

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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- \* Hale, Greater Manchester, 8 June 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Douglas Rendell
- \* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Julia McDowell
- \* DR=Douglas Rendell, VB=Valentina Bold
- \* Notes: Second of two interviews with Douglas Rendell; Sound Quality: Fair; film projector is used from 0:48:00, which can be noisy to listen to; 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 more details.

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[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[tape introduction by Valentina Bold]

**VB: [setting up tape] Actually I've brought along one of the, one of the books we have in the office that I thought you might want to have a look at.**

**DR:** Ah. Oh lovely.

**VB:** A Daily Express one of eh--

**DR:** '38.

**VB:** '38.

**DR:** Oh great. [looks at book]

**VB: You mentioned when you wrote that one of your favourite of the women stars was Deanna Durbin.**

**DR:** Eh [pause 2 seconds], yes. Yes, that's right. Yes.

**VB: Yes. What was it you liked about her?**

**DR:** Difficult to really say really. It may be the looks, I don't know [laughs].

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** She was a very good singer of course.

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** She wasn't one of these sex goddesses, was she? Eh, but I think just the general entertainment. Singing and eh, bit more cheerful than the usual. But I always remember that one. Erm [pause 2 seconds], I don't think she made many more, did she?

**VB: No, just--**

**DR:** *One Hundred Men and A Girl* I remember seeing. That was eh, I think eh after that one. The one I mentioned was the first one I think of hers. Is she in here?

**VB: Erm, I think there might be one of her, actually. Yes.**

**DR:** There may not be. 1938.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** [pause 4 seconds; looking at book] Yeah. Quite a few references. [amused voice]. But she erm [pause 2 seconds], she didn't seem to erm become a star like the others did she?

**VB: No. I wonder why that was.**

**DR:** Page five.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** [turns pages]

**VB:** Oh. Looks like we're missing page five. [laughs]

**DR:** I'll just get... [DR leaves room for 10 seconds] Think it says something about her here.

**VB:** Ah. [pause 5 seconds]

**DR:** I don't think she had the right director. I think that was the... [inaudible]--

**VB:** Mhm. [pause 3 seconds]

**DR:** [reading from book] "Her career faltered badly in the mid forties. Probably because Pasternak left university and no one developed her screen personality in a new way. As was done with Judy Garland."

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** 'Course she was another one, who erm... She was [pause 3 seconds] one of my favourites.

**VB:** Yeah. Thanks. Eh, erm, 'The World's Great Movie Stars and their Films'.

**DR:** Oh she is mentioned in here. It's in here.

**VB:** Ah. Ah I see.

**DR:** In the forward. It's just one of the names.

**VB:** Yes.

**DR:** These are the new ones in 1938. Deanna Durbin. Sonja Henie. I remember her. Was she a skater?

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** That's right. Yeah. Tyrone Power. Yes. Remember all those. Norma Shearer. Yeah.

**VB: I mean just looking at that. I mean Nelson Eddie and Jeanette MacDonald. Were they--**

**DR:** Yes, I remember them. Yes. They were, they were good singers. And eh, those were quite enjoyable films. I think they're silly stories but eh, [chuckles].

**VB: I just saw *Maytime* a couple of days ago.**

**DR:** Oh did you?

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** Yes that's a [pause 3 seconds], was it on telly?

**VB: Erm, well someone was actually showing me it on video.**

**DR:** Oh I see. Yes.

**VB: But I quite enjoyed that. It was the first I'd really seen of the two of them together.**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB: Apart from Rose, *Rose Marie*.**

**DR:** Yeah. Oh yes, I remember that, yes.

**VB: Yeah. But as I say the storyline wasn't so much the thing as the songs.**

**DR:** The songs. That's right. Yes. Just erm [them together?].

**VB: Yeah. Did you like the musicals, particularly?**

**DR:** Eh, well I did, yes. All the eh, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. [pause 2 seconds] Went, mainly because my family, eh, the rest of the family seemed to like those. I used to go with them. So I think they influenced us a bit.

**VB: Ah.**

**DR:** And they're showing quite a few of them now aren't they? Since eh [pause 2 seconds], Ginger Rogers died.

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** Seen one or two the other day.

**VB: Ah.**

**DR:** But the storylines are terrible in that one.

**VB: Which ones were that? 'Cause obviously I've missed out on the--**

**DR:** Eh, the other day, what was it? Oh I can't remember the names now. They had two on the other day. [moves away to look up films; pause 8 seconds; flicking through pages]

**VB: 'Cause they made quite a few together, didn't they?**

**DR:** Yeah. [pause 5 seconds] Aw, I can't remember, I've no idea. [looking at book], yeah. Well *Top Hat* of course.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** You know that one. But erm, [pause 4 seconds], it doesn't give many of them with Fred Astaire.

**VB:** Mhm. Did you enjoy *Top Hat*?

**DR:** Yes, that was good. Yeah.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** That's one of their best isn't it?

**VB:** Aw I think so. Yeah.

**DR:** Eh the one that erm, yes it did say in the review that it was one the best. *Swingtime*. [pause 4 seconds]

**VB:** I don't think I've seen that. What was that, what is it about?

**DR:** Erm--

**VB:** Or nothing much! [laughs]

**DR:** No. We just watch it for the music. It's just a ridiculous story. [pause 4 seconds] Can't remember. Joan would remember that. Here they are. *Gay Divorce*. *Top Hat*. *Swingtime*. *Shall We Dance*. *Easter Parade*. We've got that on tape. Somebody gave us that as a present. [pause 3 seconds] But really it was their dancing that made it wasn't it?

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** All those films. Yes.

**VB:** And the look of them of course. Visually as well.

**DR:** Yeah. Yeah.

**VB: I mean did you enjoy that aspect? Being interested in visual images yourself?**

**DR:** Oh yeah.

**VB: Was that something that attracted you to--**

**DR:** Eh, later on, yes.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** The erm, the photography and so on. And composition of pictures. Yes. Erm, more so now but eh, in the early days I didn't bother too much. But erm--

**VB: I'm interested that you say that. What do you think it was that erm, interested you in films in the thirties?**

**DR:** To start with?

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** Erm, well I think as I said before, I think it's the same today. You know people get eh, young children get glued to the television don't they? I suppose I got stuck to the pictures. The movement and the excitement. And eh, and course everybody, in the early days, everybody was cheering like mad. You know the children's matinees. You're sort of part of the audience [laughs] aren't you?

**VB: So that sort of being with friends was quite a big part of it?**

**DR:** Yes it was.

**VB: Being part of the--**

**DR:** In the cinema everybody was shouting and screaming and everything.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Children's matinees. Bit difficult to explain really isn't it? But then of course I got interested in the, on the technical side. And also, everything mixed up really. Everything to do with films, I liked. One of those things. [laughs]

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Mhm.

**VB: 'Cause it sounds from what you're saying as if was as much a social thing as the entertainment.**

**DR:** Well, I think it became a habit really.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Yes, with my family I think. Yes. Erm, you know, going twice a week and so on. But there was a certain, you know, they didn't just go as a habit. They did pick and choose a bit. Because when I got down to London that was a different eh [pause 3 seconds], that was a different, I wasn't, became more choosy even then you see. I was influenced by my, eh, by my colleagues really. Eh, I suppose when you erm, when you went to universi, well, you see, when you went to university you found a sort of a mixed bag of characters there, didn't you? From all over the place.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** Well when I went to London erm, we were only a small group, there was only eight of us. But erm, they were all from the south. Mainly from London. And I was sort of the odd man out really. Provincial boy from Manchester. And you'd get teased about coming from Manchester and all that sort of thing. Erm [pause 3 seconds], always raining, [laughs], got to [inaudible].

