

ON THE RIVER:**Memories of a Working River****A NEW PLAY BY AGE EXCHANGE**

- SONG: We are the Bermondsey girls...
- BILL: I was born in the Downtown area, Redriff Road, Rotherhithe. We had the River Thames on one side and the Surrey Commercial Docks all round us. And to get out of downtown you had to go over one of five bridges. Swing bridges.
- ALICE: I remember the swing bridge and they dared me to stand on it one day as it swung round. We were all going to stand on it and the boys got cold feet and ran off, and of course I was scared then, so I crouched down. The man was shouting at me, but of course as soon as it stopped I was up and away.
- TED: Now nine times out of ten, when I was a boy going to school, the bridge'd swing to let the ships into the dock, and when that bridge'd come back, they couldn't get it back... it'd break down.
- BOYS: Bridger! Bridger!
- BILL: And it was a good excuse for us to have half a day off from school, cos...
- BOYS: We couldn't get out.
- JIM: If you were lucky, they used to shut the road off, swing the bridge round to let the boats go in.
- FLO: We used to love watching all the boats going in and coming out. That was a beautiful sight. You'd see all the boats come in, and the funnels would be blowing.
- TED: You could tell their nationality by their flags.
- BILL: You'd look for the funnel to see what the colours was, so you'd know what shipping line it was.
- TED: You'd look at the flag at the back to see what country it come from.
- JIM: Then you'd know what it was carrying. I think blue and white was the Norwegian flag and that would be carrying timber to the Surrey Docks.
- TED: I could've dived out of my window into the river, I could. I could see all the French, Belgian and Russian ships and Nigerian, and all the flags.
FLO: When the boat come in they would all be up the top waving when they come in you know.

JIM: And then you used to get all the foreign people, the Lascars, coming off the boats to run into their pub or up the road with shoes that were turned up and curled, long plaits and that.

FLO: And you'd sort of wait for them to come in - especially the little Indians. They always seemed so thin to me all these little Indians when they came ashore. And they'd all walk behind one another. Single file. I said to my father, "Well why do they do that?" He said:

DAD: Well that's to protect one another see.

FLO: And then they'd go to the markets and come back with great big bundles to take to their ships. When they was back again, all the children used to follow them because it was comical. You used to wave to them when they was going out.

JIM: At the bottom of our backyard was the docks fence and then sheds with all the timber in.

TED: Sometimes the dockers'd throw you locus. Brown stuff.

FLO: Your mother forbid you to go anywhere near the river. Because there used to be children drowned.

BILL: Mum says you mustn't play by the water.

FLO: Well why are you down here?

BILL: Because I'm a boy and I'm older than you.

BILL: Mum says you mustn't play down by the water.

FLO: Well why are you down here?

BILL: Because I'm a boy and I'm older than you.

FLO: I was five years old the first time I fell into the river. We was all dressed in red jerseys, and I had a navy blue kilt, and we've all got a penny each to go on a penny boat ride.

BILL: And little Flo kept on putting her feet in, and I said, "You'll go in in a minute", and she went right over. And we got her out with a boat hook. And when she came out, she said:

FLO: I've still got me penny.

BILL: Well, you hung on to your money in them days.

FLO: They carried me into the pub, pubs was open all day, laid me on a bench, made a fuss of me. My mother says:

MUM: Wait till your father comes home.

BILL: God, that'll be the day when he comes home.

FLO: At last he came home. Bucked myself up, going to get a good hiding. He says:

DAD: How've you been doing?

FLO: I say, "I fell in the river." He says:

- DAD: I'm glad you told me. I knew you did.
- BILL: And you could get down on to the sand when the tide was a bit out. There was a little bit down there, it wasn't actually sand, but you could play on it.
- FLO: The girls used to go there paddling, but the boys would not let us up there at all if they could help it.
- BOYS: Scram!
- FLO: I was a pest to him really; I used to follow him everywhere.
- JIM: My mother didn't know half the time that I was going round there to play. She thought I was at the park.
- BILL: And we used to have quite a good time there, especially when the tide was out because to us that was like the beach and there was all the shingle and chalk and things.
- TED: We used to go what you call shore raking. All round Rotherhithe it's very hard shore round there, no mud. So when it was low water you used to go you know walking along, you know see what you could find. Beachcombing.
- BILL: It wasn't so good when the tide was up. You'd see all this dirty old smelly wood and bits of rag and everything.
- FLO: Even balloons. At least I thought that's what they were. I went home and I used to say: "Ooh Mum, they must have had a party on the boats. There were ever so many balloons.
- BILL: Boys used to swim across the width of the river with no clothes on. You had to be a good swimmer.
- TED: We used to swim naked, cos we couldn't afford costumes.
- BILL: Eventually they made us. We used to get two bits of string and tie a handkerchief round.
- JIM: There used to be an old woman policewoman who used to come along with a great big cane and she used to whack us.
- BILL: But if we had our handkerchiefs tied round, she couldn't whack us then.
- JIM: You had to be a good swimmer. The currents would whip from under the barges, so if you weren't a strong swimmer, you were a goner. I remember a boy got lost and they couldn't find him for two days. He was stuck to the bottom of a barge. I can remember the horror of it when we knew it had happened.
- BILL: You'd see quite a few dead'uns. You might see one lying in the mud when the tide goes out.
- TED: And another thing I can remember, we used to go down and get eels. There was quite a lot of eels, all wriggly things. And we used to get a piece of rag and pull them out you know.
- JIM: Because they were slippery, we put this piece of rag round to grip them and pulled them out of the river.

