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* Bolton, Greater Manchester, 14 June 1995: Valentina Bold interviews John and Marion Cooper

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/ Standardised by Annette Kuhn

* JC=John Cooper/ MC=Marion Cooper/ AL=Alice/ VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: Second of two interviews with John and Marion Cooper; 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.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

JC: [tape starts mid-conversation] What was the [age group?] [inaudible]

AL: Where – I didn't teach at the local school.

JC: Greater Lesser.

AL: Only before College. At Kearsley West.

JC: Yeah. Kearsley West.

AL: The age group that I taught in--

JC: Yeah.

AL: Eh, young seniors. They'd be eleven, twelve.

JC: Right.

AL: And then came down a bit.

JC: That was before they had eleven-plus like.

AL: Yes. Well they moved on.

JC: Yeah.

AL: But Kearsley West was not the beginning of the cinema. It began... our knowledge of the beginning of the cinema was in Little Lever.

JC: Oh I know all about that. Oh I've got that down on a piece of paper.

AL: Yes. Yes.

JC: So I've asked eh, we've found a little bit of information about the village where they lived.

VB: Ah!

JC: On the film. Alice was there.

VB: Yeah.

JC: I've written it down.

VB: Great.

JC: So, I was asking if eh, how often did those children, kids go to the pictures. And eh... [pause 2 seconds] Because you might find this useful in a way. Eh, [pause 4 seconds] Marion and Alice lived in Little Lever. You've not been there. But you don't need to go. It's a little village, three or four mile out of Farnworth.

VB: Yeah.

JC: And I lived in another little village.

MC: Industrial village.

JC: Industrial in a way, yes.

MC: Mhm.

JC: Eh, about the same distance away from Farnworth, which was between the two of them. Farnworth. But the village that I lived in didn't have a picture place. Pictures.

VB: Yeah.

JC: There were no pictures. Not even one there. Eh, so erm, shall I carry on a bit about that?

VB: Sure.

JC: Eh, just stop me if you think it's irrelevant. We did have a bit of a word about it. Now then, so that Prestolee was the village that I lived in about the time you were talking about. For the project. And, it was like Little Lever. It was down in a valley. Two mile away from where anything was going on in Farnworth. The town. Which as you know is [section?] of Bolton.

MC: You said all that last time. You said, you told Val that.

JC: What?

MC: Last time!

JC: No, I didn't say. No. I didn't. So! Since then, erm, they had in Little Lever, they had a picture place which, I've got you some interesting information on a piece of paper. I'll bring it in. They'll speak for themselves in a minute.

VB: That's great.

JC: About it.

VB: Yeah.

JC: Now, in the village that I lived, was an equal distance from where the pictures are. Eh, on a little bus route. there wasn't a picture place at all. And eh, one, eh, one factor, what affected the social life of the town, this village, only a village, with one school. Eh, we never went to the pictures in an evening. We only went on the Saturday night. And I described it last time you came. A Saturday night with the young men you know. Eh, after, but never during the week. Because it was quite a distance away. But, I know you're interested in the social side of life as well as the cinema. Now, in the village, itself, of Prestolee, there was a school with a headmaster of international renown. You'll find it in the University Education Department. You'll find, ask the library. You can get a well-known book, which was called 'The Idiot Teacher'. And it's international, every department of education in the country, will have that book. And they'll be told about this, what you might call, experiment. In Prestolee. Eh, about this well-known headmaster. Very progressive education. What [you might say?] Do-as-you-like education. No blackboard work. All project work. Come and go as you like. Come at night if you want. All that! I've done a little project on it myself with some pictures and I've taped a conversation with him. Some years ago. You can borrow it if you want. But why I'm mentioning this Val is this. Eh, no pictures in that village. I told you, no picture place. But everybody, even the older people, went to the school. The school was open until, from nine o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock at night. And in the evening eh, anybody could go. And most of the children who went to the school, went, in an evening. Go to the school at night. In other words, it was probably the very first community centre. In a way. Or youth centre. But grown-ups could go and a lot did. Now, so the community life was centred round this school. Therefore there was no need for those people down there to seek outside entertainment, a mile or two away, at all. So there were very little cinemagoing in that town. Now that's just another little facet of what you're studying. Whereas in Little Lever, they just had ordinary schools, if these two will forgive me calling their school an ordinary school. Ordinary schools weren't they? I mean--

MC: It's all right. [inaudible]

JC: They were the main stream of education over practice.

MC: [inaudible; overtalking].

VB: [laughs]

JC: And eh, and they were shut at night, and all that. So there was a little more incentive in that village for people to go to the cinema. Eh, eh, although these two didn't. So, I'm just drawing a parallel between the need for the cinema eh, in an isolated place with nothing going on. And no need for cinema, where there's a strong community centre of some description they can go to. And that's the difference between the two communities. Now then, eh, [pause 2 seconds] I suggest you ask Marion and Alice about the cinema again in Little Lever, because we've found a bit of excellent information for you.

MC: Perhaps you would care to [Alice?] because—

VB: I can--

JC: Louder.

AL: I don't hear very well.

VB: Ah I see.

AL: So don't count on me for very much. I shall have to keep begging your pardon all the time. But this interested me. I was teaching in the village, next to this Prestolee. Up on the hill. And it was referred to as 'The Crazy School'. You know, the crazy head. Because he was so unusual. And children were, it wasn't all three Rs. We were more a normal school. But our children would go to the cinema when they could. Too often we thought, you know. But children of very big families, and poor families, got to hear of this evening work at O'Neill's. And they said to me, one day, "Miss, what do you think? If you went to Prestolee, there's something going on every night." Now that appealed to them. They were families who wouldn't do much for their children. In the evenings. They wouldn't have money for them to go to the pictures too often. Nobody could go easily. So they took to going to Prestolee. And it persuaded their mothers a bit more, to think a bit about it.

Because they put him down in their minds, because it was so irregular at that time. So unlike everybody else. But then mothers began to be more interested, in this freer, freer type of education, where the child is eh, doing more for himself. And the teacher is not all talk and chalk. So it gradually got known better. It was our poorer children who just brought that on a little bit, the fact that there was something going at nights. And it could even be gardening, out of doors, but they would try it all.

VB: So it was quite a topic of conversation, locally?

MC: Yes. Yes it was.

VB: That's interesting.

MC: So even then say, what Brenda told you about the building of the cinema in Little Lever [referring to the Corona]. Can't you?

AL: Well, it's only that she went to the first night.

MC: Yeah.

AL: She and the daughter of the builder, and I knew the daughter from my, from my young days. They went to the opening of this cinema. We wouldn't. It wasn't done in our family. To go to the cinema. But erm, she said it was very enjoyable. Fourpence they paid. Fourpence in the front and ninepence in the back.

