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Okay, so my name is Joshua Adams and I'm working for Eastside Community Heritage, and this is for the Stadium of Stories Project, do you maybe just want to introduce yourself, for the sake of the tape.

Right, my name is Patricia Starling.

And how do you spell that?

S-t-a-r-l-i-n-g, that's obviously my married name…

Yeah, and what's your date of birth?

Sorry!?!

What's your date of birth?

My date of birth is the XX of XX 1949.

Great, do you remember the hospital you were born in?

Yes I do (chuckles), I remember it very well because I had my first, my first son, my eldest son was born there, erm… I was born in Howard's Road Maternity Hospital in Plaistow.

Yeah, so I thought we could maybe begin with by talking about your grandparents…

Oh my grandparents? Erm… Well my Mother came from up North in Wigan, my Dad was a typical East End man, he was six foot, two, he was a Docker, in the Royal Docks, erm… Which was the family trade, his father was a Docker, all his brothers, he came from a large family, all originated from Canning Town, so… Erm… I have a very unusual maiden name as well… So anyone that's got the same name as me is a relative, a definite relative, erm… So my Dad, erm… Went into the Air Force during the War, he met my Mum that worked in the NAAFI, and… erm, they got married, I have an older brother, erm… And she came to

live in East London; we first of all lived in, oh now I don't remember because it was such a long time ago… And I moved when I was very, they moved when I was very young, but erm… They lived in umm… Custom House, erm… And then erm… When I came along because they only had kind of I think one bedroom, erm… Living in the top part of a terraced house, erm… And then they bought a house, which was most unusual in them days, but they bought a house in Forest Gate, so… My memories really are of my house in Forest Gate, that's where, that's where I grew up.

Just to rewind there, erm… To your grandparents, erm… You said your grandmother, came from Wigan?

No, my Mother.

Your Mother came from Wigan?

Yeah. Well, her side of the family were all up there, on my Dad's side, including my Grandparents, came from the East End of London.

Do you know whereabouts in the East End of London your Grandparents are from? Canning Town.

Canning Town.

Do you know where they lived in Canning Town?

I don't, I don't know the name of the road, and unfortunately my Dad's passed away, he probably did tell me, but I can't remember, I just know it was Canning Town, and… I know where we lived in Custom House that was 'Cleaver Road', which I don't think is there anymore, erm… But I don't know where my Grandparents… I think, probably quite close to, there used to be a market there and I think it was quite close to the market, but I don't know what road.

You're Grandfather worked in the Docks as well?

Yes, yes, he was a Docker.

Did he work on the Docks all his life?

Yes, yep.

Do you know how many years he worked at the docks?

Oh Crikey! My Grandfather I don't know, he was a bit of a rogue by all accounts, but erm… He was always in the Docks, and them times were really hard, erm… I would assume most of his working life; he never came out of the Docks.

So he was a 'one job man'?

Yes! Yeah,

Do you know what sort of role he done at the Docks?

He was a, I think he was just what they called a 'Docker', my Dad was a Stevedore, but my Grandad was a Docker, erm… And, and all those years ago from what my Dad always told me, you had to queue up for work and if you were picked you were lucky, and if you didn't get picked, then you didn't earn any money, so… My Dad can remember going to school with no shoes and… You know? It was really tough.

Yeah. So what did your Grandmother do?

Erm… I think she looked after the children, because there was, there was ten of them…

So a large family?

Yes, yeah, which I think most of the East End people did, during that era… erm… They just had lots of children so…I think apart from looking after the children, erm… And keeping house and I know that my Granddad used to keep hens, erm… In the backyard, and he used to breed Wire Hair Terriers (Wire Fox Terriers), and sell them down at erm…Is it Club Row, Club Row, he used to take the boys, including my Dad, he used to go in the Pub for a beer and they used to stand outside with the puppies selling them, for money.

You just said there erm… That families in the East End erm… Were quite large, do you know why that is?

Sorry!?!

Do you know why that is? Why all the families in the East End were, relatively large…?

Well because they had nothing else to do, but breed… (Chuckles), they just had kids didn't they, my… Well my Dad, he used to tell me erm… That his Father was a Catholic, but wouldn't speak about it, he never actually admitted it, apart from one time when he remembered Catholic Priests coming to the door, and my Grandad sent him away, erm… Erm… So he would have nothing to do with the Catholic Church, but we wasn't brought up as Catholics, erm… And I suppose, you know? There was no contraception, you know? There was no television… So… Wahey!

Yeah, if there's nothing else to do…

(Chuckles), but it's all changed, I wouldn't like to have ten kids… Erm… Yeah sorry…

What were you going to say? Sorry.

Erm… Yeah, so as I said, as I was going to say, I think that's the reason why they had… I mean if you see… I've watched old footage on the TV erm… And they always depicted the East End families having, you know? Of that era, my Grandfather's era… That had lots of children… And I think my Grandmother even lost, my Dad says she lost twins, so… You know, it would have been even more…But my Mum, because she was a Northerner; there was just four of them… Erm… And one of them died, so really there was… So she just came

from a family, with three, three children… And, and the parents… Erm… I don't know, I don't know why it was with the East End, I can only assume they just like 'avin sex… (Chuckles), maybe so, maybe so…

So I just thought you could talk a bit more about your parents so… What were your parents full names?

What my Parents, sorry Josh?

Erm… Your parent's full names...?

What my Parents?

Yeah…

Erm… Where do you want me to start?

Just with their names, and erm… If you remember umm… Their date of birth?

Yes, I do. My Mum, her name was Joyce, although she was… Erm… She was Christened Doris, but she was never called Doris, she was always called Joyce, and she used to worry, later on in life, she used to worry, she used to say… 'When I die, will it be Doris?' And I said, 'yeah it will be Mum, because that's what's on your certificate', but erm… She was born on the XX of XX 1917, and she died at the age of ninety-six, so she had a long life, and my Dad was born on, the XX of XX 1922, so he was five years younger than my Mum, and he died last year at the age of ninety-three, so they both had a long life, considering that they went through the war years, erm… And my Dad in particular had a, you know? There was a lot of poverty; I think he only kind of started probably to eat properly when he went in the Air Force, during the War, erm…

Yeah. So, you said your Mother was from Wigan, and your Father was from the East End, so how did they meet?

They met, erm… My Mum worked in the NAAFI, during the war, and my Dad was in the Royal Air Force, and that's how they met, and it was really strange really because she, my Mum decided she didn't want to see him anymore, so she basically dumped him, and then he was out in the Far East, and he met up with my Mum's Step-Brother, and it was really funny because erm… Bill his name was, Bill told my Mum that he'd met my Dad and they got back together again, and my Dad had met another girl in-between as well, erm… And dumped her and my Mum and Dad got back together, and they got married on the… 5th of October, it would have been after the War, she wouldn't marry him before… Erm… 1946.

And they got married in London?

No, they got married in St. Margret's Church in Wigan, Lancashire, and that was where I was… They took me up there to be christened, erm… So they'd been married a long, long time by the time they finally both passed away. My Dad was heartbroken when my Mum died because erm… He'd never known to be with anyone else, she was always there and you know? It was quite hard for him.

So they settled in the East End of London?

Yes!

Why didn't they settle in Wigan?

Because of my Dad's work, because after he got 'demobbed' (demobilised), well after he got demobbed from the… Well, just before he got demobbed from the Air Force he was erm… Offered a job in New Zealand to carry on in the Air Force, erm… And my Mum didn't want to go, so he turned it down, so he… After demob, basically he had to go back to the docks, where all his brothers, he's got about I think out of the ten, there was like seven boys and three girls, and all of his brothers, there's only one younger brother than him, so he was one of the youngest in his family (coughs), 'scuse me Josh, erm… They all worked in the Docks, so… Obviously just after the War, I mean we don't know what it was like, we can only imagine the, you know? Especially in London, everything had to be rebuilt, erm… And so the easiest thing I suppose for them to do was for my Dad to go erm… Back into the Docks which is what they done.

Yeah. Did they always live in the same property whilst they were married? Or…

No! No, no, they erm… They originally, I think when they first got married they lived in Kent with my Grandparents because they'd got moved out, evacuated out during the War, and they went to Kent, erm… Because my Grandmother used to go every summer, 'hop-picking', erm… And the children used to go with her, she used to spend the week, err… The six weeks down at the hop fields, and, and my Grandad worked in the Docks, during the War, and then when London got Blitzed, and they're house went, a lot of the EastEnders moved down to the, to live in the, like the chalets or the sheds, whatever they used to live in when they was hop-picking, and my Dad remembers her going so… After the War, when my Mum and Dad got married, they didn't have anywhere to live, so they went to live in Kent, and from Kent, when my Brother must have been about a year old, they moved to Custom House, because it was easy for my Dad for work, in the Docks, Custom House is right there, in the Docklands.

