

Disclaimer: This interview was conducted in 1995 and concerns memories of 1930s life; as such there may be opinions expressed or words used that do not meet today's norms and expectations.

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- * Tourist Information Office, Manchester, 12 May 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Arthur Orrell
- * Transcribed by Joan Simpson/Standardised by Annette Kuhn
- * AO=Arthur Orrell, VB=Valentina Bold
- * Notes: First of two interviews with Arthur Orrell; Sound Quality: Poor; this interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner; the original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection - please contact Lancaster University Library for details.

[Start of Tape]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

[small extract of audio missing at start]

VB: That looks like it's fine. That's great. [setting up recorder] I'll just check that's working okay. It's hard sometimes to see, if you've got the sunlight erm--

AO: Oh yes.

VB: If it's actually working. But that seems to be fine. Could I ask you to clip that on?

AO: I've not used one of these.

VB: They're very good. I'll maybe untangle it first. [laughs]

AO: Yeah.

VB: They pick up really well.

[audio starts; crackling noise]

AO: The only other time I did this was when eh, erm, Radio Manchester.

VB: Oh right.

AO: Went there on one occasion and had about ten minutes with a chap called Clive Pryce and he was the chap who did activities on natural history.

VB: Clip that on there. That's great.

AO: Good.

VB: One thing I was wanting to do before we actually started--

AO: Uhuh.

VB: Erm, talking about cinema, was to ask you just one or two sort of background questions.

AO: Yes. All right. Fire away. Yes, yeah. That's just getting the gist a bit. Rather than say, well I was going to ask you that.

VB: Yeah. Sure.

[tape crackly]

VB: Right. Can I ask how many sisters and brothers you have? Or what size of family you come from?

AO: Well, erm, I'd a father and mother and one brother who was seven years older than I was.

VB: Right.

AO: He was born in 19, eh, 1913. Yes.

[background noise of train]

VB: And, was your father, I think you said your father was in the cotton industry.

AO: He was known as a erm, he was in the cotton industry. He was known as a mule spinner. Or a minder was another expression.

VB: Right.

AO: And it was quite an established skilled job. And they had erm, assistance from what were known as a big piecer and a little piecer. And they functioned to assist him, generally. And it's a case of keeping the erm, mules working and they went in a forward and backward direction on a kind of track. And as they move forwards and backwards, so the thread came, you know, came out from one section of the machine onto eh, another part, you see. And from that it became eh, cotton thread. And they would then pass it for another function. To another part of the mill or to a weaving shed.

VB: Right. And did your mother work at all?

AO: No, eh, yes, she did. But not as family.

VB: Right.

AO: She worked some little time after my father and mother were married. And eh, within two or three years I think from being married they went to America.

VB: Right. I remember you saying this. Did they stay very long in America?

AO: Well, they stayed three years.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Moved from one place to another and basically around Massachusetts.

VB: Right.

AO: Rhode Island, Nantucket, erm, New Bedford. It was kind of a developing area for the new cotton industry there. And there were many people, from Lancashire, went. You know, sailed from Liverpool, went to eh, America for work.

VB: Right.

AO: And eh, grandmother, she was then sixty-five. She went with them.

VB: Goodness me!

AO: They were tough [laughs] in those days!

VB: Yes. Very adventurous.

AO: Yes.

VB: To do that. And, can I ask how old you were when you left school?

AO: Fourteen.

VB: Right.

AO: Fourteen years old when I left school.

VB: Right. And then, what was your first job?

AO: Oh, eh, first job I kept, I think, about two or three days. It was in a gents' outfitters.

VB: Right.

AO: And I was interested in radio then and eh, I made contact with a manager of a radio shop so I went there for a short period. Over the Christmas. But eh, mostly clothing near up to the age of twenty-odd I was, you know, erm, doing various, various jobs. I was in the leather trade. [interference on tape] In the section which deals with raw cow hides, and calf hides to erm, preparation of those for use for footwear.

VB: Right.

AO: And eh, it was hard work. Little pay. Cool conditions, raw conditions. And then there was nothing to look forward to, so I just packed the job in and went to London. I went on a scheme which was known as the Juvenile Transference Scheme.

VB: Right.

AO: There were certain developing places like Letchworth Garden City.

VB: Uhuh.

AO: Erm, I went to Bedford. And eh, I was there for about two or three months and I didn't see any prospects there. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: So, however, I said I was, you know, homesick. And then instead of going home, I got my things from my digs and eh, caught the next bus to London.

VB: [laughs]

AO: So, from then on, things were a lot better.

VB: Right. So, how old were you when you went down south?

AO: Sixteen years.

VB: Sixteen. Right.

AO: Mhm.

VB: Eh, I remember you saying, 'cause you worked in various places, didn't you?

AO: Oh yes. Yes. Yes, I've worked all over.

VB: Yes.

AO: But generally I've been in the engineering cum electrical industries.

VB: Right.

AO: So much so that I was carrying on during the war, reserved occupation rather than being, erm, you know, called up.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And I worked on eh, aircraft cameras, in the main. Photography equipment.

VB: Right.

AO: For the first two years of the war and from there I went to an electrical firm called Ferranti's.

VB: Oh right! Yes.

AO: And I was on electrical instruments there. I worked in the laboratory.

VB: Right. 'Course they've got a branch in Edinburgh I know.

AO: Well, I know the chappie who started that.

VB: Really!

AO: Oh yes. [Absolutely?] [inaudible] Two or three people from section I worked with went up there. They went to Edinburgh. And then of course, from there, it went from strength to strength.

VB: Yes.

AO: But it were a good family firm. You'd get the old Sebastian erm Ferranti come round. And the Ferranti sons there. Yes. Yes.

VB: It's interesting. 'Cause the reason I'm saying that is 'cause my uncle worked in Ferranti's.

AO: Did he? Oh yeah.

VB: Served an apprenticeship there.

AO: Did he really?

VB: Yes.

AO: It wasn't Portobello, was it?

VB: Is it not, it's somewhere near Leith.

AO: Yes. That's right. Yes. Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Yes. I was on the point of going up there but eh, then again, my parents were getting on a bit and I didn't want in particular to leave them.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But I stayed with Ferranti's until eh, you know, made redundant about 1946.

VB: Yeah. So how long have you been in Bolton?

AO: Oh, born and bred in Bolton.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Eh, I was born in Bolton, I was there about two years. And then we moved from there to Preston.

VB: Right.

AO: And then eh, that's about [sixteen?] miles from Bolton. [background noise]

VB: Yeah.

AO: And then my father got a job in Bolton. And we moved to a place called Farnworth.

VB: Right.

AO: So I was in Farnworth from the age of five until eh, four or five, until I was seven.

VB: Right.

AO: And eh, then that's where I started the 'Picturegoer' [laughs].

VB: Right. [laughs] Right. Erm, and can I ask if you've been married at all?

AO: Pardon?

VB: Are you married? Or have you been married?

AO: Well, my wife died five years ago. I was married when I was thirty-two years old.

VB: Yeah.

AO: So I had a chance of getting about before settling down.

VB: Yes.

AO: So there was no commitment there as to what I did.

VB: Yeah. And did your wife work, herself?

AO: Eh, for about the first twelve months or so and then eh, had a daughter and then-- [background noise]

VB: Right.

AO: And since then she, she erm kept at home and that was kind of [daughter?] [inaudible].

VB: Yeah. Is it just the one daughter you have?

AO: Yes. Yes.

VB: That's great. Erm, as I say, that was just to get a wee bit of background information about you.

AO: Yes, very good.

VB: The other thing I was going to ask is, because I'm taping this--

AO: Yes. Yes.

VB: Erm, these tapes'll be kept in Glasgow University.

AO: Yes. Fair enough. Yeah.

VB: And it's possible that researchers might listen to this.

AO: Yes.

VB: In the future.

AO: Oh yes indeed, yes.

VB: Would you have any objection to that?

AO: No. No. No objection whatsoever. No.

VB: Right.

AO: Something for posterity, isn't it?