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR:** Before that I didn't know [amused voice] Manchester had got a reputation for raining! And there was one, one of the students had an upper class accent that wouldn't go any higher if you know



what I mean. And he occasionally would try and imitate a Lancashire accent if he were talking to me.  
[laughs]

**VB: Aw dear.**

**DR:** But eh, I got on well with them all. They erm, they erm, some of them was a bit like [inaudible]. I got particularly friendly with three of them. And eh, we went out a lot to the pictures, the four of us or three of us or two of us. And of course I was influenced by their, by them as well. I think they were much more intellectual and they could discuss, eh, they could criticise things. And they were interested in music and so on. Which I was as well. Eh, and that's erm when we started going out and seeing these foreign films. Anything a bit different. Particularly documentary films, we were very keen on documentary films. *Night Mail*. Particularly remember *Night Mail*. Yeah. [pause 2 seconds] And also erm [pause 2 seconds], there was a film society in London, the London Film Society. I forget where the cinema was [pause 4 seconds]. Erm, I forget the name of the cinema now. I don't think it's there now. Eh, and they had shows on Sundays. And we saw some of the Russian films there. Eh *Battleship Potemkin* and that. Which in those days were a bit erm, [laughs] communism, a bit dicey. But, and then there were experimental films going on. These cartoon things. Painting on film. [Jacko?] Len Lye. Bet you've never heard of him. He made a few experimental films by painting pictures on the actual celluloid and eh, putting music to it. A bit crude these days but we thought it was marvellous at the time. Yeah. [chuckles]

**VB: It must've been a very exciting time for you.**

**DR:** Yes. Oh yes it was.

**VB: Getting to know these new--**

**DR:** Yes. Yes.

**VB: Types of film.**

**DR:** Now we had a, when I say we, we had a passion for Ginger Rogers. Not Ginger Rogers eh, Rita Hayworth. [pause 2 seconds]. She just, I think eh [looks at book]. Seventy-five. She must've been

appearing there. [turns pages to 75]. Yes her first one was 1939 so it must've been, you know, later on.

**VB: What was it about Rita Hayworth that--**

**DR: What?**

**VB: That appealed to you so much?**

**DR: Rita Hayworth?**

**VB: Yes.**

**DR: Oh I don't know. They all seemed to eh, [pause 3 seconds], seemed to like her. I just followed the crowd.**

**VB: I suppose you only have to look a photograph of her to see why she appealed! [amused voice]**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: She's really lovely.**

**DR: That's not her is it?**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: Oh yes, that's her. Yeah. [pause 2 seconds] [Love Goddess, because of her?] sexuality. But I don't think, [pause 3 seconds], I don't think it's sexuality, I'm sure. Difficult [pause 4 seconds]. These days, I, I, I've an idea that she, could be completely wrong, but students seem to have affairs. And eh, drink a lot, that sort of thing. But eh, I can't say in my day but our particular lot, we didn't have any girlfriends. I don't remember girlfriends being discussed. Although there were girls all round us. Particularly in the art school. Some very attractive ones. I think we looked at girls. But that's as far as it went. [laughs]**

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR:** I don't remember, [pause 3 seconds], going to films from the sex angle at all. 'Course fifty years ago is a long time, isn't it?

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** To erm remember these things.

**VB:** It's interesting you should say that, because someone else was telling me more or less what you've just been saying.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** That they liked stars like erm, Madeleine Carroll, because she had a sort of sweet appeal to her.

**DR:** Yeah. [phone rings in background]

**VB:** I don't know if that was something that you'd agree with.

**DR:** Yes. Perhaps so. Yes. Yes. [pause 2 seconds] [phone ringing in background]. Erm, I'm not sure that's our phone or not.

**VB: Mhm.**

[goes to see what phone is ringing]

**DR:** No.

**VB: Ah.**

**DR:** Yes, there was something about the eh, I suppose it must've been the sexuality. But we may or may not have been aware of it. [laughs]

**VB: Or using different names for it. Maybe perceiving it differently.**

**DR:** That's right.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** Yes. Yes. But eh, but we certainly didn't go, I mean we didn't go and see musicals for the erm, half naked girls all parading about. I can't remember ever doing that. I think we must've been late developers.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** I was [amused voice], anyway. [laughs]

**VB: Do you think that they had more of a sort of romantic appeal to them.**

**DR:** I think so, perhaps so, yes.

**VB: 'Cause when you're talking about films like *Top Hat*.**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB: With the glamour and the--**

**DR:** Yeah. Could be that. Yes.

**VB: *High Society*.**

**DR:** Yes. And eh, and we never, we never went into pubs at all. Well eh, we went about, I can only remember a couple of times going to a pub because the polytech was near the BBC. And there was a little pub there. And we went there for the food and in the hope of seeing somebody eh, some celebrity from the BBC. Which we never did.

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR:** But apart from that, we never eh [pause 3 seconds]. Erm, now there was one, I was talking about this a moment ago [amused smile]. There was one exception. That was Jack Lee. Now we were all about erm [pause 2 seconds], we were about seventeen or eighteen. Now Jack Lee was over, well over. He'd be about twenty-five. His brother by the way, you probably, erm, Laurie Lee. Have you heard of Laurie Lee the--

**VB: 'Course. Yes.**

**DR:** Yeah. 'Cider with Rosie'.

**VB: Yes. Of course.**

**DR:** He brought him to the poly actually one day to meet us. He'd been to the Spanish Civil War. I think he got back and eh, he came in to have his photograph taken. Anyway, Jack Lee. He couldn't afford the fees so he left. But eh, [pause 2 seconds], I remember walking through a park with him. And he'd see a girl sitting in a, in a deck chair, a few yards away. He'd go pouncing off. Just chat her up. Just like a ru, a young bull. I can see him now, chasing along and chat her up and then come back and join us. It was all very embarrassing. But he was much older. More erm, more experienced of course.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** But apart from that, yeah. [pause 2 seconds] Unfortunately two of my friends were erm killed during the war. And eh, that was one of the reasons I think that eh, I didn't sort of end up in films really. Because we had great plans for, it would never have worked out, but we were going to buy a house and eh, [pause 3 seconds], start making documentary films.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** Don't think it would've ever worked out.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** But eh, there it goes. I'm still in touch with the third one. [pause 2 seconds]

**VB:** It sounds like these erm, these Grierson documentaries you mention. Did they make quite a big impression on you, when you first saw them?

**DR:** Oh yes. Yes. The documentaries. Yes. Eh, and the 'March of Time' one, 'March of', what d'you call it? 'March of Time', wasn't it? Eh, those were showing all over the place. And erm, in fact Jack Lee and two, and my other colleague, they went as the, the Crown, GPO Film Unit as it was then. But [that?] made *Night Mail*. And they both started there. After the course.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** But of course it closed down I think, in the, during the war didn't it?

**VB:** 'Cause it's an amazing film that. *Night Mail*. The whole eh--

**DR:** Yeah. Yeah. And then they made one or two very good ones at the beginning of the war. And did eh, [pause 2 seconds], *London Can Take It!*.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** And the one about the music.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** Which my friend did. Eh, [pause 2 seconds]. Forget the title.

**VB:** And was there not one about erm, [pause 2 seconds]--

**DR:** *Listen To Britain*. That was it. Yes.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** I think my friend Joe Mendoza, I think he eh, [pause 2 seconds], I think he did the music. He was working on it. I think he did the music for that. Mhm. [pause 4 seconds] Well they were just the coming thing. Wasn't it? The documentaries at the time.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** In the thirties.

**VB: Well we talked a wee bit about the *Man of Aran* I think last time I was here as well.**

**DR:** Yeah. *Man of Aran*.

**VB: Which I suppose is halfway between documentary--**

**DR:** Yeah. Yeah.

**VB: And fiction.**

**DR:** And the other one that I did mention. I finally got erm, [moves away]. Did I mention *The Edge of the World*? That film--

**VB: I don't think you did. No.**

**DR:** No. [DR leaves room; pause 18 seconds; DR comes back into room] There were two films. *The Turn of the Tide*. Which was about a Yorkshire [pause 2 seconds], I think, fisherman. The Yorkshire coast. Erm, but they were more realistic you see. They didn't use studio sets. Or if they did, they used very little. And erm, I thought they were much better. 'Cause all these, pretty all everything else was studio [bound?]. But even the Hitchcock's lot, you can see the background. It looked [amused voice] very artificial. Or these eh, motor car shots. You'd see the background. I was very much aware of those. But there was eh, *The Edge of the World*. Michael Powell. Well he died recently didn't he?

