

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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* Lowestoft, Norfolk, 19 October 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Doreen Lyell

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson / Standardised by Annette Kuhn

* DL=Doreen Lyell/ VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: First of two interviews with Doreen Lyell; Sound Quality: Good.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[tape introduction by Valentina Bold]

VB: I'll put this near where you're sitting.

DL: Is that the microphone?

VB: That's the microphone. [laughs]

DL: Good God. Don't believe it.

VB: Eh, I'll maybe clip it on actually to this paper or something if that's okay.

DL: Mhm. Yes, that's fine.

VB: And that'll keep it steady. I'll just leave it there so I can keep track of it. That's fine I think. Right. [laughs] Yeah 'cause one thing I was wanting to ask was a wee bit about your family background. Did your... was your father working locally?

DL: Yes. He... he... but as I said, he was unemployed for, when he came back from the war, he only had temporary jobs. You see work in Lowestoft was seasonal. He was always employed in the fishing... in the fishing season which was the herring season. Erm, when the Scottish people used to come down for the herring season and they had to supply all the boats with the coal and supplies, food and rigging and everything like that. So there was always plenty of work you could get then. But then, after Christmas there was always unemployment.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Unless there was snow. 'Course then you'd get a few weeks sweeping the snow away for the corporations.... in those days they used to do all the paths. And all the shop fronts and everything. The corporations. Now you get no services like that at all.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Not that we get the snow now but. And then in the summer he would have another temporary job until erm, and that went on till I was about fourteen.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And then he eh, he helped to build the boating lake, he had these sort of labouring jobs. He... he... erm... he helped to build the Kensington Gardens boating lake.

VB: Mhm!

DL: Oh it was a lovely boating lake there. You know, really popular with the children. And erm, and then when it was finished they gave him the job of looking after it. He was superintendent there. But of course, [laughs] then the war came. He loved that job. We never saw him in the summer. You know, used to go out in the morning, come out about half past ten at night. He was working up there all the time. He loved it with the children--

VB: Mhm.

DL: And everything. And the children loved the place. And eh, then 'course the war came, they shut it up and he had to go into the Town Hall and they made him the rates collector. [laughs] So he was cycling round--

VB: Ah-h.

DL: Collecting people's rates. [laughs] And that was, that was his job until he, until he died.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Yes. And then they stopped that. They've stopped collecting those now. You have to take them up yourself!

VB: Aw dear.

DL: Yes.

VB: And did your mother work?

DL: No. My mother never worked.

VB: Yeah.

DL: She was always there for us.

VB: And can I ask how many brothers and sisters you had?

DL: Well I had one sister.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And she went into the Air Force and she met an American. And she was a GI bride. And she went to America, after the war. And eh, she died in 1982. She was sixty-nine. She had cancer. I did manage to go over and see her once before erm.... I'd never seen her home. And I'd always planned to go when I retired. Well this was two years before I retired. Erm, I decided to go because, you know, I

didn't like the signs. So I did go and see her home. And, you know, her hair was all, she had hardly any hair and it wasn't like her. But she was fairly well. And then in the next two years, erm... she deteriorated and she died.

VB: Mhm.

DL: So that was all the family I had. And all my family are dead. My aunts and uncles and everything.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And I never married. So erm, you know. I've got friends. I'm not lonely. I'm never lonely. But erm, I've got no family at all.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Yeah. [pause 3 seconds]

VB: Erm, the other things I was wanting to ask eh, were, were you brought up in a particular religious background?

DL: Eh, Church of England. Yes. Church of England. We always went to Sunday School. I think to get us out of my mother's way really. [laughs] So she could have a bit of peace on the Sunday afternoon.

VB: [laughs]

DL: But we always went.

VB: Right.

DL: And erm, I used to go to St John's Church, which is just before you get to the swing bridge. But it's been demolished.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And I've hardly been to church since. I used to love St John's. I went to St John's School which was attached to the church. And erm, we used to go in there for prayers and special occasions. And eh, you know, it was lovely. But erm, Pakefield Church is quite nice. I do go there on high days and holidays. I don't make a regular habit. Because I've got to walk there. And, it doesn't always suit me to walk, because of the rheumatism.

VB: Mm.

DL: And so erm, I'm not a regular churchgoer. But I do love the church. Mhm. I like singing hymns.
[laughs]

VB: Ah. Some lovely... lovely tunes as well.

DL: Oh yeah.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Mhm.

VB: And the only other thing was eh, if you had, do you have any strong political views? Have you ever--

DL: Well, of course, with my father being unemployed most of those years he eh, he was strong Labour, you know.

VB: Mhm.

DL: He, he was, he didn't belong to the Labour Party as such but he used to serve on the committees for the unemployed. To try and get better conditions for them and that. But in the end, erm...
[laughs] it was his making really. Because he was such a nuisance to them at the Town Hall that they gave him a job.

VB: [laughs]

DL: See. They gave him this permanent job. And, well we couldn't complain because, [laughs] you know, he was employed. We were happy. And my mother was happy. But we never... we never voted anything except Labour.