VB: Right. Absolutely. It's important.

AO: Some people would object, I agree to that.

VB: Yeah. In that case, could I ask you to sign this form?

AO: Yes, it's eh, what they call a release form. Like photography models [inaudible].

VB: Exactly. Just to stop you suing us or anything.

AO: Yes. Well, yeah.

VB: [laughs] I'm sure, I'm sure there won't be anything incriminating. [laughs]

AO: No. But you've got to safeguard yourself. That's true.

VB: That's right. Yes.

VB: It's just in this bit here.

[AO signs form]

AO: Will that be all right? Do you want the date?

VB: Yes, please.

AO: What's the eh, is it the 12th?

VB: It's the 12th, yeah.

AO: Yeah.

VB: And I'll sign that as well. That's the sort of official part.

AO: Yes. Yes, yes.

VB: Erm, the first thing I really wanted to ask was about your earliest memories of going to the cinema.

AO: Oh yes.

VB: You were about seven or--

AO: Oh yes. I'd be, yeah, earliest memories would be about 1925. Yes, yes. If not '24.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Just between those. And that was at Farnworth.

VB: Right.

AO: And eh, we went to all the cinemas there, in Farnworth. But, you know, there was cinemas then and there's cinemas now. And the cinemas then were cheap. They were a form of escapism. You

know. A lot of this glamour, Hollywood. Like people treat football stars now. And eh, pop singers. In those days, it was a case of erm, film stars and all the glamour that went with it. And it was a form of escapism. And, of course, there were quite a number of cinemas that opened up within.... They kept going within a particular period and then they kind of turned off. And, like Bolton for instance, I think there used to be about twenty-six cinemas at one, at one and the same time.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Different grades. I mean they were what they used to call the bug huts. You know. You went in with your jersey and came out with a jumper!

VB: [laughs]

AO: But eh, and then there were higher class types. And of course this was the days of erm, the silent films as well. But I can rattle off lots and lots of the old stars. The comedians. And particularly cowboys. I was mad on cowboys like kids are mad on football now. We used to come out of the cinema and, you know, Saturday afternoon sometime and night-time, you know, what do they call it? The chippie. Get a pennyworth of chips and went to the one that gave you most scraps you see.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And eh, we had a particular run. You could run a particular way. You did that with your hands, as if you were on a horse, you see. So--

VB: [laughs]

AO: It eh, yeah. I always wanted to be either a cowboy or a mounted police. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: Not an engine driver. Or the likes. But eh, they used to show a main film. And they also had a feature film. Erm, sometimes be comedy and sometimes.... And another thing they used to have, they used to try and get people going week after week.

VB: Mhm.

AO: They would have a serial. You know. Probably the same kind as these Pearl Buck films erm, re-issued on television now. You know, she's strapped to the lines. There'd be trains coming. And then--

VB: [laughs]

AO: But eh, one of the peculiarities we had in those days, call them peculiarities, but erm, some cinemas used to have it such that we went in, eh, they had a bit of an orchestra, you know, two or three players. Violin and piano and that. They would start for about five minutes before the erm, film started. But eh, then, eh, they would show, a slide would come on, onto the screen, a black-and-white slide. And they had a song sheet there. And they had white dots, conspicuous white dots. You could see from the back. And that would kind of time the tune for you. I don't know whether anybody's mentioned this or not to you. And eh, other things that, in an emergency they could have erm, a piece of eh, a square piece of glass about, I think it was about three-and-a-quarter inch square. They could put smoke on it with eh, well I think this is the method they used, from a candle and that would have a sootier appearance. And then they would scratch on there and that could be projected onto the eh, onto the screens. Oh and then, the seats were such that the cheapest parts used be forms, you know, like this.

VB: Right. Yeah.

AO: But eh, yeah. And then of course, in particular where you got murder films. You know, anticipated what the end's going to be. Some little lad in devilment would say, "Oh, he did it!" [laughs] You know.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And then eh, the weepies where women took things to heart, you know, and the like. [laughs] Somebody would shout out, "Do you want a bucket missus?" [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: Yeah. But eh, Saturday night used to be a bit difficult at times. Because, there weren't any television, no other form of entertainment particularly. And people didn't go into pubs like they do now. And eh, we used to form queues. And they had eh, usually two programmes a night. You know. The same programme. They would start at say, I think six o'clock till eight. And the other one erm, eight o'clock till about ten o'clock. I'm not exactly sure of the time but round about that. So, you could go second house. And then of course we got the Odeons that erm, came into being. And they were kind of quite classy and good and separate seats. There were some cinemas introduced at the end of the war eh, what we used to call plush seats. They had extra-wide ones, say here, and that would be the aisle, you see.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And eh, these were two-seaters! Ideal for courting couples! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: There was a cinema in Bolton called the Queen's Cinema there. And eh, they had two pay entrances. One for higher price than the other one. And, it was split across entirely with eh, a high screen about eh, four or five feet high, at least. You know. So they couldn't climb over. And that would segregate the cheaper ones from the dearer ones. Eh, the Capitol cinema eh, in Churchgate was erm, a little bit interesting, in so far as there they had, as usual, most of them, the dearer seats were at the back. And erm, this particular cinema, they had a row of seats which were the cheapest of the lot! The fact is, they got people in and they sat there. But eh, they were too near the screen so they finished up with eh, you know, a sore neck afterwards. And, there was one cinema there called the erm, eh, I think it was called the Regal. Originally. Then I think it was called the Olympia. Or vice-versa. You can check that up if you wish.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And eh, some of these names, they changed because different companies took them over. One company, a set of individuals and then perhaps two or three companies. Until you got the erm, the Odeon type of cinema coming along. You know, no national type of control. You know. Not quite to the extent that Cannon do now. But this particular one was one of the biggest seating capacities in town. And eh, they had a screen there. And it said that, some little bit of time before I started to go

there, and this was in Bolton. But, it was a penny cheaper to go behind the screen. You know. You just had to put up with the fact that any writing that came on was, was the other way [laughs] round! But it was cheaper.

VB: [laughs]

AO: Then of course eh, a lot of these were eh, not carpeted floors, but wooden floors. And then again, Manchester being as it was in those days, many people were wearing clogs. So clunk, clunk, clunk with their clogs [laughs] you know.

VB: [laughs]

AO: Then of course people come round with ice cream and chocolates and the like. Yeah. The erm, I forget what year it was when I stopped going. I've only been to the cinema about once in the last ten years. And that was a film called '2001' [referring to *2001: A Space Odyssey*]. And it was one of these scientific ones. I think it was by, that erm, eh, that eminent scientist. What's his name? Clarke. Is it eh, Alfred Clarke?

VB: Oh yes. Erm, Arthur C. Clarke.

AO: Arthur C. Clarke. Yes, that's the one.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But eh, I rate much of it. I've seen more people come out of that film before the conclusion than at any other time. And eh, that was one of the last times I went. But what stopped me going was that there was a cinema in Bolton called Crampton, the Crampton, on Crampton Way. And eh, [pause 2 seconds] before that closed eh, and it's now become something else, I went and eh, I went to a film called *Mutiny on the Bounty*. And I'd seen it once. And I wanted to see it again. And, it was the fact that there seemed to be a change there. That was that there were a lot of locals, you know, boys and girls. Teenagers. They would [noise of tram or train], they would congregate at the back and there would be a lot of chatter. And that kind of, you know, started it. It kind of put me off in a way. But eh, as I say, I used to know all the film stars and what they did. I used to get the 'Picturegoer' was it? The 'Picturegoer', the various magazines. And eh, as I say, even now, I can tell

all the cowboys. Eh, Buck Jones and eh Art Acord, Hoot Gibson. Eh, Tom Mix was my favourite. And eh, yes, Ken Maynard. Tom Tyler. Yes. The lot.

VB: What was it about Tom Mix that particularly appealed to you?

AO: Well I think, partly, he featured in comics as well, you know. Mhm. He's supposed [pause 2 seconds] to have the ability to carry a woman in his arms and jump over the back of a horse.

