you weren't doing a round?

Alfred: Oh no. No. I was a horse keeper.

Pauline: Oh were you?

Alfred: Yes. We had sixty-five horses at er, at er, Green Lanes Depot. And I came back out of the army and I was transferred to Baring Road. And I had fifty four horses there. And I kept there until '52 when we changed over to electrics.

Pauline: So when you had your back garden looking over the horses you knew about those horses anyway didn't you?

Alfred: Oh yes, yes, yes. We er, I used to do everything with horses.

Pauline: Did you ride?

Alfred: Yes. I've got pictures somewhere of me on horseback and erm, I used to do everything for them. Like shearing them, every year. And er, shioing the odd horse as well. I put on shoes on the odd horse, when when they cast any shoes during the course of their journey. We had furriers come in twice a week that used to shoe the horses. But er, whenever a shoe come off out in the road I used to have to go out and put them on. Because they weren't allowed to travel back to the depot without shoes on.

Pauline: On a bicycle? Did you go on a bike?

Alfred: Er, or on a horse and cart. Yeah horse and cart or a bicycle. It all depended what was available.

Pauline: How interesting. How interesting. So anyway getting back - you've told me a bit about the shops at Horn Park. No you haven't actually. Were the shops built for the estate? What size ...

Alfred: At Horn Park?

Pauline: At Horn Park.

Alfred: There was just a hut at first. A round hut. Er, well just two huts. There was a newsagent and a grocers shop there. But after two or three years they built the small amount of shops that there are over now including the post office and that.

Pauline: So how far did you have to go to other shops before they built them?

Alfred: We had to walk to Eltham, there was no buses or anything like that.

Pauline: So how far was that?

Alfred: Er, a good two mile I suppose.

Pauline: There and back?

Alfred: No. Two mile there and two miles back.

Pauline: Thats four mile, with the shopping. And with children, if women have ...

Alfred: Yes. Push chair and that.

Pauline: Thats very hard isn't it.

Alfred: Yes.

Pauline: Four miles is a long way with shopping isn't it.

Alfred: Yes. Er, you couldn't get everything you wanted there. It was a small shop you see. And er, so when you wanted to do your shopping you had to go to Eltham.

Pauline: Now, how did you choose the house? Were you allowed to choose the house or were you given it?

Alfred: Oh no, we were given it. Yeah, because they weren't all finished. This was about the first one finished. The walls were still damp. And as I say there was no gates, no fences, no nothing. We just got in to it.

Pauline: So, you were just allocated that house?

Alfred: We was lucky. Yes.

Pauline: You were allocated a house.

Alfred: Just lucky to get it.

Pauline: And did you like it as a house?

Alfred: Er, oh yes. Yes. Quite nice. Yeah.

Pauline: What was it like, tell me what it was like?

Alfred: Erm, well ...

Pauline: I mean did it have a central front door, or a front door at the side?

Alfred: We had two bedrooms. And there was a front door in the front. And a backdoor leading out in to the orchard. So it was quite nice. We had no back fences so ...

Pauline: So you came in the front door and you were in a little hall?

Alfred: Erm, yes there was a little passage.

Pauline: With a staircase?

Pauline: Er, yes. And the doors were off the hall - leading to your kitchen ...

Pauline: To the right ..

Alfred: And er, your living room.

Pauline: And the walls were wet you say, still?

Alfred: The walls were still damp yes. We were told not to paint them or emulsion them - for a year, at least.

Pauline: So you lived with drying out plaster for a year?

Pauline: Yes. But it was quite nice. We had Triplex grates. And they were quite nice.

Pauline: What were they?

Alfred: Er, small grates with a nice fire. But there was an oven alongside them that you could cook in.

Pauline: What type of house was yours. Was it a parlour house or ... did they have types of house in Middle Park?

Alfred: No. Ordinary house. Ordinary type. Ordinary type house. There was parlour type intermixed in with the houses. Every so often there was a parlour type. They had an extra front room. And they had three bedrooms.

Pauline: And you had a downstairs living room and a kitchen?

Alfred: Yes.

Pauline: Big kitchen so you could eat in it?

Alfred: Erm, yes I suppose so, if you didn't have too much furniture in it.

Pauline: But you didn't eat in the kitchen?

Alfred: And we had a bathroom and a toilet downstairs as well.

Pauline: So you had a bathroom and a toilet downstairs. A smallish kitchen, and a biggish main room which you eat in and lived in.

Alfred: Yes. Yes. We had gas and electric. And both of them they were operating. The gas had a large switch on the wall next to the electric and you could switch the gas on in the living room as well as you could the electric. You could have them both on at the same time. Until they took the gas away. Now, if you look up there (*pointing to ceiling*). Can you see it? There should be a gas pipe there ... no I've hid it with that. But they had gas as well as electric. Because the gas company and the electric vied with each other to ... who should er, illuminate the house. But of course after a few years nobody used the gas. It was er, so they just simply took the gas appliances away.

Pauline: Why did gas go out as a form of lighting?

Alfred: Well, mantles kept breaking. Vibration broke mantles. And erm, also. well, it wasn't such a good light.

Pauline: I think it's a much prettier light isn't it. Its much softer.

Alfred: Oh prettier light. Well, so is an oil lamp. But it's, its not so good to look through. And it's more convenient to turn on the electric. In the bedrooms they used to have a gaslight with a cord coming from it that you could lower, for any children. You know a night light.

Pauline: That's nice.

Alfred: Yeah. That was good. Yeah. But anyway all the...

Pauline: So your bathroom was downstairs. How did you heat your water for the bath?

Alfred: Oh we had a cupboard alongside, that had a big water tank in it. And the fire - the triplex fire - heated the water for all the ...

Pauline: And that was solid fuel, that was coal?

Alfred: That was coal. Yes. Yes. We used coal. Or coalite. Or coal eggs.

Pauline: How much was it, coal?

Alfred: Er, well, first off it was only two shillings a hundred weight.

Pauline: Two shillings a hundred weight?

Pauline: Yeah, thats ten pence a hundred weight, trolley coal.

Pauline: What's trolley coal?

Alfred: Well the people used to come round hap-hazard, on a trolley, calling out.

Pauline: Oh did they?

Alfred: Yeah. If you belonged to the co-op and had the co-op coal call on you. It used to go up to about half a crown. So if you caught the chap in the street, which was hap-hazard, he used to charge you two shillings a hundred weight.

Pauline: And was what he was selling as good as the co-op coal?

Alfred: Er, not always, sometimes you had a bit of slate in it. But it was quite good. I mean we've often waited for the trolley car to come around. And er, there was that, or there was coal eggs, you could buy. And a lot of people used to er, go up to different places, and get blocks from the tramways. Tar blocks.

Pauline: Tar blocks?

Alfred: Yes. The roads, when the tramways were working, they used to take up the wooden blocks, alongside the tramlines, when they were worn, and replace them. And you had two or three depots. There was one at Well Hall station there, where you could go and buy coal blocks, tar blocks.