Yeah. Do you remember the street name?

No, Oh! Cleaver Road, yeah sorry… Cleaver Road, don't think it's there anymore, I think the houses went, pulled down… And, think they built tower blocks that are probably not there now… Erm… And of course, the Docks isn't there, the East London Docks isn't there, the Royal Docks. We went up a few times and I used to say to my Dad, 'oh you wouldn't recognise it Dad, it's so different', he said 'is it all gone?', I said yeah'.

Yeah, its constant regeneration isn't it? In the area…

Yeah… Yeah, I said 'it's really nice', but of course he wouldn't have liked it because, he was proper East-End my Dad, he was six foot, two tall… he, he was a… Big East London Docker…

Yeah. So you were saying that he was in the Air Force, erm… Could you maybe expand upon that, what he'd done in the Air Force?

He was a Stevedore, so he used to operate the erm… The Cranes, he used to be up there on the cranes, loading and unloading the boats as they came in…

Yeah, did he ever share any stories with you about the War?

Oh, the War!?!

Yeah.

Oh yeah… Oh yeah, he had plenty of stories to tell me about the War… Although he was in the RAF, he didn't, he wasn't actually flying, he used to, erm… he was on the building side, so he used to go and build temporary runways, erm… For the planes to land, but he did do… He was out in the Far East, for quite a long time, he did get wounded, he got some shrapnel in his knee, so he spent some time in hospital in the Far East, erm… But, erm… On one particular erm… At one particular time he was in Japan, which he quite liked, and he was… he was one of the cooks there, and erm… He had this Japanese girl as a kitchen hand working for him, was it Japan? It must have been China I think, yeah… Erm… And erm… She was, I'm going to have to swear here because this is my Dad speaking, if you understand, and she was a skinny little thing and my Dad often used to say, he said 'I took one look at her and I said to her well you're a fucking skinny bitch aren't you? I'll have to fatten you up.' He used to give her food and that, and one day she came in and she said to him 'I no fucking skinny bitch now, I fat bitch!', that was one of his stories, erm… We often think he had a thing about her, but… he never let on… And another time, he had to escort a prisoner back erm… From… China, or Japan, might have been Japan I suppose, anyway he had to escort this prisoner back who had murdered someone, and was coming back to be hanged, and one of the jobs my Dad had to do was to exercise him on the deck each day, and My Dad couldn't swim, and one day he was exercising this guy, handcuffed to him and this guy turned round to him and said 'sod this' he said 'I'm going to go overboard now', and my Dad just looked at him and he said 'you're not', he said 'because I can't swim', so he un-cuffed him, cuffed him to a pole and left him there, erm… So they done sort of a variety of things, in the War, but erm… And when he first, they couldn't… Trace him, well when he got, when he was first called up… Because he was young he had to wait for his 'call-up papers' like everyone else, and he was working away, at that time he hadn't gone actually gone into the Docks, he was working… He was doing some sort of building work and he was moving around the country, so when his papers finally caught up with him and he enlisted as soon as he put his RAF Uniform on they arrested him for desertion (chuckles), but you know? When he explained what had happened they said 'oh that's okay then', they saw him as a deserter because he never answered his call-up papers, so… Yeah, he had lots of amusing stories to tell.

Did he not ever think about staying in the Far East?

Yes, he probably would have liked to, but he'd met my Mum then and my Mum was adamant that she did not want to live anywhere else apart from erm… Great Britain.

Yeah. So do you maybe want to explain a little bit about erm…? Your Mum's job, and what that entailed…?

Erm… I don't really know, what during the… During the… When she was in the NAAFI?

Yeah.

Well she just used to sell teas and cigarettes, she actually, erm… My Dad always said she should have been ashamed of herself, because she actually joined the Army, at outbreak of War, she enlisted, and she was sent to camp for training, and she couldn't hack it, so she, she gave it in… And erm… They wanted to put her in err… Erm… Munitions factory, which she didn't want to do, so she turned that down, erm… And of course she had to do something, being a young woman, and fit and able… So… erm, they offered her this post in the, working in the NAAFI, on the Army camps, Air Force Camps, and that's how she met my Dad, selling cigarettes to the forces men, in their camp and… Whatever else, teas, and what have you… But that's how, that's how she met my Dad.

It's also interesting erm… How your Dad talked about his War experiences, because I've interviewed a lot of people and, I'd probably say the majority of them did not talk about their experience during the War.

No, he never said a lot about it, erm… My Husbands Dad was the same, he was, he got Malaria when he was out in the Far East as well and he never liked talking about it, just little snippets. My Dad would tell us the erm… Amusing stories, you know? That he would think we'd like to hear, but, but none of erm… The real bad bits, and when my Dad passed away last year and we was going in through everything as you have to, erm… And we found ration books, and I found his erm… His pay-book and his demob papers, from the RAF, erm… And my Brother in Law actually wanted, he wanted the ration books, and I said 'well why do you want them?', and he said 'ration books, you can sell them on Ebay', and I said 'I'm not selling them', and I actually gave one, to our grandson who was quite interested, so he's got a bit of the memorabilia, and erm… I've kept some of the other stuff, erm… Yeah, yeah we… Kept them all those years.

So what other memorabilia did he keep?

Sorry?!?

What other memorabilia did he keep?

What did I keep?

Yeah.

Erm… I've got ration books; I've got my Dad's erm… Demob book from the RAF, and… Erm… I've got his pay-book as well. I haven't got anything, I, I know when he was in the Docks, he would have had a union card because he belonged to the Union, to get work all them years ago, if you wasn't a Union member, you didn't get work, and my Dad belonged to what was then the Blue Union, which was the Stevedores Union, but he must have got rid of his union card which was a bit of a shame really, I would like to have had that.

It's interesting after all these years that…

Yeah! Absolutely, absolutely, erm… I can remember when he was… The Docks were always on strike for one reason or another, and they never got paid any money when they was on strike, and I remember, one time he was on strike, and my Mum said to him, because they had a mortgage to pay then, and my Mum said to him, 'you'll have to go see if you can get money off of the Labour Exchange' it was then, wasn't it? And he went down there, erm… Down to East Ham, to the Labour Exchange, and (chuckles) he said he nearly got arrested because he got so angry with them, because they said to him 'well you've got a daughter that works haven't you?', and he said 'yes', I'd just started work I think, and they said 'well go and get money off her' (chuckles), and they didn't give him any money, and he actually left the Docks, because the strike was never-ending and my Mum was getting worried, my Mum worked, but you know? They had a house to look after and everything, erm… And, and he drove the London buses, about two years I think. He, he was a London bus driver.

Do you know which routes he drove on?

Sorry!?!

Do you know which routes, erm…? He drove on?

Yes! Yes, he used to, he used to, he used to go, he used to go from Wanstead Flats, right up to Aldgate, I think it was the number forty, erm… Yeah, and he done that for two years, it was when the 'clippies' were on the bus, you know? He had a clippy, and erm… Then for whatever reason, he packed that in and he went back to the Docks.

Because it was seen as quite a good job back then, working on a bus?

I think it was, and I think he enjoyed it, although it was shift work, erm… But my Dad was always, you know? Erm… How can I say it? He was always his own person, and he would always only do what he wanted to do, they asked him to, well he offered to do the night bus, what they called the night bus one night, which took all the staff home, and he said 'you know? I'll do that tonight', for a bit of extra money I suppose, and erm… They said 'no, we've got someone to do it', and, and the next time they asked him to do it and he said 'no, I'm not going to do it, because you, you know? I couldn't do it last time', so talk about spite, erm… But I think he enjoyed his time on the buses, because it was obviously a lot different then, and he had to go on the skid patch and all that which I understand they don't do that anymore, erm… And he, he was a good bus driver, I mean, you know, big double-deckers, God! I wouldn't like to drive one… But obviously then there wasn't the amount of traffic, on the road that there is now, but erm… Yeah… And I don't know why he's, he stopped doing that but… He did, I think the Docks must have improved somewhat then, and then they went on to shift, when he went back to the work, to the Docks he, it was on shift, shift work, but he got back, back into the Docks as easy as anything, just said his name and that was it, he had a job.

Yeah. So you were talking about your Mum there before as well, and did she ever have any other jobs?