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** Now that was another outdoor one on the Island of Foula. Now he published a book called '200,000 Feet on Foula' in 1938. [pause 3 seconds] Two hundred thousand was the amount of film he shot.

**VB: Ah.**

**DR:** That's eh, two hundred cans' worth, thousand feet from here. I've not read the book. 1938. It's a book I've always wanted to erm, to read. Eventually I got round to it only a few weeks ago. About a month ago. I went to the library. And ordered it. Well apparently it was re-issued in 1990, under a different title.

**VB: Ah.**

**DR:** And this has come from eh, [pause 2 seconds] Belfast Public Library. They've been chasing round for it. So eh, I've ordered it. So far it's only more of a travel book really.

**VB: Ah.**

**DR:** I was hoping... But there are some pictures in the side here. These are on Shetland.

**VB: Oh right! Yes.**

**DR:** And that's erm, [inaudible; rustling; pause 11 seconds]

**VB: Magnificent views! Aren't they.**

**DR:** It's about the depopulation of the islands.

**VB: Yeah. Well when was that made?**

**DR:** 1938.

**VB: '38. Yeah.**



**DR:** I thought perhaps [inaudible] was written, perhaps '36, '37.

**VB:** Yeah. 'Cause it looks, it looks kind of similar to *Man of Aran*. Just the shots, doesn't it?

**DR:** Yes. I think there's more of a, more of a story.

**VB:** Yes.

**DR:** And the actors that are in it. Eh, Finlay Currie. Do you remember him? Finlay Currie.

**VB:** It rings a bell.

**DR:** A Scot there.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** They've got a picture of him here. [pause 3 seconds] That's him.

**VB:** Ah yes! Yes. Ah!

**DR:** He died recently.

**VB:** He wasn't in *Whisky Galore* as well was he? Maybe.

**DR:** Probably.

**VB:** Yeah. He looks really familiar.

**DR:** He was in that two reel comedy. Did I show you those stills of that two reel comedy?

**VB:** Yes. Maybe that's what I'm thinking of actually. Yes. Yes.

**DR:** I travelled on the train with him once from Elstree to St Pankhurst. Seemed quite a pleasant chap.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: So that one had more a sort of plot to it than--**

**DR: This one here?**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: Seems to be. Yes. Erm, but it seemed to be much more naturalistic.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: Than the other ones, than the studio ones.**

**VB: Yeah. It looks quite. I must try and get hold of that myself.**

**DR: Yes. I've ordered--**

**VB: From Belfast probably! [laughs]**

**DR: I went to the bookshop and it's still listed so--**

**VB: Yes.**

**DR: I've ordered a copy. Eh, [pause 3 seconds], so hopefully it turns out that it's still in print.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: But I say, the first part so far, it's mainly eh [pause 3 seconds] travel. Whereas the other one eh, [moves away], don't know whether it's here or not.**

**VB: You must've been there quite a while to shoot all that film. I mean--**

**DR:** Yeah. This one is a wonderful book. Have you read that?

**VB: 'Adventures with D.W. Griffiths'. No I haven't.**

**DR:** Well that's going back to the first war of course. But this was written by Griffiths' photographer's assistant. And there's a lot of technical things about it.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** About photography and about cameras. And developing and printing, that sort of thing. So, to me, that's the best film I know of.

**VB: Yeah. [pause 2 seconds] 'Cause you must've been watching these films with quite a critical eye as a student as well.**

**DR:** Yeah. That's right, yes. I don't know whether you've seen a big set--

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** [pause 8 seconds; flicking through book]. That was Ronald Gow's camera. That was the type of camera that Ronald Gow would use here.

**VB: Right, yes.**

**DR:** Look there, behind the camera. You can't see his face but eh, he's the cameraman. It's his assistant. That wrote the book.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Kevin Brownlow. He's the chap that does the, have you seen the 'Thames Silents'? On TV.

**VB: I don't think I have actually, no.**

**DR:** No. He's rescued a lot of all the old silent films. And eh, [pause 2 seconds] 1973 this was written.

**VB:** I mean, were you starting to get interested in the directors and the photographers and the technical people--

**DR:** Yes.

**VB:** In the late thirties.

**DR:** In the thirties, yeah.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** Getting more interested really. Yes. Erm, but I think I would've made, I would've made a better technician, I think, really. Working behind the scenes rather than, eh, [pause 2 seconds]. I don't think I'd have made it in the film industry. [pause 3 seconds] You'd need a little bit more outgoing personality I think.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** To survive [laughs].

**VB:** I'm sure that's right. Ah.

**DR:** I don't think I'd have survived for long.

**VB:** When you hear about the Hollywood ones, they were terribly flamboyant.

**DR:** Yes. That's right. Yeah. But eh, oh yes, we used to discuss the eh, the director and so on. And the photography. [pause 2 seconds]

**VB: Were you quite harsh on some of the films? I mean do you think, I was interested when you were talking about watching films as a child. And the people around you and the noise and everything.**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: Do you think that you got more, [pause 2 seconds]. I mean obviously you must've got more critical as you got older. Did you start picking faults with the films more than you did--**

**DR: Eh--**

**VB: When you were a child.**

**DR: Well later on, yes.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: Yes. Erm, particularly when sound came in. Because that's [swallowed?] everything up didn't it? And erm, so when I was used to the action of the old silent films. Ehm, certainly the sound eh, I remember one or two where the dialogue went on all along and eh, for a young person it gets a bit boring doesn't it? Love scenes and so on. Mhm. [pause 2 seconds]**

**VB: 'Cause I, just listening to what you're saying, it's interesting because your tastes seemed to have changed even throughout, throughout the thirties.**

**DR: Oh yes.**

**VB: From the beginning to the eh--**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: The end.**

**DR:** Well some of the things we watch now, the early films, we're wondering why, you know, [amused voice] what attracted them to us about them.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** And why we queued in the rain to watch them. Even going to Manchester to see eh, Abbot and Costello. You know, pretty terrible now. But I remember going once there to see them. Mhm, [pause 6 seconds].

**VB: I've got some stills with me as well that, erm, I got from London. Some of the thirties films that I thought you might like to see as well.**

**DR:** Yeah. Oh yeah!

**VB: Eh, [laughs], Laurel and Hardy.**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB: I don't know if--**

**DR:** Yes. Well the one, the film there that stands out in my mind is the one with the piano. [pause 2 seconds] Can't remember its name. D'you know that one?

**VB: Is this the one where they're trying to get a piano up a--**

**DR:** There's a whole, great, man... somewhere in Hollywood. I think it's still there. [pause 3 seconds]. Oh, I don't know how many steps [inaudible]. That was only a two reel one wasn't it?

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**DR:** [recording starts mid-conversation] [inaudible] Sorry all my books are all over the place.

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR:** [They're all in the middle of the room?], the main ones. [pause 17 seconds; DR comes over with book]

**VB: Ah Mr Laurel and Mr Hardy.**

**DR:** Have you been to the museum? Is it still there up in the lakes?

**VB: Eh I haven't. No. I'd love to. It sounds--**

**DR:** I remember there was some problem with it, wasn't there? Weren't they having to move or close or something?

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** But erm, [pause 3 seconds]. Yes well, as I say, there's pictures here, that's the one that eh I remember.

**VB: 'Cause I think the father had a, managed one of the theatres in Glasgow for a while. Eh, Stan Laurel. So they say. [laughs]**

**DR:** Oh.

**VB: 'Cause I think he spent some time in Glasgow as a boy.**

**DR:** Aw. [pause 2 seconds] Yes.

**VB: So I've been told anyway. [amused laugh]**

**DR:** Yes, well it could be.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Glasgow. [pause 5 seconds; looking at book] Page one. 'Sixteen-year-old [inaudible] the Glasgow theatre'.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** [laughs]

**VB:** Ah yes. That's right. His father was manager at Pickard's Museum.

**DR:** Yeah. [pause 8 seconds]

**VB:** That's right. So, apparently his father came to Glasgow in 1905 to manage the Metropole.

**DR:** Oh. Yes.

**VB:** So he spent quite a while there.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** This looks interesting.

**DR:** They used to show the shorts. Apart from eh, seeing them in the news theatres. I saw several of them there. [pause 4 seconds] But in London they were mainly the eh, the shorts seemed to have disappeared when I got down there.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** They all seemed to be double feature films.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** We used to see. That seems incredible. You could get in for about a shilling. That's what, 5 pence you see. Erm, during the afternoon, before a certain time. 4 o'clock. I can't remember now. But



you'd get in and see a three hour show. [amused laugh] Even allowing for inflation you wonder how they managed it.