VB: Ah.

DL: You felt, if you did, it would be a betrayal really. With all you went through in the thirties.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And I haven't changed my mind. I mean, with this government, eh, they seem hopelessly incompetent. I mean I know Labour isn't the answer either. It's not the answer. I don't know what is. But I know the Conservatives are not the answer because they, all the nationalised industries have just made hundreds and thousands of pounds for these private companies and I think that's immoral.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And people are paying for it in lots of ways. They're having their homes repossessed because they can't afford to pay their dues now. And there was no need for it.

VB: Mhm.

DL: They... they functioned quite well as a nationalised industry and they should never have been reverted.

VB: Mhm.

DL: That's my opinion. [laughs]

VB: Oh I agree with you there.

DL: Oh good.

VB: I mean selling people something that they own already [amused voice]--

DL: Yes.

VB: Has got to be wrong, isn't it?

DL: 'Course it is!

VB: Yeah.

DL: It's hopeless!

VB: Yeah.

DL: But there again, I mean, that's the policy of the, of the erm, Conservative Party. To look after their own. And they're in business to make money. And that's it.

VB: Yeah.

DL: I know you can't afford the welfare state. Really. I mean it's gone too much the other way.

VB: Mhm.

DL: We can't afford it. But you need some kind of structure for the poor. And eh, but, you see in our day we would never take advantage of it. We eh, we never had a thing from the government, except for... In fact, my father when he was unemployed, he only had a year and then he had to go onto what we called Relief. And erm, he had.... instead of having money you had food tickets and things like that, you know. And erm, but we never had any handouts or anything like that. Except once I remember at Christmas, I think it must've been the WI [Women's Institute]. Erm, they gave us all a parcel. [chuckles] And in the parcel [laughing] was a pair of navy blue knickers! [bursts out laughing]

VB: Aw dear!

DL: And that was a Christmas present. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: Anyway, erm... [pause 2 seconds] But nowadays, there's too much. I mean all these single mothers, [laughs, I don't suppose you're a single mother, are you? I don't know. [laughs] But erm, I don't agree with it. I think that parents should be responsible for their children until they're twenty-one, not eighteen. They should never leave home at that young age. They should stay in their own homes and their mothers and fathers should take care of them. Ours did. And erm, there wasn't half the trouble in our generation.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But there you are. Things change so much. And now everybody's on the bandwagon. Trying to get as much as they can out of the government. But what is the government? The government is nothing. It's what you earn and pay tax on that keeps it going! So it's not the government. It's not just a fount of money. And they don't seem to realise that.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I think it's a... it's a wicked world nowadays.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I'm glad I'm on my way out. [laughs]

VB: I mean it certainly sounds very different.

DL: Mhm.

VB: You were saying just as I came in about going to the cinema weekly.

DL: Yes. But we had a... we had a lovely life. We had nothing but we had the cinema. And that was our eh, escapism. And we saw places that we would never hope to visit. You know, countries. America in particular. I mean they always had everything, Americans. And erm, you know, lovely clothes and jewels. And beautiful homes. We never, we weren't envious. We never expected anything like that. But it just gave us something, you know, like a fairy tale. And that was the enjoyment we got out of it. And they were staged so wonderfully, you know, these musicals. Like the

Broadway melodies [possibly referring to *Broadway Melody of 1936*]. And things like that. It was, it was amazing really. And it was really lovely. I enjoyed every minute of the cinema. I always look back on it. In fact, I still like the black-and-white films on the television. Specially the westerns. [chuckles]

VB: Ah!

DL: You knew where you were with the western. You had the goodies and the baddies. And everybody had a happy ending. Except... the baddies used to get it in the neck in the end, which was only right and proper.

VB: [laughs]

DL: And therefore, that was simplicity itself, you know. And that's how we looked at life. You know, you'd got to do what you're told. And not break the law. And if you did, you'd get caught and punished in the end. But now anything goes in films and theatre! Doesn't it? Which is I think has helped to destroy the pattern of life. I really do. It's too permissive.

VB: Did you have favourite stars in the westerns?

DL: Oh yes. Erm, well, James Stewart was one of my favourites. Back... when we were quite young we used to go to Saturday morning cinema. And there was Tom Mix and William Boyd and lots of cowboys. Gene Autry and things like that that you never hear of now. But eh, I liked the big westerns like, with John Wayne and erm James Stewart and cowboys and Indians. Anything at all exciting.

VB: Mhm.

DL: 'Course it was unbelievable really. But it was entertainment. You know, they're trying too much nowadays to shock us all the time. And I don't want to be shocked. I just want to enjoy what I see. And take me back to my youth.

VB: Mhm.

DL: That's all I want.

VB: Mhm. 'Cause you were saying about eh, was it the stories that you enjoyed?

