

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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* South Harrow, Middlesex, 5 July 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Gwen and Fred Curnick

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Richard Rushton

* GC=Gwen Curnick/ FC=Fred Curnick/ WA=Walter/ VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: First of two interviews with Gwen and Fred Curnick; Sound Quality: Good.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

GC: [tape starts mid-conversation; looking at book] Oh, that's the Dominion, yes. The ABC, yes. That's the Grosvenor.

FC: Yeah.

GC: The Ace. Oh, yes! That's the same one, yes. I don't remember it in [inaudible].

FC: I stopped going to the cinema, [pause 3 seconds] about 37 years ago.

VB: Yes. [laughs]

GC: [laughs]

FC: We lived here when we were first married and if we wanted to go the cinema it wasn't difficult 'cause my mother was here.

VB: Right, I see.

GC: Erm. Then we moved and it wasn't so easy then and it was just one of those things.

GC: That was one we were talking about, the Belmont.

VB: Yeah. What was that like as a cinema?

FC: I never went there.

GC: I went to the Belmont, I think, once. Erm. [pause 4 seconds] I can't remember it very well. Eh, it wasn't a terribly big cinema, if I remember rightly but eh, it was a fairly, it was quite a nice cinema.

FC: Naw, I never went there.

GC: The prices are interesting. It's one and six for, shilling sixpence, this goes up to one and six.

VB: Mhm.

GC: 1939, that one. Or is it when we donated to Harrow Hospital?

VB: Did you go to the cinema much when you were children?

GC: Erm, [pause 3 seconds] we didn't go. We weren't really taken by our mother and father but Chummy used to take us, didn't she?

FC: Well.

GC: Or she used to take me.

FC: Yeah, well, I, I, [pause 2 seconds] I think I used to go with, you know, Dennis [surname redacted] next door--

GC: Mhm.

FC: As much as anything. He was a couple of years older than me and eh, and I seem to think that we used to go together. Erm, I do remember my elder cousin that lived with us taking me to see *King Kong*, 'cause I couldn't get in to see it. [laughs] It was eh, an 'A' film and I couldn't get in without an adult. And she took me to see that. That was down at the Odeon at South Harrow.

VB: Ah. What was that like inside the Odeon?

FC: Just a perfectly ordinary cinema. They were restricted in space when they built it, I think.

GC: Yes. Not a terribly big cinema, was it?

FC: They couldn't make it very large so I believe they made it a 999-seater because it came under less strict rules.

VB: I see. So just under the thousand?

FC: Yeah. Erm, I can't [pause 2 seconds] vouch for that, but that's what I heard. That it was nine hundred and ninety-nine seats. Erm, the balcony wasn't much higher than the eh --

GC: No, it wasn't.

FC: You didn't sit under the balcony.

GC: No. It was just at the back of the stalls.

FC: It was just raised a bit higher.

[pause 4 seconds]

GC: There's the Embassy.

FC: That was our original cinema in Harrow, that one.

VB: The Coliseum.

FC: And the eh, the Broadway, which I don't see anything here for the Broadway.

GC: No. The Broadway was a really old cinema, wasn't it?

FC: I wouldn't think that that was a cinema originally.

GC: No.

FC: I shouldn't think it was built as a cinema, actually. Because it was, you went down the sides. It was in a block of shops.

GC: Mhm.

FC: There was a, the Technical School was one side, wasn't it?

GC: I don't know.

FC: And Charles Baker, outfitters, was the other side. And you walked down the length of their shops--

GC: Yes, that's right.

FC: And it run across the back.

GC: Yes. Yeah, that's right. That's how it was.

FC: Erm, it wasn't. I shouldn't think that was anything near as big as the Odeon, I don't know.

VB: **So was there a difference between the local cinemas then? Were there ones that were, sort of, more upmarket, say than...?**

FC: Oh, yeah.

GC: Definitely, yes. Definitely. I mean, the Coliseum was a very old cinema as well. And in fact, I don't know just when it was, but it couldn't have been all that long after that, 1936 date, it became a repertory theatre.

VB: **Ah!**

GC: And it was a repertory theatre right up until the time it closed, wasn't it?

FC: Mhm.

GC: Erm. But that was a very old one. And the one that was up on the hill, and you haven't got anything about that either. It was called the Cosy at one time and it became the Carlton. And that was a very old one, wasn't it?

FC: Originally it was the Elite, wasn't it?

GC: Oh, yes. I believe it was, yeah. I think that was before I can remember.

FC: That's where I used to take the girl, the first girlfriend.

VB: **[laughs]**

GC: **[laughs]**

VB: **So fond memories of that one.**

GC: And that one, that one that was up on a hill [probably referring to Harrow Hill]. Eh, they used to run a free bus service.

VB: Really?

GC: Yes. Erm, I don't know whether you can remember just where it went but it, it --

FC: It came down [pause 2 seconds] along the High Road, down Roxeth Hill, then along [pause 2 seconds] Lower Road, isn't it?

GC: Yes.

FC: Along Lower Road, Bessborough Road to Roxborough Bridge, over Roxborough Bridge, down, erm [pause 3 seconds], that one's College Road, isn't it?

GC: College Road, yes.

FC: To the foot of College Road, then it turned right, and actually went in front of the Coliseum.

GC: Coliseum. Yes, that's right.

FC: Erm, and then back up the Hill, up Peterborough Road.

GC: Yeah.

FC: Up to the top of the Hill and along the High Road again to the cinema.

VB: Ah.

FC: And eh, it done that [pause 3 seconds] evening, didn't it? It wasn't, it, it kept going round like that and you could get on it anywhere and go up to the Hill or you could come down. I don't think it was all day. It was evening time. And when the last house was well and truly in, then you walked down the Hill 'cause they stopped it. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

GC: [laughs]

VB: So just to get you up then, [laughing] and make your own way back.

FC: Up there.

GC: That's right, yes, yes, yes.

VB: That's interesting.

FC: But that was a, that was completely free. There was no charge or anything.

GC: Not on the bus, no, no.

FC: Was it--

GC: Erm...

FC: Go on, sorry.

GC: Erm... [pause 2 seconds] I was friendly with a girl whose mother and father had a confectionery business at bottom of the road and they used to exhibit eh, an advertisement for [pause 2 seconds] - I don't think they used to do it at the Granada, I think they used to do the Dominion. And the Grosvenor. And they used to get a free pass to people to go to the cinema and we often used to use that. We used to go straight from school 'cause I went to school in Harrow. So we only had to walk, you know, from the school to the cinema. And we used to go straight to the cinema from that. Erm. [pause 3 seconds] So, you know, we used to go fairly regularly then when we, while we were still at school. And I can remember, you got an opening for this, Granada here [in book]. And I can remember going to their first birthday party and they had, you know, quite a special programme on the cinema. But you also got a free piece of birthday cake as you went in. Erm, and the, or both of them, I think. The Granada has an organ, it's still got an organ in fact. Erm, somebody's giving an organ recital on Sunday.

VB: Oh!

GC: This Sunday coming. Erm. [pause 2 seconds] And the Dominion had a stage show, didn't they?

FC: Uhuh. Yeah.

GC: In those days. It used to last about an hour.

FC: Uhuh.

GC: You still used to get a couple of films, didn't you? I mean it must have been a very long programme.

FC: That erm, that cinema up on the Hill, the Cosy, erm, I've actually been in there and seen seven films.

VB: [laughs]

FC: You know, the main feature. Then a B. And the news and four other films. Erm. [pause 3 seconds] There would be perhaps, a nature film, couple of comedies, things like that. But actually seven films I've seen in there.

VB: [laughs] **That's amazing.**

FC: Yeah. I know that because, eh, [pause 3 seconds] you know, it stuck in my mind over the years that I saw seven films for the price of what, perhaps less than a shilling.

GC: Oh, yes. I don't think we used to pay a shilling--

FC: And eh--

GC: When we went up there I think it was only about ninepence.

FC: And now, you know, you're pushed to see one film.

VB: **Well, yes.**

FC: I only know what they tell me, I mean, one film and it costs you an arm and a leg.

VB: **Yes, that's right. Yeah. So, I mean, you say you saw seven and you were saying you went quite regularly. I mean, how often did you go to the cinema when you were children?**

GC: I should think during the thirt-, well the late thirties, erm, probably once a week anyway.

FC: Uhuh. That was about--

WA: [enters room] Well in the old days you used to have two films didn't you? One on the Wednesday or the Thursday.

GC: Yes, you did, yes. Programme often used to change in the middle of the week. Yes.

WA: You know, in the early days.

GC: We weren't [pause 3 seconds] exactly encouraged by mother and father to go --

FC: No.

GC: Were we?

FC: They used to go every Monday.

GC: Yes.

FC: My mother and father. They, we had a quiet day on a Monday. And eh, he used to come home, didn't he, and polish himself up and they used to go to the cinema. And it became a habit with them, and it became a habit with me and my first wife when we were courting. And we often used to sit in the cinema and something funny would come on. And I'd say, "The old man's here!"