Alfred: And they were impregnated with tar from the trams were they?

Alfred: Oh yes. And stones. And when you used to put them on they used to burn fierce, but the stones used go bang and split and splurt out everywhere.

Pauline: So they were blocks that were put in by the tramlines?

Alfred: By the tram people. Yes.

Pauline: By the tram people as part of the process of getting a tram to go along ...

Alfred: Tram lines. Yes. They had wooden blocks. And some of our roads were wooden blocks as well. Eltham High St had wooden blocks.

Pauline: And the blocks were treated with tar to keep them, to preserve them were they?

Alfred: Yes and, well, they originally had creosote in them - I should imagine soaked in creosote - to keep them. And then as the surface of the road was retarred the blocks were tarred. So when you got the blocks they were clean on three sides and on the fourth side was a thick lump of tar studded with all little stones.

Pauline: And why did they pull them up?

Alfred: To replace them when they were worn.

Pauline: Oh I see.

Alfred: Or, if they were laying new tram lines in, replacing the tram lines, used to knock the blocks up, chock the blocks up, to get them out easy, and then put new blocks back.

Pauline: And how much was a block?

Alfred: Oh, I think they were about two a penny.

Pauline: Two a penny. And how big were they?

Alfred: Erm, about er, ab ..., I should say about six inches long. Six inches high. And about four inches thick.

Pauline: Oh I see. So that you could transport them.

Alfred: Oh yes. Well most kids had barrows with wheels on. Pram wheels on. And they used to go out and get all that sort of thing.

Pauline: And they burned well I imagine.

Alfred: Burned fierce. Oh yes, they used to eek out your coal. And er, they er, they used to burn fierce. But, as I say, sometimes your chimney caught alight, with the tar going up.

Pauline: And the exploding stones? And the smell presumably?

Alfred: Well, nice smell. Nice smell of tar. Quite healthy smell. Yeah. Mmm.

Pauline: Yes. I like the smell of tar. Oh that's interesting. Very interesting. No, I imagined you meant things like railway sleepers.

Alfred: Oh no, small blocks, they used to put in, yeah.

Pauline: Was that quite a common thing to do?

Alfred: Oh yes. Quite common. Everybody used to do that.

Pauline: So they were always available?

Alfred: Yes. They used to help the coal out. And although coal was so cheap, money was so cheap too wasn't it. I mean, as a milkman - that was a good paid job - I only used to get two pounds sixteen a week.

Pauline: What sort of hours did you work for that?

Alfred: And er, ... oh three o'clock in the morning till six o'clock at night. With a couple of breaks.

Pauline: That's very long hours isn't it.

Alfred: Yeah. And on a Saturday it was seven o'clock. I used to start work at three o'clock in ...

Pauline: That's six days a week?

Alfred: Seven. Er, well six, and sometimes seven. I've walked in a stable at three o'clock in the morning and the horsekeepers said to me - er, a minute past three - and the horsekeepers said to me, "Good afternoon". Quite sarcastic like.

Pauline: Were there - talking about money - were there people on the estates who found it difficult to pay the rents? Were you aware of that at all?

Alfred: Well, the rents were all below ten shillings. Roughly about ten shillings.

Pauline: But some of the people who came from say Bermondsey must have been paying lower rents than that. And I just wondered if there was any hardship about paying ...?

Alfred: I don't there was any scheme to give you lower rents, like housing benefits or anything like that. But there used to be something called unemployment, erm, the erm, what was it called now erm, ... relief. What they called relief. And people used to go and get coal tokens. And er ...

Pauline: But that's if they were really destitute wasn't it.

Alfred: If they were real poor. Coal tokens and real food. You know they used to get food itself, not money.

Pauline: But I'm thinking of people say from Bermondsey you know who pay far less and they come somewhere like Horn Park where there's only one shop or two shops. They haven't got their market. They can't get their cheaper food can they? And they're paying more rent. I just wondered if you were aware of any particular, specific, hardships?

Alfred: No. If anybody was out of work they could only remain on the dole some time before they went before a court of referees. And sometimes they were cut off. So they had to depend on relief. So they had to go to the relief to get a token for their rent.

Pauline: So, what would happen on one of the estates, like Horn Park or Middle Park, if somebody couldn't pay their rent? Were you aware of that ever happening?

Alfred: Well, I don't exactly remember any single cases. But I think that they'd be thrown out. If they didn't pay their rent.

Pauline: Pretty swiftly?

Alfred: Yes. Pretty swiftly. They didn't used to let it mount up, because they'd never pay it in the end. Because the money was so poor. As I was saying I got two pounds sixteen a week. And after the stoppages of National Insurance and unemployment, which were two separate things and, uniform and a couple of other odd things - like Widows and Orphans and that) - I used to go home with two pounds twelve and six. Well, after you'd paid your rent - which was the odd money say - you had two pound to buy all your food, buy your coal, pay your insurances, your clothes, and everything else. And if you had a fairly large family, it didn't leave you with much.

Pauline: No it didn't.

Alfred: Mind you, you couldn't really save up on it. Not on the money you used to get. And, we used to rely on things like erm, pub clubs.

Pauline: What were they?

Alfred: For Christmas. You'd pay in to a club, a loan club. And er, at Christmas time you used to draw out the money for Christmas, otherwise you wouldn't get much of a Christmas.

Pauline: And did you grow vegetables in your garden?

Alfred: Oh yes, yeah. I used to get packets of seed from Woolworths and grow me own er. Well, you couldn't grow everything but you grew some potatoes and you grew things like lettuces and radishes and things like that. Beans. Runner beans and that.

Pauline: And what about chicken and anything like that. Did you keep chicken?

Alfred: Er, no some people on the older estates like Middle Park estate and Page estate - they used to keep chickens. But I don't remember many people at Horn Park estate keeping chickens because it was the last estate we built and chickens were going out.

Pauline: And that goes for rabbits as well I suppose?

Alfred: Yes. Rabbits and chickens, they were going out. They were a favourite thing earlier on. But the council didn't really want you to keep them.

Pauline: No. How, I was going to say, how strict were the estate offices? How strict were they about what you could do and what you couldn't do on the estates ? And what were the rules?

Alfred: Well, er they're easier now than what they were then. Er, you er, weren't allowed to build anything or alter anything on the estate at all. And er, when televisions first come out ...

Pauline: And could you, sorry to interrupt, but if there was a hedge in your front garden you couldn't cut that down?

Alfred: Well, you cut your own hedge yes. But on the estates ...

Pauline: No but could you cut it down?

Alfred: ... oh. No you couldn't cut it down because most of them were planted by the estate. Originally, the hedges were planted by the estate.

Pauline: So, if you didn't like hedges you couldn't, you were stuck with it. You couldn't ...

Alfred: Yes. You couldn't cut it down. You had to trim it.