MC: [laughs] And the two back rows, erm, were for courting couples. They were double.

VB: [laughs] **That's interesting, what you were saying about erm, in your family it was thought of as a bit of a--**

AL: Yes. Well, it was perhaps a bit too modern.

MC: I don't know.

AL: Catering to poorer, well, perhaps it was poorer families. It was the poorer ones who went to the pictures. It was not the ones who had a bit more money.

VB: 'Cause I was interested before when I was hearing a bit about in your family you were very much encouraged to read and--

MC: Yes, yes. We did perhaps read more didn't we?

AL: Yes, yes.

MC: Mhm.

AL: And our presents would all be books.

VB: Yeah.

MC: And I think eh, Brenda said that the films changed, twice a week. And, I suppose some children would go to every change--

AL: Yes, yes.

MC: Of programme. Because no doubt there'd be a serial one on, you know. That would have a dashing end, and you'd say, "Oh, I'll have to go next week."

VB: Yeah.

MC: To see what happens.

AL: And of course, what our parents hadn't thought of, was it was very likely better for the children to do that than what they would've otherwise been doing. Getting into trouble. Not looked after at home probably. They'd say, "Oh, out of the way." Get them out of the way.

JC: Can I, I'm sorry [inaudible] so much information, you may have mentioned about this.

MC: Yes.

JC: While I've just been upstairs to get something. The cinema in Little Lever, I may have told you was called the Corona. I think we told you last time. And we met, we went to see a friend, this eh Brenda [surname redacted], her name is. And eh, [coughs] she said that she went to the very first performance of eh the film in this cinema. Did she give a date?

MC: No.

JC: I can't remember the date. But she attended the first performance which was free.

AL: Free to her.

JC: Free to her. And she says she also knew the manager of the, the first manager of that cinema, a Mr Severs. So, eh, she knew him. Mr Severs.

AL: No she didn't. I was in the class of his son. His son joined my class. I would say about standard four. And he came as a young boy. It was one of our class.

VB: Mhm.

AL: [Carl?] Severs. He served the manager. She hadn't known the manager's name. No. Brenda hadn't known the manager's name.

JC: But it was a Mr Severs.

AL: Yes. His father would be called Mr Severs, wouldn't he?

JC: That's right.

AL: I didn't know him either.

JC: And we don't think that eh, they were friendly with Brenda. You went to the--

AL: I knew her too.

JC: Yes.

AL: She was one of our age group.

JC: She went very little. She went very little to the cinema. It appears, I don't know whether it is so, Val, that eh, would you say that, I always think, working-class children, and working-class people, in those days, went to the films more than the middle class and the more educated class. It's the opposite now isn't it? I think that's what it was in those days.

AL: Get them out of the way.

JC: Is that what you've found out?

VB: I think that's probably true. Yes, yes.

JC: In general.

VB: Generally. Although of course, the very, very poorest people, it's a bit more occasional. But I think you're right.

JC: Yes, because it was the only way of entertainment then.

AL: Yes.

JC: The middle class read. And that's probably one reason why these two didn't go to this Corona. Because they were in a family with books and they would read.

MC: And we'd be doing homework.

JC: Well that's what the middle class do. Did then. They had their children at grammar school and the like, in those days, hadn't they?

AL: Yeah.

JC: And erm, it was the working class, the miners and the textile operatives, I think, who went to the cinema more than the teachers and the doctors and all.

VB: **That's interesting, yeah.**

JC: Now ask us some questions Val. While you've got a chance.

VB: **Right. [laughs] Well one thing that I wanted to, I mean I'd like to ask some general questions but we'll come back to that maybe later.**

JC: Yes.

VB: **Erm, a thing I really wanted to ask about was a bit more about the stars that you mentioned.**

JC: About?

VB: **Film stars. That you mentioned.**

MC: Oh no. We're not much help there.

VB: **Well one of the people that we talked briefly about was erm, was Jeanette MacDonald.**

MC: Jeanette MacDonald.

JC: Yes. I remember seeing Jeanette MacDonald.

VB: **I think you mentioned *Naughty Marietta* was one of the films.**

JC: That's right. She was a singer. A ballad singer. And eh, and eh--

MC: I don't remember her.

JC: And eh, a ballad singer incorporated with what you might call, music, not music hall. Musical comedies we'll call them. There were a few at that time weren't they? Eh, there was erm, [pause 2 seconds] erm... [pause 3 seconds] It goes and comes in your memory doesn't it?

VB: Yeah. Yeah.

JC: You think some of the time, it's gone.

VB: Yeah.

JC: There were a few of that eh, period. Eh, like that. But eh, they were very popular. Because I were thinking of people like Jeanette MacDonald and erm--

MC: Was Jessie Matthews?

JC: Jessie Matthews was one.

MC: Was she in the early films?

JC: She was.

MC: Or was she a bit later?

VB: No, she was.

JC: She was. Jessie Matthews.

MC: Mhm.

VB: Films like *Evergreen*.

JC: Yes.

VB: I think was in the thirties. *Evergreen*. I don't know if you remember that one.

JC: Jessie Matthews. Yes. And eh, and they were popular, I think, particularly with the adult population. Because it was musical comedy. They could connect with eh, with eh show business if you like. Show business. They didn't get much opportunity the working class, for going to theatres. Eh, because I did mention didn't I, about the Hippodrome Theatre in Bolton. There was only one. And eh, for them, I think the musical shows, it didn't appeal to a lot. The younger people. They were mostly for the gangsters. And eh, gangster films.

AL: Cowboys.

MC: Yes, cowboys. That was the name. I don't remember the names of any that we saw.

AL: Well we just didn't go did we?

MC: No, we didn't. [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

MC: No.

VB: **But Jessie Matthews is one you do remember.**

AL: Yes.

MC: Yes.

JC: Yes. Oh yes. And of course Jessie Matthews, she went from the stage to films.

MC: Yeah.

JC: She was a stage singer.

MC: Yes, she was a stage--

JC: And quite a number of them were.

MC: She wasn't a singer. Was she a singer? Or was she an actress?

AL: An actress, I thought she was.

JC: There was quite a few popular duos if you like. Two together.

MC: Yeah.

AL: Yes. It was Jessie Matthews and somebody.

JC: And there was Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy.

MC: Oh yes. They were a couple.

JC: Team.

MC: But I don't remember ever seeing them.

JC: Nelson Eddy sang with Jeanette MacDonald.

MC: I don't think I cared for erm, those singing dancing ones.

VB: Ah. That's interesting.

AL: No we didn't, on the whole. No.

VB: What was it about them that you didn't like so much?

MC: Well, I don't know. Erm. [pause 2 seconds] I just didn't like the singing and dancing. It seemed erm, a bit trivial somehow.