GC: [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

FC: [laughs] And we'd look round and there he was.

VB: Ah.

GC: Ah, he had a very distinctive laugh.

VB: [laughs]

GC: But they didn't used to take us to the cinema. I can hardly remember going to the cinema with my mother and father. But we had an older cousin who my father had adopted, even before he married my mother. And she used to take us to the cinema when we were quite young. And then, as I said, I used to go with this friend who had a free pass. And I had another friend up the road and I used to go with her and her mother and father. But I really can't remember going hardly at all. Maybe when we were on holiday, but I can't remember going to the cinema round here.

FC: I can tell you once when you went to the cinema.

GC: When?

FC: When we went with Goldings up to eh, Madame Tussauds.

GC: Oh, yeah, that's right.

FC: And we come out of there and eh, went in the cinema.

GC: Yes.

FC: Ye know, the family.

GC: Yes.

FC: There was three of them, and their mum, and three of us and --

GC: Yeah. Yes.

VB: So was that something that was a highlight of your parents' week, do you think? Their night out at the cinema?

FC: No. I wouldn't say my mother and father because... [pause 3 seconds] He wasn't too bad off, was he?

GC: No.

FC: And if they wanted to do something, it wasn't a matter of finance. They could do it. They used to go, the Ideal Home Exhibition.

VB: Ah. I see.

FC: The Motor Show, and all that.

VB: Yes.

FC: Of course they were all in London then.

VB: Yeah.

FC: And eh, they used to go quite regularly and if they wanted to go eh, it wasn't theatre so much, was it?

GC: No.

FC: Chiswick Empire. Erm, sort of variety show.

GC: Oh, we always. We had a car. I mean they had a car before I was born. And my father used to like driving so we always went out on Sunday. We went out, we went to the coast for the day on

Sunday. Erm, and even in the winter he would, you know, take you out. You would get absolutely frozen in the car. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

GC: But he'd still insist upon you going out.

VB: Good for your health.

GC: There were no excuses. So, you know, the cinema certainly wasn't really a highlight, you know. They had a lot of other interests.

VB: I see, yeah.

GC: But they weren't sporting people or anything like that. So, you know, it was sort of motoring and cinema and possibly the theatre occasionally. And, you know, he was quite good, wasn't he?

FC: He was very good.

GC: He used to take mum to treats. I can remember him taking her to Ascot once.

FC: Yeah.

GC: Things like that.

FC: With her sister.

GC: Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

FC: Tony, wasn't it?

GC: And they used to go on holiday, erm, without us children. Not always, but usually about once a year. Because my grandmother also lived with us. So of course, they could leave us with my grandmother and with my cousin. So, eh, no I don't think the cinema was really a highlight, was it?

FC: No.

VB: 'Cause I was interested, erm, when you were talking about your parents going to the cinema, if you think, to them, it was something different to, say, your generation?

GC: No.

FC: I think with my mother and father, he was twenty years older than my mother. And I think he got, to put his best foot forward, didn't he?

GC: Yes.

FC: You know. I think that's how he felt. That he'd got to erm, [pause 5 seconds] look after her special because, 'cause he was twenty years older. He didn't want her running away, you know. I don't think she ever would have.

GC: [laughs]

VB: [laughs] **He treated her very well from what you're saying.**

GC: Yeah.

FC: I think, yes. She had a good life, I think.

GC: Yes, she did.

FC: And eh, [pause 3 seconds] I think that was really the reason he used to... He always used to enjoy going out, mind you. I mean, when we was kids he'd have a game of cricket with us, wouldn't he?

GC: Yes.

FC: And all that. Although, [pause 2 seconds] when I, when he, I was born he was about forty, wasn't he?

GC: Yes.

FC: You know. But he'd still have a game of cricket and a game of tennis with my mother.

GC: [laughs]

FC: Not tennis. But they'd knock a ball about, you know.

VB: Yes.

GC: I think for most people in the thirties a visit to the cinema was a highlight, wasn't it? I know these people who lived up the road, I was friendly with their daughter, and I know, you know, it was quite a treat for them to go to the cinema. They eh --

FC: My mother-in-law, my first mother-in-law, she, eh, she used to be at the pictures every afternoon. She hadn't got two halfpennies to rub together and it used to cost, perhaps sixpence in them days?

GC: Yes, I think it was sixpence in the afternoon--

FC: In the afternoon. And eh, she'd be at a different cinema every afternoon. [pause 2 seconds] But eh, so that wasn't financial, it wasn't because she was well off.

VB: Mhm. That's interesting.

FC: Erm.

WA: There was no other form of entertainment, was there?

FC: Pardon?

WA: No other form of entertainment.

FC: Well, you got no telly. Perhaps you got a radio. I can remember, [pause 3 seconds] what in 1934, selling someone a second-hand radio and they never had a radio before. You know, it seems ridiculous now but --

VB: I mean, in terms of the films that you enjoyed yourselves did you have--

FC: Cowboys!

VB: Cowboys. [laughs]

GC: [laughs]

WA: Yeah, it was cowboys wasn't it?

GC: Yes. They weren't my favourite films, cowboys.

VB: I was going to say, it sounds like something that--

WA: They were serials, weren't they?

VB: Boys would like.

WA: They followed on from week to week.

FC: Oh, yeah.

GC: Yeah.

WA: Was there a thing called Elmo? The name Elmo sticks in my mind [referring to *Elmo the Mighty*].

GC: Can't remember that.

FC: That was before our time.

GC: [laughs] Erm, I can remember some of the stars. And I mean, we used to go mad about Clark Gable and erm, Fred MacMurray.

FC: Uhuh.

GC: Eh--

WA: [inaudible].

GC: Yes.

WA: Mary Pickford.

GC: Yeah.

WA: Charlie Chaplin. Harold Lloyd.

GC: Yes. Charles Laughton. Erm --

FC: Buster Keaton.

GC: Yeah. I can remember lots of the stars. Yes, they seem to stand out far more in those days than they do now. I don't know whether there weren't so many big stars or what, but, you can remember them, can't you? Robert Taylor.

FC: I think all it was we... possibly more interested.

GC: Yes. I suppose, really, that's the trouble that eh, now, I mean, you can turn on the television and see a film almost anytime. And eh--

FC: I've been watching one this morning, while I was waiting for my [inaudible].

GC: [laughs] And so, as a consequence, you eh, you don't really pay so much attention to them. And of course, it's wildly expensive to go to the cinema these days. And eh, so, unless there's something you really want to see, and even if it's something you really want to see, it comes on the television before all that long, doesn't it?

VB: Mhm.

GC: So, eh, you just don't make the effort. I think everybody went to see *The Sound of Music* and that I think, since then [laughs] I don't think anybody's hardly been.

FC: I [pause 2 seconds] married my second wife twenty-five years ago, wasn't it?

GC: Yes.

FC: Thereabouts. And we went to the cinema once. [pause 4 seconds] In the whole of our... [pause 2 seconds] Well, that was before we were married, actually. I don't think we ever went to the cinema again, after that.

VB: Mhm.

GC: I don't think we've ever been, have we?

FC: What?

GC: Don't think we've ever been, have we?

FC: No.

VB: It's interesting. 'Cause it sounds so different from when, you know, you were talking just now about courting your wife at the cinema.

FC: Yes.

VB: Your first wife, I mean.

FC: Oh, that was, I was only about twelve-year-old then! [laughs]

VB: Yes.

FC: She'd have to pay for herself! [laughs]

VB: Oh, I see. [laughs]

GC: And in those days, really and truly, that was about the only place that you could go with a boyfriend or a girlfriend, wasn't it?

FC: You'd get a bit of privacy! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

FC: And that was with someone breathing down your neck from behind! [laughs]

GC: Yeah. I mean there was none of this business that there is these days of, you know, the boyfriend calls and you take him up in the bedroom. I mean was absolutely unheard of in those days. No way.

FC: Where you going? [laughs]

GC: [laughs]

VB: [laughs] That's interesting. So was the cinema somewhere that your parents could feel you were safe to go with a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

GC: Yes. I think it was, yes.

FC: Well there wasn't a great deal that you could do, was there?

GC: No. [laughs]

FC: Let's face it.

GC: Aw, no. I think they felt that you were safe to go to the cinema but certainly there was no erm, [pause 2 seconds] going up to the bedroom and all the sort of things that young people do today. [laughs]

VB: Yes.

GC: I think I'd probably do it quite innocently. [laughs]

VB: Yes.

GC: You know. We often remark about the fact that we would never have been allowed to do it.

FC: I, eh... [pause 4 seconds] I took Connie up. I'd a tandem for a while and we went out for a ride one Sunday and got wet through. And eh, come back here and my grandmother was here. And we come back here and we were both wet and I got changed. And of course, there was no one here I could get any gear from for my girlfriend, she was then. So I give her a pair of my trousers to put on. And we was upstairs and our gran was up there.