Pauline: You had to trim it ? What happened if you didn't trim it?

Alfred: Oh I don't know. Everybody used to ... everybody used to be keen enough to trim it. Trim the hedges ...

Pauline: So what happened if you had a slob up the road who didn't trim the hedge?

Alfred: Well I don't know. I suppose the council would come and cut it for him.

Pauline: Would they?

Alfred: Charge him. But they didn't encourage you to alter anything. They were pretty strict about that.

Pauline: And that goes for the inside of the house as well?

Alfred: Oh yes. It wasn't until later years they used to let you alter things, if you submitted something to them. But when we first had a television - which was on that estate, earlier on - we had to get permission for the television aerial to be erected in the loft.

Pauline: But that was quite late. That was after the war was it?

Alfred: That was after the war yeah, that was in 19 ... we had our first television I think it was just after the war. Yeah, just after the war we had our first television. And they were pretty strict about aerials and things like that. You had to get plans for the ... you know for what you wanted to do.

Pauline: So, to go back to before the war and about the gardens. Were there competitions about gardens? I mean was there any sort of community feeling about the estate like you would have in a village. I mean they were built to look like villages.

Alfred: Er, no, not at first no, because the war was in the offing. And I think any schemes there were, they weren't started until after the war Because everything was dig for victory. And people used to dig their gardens for vegetables for themselves and that. Everybody was doing it. And then they started with allotments. Behind the houses where the cows were grazing, they moved the cows further down to the field at the bottom, and they would (have that for Dig for Victory, digging all the field up for victory.

Pauline: So that although the sort of - the thinking behind the cottage estates and the reason they were built as they were was to look like villages, wasn't it?

Alfred: Oh yes. In the first place ...

Pauline: There was no conscious promotion of the village community thing, there were no community centres or any attempt to make it a real community ...?

Alfred: Not at the beginning. No. Nothing at the beginning at all to do with that. There was a church built over at Horn Park but it was, it was er, that was just about the only thing that was there. There was a church and a paper shop and a little shop that sold groceries.

Pauline: And what happened in the church? Was there a community centre in the church or any sort of ...?

Alfred: No. At first. At the onset. There was really nothing. But afterwards, after the war, things started to get moving a bit. There was a bit of community spirit. For instance, the coronation, that was a big bit, hit, towards the community spirit - because everybody joined in to make it a success you know.

Pauline: So, let me think, we've covered the neighbors - did you know any of the neighbors that came from Bermondsey? Did you get to know any of those?

Alfred: Well we got to know our immediate neighbors. Because I mean sometimes you spent the night in a shelter with them. And er, you got to know the people that were there. Of course now they are all gone. All gone. All gone ages ago. All split up. Everybody split up. They've all gone their different ways.

Pauline: Did you have children when you moved here?

Alfred: Er, on the estate, yes I had one boy.

Pauline: So your wife was at home ...

Alfred: Yes.

Pauline: ... all day with the one child?

Alfred: Yes.

Pauline: In a new estate.

Alfred: Yes.

Pauline: And she had to walk four miles to the shops and then she just went to the ...

Alfred: Well, we waited to the weekend, mostly, before we did most of the shopping.
Went to Eltham.

Pauline: So what did with herself all day - in the house by herself?

Alfred: Erm, well she took the boy to school.

Pauline: Was that on the estate?

Alfred: There was a school on the estate.

Pauline: A new one? Er, yes, fairly knew, yes. Yes. It was a knew one yes. It was built
off the estate. Its still there anyway.

Alfred: So they built that school pretty soon then didn't they, because if yours is the
first house.

Alfred: Er, no it wasn't. No. I don't think it was built before the war no. I think they
were built just after the war, when the rest of the estate was built.

Pauline: So the school she took him to wasn't on the estate?

Alfred: I think she took him to Kings Park, which was a walk down through into this
estate. She walked down the hill and through in to this estate, Kings
Park, which is now Moat Bridge. That was Kings Park, there was no
Eltham Green then.

Pauline: And then she went back to the house. With nobody much round her?

Alfred: No.

Pauline: All day?

Alfred: No. Very quiet.

Pauline: Very. Very quiet. Was she lonely?

Alfred: The only thing - they used to get callers coming round then - dropping things
on your doorsteps like curtains and clocks and things like that.

Pauline: Trying to get your custom?

Alfred: Trying to get your custom yeah.

Pauline: There were a lot of those were there?

Alfred: Yeah.

Pauline: But apart from that then she probably wouldn't have seen people all day long would she?

Alfred: Well, it wasn't long before the people started moving in at our end, because there was only one end of the estate built.

Pauline: And did she come from a very close family - I mean where you were before I mean did she have relatives, her mother and a sister and so on?

Alfred: Oh yes. She came from Deptford actually my wife.

Pauline: And did she go back there? Because its quite a long way to get back isn't it.

Alfred: To Deptford? Oh yes. But during the war she did travel backwards and forwards to Deptford during the war.

Pauline: And before the war did she do that? When you first moved?

Alfred: Er, no, I can't remember. I think ... no, I don't think she did. It was only because I wasn't there, I was in the army, that she used to travel over for a bit of company from her mother.

Pauline: So she must have missed them enormously in those first few years?

Alfred: Oh I suppose yes. In the first place yes. Yes. Very quiet up there it was.

Pauline: Mmm very.

Alfred: Yeah. Very quiet place.

Pauline: And what about your immediate neighbors, the people who lived next door to you? What were they like?

Alfred: Er, the lady next door she was a labour lady. Did a lot of labour work. You know counselling and that. Er, that was downstairs ...

Pauline: What was her name, can you remember?

Alfred: Er ... no I can't. I'm sorry. I can't remember her name. It's too far back.

Pauline: What did she look like?

Alfred: Short, middle aged. I can't remember much about them - we were young ourselves.

Pauline: Was she very forcefully labour? I mean that's the thing you remember about her.

Alfred: Oh yes she was. Yes. She was very. Yes. Very. Yes. She was one of the leading lights in the labour party on this estate.

Pauline: Oh was she?

Alfred: Yeah. For years. A good many years. After the war as well. Yes, but the people the other side, I can't remember much about them.

Alfred: There was er, a whats a name house next to us - a parlour type house next to us. And she had a large family. But we didn't see a lot of them you know.

Pauline: Her children played with your son?

Alfred: Erm, no, I don't recall them playing. See, it was a funny old time when we moved in cos it wasn't long - the war was in the offing ...

Pauline: Yes. And there was the phoney war wasn't there.

Alfred: And there was the threat of war in the air. And we were going and getting our gas masks and receiving war instructions. And they were talking about blackouts and everything like this you see. So ...

Pauline: And you were working until six so what time did you get home in the evening?

Alfred: Well just after six. Yeah, just after six. I had to peddle from Green Lanes before the war.

Pauline: Green Lanes?

Alfred: Yes.

Pauline: And you went to bed at what time ? Pretty early I imagine.