- BILL: And some of them - I can see this long ... I should imagine it must have been a sewer because ... they was much bigger than what you saw in the shop.
- FLO: My mother put it in a big bowl of water and put salt in and that sort of made the eel sick I suppose. I don't know, I'm only guessing. And then all this slime and ... my sisters and I ... but my mum and dad and the elder boys liked them but I never did. They'd boil them and have parsley sauce. She would say,
- MUM: You don't know what you're missing.
- FLO: I would say, "Ooh mum." But she'd say,
- MUM: You don't know what you're missing.
- BILL: As kids we would dive in the river, have a swim, and see what was in the barges. Peanuts and that. We used to nick the peanuts.
- TED: We used to share them out and whatever was in the barge we got, you know what I mean.
- JIM: The river police were very hot, and as they passed we used to sing to them:
- ALL SING: "Three black beetles in a water boat,
Going down the river in an old tin can."
- JIM: And they'd chase the hell out of you. But if you got in the land, you was all right.
- BILL: We wasn't allowed to go down the wharves really. And when we did used to go down, we used to run through them.
- FLO: We were terrified of the wharves when we were little. As a child, the roads and turnings were so narrow and so high.
- JIM: And as you walked through and all the openings, you'd look up and you'd see a worker with a crane. You'd look up and be terrified. They may be pulling up something and letting down, and you'd hear the voices and look up and you'd run through them in case you got caught down there.
- TED: The side of the wharves you'd have loopholes, looked like eyes looking down at you. It was a very strange feeling.
- BILL: If you didn't look where you was walking, you could easily put your foot in a whacking great hole, or put your foot on a rat. (SCREAMS)
- TED: The rats, big ones, that come off the ships, water rats used to fly by you.
- FLO: I was terrified.
- JIM: There was a rat catcher who had a terrier, and what he used to do, and I know this for a fact, when he used to be next door to the Blacksmiths Arms he would go up there and he'd sit there. The dog would be there. He'd go out and have a couple of beers, come back, and the old dog would go Wallop, Wallop, Wallop. And there would be so many down there dead. He used to get paid so much per rat.
- TED: When you got hungry you went home and if you lived in the buildings or in the flats you'd say, "Mum, throw me down a bit of bread and jam". And mum

would put bread and jam in a brown paper bag and throw it down. I used to get my skates on eight O'clock on a Saturday morning and not take them off till ten O'clock at night.

- JIM: Or pie and mash wasn't dear. Your mom'd say, "There's sixpence. Go and get yourself a dinner in the pie shop." (SIREN)
- FLO: I can remember the terrible noise the siren made and that was when there had been an accident on board ship, and my mother said:
- MOTHER: Oh no!
- FLO: If I was out in the street playing, even nowhere near the river, I would run in. It was a terrible noise. The next day the Stevedores or Dockers would come by the door and my mum would ask:
- MOTHER: What happened yesterday?
- DOCKER: Joe Casey broke his back loading sugar.
- MOTHER: Oh no! Sometimes we had floods and we'd have to get all the mats and everything and throw them out because of all the thick black sludge. And the smell was terrible.
- BILL: We had to help our mother do all sorts of cleaning.
- FLO: We had to emery paper the knives and forks.
- BILL: I did the knives and forks last week.
- MUM: Well you do the paper this week.
- BILL: You even had a certain day to cut up the square paper for the toilet that was a job we were given to put a skewer through with a little bit of string with newspaper hanging up in the toilet and if you'd run out you'd call "A BIT OF PAPER MUM, a bit of paper."
- FLO: We'd have to go bug hunting.
- BILL: My mother could smell them and if she saw one she'd turn all the beds out and go round the slats with paraffin.
- FLO: The old white table top we had to scrub. You'd have to scrub the table till it was white and if you didn't scrub the way of the grain, you'd get a smack round the ear.
- MUM: You're not going the way of the grain, it won't be white.
- FLO: We'd put oilcloth or newspaper on top of that because we didn't have tablecloths. Your tablecloth you'd have News Of The World, because that was the biggest paper.
- FLO: Dinnertime we might have a bowl of soup, it would cost my mother about 3 pence to make pea soup dinner. We never had a piece of bread under forty-eight hours old.

BILL: My mother was a good cook really, she'd have a penn'orth of carrots, swede, split peas and put an Edwards soup powder in for thickening. My dad was a docker. He'd come in, sit for his dinner. Sleeves rolled up.

FLO: (WATCHING HIM) Didn't say much. Wouldn't come home and chat. If he'd been early shift, he'd have a chair by the fire, a wooden chair with side pieces and struts at the back, and he'd go to sleep.

BILL: If there was any noise from the kids, you know, (PULLS FLO'S HAIR. SHE SCREAMS)

FATHER: Wallop!

FLO: (CRYING) And he was out then straight to the pub.

BILL: Kids played out in the street till late those days.

JIM: Knock down ginger. What happened, you'd get a great long length of string, tie it off on the end of that door.

BILL: There was all different knockers on the doors, like anchors.

JIM: Then tie it on to the next one.

BILL: Or the bows of a ship.

JIM: Then tie it on to the next one.

BILL: Or a mermaid. Cos they was all people that were on the boats, seafaring people down our street.

JIM: And then we used to get on one end of it, and give it one mighty great tug, and then all the knockers knocked on all the doors.

TED: And all the people would come out and swear at you.

JIM: And we used to play ball up the wall until a woman come with a bucket of water.

WOMAN: Oi! You're keeping my kids awake.

JIM: And she'd chuck it all over you.

FLO: Do you remember at a certain time of the year everybody had a hoop?

JIM: Another time it was all marbles. Or whip and top. We used to paint all different colours on the top. You wound the cord round and pulled the cord. Boys seemed to do it better than girls.

FLO: Easter time there was always skipping in the road. Easter Monday, Good Friday, holiday time, I remember grown-ups as well going in skipping. You get a rope, a really thick rope, and the men would stand either side. All day it was turned, and we used to skip.

SKIPPING SONG:

I know a little girl who's
 Shy and deceitful
 She goes and tells the people
 Long nose ugly face
 Ought to be put in a glass case
 If you want to know her name
 Her name is Eva Chalk
 Oh Eva Chalk
 Keep away from me
 I don't want to speak to you
 Nor you to speak to me.
 First we were friends
 But now
 We don't agree
 So, Oh Eva Chalk
 Keep away from me.

- FLO: Outside the door, was where you had the grottoes. The grottoes were marvellous. You'd go and get all Mum's little things, perhaps something with "A present from Ramsgate" and you'd go where there was a bit of grass, put all your things on and stand and beg. "Please remember our grotto". Any passer-by would look at you, sling you perhaps a ha'penny or even a penny.
- JIM: We had grottoes, with moss. We'd get it out of the gardens, and make a grotto on the pavement. And that's how you'd get a few bob. You'd hold out your hat to them.
- BILL: If there was a man going along the street, you and your mates would go up to him with your hat, didn't matter if there was girls there, you'd push them out the way, and they wouldn't get nothing. "Can you give anything for our grotto please?", and if he put anything in you'd thank him. Never no more than a penny.
- TED: We-used to draw on the pavement. Pictures of the people. And when people came by, we'd say, "How's that? Put something in the bag."
- FLO: The Catholics used to have processions. I wasn't a Catholic, but I went to see them.
- SONG: (BEHIND FOLLOWING DIALOGUE AND PROCESSION)
- FLO: They were really lovely because no matter how hard up people were they would really dress their kids up for that. The girls would wear a long white dress and a white veil.
- JIM: It used to cost my mother a lot of money to dress me out for processions. I used to have the robe and cassock, i was in a white cassock and black robe, we never had anything on our head.
- BILL: The priest would be at the head of the procession and he'd carry the cross. They used to marching all round the streets.
- TED: The streets would all be lined with people, all the flags were out. People used to put out the flags of the Hail Mary and of our father, Jesus Christ, and we used to hang them all out of the windows.