GC: Oh, yes.

FC: She was up there. See what we was up to. [laughs]

GC: I can remember often when Joan was up here with boyfriends, my mother would say, "Go up and see what they're doing!" [explosive laughter] She wouldn't come up herself. It was just to entrap them, that was all. [laughs] She didn't really want to know what they were doing. She just wanted to make sure they were [laughs] regularly interrupted.

VB: [laughs]

FC: Well we're not talking much about cinema, are we?

GC: No.

VB: No.

FC: You ask your questions.

VB: Well, I was interested when you were mentioning some of the stars there. I mean, people like Clark Gable and. Did you have erm, favourites? Was Clark Gable one of your favourite stars?

GC: Oh, yes. I think Clark Gable was everybody's favourite, really. And there used to be a magazine called the 'Picturegoer', didn't there?

FC: Mhm.

GC: And we, we used to buy it. I don't know who used to buy it, but somebody used to buy the 'Picturegoer'.

FC: I don't really,

GC: I think I used to buy it myself sometimes. And eh, and you know, it got all the stars in. We were never allowed to stick pictures up on the bedroom wall like people do now. But eh, you know, I can remember having pictures of Clark Gable and Robert Taylor and all those people. Yes, they were definitely favourites.

VB: Oh right.

GC: Ronald Colman. He was another one wasn't he?

VB: That's interesting. I've seen some of these magazines. They told you a lot about the stars as well, didn't they?

GC: Yes, they did. Yes.

FC: I'll bet she's got some somewhere.

GC: No, I haven't.

FC: She never -- [laughs]

VB: I mean, were you interested in finding out about the lives of the stars, do you think, or? Was it more the pictures themselves that you were interested in?

GC: No. I think it was the pictures rather more than finding out about the lives. I don't think you found out so much about the lives--

FC: No.

GC: Of people in those days.

FC: You were told what they wanted you to know, really.

GC: Yeah. I don't think that the media probed as it does now. It certainly didn't print all the scandal that it does now. Erm, I don't, I really don't think that you knew a great deal about their lives, did you?

FC: No, no.

GC: In fact, some of the things that have emerged since about them, you know, have been quite a surprise. You haven't realised at the time. You know, I mean, Errol Flynn was another, wasn't he?

FC: Yeah.

GC: And quite a lot of things have emerged about his life.

FC: Yeah.

GC: But you didn't know them at the time because, as I said, I don't think that anybody probed into private lives like they do now.

VB: That's interesting. So they --

GC: I mean, nobody's got a, a private life now really, have they? You know, I mean, the stars certainly haven't. They, eh, they're hounded everywhere they go, aren't they?

VB: I mean, it's interesting that. Do you think that in the thirties, did you feel that the stars were approachable or were they sort of distant?

GC: No, they weren't. No, they were very distant. They weren't approachable, were they? I mean, most of the big stars anyway were American. I think most of the films were American, really.

FC: Yeah.

GC: I think English films came into their own a bit after that. Erm, I think most of the films that I can remember and the stars that I can remember were American. Erm, but, no I don't think they were approachable at all, really. They were on a different planet almost, weren't they?

FC: Yeah.

VB: I mean, it's interesting what you were saying there as well about the English films really coming into their own after the thirties. Do you think there was a difference between films that were made in England and films that were made in Hollywood?

FC: I think there was.

GC: I can't remember English films very well before the war.

FC: Well, the attitude I think was, [pause 3 seconds] "Oh, it's an English film, I don't wanna see that." Wasn't it?

GC: Yes.

FC: You know, I think that was the attitude. It wasn't blown up enough, you know.

GC: No. I think possibly they didn't put the same money into it as the Americans did.

VB: Mhm.

GC: It wasn't such a big industry in England as it was in America. And consequently, of course, the films that they'd made were erm, just nowhere near so big. They were not such big hits. But, I mean, after the war, eh, they did make some really good films, didn't they? And eh, you know, the English films really quite came into their own for a long while.

VB: Mhm.

GC: Unfortunately they didn't eh, maintain it really, they ... tended to fade out. But erm, I don't think, I mean, I can't remember any English films that stood out before the war.

VB: Mhm.

GC: I can remember, erm, American ones, but I can't remember English ones. There were a few, 'cause there were a few sort of Margaret Lockwood and Anna Neagle--

FC: Yeah.

GC: And people like that. So there were a few reasonable ones. But, on the whole, you know, as Fred said, eh, it was an English film, oh, it wouldn't be very good, you know. You didn't tend to go for it.

VB: It's interesting that you say that 'cause of course, there must be stars that you mentioned a minute ago, were English, but in American films, or, people like Ronald Colman --

GC: Yes. Yes.

FC: Definitely, yeah. If you read some of the biographies, [pause 2 seconds] it seems as though it was their ambition always to get to America, wasn't it?

GC: Yes.

WA: Well, that's where the money was, wasn't it?

GC: That's what I was going to say. I don't think they had the same opportunities--

VB: Mhm.

GC: In England as they had when they went to America. I don't think they could earn the same money. Because, we weren't making the big hits.

VB: Yes.

GC: It was America that was making the big hits. So that's where the big money was.

VB: Yeah.

GC: Erm, I just think, you know, that's why their ambition was to go to America. To get the money, wasn't it?

VB: Yeah. 'Cause you mentioned Anna Neagle there as well.

GC: Yeah.

VB: I was thinking of films like *Victoria the Great*.

GC: Yes. 'Course that was an outstanding film.

VB: Mhm.

GC: I don't know whether that was in the 1930s.

VB: I think it's about '38, something like that.

GC: Yeah. Yes, that was certainly an outstanding film. I mean, I can remember that.

FC: I don't remember whether I saw it. But I was rather, you know, I was told where I was going to the cinema, wasn't I?

VB: [laughs]

GC: Yes.

FC: [laughs] My wife used to, when we were courting or even after we was married, she wanted to see that picture, and that was that.

GC: Yeah.

VB: [laughs] I mean, were there certain kinds of films you liked more than others? I mean, you mentioned, erm, comedies, eh, earlier on. Erm. [pause 2 seconds] Did you have any favourite comedians, or... [tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

FC: You know,

VB: Yeah.

FC: You never saw the full length of, erm --

GC: No.

FC: Laurel and Hardy and all those.

GC: Yes, yes. Laurel and Hardy and Abbott and Costello and erm, and the Marx Brothers.

WA: That's right, yeah.

FC: The Marx Brothers made some full length, didn't they?

GC: Yes, they did, yes, yes. And eh, I mean they were all good films, weren't they? And you did used to go for those.

VB: Yeah.

GC: You don't know, actually. I mean, when they're on you think to yourself, "I don't know what I found funny about this." [laughs]

VB: Ahh.

FC: I can sit now, and they can't raise a laugh.

VB: That's interesting.

FC: And yet, I told you, we used to go to the cinema and I'd say, "The old man's here." You know, perhaps the, the short comedy film had come on and he'd be having a good laugh. And perhaps I was having a good laugh as well. But now, you can sit, I sit there and I think, "What the hell, they..."
[laughs] You know.

VB: [laughs]

GC: My father, he particularly liked slapstick comedy. He always laughed at slapstick comedy, didn't he?

WA: He used to do this, didn't he?

VB: Rocking! [laughs]

FC: When he laughed.

GC: And erm... [pause 3 seconds] And, as I said, yes, you did. You just saw, you know, the comedians. Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, all those people. You did used to thoroughly enjoy them. And yet now, eh, you know, if they show you an old film you just think, "Oh, what a load of rubbish." Eh, I suppose over the years our tastes have changed.

FC: More, more sophisticated.

GC: That's right, yeah.

VB: That's interesting. So it was different things that made you laugh then?

FC: Oh, definitely, definitely.

VB: Yeah.

GC: Yes, yes.

VB: Mhm.

FC: You never, you never got a laugh out of a bit of smut, because there was no smut, was there?

GC: Oh, no, no.

FC: You know, I mean now, all right. [pause 3 seconds] Once an evening, you've got something on there --

GC: [laughs]

FC: That would have been frowned on, when we were kids.

GC: Actually, I think it was probably, from that side, I think it was probably better in the old days. I mean, nowadays, eh, it can be quite embarrassing if you're somewhere and the television's on and suddenly there's a couple making love. You know, I mean all that was left to the imagination--

VB: Yeah.

GC: In those days. A couple would maybe kiss and you'd just use your imagination after that.

VB: Yes.

GC: But now, of course, you know, they don't think anything of it.

VB: Yeah.

GC: And it can be quite embarrassing. It must be quite difficult for people with young children.

VB: Yes.

GC: Eh, you know, who must feel embarrassed, really.

FC: Well, my daughter does, doesn't she?

GC: She does, yes. She, I mean, she did the other night.

FC: Yeah.

GC: And, I mean, the children weren't up, were they?