Alfred: Well, it was a funny old to-do really because er, I used to go to bed late.

Pauline: Did you ?

Alfred: Yeah, I used to go to bed about eleven, normally. And if I went to the pictures which was at the Odeon Well Hall on the hill, I'd have to take my clothes with me to work, back in afternoon, on the back of me bike. Go to the

Odeon. Park me bike out in the car park with me old clothes on - nobody'd steal them - they didn't have any thieves about then. And I'd go in the pictures with me wife and we'd come out about eleven. We'd walk home. We'd have our tea about twelve. And then we'd go to bed about one. And I was up again at two to get to work. Well then I'd come home, I'd come at dinner time, and try to snatch an hours sleep before I went back at two o'clock.

Pauline: So you were only getting about three hours sleep a night.

Alfred: I know. I know. Terrible.

Pauline: How many years did you keep that up?

Alfred: Er, well, right until the war started. And I was falling asleep eating me breakfast.

Pauline: Of course you were.

Alfred: It was a bad time for me then.

Pauline: I'm sure it was. And why did you go to bed late?

Alfred: Well, if you went to bed at the time you should do.

Pauline: You'd have no life at all.

Alfred: You'd have no life at all no. No.

Pauline: No. Exactly. Exactly. Good God!

Alfred: You see in those days you didn't get paid for your sickness or, if you were sick, you got no pay. And if you were short, there was so much unemployment ... if you, you know, didn't go to work there was so much unemployment, you soon got the sack.

Pauline: Did you fall asleep a lot during the evening before you went to bed?

Alfred: Well, as a matter of fact, I fell asleep on a horse's back.

Pauline: Did you?

Alfred: When I'd been cleaning a horse.

Pauline: Did you fall off?

Alfred: No, I wasn't sitting on, I was cleaning it.

Pauline: Oh I see, just resting leaning, resting against it. I fell asleep cleaning a horse's back, I was so tired.

Alfred: And sometimes I was eating me breakfast and I'd open the cupboard to get the food out and bang me head on the cupboard door. Never had the sense to get out the way. I was so tired.

Pauline: Never fell off your bicycle. You never had an accident.

Alfred: Er, no, not then. I did have an accident before I was married. That was er, that was in 1935. That was before we moved here. I was coming down the Rochester Way - after seeing me future wife at Deptford - and I was coming down the Rochester Way and there was a cafe... opposite Chandlers orchard, up on the Rochester Way there was a big orchard, and this lorry was parked, and I was riding the bike asleep. And I run in to the back of this lorry and put me face out a bit. Put me teeth through me lip and all that. And the lorry driver put me bike on the back of the lorry - it was all buckled - and I got carried home. That was the only accident I remember, through falling asleep. I'd come all the way from Deptford and I don't remember the journey. Because there wasn't so much traffic about in those days.

Pauline: How many hours sleep a night do you have now?

Alfred: Oh I don't need, only about four.

Pauline: Do you really?

Alfred: I don't sleep a lot.

Pauline: So, you've never needed an awful lot of sleep?

Alfred: No. I think the fifty yers on the Unigate schooled me in to having not much sleep.

Pauline: Well it could have worked the other way once you retired. You could have made up for lost sleep couldn't you.

Alfred: I could have done but it wan't like that you know.

Pauline: Its interesting. You mentioned going to the cinema, was that cinema built for the estate?

Alfred: For the Middle Park estate? Yes. That was the Odeon. There was one at Well Hall, built for the Pages estate, and one at Eltham Hill for the Eltham estates.

Pauline: And what was it like that cinema? What happened? I mean did it have live shows as well?

Alfred: Er, no. No. Not at the time no. No it had no live shows. Just a cinema. And you used to get in for one and three. One shilling and threepence. That was about er, five, six, seven pence. Seven new pence.

Pauline: And what sort of films were you seeing at that time ?

Alfred: Oh erm, well I can't really remember. Some of the old films you are seeing now. Er, Jacky Coogan and people like that you used to see.

Pauline: Who's your favourite film star?

Alfred: You mean dating right back?

Pauline: Yeah.

Alfred: Dating right back there was a girl I fell in with - Janet Gaynor, and Charles Farrell. They used to be a pair that worked together. I fell in love with her yes. That was back in ... I was actually ... Er, the first cinema in Eltham. No, the second cinema in Eltham was the Eltham Palace. I can't remember the year it was built. I think it was about 1929.

Pauline: But that wasn't built before any of the estates?

Alfred: No. No. That was built before Eltham itself. I went and saw the first film there. Er, it was a racing picture with Steve Donaghue, it was supposed to be, riding. And it was Douglas Fairbanks senior and Mary Pickford. And to get in, all the kids were allowed to get in to the matinee on the first day for two horse shoes. And er, there was a farrier's shop in Eltham, on the corner of Carter Patterson's Yard - which is now obviously the castle hotel, it isn't there now - and I got one horse shoe there - there'd been a big call on them, because all the kids had gone on strike over there, which was the nearest farrier's shop, blacksmith, and er, there was only one shoe left. So I had to go right down to New Eltham - to a place called Blackkeys, at the back of the Beehive hotel, where there was another farrier down there and got one shoe off of him.

Pauline: What were they collecting horse shoes for?

Alfred: To go in to the cinema.

Pauline: Yeah, but was the cinema doing with horse shoes?

Alfred: Nothing. As a gimmick. As a gimmick. Yeah. Because the first picture they put on was a racing picture.

Pauline: So, apart from the two big cinemas that were built for the estates there were no other sort of community - or anything else built for the community - in the way of entertainment?

Alfred: Oh no.

Pauline: What about pubs? No pubs built? L.C.C. licensed refreshment houses?

Alfred: Er, yes, yes. The Dutch House was built. The Dutch House was built, on the main road there down by the bridge, railway bridge, Horn Park.

Pauline: Which estate was that built for? Horn park?

Alfred: Yes. That was built just before the war. And I remember that, just prior to the war, they painted the roof with camoufalge paints, so the aircraft couldn't pick it up.

Pauline: And that was built for the Horn Park?

Alfred: That was built for the Horn Park estate. Yes. And that was the centre of the attraction I suppose.

Pauline: And that was what a pub and it had ... anything else happen there?

Alfred: That was a pub and a hotel like ... and you could hold dances there and places like that.

Pauline: So that was really a community ...?

Alfred: Yes. Well, er, you have to pay, it wasn't free. And the other place was The Yorkshire Grey - they had a dance hall there, which was bombed during the war.

Pauline: And that was for Middle Park?

Alfred: That was for Middle Park, yes. The Yorkshire Grey.

Pauline: And did they have Saturday night dances?

Alfred: Oh yes they had dances there. Lots of dances. And other things used to go on there.

Pauline: What sort of other things?

Alfred: Well, er, firms used to hold their dances there. Yeah.

Pauline: Oh I see, social functions.

Alfred: Yeah. Social functions there. Weddings and things like that.