- FLO: The Catholic people would have their windows up, and have an altar there in the window with the statues in white robes, and he'd bless those as he went through.
- PRIEST: "Orate fratres meura in vestrum sacrificium acceptabile fiat a pu Deum, Patrum Omnipotentum."
- FLO: Catholic, Protestant, they thought the world of it.
- TED: They went and had a little drink afterwards, one neighbour comes into another, and they pass their opinion on how the procession was.
- BILL: Very often one of the neighbours would fetch a piano out, cos we was in a closed street and they would fetch the piano out, and everybody would come out and play and sing.
- FLO: They'd bring their chairs out, and everybody would come out and sing.
- SONG: WHEN DAY IS DONE.
- BILL: I remember the cold bedrooms. The only time you had a fire upstairs was when you were ill. It was freezing upstairs. You'd have a bath brick and mum would warm it in the oven for a couple of hours and wrap it in a flannel and put it in the bed.
- FLO: We had a family, I was friends with the girl, and they all lived in one room, just one room with the bed. The children and everything. I used to think it was lovely the kids going to bed in the same room. I used to think, "Mustn't it be nice all in one bed." That seemed something good. We had to go upstairs to our bedroom.
- REPRISE SONG: WHEN DAY IS DONE.
- BILL: My father, every Sunday used to take us over the docks. This was Sunday morning. Mum would be home with the younger children. The old man would take the kiddies.
- DAD: (TO AUDIENCE) Only too glad to get out the way of the misses you know.
(TO WIFE) Yeah I'll take him".
- BILL: Dad'd be having his bet and having a pint.
- FLO: We'd walk over the docks and there used to be this little pub and dad would go in and we'd all stay outside.
- DAD: You'd always see children outside pubs with bottles of lemonade and arrowroot biscuits. Practically every Sunday during the summer, they'd have a regatta, say four races, the rowing clubs, the Globe, the Curlew, Poplar and Blackwall. Mainly lightermen rowing. There'd be a bookie there. Open a book on the race.
- FLO: Sundays you got the buskers come round who used to sing, blokes with concertinas and banjos. The old tin whistle blower outside the pub door and a lot of street organs about.
- DAD: Old Mutton Eye, he was a character. Cross-eyed as they make 'em. That's why they called him Mutton Eye. (SONG: ANY OLD IRON FROM MUTTON EYE) Always had a bowler hat. He used to play the accordion. He'd have a few whiskies, he'd come out and play again as drunk as a lord. (REPRISE)

- FLO: There was a group of entertainers who called themselves the Looney boys. They'd dress up as women. They used to dress beautifully to my idea as a kid. They used to look wonderful. And I would never believe they were men. We used to all sit on the kerb and watch them dance the sand dance.
- (SAND DANCE)
- We used to follow them for miles. And I can always remember one of them turning to me and saying:
- DANCER: Clear off. You're losing us all our trade.
- (MORE DANCE)
- FLO: From that stretch, from Cherry Garden Pier to Tower Bridge, my father would have a rowing boat. And he'd take us kids for a day out as far as Tower Bridge. That used to be our day out as kids.
- WHISTLE AND FLUTE: BLOW THE MAN DOWN.
- BILL: I wanted to go on the river. My father was the docker, but Mum's side of the family were all lighter men. If you were apprenticed at that time, you were apprenticed by a father or a relative. It was usually somewhere in the family, whether it was by marriage or whatever. If not it was...
- LIGHTER: Your father wasn't a lighter man. You're an interloper. Not one of us.
- BILL: I pestered the life out of my mother until eventually she persuaded my uncle and he apprenticed me. I was apprenticed in 1927 when I was just fifteen.
- MIKE: You go up to Waterman's Hall to be apprenticed.
- BILL: You'd walk up these stone stairs into a room with chandeliers and the waterman's coat of arms. You would stand in front of the Master's chair and all his wardens, who are all freemen, are all master-lighter men and master-watermen.
- MASTER: You are coming into a historic trade to uphold the history of the trade.
- (TAKES SCROLL AND READS FROM IT)
- "This indenture witnesses that William Arthur John Mc earthy of Rotherhithe, S.E.16, is apprenticed to Michael James of Rotherhithe S.E.16, a freeman of The Company of Watermen and Lighter men of the River Thames. To learn his art and with him, after the manner of an apprentice, to dwell and serve upon the river of Thames from the day of the date hereof until the end and term of six years.
- Dated 14th June 1927. And signed and delivered at Waterman's Hall, E.C.3 in the presence of members of the court.
- BILL: I started work as a first year boy, for one of the good old firms on the London River, Braithwaite and Dean. Old Braithwaite, the governor of the firm was waiting there. William McCarthy.
- GUVNOR: All right.
- BILL: (TO MIKE) Hallo Uncle Mike.

- GUVNOR: Mr James to you. (TO MIKE) Mike, take this lad and take the order over to London dock.
- MIKE: Come on son.
- BILL: And I had to go down the gangway, across the barges. You know the only barge I'd been on before was when I used to play down the shore before that. Any way, we drove. Mike showed me how to get an oar out, a 25 foot paddle.
- MIKE: Now driving is using the sweeps, but we call them paddles. I'm going to show you what to do. It's a very easy barge to drive. (GIVES PADDLE TO BILL)
Edge her over. Just edge her over, hold her up to the point. Let her drop away a bit. Hold her up. Drop her away. (RECLAIMS PADDLE) Have a blow. We're not going far. Only over to London Dock.
- BILL: When we go to the dock entrance, Mike really showed me. He just pulled on the paddle, and the barge went in as easy as pie.
- MIKE: We made a decent old fetch there. You'll pick it up all right. You'll pick it up.
- SHOUTS: Wayere

Well every firm has its own whistle and its own shout. This firm, Braithwaites whistle is:

(HERE FOLLOWS DEMONSTRATION'WHISTLE AND BILL'S ATTEMPTS AT IT. NOW TUG SIGNAL FOLLOWS).
- MIKE: The tugs have got their signals. Four on one is you're going round to starboard, four on two is they're going round to port.
- BILL: What's the old rhyme. There are two bottles of red Port left in the cupboard. It's a rhyme to learn the kids how to remember. Green to green, red to red, perfect safety, go ahead,
- SHOUT: Lighter, lighter, you're wanted.
- BILL: There's people looking down at us from the bridges. I look up and think, I'm learning to do something, you know, that not many people can do.
- MIKE: The art of it is to make use of the tide, or you could hit one of those bridges. It's a skill. Do it with your eyes closed. In a fog you can sometimes get by through smell. It depends on where you are. If you was passing down Blackwall Reach you knew roughly where you was going. You'd be abreast of Molassins and you'd smell the sweet sickly smell of the molasses. And East Greenwich you'd smell the coke fumes from the gas works. If you're at Wapping, you could very well get away with the smell, because you've got tea warehouses, you've got spice warehouses, you've got fruit warehouses. So you could drift up there, and know full well where you are because of the smell that comes from certain warehouses.

Fog was one of the biggest upsets. You'd always be hearing tales of pea soupers. Real stinkers.
- LIGHTERMAN: When I worked for Whitehairs I had to tow down to Tilbury one evening. And when I went out that morning I said to the wife, "I'll be home about four O'clock". And on the way down it started getting a little bit thick. And by the time we'd just about found our way to Tilbury it was so thick that you just could not see till the gun whale and they wouldn't even open the lock gate.

And then I knew I was there for the night. No food. And I was there till 11, 12 O'clock next day.

WIFE: What a night. Oh it was dreadful. I had Peter a baby and my other son. Never took me clothes off all night. I was lying on top of the bed. I thought, "For sure he's fell in this time". And I kept going to the street door. My Dad lived round the corner, and I thought if I went and asked him he'd say,

DAD: He'll be alright, he's just fog bound.

WIFE: Because my Dad was a lighter man. But come ten O'clock the next morning he still wasn't back. I thought, "Well that is it, he's definitely fell in and no one's seen." Oh it made my nerves bad that night. I couldn't sleep. And every time he was late after that I used to think, "I hope its not all night like that".

SONG: A FOGGY DAY IN LONDON TOWN

BILL: I'd sit on the barge with the lighter men going downstream telling tales. There was always a tale.

MIKE: I'll tell you a story. I'll tell you a story. When I was a boy. This is true. I had to take some "entries" over to Mark Browns Wharf one particular morning. And I rowed the boat from Tower Pier over to Mark Browns, which was just across the river. And when I stepped on one of the barges, I made her fast. And there was a bloke standing there. I didn't know him then, the first time I had ever met him, his name was Ronny Fagin. Now Fagins are well known around Bermondsey. And then Ronny said to me,

RON: Where are you going then Mike?

VICTOR: He learnt me name just like that. I said, "Well I'm going back to Tower Bridge".

RON: Could I borrow your boat for a minute?

MIKE: Oh, I don't know about that. I don't think so.

RON: Go on. I won't be long. I'm only going to go down to Butlers Wharf.

MIKE: "Alright", so I let him have it. So he rowed down. Then he came back. And as he stepped ashore, he pushed the boat away. Pushed it away you see. And there she was floating down underneath Tower Bridge on her own - the boat, with the oars in. He done it on purpose you see. So there I am screaming, tearing me hair out. And of course he could see the state I was in. So he done no more than took his clothes off, dived in, in the river, and the river was pretty dirty in those days. And he got hold of the rope with his teeth and he swam back. And that's true.

BILL: Lighter men travelled here, there, and everywhere.

SONG: REACHES AND CREEKS.

BILL: You met all sorts of people. The river was alive with characters.

LIGHTERMAN: You can always tell a lighter man. He always wears good boots you know. From Blackmans of Brick Lane. Highly polished. Always tucks his trousers up, has two or three tucks up his trousers. And always carries his coat in a certain way and nine times it was made of Blue Melton. Stiff white collar and a thin black tie. Smoked a little cheroot, waxed "moustache. Wouldn't soil himself. Always kept clean.

- BILL: And it was always a joke with the Dockers, they'd curse you for it, that an eggcup full of lighter man's sweat is worth a hundred guineas, because it's so rare.
- WIFE: I was married to a lighter man, and I remember once, we'd been to a dinner and dance, and years ago in the Strand was a little half of a shop at the side of the Lotus shoe shop. And in the window they used to sell all pretty little bed jackets, cobwebbed crochet in pastel shades that tied up with bits of ribbon. And this night we'd come home and I got in bed with my nightdress and this little jacket to cover me arms up and I was sitting up in bed. And he's getting undressed. So he walks to the wardrobe, he's got his bowler hat out, white scarf, kitted out, and he's in his singlet and pants. I looked at him; he's got in bed, so I say, "What's the matter with you? Gone mad?" So he says,
- ROB: Well you're done up. This is going to be a posh affair.
- ANNA: We laughed. The bed must have rocked with laughter. I thought he'd gone mad.
- SONG: WHERE OR WHEN
- BILL: At the end of your two years apprenticeship, your first two years, you go back up to Watermans Hall. The beadle stands at the top of the stairs.
- BEADLE: William McCarthy.
- BILL: You come up, and you're taken into the room where you was bound. It's November when I came up. There was an open fire roaring away. I was sweating even before I came in there, and I've got to stand with that fire, with answer after answer and the sweat's pouring out of me.
- MASTER: Name your bridges up.
- BILL: So you're thinking, "Oh, yeah, London Bridge, Cannon Street, Southwark, Blackfriars, Waterloo, Charing Cross, Westminster, Lambeth, Vauxhall you're working up, and then suddenly:
- MASTER: Give me the Bridges down from Westminster.
- BILL: (QUESTIONING) Bridges down from Westminster?
- (To AUDIENCE) And you go 'Hmm....', thinking in your mind how far up, and then you've got to work back. They'd do catch questions, little things, hoping they'd catch you out.
- MASTER: Give me a drive from Fresh Wharf down to West India Dock.
- BILL: Now it's no use you saying, "Excuse me sir, where is Fresh Wharf?" Because they would say,
- MASTER: Out that door, catch a 36 bus.
- BILL: And then you'd be out. You had to know where Fresh Wharf was. They would give you what time and tide it was. And I think it was just after high water. I wouldn't care, but all those blokes who was asking the questions had probably never handled a barge in their lives.
- Well Master, I would make sure my barge was prepared; I'd unlock my paddles ready to go. Then I would let go forward, let the tide take me out, pull off, then get me sweeps out, pull till I was clear of Custom House Quay and Roads. Then I would shape her up for Tower Bridge....