DL: Oh yes. Mhm. Oh yes. There were some wonderful stories, weren't there? Well 'course, you wouldn't know! But I mean I don't think films are anything like the entertainment value today. I mean I'm glad to see all these big Disneys coming back, you know. Like *The Lion King* and all that. 'Course we loved *Snow White* and the first cartoons and everything like that. I mean, when you think of it, I think Disney was a wonderful man.

VB: Mhm.

DL: He really was.

VB: 'Cause that was one of the earliest colour films as well wasn't it?

DL: Ye-es. I've got the video somewhere.

VB: Ah!

DL: I don't know what year, what year it was. It was before the war. 1936 or something like that. I can't quite remember the year. But that was, when it did come out it was wonderful. We loved it. You know. We loved any Disney film. We would go to see any Disney film. I mean they were wholesome. And they always had happy endings. [laughs]

VB: Mhm.

DL: They were a bit violent. But then that's what children like, you know. They like a bit of violence. But not, not this sleaze we get today--

VB: Mhm.

DL: You know.

VB: 'Cause you mentioned musicals as well.

DL: Oh yes! The musicals. They were wonderful! All these chorus lines. And there seemed to be hundreds of chorus girls. You know, dancing. I believe they did it all with mirrors! [bursts out laughing]

VB: Ah!

DL: You know. That was what we were told afterwards. But, at the time, the Busby Berkeley chorus lines were absolutely wonderful.

VB: Mhm.

DL: They really were. Mhm.

VB: I mean did you have favourite stars of musicals as well?

DL: Well. The ones I remember were Dick Powell. Erm... he had a lovely voice. I mean in later years he was just an actor. But in the beginning he had a lovely voice. And Ruby Keeler. She was a wonderful dancer. And Joan Blondell, she played the comedy parts. I remember those. And I remember the first talkie that I saw was Al Jolson and I can't remember the name of it. Whether it was *The Singing Fool* or *The Jazz Singer*. But he sang 'Sonny Boy', I know. [laughs]

VB: Mhm.

DL: And erm, I used to like him as well.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But that was when I was quite young. But the later musicals, I mean you're only interested in the thirties aren't you, really? But I liked them later. The musicals with Judy Garland and erm, oh I forget his name now. She used to star with him. Mickey Rooney.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Used to star with him. And we always saw all the musicals. They were wonderful. Well they were a lot of hocus-pocus but, you know, that's what we wanted. We didn't want anything deep or dramatic. We wanted entertainment. And I think they've somehow forgotten that.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Oh I loved it. Twice a week we used to go, us girls. Always. I mean it was only ninepence. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: But mind you, we didn't have much. I mean when I first went out to work I got ten shillings a week. Which is half, half a pound. And erm, then we had to pay our mothers. Which they don't nowadays. Which I think is wrong. And erm, and then we had money over for a few sweets and two trips to the cinema. And that was our life and we were quite content and happy with it. I was anyway.

VB: Did you have any favourite cinemas in the...? You mentioned quite a few--

DL: Well, we lived in Kirkley you see. So we had, I used to go mostly to the Grand Cinema. Which is in K., it's derelict now. But after the war they all turned over to eh, bingo halls.

VB: Mhm.

DL: We had a wonderful Odeon. That was... after the war that was wonderful. But, then they knocked that down and erm, now it's W.H. Smith stands there. [laughs] So I suppose that's books in exchange for films. It's not the same--

VB: [laughs]

DL: Because the films aren't the same anyway.

VB: Yeah.

DL: So, they're not like our films. We saw. I thought they were magical. Our films. And then erm, there was the Palace. The Hippodrome was just over the bridge. And then there was the Playhouse.

And between that little circle. There were other cinemas but they were further up the town. And we didn't go that much over the bridge. It was a long walk from home.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And erm, so, there was eh, the Ideal Cinema. I think that was in Norwich Road. And Cosy Corner. That was in eh High Street. There were probably others but I can't remember those because I didn't go to them.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I went to the Grand. And the Palace. And the Playhouse mostly.

VB: What was the Grand like inside?

DL: Oh Wonderful. Wonderful!

VB: I mean it sounds quite splendid.

DL: Yes! Lovely sound effects. And we always had erm, Saturday mornings we used to have a western, always a western. Then a comedy film. Like the Three Stooges or the Ritz Brothers. And then a bit of a cartoon. And maybe a, maybe a newsreel. I can't remember, but it was jolly good value for threepence! [laughs]

VB: Did you like the news? Was that part of the--

DL: Oh yes! I liked the news. I liked to keep up with what was going on in the world. And then I believe we used to have a singsong. Erm, something used to come up on the screen with the words of songs and a ball used to go over each word. So you used to know where to join in. And we always used to sit there and sing. It was, [laughs] as far as I can remember, it was more like the theatre performance.

VB: Ah.

DL: Yeah.

VB: So did any of the cinemas round here have pianos or organs?

DL: I think they did. The Odeon certainly had an organ.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And I believe eh, some of the others did as well. But, as I say I'm a bit hazy on that. I really can't remember. Probably somebody older than me would remember all about that.