My Mum, yeah my Mum worked as soon as, my Mum started going back to work as soon as we was kind of at school, erm… But she always done office work, she was a bookkeeper, so

erm… So erm… She worked for local firms while erm… While they lived in London, she worked for a sweet factory in Woodgrange Road for quite a few years, and then just before they moved out of London, she worked at erm… The Department of Health and Social Security, I don't know if it's still there, there's Woodgrange Park Station, and she worked just there, that's where the office was, erm… And then they, they moved out to Chelmsford, erm… Can't remember what year that was, I'm trying to think now; I think my kids were pretty young, that was probably about thirty years ago… No, probably more than that, probably about thirty five years ago they moved, they moved out of London, we'd all moved out by that time, so they was kind of the last ones, bit of a shame really.

Yeah. Erm… So, we were just talking about your family there, did you have any siblings at all?

Yes! I've got an older brother and a younger sister.

Do you want to tell us a little bit about them?

Yeah, my brother is two years older than me, erm… He lives in Gidea Park, so he's kind of the nearest to London erm… he's an Asphalter by trade, my sister, who lives quite close to me, I live in Clacton-on-Sea, and she lives in Colchester, erm… And my sister in three years younger than me, so all quite close in age, so… Yeah… Grew up in the sixties, a great era to grow up in, erm… Sorry!?!

I said yeah I bet.

Yeah, it was, I just feel so privileged to have gone through 'Beatlemania' and… (chuckles), and all the rest of it… I often say to my sons, 'oh! You think you done it all, you wasn't in the sixties', (chuckles).

I thought we could maybe move onto your childhood then, erm… Do you remember your first family home?

My first?

Family home?

My first, the first family home I can remember, is Monega Road, Forest Gate, erm…

Yep. Can you maybe just describe what the house was like?

Yes, it was a lovely house, erm… It was a three bedroom Victorian terraced house, we had a big garden, erm… Yeah, it was, it was really lovely, we had a bathroom, which we, I don't suppose we had, they had in Cleaver Road, in Custom House, and I loved, I loved living there, yeah very fond memories, erm… I've been back to the house a couple of times and had a look at it, erm… So yeah, very fond memories, very, very fond memories. I remember when I was still at school, when I was at secondary school, and my Mum had it in her head that she wanted to move to Ilford, and I was mortified, I said 'well you can go, but I'm not' (chuckles). So she never moved, and then it was Southend, she wanted to move to Southend, and I think I said the same to her then, 'well you can go, but I'm not', erm… (Chuckles), and

we all said the same actually, because, because it was just good living where we lived, erm… I couldn't bear to kind of live too far away from the football ground either (chuckles).

So what was the attachment with Forest Gate then?

With sorry?!?

With Forest Gate, what was the attachment?

Erm… Well I'd grown up there; I'd gone to Monega Road Primary and Infant School, and then I'd gone onto Plashet Secondary Modern School, I had all friends there erm… And the football ground.

Hmm. Did you live anywhere else as a child? Umm… Aside from Forest Gate?

No. Apart from Cleaver Road, but I can't remember living, I can't remember much about Cleaver Road to be quite honest, I was maybe four or five years old when they moved to Forest Gate, up until the time I got married, I was married at twenty-one, erm… I, I only knew really, you know? Forest Gate, and going to work in London, on the tube, and you know? That's really all I remember, it was brilliant, it was lovely.

Yeah. So what memories do you have? Erm… Growing up in Forest Gate? What did you do as a child?

Erm… As a child? What age?

Oh, erm… Say, Primary School sort of age…

Yeah, umm… I remember going to… You know? I just, I went to school, it was just up the road, so we went to school, erm… My Mum didn't work then, so she was at home, erm… and of course my sister was three years younger than me, so… But we all went to that school, and then from that school we, I used to… I was a bit of a tomboy to be quite honest, erm… I never used to play with dolls or anything, I used to 'rounders' in the street and cricket with the, with the lads, you know? The boys in our, in our road, erm… And from a very young age when I was still at school, not primary school, when I went up to the next school which was Plashet Secondary Modern School which is in Plashet Grove, I hated school anyway… I think I spent more time bunking off than being there, (coughs)…

So what else…

But I always, erm… I was always a bit of a tomboy and I suppose a bit rebellious when I was at school, hence the bunking off, I used to spend days just sitting over Plashet Park when I didn't want to do certain lessons, how I didn't get caught is quite beyond me, but I had a good system going so… That was it…

Hmm… So what was your system?

Well I used to go in for registration, and then just walk out the door and go to the park, so for all intents and purposes I was there… (Chuckles)

Yeah… Well you were there on paper…

Yes… (Chuckles), but not in person; I'll give you an example of how rebellious I was, I remember one day my, my mate said to me 'dare you to walk into assembly with your high-heels on', and it was an all-girls school so it was very strict, headmistress was really strict, erm… She used to swish around in her flipping cloak and… Mortar board hat, and yeah… She didn't frighten me though and erm… So I thought 'yeah, I'm not going to turn down a dare', so I did the next day in assembly, I walked in with high-heels on and she just yelled my name out, she knew it was me, and I got the cane for that (chuckles), I never told my Dad because he would have belted me again (chuckles).

They were still practising erm… Punishment then at schools?

Yeah, it was the cane, yeah… I know it's unbelievable isn't it? Yep, I got the cane many a time…

Must've been an experience…

I, I, I never told my Mum and Dad, told them later on in life, and my Dad used to say to me, 'yeah I knew you used to do that, I knew you used to bunk off', and I used to think 'no you didn't, you didn't know because you'd have belted me if you did', but erm… Yeah, it was just; oh I bunked off school as well with erm… A load of my mates, I remember when, it was when the Beatles were coming back from their first tour of erm… America, and it was like 'yeah we'll save our pocket money, we'll go up to Heathrow to meet them', and we actually thought you know? We would touch them, and see them, and when we got there, there was thousands, and thousands, and thousands… (Chuckles), teenage girls screaming out for the Beatles, oh dear! My Mum and Dad never knew about that either.

So what was it about school that you didn't like then?

Err… The teachers, erm… All I wanted to do was leave school… My, my youngest son was the same, and he was terrible, he used to think, he used to say to me 'there's no point in me going', and I used to say to him that 'you've got to go', you know? There is a point to you going, you can't just decide, and he'd say to me, 'yeah but you never liked school either did you Mum?', 'no I didn't', and… I just didn't like it, I suppose it's the authority, and I think it's much better now, but then it was, you know? And going to an all-girls school we had, we had lessons like Latin; I mean who wants to speak Latin? I considered that an absolute waste of time, and writing lessons, and speech lessons, and… I just thought it was a waste of time, I only really 'bucked up' during the last year and the headmistress said to me 'you put one foot out of place', because I then wanted to take a typing course, and she said to me 'you put one foot out of place, and you're out, you're expelled', and I did behave for my final year at school, and I learnt to type, so… But it was too late, my husband, now who's my second husband, he often says to me 'you wasted all your school years', which I probably did, but… You know? You can't go back can you?

No. You were saying as well that you played cricket, erm… Around that age, erm… And other games, erm… At that time, where you part of any social clubs, or…? Any clubs in general?

Yeah, I used to go youth clubs, err… A youth club in Manor Park, erm… And I can't remember what it was called, erm… But they had youth clubs then, and we used to just meet up, you know? A crowd of us, you know? And just go to the youth club during the evenings, where they had several activities going on, and I was in the school netball team actually, I quite liked sports, I did enjoy playing netball at school, erm… But the youth club was good, because, you know? They had pop music going, and they had different activities going on, and… When I was at Primary School I used to go to, erm… A school camping XXXX, every summer for a week, where they used to hold, all sorts of different sporting activities, and… Stuff like that, I can't even remember my sister going, but I know I went and I really enjoyed it…

Did you ever play football at all when you were younger?

No I didn't, 'cos girls didn't, girls didn't go to football matches… I have to tell you Joshua… Girls did not go to football matches; it took me a long, long, long, long time to get my Mother to consent to me going to see West Ham, my Brother used to go, my older Brother used to go every home game, and it would be the same every other Saturday… And I would plead with my Mum, 'please let me go, please let me go' and she would say the same thing, 'girls don't go to football matches', 'but I really want to go', 'but you won't like it', and I don't think my older Brother really wanted me tagging along to be quite honest, but I kept on, and on, and on, I mean for more than a season, probably two season, I kept on, and on, and on, and on, and on… And I thought 'how can I get to this flipping football match?' And in the end she just got so fed up with me, she said to my Brother, 'oh for goodness sake take her, she won't like it, it's alright, she won't like it', and she gave him the money, because in them days you just went through the turnstiles, about 5 'bob' (shillings) I think, something like that, and I loved it…

So…

I loved everything about it…

You were saying you were part of youth clubs, and you played some sport and stuff at school, erm… What did you do for fun inside of the home? Erm… Did you listen to the radio, did you read books?