JC: I wouldn't call it trivial.

MC: No, well not trivial, but erm, it just didn't appeal. For one thing I don't sing and erm--

JC: [laughs]

AL: We wanted a story, didn't we?

MC: Yes!

AL: [inaudible] story.

JC: Oh yeah.

VB: 'Cause I remember you were saying you liked the sort of literary films. Things like *A Tale of Two Cities*.

MC: Yes.

JC: Yes, that's right.

MC: Mhm.

JC: I did.

VB: So, was it the story then that interested you?

MC: Probably. Probably.

AL: It is the story.

MC: The story. Yeah.

AL: It needn't be highbrow.

MC: No.

AL: But it was new to us to have a story through singing and dancing. And eh, I don't know. We never got used to it.

MC: Did you go to watch many singing and dancing ones?

AL: No. No.

MC: No.

AL: Never enjoyed it.

JC: Eh, no, I don't think, I don't think I did really.

AL: And that made you less interested in, when we were growing up. Everybody knew all the shows and everybody who was in all the shows. The singers and the dancers, and we didn't. We just got, we never got into it.

MC: Mhm.

AL: [pause 2 seconds] Prejudice perhaps.

JC: No. I don't think your father was interested in what... Was he interested in music, your father?

AL: Not at all.

MC: No. Nor mother.

JC: No. No. No I don't think he was. He had lots of interests but that wasn't one of them.

AL: Well he had political interests.

JC: Yes I know he had that. So that probably, that would be a reason that you didn't go to see these films.

VB: Ah. Yes.

JC: Or these musicals. Eh, I would think so.

VB: Were you interested in documentaries at all?

MC: Well, did we have any documentaries in the early--

JC: No.

AL: No, not in the early days.

JC: Yes, I would agree with that. That eh, the documentary films as you know, they're good documentary films. No, first of all, a lot of those at that time, what we might call documentary, they were eh, government-sponsored films weren't they? They were, to a degree, what we might regard now as propaganda. I'm talking before the war. We had them during the war of course. And there were a lot of propaganda for the government as you get in wartime films. And eh, I don't think there were very many documentaries really. Eh, [pause 2 seconds] my memories of the documentary films came in after the war. After the last war. Eh, with people like Grierson. And Lindsay Anderson who's just died. And they really, made the real documentaries. From which the present documentaries have grown, haven't they? Really. Of the very few shown of real documentaries eh, in the thirties that I know of, they were nearly all films that made you weep. [laughs]

VB: [laughs] With pleasure I'm sure.

AL: People wouldn't have gone much, if there'd been documentaries. In the early stages.

VB: Mhm.

AL: They just wouldn't have gone.

JC: No. They wouldn't.

AL: No. Something more exciting.

VB: So was it the entertainment side of it you think, that attracted?

MC: Yes.

JC: Yes. I think that was what they wanted, everybody.

AL: Yes.

JC: Entertainment really. That's what... because they couldn't get it anywhere else, could they?

MC: No.

JC: They can nowadays.

AL: Oh the pubs. They'd only go to a pub wouldn't they? [If they were?] grown-ups.

JC: Yes. That's so.

AL: If they [weren't interested?].

MC: And it was an inconvenient village. Inconvenient to get to the town.

JC: Yes. You lived in an inconvenient... well I did.

AL: [inaudible; overtalking] a lot of walking. But then you used to do a lot a walking. Like country walking.

VB: Yes. 'Cause I remember you were telling me about the Clarion Movement.

MC: Yes.

AL: Yes.

JC: Yeah.

VB: Was outdoor, did you do a lot of outdoor activities?

AL: Outdoors, yes, yes.

MC: We played a lot too. [laughs]

JC: Now, we had Denis and Wendy [Pye] round here last night. Eh, we went to see them when I took you back last time. And eh, this is an interesting, I'll tell you in a minute, an interesting slice of social history, not connected with films really. But Denis having written this book, you know. And studied it. Denis came to interview these two about the early days of the Clarion Movement which was a political organisation with a community--

AL: Definitely Labour. Definitely Labour.

JC: With erm, Robert Blatchford started it and all that. And they had, over the country, what they call, clubhouses where eh, walkers and cyclists could go and stay. And they were all run voluntary. You stay overnight. All run voluntary, for the working-class people. We're talking now about ninety years ago and up to fifty years ago. That period. And some are still left. Now then, he was surprised was Denis was to know that eh, Marion and Alice and her father were very, members of this organisation.

MC: Well father was.

JC: And he took you. And they used to go regular walk, to one of the club houses about five miles from where they lived.

JC: A good four miles.

MC: A good four miles.

AL: Country walking.

MC: Yes.

AL: Well that suited father. There was not many in Little Lever would be doing that. It wouldn't be going to these club houses in a big way. It was only that father was politically interested in them.

MC: Mhm.

AL: And the fact that it was a walk. And he took us walking from quite early ages. While some of them would be at the pictures, we'd be on a walk to somewhere. We know more about the district than about the pictures.

VB: *That's interesting.*

JC: Eh, that's so. That was a very... in fact, he knew very little about the club house. Because that's now shut down, hadn't it?

AL: Yes.

MC: Mhm.

AL: The Clarion Movement has faded away, hasn't it?

JC: And the only thing that's left--

AL: The cycling club.

JC: The Clarion Cycling Club. That's the eh, the last remnant of it.

AL: Mhm.

MC: Mhm.

JC: And so, you occupied a lot of your time, weekends didn't you? There.

AL: And we read the paper, well, we didn't read the paper. We were too young. We glanced at it a bit. And it was a very respectable, well printed paper. Small one.

MC: Mhm.

AL: [inaudible] the type of the 'Daily Herald'.

JC: Brenda also said that the film at the Corona at Little Lever, she went to the first performance and all that. Eh, the early films. They were similar to what I could remember. She said there was a pianist. And a pianist. And she knew the pianist. She was somebody from the village. She was only a very ordinary pianist, she said.

AL: She said [they were little more?] than piano teachers. All they could play was scales. Play faster and faster. Or slower or slower. Louder and louder. [laughs]

MC: Louder and louder! [laughs]

VB: [laughs]

JC: And the pianist played, looking at the films all the time. You know.

VB: [laughs]

JC: And I do remember that too.

AL: Yes.

MC: Yes.

JC: In fact, do you know, I remember probably more about the cinema, in a way, when I was younger, before the thirties, in the, in the middle twenties. Because eh, we lived in Bolton then. And

there were far more cinemas. And there was one only about two streets away from where I lived. Called the Atlas. And eh, it was silent films then of course. And there was this pianist, who played. And eh, it was threepence to go to a performance. It was changed twice a week, as it was in the Little Lever cinema. And it was threepence to go. And on Saturday afternoon it was a matinee. And that was always a cowboy. And there were serials of course.