VB: Mhm.

DL: So I hope you meet one like that. [laughs]

VB: I was looking for information about the local cinemas and--

DL: Mhm.

VB: Erm, I did find a picture of the Odeon but that was... that was all.

DL: Oh yes.

VB: That might be the one you were--

DL: Yes that's the Odeon. Yes, that was wonderful.

VB: Yeah.

DL: That was... All round it was bombed in the war, you know.

VB: Ah.

DL: So, they took that down after the war.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And eh, well anyway the cinema fell off, you know. They couldn't sell their films.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And erm...

VB: Thanks.

DL: But, as I say, Jack Rose he's got all the information on all the cinemas in the town.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Because he's a really, you know, he really takes an interest in the old Lowestoft and--

VB: Yeah.

DL: He's got all the records and he's got the Old Lowestoft Society and he's got a museum in the Sparrow's Nest [referring to the Lowestoft War Memorial Museum in Sparrow's Nest Gardens]. And anything you want to know about the past he would know.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But I don't suppose you're going to meet him are you?

VB: Erm, probably not this time.

DL: No.

VB: I might erm--

DL: You might again.

VB: Try and do that.

DL: Yes.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Yes he's in the phone book. And I think he lives in Crown Street.

VB: Yeah.

DL: But he's retired now. And erm, so he erm, he would be the man to know all about the locations and what was, what was on.

VB: I mean it sounds wonderful when you were talking about going with your friends and--

DL: Mhm.

VB: Was it mainly with your friends you went?

DL: Oh yes. Oh yes.

VB: Yeah.

DL: We always went with two or three girls you know. Specially when we first started out to work. That was our entertainment. There was nowhere else to go.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Erm, we couldn't go into pubs. We didn't want to go in pubs. Eh, there were no clubs. There were no sporting venues or anything like that. There was one dance hall I believe but we weren't allowed to go there. Because they stayed out too late. [chuckles] We had to be home by ten o'clock. [laughs]

VB: Mhm.

DL: In fact, I had to be home by ten o'clock right up into my forties. [bursts out laughing]

VB: [laughs]

DL: And erm, but we always went together, us girls. You know. And then the others gradually got married and that fell off. But there was always someone to go with. But I didn't mind going alone. I used to love the cinema. I would go alone. If it meant missing a film I wouldn't... And erm, that was really part of my life, the cinema and I'm glad I had it. It was... it was lovely.

VB: Did you, when you were going to the cinema, did you dress up or...?

DL: Well we always put on our best coats and things. Oh yes. Definitely.

VB: Yeah.

DL: We didn't go scruffy like they do today. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: We never wore jeans! We always put our best things on. Yeah. Well the Odeon was a really nice plush place, you know. The foyer was lovely. And eh, the seats were all velvet. And eh, it was an occasion to go to the cinema. It was a lovely place to go. And erm, I don't go now because I don't like, well, I can't afford to go now, to tell you the truth. And erm, I don't like most of the films. In any case if you wait they come on here [referring to television]. Which is cheaper for me. And eh, I don't go out after dark anyway.

VB: Mhm.

DL: You know. So--

VB: It's interesting when we were talking on the phone and you were mentioning people like Clark Gable and Cary Grant.

DL: Oh yes. I love Clark Gable and Cary Grant. You'll see the books.

VB: Oh!

DL: Erm, they're gonna be rather heavy for you to take. I didn't realise you were such a slight person.
[laughs]

VB: Oh. [laughs]

DL: But I mean they're all in there.

VB: I'd love to see them actually.

DL: Do you want to see them now?

VB: That'd be great. Yes.

DL: I'll put my glasses on. Where did I put them? Oh here they are. Here we are. [pause 4 seconds] I started these when I was, [rustling paper] erm, about eight I suppose. Forget which one is the first one. I think that's the second one.

VB: Oh.

DL: I think so. Yes this was the first one. Erm, [pause 2 seconds] this is about 1938. That's '38. And this is about '36. And eh, we go through, you know, as I went--

VB: That's wonderful.

DL: Oh, there's Clark Gable and Jean Harlow.

VB: [gasps]

DL: Robert Montgomery. There's Randolph Scott. He was in hundreds of westerns. John Wayne in a western. Erm, John Bowles. He was a lovely man. And eh, it goes, there's Dick Powell. We went right through it. There's eh *Cleopatra* that one.

VB: Claudette Colbert. Yeah.

DL: Claud, Claudette Colbert. She was in lots of eh, epic films. You know, like erm, I don't know whether she was in *Ben-Hur* or what. And all these are part of the films, you know, that I did see at that time. So you'd probably be able to work something out from that.

VB: Oh wonderful!

DL: You know, they go on and we've got--

VB: Are these mainly from the 'Picturegoer'?

DL: Yes and well, and other books, you know--

VB: Yeah.

DL: I used to buy. And erm, see, look at that beautiful picture.

VB: Oh that's wonderful!

DL: Loretta Young and Joel McCrea. They were lovely, and erm, they go on until we get to the big...