VB: [laughs]

AO: But physically I don't think that was quite so. But you used to get tales going around. And then of course, eventually, colour came into being, didn't it--

VB: Mhm.

AO: So many years afterwards and eh, then they had the adverts in those days. You know, when they introduced colour. And then of course, again... [balanced and balanced towards more?], you know erm, high-tech commercial stuff.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Eh, one feature about Bolton was the.... We have a place there, you may not have seen it, it's called Victoria Hall. And they used to have the Saturday night concerts there. It was, I think it was the Methodist church and still is. And they used to have a concert party, a local concert party. Good artists, you know. Not eh, as pop stars these days. Acceptable artists. Groups. Individuals. Instrumentalists and the likes. And that would go on for about three-quarters of an hour to an hour. And eh, after that they used to show a film. A full-length film. And it was only fourpence in new money. And that used to be, you know, quite full and very good. Eh, there was one called the Electric Cinema which changed its name to, eh, I think it changed its name to the Embassy. Eh, I forget why it was called Electric. Maybe it was the type of illumination. Because at one time, they used to rely on carbon arcs for their illumination, you know. Kind of controlled lighting for the erm, showing the film. They didn't realise, at the time, that, you know, you used to look back and see this light shining through from the projection room and eh, there was this terrific beam coming out.

These days of course, we weren't aware of eh, cancer and smoking and the likes and didn't realise that's what we were, you know, inhaling.

VB: Mhm.

AO: A lot of the local cinemas particularly used to display eh, adverts, roughly about eh, eighteen inches high by about eight inches wide. Which were eh, showing the local cinema, what the programme would be.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And eh, they changed. The programmes used to change in local cinemas. Eh, twice and even sometimes three times a week. But one time, you know, I think I was about six years old, I went to the cinema seven times.

VB: [gasps]

AO: That was, and they didn't show them Sunday night. That was once every night and once on Saturday afternoon. But eh, yes, they were memorable days were those. Yes.

VB: How often did you usually go?

AO: Oh about twice a week on average.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Or, two to three times a week. It depends. I could get two or three, you know, coppers from eh, from your parents.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Eh, things were very tight in those days and the likes. I mean, tramcar, tramcar fares were only a ha'penny and the likes and eh, yeah, that was what I used to spend my money on. Because there weren't, weren't the, you know, the toys and the facilities that there are now.

VB: Mhm.

AO: I mean, we used to have lead soldiers that we used to play with. And eh [pause 2 seconds] little games called Piggy. [sound quality of tape deteriorates] I don't know whether you've come across Piggy or not. Piggy. Have a piece of wood about two inches long and about inch-and-a-half diameter. One end of it curved in the form of a big snake. And that [voice fuzzy; inaudible] in a particular position. And you had a stick in the form of a slat. And you would then, put the tip of the wooden Piggy as we call it. And that would cause it to flip up into the air. And then as it's descending and at the right height, then you'd give it a terrific blow. And erm, you know, it would go a particular distance. And then of course, you would have, you know, individual competitions, and it was how many strides and the like, you see. Oh yes, there was a lot of their own games in those days. Like in eh, in school playgrounds, we had ride a [c?] on a wooden bench, you know. Eh, [pause 2 seconds] getting one behind the other and one would have his hands against the wall like that and the person behind them would have his hands on the erm, the person in front on their hips. And so you'd get half a dozen. And then there would be two teams. And take a run and they'd jump on the back. You know.

VB: Yes.

AO: And then, I think eh, they would erm put their fingers up and then it would be a case of, "How many fingers are there?" Well, if they guessed right, you see, then they changed places.

VB: Ah right.

AO: But I mean, these were things that would be entirely discouraged by health and safety regulations now, [laughs] I should think.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And then, of course, there were marbles. And cigarette cards, you know. We used to spend hours asking various fellows, strangers entirely, "Have you had a cigarette card?" You'd get sets of them, and you know. See them in antique fairs and that now.

VB: Mhm.

AO: But we used to use those as games. We had what were known as 'knocky downs'. That's standing a card that had been [primed?] against a wall on the flagstones and then you'd [inaudible] a card. You would then pitch it to it and knock it down. And then if you knocked it down you would then, you know, claim those cards. And then they had, eh, another type of game in which you would throw one and then your opponent would throw one. It was who got on one cigarette card first and then he would then collect [points?] you see. So, you know, little things like that were of interest.

VB: Did you ever collect the cigarette cards of film stars?

AO: Oh, yes! Absolutely! Yes. I've got quite a few yet.

VB: Oh, really!

AO: Yeah, yeah. Oh yes.

VB: Ah!

AO: A lot of them long gone.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But, of course, you've got eh, you know, Robert Young and eh, Gary Cooper. Eh, Ronald Reagan when they were coming up.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Eh, and particularly, Mickey Rooney as one of the eh, young stars there. Along with eh, Freddie Bartholomew was another one. And then go up a little bit to teenagers and they're part of the Hardy Family [referring to the 'Andy Hardy' series] with erm, what was it? Lewis Stone. The [Lou?] chappie who was the father. But to see Mickey Rooney now, eh, still short, but eh, he was about, he was really plump--

VB: Yes.

AO: And you wouldn't credit it, you know.

VB: Yeah.

AO: [When you see any of us?] that we were. As a youngster. Mhm.

VB: You mentioned Robert Young there. Did you have favourites amongst the stars?

AO: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Particular, eh, cowboys apart and the like? We had the adventurous types, such as Douglas Fairbanks Senior. You know, we've got at the moment his son who's still going strong [referring to Douglas Fairbanks Jr]. Eh, 80-odd year old. But the father, he married of course, Mary Pickford. And eh, actually I don't know whether you realise it or not, but he had a very short [inaudible].

VB: Really?

AO: Oh yes.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Consequently, all the stars and the people act together, were proportionately shorter.

VB: [laughs]

AO: Mhm.

VB: 'Course, Mary Pickford was quite tiny, wasn't she?

AO: Oh, yes! She was, indeed. Then of course they formed their own eh, their own film company.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Eh, what was it called? I forget now. But eh, yes.

VB: Was it not something like Pickfair? No, their house was called something like Pickfair, wasn't it?

AO: Yes.

VB: It was some combination of their names.

AO: That's right.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Yes. Yes. It's like that other one, more recently, comedy. Somebody like Darrell, Darrell [Roy?] or something like that.

VB: Yeah.

AO: That's not the exact name but, one similar to that was eh, you know, in production for a long time.

VB: So did you like these sort of adventurous films?

AO: Oh yes, yes, yes. I mean, it was, you know, they look a bit corny nowadays when you realise the physical impossibility somehow.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And the like. Yeah. But erm, yes, used to like going to the serials of course. And then of course there were daft comedies like Harold Lloyd. I don't know whether you've seen any Harold Lloyd ones. Always with the glasses on. He never had lenses in them you know.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And eh, Charlie Chaplin of course. Well, he used to come to Lancashire. He'd been to Bolton, has Charlie Chaplin. Mhm.

VB: Mhm!

AO: Yeah. And he had a brother. I remember his brother when a cinema in Farnworth was open, roughly about 1928 I think it would be.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And eh, that was *Charley's Aunt* [referring to the 1925 version]. And I think it was eh, Syd, Chaplin's brother who was in it. Yeah.

VB: Mhm. What about people like erm Laurel and Hardy?

AO: Oh well, they were fair bits of course. Yes. But they did straight comedies. There was no, you know, [pause 2 seconds] undercover subtleties like there are now, you know. Eh, close to the bone stuff with them. They were, you know, real slapstick. They've no comedians nowadays, I don't think that eh, that compare with people like that.

VB: Yeah.

[background noise; tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

[Side B starts mid conversation; background noise]

AO: And they've got a museum there for him.

VB: Right.

AO: And eh, yeah, there were one or two ones to follow of course, with people like Morecambe and Wise.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And erm, there used to be Will Fyffe. He was in films. And then the nearest one, the one nearest to, used to be Frank Randle. You know. [inaudible; sound of train in background].