AL: Yes.

JC: Eh, serials. Like on television. Where you got to go the following week and find out what they were up to. Like, Neighbours [Australian soap series] and all these others. [laughs] I'm sure everybody has told you the same story, Val. [laughs] [inaudible] when all's said and done. And you're trying to draw the threads together. And eh, go on, any more questions? We're not being very helpful.

VB: No.

JC: We didn't go a lot, you know.

VB: You have been very helpful.

JC: No. We didn't go a lot. Ask us some more questions.

VB: It's interesting for me to find out about other things--

AL: Yes. Yes.

VB: You know, that were happening. Puts everything into context.

JC: I think that's an interesting point that I've mentioned that you might find. That, where there was something, eh, some community activity in a village, they'd be much later in having a, a, picture place established. [inaudible]. And it could well be too, this is just an observation, that when I lived in Bolton, it was a big urban area. And a lot of two-up and two-down cottages. Eh, little, rows and rows of houses and the like. And I think anywhere in Bolton at that period, I'm talking about just the thirties, just after, then, I don't think anybody would need to walk more than two hundred yards to

the nearest cinema. You see. But in a, and you didn't have the village community life. Eh, in that area. That urban environment. But in villages, even if they were industrial villages, if they were cut off from boroughs and all that. Then they developed some kind of erm centre or--

AL: Even churches. [inaudible; overtalking] churches. We're much more go ahead at providing entertainment than churches.

MC: Yeah.

JC: So that I would think that it's the industrial areas, at that period, where there were more cinemas could thrive.

VB: Yeah.

JC: Rather than the village. You see. Would you think so? Is that what you've found?

VB: I think that's probably true.

JC: Yes.

VB: I was interested actually, just when you were talking about Bolton at that time. Erm, I've been hearing that it was very different in atmosphere to what Bolton is now. Erm, a lady was telling me yesterday about when the mills were... [tape cuts out]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

VB: I don't think so.

JC: No. Very important person. I've got a book. Sorry.

MC: In the Labour movement... In the Labour movement, you must [say?], John.

JC: In the Labour movement. Alice Foley. Now then, and she wrote a marvellous book. She was a, was a great stalwart in the town. JP, president of this, that and the other. She was even the president of our organisation. Eh, for twenty years. Eh, Alice Foley. And erm--

MC: Alice Foley, 'A Bolton Childhood'.

JC: This is a well-known book. Marvellous. It's called 'A Bolton Childhood'. And eh, well, and, if you're interested in what life was like, in Bolton, at that time, this is the book. I'll lend it to you.

VB: That would be great!

JC: Look after it, because, you see, she's signed it for me and everything. And everybody in Bolton will know about this book.

VB: Yes.

JC: And it's for sale in the shop in the library.

VB: Oh right!

JC: It is. 'A Bolton Childhood'.

VB: Yeah.

JC: Eh, about five pound. Published by Manchester University. She received an honorary MA from Manchester University, for her work for education. And she was a great literary person. She was the first trade union woman. Trade union secretary. And she became the secretary of the, of the textile union in Bolton. Which is a big textile town. She finally finished up as professional secretary of that organisation. Trade unionism. But this is an account of eh, her life in those streets around Bolton. Where she was born. Two-up, two-down, long rows of erm. Like they were I suppose, in Paisley and those places. Well they were tenements weren't they?

VB: Mhm.

JC: In Paisley.

VB: Right.

JC: So, I'll lend you this.

VB: That would be great.

AL: Is it still cheap John?

JC: Oh yes.

AL: Fifty p then. Mhm?

JC: It's about five--

AL: That was fifty p.

JC: No. No. Never been so cheap I don't think. Where's it say fifty p?

AL: Inside.

JC: Ooh!

AL: I was just really impressed by it. Price fifty p. So it's decimal time isn't it?

JC: It's about, it's about, it might be four pound now. But the WEA [Workers' Educational Association], we get it cheaper. Because it's our book. You see, she was our president. We own the copyright of it. Manchester University and the WEA. See, they published it. It's been reprinted since then. So, you'll find a lot of interesting information in that.

VB: I think I'll enjoy that.

JC: Will you? Will you like it?

VB: Very much so. Yes.

JC: It's a good read as well.

VB: Yes.

JC: Now there's another person in Bolton, I'm sure somebody'll mention him to you. If you want to know about the social life of the people. Which is typical of any industrial area. You will have heard of this person. Bill Naughton.

VB: Oh yes, yes.

JC: Eh, died some years ago. The playwright. What did he write? They made films of his books. And eh, find that first volume of his autobiography.

MC: That first volume of his autobiography.

AL: Didn't he write 'On the Pig's Back?' That's one of his.

MC: 'On the Pig's Back'. Yes.

JC: And incidentally, he's just brought out, I've not seen it, they've only just published it, the second volume of his autobiography.

MC: Bill Naughton.

JC: And it's... he came from Ireland--

MC: Bill Naughton. He's Irish. And he came, the family came over when he was four. And they settled in the same area that Alice Foley did. This.

VB: Right.

JC: In the same area of Bolton.

MC: In the same area of Bolton.

JC: In the thirties. Both books are about the thirties.

MC: And this is his erm, first autobiography. His second one has come out.

JC: It has.

MC: Recently. But I've not got that one.

JC: Tell Val where the title comes from.

MC: 'On The Pig's Back', that's an expression used in Ireland, when people thinking [they're going to really get on?]. And his mother tells him in Ireland that, his father had gone some years before to get work. He went to work in the mines. And they're packing up and she says, "We're going to be on the pig's back."

VB: [laughs]

MC: Everything will be beautiful. They were in County Mayo. A lovely area on the west coast of Ireland. Very much rural. You know. And quite poor. And she said, "We're going to be on the pig's back." And I read another book too. Fairly recently. And the man says, "We were on the pig's back."

VB: [laughs]

MC: Anyway, I'll lend you that too.

VB: That would be great.

MC: Yes.

VB: It's very kind.

JC: And eh, that's a really good cross-section of what it was like in the thirties. The working class.

MC: And quite a lot in there will be about the cinema, too.

VB: **That sounds great.**

JC: Yes, you'll find things about the cinema in there too.

VB: **Yes.**

JC: And there's a... it's in short stories. About seven books. And plays, and they've been made into films haven't they? What were they?

MC: Mhm. Mhm.

VB: **I know *Alfie*.**

JC: *Alfie*.

VB: **I see at the front, mentioned.**

MC: Yeah.

AL: Yeah.

MC: Talks about going to the cinema, in Bolton, at erm, one of the big cinemas, the Capitol I think it was. One of them. And a dog keeps following them. Some dog attached to his family, or his friend's family. And they go in there and the dog creeps in.