Pauline: Did they have live entertainment at all ?

Alfred: Er, no. No, only just for the actual thing itself.

Pauline: No hired professionals?

Alfred: No hired professionals there. No. No.

Pauline: But you could have amateur talent contests.

Alfred: Oh yes you could have people come there and give songs and things like that.

Pauline: Can you remember any of the sort of songs that you were singing at that sort of period of time?

Alfred: In 1937?

Pauline: 1935, 37.

Alfred: Well I remember some songs that used to stick out there was like er, 'Sunny side of the street' and ...'I'm Dancing with tears in my eyes'

Pauline: Whats that one?

Alfred: 'I'm dancing with tears in my eyes. Cos the girl in my arms isn't you ... ' I remember that. You didn't used to get a lot of songs. Not like you did in the sixties. They didn't start till the sixties. And before then you got songs. But they were all good songs and you understand all the words.

Alfred: So, what else were you singing at that time?

Pauline: What was your favourite song. You and your wife. Did you have an "our song".

Alfred: No. I don't think so. Not at the time no. I don't think the' interest lay in songs so much. We had our radio. We used to listen to the old radio a lot because there were no televisions then. And er, Dick Barton speicial agent at six o'clock

Pauline: Yes. I loved him. But that was later though wasn't it. Did you have a song that you sang to your child, as a little boy?

Alfred: Oh only 'Rock a by baby in the tree top'. That was the favourite I think yes. And er, no I can't really think back to those days a s regards songs.

Pauline: O.K. it doesn't matter, I just wondered.

Alfred: No, it seems a funny time when we moved there, because the war was in the offing and there was so much war about.
END SIDE A

SIDE B18:

Alfred: ... which was only five pounds. And everything was settled and we were going to move in and then I suddenly found out that the repayments were 32 shillings and 10 pence.

Pauline: A week?

Alfred: Well, as I knew I was going to be called up for the army, then I thought that the wife could never afford 32 and 10 pence out of army pay, because it was very small then. And so, just before the outbreak of war, I went down to see the Ideal Homesteads people and put the situation to them, and they gave me my money back. The repayments would have been 32 and 10 pence and that would have been too much. But unfortunateley I didn't go in to it. And I didn't realise that she wouldn't have had to pay all that, all she'd had to pay was have been interest. Which would have been about five shillings a week. And she could have made it quite...

Pauline: They should have told you. They should have known shouldn't they.

Alfred: And the house we would have bought, at that time would have been er, £485. And today it'd been worth about thirty thousand.

Pauline: Mmm. More than that. Be worth more than that. You can't buy a house for thirty thouand now.

Alfred: And so I got me five pounds back. And we parted on good terms.

Pauline: No tell me, you say you lived on the Page Estate.

Alfred: Er, no, I lived on the Horn Park Estate.

Pauline: But before the hornpark estate?

Alfred: I lived on the Progress Estate.

Pauline: You lived on the Progress estate. No tell me about the Progress Estate.
When did you first move to the Progress Estate?

Alfred: Er, 1914. Yes, me Father came from Brixton and he moved on to the progress estate. It wasn't called the Progress Estate, I don't think, then. It belonged to the Co-op.

Pauline: And how old were you when you moved there?

Alfred: I was born there.

Pauline: You were born on ther Progress Estate. Yeah, I was born there. And erm, dad worked in the er, as a draughtsman, in the Arsenal. He worked in there for a good many years.

Pauline: A draughtsman?

Alfred: A draughtsman in the Arsenal. In the drawing office. Yeah. And erm, I went to school at The Gordon School.

Pauline: Is that the Prograss Estate School?

Alfred: That was the nearest school, that was in Grange Hill. Every body in the area went to that school then, or Deansfield.

Pauline: It wasn't built especially for the Progress Estate?

Alfred: No. No. There was two schools there - Deansfield and Gordon. You could go to either but I went to the Gordon, it was the nearest, more or less, in Grange Hill Rd. And of coursel was five then. You didn't go to school before you was five because there was no nursery schools, no.

Pauline: So what was it like growing up on the Progress Estate?

Alfred: Oh. Very good. You had your friends. You had so many friends. And you knew so many kids around and you made all your own games.

Pauline: What sort of game?

Alfred: Well, games was er, er, knocking down ginger - knocking on people's doors and runing away.

Pauline: Did you shout anyhthing when you ran away?

Alfred: No. No. Or you tied people's knockers together with cotton, from across the street. And then knock on one, then run. And then they'd knock the other people's knocker when they opened their door. And er, we used to play er, 'release O', that was running around the block and hiding.

Pauline: Release?

Alfred: Release they used to call it. Running around the block and hiding in different places and you'd try and find them.

Pauline: Why was it called release-O?

Alfred: I don't know. I can't remember.

Pauline: you didn't shout release O or anything when you ...

Alfred: No. No. And there was Tipcat - which was a piece of wood. Er, a couple of circles and a piece of wood. And you had a stick. And you had to knock this piece of wood and then run to the other circle while they went and retrieved it. It was like what they play in America now, you know, baseball. Only you used a piece of wood. In lieu of a ball.

Pauline: You'd stand in a circle ...?

Alfred: The piece of wood er, was shaped you see like that. And you knocked it from the ground so it flew in the air and while you they were retrieving it ...

Pauline: How did you knock it from the ground?

Alfred: Well, in the end of it there was, standing up ...

Pauline: So you had two pieces of wood?

Alfred: No. One piece of wood - oh yeah, one in the hand ...

Pauline: One in your hand to hit it with?

Alfred: Yeah. Yeah. And you used to hit that and it used to spin in the air and fly away. And then they used to run after it.

And, while they were running after it you was running...

Pauline: What, if they caught it you were out?

Alfred: You was running runs. If they caught you with it you was out.

Pauline: Like cricket. What was it called? Tipcat?

Alfred: And then of course we played with whips and tops and hoops. We had wooden hoops and steel hoops and you used to run round the streets with them. And then one of our favourite things was baiting the lamplighters that used to come round.

Pauline: What did you call to the lamplighters?

Alfred: Oh, "Lamplighters, Fleabiters" and all that sort of thing.

Pauline: Go on, tell me some more that you called.

Alfred: I can't recall all the names we used to call them. But, anyway, it was a bit of fun.

Pauline: What, you ran after them?

Alfred: Yeah, used to run after him when he got on his bike. He used to like go to each lamp and put his cane up and light the light. And if it didn't light because the bypass had gone out, he used to put a match, and we'd run up and blow it out. When he put it in the end of his stick we'd light the match and take it up to he lamp.

Pauline: And you called him lamplighter , fleabiter, what else?

Alfred: What else. I can't remember. I can't remember. Too far back.

Pauline: Can you remember a particular lamplighter ? What he looked like, any name: ?

Alfred: No. No. Just an ordinary old fella. They all seemed to be old people to me. Of course they wasn't. And they used to ride bikes.

