

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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\* Fakenham, Norfolk, 24 October 1995: Valentina Bold interviews clients of Cranmer House

\* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/Standardised by Annette Kuhn and Julia McDowell

\* HB= Hilda Bennett, AM=Alice [Marchbank?], MM=Mabel Manning, VB=Valentina Bold

\* Notes: First interview of one with three Cranmer House clients; Sound Quality: Fair; this interview was originally transcribed in a phonetic manner; the original phonetic version can be accessed through our physical collection - please contact Lancaster University Library for details.

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[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

**VB: Ah, I see. No, as I say, I'm from Glasgow, I don't come from round here so--**

**HB: You don't come from round here then—**

**VB: No—**

**HB: [inaudible].**

**VB: Yeah. So, that's why I'm so interested in finding out a bit about more from you.**

**HB: [inaudible].**

**VB: [laughs] That's great. Erm, I'll just put that somewhere in the middle. I'll put that down here and then it'll pick everybody up. Believe it or not! [laughs] From the size of it. That's great.**

[sound of music in background]

**VB: Could I just start--**

[VB is offered coffee and refuses, has just been given lunch]

**VB: Could, could I ask everybody's name?**

**HB:** Well mine is Hilda, this is [Beth?].

**VB: [speaking up over music] Can I ask what year you were born in Hilda?**

**HB:** Erm, I can't think, I was born, we've been talking about it all the time.

**VB: How old are you?**

**HB:** Twenty-six! I'm seventy, well I shall be seventy-two at Christmas. Boxing Day.

**VB: That's great. And are you from Fakenham yourself?**

**HB:** No, I live in Wells [next the Sea].

**VB: [writing down] That's great.**

[inaudible; laughter and cup noises]

**VB: And, can I ask how old you were when you left school?**

**HB:** Fourteen.

**VB: That's great.**

**HB:** Oooh!

**VB: And, can I ask what your first job was?**

**HB:** Well I was, I went as a nanny.

**VB: Ah!**

**HB:** To little children. Mhm!

**VB: That's great, well.**

[cup banging noises]

**VB: That was all I wanted to ask you was, so I could got a wee bit of an idea about yourself. Erm, how about yourself? Can I ask what your name is?**

**AM:** Alice [Moxborough?] if you want my surname.

**VB: That's great. And, what year were you born in?**

**AM:** 1915.

**VB: That's great. And, do you live locally? Or have you always lived locally?**

**AM:** Yes, I live locally. I didn't always live locally, I lived in Wales for a long time. All my school days.

**VB: Ah! I see. That's great. [pause 1 second] And can I ask how old you were when you left school?**

**AM:** [loudly] Can you what?

**VB: Can I ask how old you were when you left school?**

**AM:** When I left school? Sixteen.

**VB: That's great. And can I ask what your first job was?**

**AM:** Oh, don't ask me, babysitting. [laughs]

**VB: Ah! Babysitting. Not, not--**

**AM:** [inaudible; overtalking] babysitting.

**VB: That's great. I won't disturb [inaudible]. Can I ask—**

**HB:** No, she can't—

**VB: Can I ask what your name is? [pause 1 second] What's your name?**

**MM:** My name is Mabel [Manning?]

**VB: And can I ask what year you were born in.**

**MM:** 1909.

**VB: Really?**

**MM:** Yeah.

**VB: And were you born locally?**

**MM:** Yes, just outside of Wells.

**VB: Ah. And can I ask how old you were when you left school?**

**MM:** Fourteen.

**VB: That's great. And what your first job was?**

**MM:** Well, I was working as a housemaid.

**VB:** That's great. Well, as I say, that was all I really wanted to ask about yourselves just so I got a, a bit of an idea.

**AM:** Of what we're like.

**VB:** That's right.

[inaudible; overtalking]

**HB:** There wasn't a lot going on in our time. You know, for jobs or anything.

**VB:** I mean, did you go to the cinema much when you were teenagers?

**AM:** No.

**HB:** Well I did because I was the youngest of my family so I did.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MM:** My sisters used to give me pocket money, you know, to go, [laughing] a penny or tuppence.