JC: In the pictures?

MC: Yes, in the cinema. You know, and I think they're a bit embarrassed.

JC: And did the dog go in?

MC: I think the dog goes in.

JC: Sits at his feet.

MC: I've forgotten now.

JC: [laughs]

MC: [It was just something about] a dog going into the theatre or cinema. It's a good read.

VB: It sounds great.

MC: Yes. Yes.

JC: Now when I chipped in then, Val, you were going to ask us some questions. Ask us something else.

VB: Well actually, I was going to--

JC: I don't want to miss out on what you want to know.

VB: I brought a book with me.

JC: Because we get carried away you know. Red herrings, shall we say. We get carried away with all kind of red herrings.

VB: This one's erm, a book of stars and films of 1938.

JC: Yeah.

VB: From the 'Daily Express'. That I thought you might be interested in having a look through.

JC: Oh!

VB: So, I'm afraid I can't lend you this one cause I'm needing it.

JC: Oh, no!

VB: I thought you might like to have a look at it anyway.

JC: Oh yes! I see. Ye-es. You look first.

MC: Well perhaps that will remind us of what was missing in our early lives.

AL: [laughs]

JC: Also, [inaudible; overtalking] you must know [a book?] at that time, [inaudible] you know so well, you must know, there was also a very good periodical called 'Picture Post'. And all the copies, every copy's still available. If you come across any reference to the 'Picture Post', eh, then, they are available at the headquarters. One of the newspapers. And eh [moves away]. Have you heard of it? The 'Picture Post'.

VB: I have. Yes.

MC: Yes.

JC: Right. Well, eh. [pause 3 seconds] This is a little project I did about this Terry O'Neill, the teacher.

VB: Right.

JC: Just a minute. I'll have to show you. Now, these are reprints. From the 'Picture Post'. Eh, in fact, [pause 2 seconds] yeah. See, the 'Picture Post' came to Prestolee. To see this teacher. And to interview him. And all that. And these are some of the pictures. That's one.

VB: Ah!

JC: Marvellous pictures.

VB: It's wonderful. Yes.

JC: And it came from 'Picture Post'.

VB: Yes.

JC: I managed to get copies from the 'Picture Post' Library. And they did a lot of social work. And I'm sure your researches will lead you somewhere there to the films. And erm, you can borrow this if you want.

VB: Erm--

JC: It might not be good for you. It's educational.

VB: I might leave it for just now.

JC: And eh--

MC: Well it brings to mind names doesn't it? Katharine Hepburn.

JC: Go on. Oh! They were like that in the 'Picture Post'. They were sepia like that. The pictures. Weren't they?

MC: Mhm. Mhm.

JC: Call them up.

MC: Oh yes. Emile Zola. I can't think what he was on.

AL: Emile Zola?

MC: Emile Zola.

AL: He was a writer wasn't he?

JC: Oh yes.

AL: Zola.

JC: Zola. And then they made a very famous film. A film was made of Zola.

AL: A film would be made of Emile Zola.

MC: *The Life of Emile Zola*. That would be... Oh Paul Muni!

JC: Oh yes. I remember Paul Muni.

MC: He was an actor in this 'Life of Emile Zola'. I wouldn't see that film.

JC: That's right. Paul Muni. That's right. Eh, I remember him. They were very popular. I saw a lot of these. They were what we now call horror films weren't they? Paul Muni.

MC: I don't know. They could've been.

JC: They were semi horror films.

MC: Myrna Loy and William Powell.

JC: That's right. They were all glamour. They were the glamour films and all that. Of the time. And eh, I don't think I went to those.

MC: Fredric March. No.

JC: I remember all these people on the cinema.

MC: Oh yes. There were a lot. Vivien Leigh. Oh was she in the... [pause 2 seconds]

JC: Oh, Vivien Leigh.

MC: In that long, the American film. What was it? You know. Everybody went to see it.

AL: Yes.

VB: *Gone with the Wind*?

AL: *Gone with the Wind*. Yes.

MC: Yes.

JC: Yes, yes, yes, yes. That's right. And of course, the cinema then, influenced people's fashions.

MC: Dorothy Lamour.

AL: Was it beyond the thirties then? When it came to Vivien Leigh?

VB: It's 1938.

MC: This is 1938, yeah. Dorothy Lamour wouldn't impress me in a film.

JC: No. No. No.

MC: Luise Rainer.

JC: Who?

MC: Luise Rainer.

JC: Oh yes, I remember him too. I can picture him. We remember them--

MC: Luise Rainer! She's a woman.

JC: Oh yes, oh, there was a Rainer who was a man as well. But anyway, we will remember these, not so much because we've seen the film but we've seen the placards outside the [cinemas?].

VB: Ah!

JC: There's so many cinemas, you're passing them, and you're seeing these big pictures. Eh, on the hoardings.

MC: Spencer Tracy. Carole Lombard.

JC: So you saw them, as we see adverts now. Without necessarily going to the pictures.

VB: That's interesting.

MC: Joan Bennett.

JC: And that's why we'll know these, never having seen the films! Would you think that Alice?

AL: Definitely. Same as Little Lever too. There'd be placards.

JC: Yes, there's be glamourised pictures of these--

AL: Mhm. Mhm.

JC: Of these stars and the like.

AL: Yes, a lot of money was put into the early days.

JC: And that's why we would know them, without necessarily knowing the films they were in.

AL: Yes. Yes.

JC: They, they acted in.

VB: 'Cause I remember you telling me about the adverts in some of the shop windows as well.

MC: Ooh yes!

JC: Yes, that's right.

MC: And if the shops put an advert in their shop window, they were given--

JC: Free tickets—

MC: Free tickets to erm, offer to the customers. Audrey [surname redacted]. She went to the cinema on free tickets.

JC: Did she?

MC: Yes. Because they shopped at [pause 3 seconds] a confectioner's in Lever Street. [pause 3 seconds] that we never shopped at.

AL: [laughs]

JC: Your mother was busy baking, wasn't she?

MC: Well our mother was busy baking and their mother bought. So they got free cinema tickets.

AL: Mhm. It's a good idea.

VB: So that was for the favoured customers was it?

MC: Yes.

AL: Yeah. They were good customers. [laughs]

JC: [inaudible; overtalking]

VB: A good policy.

MC: Ooh! Very much. Errol Flynn.

JC: Yes.

JC: He was a bit later.

MC: Handsome. Oh, he was '38.

JC: 'Course you can't avoid knowing these, because it was the culture of the age. Even if you didn't go to the films at all or you'd never been, you'd know a lot of these people.

MC: Yes.

AL: [inaudible; overtalking].

JC: They were in the newspaper adverts. Ah [pause 2 seconds] it was the culture of the day. As your project says. A cinema culture for entertainment. Everybody knew about these things, even if they never went!