Pauline: And were they nice to you or did they hate you or, what was their relationship to you?

Alfred: Oh they hated us. They hated us, yeah. They used to get on their bike and ride away as quick as they could. And we used to swing on the lamps. That was another thing we used to swing on the lamps. They had a bar

they used to put their ladder against. We used to climb up the lampost and swing on the bar, that was another favourite thing.

Pauline: Now the Page Estate, surely wasn't that in the country then?

Alfred: Erm, well when I was a boy the Page Estate didn't exist, it was corn fields.

Pauline: But you said you were born on the pages estate?

Alfred: No, I was born on the Progress Estate.

Pauline: I'm sorry the Progress Estate.

Alfred: On the Page Estate - which was built in 1929 - we played on there, it was cornfields. And we used to...

Pauline: The Progress Estate. So as that country?

Alfred: Erm, the Progress Estate, I don't remember, because it was all built at the time I can remember.

Pauline: Because you seemed to be talking about urban games. You know, not country games, that you played, aren't they. They are all street games your talking about.

Alfred: Yes. Yes. And of course we played cricket and things like that.

Pauline: So, there was no country? You're not aware, when you were a child, of playing in the country?

Alfred: Oh yes, it was all country. Er, the other side of the Well Hall Rd - I lived on the Progress estate - the other side of the well hall road, where the huts were, behind the huts, was all country. There was one line of huts that went up the main road, one line, just one line. And the other side of the backgardens, was cornfields and greenfields and vegetable fields. Turnip fields. All sorts.

Pauline: So you played country games as well?

Alfred: Oh yes, we used to walk down through Kidbrook Lane and pick the odd turnip up and eat it raw. And er, play all sorts of games in amongst, in and out the lane you know.

Pauline: What sort of games?

Alfred: And we used to run in the cornfields sometimes and get chased by the farmer. He used to ride a white horse - bloke named Corps.

Pauline: Mr Corps?

Alfred: C.O.R.P.S. Yeah. Corps. Mr Corps. He used to ride his white horse.

Pauline: Did you have a gang as a child, were you a member of a gang?

Alfred: Oh yes, we used to have catapults. Er, we used to make our own catapults. Buy some rubber up in Eltham, from a shop up in Eltham, Eltham High St. Quarter inch rubber. And make our catapults out of a piece of wood, and a piece of leather. And fire at birds and things like that. And fire at targets, bottles and anything like that along Kidbrooke Lane. Used to go right out in to the country ...

Pauline: Did your gang have a name?

Alfred: Er, no I can't recall them having a name. Used to be about six or seven or us.

Pauline: Did you have a leader?

Alfred: Er, no I don't think so. No. We were all about the same.

Pauline: Can you remember the names of the members of the gang?

Alfred: Er, yes there was some Willoughbys. There was a large family of Willoughbys, there was two or three of them in our lot, Willoughbys. Chapman.

Pauline: What were their Christian names?

Alfred: Erm, erm ... the Chapmans, there was Ronny, Ted, Jimmy. Ronny, Ted and Jimmy. There was the Mac Donalds - they were a large family. There was Francis, Joey, and Jack. And The Deadmans. I can remember their name.

Pauline: What was their Christian names?

Alfred: Er, one got drowned ... Ernie Dedmond, he was drowned at All Hallows. He went down All Hallows on his bike when he was about twelve and he got drowned down there.

Pauline: Where was All Hallows?

Alfred: Down towads Kent, Gravesend. Down there.

Pauline: What, in the river he got drowned?

Alfred: In the river yeah. He got drowned.

Pauline: Now listen. It's a sunny day. Sunny Summer day. And its a Saturday, or its the school holidays. So you'd go out with a gang. What do you do?

Alfred: Well, there were so many things to do. Sometimes I've been up to the Eltham Palace. And you bypass the Eltham palace and go down that lane. And walk right through to Chislehurst.

Pauline: What you'd take some sandwiches or something?

Alfred: Yeah. Take a couple of sandwiches with you and a bottle of liquorish water.

Pauline: Liquoruish water?

Alfred: Yes, used to put liquorish inside in lieu of lemonade powder or sherbert. Sometimes you got sherbert and put that in.

Pauline: Thats powdered liquorish?

Alfred: Yeah. No. No. You used to put your piece of liquorish in it, in the water, and shake it up. And er, used to take a couple of sandwiches, bread and butter - can't think they had much in them. But it was Chislehurt Woods and have a picnic up there, you know. It was quite safe then. Nobody interfered with you up there.

Pauline: So, how far is it to Chislehurst Woods from (125the Prospect Estate).

Alfred: Er, walking through, past Eltham palace, and down the lane - King Johns Walk - used to go across the railway line. There's a bridge there now, but you used to cross the railway line and look to see if any trains were coming, and then cross through the gates. They used to have gates there. And we used to cross there and go through the styles the other side - there were styles the other side - and then up through, up to Mottingham Village. And then walk straight up the Wwhitehorse Hill, right through to Chislehurst. Quite a good walk. I should imagine about a good three, four mile. And then we used to play in Chislehurst Woods till it was dark.

Pauline: What sort of games did you play?

Alfred: Oh, hiding amongst the trees and er, climbing trees, that was quite a good game, climbing the trees. Tear your clothes, and then you had to go to school with a patch - because people couldn't afford new clothes then. We used to go scrumping, orchards, if we see any orchards on the way. Which was ... there were a fair amount of orchards then - you know in

different places. Any trees near the fence you used to scrump them, apples. And er, pears, things like that. That was a favourite game.

Pauline: And what happened if you got caught?

Alfred: Well, you used to get clumped round the ear.

Pauline: Ah, nothing more serious?

Alfred: Oh no, no. Even the policeman used to clump you round the ear. Yeah, I remember old sargeant er, what was his name? Willoughby. Sergeant Willoughby. Sergeant Owen, I remember him - he used to give you a clump round the ear too. Yeah. Er, no the police were much easier then. The only serious crimes that kids did when I was a kid was setting fire to haystacks. And that was very very rare. But that was the most serious crime that anybody could do I should think, when I was a kid. Was to set fire to a haystack, and that was really serious that was. But apart from that they'd either give you a kick up the backside or else give you a clump round the ear. And you expected that. Even the shopkeepers used to do that.

Pauline: And Mr Corps the farmer would do that if he caught you on his land or whatever?

Alfred: Oh, if he caught you yeah he'd give you a clout round the ear or whatever. You'd expect that. And you wouldn't attempt to retaliate, you'd run, you see.

Pauline: What farm did Mr Corps have?

Alfred: Lime Farm.

Pauline: He was the farmer at Lime Farm.

Alfred: Lime Farm yeah. That was the one that commanded all the fields down to Elton Green.

Pauline: Was it?

Alfred: Yeah, they were corn fields, and vegetable fields. They used to change them alternately you see.

Pauline: Yeah. And what about your neighbors on Prospect. You know the people that you grew up with, they were all munition workers?