**VB:** Ah, I see.

**MM:** [laughs] Yes.

**AM:** Sport was my favourite pastime.

**VB:** I see. Yeah.

**AM:** Football's my favourite! [laughs]

**VB:** Yeah.

**AM:** No kidding, [inaudible] well I used to play with the boys!

**VB:** I see.

**AM:** Football!

**VB:** And that's obviously why you look so fit now. It's eh--

**AM:** Well, thank you!

[all laugh]

**VB:** Ah. How about yourself? Did you go to the cinema much?

**MM:** Not when I was right young I didn't.

**VB:** Yeah.

**MM:** When I was about sixteen I went with my [girlfriend?].

**VB:** Ah, I see, was that because there wasn't a cinema--

**MM:** No, well, yeah, not really.

**VB:** Where you were?

**MM:** No, well [laughing] Wells was the nearest one.

[general assent]

**VB:** What, what were the cinemas like in Wells then.

**HB:** Well in my time, about that time they had just the benches, the forms, you know--

[coughing]

**VB: Ah!**

**HB: Yes.**

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

**HB: The first one I went to, was at [Norwich?]. In [C?] Street.**

**VB: Ah, I see.**

**HB: That's where I'd go.**

**VB: Ah, What were the cinemas like there?**

**MM: Not too bad, I would say, I don't know, not that there was talking or anything.**

**HB: No, they was all silents. Mhm. 'Cause they used to go "Shush!"**

**MM: "Sch!"**

**HB: "Be quiet."**

**MM: Be quiet!**

[all laugh]

**HB: 'Cause there'd always be talking! [prolonged laughing] Yeah!**

**MM: I'd sit with my boyfriend!**

**VB: Ah, I see.**

**MM:** And we didn't talk much! [uproarious laughter]

**VB:** [laughing] I won't ask about that!

**HB:** Naw! [inaudible]

**VB:** I mean what, what sort of, erm, films were you going to see then? What sort of films.

**MM:** I used to like Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire.

**HB:** Yes.

**AM:** Oh yes.

**HB:** And Joan Blondell, and--

**MM:** Yes, yes.

[inaudible; overtalking]

**MM:** That pair, and they used to be singing and dancing and...

**VB:** I brought some, eh, film stills and things along with me actually. And one of them, if I can find it, is from *Top Hat*, so.

**MM:** Yes, oh yes.

**VB:** What was it about Astaire and Rogers that you liked?

**MM:** Well, it her lovely hair and the beautiful gown and it was the dresses.

**VB:** [finding still] I'll pass that along.

**AM:** Oh yes, I loved these.



**VB:** Was it the musicals that you liked particularly? Or.

**HB:** Well I liked, I used to like cowboys.

**AM:** And Indians.

**MM:** I liked cowboys.

**HB:** Yes, I used to get really out of my seat for that.

**MM:** Ginger Rogers.

**AM:** Did you like to see her?

**MM:** Yes, I did.

[inaudible; overtalking]

**VB:** They mentioned Tom Mix as well, a minute ago.

**MM:** Yeah. [inaudible]. Yeah.

**AM:** You two ladies want to see them? [passing on]

**AM:** Yes.

**MM:** Yes, going back a bit now. They used to have it in colour and I thought it was wonderful in colour.

**HB:** It was in colour.

**MM:** Yes. It was all black and white.

**AM:** Yeah.

**HB:** [very loudly] Ah yeah, they were good. [looking at photograph] Yeah.

**VB:** Mhm.

**AM:** Tom Mix and 'The Hooded Terror' [probably referring to *The Terror*].

**MM:** Yeah, yeah.

**VB:** Oh.

[inaudible; overtalking]

**AM:** [Was that in colour?]

**VB:** Erm, talking about musicals I mean, I've got things like Deanna Durbin as well.

**HB:** Oh yes, Deanna Durbin as well, I saw her films, she was a lovely singer.

**AM:** She used to be another one, didn't she.

**MM:** *One Hundred Men and A Girl*.

**HB:** Is this a survey you're doing?

**VB:** Yes it is, erm, we're talking to people about...

**HB:** Deanna Durbin.

**MM:** Do you know Deanna Durbin? [showing photograph]

**HB:** Yeah.

**VB: And then we'll...**

**MM:** It is her.

**VB: We're trying to find out about things like, if particular stars were popular in certain areas, or if people went more to the cinema, you know, in different places. So, eh.**

**HB:** There were nothing like that on a Sunday, though, you see.

**VB: Ah, right.**

**HB:** No pictures, no, nothing on a Sunday. We all went to chapel in the morning, then went for a paddle [lunch?] and went for a walk with the parents. And after, we used to go again in the afternoon.