- MASTER: Yes, all right son.
- BILL: They could tell I knew what I was doing.
- MASTER: Is everyone satisfied?
- BILL: Well you've come through it all. I got me twos. Uncle Mike says:
- MIKE: Well lad, you've passed. You're half way to a man now. Right, now you can buy the beers. Come over the Three Kingdoms.
- BILL: You're Jolly Jack the Sailor, you know, third year apprentice. Or, as I used to call it, "a load of cheap labour". Because I could do as much as a freeman but I was paid about a third of his wage.
- Wintertime, I've cried before now when me hands have been so cold, stuck to an oar you know, and I've almost cried with the pain.
- MIKE: What I've done before I've gone out on the river, I've rolled newspaper round my legs and under my socks to keep them warm, and put it across the chest under me jersey.
- BILL: And I learnt to drive. And I used the winds and I used the tides. Knew the bridges.
- MASTER: 20th June 1933, William Arthur McCarthy of the Parish of Rotherhithe in the County of- London was duly admitted, allowed and registered freemen of the company of watermen and lighter men of the River Thames held at the Hall of the company of St Mary at Hill in The City of London.
- BILL: You passed. From then on, you were to a large extent your own guvnor. You were free and you were very independent. You had to think for yourself. You had to be capable of handling yourself as well as your barge. It was a marvellous life, even when the rain was running out of your behind as the saying goes. We was known as the aristocracy of the river.
- FLO: I had three friends, and on a Monday night, we always went in the Star and Garter because the lighter men used to have branch meetings on a Monday night, and after they come out of that, they'd come in the pub. We always had our entrance fee, which was one drink each. We used to have a white lady, which was sixpence or a sherry, which was fourpence. And you'd make it last as long as you could until the men turned up, and they'd probably offer to buy you a drink.
- The lighter men were a healthy looking lot due to the fact they were well built from rowing barges about. The girls used to go for the lighter man more than the docker. They were the weekend millionaires. The lighter man thought he was jolly Jack the sailor sort of thing.
- MIKE: A man wanted a brain transplant. So he's gone to the brain surgeons. He's got three brains there. One was a professor's brain, and he says: "That brain's worth fifty pounds." One was a clerical brain. "That one's seventy-five pounds. There's a docker's brain. You can have that, that's worth three hundred pounds. Well, a docker's brain would be worth more."

- BILL: Why would a docker's brain be worth more?
- MIKE: Because it's never been used.
- DOCKER LAUGHS, TWIGS, THEN HITS MIKE ON NOSE.
- FLO: The docker was more casual. If he was taking you out, he'd say,
- DOCKER: All right, where we going tomorrow night? Fancy a trip up the pictures? Fancy it? (SHE NODS) I know you're a lighter man's sister. I know your brother don't go much on us, but you settle that between yourselves.
- FLO: You'd go to the pictures and then say, go to the pub for a drink afterwards.
- SONG: WALKING MY BABY BACK HOME
- TED: When I reached the age of fourteen, I left school and there was nothing for me to do. But I couldn't register as a docker till I was 21. There were no other jobs in the Downtown-area, only a bit of scrounging, like getting the timber out of the river, which had fell off the boats.
- First day I shaped for work, there must have been about two hundred men there. We stood on the stones, which is like the pavement. At a quarter to eight, the foreman came out, and called off the registered men. They stood with their registration cards in their hands.
- FOREMAN: Preston, Kerr, Coombes, Shreen, McClean, Wardell...
- TED: After that everything was a shambles. All the non-registered men, nonners we was called, wanting a day's work, was pushing and shoving, and calling the foreman:
- NONER: Here John... Over here Jack...
- TED: It was pretty terrible to see married men with families not able to get half a day's work because they wasn't picked by the foreman.
- NONER 2: I'm here. Over 'ere.
- TED: Then he threw the tickets in the air and watched us scramble and fight for them. (THEY DO) I came out with the arm of me sleeve all ripped, but I got half a day's work.
- Turned out this foreman had regular gangs. While I was working that day, some photographs fell out of one of the chap's pocket, and when I went to pick them up, they was photos of all that gang I was working with apart from me, in the garden of the foreman cutting his grass. They was dodging round the foreman so they could keep the job, you see, cutting his grass, doing his house up, bringing him a bacon sandwich.
- I was put with another fellah on loading bagged sugar. Demarara sugar come over in its raw state. It had been to Tate and Lyles to be refined. Well they could weigh anything up to 300 pounds. They were all piled high, all the way.
- JIM: (ABOUT TED) I hadn't worked with this fellah before, and he was started.
- FOREMAN: I want you, I want you and I'll have you.

- TED: I can remember walking down. I thought I was the big docker because I'd got a hook, you see. You know a case hook. And I struck that down my belt like that. It was like High Noon, you know.
- JIM: (TO TED) Push that bloody hook away. You never wear a hook with the point coming round that way. If you bend down it'll stick in you, see. (ABOUT TED) So his first thing - dug his hook in the bags of sugar. (TO TED) Now stop that. You slash at a bag with your hook, all the stuff that's in the bag'll start to run out. 'Ere, you 'aven't done this job before.
- TED: No.
- JIM: It's a dangerous job. A man named Barton was killed by a bag of sugar. Bag of sugar came out of the strop and killed him. I'll take over. You never use your hook to lift with. You only use it for pulling out. You handle a bag on the corner where the stitching is. You put your hook in a corner. You pull on that corner, you hold this and it drops to stand up. You see the idea of docking is not to lift anything. Very unnecessary. You have to use your head. Come on, get your 'ump under this.
- SLAPS SACK ON TED'S SHOULDER
- TED: You had to learn the hard way. There was all kinds of methods. There wasn't an apprenticeship as such, but you had to learn every aspect of cargo handling.
- JIM: Oi! Come over 'ere.
- TED: So when you went to the ship's side, you knew what all the equipment was and what it was for.
- JIM: Oi! Come on.
- TED: Don't we get a break?
- JIM: What do you mean, break? You're on piece work. You don't get a break when you're on piece work.
- TED: What, no breaks? What sort of a game's this?
- JIM: Look here mate. You want to think yourself lucky. In 1889, my old man was fighting for a tanner an hour, never mind a bloody break. If he got a break he got a six month break. Is that what you want?
- TED: Couldn't the unions do anything?
- JIM: Unions mate? They didn't have a bloody union, the Dockers Tanner Strike was the start of the union. Now come over 'ere and get on with it.
- TED: Glad I wasn't around in them days. (COLLECTS SACKS) After a time, you got a certain amount of skill. You became a very competent worker.