Oh yeah, we had a television, erm… Yeah I was an avid reader I still am now, so I used to read a lot, Enid Blyton books, 'The Famous Five', I probably read all of them, erm… And we had a radiogram, so we used to play records; we used to play games… 'Monopoly', my brother used to put his tent up in the garden, so we used to sort of go camping, we always had a holiday, every single summer, my parents took us away on holiday…

Where did you go…?

Erm… We, we used to go to the Isle of Wight a lot, erm… Down to South Coast, I used to go to XXXX as I've told you with this camp… Erm… We used to go to Worthing, to Brighton, and then we also used to go up North, to visit my Mum's family, she had two sisters that were alive, erm… So we used to go to Blackpool and Southport, yeah we had… Wales we used to go to… My husband thinks I'm extremely lucky because erm… He, he's a Clacton man, born and bred erm… And he says, 'I can't believe you went on holiday every year', and

I said 'yeah we did', my Dad had a motorbike, and then he had a car, we had a phone, so I suppose we was kind of not too badly off…

Yeah it seemed quite traditional for East End families to go to places like Clacton, or Brighton every summer; it seems to be a common theme…

Yes! Yeah I think it was, I think it was erm… And it was brilliant; it was really brilliant but erm… I remember the Isle of Wight more than anything, we loved the Isle of Wight, I still do, and even now it brings back fond memories of erm… Our holidays, lovely holidays that we spent there, erm… And I remember one, one instance at the Isle of Wight at a holiday camp and we… It was cold and I had a coat on and we was… I think we was leaving that day, and I fell in the flipping swimming pool, I couldn't swim, I was so young someone had to dive in and get me, my Mum was mortified, I'd ruined the best coat… (Chuckles)

It was a lucky escape…

Yeah… Yeah… Erm… So yeah we had lovely, lovely holidays as kids, it was, yeah it was great, it was great…

What did you do for fun as a teenager then? Obviously you were talking about Beatlemania, and you know? Growing up in the sixties, what was that like?

Well… I was a 'Mod', so… And erm… Oh God, my Dad was so flipping strict and erm… They forbade me to get on the back of a scooter, and I remember it was the infamous erm… Down here in Clacton funnily enough, between the Mods and the Rockers, and I got on the back of this boys scooter, who this boy really liked me, because I'm a 'redhead' and my friends were like 'well he only likes redheads, you're in there you know? Because you're a redhead', and erm… We came down, I came down to Clacton, I, I often say to my husband now because he's Clacton, and he was a Rocker, and he remembers that as well, and I say yeah 'I might have even bumped into you all them years ago', and he said 'I wouldn't have looked twice at you'…

So you were actually there when that happened?

So… Apart from, sort of, I still went to the Youth Club, but then as a teenager of course, especially when I started work, and I was working in London, erm… I used to go to erm… There was a place in Stratford, there was a pub called the Two Puddings that had a disco, erm… On the top of the top floor of the pub, every Friday night, so I used to go there, that was regular, where they used to play all the pop music, and… Erm… I used to go to the cinema, out with boys (chuckles), you know? The usual, you discover boys, I stop playing cricket with them in the street then and I wanted to do other things… (Chuckles), my Dad was really strict, if a boy walked me home, aww I remember once he stuck his head out of the bedroom window upstairs and he said to me 'you get in here' and this boy just looked at me, it was so embarrassing, but that's what they was like then…

Do you think you rebelled because your father was…So strict?

Oh yeah… Yeah! Absolutely, I used to say to him, I used to say to him 'you don't frighten me you know?' (chuckles), 'I'm not scared of you!', that used to get him even worse, he used

to think 'well you should be', but I used to say to him, my Mum used to say to me 'don't, don't wind him up, because he'll only have a go at you' If anything went wrong, he always used to say… 'It's ginger! She's done it!' erm… My, I was very much like my Dad, my Dad was yeah… everyone always says, I'm so much like my Dad, I look like my Dad, and I act like him as well, I s'pose he was a bit of, bit rebellious, and so was I, erm… And he always says that I should have been the boy and my Brother should have been the girl, my Brother got beat up erm… Coming home from school once and I was still at school myself, obviously I was very young, and erm… And my Dad said to him 'so what did you do to the other lads?', and he said 'oh I didn't do anything', and I said to my Brother, tell me who they are and I'll go and beat them up for you… (Chuckles), and my Dad just looked at my Mum and he said to her 'I told you she should have been the boy, and he should have been the girl…' Oh dear… It's very amusing

So you were saying you grew up in the sixties erm… Then you were a Mod erm… So maybe tell me a bit about being a Mod what is was like, what the culture was like, what the clothing was like…

Oh well in the sixties, oh my goodness me erm… It was great, erm… Because everything happened then, the mini-skirt, and the Sexual Revolution, the Pill came out from the sixties, the late sixties didn't it? Erm… I think abortions were illegal wasn't they? I think everything, everything sort of happened in the sixties erm… It was all about, I remember a lad I went out with and he took me to the Redding festival, so festivals had just started, and I often say to people now, do you know I XXXX off there in a mini-skirt and high-heels to Jimmy Hendrix, and at the time it was like, oh when this boy asked me I was like 'I don't know if I want to see Jimmy Hendrix', you know? And he said 'oh please come with me', so I thought 'yeah I will', it, it was pretty good actually, it was all hippies and smoking pot and Purple Hearts (Dexamyl) , had just come out, we used to pop Purple Hearts and everyone was a bit sort of rebellious, it was Mary Quant, it was Carnaby Street, erm… It was such a brilliant era to grow up in, it was the Rolling Stones, and you know? Mods and Rockers, the different fashions, what we used to wear and what the Rockers used to wear, erm… Totally different erm… Fantastic era…

Hmm… Do you maybe want to talk a bit more about the fashions and what you wore as a Mod? When you were younger?

Well… I used to obviously wear mini-skirts, the shorter the better and erm… My Dad used to, being my Dad, he used to say to my Mum 'you're not going to let her go out in that are you?' And my Mum used to say 'well, what's wrong with here?' he said 'she's only got a belt on, for goodness sake it's a belt!' erm… So it was mini-skirts erm… Hot Pants, I remember I worked in, hold on a minute, I'll have to think, where did I work? Cos' I used to change jobs so regularly, it must have been when I worked for the electrical company in the City, EC1, and I'd gone to work in Hot Pants, and they were so tight I split them and I had to go all the way home to get something else to wear… Fashions were really, erm… Very nice, very yeah… And they're all, they're all coming back it's what they're all wearing now isn't it? Mini-skirts, black tights, stiletto-heels, shorts, it's like all turned around and they're all fashionable now…

Being a Mod back then, did you have certain kind of hangout places where you would buy your clothes or… Or where you would sort of socialise…

Yes, yes, there was a certain shoe shop called Ravel's where I would get all my shoes from because they sold a lot of the Moddy shoes there, erm… And boutiques, we used to shop in boutiques, erm… I think boutiques like Bieber, and places like that to get err… clothes, Rockers used to wear jeans and leathers didn't they, you know? We was always a bit more particular about our dress, erm… And I was always wanting to be up there with everyone else, with the fashions…

Hmm… So obviously the Mods had a certain look and the rockers had a certain look, how did those looks come about all of a sudden you know?

I, I don't really know, erm… I don't know, I mean the Mod girls would have short, you know? Layered hair, erm… And, and the Rockers always had long hair, erm… Even the lads, the Mod lads used to have kind of Beatle haircuts, but I don't know whether the Beatles first started it off cos' some of the Mod lads used to wear the Beatles suits, what they called the Beatles suits, but the Rockers would never wear anything like that, the Mod lads, erm… Drove Lambettas and Scooters, whereas the Rockers was motorbikes and leathers, so… There was a lot of difference between the way the dressed and what we done… They used to go in cafés; we used to go to discos…

Yeah it's just very interesting how that all came about, how you had the Mods wearing the suits and more kind of tailored clothing whereas you had the rockers who had jeans and leathers… erm…

Yeah, that's right, there was a, there was a big distinction between how the two sets dressed and looked, yeah absolutely… Hence my husband now saying to me 'well I wouldn't have looked twice at you'… Which he wouldn't have done…

Did the Rockers come from a certain area, and did the Mods come from a certain area or…

No! It was, it was kind of all over, I think it probably if the truth be known, it probably all started in London which was the 'in' place to be, but my Husband has always lived in Clacton, and there was… Well… Apart from living in Thorpe… But, hold on… He's just talking Josh…

(To Husband): Well there was Mods down here wasn't there in the sixties?