MC: I tell you what I did go to see, *The Grapes of Wrath*. Did you ever to go see *The Grapes of Wrath*?

AL: Probably.

JC: Oh probably, later than the thirties.

MC: Would that be later than the thirties?

JC: Aye.

MC: Oh. Oh.

JC: Because I don't think they had in the thirties itself. That era. I don't think they had these long films. *Gone with the Wind* might've been--

MC: Well that was a very long film wasn't it?

JC: But they didn't have very long films like they have now do they? They were in two kinds. There was what we called the big picture. That's what we described it as. Now, eh, there was the big pictures and there was a supporting picture. And adverts in between. Eh, on the screen. And then, eh, you went for the main picture. And then there was also a minor one. The big picture might run an hour and a half. And the other one, run half an hour. Eh, it could be a comedy. There was Harry Lauder and all those.

MC: I didn't know *South Riding* was made into a film.

JC: Yes, it was.

MC: I read the book but I don't know if I ever saw the film.

JC: Yes. It was.

MC: That was Ralph Richardson. Edna Best was the schoolmarm. Edmund Gwenn and Marie Lohr. And Ann Todd. Oh, perhaps we did see it.

AL: Never mind. Never mind. You want to get on, don't you Val? If they're lending it to you. Are you lending this?

MC: No. No.

JC: No. Too precious is that.

AL: Yes, well never mind. What I've missed I've missed haven't I? It's not important that I'm catered for John.

JC: That wasn't published by the 'Picture Post', was it?

VB: No. It's the 'Daily Express' I think. It's an annual one.

JC: Eh, what was the newspaper that published 'Picture Post'?

AL: 'Daily Express' this is. Daily Express Publications. 1938.

JC: Yeah. 'Picture Post' belongs to some, some group. I wonder whether they done... That's a very valuable book for your research isn't it?

VB: It is. Yes.

JC: Really.

VB: Yes.

JC: And of course, it reminds people.

MC: Reminds you of the film. You see, you don't remember yourself.

JC: Will you be trying to find in your research by asking people if they went to see this film. Would you be trying to arrive at the popularity of these well-known people?

VB: Erm, yes. I mean one of the things that's interesting, that we're finding out is that the film stars that were popular around Bolton, Manchester--

JC: Yes.

VB: Is quite different from the ones that were popular, say in Scotland.

MC: Mhm!

AL: Mhm.

JC: Oh yes. I would imagine so. Eh, yes. Even in the industrial areas, around Paisley and all those places.

VB: Yes. Yes.

AL: Mhm! Have you better taste?

VB: I don't know. [laughs]

AL: [laughs]

MC: [laughs]

VB: They didn't all like the classics [laughs] or anything!

JC: That's an interesting thing that might come out of this.

VB: Yeah.

JC: The difference in the culture.

VB: That's right.

JC: That's why, the more questioners you can get, and the more answers to "Did you see this, did you see that?"

VB: Yeah.

JC: "What was the most popular? What did you like best?" If you could isolate the differences in the geographical areas. Eh, with the culture of the town, would be--

VB: That's right. Yeah.

JC: Quite interesting that. And then eh, would you be going into questions like [pause 2 seconds] why was it that people living in deprived environments, as they were, the working-class people at the time. Why they were interested in all this upper- and middle-class culture.

AL: Yes!

JC: 'Cause that book's full of it! Look what they're wearing.

MC: Yeah.

JC: In the cinema. The actors and actresses and all that. Eh--

AL: Yes. They needn't be about working-class areas, need they?

MC: No.

JC: No. Well what connection is there, say, with Noel Coward? I know he was a bit later than that. [inaudible; overtalking] working class. [When they filled the places up?]. Whether it was envy or--

MC: No, I don't think it was envy. No, I don't think so.

JC: I don't think it was envy, no. It was perhaps a bit of an antidote to their drab lives.

AL: Yes!

JC: [inaudible] wasn't it?

AL: Mhm.

JC: Yes.

VB: Something that again someone was telling me was they enjoyed seeing erm, Gracie Fields pictures.

AL: Yes.

VB: Not so much for Gracie Fields, but because of the locations.

AL: Yes.

MC: Yes.

VB: They enjoyed seeing pictures set in places that were--

JC: Right! Because they were filmed in Bolton.

[multiple voices at once]

AL: She was one of them for a starter, and not a high-class actress.

MC: Mhm.

JC: You mean the settings of the films.

VB: That they enjoyed seeing where they were set.

JC: Yes, that's right.

AL: They were good. Whatever Gracie Fields picture came, they were good. Because she was nearly local. She was Rochdale.

JC: Oh yes!

MC: I think they were good, [pause 2 seconds] not for the glamour.

JC: No.

AL: And the dialect too--

MC: Yes.

AL: Would appeal to them.

MC: Mhm.

AL: It was easy to follow isn't it?

JC: Well--

AL: Well we think it is.

JC: Yes. Yes. That's so. Eh, well, Gracie Fields was a culture kind of in Lancashire at that time. She became really popular because of the regional. There were gramophone records. We had gramophone records at home, of Gracie Fields you know.

MC: Mhm.

AL: Yes. Yes.

JC: I can remember one all those gramophones you wound up. Gracie Fields was probably the first record we ever bought. We played it.

AL: Yes. Yes. Perhaps even more than films.

JC: Oh yes. That's so. Erm, mhm. [pause 2 seconds] They erm, there weren't many films. If you compare the films of today and all that we see on television, there weren't many films in our area that had a local appeal in the settings. Because they were Hollywood dominated weren't they?

MC: Yes.

AL: Oh yeah! Very much.

JC: I know we did have a local film production unit.

AL: Elstree.

JC: Places like that. But eh, they were more for studio films in a way. They weren't in sets, outdoor settings. And eh, I think that eh that was an attraction. The fact. And Bill Naughton's films, I think, and Gracie Fields, I don't think we had many more local people who went into films I can remember. The attraction was, in the film itself, you could see the backgrounds. particularly Bill Naughton's films.

MC: Mhm.

JC: Because they filmed all in the streets in Bolton and everywhere, didn't they? The Bill Naughton films.

AL: Mhm.

JC: [pause 3 seconds] Have you met a Mr Ken [surname redacted]? Who is the librarian at Farnworth Library.

VB: No, I haven't.

JC: No. Well, he'll be a good contact for you. Because [pause 3 seconds] Bill Naughton of course, his films come later than the thirties. Bill Naughton's films. Well, eh, he's a librarian at Farnworth and he's also Secretary of the Farnworth Local History Society. And he's just eh, eh, we've been. He's just put together [inaudible] of this, of eh, on Bill Naughton, his life story. And all about his films and reading his books and all that.