**VB: That's amazing. Yeah.**

**DR:** [pause 3 seconds] Is that Joan Crawford?

**VB: Ah yes. Yeah. Was she someone you liked as a star?**

**DR:** Yes. I liked all, I can't really say any particular [inaudible]. Basically all [inaudible].

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** [pause 3 seconds] Well some of her films have got natural backgrounds. Were taken outdoors, aren't they?

**VB: Yes. I was hearing that one, *Sing As We Go!* was shot in Bolton. Quite a lot of it.**

**DR:** That's right. Yes.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** I think it was. Yes. And that makes them more interesting to see today.

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** The backgrounds.

**VB: Yes. I think that might be from *Sing As We Go!* as well that one.**

**DR:** Yeah. All the details.

**VB: Yeah. [pause 3 seconds] Do you think you got a fairly accurate idea of life in Lancashire from some of Gracie Fields's films?**

**DR:** Sorry. Did you get any?

**VB:** Did you get, do you think they gave an accurate reflection of life in Lancashire?

**DR:** Ah. [pause 4 seconds] Well, I'd doubt it really. No. Difficult to say. [pause 10 seconds]

**VB:** 'Cause I'm sure the sort of images in films like that must've--

**DR:** Yes.

**VB:** Shaped people's ideas. Especially people who didn't know the places.

**DR:** Yeah. Well 'course I was, I've always lived in Sale but my family came from Accrington.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** You can't get more Lancashire than that.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** And erm, [pause 3 seconds]. In fact my father was I think the most classless person you could eh, could imagine. Because he was equally at home with the men on the shop floor as he was the Sir somebody's--

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** In the boardroom. And in fact he mixed socially with erm... And I've been out [pause 3 seconds], in the erm, some of the houses in Accrington, the terraced houses in Accrington [inaudible]. And eh, we've met some real mill girls and so on. And I did a lot of work in the mills after war. Photographs. In the cotton mills. And [amused laugh], [pause 3 seconds]. Everything looks a little bit too neat and tidy I think. On the films. [pause 2 seconds] Eh although they're wearing clogs. But it was just a little bit eh--

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** It's like what you see. Some of the ones in the present day. Eh, dramas, you see on the TV. Which cover the thirties, the twenties and thirties. They get everything right. But there's just something, [pause 3 seconds]. You get a lot of motor cars for instance, look like they've just come out of a museum, don't you? [laughs]

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** I don't see them like that at all.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** But eh, mhm.

**VB:** I think that's a really interesting way of looking at it. You know just that it's, there's something wrong. It's like, I suppose, I mean even in a film like Whisky Galore.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** It's got, it's got aspects of Scotland in it but there's just something that's not--

**DR:** Something not quite right.

**VB:** Quite right. And it's maybe, like you say, things look like they've come out of a museum.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** Like the sweaters look like they've just been knitted.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** You know. [amused voice] Everything's, it's not quite right.

**DR:** Yeah. And of course when you go further and look at some of the lighting.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** There was a film yesterday afternoon called *Hiding*. With Mai Zetterling. [pause 2 seconds] That was made in 1947. Eh, about an RAF officer who married a German girl during the war. Or just after the war. And brought her home. And all the problems. But eh, every time there was a close up of Mai Zetterling it would just, all shadow. And wherever she was--

**VB:** [laughs]

**DR:** Soon as it got to a close up, it was just like a glamour shot.

**VB:** Yes.

**DR:** Just that little circle under the nose, you know, a shadow there--

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** Spotlight on there.

**VB:** [laughs]

**DR:** [laughs]

**VB:** Maybe that's what it is. It's the lighting. That you can never get that sort of--

**DR:** No.

**VB:** That naturalistic effect really.

**DR:** And of course you see shadows all over the place.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** That shouldn't be there.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** I notice them [pause 2 seconds], rather a lot but eh, [looks at stills]. Shirley Temple. Yes, we used to watch her.

**VB: Did you like Shirley Temple?**

**DR:** At the time, yes. Yeah.

**VB: Mhm.**

[pause 3 seconds]

**DR:** Cute [but ?]. [pause 4 seconds] Joan Blondell. [inaudible] [pause 5 seconds; turning pages] Never heard of her.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** [pause 8 seconds] Oh here's [D? Dyer?]. Oh. [pause 2 seconds; flicking through pages] Yeah, here's one of the photographers. Harry Stradling. I remember his name. 'Greatest living cameraman'.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** Mhm. [pause 3 seconds] These are just straight mug shots.

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR:** [laughs] Mhm. [pause 5 seconds] They're very keen on eh, Venetian blinds.

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** You see them. [laughs] Any excuse for Venetian blinds. [pause 10 seconds; looking at stills] Oh, there was Mae West of course. I remember Mae West. She was eh, quite a girl wasn't she? [amused voice]

**VB:** [smiles]

**DR:** I always thought she had a pretty face.

**VB:** Yes. She has. She'd a very bright sort of smile.

**DR:** Oh yeah. I presume she's still alive. Says she's in Switzerland in there.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** So she must be about my age. She'd be about in the mid seventies. [pause 4 seconds]

**VB:** Did you like Bette Davis?

**DR:** Oh yeah! Yeah, she was eh, [pause 2 second] a character, wasn't she? See that shadow?

**VB:** Yes! [laughs]

**DR:** Mhm. Oh she had a lot of character, didn't she? [pause 8 seconds; turning pages] Oh that's [inaudible]. [pause 5 seconds] Joan Bennett. [pause 8 seconds] Ah Tom Walls. Yes. We used to enjoy him. I saw him on stage as well.

**VB:** Oh.

**DR:** And Robertson Hare. Have you ever come across him?

**VB:** Again, I know the name.

**DR:** Yeah. Well he was in the, in those, the farce on the, those farces they used to have at the Aldwych theatre in London [referring to the Aldwych farces].

**VB: Ah.**

**DR:** Robertson Hare. Doubt if he'll be in. [pause 3 seconds] Robertson, on ninety-seven. Bald head. There he is.

**VB: Oh yes. He does look very thin there. Yeah.**

**DR:** [pause 5 seconds] [mumbles; inaudible]. *Friday the 13th*.

**VB: Mhm. I can't think of the films but I know the face.**

**DR:** Yes.

**VB: When you say that.**

**DR:** Yes. HE was very good.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Had a catchphrase. What was it? [pause 3 seconds]. Oh dear! My memory's going I'm afraid. [pause 3 seconds] Oh! Oh they got them all in here.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Good find this. [pause 5 seconds] [inaudible]. Oh here's another one.

**VB: Looks like a wonderful shot that.**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB: Mind you, he's still got the shadow [amused voice] under the nose, as you said. [laughs]**

**DR:** Oh well, yes.

**VB: Not quite a glamour shot, though.**

**DR:** Not so bad there, is it?

**VB: No.**

**DR:** [laughs]

**VB: Is that. Is that a photographer's trick? To make the--**

**DR:** Well, it's full 45 degree lighting. It's not there.

**VB: Ah I see.**

**DR:** See these are heavily retouched.

**VB: Right.**

**DR:** See that. Pencil work all over the face.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Make it so smooth.

**VB: That's interesting.**

**DR:** Yeah. Which we didn't do in later years.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** But eh--

**VB: So you say, the ones that have the nose shadow, it's a sort of 45 degree light?**



**DR:** Yes. That's to sort of give eh, you see coming round there.

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** That's to give the, that's supposed to give the best modelling in the face.

**VB: Right! Yes.**

**DR:** 'Cause it leaves a shadow that size. So you put another light on this side, just to lighten up the shadow.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Or a reflector.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** See. That's the sort of basic lighting.

**VB: I see! Right. Like in this one with Ronald Colman.**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** That's 45 degrees there.