FC: No. But she's forty-ish and we were there.

GC: Yes.

FC: And suddenly a love scene comes on, you know, and whoo, it's off!

GC: Yeah.

VB: Yeah. It's interesting what you were saying as well because erm, I can think of. I can't remember the name of the film, but there's one scene with erm, I think it's, it is actually -- Is it

Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert? They're in a film where they hang a sheet between them [referring to *It Happened One Night*]. It's very romantic but there's absolutely nothing erm--

GC: No, no.

VB: Stated.

GC: No.

VB: But it's all implied.

GC: That's right, yes.

VB: Quite, subtly.

GC: Yes. Oh, it was implied. But eh, you never saw anything.

VB: That's right, yeah.

GC: I mean a kiss, a kiss was just about the most.

VB: Yeah. That is interesting.

GC: Certainly changed in that respect.

WA: [laughs]

VB: I was just eh, pulling out. I've got some, I had some stills with me just now. You mention Laurel and Hardy. I've got one of them there.

GC: Laurel and Hardy, yeah.

FC: Yeah.

GC: You can still have a bit of a laugh at them, when they come on, can't you?

FC: We-ell.

VB: Mhm.

FC: They don't do much for me, I'm afraid.

GC: [laughs]

WA: Oh, I like them.

GC: Yes, you like Laurel and Hardy, don't you? And I, because you like them, I've watched and I can still have a laugh at them.

[pause 5 seconds]

GC: 'Cause Laurel anyway was English wasn't he? I don't know whether Hardy was. I can't remember.

VB: Well he's got a connection with Glasgow as well. I think his father erm, ran the Glasgow Empire at one time--

GC: Ohh.

VB: So he spent some time, erm --

GC: I think he was... [coughs] He came from up north anyway, didn't he?

WA: He did, yeah.

VB: That's right, yeah. Don't know what other ones I've got. This is just ones that I had in my bag. Erm, one of *Top Hat*.

GC: Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Yes.

VB: Were they popular? Were they very popular?

GC: Oh, they were very popular, yes. And of course the films that they were in were really spectacular films. Erm, I suppose that's one of the reasons that they were so popular. You know, they were really lavish films, marvellous. [coughs] Marvellous settings and marvellous costumes. Eh, you could really get carried away in their films, couldn't you? Because eh, you know, you never experienced that sort of thing in ordinary life. So, eh, it was quite an experience to see one of their films. And they were marvellous dancers.

VB: Mhm.

FC: I was never interested in dancing but my wife was.

VB: Mhm.

FC: And, that would be one of the pictures that we would have an argument about 'cause I didn't want to see it, and she did. So that's typical of one of the--

GC: Yes.

FC: Pictures that we would have argued whether we were going there or not. We most likely went anyway. [laughs]

GC: I think they were more women's pictures than men's really. Because eh, you know, it was the costumes and the lavish scenery and everything that a woman was more interested in than a man. A man wouldn't be so interested, be interested more in action. Eh, they weren't usually terribly good stories, were they?

FC: No. They were for the music and the dancing.

GC: That's right, yes.

FC: The story was woven round the music and the dance.

GC: Dancing, yeah.

FC: I mean, some of the music, it's still nice to hear it.

GC: Oh, yes.

FC: But erm, well, it's still nice. [pause 3 seconds] It is, I mean, it was good music and it still is!

GC: Yes, yes.

VB: Yes.

FC: Erm, the modern stuff. [pause 2 seconds] I just don't understand it and that's all there is to it.

GC: [laughs]

FC: Doesn't mean a thing to me.

VB: Yeah. I know, when you look at a film like *Top Hat* and the music and lyrics by Irving Berlin and --

GC: Yes.

VB: You know, I couldn't think of the title song... 'putting on your top hat' [referring to 'Top Hat, White Tie and Tails'].

GC: Yes.

VB: Yeah. Did you listen to... Was music from the film something that you listened to outside of the cinema?

FC: Oh, yeah.

GC: Oh, yes. Yes, I mean, we had, we've still got it actually. A gramophone. And we used to have records, didn't we?

FC: Oh, yeah.

GC: And we used to often have a [coughs] record that was erm, a selection of tunes from a film. Yes, you, and they played them on the radio as well. You used to listen to music from films a lot. Sometimes, of course, it was listening to music from the films that made you want to go and see the film, you know. Because eh, it was coming over on the radio and eh, so you, you know. You were encouraged to go and see the film.

VB: Mhm. 'Cause I was interested as well, when you were talking about eh, your friend that had the shop that advertised--

GC: Yeah.

VB: Erm, I mean, how did you choose what films to go to? [pause 3 seconds] Apart from--

FC: [laughs]

VB: If you heard the music.

FC: I'd be told.

GC: [laughs]

VB: [laughs] Eh--

FC: I'd pay and she told me where we were going. [laughs]

WA: Well, it depended on what she wanted to do, wouldn't it? I mean, if it was pouring with rain, you couldn't do anything but go inside somewhere and you might decide to go to the cinema, because--

FC: There wasn't really anywhere else to go.

WA: No, no. And when the talkies first came in, I remember we used to have a special coach which used to take us from where I lived, which was in the country, to a local cinema some distance away. And we were allowed to walk straight in. They were queueing outside but when our coach arrived, we all got out and we went in the cinema. And there were people lining up outside.

GC: Yes, they did, in those days, erm, when the war first started. There used to be colossal queues for the cinema sometimes. Eh, you couldn't just walk in if there was a really good film on. Eh, you might have to queue for quite a long while to get in--

VB: Mhm.

GC: Because they were continuous performances. So you could go in any time. But erm, you know, you might have to wait for quite a long while. Eh, it wasn't so bad. You used to go on Mondays, and that wasn't--

FC: No, I think you used to get it occasionally, I mean, we've been down to the erm... [pause 3 seconds] Granada before now and they've been queued up right down the side.

GC: Yes, that's right.

FC: Erm, didn't get in the queue.

GC: No.

FC: That was one thing I never done. I [pause 3 seconds] I wouldn't queue. Well, the old man was the same, wasn't he?

GC: Yeah.

FC: He wouldn't queue.

GC: Oh, I queued to go in the cinema.

FC: But we eh, who was I telling the other day? I used to pick my wife up, on Monday.

GC: It was me.

FC: And I used to go and have something to eat. Perhaps poached egg on toast or, tomatoes on toast, or something like that. Nothing much but something because the wife hadn't had an evening meal or something. Or the girlfriend then. Go to the cinema, [pause 3 seconds] and have some sweets, and it didn't come to ten bob when you'd finished.

VB: [laughs]

GC: Oh, my.

FC: And, that was it! But that was, something for the two of you to eat and you'd have a pot of tea and a cake afterwards, possibly, as well as the... [pause 2 seconds] And then, a decent seat in the cinema, and eh, [pause 2 seconds] and a quarter of sweets, and eh, you'd have change out of ten bob. Or fifty pence.

VB: Were there cafes in some of the cinemas then?

FC: Yes.

GC: There was, yeah.

FC: The Coliseum, the Granada and the Dominion all had, eh, a cafe.

GC: And the Grosvenor, I remember seeing that had.

FC: Yeah, I never, yes, it did.

WA: Must have had one too, didn't it?

GC: Yeah.

FC: But those three down in Harrow, they all had --

GC: Yes. The Odeon at South Harrow didn't have, did it?

FC: No.

VB: Mhm.

FC: Well, I think at one time you could get a cup of tea during the interval.

GC: Yeah. I don't remember them ever having a cafe as such.

VB: **Someone was telling me about eh, that some of the cinema cafes had tea dances. I don't know if that was something that happened in Harrow.**

GC: Yes, they did. They had tea dances at the Dominion cafe.

FC: I wouldn't know.

VB: **Mhm.**

GC: Yeah. I mean, I'd never been to one but eh, I know they did have tea dances at the Dominion cafe in Harrow. Erm, I don't think they ever had, I can't remember them at Granada.

VB: **Mhm.**

GC: Yes, I'm sure they had them there.

VB: **Yeah.**

GC: We weren't allowed to go dancing. My father didn't approve of dancing.

VB: **[laughs]**

GC: [laughs] So eh, we didn't really ever go dancing.

VB: **Mhm. [pause 3 seconds] Certainly sounds like you were busy in lots of other ways, from what you're saying.**

FC: Oh, we didn't go short of anything, did we?

GC: Oh, no.

FC: I don't suppose he would have worried if I'd gone dancing, I just wasn't interested.

VB: **Mhm. So was it something that--**

FC: It was the girls that he was worried about.

GC: He had, my father had been married twice and he'd had two daughters by his first wife. And eh, I mean, all this happened long before I was born but I think they both got themselves into trouble and I think it happened at dances. [laughs] So he naturally, you know, didn't want the same thing to

happen to his second family. And eh, so he was dead against dancing. Erm, I mean, it didn't worry us too much because eh, we'd never been in the habit of going, and--

FC: I never heard mum saying anything about dancing.