JIM: Still, if you didn't buy the foreman a few beers- you never got a job the next day. Everyone knows about it, but no one can prove it. That's how you get the jobs, treating the ganger. If you stick up for yourself, you won't be wanted in the morning.

DOCK SONG:

On the stones we'll soon be waiting
It's a system we're all hating
While the foreman's contemplating
Who'll do a little more each day?

TED: You spent half your time down the pub looking for someone who was working. I'd get down the pub lunchtime. (TO CHARLIE) Hallo Charlie. What are you doing?

FLO: Ten pence a dinner, five pence a pint, two pints, that's 1/8, right?

DOCKER: (PAYS UP) Right.

CHARLIE: We've got a boat coming in tomorrow. Rangi-Tiki. Hundred thousand carcasses of lamb. New Zealand Yard. I've had a buzz. We're in the third gang. See you on the stones tomorrow morning. Shoot down there on the quick.

TED: Ear to the ground. Continually chasing a job. (TO FLO) Boiled beef and carrots and a pint.

SONG: BOILED BEEF AND CARROTS

FLO: The old docker lived in the pub. Pubs had their regulars. If anybody come in the Three Compasses who'se been using the King and Queen, you'd want to know why. We used to sell between 12 and one, ooh a hundred odd dinners to dockers. One of the gang'd come in and say:

DOCKER: I want 12 dinners. '

FLO: And they'd all be got ready. Never did a sweet. Nothing like that in them days. It was roast lamb, salt beef, a favourite was boiled beef and carrots. Saturday morning, we used to make shepherd's pies in pie dishes as big as that and as wide as that. Nobody paid till they'd ate their food. As they were walking out.

DOCKER: Two pints and a dinner.

FLO: They never robbed us of a penny. There were some characters in that pub. There was "Off the blade Harry" used to eat with his knife. Then there was Sparksey".

SPARKSEY: Where's the bone?

FLO: Say they'd had a leg of lamb, you know, he'd want the bone. And we'd cut the salt beef in a long roll. And if the meat wasn't hanging over the side of the plate, he'd say:

SPARKSEY: 'Ere, it ain't 'angin over the side.

FLO: Funniest nickname that I know of was:

- DOCKER: Pudding and one, no gravy.
- FLO: This bloke used to come and have his dinner every day and that's all he used to have. He'd shout out:
- DOCKER: Pudding and one, no gravy.
- FLO: Then there was Big Bill Cole. He was a nuisance. He was a massive big deal porter, massive fellow, strong as a lion, and had a turn in his eye. Every month the deal porters used to get what they called their plus money. They'd get so much a week and their bonus at the end of the month. That would be Bill's couple of days on the booze. He used to get real drunk. Publican'd say to me:
- PUBLICAN: Go and tell him he can't have no more.
- FLO: (TO BIG BILL) Come on Bill, you're not having no more. (BILL RESISTS) Oh he'd be obstreperous, and we'd have to send for a policeman to get him out. Old Bill Cole'd fight the coppers. He used to hold on to the railings and challenge the police to shift him. Opposite our pub was St Mary's School. The kids used to watch it all. They thought it was great and it would take three or four policemen trying to pull him off the railings (he was a massive man) before the police would knock him out. They'd take him down the station on a trolley, spend the night at Tower Bridge Station and as usual had a 7/6 fine.
- SONG: DRINK TO ME ONLY
- TED: You hear the chill boat's coming down; you had to be on the stones as the ship come in the locks. You climb on the ship up the Jacob's ladder.
- CHARLIE: I'm going up first. No looking up my clothes.
- TED: It's got to come all round through the locks. And while that's coming up through the locks, you get the ship ready. Put the decks up. When it ties up, you've got the set already coming over. Not a minute lost.
- JIM: Have we got the outlets?
- CHARLIE: Course we've got the outlets. Being casual, you see, sooner you get that lot unloaded, quicker you get round to another job and pick that one up.
- TED: I've seen men steaming. I've seen the sweat purring off them. And they call us the lazy dockers.
- TED: Say you got a job down in a ship that's got a cold store, frozen beef, you wasn't supplied with any special gear, you just went down there.
- CHARLIE: (TO TED) Wrap your feet in old sacking and tie it round. That'll serve a double purpose, keep your feet warm and stop you slipping on a frozen floor.

TED: It would be whole carcasses wrapped in muslin all been gutted. They used to weigh quite heavy those beef. Men'd get them into the right position on their shoulder and they'd probably have a leather hat with a big flap at the back so that they could carry them quite well. The flap protected their shoulders.

JIM: At the end of the day, you've got sore shoulders, absolutely raw in the crutch between the cheeks of your bum - Tin of Zambucca, Fullers Earth, to lubricate your old crutch mate when you're up and down those steps.

DOCK SONG:

The ship's unloaded and the stewing's done
 We can't say that it's been much fun
 That bastard's had us on the run
 With his "Do a little more each day.
 Keep those muscles going
 While the cargo you are stowing
 Keep your red corpuscles flowing
 And do a little more each day."

CHARLIE: I well remember when I was sent over the royal group of docks and we were sent to a ship in the Albert. Now on the meat boats, they were very deep; you had about six different decks where the fridge hatches were. We're going down the ladder right down the bottom; we had about six gangs working down that one hold. The foreman says:

FOREMAN: Right you'll go down the bottom,

CHARLIE: So down we go, down the ladder. And as I went down, each deck there was a dice school going on. They was rolling dice. The Royals were a crowd themselves, they were.

FOREMAN: I've seen men get their week's money in their hand, and there's been a crap game going on the deck of the ship. And I've seen them lose all that money in half an hour.

Don't go throwing your money away. Your little girl's waiting at the gate.

GIRL: I'm waiting for me dad. Me mam's sent me down for the money. She wants a penny for the gas.

FOREMAN: They'd borrow money off the money lender blokes hanging round the outside circle willing to lend them a couple of quid at 3 0% to have enough money to take home to fend for the kids for the weekend.

SONG: IT'S TURNED OUT NICE AGAIN.