VB: Oh.

DL: You know, Henry Fonda and Cary Grant.

VB: Ah.

DL: Don Ameche. He's still working, I think. And erm... [pause 2 seconds] Fred MacMurray and everything. And erm, Cornell Wilde. That was later. And there's Cary Grant again.

VB: Oh Cary Grant. Yes.

DL: In *Gunga Din*. [laughs]

VB: Aw.

DL: Tyrone Power. Now he was a handsome young man. He died quite young. And that's the MGM birthday parties with all the stars. And so, you know they are--

VB: These are just great!

DL: And erm, you're going backwards in that. Because I started one on Bing Crosby who was my favourite singer. You know in those days. And there's a... there's a magazine here [looking through papers] which I haven't... which I always intended to cut up. That's his life story.

VB: Ah!

DL: With erm, there's some cuttings. I don't know what date that is. Oh that's 1945. But eh, you know there's the story of his life. I don't know if that would be interesting to you.

VB: They're just wonderful. That must've been many happy hours spent--

DL: Oh yes! That's all I did was eh... was eh--

VB: Oh!

DL: Cut these out. And this was an album which was... actually my sister when she was in the Air Force, she met a girl who'd been to Hollywood and she'd taken these pictures, you know, actually there!

VB: Oh wow!

DL: So these, I don't think they've been published you know. There's Bing Crosby.

VB: That's amazing!

DL: Spencer Tracy, and erm... Some of them are stills. But most of them are, Spencer Tracy again. Most of them are actual photographs taken in Hollywood.

VB: [gasps]

DL: So erm, you know, if that's any interest to you.

VB: Aw these are fantastic!

DL: If you can erm, take those. I mean that's obviously a still--

VB: Yes.

DL: That one isn't. But you can see by the sepia that they were actual films. And this is rather interesting at the end here. Em, that was Colonel Lindberg and Will Rogers. Eh Will Rogers was going to do a film on flying, I think [Note: Will Rogers later died in a plane crash in August 1935]. And erm so that was interesting.

VB: Aw.

DL: And eh, this one, erm, is a continuation from there. This was later of course. But it's the same kind of thing. Charles Boyer! Wonderful voice.

VB: Oh!

DL: Then course we came to the gangster films with the Dead End Kids and John Garfield and everything like that. So there's all, every type of film in here. Margaret Sullivan. She's lovely. Gary Cooper. Tyrone Power. And erm... [pause 2 seconds] oh, big pin-ups.

VB: These are fantastic.

DL: Well, if they're any good to you, I'm glad. Because I didn't want them to be wasted!

VB: Aw, I mean that's, they're just, I'm sort of, don't know what to say! They're just fantastic!

DL: They will be useful to you.

VB: Very much so.

DL: Oh that's good. I didn't even get round to doing. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: I'll leave them in there for somebody else.

VB: Oh these are wonderful! I mean that's just so kind of you to--

DL: Well, no. It isn't kind of me because I... I just want them to go somewhere where they can still be of some use, you know.

VB: Oh.

DL: Because I'm sure, you see, I've got no family and nobody is interested in them any more. Erm, in fact I wouldn't like to see them thrown away if you know what I mean.

VB: No not at all.

DL: They're part of my history.

VB: They're just fantastic!

DL: That's good. Oh I'm glad. I'm glad they'll be of use to you.

VB: Thanks so much. I mean they're just wonderful.

DL: Oh good. Well I mean I think you can make out the years and the films and the stories from there--

VB: Yes.

DL: And what other people tell you, you can look back and see the references in there.

VB: They're just fantastic. They really are.

DL: That was what I did from when I was about eight. No, I was older than that. About ten I suppose. About 1932.

VB: Mhm.

DL: When I was about ten till into my teen years, you know.

VB: Mhm.

DL: It was something to do and I always had the 'Picturegoer'.

VB: Did you swap magazines with friends?

DL: Yes. Oh yes. Our friends. Yes. If there was a picture of someone I liked and a picture, we used to swap pictures. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: My friends, but unfortunately most of my friends have... seemed to have died early, you know. The ones that I went to the cinema with when I was younger. They seem to have died off. I've lost...I've lost a lot of school friends.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And erm, so there's nobody to go the cinema with now. [laughs]

VB: Ah. These are... these are fantastic though.

DL: Yeah. Well I'm glad they'll be of use to you.

VB: Aw.

DL: They're rather heavy for you to take but eh, I hope you can manage those.

VB: Oh they're great.

DL: Mhm.

VB: I mean you must've--

DL: I spent hours on it. It was lovely.

VB: I was going to say. Yeah.

DL: Well I really was immersed in the cinema. My day.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Because eh, that was part of erm, your dreams, you know.

VB: Mhm.

DL: You didn't expect them to come true.

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

DL: I tried to keep the captions--

VB: Yeah.

DL: So I could remember which films I'd seen. You know. And erm, so I think you'll find they'll be useful.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Mhm.