**VB: So, as you say, it was, it was a Saturday thing really, going to the pictures?**

**HB:** Yes. It was, Saturday, yes.

**AM:** Saturday.

**MM:** Of course Saturday nights.

[inaudible; overtalking]

**HB:** And for tea we used to have winkles and prunes and custard! [laughs uproariously]

**VB: Ah, right!**

**HB:** [laughing] Thought that was wonderful! [laughs]

**VB: So it was a bit of a special day, then?**

**HB:** Yes, on a Sunday they'd all have little pins round the plates.

**VB: Yeah.**

**HB: To pull the winkles out of the shells! [laughs]**

**VB: Yeah!**

**HB: [prolonged laughter]**

**VB: Ah!**

**AM: Well my Dad was a [Cambrian Highlander?]. Born in Scotland. Born and bred.**

**VB: Ah, right. What was it like going to the pictures in--**

**[sound of cup crashing onto saucer]**

**VB: In Wales in the thirties?**

**AM: When we were young?**

**VB: Yeah.**

**AM: Yeah, oh it was lovely on a Saturday afternoon, screaming and shouting and "Come on, Tom! Hit him!" Yes! [laughs] Honest to God, "Go on Tom!"**

**[all laugh]**

**MM: Yes.**

**VB: So there was a lot of noise going on!**

**HB: Oh yes.**

**AM:** Tom, Tom Mix and the Hooded Terror! [probably referring to *The Terror*] [laughs]

**HB:** Yeah.

**AM:** Oh, we used to love it.

**HB:** Sometimes I used to go in there ab- in the afternoon about eh, say about two o' clock and didn't come home to the house till about ten!

**VB: Really?**

**HB:** Used to sit right the way through, we used to hide up on, go in the toilets and hide up till that was, you know, they all come in, the second lot.

**VB: So it was a continuous--**

**MM:** Free!

**HB:** So we used to be in free then, you see?

**VB: I, I see!**

[all laugh]

**HB:** Crafty move that!

**VB: Were, were the cinemas busy then, were they?**

[general assent]

**HB:** Yes, 'cause there wasn't anything else you see.

**MM:** There was nothing else to do.

**HB:** No television or anything like that, you know?

**VB:** Yes.

**MM:** There was nothing else.

**AM:** No.

[pause 2 seconds]

**VB:** Were there, were there ever queues to get in? Or?

[general assent]

**MM:** Oh yes, all for a penny.

[general assent]

[pause 1 second]

**VB:** Did you, did you go mainly on your own or with friends or boyfriends or?

**MM:** Boyfriends.

**HB:** I had a boyfriend, his name was...

[inaudible; overtalking]

**AM:** You weren't allowed to have boyfriends, were you?

**HB:** We all had boyfriends, you know. Yes.

**AM:** You used to have them but you never [let on?].

[general assent; laughter]

**AM:** In our days.

**HB:** [laughing] Mine used to live next door! [laughs]

**VB:** Ah, I see!

**AM:** [inaudible] Whenever any of us done anything wrong, she'd say, "I'll tell your father!" [laughs]  
"Wait till he comes home, I'll tell your f-! [breaks down into laughter]

**MM:** That's an old saying.

**VB:** Ah.

**AM:** Mhm.

**MM:** Well I used to say that in any case to my children, I used to say it, "You wait till your daddy come home!"

[pause 1 second]

**VB:** So the discipline was different from then to now.

[general assent]

**VB:** Erm.

**AM:** We were very naughty in them days! [pause 2 seconds] We [put a mat behind?] the door for another one to come in you know, my brother'd be late and we'd put that behind the door for him to come and five minutes later he'd come [laughs] to collect them! [breaks down into laughter]

**VB:** Ahh!

**AM:** They were good old days, though.

**MM:** Yeah, they were good.

**AM:** We saw a lot as well. Not all this bitterness that's going around now.

**MM:** No, it wasn't like that, it was a nice [change?].

**AM:** Fighting--

**MM:** Well I had that, anyhow.

**AM:** Thieving and stealing.

[pause 1 second]