CHARLIE: There are all sorts of trades working at the same time. The fastest crane drivers in the world, swing it over, stop it drop it. Ships painters, the engineers down below.

PORT AUTHORITY:

It's got to sail out by a certain date. It's got to be a smooth quick turnaround, and the ship on her way with the minimum wastage of time and her owner's money.

CHARLIE: You unload it, load it, send it out to New Zealand, India, Pakistan. There's no messing about. They say this the world over, it's the fastest port in the world the London Docks.

TED: You know what the first law of the dock is? Thou shalt not grass. I've seen a side of bacon wrapped round a man. He's took his shirt off and wrapped it round his side. They'd cut the knuckle end off, and then as they wrap it round the leg part goes into where they cut the knuckle out, like a belt, and then they'd put their clothes over the top of it.

TED: Now Dick Turpin - that was his real name, Dick Turpin - he could open a case of whisky in the middle of a warehouse, and no one, but no one, would know he was doing it. He would take out a bottle or two, one for him and one for his friends. And that would last him all day. Yes he was a bottle a day man.

He used an old army knife. They had a tin opener at one end, which was very handy for lifting nails out of a case. And a very sharp knife at the other end which you could split the wood and slip it out from underneath the bands. And also a spike.

DICK: Keep your eyes a 'bobbin.

TED: You see what you did you eased the wood up and the nails used to lift just enough. And then you would get the tin opener end and prize the nail completely out. Having done that all you had to do then was to slide the piece of wood to one side, lift out your bottle of whisky, or two bottles as you wanted. Put them down on the floor. Replace the wooden slat, put the nails back, and then put it at the bottom of a pile and nobody would be any wiser.

TED: Cops all over the dock, an awful lot of stuff got pinched. You can make a living out of thieving on the dock. When the police came round, the cry would go up:

ALL: "Cabbage, cabbage, cabbage".

FOREMAN: Put that cigarette out. You wanna watch it son. You'll get done. There was one man who had two little kids. He worked up Tooley Street. Hard working man, but he took two sweets from up the wharf to take home to his kids, and he got the sack. You see, he'd come out of the wharf, and there'd been plain clothes dec's who worked for the wharves. They would just stop you at random, and this man, Mr Tippler was his name, had been unloading sweets. And the boxes used to break open, and I suppose he just took two.

DOCK SONG: Me back is aching and me lungs is bust
 Me dukes are blistered just to earn a crust
 But still the ganger shouts
 "You must do a little more each day.
 Keep that winch a'turning
 Though yer bloody guts is burning

Keep that winch a'turning
And do a little more each day.

- TED: Half past eleven, the ganger come up to us and said,
- GANGER: You're finished at 12 o'clock you know.
- CHARLIE: Are we? The job's not finished.
- GANGER: No, I don't think there's any trouble about that little bit there.
- CHARLIE: Oh all right then. If it's finished it's finished. Make sure our cards are here and our money, won't you, at 12 o'clock.
- TED: Well 12 o'clock arrived, our cards hadn't arrived, or money, so we went to dinner. We come back and went on the job again at one o'clock.
- GANGER: I thought I told you was finished.
- CHARLIE: Where's our money? Wasn't here. Where was the cards?
- TED: We won that time. We stopped on the boat, we gat the plus money.
- CHARLIE: What it was, they wanted to transfer a stevedore gang on to finish the job. They have first claim on a ship that's afloat, so if they finish another job dinner time, they come over and take the job away from the white tickets, that's us dockers, to claim the bonus money at the end of the job. It's happened to me on three or four occasions. There's nothing you can do. It's unfair. That's why there's a lot of animosity between the white ticket and the stevedore. We'd get paid shirt buttons for moving the shit-cargo, and in would come the Stevedores and they would handle the cream.
- JIM: We were the elite. It was very tight to get into the Stevie's. Your father had to be a stevedore. You were initiated. Your father would go to your branch and put your name down, and I think it was five shillings he had to pay. And after a time your father would be notified:
- STEVEDORE: Bring your boy over.
- JIM: You went up to head office in the Mile End Road. And there you sat with all the working delegates.
- FIRST STEVEDORE:
- Our union, the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union, is the second oldest union in Great Britain. Our constitution is very democratic, see. And when you go to work in the morning you never show your card, dock card, you always show your union card. If you don't have your union card you don't never go to work, and you can demand the union foreman to show his card.
- 2nd STEVDORE:

(READING OFF CARD) All members are instructed by the Executive Council that when challenged by another Trade Unionist to produce his trade union card, he must do so. It is the responsibility of members to see that their contributions are paid regularly.

1st STEVEDORE:

And if you don't pay your contributions in our union - you have to pay so much a quarter - after three quarters, you're erased and you can't work in the docks. You lose your card. And if you lose your stevedore's card, you don't never get it back.

JIM: If you did something wrong and you was caught, you was taken in front of, not the masters but the men, men like us who were union delegates, could be the very man you'd been working with that day. We sit round a table and discuss it properly like a judge and jury. The council would be sitting there and you would all be sitting outside the room. Say I was the one that was making the complaint; they'd call my name.

2nd STEVEDORE:

Brother Green, state your case.

JIM: This man left a job on the Cunard ship and went to another job, which was wrong as he was on piece work. So I took his number and told him why, cos if it's piece work you ha've to stay on that job. He broke the continuity rule.

Then you'd go outside the room, and the man'd come in and they'd say:

2nd STEVEDORE:

Well look, you've been bought to the council by Brother Green, the reason being you left a piecework job unfinished and went on to another job. What do you have to say for yourself?

JIM: Nine times out of ten they'd say:

DEPENDENT: Well I'd had a row over night and I got up late... and the baby kept me up all night... and I had a toothache.

JIM: All things like that. The normal things that men say white lies about, you see. Then you'd both be standing outside the room, and you didn't feel too pleased about it, but I can never remember an occasion when people got nasty. It might be:

DEPENDENT: (TO JIM) Ooh you devil, you old so-and-so, fancy doing me up like you did last night. (PAUSE) Come and have a drink.

JIM: Well, he asked me to drink with him, which I did do, and he stayed in there and I went home. He was a quiet sort of fellow, he wasn't really a proper tear away, but of course the drink got him. He came out drunk and he set about this policeman, and got fined another twenty pounds.

I'll probably get killed for saying this, but it's true - if you was a shipping agent, and you insured that cargo that went out, if it was loaded by stevedores the rate was cheaper than if it was loaded by dockers because it was safer. This is a fact. And we got paid more than the dockers. Our rate was always higher.