*(*To Interviewer onwards): Yeah, he's just saying, I don't know if you can hear him there was Mods down here so it probably kind of generated from London and then spread out to the rest of the country, but I don't know about up North… Whether…

Yeah. Do you remember anything at all about the big fight that the Mods and Rockers had?

Sorry!?!

Do you remember the Mods and the Rockers had a big fight didn't they? Was that, was that was in Clacton wasn't it…?

They was… Yeah, it happened down here in Clacton, I've seen old footage, we've watched it on the television, old black and white footage and we're like 'oh we're probably there somewhere…' Yeah it was erm… Yeah, a lot of rivalry, a lot of rivalry between the two, the two parts yeah… Between the Mods, and the Rockers and awful lot, we didn't like them, they didn't like us…

Did you ever have a Lambretta or Vespa scooter yourself?

No not myself, no my Mum wouldn't have allowed it, and he forbid me to go on one but I did of course, being me, being rebellious, yeah I did, I did go on one, erm… But no I never had one myself, in fact when I was seventeen he, he my Dad took me out for some driving lessons, there used to be a place off the Barking Road where you could go, where it was set out like roads and you used to get a lot of learners over there, he only took me out twice I think, the second time he said to my Mum 'she doesn't know her left from her right, she'll never pass her test.' But I did (chuckles), even now I still don't know my left from my right, so no he wouldn't have let me have a Lambretta.

Yeah. So obviously the sixties was a massive cultural explosion and you were saying you were really into music, did you, do you remember any particular concerts or gigs you went to that really stand out during that time?

Erm… Well the Redding festival erm… Which as I said I went to that with a lad, erm… to see… Jimmy Hendrix, oh! I used to go motor racing, and I went out with another lad, and erm… Erm… He, he was into motor racing so we used to go to Silverstone and Brands Hatch a lot, I met Graham Hill who's dead now, erm… I think, I can't remember, he used to go to a lot of shows up the West End, erm… Never went to Glastonbury, no! Erm… So I don't think I went to any other gigs apart from the Redding festival… Erm… No, I don't think I did.

So you were saying as well during that time you lived in Forest Gate, erm… What was Forest gate like as an area back then, what kind of shops did it have, etcetera?

Oh, it was, it was completely different to how it is now, completely different, erm…

Do you want to maybe expand upon those changes from then until now?

Well… For a start, as, as we all know Newham has now got the highest, you know? If you saw that programme on television a few weeks ago, (Last Whites of the East End, first aired 24th May 2016) which we did, the, the immigrants living there… Of course when I was growing up there wasn't any of that, so they was all English shops, erm… And you would have, I mean my Mum worked in a little television shop round the corner which is no longer there, you would get your bread from the bakers, your meat from the butchers, erm… And apart from the big shops there was always a Marks & Spencer's and there was a Woolworths down Green Street, and… There was a jewellers opposite Upton Park station on the bridge there, I remember going with a friend because I wanted to have my ears pierced and my Mum again wouldn't let me, and so I managed to get the money somehow and I went with a friend to the jewellers opposite Upton Park Station to get my ears pierced, that's not there anymore, erm… And I remember there was erm… I don't know what it is now, its round in the Barking Road, it's probably an Asian cinema now, but it, they used to have all the pop groups there

and the Beatles appeared there in the Sixties, and then it turned into err… I think it was a cinema, and that's not there anymore… Erm… Just everywhere's… I remember meeting Jeff Hurst in a book shop, in Green Street and that's not there anymore and when I go back now, I just keep saying because I always go to matches with my youngest son, and I always say to him 'it's not how it was, it's not how it was', I think he gets fed-up with me saying it, no English shops that I can point out, all used to be there, that used to be there and it's not there anymore, so yeah, it's changed a lot; I mean I moved out over thirty years ago so in that time obviously there's gonna' be a lot of changes, quite sad actually, it's quite sad because I loved living there, erm… So I get quite sad when I see it, I feel like an intruder to be quite honest, I feel like I shouldn't be there, but you know? That's times change, we move on and that's how the culture is now…

Yeah, so after you finished school, what sorts of jobs did you hold throughout the whole of your career?

Well my first job only lasted a week… (chuckles), my Mum was mortified, after I got my first week's wages, it was in a, doing typing in an office I come home and I said, 'not going back there anymore', (chuckles), and she must have thought 'oh God, no', I wanted to be a hairdresser, that's what I really wanted to do, but my Mum, once again wouldn't let me, my Mum had very fixed ideas about what girls should and should not do, and she… It wasn't that I shouldn't be a hairdresser, but she said to me 'what's the point you'll have to do all that training, two years training, you'll have no money, so you won't have any money to spend on clothes and going out', and then she said 'and then you'll probably get married', and you know? Err… So, I went to work in an office doing typing and I hated it, so I packed that in, I was in it like I said, I was only there a week, 'not going there anymore' then I, erm… Had a friend that worked at, in erm… Barclay Square and they needed a trainee punch-card operator which was like a very early computer and err… I got the job there and went to work up there and erm… We was on our lunchbreak one day and, cos' it was a very posh, Barclay Square is very posh isn't it? I worked for L'Oreal's, the hair people and… Fenwick's the departmental store was close buy and we chased Paul McCartney through their own day, he was in there shopping and he was just running hell for leather (chuckles) to get away from all the teenage girls, oh it was like 'oh its Paul McCartney', never caught him… Erm… And I was only there about ten months I think, not even a year, but that was better than a week, erm… And then I got a job in Silvertown actually, erm… I wasn't there very long either, erm… I met my first real boyfriend there, he worked there, his name was Tony, erm… And I went out with him for about a year and then I dumped him, and I left that job and… I got a job in Farringdon Road, working for a cheese manufacturers, erm… I must have stayed there a while, probably about a year and then from there I went to work in an electrical company which I really liked and I got made redundant from there 'cos they moved out to Bournemouth, erm… And then I think I got married… Did I get married? No I didn't get married, yeah I did, I got married, that's right, I went out with most of the young lads that worked there at the electrical place and then I got married, I met my first husband and then we got married, and then I went to work erm… At a place, a firm by Blackfriars, just off Fleet Street… And I was there… I done all their wages and there accounts and everything and I was there until I had my eldest son, erm… And then I left to have my, to have my erm… My son, erm… I, I obviously then I was married and erm… My husband at the time when I had bought a house in Manor Park and we payed £8,000 for it, can you believe that?

I don't want to believe it to be honest (chuckles), its, it's a…

How much… I don't know how much it's probably worth now, that flipping house, that was a beautiful house, well I said to someone, 'it must be worth about £200,000', they said 'you're joking, double that, does it have a garden and a big garden? Erm… Three bedrooms…' Lovely big rooms, yeah £8,000 we paid for that, erm… And we was there, I think I was there two years, and then we moved out of London and we actually moved down to Hampshire, erm… And I had another son, erm… And then we sold that place and we moved back to Essex, near Colchester, erm… And then I divorced him, the marriage wasn't going right so, we divorced and by that time I'd moved to Clacton and I spent, I think twelve years bringing up my kids, my sons on my own and then I met my present husband, who… We've been together now for twenty years nearly, so… Yeah…

And he's from Clacton?

Sorry!?!

And he's from Clacton?

Yes, yeah, yeah well he's, he's, he was born in a village just outside of Clacton, Erm… XXXX, very nice little village, very expensive to buy a house there, erm… Cos' villages are very popular, and then he moved, he was a bit of a rebel I think he moved here when he was seventeen… And err… Yeah, so… You know that's…

So what made you move want to move out of London?

What made me? Sorry!?!

What made you want to move out of London?

Well… I'd had my first son, he was born in 1974 and he, at an early age he was really a clever little boy, very clever erm… I mean he went on to get a degree and everything so… He was very, very clever erm… And then I, I found out that the council were going to build a school, just solely for immigrant children, just a brand new school, and I thought 'that's not right', and by that time we was, we was kind of getting a lot coming in then and everyone seemed to be moving out, so we was like, 'we think it would be better for him, if we moved out', so that's exactly what we did, erm… I don't know if it was the right thing or the wrong thing to do at the time, but, you know? Londoners were just getting out of London.

Was that a common thing back then?

Yes, yeah, yeah it was, very common… Yeah, yeah that was, everyone was doing it, you could see them moving out and… You know? I often think well, Londoners shouldn't have gone, they should have stayed there, we was East Londoners at the end of the day, erm… And we should have stayed, which is what one of the immigrants said on that programme that was on television a few weeks ago, well the Londoners moved out and I was like 'well yeah actually we did', and the only time once I'd moved out, the only time I went back was to see West Ham.