**AM:** You'd get a good belt, didn't you when you was young--

**MM:** Yeah.

**AM:** If you were naughty.

**MM:** We respected [our elders?]

**VB:** Yeah.

**MM:** You respected your family didn't you.

**AM:** Oh yeah.

**MM:** Everybody.

**AM:** You'd have to say something like "I'll tell your father when he comes home".



[general assent]

**HB:** And if you saw a policeman on the road the same type of thing, I remember you used to shiver in your shoes--

**VB: Yep.**

**HB:** Because we had respect for them but they haven't today, have they?

**AM:** Oh well I, I, I agree with the children of today, though, being allowed more freedom. I mean, they can sit in the class now, with [teed off?] children, always angry, and they're always mixed, and they can discuss any s-, subject they like with the teacher, and they get proper answers.

**MM:** Well yeah.

**AM:** Not things like unbelievably [strict?], they can hear about sex or anything like that, wouldn't it?

**MM:** Ooh, no they never did anything like that.

**AM:** They would never mention the word.

**MM:** No! They didn't.

**AM:** Wouldn't mention the word.

**VB:** I mean, talking of school did, did you ever go to the pictures with your school, 'cause I've heard some people talking...

[general dissent]

**VB: No, you didn't?**

**MM:** No.

**VB: Yeah.**

**MM:** No, nothing like that. Didn't even go on a nature walk or anything.

**HB:** [inaudible; overtalking]

**AM:** [inaudible]. Morning to the pictures.

**VB: Right.**

**AM:** For a penny!

**VB: Ah!**

**AM:** Have a penn'orth [penny-worth] of Tom Mix!

**VB: [laughs]**

**HB:** I used to like Black Jacks! [laughs] Can you remember those?

**MM:** Yes.

**HB:** Black Jacks, they used to stick all on my teeth though!

**MM:** They were lovely!

[all laugh]

**VB: What about, I mean [showing photograph] I was wondering if you all liked this pair! Or?**

**MM:** Oh yeah! Laurel and Hardy!

**HB:** Laurel and Hardy. Yes!

**VB:** Did you like, erm, comedies?

**HB:** Yes!

**MM:** Yeah.

**HB:** Oh yes! Yes.

**VB:** Any, any other favourite stars there, or?

**AM:** Tom Mix and the Hooded Terror! [probably referring to *The Terror*]

[all laugh]

**AM:** And you weren't out late at night, that's one for sure. Weren't allowed out after nine o'clock at night.

**MM:** Even when you was what, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen!

**VB:** Yeah.

**MM:** And we always had to be indoors for nine. When the war come it was just the same.

**VB:** Ah.

**HB:** My father used to shout out of his bedroom, "Come on in, girl, Hilda!" [laughs] "It's gone nine o'clock!" [breaks into laughter]

**AM:** But on the other hand, you know, you could go out any time of the night, couldn't you?

**HB:** Yes.

**MM:** Yes.

**AM:** And wouldn't be afraid--

**HB:** No.

**AM:** You wouldn't be afraid to go out.

**HB:** You'd leave your back door undone, you know, without bothering about locking it up.

**VB:** Yeah.

**HB:** You know?

**VB:** Yeah.

**HB:** But now you've to barricade yourself all in, haven't you.

**VB:** Yeah.

[pause 2 seconds]

**VB:** Did you ever get any of the film magazines like the 'Picturegoer'? Or.

**HB:** No.

**VB:** Ah.

**MM:** Yeah, yeah.

**HB:** I never did, not in my time, not down here.

**MM:** Oh, yes!

**HB:** You did? Oh, I didn't.

**AM:** Yeah.

**VB:** Or did you ever collect cigarette cards of the stars or anything?

**HB:** Oh yes!

**VB:** Ah.

**HB:** 'Cause they had, [cl?] these ones [cl?], from the [stars?]. Of the film stars.

**MM:** And they used to have the salt ones, remember they used to have the salt ones--

**HB:** Yeah.

**MM:** Didn't they.

**HB:** Yeah.

**VB:** Ahh.

**MM:** They used to have...

**AM:** Anything else love? To ask.

**VB:** Well yeah, erm, I mean, What about the gangster films?

**HB:** Aw yeah!

**VB:** Then, I mean, Edward G. Robinson?

**HB:** Yeah, he was good.

**VB:** I mean.

**HB:** He was in some tough pictures.

[pause 1 second]

[inaudible; overtalking]

**HB:** Yes, I remember him.

**AM:** Yeah. He was a big man, wasn't he. Gun in his hand, cigar in his hand.

**HB:** We wasn't allowed, when we was small, to go and see--

**VB:** Ah, I see.

**HB:** Pictures like that. [pause 1 second] I mean, like Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, and the cowboys, but not this.