VB: Ah.

AO: You know. slapstick stuff. And eh, yeah. There were one or two travel films as well, which were very good. Eh, before films came into being of course, you got part of this entertainment was established with local Sunday schools on a Sunday night. You know, to encourage youngsters to go, and they had eh, magic lantern shows. With erm, a religious theme of course. And then there used to be erm, you know, potato pie. Or you had a pea soup [supper?]. I think that was either Saturday night or Sunday night. I forget which. But that used to be at weekend.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And eh, yes, we used to like them. It was a form of escapism, which is often mentioned on radio and the likes. Yeah.

VB: What about eh, there were some very good stars that came from Lancashire.

AO: Yes! I were going to say that.

VB: Yeah.

AO: I thought, well, I must mention Manchester.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And the likes. Of course, you've got Gracie Fields of course. She was from Rochdale, surname was Stansfield. She made a film called *Sing as We Go!* And that was eh, part of that was shown in Bolton, opposite, just opposite exactly where I used to live.

VB: Ah!

AO: And eh, those mills have just, this last few years, have now disappeared. They're becoming industrialised, the area there and eh, you've got these [modern?] type industrial units and new arterial roads there that connect other roads there. It's mainly [inaudible]. And eh, Manchester of course, there's two in particular I used to know. And like. His name was Robert Donat. He was in the original eh, *The 39 Steps*.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Yes, he was a fair bit. And eh, another one, he was eh, top casting, that was eh, Reginald Denny. Eh, these were the names.

VB: Ah, Robert Donat I like.

AO: Oh yes. Well, yes. He was very good.

VB: Aye.

AO: He was eh, that kind of a gentle type of person. Mhm.

VB: Cause he was in that 'Goodbye Mr'--

AO: Oh-h! That was a super one!

VB: Yeah.

AO: *Goodbye Mr Chips*. I saw that at the Odeon. The Odeon, Bolton. That eh, then, eh, during the wartime, if memory serves me right, you could reserve your seat for sixpence. You know. Book your

seat for six old pennies. [Bit more modern?] And they had a kind of a cafe, cafe type of a place where you could just go in and have something to eat and drink.

VB: Mhm!

AO: Before or after the show as well. It was all kind of attraction there. But, during the war, eh, they had a string of bombs on Bolton. They had one smaller one, that hit one side of the cinema, and one at the other side. That's my memory, you know eh, perceived.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Yes, I lived in Farnworth for about four years but still, I went to the eh, local cinemas and, you know, kept in touch that way. And my brother, he was similarly inclined. I think it was one way of getting out of the house--

VB: Yeah.

AO: As much as anything because, father was tired and he was bad-tempered and all that, you see.

VB: Mhm.

AO: So it was a form of escapism.

VB: Did you ever go with your parents to the cinema?

AO: Oh yes!

VB: Yeah.

AO: Yes. Yes. Eh, we'd go there when there was a good film on. Usually a Saturday night, because he was a cotton spinner and he'd start, he'd go to work at half past six in the morning. Start at quarter to eight and he'd get back home at, roughly about half past six, eh, in the evening. And, when you talk about cotton spinning, there were no sitting down. Couldn't even sit down to have their dinner. They kind of crouched eh, squat on the floor, and have it there. There were no canteens as such.

And they worked in their bare feet in the cotton mill. This is another story in itself is the cotton industry. A lot of it's gone now but it used be all round here. Bolton and other, erm, other towns, they specialised in certain counts [probably referring to thread counts]. That's quality of the yarn, be it rough or fine, depending on what was the eh, you know, the resultant manufacture that they were for. Perhaps fine, eh fine shirts. You know, thin, quality shirt. On the other hand they could be used for rough towelling and eh, floor cloths and things like that you see.

VB: Mhm.

AO: But eh, one thing about cotton though is they reckon that they never wasted anything. Even the cotton waste they used as string known as bandings.

VB: Mhm.

AO: I've still got quite a lot left that my father brought home about twenty, thirty years ago!
[laughs].

VB: [laughs]

AO: We had unlimited, eh, you know, access to it.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And eh, I think they used.... Nowadays, people get paid by cheque. At one time they got paid by money. But, with the cotton industry, the minders, or mule spinners, they had control over their individual big piecer and a little piecer [often boys]. [train noise in background] The little piecer in particular, used to clean up a lot of the dust and used to go under the machines. But, a cotton spinner. I reckon they used to walk something about ten miles a day. You'd be on your feet between, say, quarter to eight and eh, half past five. And you only had about hour and a quarter eh, you know, for dinner time. No breaks in the middle because it was all production. You kept up with the machine. And if you're walking at two miles an hour. Walk, and then stop and tie up ends and walk and that.

VB: Mhm.

AO: I mean, you remember, that's five-and-a-half days a week. No Saturday morning. [pause 2 seconds] Yes, it's a hard life. Now of course, it's changed a lot. They've got more automatic eh, [them years have gone?] [rings?] spinning. Automatic machines [never go together?]. They had, during the war, or just after the war, a lot of eh, foreign labour came in, particularly Polish people and they, there's a few left in Bolton but, a lot of them, they went on to, on to Canada and other places like that.

VB: Mhm.

AO: But eh, and then again, the machines were going from half past eh, from about half past seven till half past five at night.

VB: Yeah.

AO: With just a short break. And now, of course, they've got erm, they've got a lot of Asians working and their machines are going 24 hours a day for seven days a week!

VB: Yeah.

AO: Anyway, that's digressing. A bit off the subject.

VB: Yeah. No, but I mean, it's interesting getting that sort of background 'cause your father must've been really exhausted.

AO: Oh well, he was. Very hard.

VB: Wouldn't have any energy [laughs] to go out to the pictures.

AO: I never remember a doctor coming to my father. I never remember him being off work. And he was working in the cotton industry for oh, fifty years.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Mhm. [pause 3 seconds]

VB: But you were saying you did sometimes go out on a Saturday night.

AO: Oh yes! Yes.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But eh, another thing we used to do was, we went to bed, well, roughly at about half past nine at night. And then, quite often, eh Sunday, we'd go, [would be either?] myself, we'd go for a walk in the bit of country that was around till dinnertime, and then he used go to bed in the afternoon.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And that was kind of a, you know, general practice.

VB: Yeah. Did you go to church on a Sunday?

AO: Well I used to go to Sunday School.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And then I drifted off and--

VB: Yeah.

AO: Especially when these, you know, school superintendent, you know, didn't bother coming.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But, then again, we were kind of growing up and there were lads, I remember we used to go walking and the like. Yeah.

VB: That was actually a thing that I meant to ask but I didn't. Were you raised in sort of Church of England then?

AO: Eh, well I was christened in erm, Church of England.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And eh, that was just for the christening. But, then again, I went to the local Wesleyan Methodists and they had a scout troop there and eh, used to go camping and the likes.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But eh, yeah.

VB: Mhm. Did your family have any strong political views or?

AO: Eh, ooh. [pause 2 seconds] I think they might have had but eh, neither party were any good, it was always a case of, you know, if there was any news on the radio it was there.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And they had a reason for everything going wrong, be they Labour, Conservative or whatever.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Mhm.

VB: Yeah. [pause 4 seconds] So, I mean, it's interesting when you were saying that about the, eh local stars. I mean were there stars that were particularly popular, do you think, in Bolton, or...?

AO: Oh yes. There would be. Yes. Well, Charles Laughton. That's, they were real character, real character actors, weren't they?

VB: Yeah.

AO: Charles Laughton. Eh, Sir Cedric Hardwicke. Erm, there was another one who used to take off Disraeli. I forget who was that one. Yes, they were real top notches.

VB: Mhm.

[tape background noise]

AO: And of course, eh, Bolton's had its eh, more recently, Frank Finlay. Eh, was in Bolton. He lived at Farnworth. He went to Bolton School.

VB: Really.