Cos of course you had cargoes that was very dangerous. And it was more dangerous down in the hold than on the deck. If a sling broke, stuff could drop from 30 feet. The foreman'd see it coming down and shout:

FOREMAN: Under. Down below. Stand from under.

JIM: And you'd get under the combings of the ship. You'd shout:

1st STEVEDORE:

Hold up. Greenacre.

JIM: A Greenacre is when a set of anything, wood, bagwork, could be anything, goes up, it's got a rope round, and all of a sudden it spills. It's not been made up properly. It sprays. Mr Greenacre was a man in the 1800s who murdered his wife and when they came to hang him the rope broke. So the name became Greenacre. We'd say,

1st STEVEDORE:

Oh, we've had a right old greenacre down there, poor old Fred got hurt.

JIM: I've seen some terrible wicked accidents in the dock. Mind you, we had a foreman on this ship, nicknamed King Kong, and his eyes were that bad, the story goes he called off a lamppost. He was saying to this lamppost:

KING KONG: I'll have you. What's wrong? Don't you wanna work? Come 'ere.

JIM: I wasn't in the dock more than two weeks and poor old Spud Murphy crushed his head against the combing of the ship. Got in the way of some bales of paper come whizzing across on a wire that was taut. He died there on the spot sort of thing. And King Kong didn't even know. He's looking down saying:

KING KONG: What's wrong? What's going on?

JIM: The most dangerous job in the docks was the timber. A wood ship would come in. Timber would be up on the deck, deck cargo, as well as down the hold, right up to the funnel and the derrick was rushing and it could quite easily knock a couple of fellows off the deck. I've been hit many a time on the head. You think, "Oh it'll go over your head" and all of a sudden it'd just slide out. There was three wards in St Olave's Hospital, Lister, Pasteur and Harvey wards and during the wood season the three wards was full up with injuries from deal porters, stevedores and dockers. I was laid up myself for a long while.

FLO: He'd gone out in the morning for a day's work. If they weren't back by nine o'clock, you always thought they was at work. Well he hadn't got any work for some time, so I needed to borrow money, two shillings, to get him a dinner. I said, "I'll give it back when he's home." Then I heard he'd had an accident at work. He'd had to go into hospital, which meant I had nothing. I worried the life out of myself, how I was going to give the two shillings back.

We managed how we could; we went to what they called the "bunhouse", the relieving office. The relieving officer he come round. And that day, because we'd borrowed some money from a friend of ours, I had some streaky rashers, some greens and some potatoes. When the gentleman come, we was cooking this and he came in and he says:

RELIEVING OFFICER: You can afford this and you're asking us for help?

FLO: And they didn't give us a penny. Married women didn't go out to work, but if their husband's been laid off or injured, you'd do what you could. Housework, office cleaning. I'd go to work, on the four o'clock tram with me own pails and brushes. I'd finish at nine o'clock in the morning and I'd get about one and six for that. Kids'd have to get their own breakfast, and get to school. You'd go up the factory and see if you could do a bit of washing for them. You did what you could when your husband was laid up, but you was bitter about it.

JIM: We often worked all night. Eight o'clock in the morning, dinner twelve till one, then right round to eight o'clock at night. Then we went home for three hours - what they called supper break.

TED: How could we get home if we lived in Dagenham? What was we supposed to do then?

CHARLIE: Coming down the pub mate? (THEY DRINK AND TED OVERDOES IT) 'Ere steady on mate. Carry on like that; you won't be able to get down the hold.

TED: (SINGING)

Now we'll toddle off to the pub
For a little pint of beer
And a little bit of grub

CHARLIE: Come eleven o'clock he was pie eyed.

TED: (DRUNK) Then orff 'ome for a soak in the old tin tub
Getting ready for another day.

CHARLIE: 'Ere, sling your hook for half an hour mate. We'll do your stint while you sober up.

SONG: Keep those sets a'turning
Though your bloody guts is burning
Keep those sets a'turning
And do a little more each day.

- JIM: And you'd carry on right the way round to eight o'clock the following morning. (SITS EXHAUSTED) Some of the dirty cargoes you had to handle. Asbestos. You couldn't see the top man. Nobody ever told us it was dangerous. The dust was so thick down the hold, you couldn't see what you was doing half the time.
- CHARLIE: Lamp black, that was a killer. It was a soot made from oil, used in shellac, a polishing agent. It used to go in gramophone records at that time. We'd be unloading that in bags. Well that dust'd get in you. It was still coming out of your pores a fortnight later. You was black, shiny black. You had to go to the public baths over the road.
- JIM: They took all that was good out of the docker and the stevedore. It was hard times I tell you in the docks in them days. And what you've got to realize is this, we stuck together.
- TED: Man to man, we was friendly towards each other, the docker and the stevedore.
- JIM: We still had aggravation.
- TED: We'd have a fight; we stood up and fought each other.
- JIM: But no one could say a stevedore done a docker a bad turn.
- TED: Nor a docker done a stevedore.
- JIM: There was a reason why we stuck together, which a lot of people don't seem to realize, that don't understand the dock industry - in any other industry you owed your allegiance to your governor. You worked for 22 years for him under the same governor. I, as a dock worker, didn't hold no allegiance to any governors. Because I could work with eight different governors in one week. You owed your allegiance to your family and your fellow workers.
- TED: We came out of the docks in those days, with no pension whatsoever and no lump sum. When you finished you finished. That's why dockers was allowed to work up until they were 80 years old and older.
- SONG: WHEN DAY IS DONE
- FLO: When I look back on those days, I remember all the different ships that used to come up the river. There was the working ships. There was the ships that carried just cargo and there were also lovely ships that came with part cargo and part passengers. And they came from all over the world. And at night time they looked like fairy ships as they came up or left the river. All lit up, you know beautiful it was.
- SONG REPRISE: WHEN DAY IS DONE
- BILL: New Years Eve all the barges and all the river boats used to sound their sirens at 12 o'clock.

- JIM: Everybody used to go out of their front doors with dustbin lids and saucepan lids and bang them. Down to the front gate and bang them and call out Happy New Year.
- FLO: You'd call in anybody that was dark and passing to do first footing, no matter who it was you'd call'em in. "Come on, walk in my house."
- BILL: All the boats sirens used to go right the way along from the Pool of London to Woolwich:
- ALL: Whoop, whoop, whoop.
- SONG: " LONDON IS SAYING GOODNIGHT.