VB: Did you look back over them as well after you'd--

DL: Oh yes! Yes. Oh I kept them for years! I wouldn't throw them out. And every now and again I used to go up and have a look. But I think the time's come now when [laughs] it's time to pass them on!

VB: Aw.

DL: And when I saw your piece in the journal, I thought, well it's a good opportunity. They'll find a home there.

VB: Aw it's wonderful. I mean I can assure you that, I mean this is a two-year project,

DL: Mhm.

VB: But after the project, they'll be in safe hands.

DL: I hope they'll be in a cinema club or something like that.

VB: Yes. Yes.

DL: Somebody who likes, if they're still interested in the old cinema.

VB: Yeah. I mean we're not sure exactly at the moment but--

DL: No. It doesn't matter dear. I don't mind.

VB: It'll either be, it'll be at the university library or maybe British Film Institute in London, something like that.

DL: Yes, yes.

VB: But definitely--

DL: Oh, well there'll be a department somewhere who'll be interested in them.

VB: That's right.

DL: That's all I care about.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Yes. Yes I'd really like that.

VB: Yeah.

DL: I feel they'll be, they'll be appreciated there. And they gave me a lot of pleasure anyway.

VB: Yeah. The little album of photographs is very interesting as well.

DL: Yes. Erm my sister was in the Air Force and eh, and this girl was one of the girls on her station and course she used to tell her about me. I was the younger sister and my sister's mad on film stars you know. And erm, and so she said "Well I've got an album that, you know, I took, I had when I was in... I did go to Hollywood and took these when I was young."

VB: Mhm.

DL: She was older, she was an older person. And erm, so she handed it to me. Well they'll only get thrown out, so--

VB: That's fantastic.

DL: You might as take that and see if there's anybody who can use them. I don't mind where they go as long as somebody makes use of them.

VB: You can be assured of that. Thanks very much.

DL: Good. Good. That's all right dear. Eh can I get you some lunch? Or are you going on to--

VB: Em, actually I'm probably going back into the town.

DL: Oh right.

VB: Just now. Erm but I mean I just, I'm overwhelmed actually. I'm just... really looking forward to having a chance to look at these.

DL: Yeah, have a good look through them and see what you can see. Well when you've done all your interviews--

VB: Yeah.

DL: You'll find that what people have been referring to will mostly be there.

VB: Yeah.

DL: You'll probably find other people who've kept the records as well. Because we did in those days, you know.

VB: Yeah.

DL: I know, p'raps the cinema was too much in our lives. But erm, [pause 2 seconds] it didn't affect us in that way and we never expected anything from it. It just entertained us and that was something that, I wasn't sporting--

VB: Yeah.

DL: I never did sport. And that just took the interest. I mean it was like stamp collecting and things like that. And eh--

VB: It's great.

DL: It was glamorous. [laughs]

VB: Ah.

DL: Bit of glamour in a dull world, dear.

VB: Aw.

DL: And that's what we enjoyed.

VB: 'Cause when you were showing me these just now. There's all these pictures of people like Clark Gable and eh--

DL: Oh yeah. There's some lovely pictures.

VB: Oh-h! Wonderful.

DL: There's some really good plates in there.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Which are probably non-existent nowadays. I don't suppose the plates have ever been kept, you know. But they were love... handsome people. They were a pleasure to see. [laughs] Whereas now. Some of these stars--

VB: Aw.

DL: They look rough and ragged to me. I mean everybody was glamorous in those days.

VB: How did you feel when you were at the pictures?

DL: Oh lovely. You know. It was really uplifting. Really. It was really uplifting. And then again it was, it was erm, there was always a moral message. I mean the erm good people didn't have much but they... in the end they were happy and contented. And the bad people seemed to get away with something for a time but in the end, the morals were always there. The censor made sure that nobody who'd committed a crime got away with it. And if you killed somebody you were hung. [laughs]

VB: Mhm.

DL: That was how it should be in my world. And erm, and then eh nobody was shown, no man and woman were shown in bed together.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Not at all! And eh, you know, you were aware that men and women lived together. But I mean they just lived together like we did as a family! And there was no... no actual scenes of sex or anything like that.

VB: Mhm.

DL: So it was all light and airy, you know. And then again at Easter. We used to get these wonderful epic films like *The Sign of the Cross*. And Cecil B. De Mille used to make wonderful pictures with thousands of casts. And sometimes taken on location you know, in Jerusalem and that. And erm, and then we used to sit... it was so exciting you know. The Christians were thrown to the lions. And [laughs] and that was rather sad. But mostly films had a happy ending. And that's all we wanted. A happy ending.

VB: Mhm.

DL: So.

VB: 'Cause I mean when you were saying that about morals, you mentioned the gangster films just now--

DL: Mhm. Oh yes. They were exciting, but they always got their comeuppance in the end.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean there was a strict code of censorship in the cinema--

VB: Mhm.

DL: Which isn't there today. And I think that's wrong.

VB: Yeah.