GC: No.

FC: We just weren't a dancing family.

GC: No, we weren't, no. In fact, your, you had a friend who's father owned a dance hall--

FC: Yeah.

GC: In South Harrow. But erm, you know, I mean, nobody ever went there.

FC: They just... it was a school of dancing, actually, and they used to have dancing there. And eh, they had one in South Harrow, one in [name of road?] in London, erm, one in Sunbury [pause 2 seconds], one in Chelsea, [pause 3 seconds] and eh--

GC: I didn't realise they had so many.

FC: Yeah.

VB: Mhm.

FC: I can't think of any others they had. But eh, that were, they were schools of dancing where they used to have dancing perhaps twice a week as well, you see. And eh, I never learned to dance.

VB: [laughs]

FC: I can't dance a step!

VB: What was that called?

FC: Carrs. Carrs School of Dancing. And eh, they... [pause 3 seconds] Well, you wouldn't know it. But down in South Harrow the erm, the Baptist Church is the old site, the hall is still there actually, where we used to have the dances. But the old house that they lived in, that's, that's been pulled down.

VB: Ah.

FC: Erm, and, [pause 2 seconds] it's where, it's the area that the Baptist Church is in now. It laid well back, didn't it?

GC: Yes.

FC: It was the only, really the only place in South Harrow, apart from the Odeon, where there was any entertainment.

VB: Mhm.

GC: Yes. Yes, 'cause that was another thing really that... [pause 2 seconds] In those days, eh, the cinema was, I suppose, the main source of entertainment. Erm, you never had enough money to go up to London to go to the theatre. You used to go to more local theatres, occasionally, you know. I mean that was a real treat. Erm, I don't think there was quite so much emphasis on sport in those days, was there?

FC: No, nowhere near. I mean --

GC: You weren't encouraged at school to play at sport. I mean, you used to have games lessons at school. But eh, you weren't given the same encouragement that you are these days. And eh, so cinema really was the main source of entertainment, as it isn't now. There's so many other things, happening now. Eh, but I think that's probably why it was so popular in those days and eh, the popularity's faded. That and the fact, of course, that you can see it on the television.

VB: Mhm.

GC: But eh, it was certainly the main source. I mean, if you wanted to go somewhere, you inevitably thought, oh, well, we'll go to the pictures, didn't you?

FC: Yeah. Well, I say we used to go every Monday.

GC: It was, you know, sort of that and going for a walk 'cause they were the only things you could do, wasn't it? Eh, and we, of course, when we were children, although our parents weren't hard up, we didn't have the same sort of money that the children do now. Erm, I went to a grammar school and we were given half a crown a week for our expenses, and if we went by bus, that used to cost us one and eightpence a week, anyway.

VB: Mhm.

GC: Erm, and we had half a crown pocket money. Which in those days was quite a lot. I mean, we were better off than most children. Erm, but then it didn't go very far. I mean, if you went to the cinema, you had to pay probably a shilling for the ticket, so you still only got one and six to last the rest of the week. [laughing]

VB: Yes.

GC: Erm, so, you know, there wasn't a wide choice of what you could do in those days. Eh, the cinema was the obvious choice if you wanted to--

VB: Yes.

GC: Take yourself somewhere.

FC: And it was something that most people could afford, anyway, wasn't it?

GC: Yes.

FC: Erm, you got the prices there, you know.

GC: Yeah.

FC: Erm, it didn't break the bank. Most likely, give it a nasty dent.

GC: Yeah.

FC: It didn't break the bank.

VB: Has the area changed a lot?

FC: This area?

GC: Yes, the area has changed an awful lot. In fact, the contact was through our local history society, wasn't it? And erm, I've been a member of that ever since it was founded. It was founded about eleven, I suppose it's almost twelve years ago. And, it's only really through that [coughs] that you realise how much it has changed. Because we have, we can't have slides of the local area all the time because obviously there just aren't enough. Erm, but we had an evening just a couple of months ago where it was all local slides, and it's absolutely amazing how it has changed. And so, sort of gradually that you don't realise, until suddenly they put a slide on and you think, oh my goodness! You know, I'd forgotten that was ever there, that sort of thing. It's changed out of all recognition. You, you'd

scarcely know you were in the same place. I mean, our main road that goes... [pause 2 seconds] The shopping centre itself has not changed all that much. Obviously the shops have changed hands and, but they haven't been rebuilt to that extent, have they? I mean, we've got a Sainsbury's that's built where there was a farm. Erm, but the shops themselves haven't been knocked down and rebuilt.

VB: Mhm.

GC: Erm, so that looks much the same as it did. But from the bottom of our road up to Roxeth Corner, erm, I mean it looks completely different.

VB: Mhm.

GC: There's scarcely anything now remaining that was there. I don't think there is anything. I think the gasworks.

FC: The gasworks, they were gradually getting rid of it, aren't they?

GC: Oh, it's gone. Oh, it's been gone for a long while.

FC: The opposite side of the road there was all cottages and that, and that's--

GC: Yeah.

FC: That's now flats.

GC: I don't think there's anything, eh, there, that was there before the, [pause 4 seconds] before the war, is there? There's nothing, at all.

FC: No, no. The only pub that was down there's gone, hasn't it? The little old Horseshoes, wasn't it?

GC: Oh, yes. The Three Horseshoes. Yes [inaudible]. Yes, the whole lot.

FC: Even the roads that went off there--

GC: Yeah.

FC: Have gone, haven't they.

GC: Have gone, yes. Yes.

VB: 'Cause when you said that just now about the barn that's gone, there must've been places to go for walks that aren't there now.

FC: Oh, yes!

GC: Yes.

FC: Because, within... [pause 2 seconds] what, ten minutes, you were out in the country, weren't you?

GC: Oh, you were, yes.

FC: When we were kids.

GC: Of course, we're lucky just here because erm, a continuum, continuation of this road is a private road. There is a tollgate in this road.

VB: Right.

GC: And erm, and it's a private road, and for that reason, of course, they... [pause 3 seconds] the amount of development is very, very strictly controlled.

VB: Mhm.

GC: Erm, I mean it has altered a bit even then. They've knocked houses down and built different things. Eh, but it remains very much the same. But of course Harrow-on-the-Hill is a real conservation area. And they're very limited about what they can do up there.

VB: Mhm.

GC: So, you can go on a walk sort of up this road and round Harrow-on-the-Hill. It's very much like it was--

VB: Yeah.

GC: Even when I was at school. It hasn't changed all that much really.

VB: Yeah.

GC: But, the main part of Harrow, and South Harrow, has changed beyond all recognition.

VB: Right.

GC: I mean, Harrow is the same. It's changed an awful lot, hasn't it?

FC: Well when I was a youngster, erm, [pause 2 seconds] how many roads is there there? Eh, there's Parkfield, Eastcote, eh, [pause 4 seconds] Wargrave, Whitby, Scarsdale, Wyvenhoe.

GC: Wyvenhoe.

FC: And beyond-- that, and they are roads that run parallel with this on the other side of the station. And the last one was the one where I was born. Eh, Walgrave--

GC: Wyvenhoe!

FC: Wyvenhoe Road, sorry. And eh, beyond there, [pause 3 seconds] that was it! There was a few houses dotted along the, the lane, or it wasn't much more than a lane. Few houses dotted along there and that was a farm down there.

VB: Mhm.

FC: And that was, that was it. You was out in the country.

GC: Oh, yes. I mean, I can remember, erm, going down Shaftesbury Avenue and you only went a little way down there and you were out in fields, you know. And you were right up to your knees in grass.

VB: Mhm.

FC: Well, where she talked about, there was a, that was a farm, horse [Halls?] farm.

GC: Yes, that's right.

FC: And eh, you only had to walk through the farmyard, [pause 3 seconds] and you was out, out in the fields!

GC: Mhm.

FC: There was quite a big lake out there as well, that particular part.

GC: Mhm. Oh, yes, it's altered an awful lot.

VB: Yes.

GC: Yeah. [pause 2 seconds] I imagine even Glasgow must've done. [laughs]

VB: Oh, yes! Yes, absolutely, yeah.

GC: I've never been to Glasgow.

VB: Yes. It's a nice city. Erm, it's very --

GC: Well, it's untrue to say I've never been there because I have, I've changed trains there once or twice.

VB: Oh. [laughs]

GC: Had lunch at the hotel that's in the station.

WA: Central.

VB: Yeah.

GC: Yes. That's all. [laughs]

FC: The nearest I got was Greenock.

VB: Ah, that's fairly close.

WA: There used to be a very famous restaurant opposite the station [possibly referring to Corn Exchange Restaurant, 88 Gordon Street]. Is it still there?

VB: Erm.

WA: I can't remember the name but it was quite a well known restaurant.

VB: I think it's probably gone actually.

WA: Yeah.

VB: I can't think of one.