**VB: And do you think that one's been touched up as well?**

**DR:** [pause 2 seconds] I should think so.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** You can't tell on these reproductions.

**VB:** Sure. Yeah.

**DR:** But erm, [pause 3 seconds].

**VB:** And I thought all the filmstars had perfect [amused voice] complexions.

**DR:** Oh no, I shouldn't think so.

**VB:** [laughs]

**DR:** [pause 2 seconds] They don't bother so much these days, do they?

**VB:** I don't think so. No.

**DR:** Well, they do make-up.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** Oh Jessie Matthews of course. Yeah. She's eh--

**VB:** Was she someone you liked?

**DR:** Yeah. Yes. She's singing and dancing here. Yeah. [pause 7 seconds] Have you got the time?

**VB:** Yes. It's erm, oh, it's about twenty past 11 actually!

**DR:** [inaudible]. [DR leaves room] Would you like some coffee, Val?

**VB:** That would be lovely. Yes, yeah. I didn't realise how the time was passing actually. Once you start talking. That'd be lovely, thanks.

**DR:** Black?

**VB: A black coffee I think. That's great.**

**DR:** Yes. The [inaudible].

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** I don't know what, I must order one.

**VB: Busby Berkeley. 'Gold Diggers' [referring to *Gold Diggers of 1933* or *Gold Diggers of 1935*]**

**DR:** Do you have those?

**VB: Eh, no. I'll just take it black. Thanks.**

**DR:** Sugar?

**VB: Erm, just as it is. That's great. Thanks very much.**

**DR:** A biscuit. Do you want one?

**VB: Eh, that would be lovely. Thanks very much. Did you like these big Berkeley musicals.**

**DR:** Oh yes. Marvellous things, aren't they? That piano one, yeah!

**VB: Ah.**

**DR:** That was wonderful. I remember that! [laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR:** Don't know how they do it.

[coffee being poured]

**VB: It's very useful this, isn't it?**

[coffee being stirred]

**DR: Now which film did you want to see?**

**VB: Right. Erm, [pause 4 seconds]**

**DR: We've got erm, [pause 3 seconds]. Eh, do you want any of the very old ones?**

**VB: Erm--**

**DR: The ['Children's Art into Model'?] is the earliest. That's 1909.**

**VB: That would be nice actually. To start off with something like that.**

**DR: Eh, what's the next? The other one was the eh--**

**VB: There was one of eh, I remember from hearing the list. There was one from a wedding. From about 1938.**

**DR: Oh we've got a wedding yeah.**

**VB: That sounded quite good as well.**

**DR: Yeah. I'll put it on there. So if we erm--**

**VB: I'd very much like to see a bit of one of the Gow fragments that you had.**

**DR: The?**

**VB: The Gow films.**

**DR:** The Gow. Yeah.

**VB:** They sounded excellent. [pause 6 seconds]

**DR:** Oh! Here we are. I was going to put them on the reel but eh, [pause 11 seconds; setting up projector] Silly projector, it's an automatic threading.

**VB:** Ah. I see.

**DR:** Which eh, [pause 2 seconds], is all right in theory but, if anything goes wrong--

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** It mashes up the film.

**VB:** Yeah. It looks, as I was saying, the only time I tried to show old film I had a very, it was an old projector as well.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** It was really awkward to use. That looks a lot more sophisticated.

[pause 3 seconds]

**DR:** I bought it really, well about, [pause 2 seconds] 1980 really.

**VB:** Ah.

**DR:** I missed out a lot of the films at the cinema, for various reasons.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** In the seventies. So I thought, eh, [pause 2 seconds], I'd catch up on them and hire a few films.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** As soon as I got it of course, the video boom.

**VB: Ah. Yes. [laughs]**

**DR:** So, I didn't buy many. They got so expensive.

**VB: Oh yes.**

[pause 8 seconds; setting up projector]

**DR:** Hope for the best.

**VB: Ah. No I like videos but they still can't replace film I don't think. You know the whole experience of going to the cinema.**

**DR:** Yeah. Yeah.

[pause 3 seconds]

**VB: It's quite good. I like watching a video in the evening, you know.**

[projector starts running; loud whirring sound]

**DR:** Yeah.

[pause 18 seconds; projector stops running; pause 5 seconds]

**DR:** [sound of telephone ringing in the background] [inaudible] It's not happy. That's a granny flat there we have.

**VB: Ah I see.**

**DR:** We eh, rent it out now to a young lady--

**VB:** Ah.

**DR:** Who was a member of the Sealed Knot. Do you know the Sealed Knot?

**VB:** I don't. No.

**DR:** Well she goes around eh, [pause 2 seconds], giving demonstrations of Civil War pageants.

**VB:** Mhm!

**DR:** She's a soldier. I don't know what she does or [laughs].

[projector starts running]

**VB:** I've heard of, I think I have heard of it before. It sounds like a lot of fun actually.

**DR:** Yes.

**VB:** I'm sure it must be very enjoyable.

**DR:** Yes. Oh yeah.

[projector running; pause 5 seconds; stops]

**DR:** Problems already – I'm sorry.

**VB:** Ah.

[projector starts and stops a number of times]

**DR:** It just won't take.

[projector stops, starts again and stops]

**DR:** This was made professionally for a local cinema in Altrincham--

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** Which doesn't exist any more. [pause 3 seconds] They used to, they used to have these annual outings for children, into the country. I think they used to go by, [pause 2 seconds] in a horse and cart. But this is the first outing by rail. From Altrincham to Mobberley. Mobberley is a village just down the line.

**VB: Mhm.**

[pause 3 seconds]

**VB: This one's from 1909 you say.**

**DR:** 1909. Yes.

**VB: Goodness.**

[pause 3 seconds]

**DR:** It's better quality than a lot of the other things you'll see.

**VB: Mhm.**

[projector starts running]

**VB: Mhm! [pause 3 seconds] It is. It's very sharp isn't it?**

**DR:** Yeah. [pause 3 seconds] They all look well turned out, don't they?

**VB: They do. Very much so!**



**DR:** Well, they're meant to be the poor children of Altrincham but I don't know.

**VB:** [laughs] **With the he flags as well.**

**DR:** The gramophone there.

**VB:** **Looks like the whole town's turned out as well.**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** [laughs]

[projector runs for 7 seconds]

**DR:** The railway enthusiasts would like this one. [projector sound loud]

**VB:** **Oh I'm sure.**

**DR:** There's Altrincham station.

**VB:** **Yeah. [pause 3 seconds] I wonder if any of these children are still around.**

**DR:** I'll tell you about that [in a minute?].

**VB:** **Ah. 'Cause some of them are quite small of course, there.**

**DR:** This is Mobberley station now.

**VB:** **Ah. [pause 4 seconds] That's lovely. They look so excited as well, don't they? [laughs]**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** Ah. [projector continuing to run; pause 10 seconds] Just like children today as well. The excitement of seeing a [inaudible], [laughs].

**DR:** Yeah. [projector continuing to run; pause 4 seconds]

**VB:** Ah. Real donkey. [pause 3 seconds] Donkey there. [pause 3 seconds] That's wonderful. Was that two little boys having a bit of a [amused voice] punch-up in the background as well? [laughs]

**DR:** Yeah. [projector continuing to run; pause 9 seconds]

**VB:** [laughs] Acrobatics. [pause 12 seconds] Oh, this [looks like fun?] [laughs] [pause 4 seconds] This is wonderful. [pause 9 seconds] [laughs] Look at his face! [laughs] Did they carry on doing these annual outings?

**DR:** Yeah. [voice in distance] Yeah. [pause 15 seconds]

**VB:** They look like trumpets or something. [pause 10 seconds]

**DR:** Yeah, yeah.

**VB:** [inaudible; expresses enjoyment intermittently]

**DR:** That's it.

**VB:** That's tremendous. It really is.

**DR:** We would've had more [switches projector off] but, there's a Punch and Judy show which is on the original but... for some reason or other, when I got this print, it wasn't on it.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** Erm, when I showed this to the Bolton History Society. I think it was about 1988. Eh, a lady in the audience got very excited 'cause she recognised herself.