DL: I mean, I think that these violent films do influence people! I think the young impressionable mind seeing something like that, would go out and imitate it. We didn't. We found that criminals didn't profit from their, from their spoils and that's how it should be, you know.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean it was a bit simplistic but that's how it should be.

VB: Mhm. Did you have any favourites among the gangster stars?

DL: Oh yes! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

DL: I used to like, erm, John Garfield and eh, Paul Muni. And Humphrey Bogart. Oh, they were exciting those films. Yes. And it was just as America was you know, in the bootlegging period. And [pause 2 seconds] and they were very exciting. They seemed to live a high life but in the end they all got shot. [laughs]

VB: Mhm.

DL: Just like the Indians.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And course after the war we found that the Indians were the oppressed people! [laughs] But in our day, the Indians had to be wiped out! [laughs]

VB: Mhm.

DL: Well, I mean, things are never what you think they are, we know! But eh, but at least erm, it was lovely at the time.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And that took us through our lives. And of course, when I was seventeen, the war broke out! We still went to the cinema. But they didn't make so many films in those days.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But it was between the time I was about ten and the... and the war breaking out in '39 that... So '32 to '39 was the biggest period I saw.

VB: Yeah. I mean you mentioned getting to know America through the films. Did you notice any difference between the British-made films and the American films?

DL: Well, the British films always seemed amateurish. Quite entertaining but very amateurish. And mostly eh, it was people with high-class accents that got the jobs! And we couldn't relate to those quite so much. You know, we loved the films with John Mills, when he was a working-class boy and things like that. All those films, about working-class people, were fine with us. But most of the top actors and actresses were all cut glass accents. And we couldn't relate to those so much. The Americans seemed more cosmopolitan. And there was no, didn't seem to be any snobbery in American films. And people used to seem to get on through their own efforts. You could make a good life in America. If you worked hard enough. That was the story. Then of course [laughing] there's as much prejudice in America than anywhere else! But, we didn't know that at the time so we just sat back and enjoyed it. And that was the whole object of it. So, that was it.

VB: Yeah. The other thing that we haven't really talked about is horror films. Did you--

DL: Oh no. No. I didn't like horror films. No. I did see Boris Karloff in *Frankenstein* I think it was but no. I didn't like anything like that. No. No. I don't like anything like that. I can't watch those. I can't watch those things.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I don't like anything grotesque. It's got to be just light and airy and wonderful for me. [laughs]

VB: Mhm.

DL: I don't like books with unhappy endings. [laughs] I like everything to be wonderful in that world. We've got to have some part of our lives where everything is just right. I think it helps you. I don't think it's conning you. I think it just helps you to get through the realities of your own life. Really.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I don't think it's running away from reality. I think it's wonderful.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Or it used to be.

VB: What about comedies? Did you--

DL: Oh yes!

VB: The comedy stars.

DL: We saw plenty of comedies. We had The Three Stooges. [laughs] They were knockabout comedians. [laughs] I couldn't laugh at them today but of course we did in those days. And the Ritz Brothers. They were three brothers that were always in sort of musical comedies. Part of the act in musical comedies. They were very good. And erm, but the British comedies, they never, oh I don't know. They didn't have the same appeal. They seemed, oh, trite. The storylines were trite. And eh, and amateurish really. But the British have made, since the war, they have made very good films.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I mean I loved *Brief Encounter*. I mean things like that. Classic films like that now. But in those days we couldn't care less about British films really. It was the American films that filled our lives.

VB: Mhm.

DL: I know it's a, it's a bit stupid really [laughing] when you look back on it. But I don't care because we enjoyed it.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Yeah. [pause 4 seconds] So what time's your next appointment then dear?

VB: Erm, well I'm going--

DL: Oh you're going to have your lunch.

VB: I'm going to have lunch probably back there on my way into town.

DL: Yeah.

VB: And I was planning to maybe have a look in the museum and eh--

DL: Oh yes.

VB: Try and get some background--

DL: Mhm.

VB: This afternoon.

DL: Mmh.

VB: Eh, so I'll be dotting around I think.

DL: Yes.

VB: Making sure I'm wrapped up a bit warmer. [laughs]

DL: Have you brought an anorak with you?

VB: Eh, I've got a coat with me so--

DL: Oh good. Good.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Because these closed windows are treacherous. And you're sitting here exposed to these germs all this time.

VB: Yeah.

DL: I wouldn't like you to get this.

VB: Not at all.

DL: I hope you don't, but this is a tiny room and [laughs] we're face to face.

VB: Yeah.

DL: But as long as your landlady's got one--

VB: That's right.

DL: I shan't feel so guilty!

VB: Well it'll be her! [laughs] If I pick up anything.

DL: It'll be her germs will it?

VB: Yeah.

DL: Good. Good. Anyway, I hope you enjoy the books.

VB: Aw! I mean it's just so kind of you to pass these over.