MC: [inaudible]

JC: But still, that's coming off the cinema. Well when erm, looking at television films, there's the point you made about the background. Eh, we find, and I think other people may find, I find and you find, there could be something which eh, "Ooh! What's this?" Because it's in this particular place. And we want to see it because it's filmed in this place and because you know it well. It means

something to you. And the story doesn't. And we've been disappointed many times. In fact the last, [pause 2 seconds] the last one, was a Scottish one. And it was eh, filmed in a place we know very well. Plockton, in the Western Isles. A television series. It ran for six--

MC: I think it ran for four or six.

JC: It was 'Name of the Village'.

MC: The 'Name of the Village' it was called.

JC: The 'Name of the Village' and erm it ran for six sessions.

MC: We watched the first one and we thought, we're watching no more of this.

JC: They gave a fictitious name.

MC: Yes.

JC: The name of the film was the name of the man in it. He was the eh, eh policeman in this village.

MC: Oh yes. He was.

JC: Of Plockton, which is near Kyle of Lochalsh in Scotland. And I think this is what happened with a lot of films.

MC: They find like a very dramatic scenery. And eh, think they can make a story out of the scenery.

JC: And then it degenerates into a mini soap opera.

VB: Mhm.

JC: Everything else, it's simply, it's another version of 'Coronation Street'. A shorter version of 'Coronation Street'.

MC: Now, did you watch any of those?

AL: Only one, and I was bored.

MC: Yes, we were bored.

JC: We only watched the first one. And there was another series, this is really television but it's a film [just the same?]. And this is coming more up to date. I don't know if they had it then, when I'm saying this, they find something interesting and dramatic, which draws your attention. "We'll watch this." And then it becomes a simple, romantic soap opera.

AL: Yes they did one, about the lifeboats.

JC: There was a lifeboat.

MC: It was about the lifeboat. And we thought, "Oh! We'll watch this". Because erm I collected in Fairfields for the lifeboats once a year, you know.

JC: This'll be all very good. This'll be all about the lifeboats. Rescuing people at sea and all that. The first one they show you, show you about the lifeboats. What the lifeboat was all about. And then, we only watched two. And then the next was simply about the personal relationships of the lifeboat crew. You see.

MC: Yeah.

JC: Which is just a kind of a soap opera attitude towards it.

VB: Right.

JC: But you didn't get it in the thirties. That.

AL: No.

MC: No.

JC: And you didn't get very many films which were filmed in the areas, because eh, they nearly all came from Hollywood and places.

MC: Yes.

VB: I mean I just happen to have in my bag [laughs] erm, a couple of stills from one of Gracie Fields ones, *Sing As We Go!*

JC: Gracie Fields.

MC: Oh, 'Sing As You Go'.

VB: *Sing As We Go!*

MC: Yes.

VB: Which I think was filmed in Bolton.

JC: What do you call it?

MC: 'Sing As You Go' [sic]

JC: Oh yes! Was that the title of the film?

MC: Yes.

VB: Yes.

JC: Yes. And a lot of that was filmed in Bolton. And it was working-class life. And it was quite, it was quite true to working-class life in Bolton. *Sing As We Go!* It was.

AL: And that was sung too. And that appealed to everybody.

MC: Yeah.

AL: It appealed to me. I liked the song. I liked the 'Sing As We Go' song.

MC: Mhm.

JC: Would you say, Val, would you say that eh, that erm realism there, was it in the thirties?

VB: Yes. Yes.

JC: Eh, that eh, it was the eh, it was of complete difference between the Hollywood stuff that were being eh, shown. But would it appeal to people outside Lancashire do you think? You'll find out in your observations.

VB: Mhm.

JC: Would it be, would it be just the fact that since it had a Lancashire background, that people would go because of that? We would. We would go because we could identify with it.

AL: And you see, and crowds, like weavers, crowds, where crowds went you sang 'Sing As We Go'.

MC: Mhm. Mhm.

AL: It was much sung. Do you remember the tune of it? [sings] "Sing as we go and let the world go by!"

JC: Oh yes.

AL: 'La la la la, lalalalalAA la!'

JC: That's it.

VB: So that was a very popular song that.

JC: Yes.

AL: Yes.

MC: Yes.

JC: Oh yes. Used to be a very popular song. And she eh, and it was popular too, with Lancashire people too because Gracie Fields came up from a working-class background.

AL: Is this from *Sing As We Go!* [looking at still]? Oh, I see.

JC: She wasn't really a top singer you know. She wasn't in the same class--

MC: Well, she's not an opera singer.

JC: No. She wasn't in the same class as another singer, who I don't think made films. Kathleen Ferrier.

MC: Oh, no!

AL: Oh, no!

MC: Oh, no!

AL: She had a working-class background but oh, was quite different!

JC: Who came from the same town more or less.

AL: She was a classical singer.

JC: Oh, she was. She was. [inaudible; overtalking].

AL: She was a singer.

JC: Really.

AL: Gracie Fields could so easily break off from singing, to have a side remark you know, in broad Lancashire. That would appeal to people.

MC: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

AL: They were different. Quite different.

JC: Yes. Oh yes, it's true to life, that. Our kitchen, not be unlike that, with two taps and the like, in the two-up and two-down.

VB: Really? Yes.

JC: I lived in, you know, I lived in a house like that and eh, same with Dad.

VB: I mean it's worlds apart from the sort of pictures in the book.

JC: It is. Completely different isn't it?

VB: Did you feel, with stars like Gracie Fields, was it closer to experiences that you knew about, than say the Hollywood--

MC: Yes.

AL: Yeah.

JC: Yes.

AL: Yeah, I think it would. And she would refer to things that you knew about.

VB: Mhm.

AL: That you'd heard of. And it made Lancashire people laugh.

[pause 4 seconds]

VB: It's interesting that you say that, it made you laugh. Do you think that comic films appealed?

AL: Yes, I think they did.

MC: Mhm.

AL: A good comic. Yes, a good comic.

JC: I think they were popular. The Laurel and Hardy and those eh, comics. They were popular. And another thing about the comic films, they didn't run long like a lot of these. They probably only lasted about three quarters of an hour. Or an hour. They didn't run an hour and a half.

AL: Oh yeah.

JC: Like the other classical films.

MC: Mhm.

JC: [coughs] Yes.

VB: I think I've got one of Laurel and Hardy here as well.

JC: Interesting.

MC: Laurel and Hardy?

VB: Yeah.

MC: Oh yes.

VB: Erm, I'm not sure what film that's from.

JC: Oh, they made so many didn't they?

MC: [laughs] They were good though weren't they?

JC: They were good. Because they had the reputation as... [tape cuts out]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

JC: [starts mid conversation] Living in Bolton and it was threepence to go to this cinema where they played the piano. There was Charlie Chaplin films came there.