Alfred: Oh. The ones we grew up with. Oh, they were very good. They used to come in your house. They were your friends and you knew all their business. And they very likely, their kids went to school with your kids.

Pauline: So there was a really community there?

Alfred: So. Yes, they were all very very friendly. Used to go in to each others houses a lot then. People didn't use to shut their doors so much then. And you wandered in to each others houses. And you knew everybody intimately. And erm, er, anybody died that was a sorrow that everybody shared, you know.

Pauline: So that was - and those people had come before they were munitions workers. I mean they'd come basically from the East End had they?

Alfred: Erm, Brixton and places like that - well, that was, more or less, the same kind of place wasn't it like Brixton.

Pauline: So they'd move that sort of...

Alfred: Yeah, Bermondsey and all round there, they all moved...

Pauline: That sort of community thing that was in the East End, they'd moved it to...

Alfred: Thats right yeah. Moved it to Eltham yeah...

Pauline: ... moved it to Prospect, so it actually worked.

Alfred: ... yeah, because Eltham actually, when I was a kid, was a village. It was really a village.

Pauline: But with the Prospect estate there, of people basically from Bermondsey and the East End, with this lovely community thing going on...

Alfred: Yeah. And then of course when the Page Estate, which was the first esate, of course the place began to get crowded then. And they started altering everything then.

Pauline: So, why do you think then that there was that community feeling on the Progress Estate...

Alfred: Progress. Progress estate.

Pauline: Progress. Sorry. Progress estate. When it was so palpably lacking in other places ? Because one of the great things about the estates was that

everybody was isolated and there was no feeling. There was no community feeling.

Alfred: Well, there wasn't actually like a community hall that could go to. But everybody knew everybody else and they went in their houses.

Pauline: Because they'd had the same background?

Alfred: Yeah. Everybody went in everybody's houses. I knew everybody around my sector ... well I practically knew everybody in the road. And everybody knew your family. And you could go and talk to any of them.

Pauline: Can you remember any particular people that you could tell me about?

Alfred: Erm, well, as I say, the next door to me was an old chap who never had a birth certificate. He was an ex-gypsy. His name was Solomon Earn, a real gypsy name. He never had a, what-do-you call it. His wife died early. But he had a daughter named Polly. I can't remember the real name but er, she was christened Polly. She went to school with my brothers and she was a very good fiend. She was in and out of our house all the time, drinking cups of tea and everything like that. And erm, that was the next door neighbour immediate.

Pauline: And he'd been a munitions worker had he?

Alfred: Er, no, oh no. No. I can't remember what he did. I think he worked on buildings. Er, certainly her husband when she married, Polly, her husband worked on the buildings. Her husband's named Jo, he worked on the buildings. Er, the other side of them was Deadmans. Mr Dedmond worked for Altrims the contractor. Horse and cart contractor, that worked behind Alders in High St Eltham. It was Altrims then - it was Altrims in the front - but it was Alders then. And he worked for them and he used to bring his horse and cart to dinner like. And sometimes he'd have a bad horse out there who used to do a lot of kicking and banging. And he used to have to go out and fight the horse.

Pauline: Fight it?

Alfred: Yeah, keep it quiet. It used to do a lot of kicking and banging out there. Really wild, wild horse he had. Er, I used to know all his sons. They were all my friends. I used to go to school with them and that. And then next door to them again, down further, there was the MacDonalds. They were Irish. She had about thirteen kids. And, they of course went to the Eltham Catholic - or to Woolwich the Cross Keys school at Woolwich. They used to go to school at Woolwich and Eltham they used to go to school. In a Catholic school. And er, then next door to them down

further still was Rhodes. They were friends of mine too. They used to go to our school, so I knew them. And then up the other way there was the Chapmans. They used to be in and out our house. They were all our friends too. And then er, I can't remember the other names of the other people but I knew them all you know then. And they were all very friendly.

Pauline: Can you remember anything that happened, or, you know, any funny stories about any of them or anything like that.

Alfred: Well, when I was a kid, I remember we were all playing out in the street with a football. And a doctor's car went past and he caught our football underneath his car and burst it. And we knew the doctor, because he lived at Spencer Gardens, Well Hall Hill. And we all went up to the doctor's house in a body and knocked on his door and asked him to pay for our football. But he wouldn't.

Pauline: He wouldn't?

Alfred: No. He wouldn't. He said if we didn't go away he would fetch the police. So, we stood outside there for about half an hour and then decided against it.

Pauline: Ahh, shame? That's very unfair. He should have paid.

Alfred: Another thing I remember was walking up my street, me and Jimmy, Chapman, and we found a wallet, in the gutter. Only a ten shilling note in and one or two cards and papers in it. Anyway we took it to Eltham police station, which was on the corner of Footscray Road then. And er, ...

Pauline: Was that sergeant Willoughby?

Alfred: No. And we er, we were taken in to the police station and grilled, and sent home crying. Because they, they, they sort of hinted that there was more money than ten shillings in it. Because ten shillings was a lot of money then to us kids. But we hadn't touched it. There was only ten shillings in there. And we were sent crying, because they more or less intimidated that we'd stolen more money. But that was all that was in there. And we never heard no more about it. Who owned it or anything. But er, of course being kids we cried. What else, funny things that happened to me. Oh yes, I got a bump on the back of me head I can remember as a kid. We used to jump er, coming home from school we used to sometimes go by the bridge at Well Hall. And the trams used to start off the other side of the bridge and go up the hill slow because of

the incline. And they didn't used to pick up speed until they were a good halfway up the hill. And one of the favourite things us kids used to do was to jump on the platform at the back. The step. And when the conductor come downstairs or if he, if he - you know, if we was lucky enough for him to be upstairs, we used to jump off. But, unfortunatley this day, the tram quickened speed very quick. The conductor come down the stairs and there was already somebody behind me. Well, normally when you jump off a tram, you run, to keep up your momentum, so that you don't fall over. But this particular instance I couldn't, because he was behind me and jumping off the same time as me. And I'd have gone in to him. So I jumped off and stopped and I went backwards and hit me head on the tramway line. And I've still got a bump there. I must have fractured me skull and didn't realise it.

Pauline: Did you really?

Alfred: Yeah. Well, you can feel it there.

Pauline: Good lord.

Alfred: And I've had that ever since. I had a headache at the time, when I was a kid, but I daren't tell me people. And so I just had it over there. It's never troubled me. No bother at all. So I must have cracked me skull at the time. But that was through playing on the back of the trams. Another favourite trick was of course jumping on the back of horses and carts. And the the other kids, on the pavement, would shout, "Whip behind guvnor".

Pauline: Whip behind?

Alfred: "Whip behind guvnor", and he'd know that somebody was on the back. And he'd hit the side of the cart with his whip to knock uou off. Er, one of the favourite ones was Beasley's beers. They used to have to have three horses with barrels on the back. And it was a low one. And they had ladders underneath at the back they used to run the beer down. Those peculiar little ladders at the back, you know.