So this gives us a good segway into moving into West Ham there, erm… How did you first start supporting West Ham? How did that all you know? Come together?

Oh that was erm… because I'd, my brother used to go to the football all the home matches, and a lot of them, he used to go to a lot of the midweek matches as well, and I always wanted to go but my Mum, I did tell you, my Mum didn't want me to go, she didn't think girls went to football because, it, which they didn't to be quite honest, you get to the ground and there wouldn't be a lot of girls there in fact, I was a bit of a tomboy and I had short hair and I remember I was, we used to stand in the North Bank and there was this man standing behind us and he tapped on my shoulder and he said 'can you see alright there lad' (chuckles), and I turned round and I said 'I'm a girl!', and he was like 'Oh Wow! Oh yeah so you are…'

So it wasn't a common thing then, for girls to come to football?

No it wasn't, no, it is now, there's loads and loads of girls and women go, but then it wasn't, it was, it was predominately a male err… It was a male thing to do, and, my Mum although she didn't want me to go, she ended up knitting claret and blue scarves for me and, it was, it wasn't like it is now, you didn't buy the, the tops and all that, you could but most of them didn't, just put a scarf round your neck, and she used to do 'em in bobble hat in the winter, I've stood on those terraces and frozen just for the love of seeing 'em play, erm… And that's how it all started off, and my ex-husband, he lived, we used to walk every home match from where I lived in Monega Road which was Forest Gate, right down towards the end of Green Street and we used to walk right up to the other end, erm… And my husband, my first-husband, he lived in Plaistow which was about a five minute walk from the football ground and his Dad used to work there , my ex-father in law, he used to work there every home game, he used to be on the turnstiles, and erm… We used to find out what turnstile he was on and we used to go squeeze in together (chuckles), we only payed once, he used to say to us 'go on, squeeze in! Squeeze in…'

Because obviously then there was no seating then was there?

No, no, no it was all standing, it was erm… And we used to stand in the North Bank, when I used to go with my brother it was always the North Bank and the away supporters were in the South Bank, and erm… And then it started to get a big violent, it must have been round about when the ICF started, or it got violent over there and they used to, from the back of the North Bank we used to sort of stand about half way and they used to come roaring down and I think my, my brother was worried that I would get trampled under-foot, so we moved over to the West Enclosure which was opposite the Chicken Run, and then it was after Hillsborough erm… That it was then all seating in all stadiums, erm… And I think that's when it kind of all changed, because I've still even now when I go with my son, I think it's not right to be sitting down, I should be standing up, but in the old Boleyn Ground there was always certain parts where they did all stand erm… Lower Bobby Moore, they always stand there erm… And then of course the prices have changed as well, what used to cost a couple of 'bob' (shillings) to get in now costs quite a few quid…

So is the stadium changed much over the years then?

The Stadium?!?

Yeah, has it changed much over the years?

Oh crikey! Yeah, yes it has changed because they, the, the Chicken Run used to be really close to the pitch, erm… And that's always were they used to start singing 'Bubbles' was in the Chicken Run and they all used to sway with it and it used to go round the ground from there, and they, they must have built the new stand and put the stand over the Chicken Run, it was just simply the Chicken Run when I first started going but now it's, its erm… The East Stand, or it was the East Stand, I mean they've demolished it now, but erm… They put the stand over that, and then they extended the West Enclosure where we used to sit, you've got the hotel there so, yeah… I've seen a lot, a lot of changes over the years, for the football ground, it's nothing like, it's nothing like when I first used to go, there was no big stadium store, there was just like a little hut, you used to get the programme sellers, the programmes were about a 'bob' (a shilling) I think, or something like that, erm… Yeah you never got tickets beforehand, you just went up to the turnstiles and you went in.

Yeah, so do you think, obviously the stadiums changed a lot, do you think the atmosphere in the stadium's changed at all?

To a certain extent yeah, it probably has, I mean there's been… There's been periods of time when the West Ham supporters, especially when the ICF was running amok, you know when the West Ham supporters got a really, really bad name erm… I think some of that still sticks today in you know? The way they portrayed us when erm… Manchester United coach, you know? Was late arriving for that final match and they smashed the glass, I'm not saying it was right to do that, but… They blamed it all on the West Ham supporters, and, and I did turn round to my husband because it, obviously he's not into football like I am, and I turned round to him and I said, 'do you know what?' I said, 'they knew that this was going to be a, thousands of people there for that match, they should have got there much earlier than what they did', erm… But we still, we still get tarred with that brush, and it probably all goes back to like Cass Pennant and the ICF, and then there was the skinheads' erm… You used to get over there, and I don't know whether they was real supporters, I sometimes think a lot of them probably wasn't, erm… That just went over there to have fights, and it, it kind of didn't make it such a nice place to be, if you know what I mean? I'd never stopped supporting them, never in all the years had I ever stopped supporting West Ham, but I think that sometimes the supporters let the team down… Yeah…

Yeah. Do you maybe want to tell me a little bit more about the Inter City Firm? And kind of how that came about and… You know?

Well, that was… That, that was all… Cass Pennant wasn't it? Erm… And the name 'Inter City Firm' was taken from the, 'cos in them days for away matches they used to run special trains, for away supporters, and then a group of them decided not to get these trains erm… That they would get the intercity trains and then that's how the name came about, the Inter City Firm, erm… And there's been programmes, and a lot of them I think, I'm not saying all of them, probably only a small minority of the Inter City Firm, they admitted they would just go for the fights, it was the fights, and they was all well to do people, erm… They was lawyers and accountants and you know? It was like Monday to Friday they're up there in their offices in London and then Saturday they'll run amok at the football matches, erm… Perhaps it was their way of letting off steam, I don't know… But it kind of didn't give West Ham a very good name and, and although there's still you know? When I go, and I see the

older generation and I think 'yeah you was probably ICF', I know they're still knocking around, you know? You go on Facebook and that and you see 'em, and you think you're ICF now, but you're old.

Yeah. So how do you think that culture came to be really you know? Because, its, its when did it? Maybe the seventies, or eighties?

Yeah… Erm…

Why do you think that came about kind of? Going to a football match and?

It must have been, I'm trying to think, because erm… My son was born in '74 and I remember we won the FA Cup in '75 and I had him in his pushchair, I went down to see the team on the bus, so it must have been eighties when that started, the ICF, erm… And I'd moved out of London by then, and I'd had, obviously I'd had another child, erm… So it wasn't so easy for me to go to matches, as what it was when I lived in London, erm… I don't really know how that come about, I don't really know, I think it was… I don't know, it was just, it was just a think I suppose, because football was getting more popular, erm… And there's, there's always been I think a lot of rivalry between football teams, especially London football teams, there is now, and I don't think that's ever gone away, erm… And when you, when you get that kind of well, you know? I remember a friend of mine who lives in Clacton erm… And, she, she's married to a, we went to their wedding a few years ago, and she's married to a guy that supports Arsenal, and the first match last season, the beginning of last season was West Ham were away to Arsenal, and Shaun went to that match, and when he was coming home to Clacton, he was at Liverpool Street Station and he, he said to me 'oh I decided to go to the toilet, before I got on the train', so he goes in the toilet, and he said 'there's about six lads in the loo, well not lads but men, six men in the toilet at Liverpool Street,' And they took one look at him and he said, I never wear colours, and they took one look at him and they said to him 'you West Ham, or Arsenal?' And he said, I just knew… They was West Ham, so he said 'I said to them, yeah I'm West Ham, but I've come with an Arsenal supporter.' And they said, 'oh that's all right mate', they'd have probably, you know? Started on him, he said 'yeah I know, that's why I told them I was West Ham' (chuckles), so there is still a bit of rivalry, especially between London clubs…

Who would you consider West Ham's biggest rivals?

Spurs…

Spurs?

Or Millwall… Millwall probably, I dunno about rivals, I think probably Spurs is yeah… But Millwall yeah we just absolutely hate don't we?

What is it about Millwall, I know a lot of people don't like Millwall but what was it, what was it in particular about Millwall that West Ham don't like?

I, I think from what I can find out, I think it all goes back to the Thames Ironworks, right back to 18… Whatever it was 1895, I think it was, I think that's where it all goes back to, the

Thames Iron, Ironworks and the rivalry between Millwall and West Ham which will never, ever go away,

It's a long rivalry to have isn't it?