MC: Mhm.

JC: Did you see any Charlie Chaplin films?

AL: Oh yes! We would see Charlie Chaplin films.

MC: Oh, yes.

JC: Would you?

MC: Yes.

AL: Oh, yeah!

JC: I think they were before the thirties weren't they? The Charlie Chaplins.

MC: Oh perhaps before and into the thirties, I would think they would be. Like his later ones.

JC: Yes.

MC: *City Lights*. Was that a later one? I'm sure that would be in the thirties.

JC: Yes. Yes, we saw the original Charlie Chaplins in black and white. And then of course there was the more, they were redone weren't they, some?

VB: Yes.

JC: He'd had some modern one. *Modern Times*.

AL: Of course they were silent, weren't they?

JC: They were silent.

AL: Yeah.

JC: And then he went into the talkies.

MC: Mhm.

JC: And then the general view is that he wanted to go.

VB: Yeah.

JC: When he went into the talkies--

VB: Yeah.

JC: They weren't as good, classic eh, technical and everything.

VB: Yeah.

MC: Mhm.

JC: I think that's the general view of Chaplin but eh, oh yes, eh, they we never missed. And they were short, too.

AL: Oh were they?

JC: They were only about half an hour!

AL: Oh, I don't think so.

JC: I don't think they went all the way through. A big performance. I can't remember the details.

VB: I mean you mentioned *City Lights* there. I've got a vague memory of *City Lights*.

JC: *City Lights*.

VB: What was the storyline?

JC: *City Lights*. Now, eh, *City Lights*. Wait a minute. Eh, *City Lights*. I did see it. [pause 2 seconds] It came after *Modern Times* I think. It was a later one than that.

AL: I can't remember now. I can't remember a thing about it.

JC: Now, *City Lights*. Ssss, no, I can remember very little in it. I remember more of *Modern Times* than *City Lights*.

VB: Yeah.

JC: Yeah. Because *Modern Times* was about industry.

VB: Ah.

JC: And it was about eh, *Modern Times* had a theme running through it, about, eh, a social theme, about industry. Eh, industry imposing itself on people. People being dominated by industry.

AL: By work.

JC: By work. By conditioning them.

MC: Mhm.

JC: For instance, little thing like this, which I've always remembered in *Modern Times*. That, mass production, you know--

AL: Mhm.

JC: Was coming in. Time and motion study. Eh, time and motion study which was foreign to the previous working practices which were craft practices.

AL: Mhm.

JC: And then this time and motion study came in. And also mass production on the conveyor belt system. And he exploited that in the film.

AL: Oh yeah.

JC: That was the social theme going through. One instance I remember, eh, Charlie Chaplin. He was at this conveyor belt. And his job was to tighten two nuts up. Eh, this piece came [laughs softly] and, tighten it up. And then another one came and, and he tightened those up. You see. And that's what he was doing all day. And then, the buzzer went and his shift finished. And then he went home, you know, Charlie Chaplin. And all the way home he was like this [mimicking action of tightening nuts].

VB: [laughs]

MC: [laughs]

AL: [laughs]

JC: All the way home. Walking like this... [pause; demonstrates; bursts out laughing]

[general laughter]

JC: And it was a masterly little thing that.

VB: Aw!

JC: And that had a social theme running through it.

MC: Yeah.

JC: And *City Lights*, I can't remember.

MC: No. Another one was *The Gold Rush*.

JC: Oh that was the old silent.

MC: Was that a silent?

JC: Oh, that was the old black-and-white style, *The Gold Rush*.

MC: Yeah.

JC: The ones we're talking about,

MC: Mhm.

JC: They were in colour.

MC: Ah.

JC: And I think they all had a bit of a social theme. Eh, whereas the others were just entertainment, in a way.

MC: Mhm.

JC: They were black and white, weren't they? *Shoulder Arms* and all those.

VB: What sort of qualities do you think Charlie Chaplin had, that made him so funny?

MC: Eh--

JC: I think there were two things. I think it was the clown aspect, of a clown that people saw in the circuses. Just a clown, a clown, plus, like Tony Hancock, he touched a little, he touched a little nerve, of human behaviour in all his films.

MC: Mhm.

JC: He touched something, like Tony Hancock did, in his programmes. It was something that we all experienced. A kind of universal thing, that everybody knew about. And he just touched that I think, in his, in his things. As well as the clown aspect.

MC: I mean, his, his dress and his, you know, stick.

JC: Yeah.

MC: And his feet.

JC: Yeah.

MC: And all clownish.

JC: Oh yes. That's right. Yes.

MC: I just remembered, my brother's friend, he was quite a clown. And eh, he [laughs] cut a piece out of his mother's black fur coat and made a little moustache.

VB: [laughs]

MC: An he had a little [inaudible]. Do you remember?

AL: Yes, I remember that.

JC: Who was this, Marion?

MC: Bill [surname redacted]. Bill [surname redacted].

JC: Oh. A friend of yours.

MC: A friend of Jim's. A friend of Jim.

JC: That's right.

MC: And he'd put it on and he had a little cane.

AL: Yes.

MC: He had a cane and he would come in and [whizzle?] it round.

VB: [laughs]

MC: Be Charlie Chaplin, wouldn't he?

MC: Yes.

JC: Yes. [laughs]

AL: So that made you laugh.

MC: Yeah.

AL: It was different. It was something you hadn't seen before that.

MC: Different acting.

AL: That style. Acting. Not what he was saying so much--

JC: But eh, he also had that touch of some little erm--

MC: A quirk.

JC: Quirk of human nature.

AL: Yeah.

JC: That everybody recognised--

MC: Mhm.

JC: In those early films.

MC: Mhm.

JC: Eh, [pause 2 seconds] like *The Gold Rush*. And like the eh, [pause 2 seconds] the eh, the greediness of trying to find a plot you know, to do with the gold and all that. And then eh, rushing to get the best place and all that--

MC: Mhm.

JC: To get there. Get his pan and the gold and all that. He touched something like, like Hancock did, didn't he?

MC: Mhm.

JC: Tony Hancock. He was a bit of a clown as well was Hancock.

MC: Mhm.

JC: Not nowhere near the clown of Charlie Chaplin really. I would say Charlie Chaplin was the greatest of them all. Eh, the greatest eh, film personality. [pause 2 seconds] I would think so.

MC: Mhm.

JC: I wouldn't say [inaudible], I would think so. From what I've seen. Now shall we have a bit of something to eat? We can talk over the meal.

VB: **That would be lovely. Yes.**

JC: Unless you want to record something else.

VB: Erm--

JC: Have some quick questions if you like.

VB: **Well, I think I'm about ready for a break. [laughs]**

[general agreement]

[End of interview]