**VB: [gasps]**

**DR:** 'Course this got Maryann excited too.

**VB: Yes. I'll bet.**

**DR:** So, about two years later Maryann put this on one of her tapes.

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** For her first video tape. And they were having a launch party. So she asked me if I could trace this lady and bring her along to the launch.

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** Which we did. She was in a nursing home then. She must've been in her eighties. And eh, [pause 2 seconds] she was interviewed on Granada News. I've got that on tape. [pause 2 seconds] I'll have a think about it. Perhaps we could have a look at it. It's only a couple of minutes.

**VB: It must've been so exciting for the lady as well.**

**DR:** Yes. Yes.

**VB: I'm sure she recognised quite a few of the other faces.**

**DR:** She knew, she knew the two boys who were doing the, who were doing the juggling.

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** So I think, if we go through now [tape cuts out].

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

**VB: I really enjoyed the family ones as well. [sound of projector; looking at film]**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: They're just tremendous. [pause 3 seconds] So these were taken by your wife's uncle? Did you say?**

**DR: Sorry?**

[projector stops]

**VB: These were taken by your wife's uncle?**

**DR: Yes.**

**VB: Yes.**

**DR: Yes.**

**VB: In colour as well. It's--**

**DR: Yeah. There's a whole lot more. On the beach. But they get a bit boring for anybody who's--**

**VB: Not at all. I mean, it's really interesting to see all these different aspects of life. I mean the--**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: From the gardening to--**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: The beach erm, demonstrations.**

**DR:** Now this is the one that erm [pause 2 seconds] the hospital supplied that one. That was made for showing at this meeting with Hilaire Belloc. Eh, they had, they tried to advertise the eh, [pause 4 seconds], they wanted more recruits.

**VB: Right.**

**DR:** But as I said, you didn't used to seem to be very short of, erm. There's a tale. They all come out of a door. Now there's a tale that some of them went round the back and came out again.

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR:** Don't know whether it's a tale or not but there you are, that's what I was told. [laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR:** It's very bad quality this--

**VB: Ah. So when was this made again? [projector starts up] Sorry. What year was this made?**

**DR:** 1917

**VB: 1917.**

**DR:** During the war.

**VB: Yeah. [projector starts running; pause 10 seconds] [reading from title cards] "Altrincham District War Hospital Supply Depot. [laughs] G & H Bowden. The Hon. Organiser: Lady Haworth." [inaudible] organisers, the workers. Some of them look a bit confused [laughs] just as to what they're supposed to be doing, the nurses.**

**DR:** Yeah. [pause 8 seconds]

**VB: [inaudible] door. Is that the matron at the side? Do you think?**

**DR: The?**

**VB: Do you think that was the matron at the side?**

**DR: Could have been, yeah.**

**VB: Yeah. Oh their sewing machines.**

**DR: Yeah. [pause 8 seconds]**

**VB: He certainly had a very good eye for the shots, didn't he?**

**DR: Yeah. [pause 3 seconds]**

**VB: The composition of them, with big groups. [pause 20 seconds] [inaudible] [pause 35 seconds] I like the lorry as well, with the horse. [amused voice]**

**DR: Yeah. [pause 5 seconds]**

**VB: [inaudible]. [pause 8 seconds] It is fascinating that. Seeing the whole--**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: Process from start to finish.**

**DR: Yeah that must've languished in the local library for [pause 2 seconds] many years. [pause 10 seconds; inaudible; projector switched off].**

**VB: It's really, I mean, it looked so idyllic as well with the--**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: Trees and the out of door work and--**

**DR:** Yeah. [pause 3 seconds]

**VB: A sunny day.**

**DR:** We'll get to the wedding one. I think this what? 1938 was it? Yeah. This turned up when eh [pause 3 seconds], when they had their eight, fiftieth wedding anniversary. [pause 4 seconds] George [surname redacted]. He brought it out and they had a party and they showed the film.

**VB: Ah!**

**DR:** So [pause 3 seconds], I said could we have it for the archives? So he said yeah. [pause 2 seconds] I think they've shown excerpts on telly,

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** Once or twice. [projector runs for 9 seconds; winds down] It was made eh, by a professional. There was a [pause 2 seconds], firm in Manchester called 'Carborundum'.

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** And they had a film unit. You know, to make industrial films. And this eh George [surname redacted], the chap that was getting married, he was a friend of his. And he shot him, he took the film. [pause 3 seconds; projector starts running]

**VB: [laughs] [inaudible] historical record. An [N.U.G?] production. [amused voice]**

**DR:** Yeah. [pause 6 seconds]

**VB: Bowden Church.**

**DR:** This is just the next village.

**VB: Ah I see. Is it Bowdon it's pronounced?**

**DR: Boaden.**

**VB: Boaden. Yeah. [pause 3 seconds] There's a town in the Borders, Bowden spelt the same so, I wasn't sure. That's D, O, N.**

**DR: Yeah. [inaudible].**

**VB: Yes, huge, yes. Here comes the bride. [pause 7 seconds] [inaudible] car. [pause 6 seconds] She looks quite keen [amused voice] to get in [laughs].**

**DR: Yeah. See the reflection of the camera there?**

**VB: Yes. Yes.**

**DR: [inaudible]. [pause 7 seconds]**

**VB: What a lovely shot. It must've been delightful for them to see that fifty years on as well.**

**DR: Yeah. Yeah.**

**VB: Aw! [pause 12 seconds] And the church. A lovely church as well.**

**DR: Mhm. [pause 12 seconds]**

**VB: [inaudible; overtalking].**

**DR: [inaudible].**

**VB: [laughs; pause 3 seconds] The reception. Snapping the snapper. [laughs]**

**DR: [inaudible] camera [inaudible].**



**VB:** [laughs] [pause 5 seconds] Goodness me! They are huge though, bridesmaids' bouquets. Three of them too. [pause 30 seconds] Was that one of the mothers?

**DR:** [inaudible].

**VB:** Yeah. [laughs] [pause 18 seconds] [inaudible] I like the way he's done the titles there. They're excellent.

**DR:** Yes. See that double decker bus in the background?

**VB:** Oh yes.

**DR:** [projector switched off] Well I always thought perhaps that double decker bus had perhaps brought the guests down.

**VB:** Ah!

**DR:** But [inaudible; projector started again then stops]. But apparently it had brought out a party of children from Ancoats. Which was a slum area of Manchester.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** To be entertained at the church that afternoon.

**VB:** Ah I see.

**DR:** I suddenly remembered that. [laughs]

**VB:** It's wonderful to get these sort of details as well.

**DR:** Yes.

**VB:** It really brings the thing to life.

**DR:** Oh this must be about five years ago. Now what else we got? Erm, [looking at reels of films].

**VB:** Have you got any of your own films?

**DR:** Erm [pause 3 seconds]. Well I make home movies. [pause 3 seconds] But they're mainly after the war.

**VB:** Ah I see.

**DR:** No. Do you want those?

**VB:** I wouldn't mind having a, it's not directly relevant but it would be nice to see. [pause 3 seconds]

**DR:** Let's have a look and see if there's anything else here.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** The Home Guard. That's eh, 1944.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** That's just a parade through Altrincham. The opening of the war memorial. And the unveiling of the Chapel Street 'Roll of Honour' 1919.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** Any of those, or...? And then there's erm, school sports day, 1923.

**VB:** Oh. That sounds interesting actually.

**DR:** Does it? But eh, this is very bad.

**VB:** Ah.

**DR:** It was taken obviously in the rain and eh [pause 3 seconds].

**VB:** Did they keep doing these erm, the outing in 1909? Did that last for longer than that? Was it something that was happening, say, when you were a child?

**DR:** What? The eh--

**VB:** That annual outing.

**DR:** Annual outing.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** I don't know how long it went on. It was going on a long time before that. But whether they continued it I don't know.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** Erm [pause 2 seconds]. [Round here?], of course, it was to attract people into the cinema you see. To come and look at themselves.

**VB:** Right I see. [amused voice]

**DR:** One of the ideas I think.

**VB:** Ah. I'm sure it worked as well.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** Must've been quite a crowd puller.

**DR:** Well Maryann's quite pleased with this. 'Cause she said there's very few, just before the sports day, there was a few shots of the inside of the school. Of boys at the school and eh, she said that they got very few school films.