AO: And eh, I think Ian McShane eh, that 'Lovejoy'.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Erm, I've yet to get the connection yet. But I think his father had a barber's shop in [W?gate] Bolton. It's no longer there now but eh, that's where I think there's a connection there as well.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Eh, then of course, you've got Huddersfield [inaudible], they produced, eh, stars, didn't they? In particular... You see a lot of these stars, they were kind of, quite good at school.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And then they joined the local amateur dramatics. And they were in the reps where they toured up, you know, up and down the country.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And of course, from there, they got to establish, you got the smaller companies like Basil Dean and Elstree and Pinewood.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And eh, they kind of grew up from small eh, small beginnings.

VB: Yeah. That reminds me--

AO: Stewart Granger was another one. He was from Huddersfield. I've got his autograph there.

VB: Oh really!

AO: Yeah. I've got it on a [inaudible; card?]. But eh, during the war I went to erm North Wales on a [train in background] on a cycling holiday. We were near Capel Curig, there were three of us, on bikes. We saw this kind of a furniture van or a dry cleaning van. I don't know which it was. But it had a board that dropped down the back. Anyway, there were about three or four figures there, sat on this kind of back of the van and they were in Spanish, erm Spanish clothes. Clothes you see. And eh, I asked someone, "What's going on here?" "Oh!" he said. "We're making a film." I said, "Oh, that's interesting." [We were at the back of?] Capel Curig, which is limestone and trees and the likes and eh, they eh... So, I said, "Oh, I'll have a look at this." And so, they decided, we'll set up there. We're making Lady Eleanor Smith's book of caravans. And eh, oh, it was quite funny that. There were quite a few of us round. And, being wartime, there weren't cars around. Nothing like that. They was supposed to be attacked in this kind of erm, eh, [pause 2 seconds] a setting between two or three big limestone rocks. And there was one of the assistants there, or there were two of them actually, and they were on this big tree over this rock to give kind of a scenic effect.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And eh, Stewart Granger, he had eh, he had a horse. He was dressed in period costume as well. Kind of a, well-to-do. cape on and you know, tight trousers and the like. And eh, then, it was a case of day like today. Perhaps more cloudy. And the sun would come out and then it would go in, you see. So, it was a case of, just judge it so that he would dash through this kind of opening between these rocks you see. And he was supposed to be attacked after that. And then, he's on the point of going, and then the sun comes out!

VB: [laughs]

AO: [laughs] And eh, he did that once and then, it wasn't quite right. So, did it again. He was on the point of doing it. And then it would cloud over.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And then, the next time, he was ready for doing. He said, "For Christ's sake! Give this bloody horse something to make it go!" [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: Anyway, that being so, they done these shots. And eh [pause 2 seconds] I was close to, you know. I had a little Russian camera with me. A black-and-white film one. And they said, "Oh, can I take your picture?" He said, "Yeah. Can you undo this [horse?]?" There was a little boy stood at the side. And, you know, he was quite a little, he said to this little lad, he said, "Do you like horses?" "Yes, sir." "Well, will you hold this?"

VB: [laughs]

AO: Then he turned round to me, he said, "Will you undo the knot at the back of this?" [laughs] I said, "Can you sign this?" I'd nothing else. A pen. There were no biros in those days. I think, could have, it was a pen. That's right. Yes. And eh, I got this youth hostel card. I've still got it, you know. When you go to a youth hostel, you put your card in and it gets stamped that you've been at that particular hostel at that particular day. Oh well.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And we were staying down in a place called Betws-y-coed.

VB: Oh. Yeah.

AO: Another time, in 19, erm, 1948, I wasn't married then. I was at a, I was a military technician at a public school called Haileybury.

VB: Mhm.

AO: It's one of the top ones. Haileybury and Imperial Service College was at, erm, Hertford. Which is eh, just north of London by about twelve, fourteen mile. And they came to make a film, I think it was called eh, *The Guinea Pig*. You know. He was in that, erm, Richard Attenborough--

VB: Mhm.

AO: And Sheila Sim was there. Was Sheila Sim his wife? Yes, it would be. Because I think her father was Alastair Sim.

VB: Right.

AO: Okay.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And eh, they were making this film. And they came to the college because they had a superb setup for a cricket match. They had the pavilion there. And they had eh, you know, extras there. And erm, and the likes. And they were filming this. He was supposed to be playing this shot, was eh, Richard Attenborough. And eh, to get the sound effect, was eh, the eh, one of the directors there threw a ball that had been held by another director there you see. Or equivalent. And, he's supposed to have, you know, banged it up into the air. Sorry.

VB: That's okay.

AO: And eh, everybody looked up at this ball. And one of the person, ah, people at this supposed school, the headmaster I think it was, and another teacher there, they were sat on a form [bench]. And everybody looked up at this ball and this ball actually came down, and caught one of these two chaps. Now one of these chaps I think was Cecil Parker. I don't know who the other one was. Oh, I'll tell you who was in it as well. Robert Flemyng. And I think he's a local, eh, he's from this area. And it caught him, just on the shoulder, here. Another few inches and it would've hit him on the head!

VB: Mhm.

AO: But, you know, I used to like coming across where they were doing some filming.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Yeah.

VB: I was interested when you said that, the Stewart Granger story 'cause I was just in Betws-y-coed at the weekend there.

AO: Were you really?

VB: Yes.

AO: Oh! Well! Yes. Yes.

VB: So it's interesting to know that'd been filmed there.

AO: Oh yes. Oh well, another one they did there was eh, I think it was 'Up the Khyber' [referring to *Carry On...Up the Khyber*] it was called.

VB: Right.

AO: With eh, Kenneth erm,

VB: Oh. Kenneth Williams?

AO: Kenneth Williams. Yes. And there they had erm, they had cutouts of hardboard stuck on, you know.

VB: [laughs]

AO: Representing, you know, fortresses and things like that. They were stood up there, in one of the passes there, from Betws-y-coed.

VB: Uhuh.

AO: Eh, for quite a long time.

VB: I see.

AO: And eh, another place, quite close to there. I shall be there in probably another fortnight or so. No. Next week, all being well. With a friend of mine. Having three days in North Wales.

VB: Oh lovely.

AO: Portmeirion.

VB: Right.

AO: Have you been to Portmeirion?

VB: Haven't. No.

AO: Well that's where a lot of these erm, erm, what do you call them? 'The Prisoner'. Eh, Patrick Magee--

VB: Yeah.

AO: Series. They were taken, they were taken there. That was quite good as a setting. [pause 2 seconds] Yeah.

VB: Mhm.

AO: There must be lots of other things like that that you just can't, eh, can't recollect.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Of course Bolton, it did *The Family Way* with James Mason. And, he was another came from the same area, Stewart Granger and eh, Huddersfield, I think he was a product of them. And of course Oldham was Dora Bryan. And eh, Graham Stark. Eric Sykes. In fact I used to work for Ferranti's during the war. At Bury there. The chappie eh, Bill Lawton. And he married Dora Bryan.

VB: Mhm!

AO: And then of course they went down to, down to Brighton. I think they got a hotel there.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And of course, Gracie Fields, she went down to Peacehaven and of course, eventually the erm, Isle of Capri. [pause 2 seconds] Yes.

VB: Yeah. What about erm, George Formby? Was he popular?

AO: Oh yes! Very popular was George Formby. Everybody knew George Formby. There were loads of comedians. You see, one of these things was... Probably like the Scottish comedians. You've got Will Fyffe. You've got Harry Lauder and the likes. And they kind of gravitated from, you know, through poverty. And eh, it's the same with the boxers. Boxers, were, you know, it was one way of getting some money quick and they got established, and the like. But George Formby, eh, he was born at Wigan I think it was. Eh, [train noise in background] but I think, [pause 2 seconds] if my memory's right, this was George Formby Junior isn't it?

VB: Oh!

AO: I'm not sure whether he had a father who was a comic as well.

VB: Right.

AO: I'll have to check that one up.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And eh...

VB: I think that's right actually.

AO: Mhm?

VB: When you mention that. I think that's right.

AO: Yeah. Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Yeah. I think his father died on the stage, actually.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Mhm.

VB: 'Cause Gracie Fields, did Gracie Fields not have a brother that performed as well?