Yeah it is, it absolutely is, I totally agree with you, erm… That the rivalry between Spurs and West Ham, I think that's something different, I…I remember, cos I only work part time now, but I remember a guy who I work with, he's a spurs supporter and… Before we played spurs, one of our, it was towards the end of the current season, and it was a midweek match and we'd got tickets, me' son and I were going, and… Erm… I'd seen him and he said to me 'are you going down to the match?' 'I said yeah we got tickets', he said 'we'll slaughter you', I said 'yeah? Do you reckon Ian, I don't think so', and… We didn't, we beat Spurs, but it was very, very sad because the riot police were there that evening and they had actually boarded up the statue opposite the Boleyn Pub, because of the Spurs supporters damaging it and I thought that was quite sad… I, I said to my husband, it, it's a game… Do you know what I mean? It's a game of football… Why, why be violent? Why damage that, that statue? And when we was driving in, and because we drive all the way in and we could see the riot police arriving and it was like, I said to my, I was looking at my Son and saying 'Don't leave me on my own will you Matthew', and he said 'no course I won't Mum', it was quite terrifying and I thought, this, this, it shouldn't be like this… It shouldn't be like this… It's a football game…

So do you think the… The culture of football and kind of… The fans…

Absolutely, yeah… Yeah, it's you know? You can hear it the banter at the games and… I've got friends here, my husband and I have got friends that are Arsenal supporters and we just have a bit of banter between ourselves, no… You know? It's just football banter, but sometimes it gets a bit out of hand, it just gets a bit out of hand, and that's when the violence starts…

I suppose it doesn't help as well because a lot of people go to the pub and drink…

That's right, that's right… I was just coming on to that, not only that, they've got bars at the ground as well, erm… And, and your adrenaline starts, I know mine does, your adrenaline starts and you start to get excited because there's nothing like being there, and, and being in that crowd and seeing your team play, it's so different to obviously, to obviously watching it on the television, but there's no need to get absolutely drunk out of your mind when you don't know what you're doing and you know? It, its, it's really, it really is quite, it's quite frightening…

So, what's the atmosphere like on the Barking Road? And on Green Street on match days?

Oh its brilliant, its usually absolutely brilliant, erm… I have to say it because obviously when at home games, the majority of it is West Ham supporters, erm… And you just talk to anyone, we've met some lovely people, my Son and I when we've been going to matches, I mean my Son lives in Norwich, so he, he travels a long way, to see a match, erm… And, and this last season, for us we haven't been season holders, but we've been members so we've been to, and also because it's been the last season we've gone to a lot more matches than what we normally would, fortunately for the next one,

we've got season tickets, but it is generally the atmosphere of you know? I start getting excited the nearer we get to the ground and then my son will say, 'Oh I can see the floodlights Mum', and it's just… And when you get in… It's a good atmosphere, I just hope that that's not going to be lost; at the new stadium…I hope the atmosphere is gonna be the same, erm… I hope that the singing's gonna be even better than it is, has been at the Boleyn, erm… So yeah… It, it is, umm… I'm really sad I've had, I've, I've had loads of tears… Saying goodbye to the Boleyn, because I've seen so many changes… Over the years, a whole lot of changes, it's been incredible, its, it's you know, I say to my son 'you don't know what it was like when I first started coming in here, it was so different', and I think he gets a bit fed up with me to be honest… And then the last time we went just before it, it closed down we wasn't able to get tickets for the last match but we was at the Swansea match and he put his, I remember he put his arms round me and he said 'it's all right Mum, you can have a few tears'…

Yeah. So we were just talking match days there as well, erm… Do you have a pre-match ritual that you have? Before you go to a game or?

Yeah, yeah we do, we do, erm… Yeah, we're quite erm… We got it all set out, erm… As I say we drive all the way, my son drops me off in Barking Road, and I get in the queue for Pie n' Mash, which is a hell of a long queue, I think the last time we was there we stood in the queue for an hour and a half, he goes and parks the car and then he comes round and meets me in the queue, so that's our ritual, if we've got time… We will see if we can get into the Boleyn Pub and have, I will have 'alf a cider and he, cos' he's driving, he will just have like a shandy which is mostly lemonade because he doesn't drink a lot, and I don't either… So if we've got time… We'll do that, have a round of Bubbles in there and then we make our way to the stadium, we don't usually go in the shop because it's absolutely murder, there's so many people, and you can shop online now for anything you want… We get the programme and then we make our way to our seat, we never leave before the final whistle's blown, so we leave with everyone else, we stay to the very end and erm… Then it takes us ages to drive home… It's a long journey, especially for my son, who comes from Norwich, erm… but he thinks it's worth it.

Yeah. It's interesting that people still go to places like Nathan's Pie n' Mash Shop and go to the Boleyn Pub, erm… Kind of week in, week out…

Yeah, it's like tradition, it's like tradition, I mean when I first started going we never done any of that, we used to have our dinner at home, on a Saturday if West Ham were playing and we just walked, walked to the match and that was it, we never went in the Pub or anything, if it was raining my Dad used to drop us off, because he never used to go to the football, erm… and, and then he'd come and pick us up… Erm… But over the years, you know? Tradition has changed now, it's you know? My son always says 'oh we can't go into the football without having Pie n' Mash' and apart from that, he absolutely loves it erm… And he says it wouldn't be the same, if he didn't get his Pie n' Mash,

So just going back earlier again there as well, do you remember your very first game, and who it was against?

Do you know what? I can't remember who it was against…

Or do you have any particular memories of any fantastic games you've seen over the seasons?

Erm… Probably most of them, I used to love Jeff Hurst, I thought he was fantastic, erm… And Bobby Moore, Bobby Moore was my, he, he was the best ever… He was such a nice man, erm… I remember like I said to you, I remember when they won erm… I think it was the FA Cup in '75 when my first son was just; he was still in the pushchair, erm… God, I'm trying to think now… It's such a long time ago, I can't remember now; I can't remember my first match there… I remember my Mum always used to say, she used to listen out for us, she used to think 'oh they'll be home soon, if they're walking down the road and they're singing Bubbles and they're rattle's going then I know they've won, and if I can't hear them, I know they've lost', and I'd come in crying my eyes out, and she'd say… 'Well it's only a game', but they've lost! Erm…

Do you know what the origins are of 'Forever Blowing Bubbles?' And how that came to be used by West Ham fans?

Err… That… Bubbles… I know it always used to start in the Chicken Run… And I think it's a really old song, erm… I think there was a player called Bubbles, his nickname was Bubbles, and I think it is, you know part of the Thames Ironworks erm… I did get the history of it, and it's a surprising how many people don't know the history of it, a lot of people don't know the history of the Boleyn actually, do you know the history of the Boleyn?

I know a little bit of history yes…

It annoys me when people say, especially when they're commentating on the TV 'and here we are at Upton Park', I think 'that's not Upton Park, that's the Boleyn', Upton Park is the Station, the ground is the Boleyn, which was the Boleyn Castle, which Henry VIII gave to Anne Boleyn… But you knew that didn't you? Well you'd be surprised, I told that to a West Ham supporter recently and, he, he was like 'really?' 'And I said yes! Did you not know?', and he said 'no', and I said 'well you should be ashamed of yourself', that's the history… And I met, years ago my husband and I went on a Caribbean cruise and we met a couple from Sunderland, he supported Sunderland Football Club, and she got in touch with me when we'd come back and they was doing, they was at a quiz, and she said to me 'can you tell me what is the name of the West Ham ground, is it Upton Park or the Boleyn?' 'I said it's the Boleyn!' It's not Upton Park, Upton Park is the station… but people call it Upton Park now, I don't know why…

Yeah, it's quite interchangeable I think it's something to do with, there was, you know? Many hundreds of years ago there was a place called Upton I think, erm… And that was a small Parish, and around the area they created a park and I think they just called it Upton Park, I don't think there's a complicated…

There's not an area called Upton Park… It's the station, isn't it…?