Pauline: Yuh, I know.

Alfred: And we used to hang on them, when they used to come from the Man of Kent - that was a Beasley house. And one or two others that used to come from this area. And er, they used to come down the Well Hall Rd, so we used to get on the back of them. And they used to er ... until they found out - and then they'd whip behind or jump down. And one of them would jump down and try and catch it. That was one of the things you used to play at.

Pauline: What do you think of the estates, the cottage estates, do you think they've worked, as an idea. Do you think they've been a good thing?

Alfred: Well, of course now I've got, since I've retired, I've got involved on this estate because I do the after school club with the children. And I also go to the school - Middle Park school - and I belong to the community centre, I'm on the committee up there. And we get involved in everything there, we do all sorts of things up there. They play games with the kids, say when their parents are at work. They play games. And er, we had everything there - snooker, table tennis, snakes and ladders, cards, noughts and crosses. They do moulding and they do costumes, cutting up costumes, and they dress up in all sorts of old clothes. And er, they put on little games and competitions...

Pauline: So, as actual communities...

Alfred: Oh, that is a real community centre up there.

Pauline: ... it does really work?

Alfred: You can buy your dinner there for three days a week. And you can also, there's also other things go on there, like one-parent groups. And er, then there's the singing group. And the Look Back group that I belong to. And I belong to the singing group as well. And there's tenants committee up there. So that everything revolves around that you see.

Pauline: So you think they were, I mean when they were originally built, I mean do you think they really were homesick for heroes.

Alfred: You know because that's the way they were built isn't it after the war, and the whole...

Alfred: Well, I don't know. After the war heroes were forgotten weren't they. I mean er...

Pauline: Between the wars though?

Alfred: I can remember coming home, from abroad, I'd been six years abroad.

Pauline: This is the second war you are talking about?

Alfred: The second war. I can remember coming home and er, I'd come from Olympia where they'd given me a demob suit. I still had my uniform on, with my medal ribbons all up here. And I was all tanned from being out

abroad, in the middle east. And I sat in a railway carriage from Charring Cross, down to Well Hall. And it was rush hour time, and it was full of people. And although I'd, obviously, I had a kit bag - I had no weapons with me or nothing, because I'd put them in at Shornecliff, down at Folkestone - but I'd obviously just come from abroad, but nobody said a word to me. Never said, "How are you ? Where've you been?" Or anything like that. Nothing." So, the community spirit which they got during the war, which was very thick, especially down in the shelters - the main shelters and all that - that was simply cut off the day that war finished.

Pauline: Thats amazing. Thats amazing.

Alfred: Well, after the celebrations. After that - all the kids parties, in the street, that all finished.

Pauline: Isn't that amazing. But between the wars, after the First World War, when most of these places were built, because of homes fit for heroes and all the rest of it. Do you think, as an idea, do you think that worked. Do you think the estates were a good thing? And that they really worked?

Alfred: Oh yes. Because they gave the poor working man a chance to have a home of his own. Which he wouldn't have done if they had had to rely on bought houses - because we were paying, we were paying a pound a week for three rooms, in a privately owned one at New Eltham. Which was pretty expensive then, because that was half your wages. I think they were very very good because they gave the ordinary working class chap a chance to own his own, well, to live in his own home and bring up a family. I think that was very good. Because they were very reasonable the estates. I mean you'd pay a penny for an electric kettle. And a penny for an iron, and things like that.

Pauline: So, they improved the quality of life did they?

Alfred: And then later on they brought fridges out. There were fridges with no covers, which they put in your larder. Yeah larders were stone, square stone places. And what they used to do was to give you this cheap fridge - put straight in to your larder. Take the door off and put it in to your larder and cover it in. And they used to charge us two and six a week for that, on your rent.

Pauline: What year would that be?

Alfred: I should imagine that was, about, three or four years after the war, yeah.

Pauline: So, you'd say that they improved the quality of people's lives immensely?

Alfred: Oh, they did immensely. Yes. Oh yes they did. Yes. It was a thing that you could never afford in your own house, not with the wages you were getting. Nobody had cars or anything like that. Cars didn't start arriving on these streets until round about the nineteen fifties. I was the first person in our street to have a car.

Pauline: Were you really?

Alfred: Yeah. 1952. I had me own little Austin Seven. And the only other thing in the street was a motorbike sidecar. Nobody else in the street had a car. I paid £100 for it.

Pauline: And also, presumably, peoples health improved?

Alfred: Oh yes. It did. Yes. Yes. Years ago, when you went to the doc ... when I was a kid, when you went to the doctor, you paid half a crown. And that was for a bottle of medicine. Mind you er, kids you used to give sweets to they were more, more, the doctors were more like doctors. They were homely doctors and they were more interested in you than just being a number. They used to give the kids sweets. And more often than not the same doctor was not only a physician but he was a surgeon as well. And he'd very likely operate on you in the nearest hospital. Like, I had a doctor called Doctor Paterson. He lived in Westmount Rd - he was a physician and surgeon. And when I had my tonsils out when I was four, in the Eltham cottage hospital, he was the surgeon. And as I say, they were more friendly the doctors then and they seemed to know more about it than they do today. I mean today you go to a doctor. And you say, "I've got flu". Well, he looks up the book to see the number is for flu, and gives you what it says. I mean apart from what you are or what you can take ... but then they did really concern themselves with you, the doctors.

Pauline: They knew you didn't they.

Alfred: And they knew by your Christian name too. They don't now.

Pauline: So, your saying actually, that it was better. And that the estates were better?

Alfred: Although they were the bad old days as regards money. You didn't have a lot of money to spend.

Pauline: But life was better.

Alfred: You used to manage. I mean you always had your Christmas. You made your own decorations. Paper chains and all that sort of thing. And you used

to get greenery from out the country, which was ... I used to go up Monnick Lane and get some holly. And er, you know, you were better off in a way. Well, better off in lots of ways. You could leave your front door open. You could walk down a lane. I mean there's lots of lanes here. And lots of cornfields and things. You could walk down, as a child - or a grown up, and er, you'd never be molested. People would never dream of it.

Pauline: Funny that isn't it.

Alfred: It is. I think the war did it. The War bought out all the vandalism.

Pauline: Mmm. That's interesting.

Alfred: There was no telephone phones then. Not as there are now. And the fire alarms - oh that was another thing that kids used to - they used to have fire alarms on the corners of several streets. And they were just a post with a round top and a glass. With a handle behind it which you pulled after you break the glass. Some of the kids used to break the, there wasn't many glass and pull the handle. And the fire engine would come out. That was another game.

Pauline: Terrific game ...

Alfred: It wasn't much of a game, because the firemen weren't very happy.

Pauline: Well, thats absolutley lovely Mr Mc Loughian. You've given me so much. I'm sorry I've exhausted you.

END