**VB:** Yes.

**HB:** That was when the war come we, we most of all went and saw, to the pictures, only when we had somebody with us.

**AM:** Yeah.

[inaudible; overtalking]

**VB:** I don't know who else I've got [looking through photographs and showing], I mean people like Joan Crawford.

**AM:** Oh yes.

**HB:** Yes. Yes. That's another one.

**MM:** Yeah.

**HB:** They're all living about that same time.

**VB: Yeah.**

**AM:** What about Judy Garland?

**VB: Judy Garland, yeah.**

**AM:** A youngster, she was. Doing all that dancing.

**HB:** Joan Blondell! All sorts, weren't there?

**VB: Ah.**

**AM:** With Fred Astaire.

**VB: Was it the dance, did you like the dancing pictures?**

**AM:** Oh yeah.

**HB:** I did, with the [purple?] clothes and that.

**AM:** Yeah, they were lovely dancers, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

**HB:** Yeah. [pause 1 second] Bing Crosby was another one.

**VB: Did you, did you go dancing yourself much?**

**HB:** Yes, I did in the wartime.

**VB: Yeah. Uh.**

**HB:** That's when that all started, you know, when the war started, you know?

[overtalking in background; pause: 2 seconds]

**VB: And then I've got George Formby as well.**

**AM:** Oh yes.

**HB:** I, I wasn't keen on him.

**AM:** No, no.

**HB:** No, no well I, he wasn't my type.

**VB: Ah? Wh, what was it that put you off George Formby?**

**HB:** I never did like him at the pictures. It wasn't my type of music, I don't think.

**AM:** I thought he was a bit, [pause 1 second] he'd go too far--

**MM:** Yeh.

**AM:** With his jokes--

**MM:** Yeah.

**AM:** Kind of thing. And he kept up, some silly kind of things he used to say.

[general assent]

**VB: I mean, I mean were there other stars like that, that you weren't quite so keen on, that you didn't like much or?**

**MM:** No.



**HB:** Well, if I didn't like, like an actor, I wouldn't go and see it. You know.

**MM:** Yeah.

**HB:** If you erm, if there was a Gene Autry or somebody else, Tom Mix and all this business I'd be up and I'd be gone! [laughs] Yeah!

**AM:** Yeah, but we could only go to a matinee, couldn't we.

**HB:** That's all. You see. When we was children.

**AM:** [inaudible; overtaking]. "Come on Tom!"

**HB:** We weren't allowed to go anywhere else.

[all laugh]

**HB:** Yes.

[general laughter; pause 5 seconds]

**VB:** I mean it's interesting to hear you talking about this 'cause it is very different to--

**HB:** Today.

**MM:** Today.

**VB:** Going to the pictures nowadays, I think, it's eh.

**HB:** Yeah.

**AM:** There's a lot of difference.

**MM:** Gracie Fields was.

**VB: Gracie Fields yes, yes.**

**MM:** No, no.

[inaudible; overtalking; male voice comes into group]

**HB:** Pity really, but then I don't think people go out now, 'cause they've got the television.

**VB: Do you think, do you think the films themselves changed a lot? Do you see a difference in the films now and the films in the thirties? Or?**

**AM:** Oh there's a lot of difference today, especially in the schools, because the teachers talk to the children in their own language, and they speak to the teachers the same. And they're well advanced aren't they?

**VB: Are the films different as well or?**

**AM:** Yes.

[inaudible; overtalking as talk to men]

**HB:** No, I didn't say anything.

[When AL was at school different, nowadays teachers sit on the desk and chat, in their day they were frightened. Children tell the teacher what to do now; asks VB if she's a teacher, VB says no, explains works at Glasgow University and this is her job, AL thinks "This is very nice". VB thanks for answering questions and says she'll have to head off; AM offers her autograph! VB says that depends! AM only has two pennies in her purse! VB thanks again.]

[End of Interview]