DL: That's all right dear. You're doing me a favour. I'm not doing you one. Because when I saw that article I thought, that is the one way to pass them on to somebody. See we used to have cinema

clubs and things years ago. You know. Used to talk and take cuttings and things but now all those have gone.

VB: Mhm. That's interesting.

DL: There's no cinema society.

VB: Yeah.

DL: We used to have record societies. Theatre societies and all that. See people don't go out now in the evening. There's no transport. There's no transport here after six o'clock.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And so you just don't go out.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And course as you get older, you don't want to. You've got the television.

VB: Mhm.

DL: You make, well there's nothing on it but you make yourself content with that and just hope for an old film on a Saturday afternoon.

VB: Yeah.

DL: Particularly a western! [laughs]

VB: I mean when you were telling me about life here in the thirties it sounds like almost a different world.

DL: Well it was. Yes, I thought so anyway. We were quite happy and content. We had nothing really. You know just had our jobs and our homes and our cinema.

VB: Mhm.

DL: That's about all. Boyfriends of course.

VB: Yes.

DL: You know. The odd boyfriends and things. But the major excitement and entertainment was the cinema. It was really wonderful.

VB: It must've been lovely here in the summer as well.

DL: Oh yes. The town was quite nice. Yes. It really was. It used to be a lovely little town. Erm, we had lovely parks and erm everywhere was clean. And, you know, shops everywhere open now. If you go into Kirkley--

VB: Mhm.

DL: Which is, you know, past... up to the bridge. The whole of that London Road is full of bedsitters with people who don't work.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And all the shops are closed except the tatty little shops. There's not a... we used to have Boots and a branch of Woolworths. We had a big hardware stores, department store and everything in Kirkley. That was near the Grand Cinema you know. Now the Grand Cinema's gone and all the shops are gone and practically every other shop is closed. And that's how the towns have gone.

VB: Mhm.

DL: Since these big supermarkets took over. And so everything is out of town. And if you have got no transport, well you just stay in.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But it's such a shame to see centres of towns dying, I think. [pause 2 seconds] But of course television coming in stopped a lot of cinema anyway, didn't it?

VB: Yeah.

DL: I mean you paid your licence you expected to be entertained for that money.

VB: Mhm.

DL: So [pause 2 seconds], anyway. [pause 5 seconds]

VB: It seems to be a nice erm--

DL: What dear?

VB: It seems to be very nice about here anyway.

DL: Well, you see, that's why I bought this little house. I mean I lived in Long Road which is a very busy road and I had a bungalow. I lived with my father and mother and they became ill so I gave up my job to look after them. And then, when they died the bungalow was all right but I had three hundred feet of garden--

VB: Ah.

DL: And I couldn't manage the garden. Well I hadn't had any salary for six years so I thought, well, I'll sell this and get a little terraced house somewhere. But I didn't want to go in the back streets and this was the best terraced house that I could find. I've got a nice little enclosed garden. I'm quite near the cliffs. I'm in... surrounded by quite nice houses. A lovely road with almond blossom in the... in the spring. And little shops. And the post office and chemist at the corner.

VB: Mhm.

DL: And I thought it was the ideal place.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And I like the old houses, about a hundred years old. But I like it, you know.

VB: Yeah.

DL: And it's cosy and comfortable and I'm quite happy here. But of course I don't get upstairs much now. I've got other rooms. And the bathroom unfortunately is up there. I can't get up very well because I've got rheumatism. So erm... but I can manage on the bottom floor.

VB: Mhm.

DL: But it seems a waste really. But there you are. I don't suppose I shall move now.

VB: Yeah.

DL: If I go out, I'll go out [laughs] on a stretcher, I suppose. [laughs]

VB: No. Not for a long time I'm sure.

DL: Oh, I feel older every year. Mhm.

VB: I like your dried flowers very much.

DL: Yes. Yes. When I moved from Long Road one of my neighbours gave me that one.

VB: Ah!

DL: And eh my friend eh, when her mother died that was her mother's and she gave that to me as a souvenir. And eh--

VB: It's really lovely.

DL: And I've got bits and pieces. I like these copper pictures myself.

VB: Yeah.

DL: I love those. And that one is of Lowes, old Lowestoft--

VB: Ah!

DL: In 1876 I think!

VB: Mhm.

DL: And St Paul's is always lovely.

VB: Uhuh.

DL: And birds I love.

VB: Oh yes.

DL: I like anything to do with nature.

VB: Yes.

DL: Anyway, it's home.

VB: Yes.

DL: That's all I care about.

VB: Yes.

DL: My home. And my roof is my own. I don't have to worry about things or being turned out. Whether mortgage repossession or--

VB: Aw.

DL: [laughs] council. Not paying rent. [laughs] Oh I'm all right. I'm not grumbling.

VB: I better let you rest your voice actually.

DL: Yes I am getting a bit hoarse, dear. Anyway, it was lovely to meet you.

VB: You too.

DL: And I hope that'll be useful to you.

VB: Aw, I mean it's just, as I say... [tape cuts out]

[End of Side B]

[End of Interview]