This was many, many hundreds of years ago…

It must have been… And, and, and it's just kind of, it's just kind of stuck, hasn't it? You know? It's Upton Park because the station, but the ground isn't called Upton Park… And there's not even an area called Upton Park, it is, it is the Boleyn Ground, erm… I remember, after England won the World Cup, well West Ham won the World Cup in 1966 (chuckles) and they opened the ground up and erm… They, they came out and they let everyone, they let all the supporters come in for nothing and Bobby Moore, Jeff Hurst and Martin Peter's came out onto the pitch, that was, that was brilliant, I remember that vividly… And I remember queuing up for I think two hours, my Mum thought it was mad, to get a book that Jeff Hurst had wrote, I've still got it now, and I'd met him and he'd autographed the book, and… Then when I went to the next home match, I used to buy my programme called Margret, I used to call her Auntie Margret, and I said to her 'oh God, you'll never guess what I've got', and she said 'what?' 'I met Jeff Hurst and I've got his autograph in this book', and she said to me 'do you want me to get the rest of them?' So I said, 'would you?' She said, 'yeah bring your book next time, and the next home match took my book along and erm… She, she got all the team, I've got Jeff Hurst twice, I've got Martin Peters, I've got Bobby Moore, erm… I've got Frank Lampard Senior, I've got Harry Redknapp, all in this book… Erm… Which is in pristine condition, its erm… My son always says to me, whenever I go abroad, I always say to him, I said to him, we went to Greece last year and I said 'if anything happens, if we get killed by terrorists or anything, the will is in such and such a place…' 'And he said where's the book?' I said 'it's in the bookshelf', 'cos he said 'that's mine' and I said 'yeah… I know, but yeah…' That's like a real… I've got old programmes and other memorabilia but that is my, that is my best…

Do you have any special memories of any of the footballers you've seen down the years?

Bobby Moore was a really, really nice bloke and he'd always speak to you, we spoke to him several times, cos' you'd see him in the pub and… Erm… It, he'd always speak… Julian Dicks as well… Would always, always speak to you, I mean when I, when I was supporting them they was all English players in the team, and they was just like ordinary people, they wasn't put on a pedestal like they are now, today, they didn't earn the money, erm… That they earn today… And, and Bobby Moore got treated terribly by West Ham… Terribly… They kicked him out, because he didn't have a ticket, and one match they kicked him out, but then it was you know? It's my team, but yeah… They treated him terribly, and, and some of the others as well were not treated very nicely, erm… But they was all really nice, yeah just ordinary blokes, they all lived didn't they, you know? Just in Essex, I think Jeff Hurst still lives, just in Essex, erm… Although they're obviously much, much older now, Trevor Brooking I met, we met Trevor Brooking in erm… Chelmsford, one day when my boys were quite young and he's a really, really nice man, he's lovely Trevor Brooking, he's always got time to talk to you, and give you his autograph… And, and that's what's nice…

Do you think obviously footballers back then came then from a more working class background…?

Yeah, I think they did …

Whereas now they don't necessarily come from that background, do you think the attitude footballers have and in general have changed over the years?

Oh yeah, yeah enormously, I think out of the whole team now, I mean Mark Noble is very down to earth, I mean I met him a few years ago and he's a really, really nice man, he, he just comes from, well he come out of Canning Town, so he's home-grown, and James Tompkins as well, erm… But I do think some of the bigger named footballers think they're really above themselves, yeah… It has changed so much, so very, very much to you know? To when Bobby Moore was leading the team out onto the pitch, and he's never been appreciated since just recently I suppose, then just now considering making him a 'Sir' I mean, he, he was quite underrated and, he was like world class… But he, he wasn't big headed at all, they was all really nice guys, but the money, the money that football has generated over the last few years Joshua has made it different, has made it what it is today, big business, it never used to be big business, I mean you just had the Club, Ron Greenwood was the manager, erm… it's just changed astronomically, and it is the money now in football, quite honestly I think, I think they get paid far too much… I remember years and years ago when my son that goes to football with me, he was backpacking with his then girlfriend in Thailand and all round there and I remember we used to keep in touch by email, and I remember emailing him and saying 'Rio Ferdinand has just been sold for £19 million', and he emailed me back and he said 'he's not worth it', and I said, 'no he's not…' That was like an astronomical, how could he be worth that much? And now… You know, their saying now erm… They won't let Dimitri Payet go for less than 40 million, and I think 'Oh my God', the money… Bobby Moore when he, when they won the World Cup in 1966, he was given £22,000, and he shared that amongst the whole team.

So just moving on there a little bit as well… Obviously, you know the big news at the moment is that West Ham are moving from the Boleyn ground to the new stadium in Stratford, what are your feelings on, on moving stadium?

Well… I was absolutely heartbroken at first, I have to admit, erm… And I was one of those that said that they will never fill it, and I admit that now, they will never fill it, and I couldn't quite believe that they were actually going to sell that beautiful Boleyn Ground that obviously they have, erm… And I never really wanted them to move, I was one of those, and it's still very sad for me when I see pictures now of them taking it down, you know the Lyall Gates have gone, John Lyall gates have gone… And other bits have gone… It's, it's really sad for me and… Although my son and I have got season tickets for the 'OS' (Olympic Stadium), and he's really looking forward to it, he can't wait for the season to start, me… I'm a little bit; I'm a bit more apprehensive, because I think mainly I don't want the atmosphere to be lost, in that huge great stadium which it might be… But we're not going to know until we actually go to the first match, what it's going to be like, erm… And that is it you know? There's been players from different teams who have said there is nothing like going to the Boleyn, the atmosphere there is terrific, which it always was, whether they're

going to be able to replicate that at the OS is another thing… They might, they might not.

Do you think with West Ham moving stadium, and obviously they're moving out the area, do you think they're losing their grounding? Their identity, in moving to Stratford, because it's such a focal point of the area… And obviously the area is not going to have that anymore…

I think the people that live there will be quite pleased, but I think it's… Yeah… I think it's very sad, that part, that particular part of the East End is going to be no more, and I think that it is, I think that is… Very sad for us older ones that have basically from you know? Such a very young age for me, I've grown up with West Ham; I've felt very privileged that I lived so close to the ground and I was able to spend so many happy Saturdays watching them there, really sad ones as well, when they've had bad seasons, erm… And I've seen them go up and down, and up and down, erm… So yeah, for me particularly I think it's very sad, it's sad for Nathan's, it's sad for the Boleyn Pub, they're like an institution, it's like, the area you know, it is… I remember when I first got married to my erm…Ex-husband and erm… He lived; his mother and his parents lived not far from the ground, a five minute walk… And everyone used to erm… Congregate, she had a couple of Brothers and my ex-father in law did the turnstiles and they used to congregate at theirs to have a cup of tea and then go to the match, and she couldn't quite believe why I used to want to go to the football, she was another one, and… She used to say to 'I hate football days', and I said 'why?' and she said 'Well… you can't get out there, there's crowds of people about', and I used to say to her 'I think it's fantastic', it brought a lot of money into the area as well, an awful lot of money, even now it does and there's a lot of businesses that are you know? Gonna feel it… When we move to the OS , and that I don't, it won't never be, you won't never get that, what we had at the Boleyn, I don't think we, you'll ever get at the OS.

Do you think the younger generation of West Ham fans are more receptive to opening, to sorry, to moving to the stadium in Stratford?

Oh yes! Yeah… Yeah, because I remember the day, it was way back in January when erm… We went up to the Reservation Office to get our season tickets and it was a cold, wet day and we wanted to go a have a look at the stadium and there was another guy in there and we said to him, got chatting to him, we said to him you know 'we're going to walk down and have a look at the stadium, do you want to come with us?' And he said 'no', he said, 'I don't want to see it at all', and we said 'why?' And he said 'I don't want to leave the Boleyn', and I just looked at him and I said 'well, there's a lot of a feel like that Paul, but you know? It's going to happen…'

So I have one final question for you… Erm… What does West Ham mean to you? How has it affected your life?

Oh… God! (chuckles), my Son said to me only a few weeks ago, we were walking down Green Street to get into the ground and he just looked at me and he said 'if you had to choose Mum, between Keith which is my Husband, his Step-father, if you had to choose between Keith and West ham, he said 'it would be a difficult one for you

wouldn't it?' And I just looked at him and I went 'Yes!' West Ham has been a big, big massively big part of my life, for such a long, long time, my husband will probably tell you I eat, drink, sleep, work, walk West Ham… Because they've been such a massive part of my life… When I read a paper, I will always go to the back pages first, because that's where all the football news is, when it comes to the end of the season I absolutely hate it and I count the weeks till the start of the season, I won't, I never used to visit my… When my Mum was alive, and then when my Dad was alive I never used to visit them on a Saturday afternoon because that would be football day, and it was more important for me to watch the football if I wasn't going to the matches, than to visit anyone, and I'm the same now… Of course it would be different next season because I've got a season ticket, so I'll be going to all the home matches, but then the Saturday's in-between when we don't go to away matches I, I won't go anywhere… I wouldn't think of going anywhere, so yeah West Ham is a big, big part of my life… Of course I love my husband more… I love West Ham; to me it's my 'beloved' West Ham.

Well thank you for sharing your story, it was lovely interviewing you…

Oh thank you for listening to me, it's been brilliant.

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