AO: Had a brother? Yes. Nowhere near the type.

VB: No.

AO: I saw his [sic] brother. I think his name's Sid.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Sid Fields. And he kind of was in the shadow of Gracie but eh, last time he was on eh, doing variety at eh, Llandudno and The Happy Valley.

VB: Ah!

AO: That's quite a few years ago now.

VB: Right.

AO: Kind of a pier entertainment. But this was a kind of complex near the pier.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But, you know, big letters. Sid Field and the like. He never really made the grade as erm, as Gracie Fields.

VB: Yeah. Did you like the, another thing I meant to ask you about was musicals. Do you like or did you like musicals much?

AO: Eh, not a lot. No. I was more for stories rather than eh, than musicals. Plus, a lot of these things have changed. I can stand musicals now and the like. I wasn't musically inclined. I mean I couldn't sing. And when I was three years old, no, four years old you're starting school there. You know. I got picked out for not being able to sing and I had to go and read a little red book called 'Red Riding Hood'.

VB: Aw! [laughs]

AO: [laughs] So, after that, I was totally discouraged.

VB: Yeah. Oh that's cruel. [laughs]

AO: Mhm.

VB: Aw. [pause 3 seconds] Mhm. Did you like the action films? The sort of American, Cagney and--

AO: Oh! Everybody [would?] that--

VB: Edward G. Robinson.

AO: James Cagney.

VB: Right.

AO: Edmund O'Brien. Erm, Edward G. Robinson. Edward Arnold. Sidney Greenstreet. Eh, Peter Lorre. Humphrey Bogart. Oh, yes.

VB: Did you have any favourites among them?

AO: Eh [pause 2 seconds] yes. Sometimes. I liked eh, William Powell. He used to take part of erm, eh, detective. Eh [pause 2 seconds] some of the Ellery Queen. Ellery Queen was the author. His, his particular theme was, that he would write a book and then he would leave you to kind of, you know. [pause 2 seconds] You got so far, towards the end, guess who it is, and then he would follow it through by giving, you know, the clues that you've missed kind of thing.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Yeah.

VB: Did you like the sort of mystery?

AO: Oh yes. Aye. Well they were always good, were mysteries.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Yeah. Yeah. Richard Dix. Eh, and then some, you know, some were cowboys and then they went onto thrillers. Yeah.

VB: What about the, the women stars? Did you have any favourites there?

AO: Oh, Loretta Young and eh, Carmen Miranda. And eh, eh, she was in musicals of course. And, oh, Bob Hope as a comedian. He was superb.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And of course, he's from London. And of course you've got your erm, Cary Grant, who's from Bristol. Yeah. [pause 2 seconds]. Yes. A lot of it's coming back now. [laughs]

VB: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah.

AO: Mhm. [pause 3 seconds] Yeah there's a lot of new ones come out and they last for just so long and then they've had it.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But eh, then they're not sort of from-- John Wayne I used to like.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Interestingly, the other day, I don't know whether you recollect it or not but, erm, he died some while ago from cancer.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Now, there were a programme on, quite a good documentary, about two or three months ago, in America and it was a place where, I think it was the Nevada Desert or somewhere like that, where they did a lot of this atomic bomb testing.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And this particular company filming went and made a film in that area. There were quite a lot of dead cow carcasses about and the likes. And, it wasn't long after that that quite a number making this film, died. I think some of the women stars as well.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And that, you know, is not particularly, you know, well-known.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Mhm.

VB: Mhm. [pause 3 seconds]

AO: Yeah there was eh, yeah. Buffalo Bill, you know, people taking Buffalo Bill off. I think he came to Bolton one time. And eh, so there's lots of stars that eh, people don't realise.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Oh! So that brings me to a point now where the eh, eh, [pause 2 seconds] What else have I got? [pause 9 seconds; looking in bag] These.

VB: Mhm!

AO: These are treasures. I don't think anybody in Bolton will show you these anyway. It's a bit draughty so, I trust they don't get torn but, we can hold them carefully.

VB: Yeah.

AO: That's not one. Well I mean that's an old one, you see.

VB: Right.

AO: 1968. But eh, I think there's something dealing with pictures somewhere along the line. [pause 2 seconds] That's another one. Think I've got it here somewhere. [pause 10 seconds; looking through papers] These are all financial things I cut out years ago. [pause 3 seconds] Let's see if I've got another... This'll be it. This'll be it. Put that back. They're no use, now. You know.

VB: [laughs]

AO: [laughs] There you are.

VB: Ah! [pause 4 seconds] Oh! That's interesting.

AO: Mhm.

VB: This is the 'Sunday Telegraph', January the 20th, 1985.

AO: Uhuh.

VB: With Leslie Halliwell.

AO: Yes.

VB: And how the silver screen enriched his life during the Depression!

AO: Yes, now, I believe footnote, I think it may give a reference.

VB: Yeah.

AO: That may be of interest to you.

VB: Ah!

AO: Yes. Have you seen that one?

VB: 'Seats in All Parts'. I have actually, I've had it mentioned to me but I haven't seen it.

AO: Mhm. Oh yes.

VB: I must make a point of looking at that 'cause it does sound--

AO: Oh yes. It is. I mean his book about films in those days.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And what he, what he writes about them--

VB: Yeah.

AO: Is similar to what I experienced.

VB: Yeah.

AO: That eh, he took off with films. And kept with films, you see.

VB: Yeah. Mhm.

AO: But eh, his book is eh, more or less the bible. I think there's been a bit of discussion there. Somebody's eh, not very long ago, it was mentioned, they'd take word for word erm, you know, information out of his book.

VB: Yes. I'm sure. Yes.

AO: Yeah. So I don't know whether there's anything additional to this. [pause 2 seconds] I keep a lot of these, I used to keep a lot of these for the erm, nature stuff you see.

VB: Yeah, yeah. [pause 2 seconds] I'll need to see if I can get hold of that in Glasgow. [inaudible; background noise] get a copy.

AO: Well. You'd better take the date, hadn't you, actually?

VB: Yeah. Well, I'll just, erm, I'll read it into the tape, it's January the 20th, 1985, and it'll pick that up.

AO: Yes, good. Now, these are better ones. [background noise] The further you go back. 1948. Women's shoes at 20 shillings.

VB: Oh!

AO: Oh, that's just the Town Council. That's, that's not needed. [pause 3 seconds] This is the one that I'm coming to. [pause 5 seconds] This is, 1946 that one. Well that didn't apply. Any minute now. [pause 6 seconds] Ah, here we are. This is it. [pause 2 seconds] 1934. How about that? Eh? Who keeps papers that long? [laughs] One penny. 1934. How old's that one then?

VB: Oh.

AO: Sixty year old?

VB: Sixty years, yes.

AO: Yes well, I got this particularly because it shows the various cinemas.

VB: Oh that's wonderful.

AO: Not all of them.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But eh, Theatre Royal for instance. And there it gives you the stars. Warren William. May Robson. Everybody knew her. Jean Parker. Yes. Ned Sparks. Yes. He was, you know, one of the erm, he was in many, many things. Yes. Eh, and then the Grand Theatre. That was the live erm--

VB: Right.

AO: Live place. That's where lot of stars went, 'Hutch' [probably referring to Leslie Hutchinson] and erm, Henry Hall and his dance band. And erm, Kitty Masters. They were together. They got Jack Hulbert. These are comedies. This is comedy I like as well. Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge. His wife, wasn't it? And Wallace Beery, *The Bowery*.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Well there was eh, Wallace Beery. And eh, there was another Beery wasn't there? Noah Beery.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And then, later on, I think he died some little while ago, was one of the sons. And then of course, the great actors, the character actors in America, then of course, the Barrymores. There's eh, Lionel Barrymore. And eh, there was the other Barrymore. Ah! Fay Wray. She was one of the leading ladies. [pause 2 seconds] Yes, it's a general pict, paper is this. Jack Oakie and Bing Crosby. Tom Walls and Errol Flynn. Of course, they were in, you know, same, similar set up to Jack Hulbert. [tape cuts out]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

VB: What about that one? The one that Jack Hulbert, *Jack Ahoy*.