FC: Well Greenock was when I went to India and Greenock when I come home again!

GC: [laughs]

FC: Oh, I don't even know it.

VB: Yeah.

FC: I were, I were off the boat, onto the train. And off the train, onto the boat, sort of thing.

GC: Mhm.

VB: Ah.

GC: I went to Edinburgh. I worked in Edinburgh for a week.

VB: Aah!

GC: Mhm. Not Glasgow.

VB: I used to live in Edinburgh.

GC: Did you?

VB: I know it very well.

GC: Uhuh. Yeah, I went up with, when I was in the Civil Service we used to send a lot of our work up to Edinburgh. We used to go on the train overnight and come back overnight. And eh, and I went up there to teach the girls how to do the work.

VB: Ah.

GC: It was legal work. I spent a very enjoyable weekend up, week up there. Very good.

FC: I've got a [pause 3 seconds] step-son, haven't I?

GC: Yeah.

FC: Eh. No. Step-grandchild up there. Erm, and his wife and, I don't know, how many they got now?

GC: Four, I think.

FC: Four, is it?

GC: I think it's four. Anyway, we're sidetracking you.

FC: Yeah.

GC: And we're wasting your time.

VB: Oh, not at all, not at all! Erm, the other thing I wanted to ask is erm, I know that you told me over the phone about your family a bit but I just wanted to ask one or two things.

GC: Yes.

VB: Just so that I make sure I've got erm--

GC: The background.

VB: Your background straight. Erm, I know you worked with your father in the, was it tallow merchant?

FC: You've been giving the game away, haven't you?

VB: [laughs] I know that already. Did your mother work at all or was she a housewife?

GC: No.

FC: Not, not, erm --

GC: After she was married.

FC: Well, she did, during the war, didn't she?

GC: She did.

FC: She had no choice.

GC: Yeah. She did during the war. Well, everybody had to work during the war. And in fact, my father by that time was more or less an invalid. He couldn't work so eh, you know, my mother then, once she started work during the war, carried on working until she was retiring age.

VB: I see.

GC: But then my father died in 1945, anyway, so, you know, she was a widow after that.

VB: I see. Erm, do you have any other sisters, brothers?

GC: Yes, I've got a sister who lives in Darlington.

VB: That's great. Erm, the other thing I wanted to ask is if you had any strong political views or--? Have you ever been a member of a party or anything?

GC: No.

FC: No.

VB: That's good.

GC: Not strong political views. I mean, obviously we've had political views but they're not strong.

VB: Yes, yes. So you wouldn't put yourself down as a strong, erm--

GC: No, no.

FC: Definitely not.

VB: That's great. Erm, and could I ask what religious, erm, background were you brought up in? Particular religion, or?

FC: No, I think I was the... [pause 3 seconds] the least--

GC: Yeah, we weren't--

FC: Of our training, religion.

GC: Yes, we weren't really brought up with any religious background at all, quite honestly. But I mean, obviously, eh, if there was any connection with the church it was the Church of England. But there was very little connection.

VB: Right.

FC: Well, my mother ran her own church. If you didn't behave yourself you got clumped!

VB: [laughs]

GC: My brother's children are both Jehovah's Witnesses but they haven't managed to convert us either.

VB: I see, I see.

GC: [laughs]

VB: Erm, the other thing I wanted to ask was eh, when were you married? What year roughly?

GC: 1945.

FC: Yeah, same year as the old man died. That was the first time.

VB: Yeah. And then twenty-five years ago.

FC: And then twenty, twenty, about twenty-five years after that I got married the second time.

VB: Right. And did your first wife work?

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

VB: While you're talking just now. Erm, the university asks us to, ask people to--

FC: Sign a form.

VB: Sign a form.

FC: To release it. [laughs]

VB: Basically, to release it. [laughs] Erm, I don't know if that poses a problem for you.

GC: No.

VB: It's just really something that gets puts in a drawer and forgotten.

GC: Oh, no, we're not--

FC: At our age I don't think we're...

GC: No.

VB: Yeah. I mean, it is possible that, at some time in the future, another researcher might listen to it, if you've got no objection to that?

GC: No, no.

VB: We might quote you somewhere or--

GC: No.

FC: No.

GC: The only other time I've ever done this was once when we went to eh, sort of, a discussion about Singers.

FC: Sinners?

GC: No. Singers!

VB: [laughs]

GC: The sewing machine people.

FC: Oh!

VB: Ah!

GC: Erm, it was up in London and eh, somebody stopped me, you know, and asked me would I go, and would I, you know, talk about it?

FC: [aside] Wouldn't put that away...

VB: That was great. Thanks very much.

GC: We sat. We sat round the table and erm, and talked about it. And in fact they didn't tell us what it was about.

VB: Mhm.

GC: They just asked us questions. And it was only at the end they told us what it was about. And after that, Singers gradually went down and down and downhill! [laughs]

VB: Oh dear.

GC: Till it practically disappeared! [laughs]

VB: Aw.

GC: I hope I doesn't bring that sort of bad luck to this one. [laughs]

VB: Oh, no.

FC: I eh--

WA: That place was in Glasgow, wasn't it?

VB: I was just going to say. There is a big factory there.

WA: I had a friend who worked there.

GC: Is it still there?

VB: Yes, it is.

GC: Oh, good.

VB: Yeah.

GC: [laughs]

VB: [laughs] It's not, it's survived! Erm, so that's just here. If you could sign that, that would be great.

[consent form being signed]

VB: And I'll sign it as well.

FC: Anyway, by the time--

GC: I don't normally know the date but I had a birthday on Monday, so. [laughs]

FC: It'll be the fifth then, wouldn't it? [laughs]

VB: Yes. [laughs]

FC: Erm, by the time they use this anyway. We'll most likely not be here! [laughs]

GC: [laughs]

VB: Oh dear. Don't say that. [laughs] [pause 4 seconds] I interviewed someone yesterday that was ninety-eight, so--

GC: Oh, really?

VB: Yes.

GC: I think they'd be more help, wouldn't they?

VB: Well, it was interesting, because she was telling me, she mentioned that place, the Coliseum, as a--

GC: Oh, yeah.

VB: As a, erm. Do you remember seeing sort of variety there?

GC: Ah, yes. It was like erm, repertory theatre.

VB: Yeah.

GC: They had a repertory company there for a long time. But, during the war, really. Erm, that was there. Of course, you probably don't remember very much about it, do you?

FC: No.

GC: 'Cause you were away.

FC: Well, I know more about that because my second wife, her husband used to do--

GC: Advertising.

FC: Advertising there. You know, they have a programme with adverts in it.

GC: Yeah.

FC: And he used to go out and eh, sell the advertising space, in the programme.

VB: Ah, I see.

FC: Eh, for the Coliseum, amongst other places.

VB: Yeah.

FC: But that was one of his places. Erm... [pause 3 seconds] I never thought of it but there's erm, one or two photos down home of star--, I don't know whether it's one or two, stars that had signed eh, photos, to her first husband.

VB: Ah, I see.

FC: And they're still at home. I don't remember who the stars were, if I ever knew. But eh, he died, same time as my first wife, or within twelve month.

VB: Mhm.

FC: And we got together. And eh, the stuff all come down from my place. And I never really took much notice of it. But it's still there.

VB: Goodness me.

FC: Oh, I know more, really, through Joan talking about it than I really know about the theatre itself. We did go there, didn't we? Erm. [pause 3 seconds] When I come home from India.

GC: Yes, I think.

FC: I treated everyone to --

GC: Yeah, I think we did.

FC: To a pantomime, I think it was, wasn't it?

GC: Yes.

FC: Christmas.

GC: Yes. Well that was a theatre by then, and not a cinema.

VB: Yes.

FC: Should we see?

GC: OK. Have you got anything else?

VB: Erm. Well actually, what I was thinking just now is erm. Unfortunately I've not got a lot of time just now but, erm, some of the things that you've been telling me about, I wouldn't mind asking a little more about. I was wondering if you would mind if perhaps I came and talked with you again. If that wouldn't be--

FC: It's alright with me. I'm --

VB: Because the other thing I was thinking is erm, I've got with me, although I didn't bring it just now, a couple of erm, annuals from the thirties that you might like. When you were telling me about the 'Picturegoer'--

GC: Aw, yeah.

VB: Erm, you might like to have a look at.

GC: Yes.

VB: Erm, 'Daily Express' ones, from the thirties.

FC: Well, it could jog our memories.

VB: Yes, that would be great. Erm, I mean I don't know what's the most convenient time for you usually, or.

FC: Well. Have I got anything on? I haven't, have I?

GC: No, erm.

FC: Tomorrow. Tomorrow morning.

VB: Say maybe in about a couple of weeks' time, or something. If that--

GC: Erm. A couple of weeks is alright. Next week's no good, is it?

VB: Mhm.

GC: Well. Part of next week anyway 'cause I'm going down... [Wally?] lives in Eng--, Essex.