**VB:** I'm sure that's right.

**DR:** [inaudible; projector started up]

**VB:** Yes. 'Cause I mean I'm sure, [projector stopped] with the expense of film, people must've used it mainly for special events.

**DR:** Yes. Yes.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** This is a local, a sort of local event film--

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** Which they showed at the Altrincham Picture Theatre. [pause 4 seconds; projector started up; pause 5 seconds; projector stopped] I'm surprised, you see in a place like Stockport which is a much bigger town eh, as far as I could make out there's only one film survived from the early days.

**VB:** Mhm!

**DR:** Albeit a good one. Stockport Market. And yet at Altrincham here we've got eh, you know, we've got half a dozen. [pause 3 seconds] Right.

**VB:** I suppose a lot of it just depends on luck and people keeping these things.

**DR:** Right. Yeah. Never bother to keep them.

**VB:** Yeah. [projector started up; pause 4 seconds] Altrincham County High School for Boys. [Annual?] [inaudible] sports.

DR: [inaudible; projector noise]. [pause 5 seconds]

**VB: It's a beautiful building!**

DR: Yeah.

**VB: Ah. So is this a woodwork class or--**

DR: Pardon?

**VB: Is this woodwork or?**

DR: Yeah.

**VB: Yeah.**

DR: Woodwork. Chemistry.

**VB: Yeah.**

DR: And then the gym I think. [pause 2 seconds] They're all well turned out aren't they?

**VB: I was going to say. Were they always this smart? Or was it for the film? [laughs]**

DR: Yeah.

**VB: The hair, very carefully--**

DR: Yeah.

**VB: Combed. And the suits. [pause 5 seconds] Even their gym kits are very smart.**

DR: Yeah. [inaudible]. [pause 5 seconds]

**VB:** [laughs] Oh yes. [pause 4 seconds] High jump. Long jump. [pause 11 seconds; laughs; pause 9 seconds] This is an assault course.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** Ah. [pause 8 seconds; laughs] [inaudible; egg and spoon?]. [pause 4 seconds] And the sack race. [pause 5 seconds]

**DR:** The umbrellas.

**VB:** [laughs] Ah it looks quite miserable actually.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** Aw. [pause 4 seconds] I like this little [velvety staff?]. [laughs]

**DR:** Yeah. [pause 5 seconds]

**VB:** Oh. [pause 5 seconds] Three legged. [pause 3 seconds]

**DR:** Egg and spoon. [pause 9 seconds]

**VB:** Have you identified any of the boys in this?

**DR:** Eh, no. I know some of the teachers.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** That one there with the hat, taught me [Mr Kent?]. When I went about 10 years later, he was still there.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** And another teacher there I recognise. This is a dangerous game isn't it?

**VB:** It is. Yes. Is it the greasy pole? Mhm. Oh. Battering each other! [laughs]

**DR:** That's it.

**VB:** That's really tremendous. [projector stops running] And as you say, seeing inside the classrooms. It's quite something that.

**DR:** Yes. [laughs]

**VB:** Had it changed much by the time you were at the school?

**DR:** The school?

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** No. No, I think it was the same then. They'd started building [pause 2 seconds], extensions about the year I left.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** It was very much the same I think. [pause DR leaves room; 16 seconds; comes back]. Oh, [says something about cooking; inaudible].

**VB:** Ah.

**DR:** [Joan?] made us something, she said give it a couple of hours.

**VB:** [laughs]

**DR:** [laughs] Make sure it bubbles.

**VB:** Ah.

**DR:** Well it's bubbling at the moment. Erm, well if you want to see before you, one of Ronald Gow's, the film. Is it about twenty past is it now?

**VB: Yes. About twenty past.**

**DR:** It might eh, it'll run for about fifteen minutes.

**VB: That would be great! Yes.**

**DR:** Erm, well there's two but the [pause 2 seconds], the people of the eh [pause 2 seconds], the people of the eh, lakes. Of the lakes. [clattering noise in background] [pause 7 seconds; setting up film]

**VB: What a wonderful collection you've got though, of these films. They're really--**

**DR:** Eh, yes.

**VB: And the archive has obviously too.**

**DR:** Yes.

**VB: It's great.**

**DR:** [projector started up; pause 8 seconds, projector stopping and starting; projector runs for 5 seconds and stops] See what I mean. [attempts to get projector working for c. 80 seconds] [inaudible] [projector starts at 1:23:00]

**VB: Ah. [reading] "The People of the Lake. A Tale of the Bronze Age'. Altrincham County High School Educational Film. [Student Collection?] by Ronald Gow. Produced with the approval of Sir William Boyd Dawkins". Who was he?**

**DR:** Pardon?



**VB: Who was William Boyd Dawkins?**

**DR:** Oh some well known--

**VB:** Ah! [amused voice] Scout [inaudible] archaeology, stenography, anthropology and [pause 2 seconds; laughs; pause 3 seconds] Drinking his juice! [laughs] Ancient man of Britain. [laughs; pause 3 seconds] Oh! [pause 3 seconds] [laughs; pause 3 seconds; laughs; pause 13 seconds; laughs] This is amazing. It's amazing it really is.

**DR:** [inaudible]. Yeah.

**VB:** Bronze Age village. [pause 20 seconds] This is amazing. With all the costumes an everything.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** And the boat!

**DR:** Boat, yeah. [pause 18 seconds]

**VB:** [laughs] [projector runs film for c. 80 seconds with VB expressing enjoyment and laughing at various points] The chief was a good scout but he hasn't passed all this tests! [pause 17 seconds] I mean who's the chief? Do you know who the chief was?

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

**VB:** [reading quietly, possibly film titles] "It was all a dream at the end. Big Fight." [pause 3 seconds] "The Errol Flynn [heroism?]. The Scout. [inaudible] [pause 8 seconds] Absolutely brilliant. [pause 7 seconds] Aw! Ah I can see how exciting it must've been to see that.

**DR:** Yes. As I say it's eh, deteriorated quite a bit. 'Cause he kept the originals in eh, in his garage you see.

**VB: Ah I see.**

**DR:** For many years. But he had a 60ml print made of it.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** At some stage. But after it had deteriorated. And the other one's much worse.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** [inaudible] *The Glittering Sword*.

**VB: Yeah. It was really amazing. As I say, it must've been a tremendous experience--**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB: For the children.**

**DR:** Yes.

**VB: I mean presumably they built all these huts and--**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB: Costumes and--**

**DR:** Yeah. Yes it's quite a big set really.

**VB: Amazing. Yeah.**

**DR:** Down in Devonshire, as well made erm... Mhm. Erm, [pause 2 seconds] now, what else? After lunch. [inaudible]. [laughs]

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR:** Erm, [pause 2 seconds] you see, my home movies before the war were on 9.5 [referring to 9.5mm film].

**VB:** Ah I see. Yes.

**DR:** I've got them on tape but not a very good quality, [pause 2 seconds], tape. I wonder if I can [pause 2 seconds], I could try that 9.5 projector and see what happens.

**VB:** That would be great.

**DR:** After lunch.

**VB:** Be nice to see--

**DR:** These others are erm, [recording cuts out; recording restarts; noise of projector running; pause 3 seconds]

**VB:** *The Man Who Changed His Mind*. Yeah.

**DR:** Yeah. They messed about with the--

**VB:** Ah. [reading] "Original story of a boy scout by Ronald Gow". [pause 7 seconds] There's Baden-Powell. [pause 3 seconds] Did he ever make any feature films?