AO: Yeah.

VB: The Hippodrome. What was that like?

AO: Well, erm, that was very good. That was a cinema, initially.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And eh, then eventually, it became rep.

VB: Oh right.

AO: And eh, that's opposite the Bolton Post Office now. The location is.

VB: Right.

AO: And eh, [pause 2 seconds] they produced quite a number of outstanding ones. In eh, 'Allo Allo', it was was his name, Kay? Who got injured.

VB: Oh I know the chap you mean.

AO: Yes. Yes.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Eh, he used to perform there. With Lawrence Williamson. And eh, who's the other one? The eh, tall chap with dark hair who took off the parson? Eh, slim faced. Eh, oh!

VB: Erm,

[pause 3 seconds]

AO: No. Just, erm--

VB: Not Derek something?

AO: Yes.

VB: Derek Nimmo.

AO: Derek Nimmo's the one.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And then there was another one, eh, [pause 2 seconds] oh, eh. [pause 2 seconds] Another great character actor. He's at eh, his father was eh, a parson at Morris Green in Bolton. Eh, oh, he's been in quite a number of them. Eh, mhm. Hard to describe him.

VB: Yeah.

AO: It'll come back to me when I get home, I suppose. [amused voice] And then, the Rialto. Now that's the picture that's on that piece of paper.

VB: Right.

AO: Well, The Rialto I think and the Queen's. And the eh, one, an out-district one called the Carlton. I think they were all on the same circuit.

VB: Oh right.

AO: You know, i.e. that is, one or a few individuals. I think one was a chappie called Crew. He was a money-lender come chappie who dealt with bookmaking and the likes you see. Then, they had money invested in that.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Eh, Bill [T?]. This is the chap I'm thinking on. Then they go to 'Statues of All Time', which was George Arliss. "Story based on the dramatic incident, life of a great French poet-philosopher and firebrand". He was superb was George Arliss.

VB: Mhm.

AO: He could take anybody off. Another, another Charles Laughton. Now, Charles Laughton, did he come from round here? He certainly went to Stonyhurst College. And of course, over where those flats are now, Ben Kingsley.

VB: Right.

AO: Yes. He came from here. Eh, Greenwood. Walter Greenwood. The author of erm, [pause 2 seconds] oh, 'Love on the Dole' and other ones. Eh, Leslie Hanson of course. Frances Day. Well they were, here we go, Reginald Denny, for instance.

VB: Right.

AO: Incredible, isn't it? Oh, there's Ken Maynard in *Come On Tarzan*. Now, Tarzan was the name of his horse.

VB: Ah right! [laughs]

AO: And Cicely Courtneidge of course. Of course she was married to Jack Hulbert.

VB: Aunt Sally.

AO: Erm, Katharine Hepburn of course.

VB: Yeah.

AO: I don't know *Christopher Strong*. Charles Bickford. He was the real tough guy, he was. You know. An English chap. But as strong as they make them. And then we have here, Bebe Daniels. Of course she was married to Ben Lyon. And they came and did radio programmes, didn't they?

VB: Right.

AO: Eh, The Belle. That's a local one that was on the outskirts. That got burned down. Then we have another one, another cinema called eh, the 'Tin Can' [probably referring to the Picturedrome, aka the 'Tin Trunk'].

VB: Yeah.

AO: And that was on Tong Moor Road Road. And it was called that because it had a tin roof. And during a storm you could hear the noise. There's [inaudible], an actor there.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Clare Francis. The dark-haired one. [Noel Astor?] [pause 3 seconds] [background noise]

VB: Did you use the papers much as a way to decide what picture to go to?

AO: Oh yes! Yes.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Well. It was that and, eh, to give you an all-round view of where they were.

VB: Yeah.

AO: I remember one Saturday night, I was about thirteen or fourteen years old, thought I would go to the pictures and eh, I started off at the nearest one which was then the Carlton. And then I went to the eh, the erm, the [Theatre] Royal I think. And then the Rialto. And I went all over Bolton. I couldn't get in [amused voice].

VB: Oh no.

AO: Yeah.

VB: So it was that packed out.

AO: Yes. Yes. Yes, yes.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And I got to that stage where eh, if I'd have got in, then I'd have just seen about twenty minutes.

VB: Yeah.

AO: But I mean when it's [inaudible; background noise]. You know. Advertising 'a penny stage on the tram' as a virtue for buying that house [reading from clipping]. Eh, "36 Third Avenue, modern. Four rooms. Bath, pantry. Penny stage on a bus or a tram".

VB: That's amazing.

AO: Mhm. But that's going off the point. Oh, and then, of course, with [cotton mills?] they had a beauty competition at the Palais de Danse.

VB: Yeah. Were there good places to go dancing then?

AO: Yes. They were good sensible dancing, you know. None of this rowdiness. And they didn't need bouncers on the door. And of course, they had top, top bands as well. Yes. Good old -- Don't know whether there's anything else relative there. I don't know.

VB: Did you go to the dancing much yourself?

AO: No. Not a lot. I was eh, a bit of a loner. And shy of girls and the likes.

VB: [laughs]

AO: Parents didn't encourage me and what have you. The fact is that, life was so, so rough in those days that eh, you know, I didn't, you know, when I was that age I didn't, I didn't want to commit myself, eh, at all to anything like that.

VB: Yeah.

AO: So I liked places, I like eh, getting about and seeing things. And there's barely a place in the country that I've not been to. I think the only part I've not been to is about the south-east corner.

VB: Yeah.

AO: And eh, I think I've been everywhere else.

VB: Yeah. It's great to get a chance to see that. You know the--

AO: Yes. I thought it was. Yeah. Yeah. And eh, been up in Scotland quite a bit. And eh, southern Ireland.

VB: Yeah.

AO: I've never been abroad as such. So I don't think I've anything else that's eh [pause 2 seconds] yeah. I've got everything in here [in bag]. Camera and what have you. And timetables and the like. Yeah. So--

VB: You're like me. I've got the world with me, I think.

AO: Yes, well. Of course in a way, you've got to justify so long.

VB: That's right. Actually one thing that I came across that you might be interested to see is erm, a couple of photos of some of the Bolton cinemas.

AO: Oh! Well, that's the Embassy.

VB: Is it?

AO: Originally called the Electric, there's Woolworth's on the side, yeah.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Yes, oh yes. Ah it became the Imperial. Electric, then the Imperial and then it became the Embassy. Yeah. And I think the reason it was, I said the Electric. Yeah. This is on Deansgate now. Yeah. That's now Woolworth's. Oh. I used to go into Woolworth's and get some mint imperials and then I'd go into, into the Embassy. Mhm. What's the other one?

VB: The other one is erm, one of the programmes, advertisements from the Odeon.

AO: Oh yes. What year is this?

VB: Eh, thirties again. I'm not sure exactly what the date is.

AO: *Victoria the Great*.

VB: Mhm. *The Prisoner of Zenda*, Ronald Colman.

AO: Oh, heavens! Yes, yes, yes. Eh, *The Prisoner of Zenda*. What was the other one?

VB: Erm,

AO: I used to like erm, Alexander Dumas.

VB: Yes. Yeah.

AO: *The Prisoner of Zenda* and the other one. You know. Very similar to it. Mhm.

VB: Oh, there was one that you mentioned.

AO: *The Man In the Iron Mask* was one.

VB: Yeah. What was that one? He made one where he was a, it's quite a similar story to *The Prisoner of Zenda*. He was a politician's brother, and he had to take over.

AO: Oh yeah.

VB: He was his double.

AO: Yeah.

VB: An he sort of took over his life and--

AO: That's right. Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

VB: He was much nicer and--

AO: Yes. Yes. Yes. That called up for eh, a lot of good acting, didn't it?

VB: Yeah.

AO: To be able to change character so well. Yeah.

VB: He was the one that was really bad. And he was a--

VB: That's right.