VB: Ah, I see. Yeah.

GC: And I'm going down to where he lives for a few days. Erm, but I mean a couple of weeks, we'll be back, won't we?

FC: Yeah.

GC: And I don't think we've got any commitments then.

VB: That would be great.

GC: Yes.

VB: Erm. I'll just. Got my copy of my schedule.

GC: How long are you down here?

VB: Erm, I'm down until the, erm, 31st. 30th or the 31st.

GC: Did you find somewhere to stay in the end?

VB: Yes I did. Luckily. [laughs] Erm, I'm staying with a family, actually, in Chandos Road. It's quite near the Harrow and Wealdstone station. Not far from there. So it's very convenient for buses and getting around too. Erm, I mean, like, if you were free erm. This is Wednesday, isn't it?

FC: Yeah.

VB: Two weeks' time on the Wednesday? I don't know if that would, does that sound alright?

FC: Well--

VB: That would be the 19th.

GC: I don't think we've got anything for that, have we?

FC: I've got nothing on, anyway. Well, at the moment, I've got nothing on.

VB: Yeah. That would be great. 'Cause I thought it would be as well to ask just now anyway. While you're both here.

FC: Well, if you're, you know, if we're of that interest.

VB: Oh! Very much so. As I say, there were a hundred questions I was thinking of while you were talking but there's not always time to--

FC: No.

VB: To ask.

FC: Where have you got to go now?

VB: Well. I thought I might actually have a walk up and have a look round for a minute. But then I've got to be back. Erm, I'm meeting someone in the library about three, I think. So...

FC: What, at erm?

VB: In Harrow.

FC: Oh, the Civic Centre.

VB: The Civic Centre. Yeah. Erm, so I thought I would have a bit of a walk before I have lunch. Just to have a look at the, what you were telling me about just now.

FC: What, on the Hill? Or--

VB: Yes. I think I'll go and have a wee walk up there. And have some lunch and, get back down.

FC: Well if you eh, [pause 2 seconds] if you find the King's Head--

VB: Yes.

FC: When you're up on the Hill.

VB: Yes.

FC: The Cosy Cinema--

VB: Ah.

FC: Is right opposite.

VB: Right. I'll have a look.

GC: I think that it had two, eh, like towers, really. And I think they're still there.

GC: If you look up.

VB: Yeah.

GC: I mean, it's a long while since I looked up and I think they're still there.

VB: Yeah.

GC: And in fact, if you don't want to walk, erm, there is a bus at the bottom of the road.

VB: Ah!

GC: That goes up there.

VB: Right. How long would it take me to walk roughly?

GC: Well, I suppose.

FC: D'you smoke.

VB: No, I don't.

FC: Oh, well. It wouldn't take long.

VB: [laughs]

GC: I suppose about twenty minutes.

VB: About twenty minutes.

FC: Yeah.

VB: I'll maybe do that. 'Cause I'd like to get an idea of --

GC: Have you got time to have a drink?

VB: Erm. Yes I do. That would be nice.

GC: What would you like? A coffee, tea?

VB: Erm. Coffee would be lovely.

GC: Coffee.

VB: Thanks.

GC: OK. I suppose you'd like a coffee too.

FC: Please.

GC: Want a coffee? [To WA]

WA: Please.

FC: I'm gonna have, have ashtray as well.

VB: **That's great.**

GC: [laughs]

WA: This is non-smoking room. [laughs]

[sound of people moving about the room; pause 7 seconds]

VB: **It was interesting what you were saying about the cinemas where you were, 'cause it sounds very different to the, cinemas that you remember.**

WA: Yes well, I never was a great cinemagoer. But eh, I remember in my school days, I used to go to a thing called a Hole in the Wall, it used to be called. And eh, it used to have these cowboys. Saturday morning.

VB: **Yeah.**

WA: The entrance fee, I think, was tuppence.

VB: **Yeah.**

FC: We used to go to that, it was the Elite when we I was a kid, the Cosy. And we used to go up there. I think it was fourpence and we used to get an out-of-date comic as well.

WA: Mhm.

FC: They'd give you a comic when you went in.

VB: **Really?**

FC: It was out of date.

VB: Yes. So that was an incentive.

FC: Yeah. But for fourpence you went up there and saw two or three cowboy films, [pause 2 seconds] and eh, come back for the comic. And I used to belong to a club, I believe. [pause 2 seconds] Wasn't the Mickey Mouse Club 'cause I've never belonged to that. I'd grown out of that by the time it come along, I think. But I believed we belonged to a club or something up there. Can't remember.

VB: 'Cause I was interested when you were saying about the cowboy films, I was thinking of people like Tom Mix and --

WA: Yeah, that's right.

FC: Actually, the one that sticks in my mind was Ken Maynard.

VB: Mhm.

FC: You never hear anything. You never see one of his pictures on the box or anything like that.

VB: No.

FC: But he was, you know, like Tom Mix and the rest of them. In my time it was Ken Maynard.

WA: Gene Autry was another one.

FC: Yeah.

VB: Mhm. [pause 4 seconds] I'll need to see if I can find out about Ken Maynard. That sounds interesting. What was he like? Was he?

FC: Oh, like most of them, you know.

VB: [laughs]

FC: Quite a good-looking, what I can remember of him. You know, he was the one that come to the rescue always, you know.

VB: 'Cause another one that someone was telling me about was Hoot Gibson. Who I hadn't heard of before so there must've been a lot--

FC: Oh, there was a lot, there was a lot of that type of picture being made at that time.

VB: Mhm.

FC: It was, there was helluva lot of westerns, them days. And, course Saturday morning, it was...
[pause 4 seconds] They were feeding the people who wanted to see them.

VB: Yes.

FC: I mean, the kids...

WA: Yeah, it was more a kids' show on a Saturday morning.

VB: Yeah. [pause 4 seconds] That's interesting 'cause it, I'm sure when you went with your parents, it was different again to the, was it, was it a different atmosphere when you went, say, with your parents?

FC: Well, as Gwen said, I didn't go an awful lot. I do remember I was at school. I wasn't, couldn't have been very old. And eh, the teacher at school told us that there was a film on at the Coliseum that she would like us to see. [pause 3 seconds] And I kidded up my parents to take me to see this film. And I got it wrong. And what I saw was *Ben-Hur*. [pause 5 seconds] I'm not sure now which, which we were told to go and see but. There was two films and they were run, ran consecutively. One was *Ben-Hur* and one was *Trader Horn*. And the teacher wanted us to see one of them and I can't remember which one it was now. And I kidded them up to take me to the cinema. And I think it was *Ben-Hur* that I saw. And then I found out that it was *Trader Horn*.

VB: Mhm.

FC: No, not *Trader Horn*. *Cape to Cairo*. It was a, a motor jour-, eh, a car journey from Cape Town--

VB: Mhm.

FC: To Cairo. Right through Africa. And eh. [pause 3 seconds] I think, I think that was the one she wanted us to see, you know.

VB: Yeah.

FC: I'm not sure.

VB: So, was that one that had a sort of educational?

FC: Well, this was it.

VB: Yeah.

FC: And of course, both of them, in a way, I suppose, had.

VB: I was going to say. I mean *Ben-Hur*.

FC: The *Ben-Hur*, you see. But that was the old *Ben-Hur*, you know. The original --

VB: Yeah.

FC: Well, I suppose it was original, I don't know.

VB: Yeah.

FC: But eh, I did kid erm up to take me because, you see, they used to go to the last house. Erm, they'd leave here, perhaps seven o'clock.

VB: Yeah.

FC: And, they possibly started half past seven, something like that.

VB: Yeah.

FC: They wouldn't come out until, half past ten, eleven o'clock at night.

VB: Yeah.

FC: And eh, that was too late.

VB: Mhm.

FC: So we didn't get taken to the cinema an awful lot. Perhaps if you was on holiday and it was a wet day.

VB: Yeah. Where did you go on holiday? Was there a usual place?

FC: Well usually, what we used to do, we used to all get in the car, out the front here. And eh, we get to the bottom of the road and we wouldn't know where we was going. And it's quite likely the old man didn't know where we were going either.

GC: [laughs]

FC: And we'd finish up on the coast somewhere. It could be anywhere. Could be Hastings, was a place we used to go to, wasn't it? Weymouth, Torquay. We'd just ride somewhere and when we got there, he'd start looking for accommodation.

VB: Mhm.

FC: And there was. [pause 4 seconds] Latter, later days there would be erm, my mother and father and us three children. But prior to that, quite likely, erm, this cousin that lived with us would be with us. So they would be looking for accommodation for about six people.

VB: Yeah.

FC: But when we got to the bottom of the road, we wouldn't know where we were going.

VB: That must've been really exciting. [laughs] When you're a child. The surprise.

FC: We went to eh, Torquay one year and while we was down there, the car broke down. And eh, we was stuck down there waiting for spare parts. For a week over our holiday, I think it was. Erm, [pause 3 seconds] and we were miles away. 'Cause we didn't have to worry about being on the sea front, having a car, you see. We was miles away from the sea.