**DR:** Pardon?

**VB:** Did Gow ever make any feature films, or..?

**DR:** No. He wrote some scripts.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** For [Pinewood?], I think.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: [inaudible].**

**VB: [laughs] [pause 5 seconds] It's a shame because there was tremendous imagination--**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: In that other one. [pause 6 seconds] [reading] "European Motion Picture Company salutes the scouts of the world and has pleasure in presenting this young British picture." [pause 2 seconds] "Produced in England by British boy scouts." [pause 3 seconds] "Sir Robert Baden-Powell has said that the film is a feather in the cap of the scouts."**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: "Photographed with an inexpensive cine camera and produced entirely by members of the Altrincham High School scout troupe."**

**DR: It's not quite right, because they hired a proper professional cameraman.**

**VB: Ah! [laughs]**

**DR: [laughs] [inaudible; pause 5 seconds]**

**VB: The titles are wonderful. As you say, with the scout motto in them.**

**DR: Yes. Yeah. [inaudible] [projector switched off]**

**VB: As I say, it is a shame that he didn't, 'cause he's obviously got such a, erm, rapport with boys as well.**

**DR: Yes. I've probably showed you this before. At the school. This man's dress. Did I show you that?**

**VB: No. I don't think so.**

**DR:** That's Ronald Gow there.

**VB: Ah!**

**DR:** That's an interesting dress you see. Look, they've all got suits on. In fact he looks the odd one out with the jacket.

**VB: Yes.**

**DR:** Look at the gold chains.

**VB: Watch chains yes.**

**DR:** They're probably sixth-formers I suppose.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** But eh, [pause 2 seconds], [laughs].

**VB: That is interesting.**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB: He was obviously very young when he was at the school.**

**DR:** Well he'd be leaving here. He'd be about eh, seventeen, I suppose, maybe.

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** He went on to Manchester University from here, so--

**VB: Ah I see. Yes.**

**DR:** I suppose about seventeen or eighteen, something like that.

**VB:** Yeah. [pause 3 seconds] No as I say, I thought the first one you showed me, it's really stunning. I mean for something done with children.

**DR:** Yes.

**VB:** Presumably an inexpensive cine camera for that one!

**DR:** Yes. Quite.

**VB:** It's just tremendous.

**DR:** [moves away] See that magazine that my wife [wants rid of it?] [pause 3 seconds] There's an article about it there.

**VB:** A-ah.

**DR:** Two pages.

**VB:** Yeah. It's in the British Journal of Photography as well. [pause 6 seconds]

**DR:** Right. Right.

**VB:** [looking at magazine] The films of, that's 1979. [pause 3 seconds] Oh I wish I'd had time to see *The Glittering Sword* now as well.

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB:** It's great that. [pause 5 seconds] I've thoroughly enjoyed seeing these. Thanks very much.

**DR:** It's a pleasure.

**VB: Thanks for not throwing them out. I mean it's been really useful for me as well. Just as I say, to get an idea of erm, you know, sort of leisure pursuits as well.**

**DR: Yes. They look pretty crude now looking back on them.**

**VB: I don't know actually. They're really quite erm--**

**DR: And of course with cine camera, the film's expensive.**

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR: And you just press the button for two or three seconds and take it off again.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: Whereas with video these days, you switch it on and leave it on.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: [laughs]**

**VB: So you must've been, had to be quite careful with how you were shooting films.**

**DR: Yeah. That's right.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: But erm [pause 2 seconds], as I say they're of no interest to anybody but family.**

**VB: Oh, as I say, I think, especially the holiday shots, you get a real impression of these '30s resorts.**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: Mhm.**

**VB: It's really interesting.**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: 'Cause I mean I've heard people talking about going to seaside resorts in Scotland as well. But I've never really seen any footage.**

**DR: No.**

**VB: Like that. Contemporary footage of holidays.**

**DR: Yeah. Well our family went eh [pause 3 seconds], Llandudno. Mainly. And eh St Anns. [pause 2 seconds]. We never went very far.**

**VB: No.**

**DR: Eh, we used to go off on day trips quite a bit with the car, in the Lake District. But holidays it was usually North Wales or eh, or St Anns.**

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR: I can't remember anywhere else. [pause 2 seconds]**

**VB: But North Wales is lovely isn't it?**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: I was in Wales for the first time about eh, four weeks ago.**

**DR: Oh. Yeah.**



**VB: My husband came down for the weekend and we went to erm, Betws-y-Coed in Snowdonia.**

**DR: Oh yes.**

**VB: It's beautiful. Really enjoyed it.**

**DR: Yeah. Well Llandudno I think is the best on that coast.**

**VB: Is it? Yeah.**

**DR: And it's not been spoilt. They've not allowed any developments on the promenade.**

**VB: Ah I see.**

**DR: So that's more or less as it was originally.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: They've ruined the pier of course. Or part of it. Taken all the nice Victorian ironwork down.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: Got these scruffy stalls and things.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: Apart from that, it's a pier. A very good pier.**

**VB: Yeah. I was actually thinking about maybe taking a day out there on Saturday and having a look round.**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: I think I will.**

**DR: Yeah.**

**VB: When you say that.**

**DR: Eh on the train?**

**VB: On the train, yes.**

**DR: I'd like to take an hour and a half for this lunch.**

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR: Yeah. And there's the Great Orme railway. If you want to go up on the--**

**VB: Ah really?**

**DR: That's running all day.**

**VB: Your daughter was telling me just now about your railway in the garden.**

**DR: Aw-w!**

**VB: [laughs]**

**DR: Eh, well it's only crude really. It only goes round in circles.**

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR: As model railways go, it's nothing.**

**VB: Mhm.**

**DR:** I don't get much time for it really.

**VB:** She seemed to be very impressed with it. She was saying that you'd cut a hole in the shed so it could run through.

**DR:** Oh yeah. Well they used to play with it when they were children.

**VB:** Yeah. [laughs] Obviously made a lasting impression!

**DR:** It was better then than it is now I think.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** It's a nice view. Conwy's worth going to. That's [pause 3 seconds] 'course a bit awkward if you're in the train.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** Nice little. You know the old Telford's Bridge. The erm suspension bridge.

**VB:** Ah right. Yes. I've seen pictures of it. Yeah.

**DR:** 'Course it's got a tunnel underneath now. But eh, it's very nice round there.

**VB:** Mhm. So was that your whole family that used to go on these holidays? Because you were saying that you were erm--

**DR:** Yes. My mother and family and--

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** And my sister.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** My brother was a lot older so he didn't, I never saw much of him.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** And Joan, their family went to, they usually went to Newquay. That was their favourite spot. In Cornwall.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** And I went with them just after the war. But eh, I think they expected it to be the same but...  
[laughs].

**VB:** Aw, I'm sure. Yeah. [pause 3 seconds] It's amazing really that your two families were both interested in film. You know seeing her family films as well.

**DR:** That's right. Yeah.

**VB:** 'Cause it must've been quite an unusual, you know, hobby or--

**DR:** Yes.

**VB:** At that time.

**DR:** Erm [pause 2 seconds], quite a popular hobby. 'Course there weren't many people filming in those days I suppose. Because of the expense you know.

**VB:** Mhm.

**DR:** Although you could get a camera for about three or four pounds. [A little cheap one?]

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** Little bit more. I think this originally was fifteen pounds when it came out I think.

**VB: [gasps]**

**DR:** But erm [pause 3 seconds].

**VB: And they more or less seem to last forever as well don't they? I suppose.**

**DR:** Well they shrink you see. They probably last longer than tape. 'Course we don't know yet do we?

**VB: Yeah.**

**DR:** But they got scratched and eh--

**VB: Mhm. I'm sure they do because I mean, the audio tapes aren't very good for lasting. So I'm sure video tape probably is--**

**DR:** Yeah.

**VB: Of a lesser quality than that.**

**DR:** Yeah. [pause 4 seconds]

**VB: Is there a copy of that in the North West Film Archive as well?**

**DR:** Eh, no.

**VB: No.**

**DR:** They've got that one I showed you on video. But there's nothing really there. They've got plenty of that sort of thing.

**VB: Ah, I see, yeah.**

**DR:** [And the quality is not very good?].

**VB:** It's interesting as well to see that type of film because I haven't come across that before.

**DR:** Yeah. We've got a lot more on 15 ml which he took after the war, which is [colourised?], which is better.

**VB:** Yeah.

**DR:** I won the [inaudible; Royale?]. [pause 6 seconds] Right, well what do you? Do you want to get off now?

**VB:** I suppose I should really. Although I've thoroughly enjoyed seeing these. It's been great.

**DR:** You can see more if you want but [laughs].

**VB:** Yeah. Oh I should go cause I've got to as I say, type some stuff out.

**DR:** Yeah. All right.

[End of Interview]