VB: A sort of fiend and everything! [laughs]

AO: That's right. Drop a clanger. Yeah, Edward G. Robinson, he was eh, in a lot of these prohibition--

VB: Yeah.

AO: You know, type of film. And Bette Davis.

VB: Yeah.

AO: She was marvellous. And of course, you got Alan Ladd as well.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Eh, Jack Buchanan. He was singer and tap dancer. And he were always a joy to watch.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Eh, Jessie Matthews of course. She were a good singing star. And of course we had eh, was it Mary Poppins? Jessie, eh, Matthews, is it? Eh, what's the, no. Eh, who's Mary Poppins?

VB: Oh, erm.

AO: Is it Matthews? [pause 2 seconds] Not Jessie Matthews. I know Jessie Matthews.

VB: I can picture her [laughs].

AO: Yeah, yeah.

VB: But I can't think what her name is!

AO: Well she used to come local. She used to come to do some of the, you know, variety clubs and the likes.

VB: Right.

AO: She was at eh, I think she was brought up at Blackpool.

VB: Yeah.

AO: I think her parents were in eh, eh, in vaudeville as well. [pause 2 seconds] Eh, [pause 2 seconds] yeah. Fredric March. He was a good discovery. Oh, John Boles. He was in eh *The Desert Song* wasn't he?

VB: Right.

AO: And Barbara Stanwyck [inaudible; background noise]. He was always... And Edgar Wallace, *The Squeaker*. [inaudible; background noise] He was a writer. He was actually a reporter, a Fleet Street reporter at one time. And eh, *The Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel*. That was one of Leslie Howard's.

VB: Ah.

AO: You know, super ones. That, you know, come time and time again. Yeah. The Odeon there. Now that one that I told you about eh, at Kilburn. Have you been to London?

VB: Erm, I have. Yes.

AO: Where did you go?

VB: Eh, well,

AO: Shall I keep these?

VB: Well, I was going to--

AO: No, no.

VB: I can get you a copy.

AO: No, no, No! It's all right. I don't need them.

VB: [laughs]

AO: Yeah.

VB: Erm, one of the, the project's going to be doing some work in London.

AO: Yeah.

VB: We're going to be looking mainly at north London.

AO: Yes, that's right.

VB: Harrow.

AO: Harrow?

VB: Yeah.

AO: Oh yes! I know Harrow. I've been everywhere, haven't I? Yeah. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

AO: Yes, eh, the Granada. [inaudible; background noise]

VB: Yes.

AO: And that was 1930 eh, mhm,' 37, '38 period. 'Cause I was in London just before war broke out. That's right. I was at a factory in Reading. [inaudible; background noise] But previous to that I was living in north-west London, so I went to cinemas there. The one I was thinking in particular, I think it was the biggest in Europe called the State. And eh, that was a super one. Of course, they got great big velvet curtains, you know. And decor. And it was a mammoth place. Always smelled nice, you know. You got the ladies coming round with those squirt things. Eh, but eh, down there they were quite good value for money.

VB: Mhm.

AO: Eh, [pause 2 seconds] by that I mean to say, they'd sometimes two good films on, plus, eh, inter film entertainment. Eh, Billy Cotton Junior. His father was a dance band leader. But he himself came and was on the stage for so long.

VB: Right.

AO: And that, that was an [extra?] attraction at quite a number of cinemas. Yes, the Harrow one. Well, in fact, erm, I used to live at a place called Kenton.

VB: Right.

AO: Do you know Kenton?

VB: I know where it is.

AO: Yes. It's eh, just a stone's throw from Harrow.

VB: Yeah.

AO: I used to work there. And eh, lived and worked in Willesden, Cricklewood, Hendon. Eh, used to go to cinemas there. But I didn't go for six months. I'd a period when, I used to walk past the one at Neasden. Which is, the area's known as Brent.

VB: Mhm.

AO: But eh, I just managed to earn enough to pay my board and to save up a few coppers, to get my train home, eh train fare home. I think it was about 12/6 [about 62 pence] return in those days.

VB: Mhm.

AO: So, I had to walk past, past this particular cinema. I forget what its name was but, first time I went, was, erm, Jack Buchanan, and, oh, Sonia Henson I think her name was, was his partner. In this particular musical. So it was sixpence without going to the pictures.

VB: [laughs]

AO: And eventually I, you know. And then sometimes I used to go down into the city. The only one I seemed to go to was, I think it was the Adelphi in the Strand. That's right. Because they used to get the films there, before they went on circuit, i.e.--

VB: Ah, I see.

AO: They were shown in London. And then, about a fortnight after that, they got circulated round the country. But in that intervening week, they had them at the Adelphi. So, we were, we were able to go there for sixpence and have about three or four hours, watching the, you know, watching the films.

VB: Right.

AO: Yeah. [pause 2 seconds] I used to live quite close to, to erm, back to back to Hanger Lane Station. Kind of got Harrow there, Harrow-on-the-Hill where the school is.

VB: Right.

AO: And then you got Stonebridge Park. I worked at Stonebridge Park for a few weeks at a radio factory there. I was handling stuff and eh, the chappie there, the boss, it was only a little place, was eh, what was his name? Sobell. Do you know Sobell?

VB: I don't, no.

AO: Well he became Sir Michael Sobell. Who eventually owned [MacMichael?] there.

VB: Right!

AO: And he was the father, he was father-in-law to erm, Weinstock, who is now, who owns GEC plus Al and all those other ones. But he was an Hungarian refugee and I remember going to him one time and saying, you know, "You promised me a tuppence a day rise". And he said "Yes." But I was only there for about two or three weeks and then I got the job back at this aircraft camera place and from there, I went with them to Reading. Mhm. But, I got a bicycle so I was able to get about, erm, quite a lot. I worked at Neasden. And I worked at Willesden. And, that was about three-quarters of an hour's walk. We were working in a [inaudible] having to wear clogs. So I developed corns on my feet.

VB: Mhm.

AO: And eh, so that eh, you know, it became a bit hard, walking. And so, got talking to one man and he'd a pushbike for sale. So, for three pound, I got a pushbike. I took the new road. I got to know London. And eh, you know, London is an Englishman's London. Sunday mornings with all the heavy traffic about. And, looking down Carlton Terrace. And then South Kensington and all the museums round there. And the, you know, going on the Thames and eh, then out in the country. Went down to the South Coast and what have you. So, you know, I've had me fill so to speak.

VB: Yes.

AO: And eh, yeah. Eh, course, Jack Hylton. You've heard of Jack Hylton haven't you? Well he was a band leader. Well he was born in Bolton. There a lot of names that come and eh, yeah. [pause 2 seconds] Don't know if there's anything here that'll strike me at the moment. There will be when I get back.

VB: Yes. Well that's always the way, isn't it? [laughs]

AO: Yes. Yeah. I've done a lot of tape recording as well. You know. If there's anything good. Well I've got eh, two or three tape recorders. I don't use it much but eh, classical I like.

VB: Yes.

AO: But a lot of, you know, history stuff and local history. Keen on anything from Anglo-Saxon, Rome and upwards. I never used to be at one time. And eh, so, that's another thing. I look through radio programmes, see what's on. It's surprising what comes up.

VB: Yeah.

AO: In fact, there's one chappie who was, lived at Salford here and he was a fireman. And he developed the North West Sound Archives.

VB: Right.

AO: And he's based at eh, Clitheroe Castle. He's been round and his associates, but he in particular, interviewing people, whatever jobs they are and things like that.

VB: Yeah.

AO: Mhm.

VB: Mhm.

AO: So, it's a case of working round. As I say, the factory you've just passed, at the back there.

VB: Yeah.

AO: It's got, I don't know whether I mentioned it. It's got Mackintosh on the side of it. And that's where mackintoshes originated.

VB: Right.

AO: You know. It's where it became Dunlop and the like.

VB: Ah yes. Yeah.

AO: So it's eh, ten past four. Do you want a wander round?

VB: Yeah, that would be good. Yeah.

AO: Yes. [tape cuts out]

[End of Interview]