VB: Mhm.

FC: It was helluva walk, wasn't it?

GC: Yeah, it was. I remember that. Down that lane, wasn't it?

FC: Yeah, you was only a--

GC: I was only a baby. Yeah. [Sound of coffee being poured]

FC: We eh... [pause 4 seconds] We used to go, I can't remember all the places. I can remember one year going to Weymouth. And there was a trip to Jersey from Weymouth. A day trip. You left about six o'clock in the morning, and we actually got back about midnight. It was twelve and six per head. For the boat journey. And while we were on the boat they came round and asked, would anyone like a trip round the island and high tea in one of the hotels? Pon--, what was it?

GC: Pondor.

WA: Pondor.

FC: Pondor Hotel. Four and six. And eh, the old man treated us and we had a trip round the island. The coach broke down before we went, so we finished up in a, us in a private car.

VB: Yeah.

FC: 'Cause there was enough to fill this private car, weren't we?

GC: Uhuh.

FC: And we had to drive round the island and the total for the day's outing, apart from perhaps some food, I don't remember that much, come to about seventeen bob!

GC: Uhuh.

FC: Or eighty-five pee.

GC: Yeah, that's right. It was freezing cold on the ship.

VB: [laughs]

FC: Oh, it wasn't bad going, was it? It was coming back. 'Cause we didn't get back until about midnight.

GC: Mhm.

FC: It's a long boat journey.

GC: And we were staying with a lady at Weymouth that got up - we left her at half past six in the morning, didn't we?

FC: Oh, we did.

GC: And she got up and she cooked fish and chips for breakfast, I remember.

FC: Oh dear.

VB: [laughs]

GC: I never forget that. Eh, do you take milk and sugar?

VB: Eh, I'll just take it black, actually.

GC: Oh, you just take it black.

VB: Without sugar.

GC: Without sugar?

VB: Yeah.

GC: Would you like some more water in it?

VB: No, that's fine.

GC: Alright.

VB: That's great. Thanks very much.

FC: Yeah, we was ... we were lucky, I suppose. You know, I can, I can remember we were, we had a car and we didn't go short of anything. There was kids in the same class at school--

VB: I'll try one of these thanks.

FC: That eh, that didn't get, that didn't even get fed and clothed properly, you know.

VB: Yeah.

FC: 'Cause, ta. She was about a fortnight old when we came here to live.

GC: Three weeks, I was.

FC: Three weeks, was it?

GC: Yes.

FC: And eh, she's been here ever since.

GC: [laughs]

VB: It's a lovely room, this. Really nice.

GC: Yeah, now, listed these houses, these four houses.

VB: Mhm.

GC: Grade 2 listed as being of architectural interest.

VB: I was going to say. 'Cause the lovely, the bay window's very unusual with that sort of, angled look to it. It's lovely.

GC: Mhm. They're not the most convenient of houses because they've long passages.

FC: Mhm. Hell of a lot of wasted space.

GC: Mhm.

GC: It's far too big for me. It's just it's such an upheaval moving. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

FC: Well between us we got four, seven, nine bedrooms, haven't we? Say between the three of us we got nine bedrooms.

GC: Mhm. That's right. Yeah. Do you live in Glasgow?

VB: Yes, I do. Erm, I'm actually just going to move when I get back.

GC: Oh.

VB: Erm, the flat we have at the moment, erm, is very near the university. But we're moving a bit further out, erm, for extra space really. 'Cause the West End's very expensive. Couldn't afford anything with, erm, much space in it.

GC: No.

VB: But it is a nice city to live in. It's --

FC: Pardon?

VB: Glasgow. It's a nice city to live in.

FC: As I say, I've never got that far. The only time. I got as far as Pitlochry once.

VB: Mhm.

FC: And the weather was oh! It was miserable. And we come out of the hotel and it'd been a lousy hotel. The first thing she said to us was, "Have you got any towels? We've run out."

VB: Oh, no. [laughs]

FC: Erm, everything we had was out of a freezer.

VB: Mhm.

FC: Erm, when we finished eating, we were told, "There's biscuits and cheese on the table there, if you want them. Help yourself. You know, go and get them and help yourself." We asked about early morning cup of tea. And she said, "What have you got in mind?" And we said, "About half past seven." She said, "Well, I'll leave the stuff out for you, you can [laughs], you can make your own and bring us one up, will you?" [laughs]

VB: Oh dear. [laughs]

GC: [laughs]

FC: And we come out and it was drizzling and it was cold and I said to the wife, "Do you wanna go further north or shall we go south again?"

VB: Oh dear.

FC: She said, "Let's go south."

VB: You were very unlucky 'cause a lot of the bed and breakfasts and hotels round there are lovely. Sounds like you had an unlucky experience.

FC: We got to Pitlochry and I said to the wife, this was what? Twenty odd years ago. I said to the wife, "By the look of things here," I said, "we want to get put up somewhere, a bit smart," I said. Because there was lot of people there, you know. And I said, "We're going to have trouble." So, I said, "I think the best thing to do is get off the main road." So the first turning to the right, I took.

VB: Mhm.

GC: And we was out in the sticks immediately. Miles away from anywhere. There was no houses, nothing. And then we come to a village and this pub [pause 3 seconds] had got a notice out and it, it was right on the path. There was no car park or anything. And opposite there was a stream and a bridge. I can't remember the name of the--

GC: Tumbling Bridge. Oh, the place was Tumbling Bridge, wasn't it?

FC: No, no, no. This was another place.

GC: Oh, another place.

FC: No. Tumbling Br--, Rumbling Bridge was--

GC: Rumbling Bridge, that's right.

FC: Was eh, was a really good hotel. So I just stopped and I said, "I think we'll get put up," you know, "As soon as we can". And we did come unstuck.

VB: Mhm.

FC: But, I think the previous night at Rumbling Bridge. It was a smashing hotel, wasn't it?

GC: We've been up to Scotland erm, quite a number of times, haven't we?

FC: Yeah.

GC: And we've always been very satisfied.

VB: Mhm. Erm, my sister-in-law's actually working at a hotel in Pitlochry for the summer. [laughs]
So, I hope it isn't the same place.

GC: [laughs]

FC: No, it wasn't Pitl --

VB: Outside Pitlochry.

FC: It was definitely outside because we went through quite a --

VB: Sounds awful.

FC: Erm, area, you know, of erm, open land and that. And I thought, oh I've done it wrong here, you know. We're going to be out the sticks and nowhere to stay the night. But when we come to this place I jumped in a bit smart, you know. They weren't Scotch. They'd eh, they hadn't long taken over and they came from eh, Derby.

GC: The Scottish people are very hospitable usually.

VB: Mhm.

GC: Can't do enough for you.

FC: No, I don't suppose I should get up there now.

VB: Well certainly not to that hotel. [laughs]

FC: I wouldn't mind going and having a look at it again.

GC: We took our, we took some friends from Canada up there, didn't we? The last time we went. And eh, we hadn't booked anything at all, had we?

FC: No.

GC: It was May and eh, we had no problems. We booked one or two nights, we booked through the erm, Tourist Bureau. Erm, but once or twice we just, you know, stayed at places that we saw. We had no problems at all, did we? We had a, quite an amusing experience. I particularly wanted to go to the Isle of Skye. So we went across on the ferry and erm, of course there was a whole load of cars come off the ferry. And you were driving along and there's not all that many places to stay. And you're thinking to yourself, "All these people are looking for somewhere to stay," you know. "Where on earth are we going to stay? We'll never get put up", you know. You're on an island, you know, that if you can't get put up, you've got to go back again. So we stopped at the first place that was any size. We went in the Tourist Bureau, didn't we? And they phoned up someone. And, this person that was obviously a man, who was having quite a joke with him on the phone. 'Cause they were having quite a laugh together, weren't they? And then they explained to us how to get to this place. It was a bungalow, just a, you know, private bungalow. They explained to us how to get there. And eh, you had to go up a, quite a narrow lane and then you went off onto what was no more than a cart track. And then they had told us that it was tucked away a bit. But when we got to one house which looked absolutely derelict, it had got written up on the chimney pot, "No, not this one."

[laughs]

FC: [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

GC: And you had to go sort of round the back of that. And there was this quite new bungalow, really.

VB: Oh dear.

GC: And it didn't really look very prepossessing. There were children there. And bedrooms, you know, they were alright. But they didn't look much and we were a bit bothered. Our friends hadn't got a washbasin or anything in their bedroom. Erm, and they showed us where we were going to have the meal and it was the kitchen, wasn't it? You know, they hadn't got a dining room. We had our breakfast in the kitchen. But in actual fact it turned out absolutely fine. Because we went out and had a meal. Eh, we came back and they said, "Would you like some coffee?" And we, said, "Yes please."

[End of interview]