

Disclaimer: This interview was conducted in 1995 and concerns memories of 1930s life; as such there may be opinions expressed or words used that do not meet today's norms and expectations.

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* Lowestoft, Suffolk, 18 October 1995: Valentina Bold interviews Peggy Kent, Hilda Green, Hilda Catchpole, Barbara Harvey, Gladys Kent

* Transcribed by Valentina Bold/Standardised by Julia McDowell

* PK=Peggy Kent/ HG=Hilda Green/ HC=Hilda Catchpole/ BH=Barbara Harvey/ GK=Gladys Kent/ VB=Valentina Bold

* Notes: First interview of two with Peggy Kent, Hilda Green, Hilda Catchpole, Barbara Harvey, Gladys Kent; Sound Quality: Good; 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]

[VB tape introduction]

[background discussion; laughter; setting up mike]

VB: Nothing that'll get you into trouble!

PK: It's too late now, isn't it!

VB: I wonder if there's, if there could be something I could maybe clip this on, eh--

PK: What can you do, darling?

VB: Could I clip this [the microphone] onto something?

PK: Yeah, you do whatever you want to do, dear!

VB: **Could I maybe use this little table?**

PK: Yes, you could use the little table, that's right, that's right, and I'll lift that.

VB: **And then, I'll put it in the centre of the room and then it'll--**

HG: And then everybody can--

VB: **It'll pick us all up. That's great.**

PK: [overtalking; inaudible] [and Barbara?] They've got to catch a bus. They should be coming along so that's good. They rang to say--

HG: Where do they live?

PK: On [Warrender Road?]

[inaudible; overtalking]

HC: Round by Gorleston Road?

PK: Yes off that way, yeah. Is it switched on?

VB: **Yes, I've got it on now.**

PK: I'm sorry, aw [inaudible]. You start, with the cinemas.

HG: Well, I think there was a cinema in South Lowestoft which we called Pakefield, that's many years ago. The next one which I remember which is still an old cinema is the Ideal cinema, Norwich.

PK: That was, that was the oldest one, wasn't it?

HG: The Ideal, yes.

HC: Dickie Bird's cinema. Dickie Bird ran that.

HG: What, Pakefield?

PK: No, the Ideal.

HC: The Ideal.

PK: The Ideal, yes.

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: Mhm, and what about the old Cosy Corner?

HC: The Cosy Corner, yes.

PK: The Cosy Corner, at the top of the town.

HG: The Cosy Corner started and then it ran several years under the Cosy Corner, didn't it, and then it was changed to another name, called Regent. Regent Cinema.

PK: I can't remember that one, Hilda.

HC: I can, yeah.

HG: Can you?

HC: Yeah.

HG: Then we had the Grand cinema in London Road South.

PK: South.

HC: Mhm.

HG: The Playhouse cinema in London Road South.

HC: South, yes.

HG: The Palace, London Road South.

PK: South.

HG: Hippodrome, Battery Green.

PK: You worked there, didn't you, for a while?

HG: Yes. I did.

PK: With Max Bygraves!

HG: Yes, that's right. And we got to know him very well, actually.

PK: You looked after his children, didn't you? I remember that, yeah.

HG: And, erm, then we had the--

PK: The Marina.

HG: And the Odeon.

PK: The Odeon.

HG: And Marina cinemas. So we were well-equipped really for the erm, life we had.

HC: Yes.

VB: Mhm.

PK: And that was mostly, there used to be one, it, it just used to be weekdays at one time, didn't it, just the cinema?

HC: Oh yes.

PK: And then it came on Sundays.

HC: Yes.

PK: Theatre Sundays, that was bands, big bands.

HC: Big bands at the Odeon.

PK: That's right, all the big bands used to come down, Harry Roy.

HC: Yes.

PK: Roy Fox.

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: [Mat Dinello?] Henry Hall.

HG: Henry?

PK: Yeah. Who else used to come down. Henry Hall, Roy Fox.

HC: Max Jaffa I [with emphasis] went to see.

PK: Oh, Max Jaffa, yes. Harry Davidson.

HG: At the Grand cinema they were the first one that had the talkies, that used to be silent films.

PK: That's right.

HG: And they had.

PK: Can you remember the first film that you saw?

HG: Yes, but I, it was--

PK: It was a Christian one, I believe, or was it Al Jolson?

HG: No, Al Jolson.

PK: Al Jolson, it was.

HC: [The] *Singing Fool*?

PK: Eh, no, 'Sonny Boy', he sung in.

HC: Yes, that's right, he did, Hilda [inaudible; overtalking].

PK: Yes.

HG: I don't know what it was called though.

PK: Weren't it called *The Singing Fool*?

HG: No, it couldn't have been.

HC: No, I didn't think it was *The Singing Fool*.

HG: No.

HC: But that was the first film that was.

PK: Did you remember they used to always have at the Grand cinema at Easter the religious ones.

HC: They did. [pause 1 second] They did.

PK: Can you remember what they were called?

HC: Good Friday there was.

HG: There was *Ben-Hur*. [referring to *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*]

HC: Yes.

PK: Yes. The one where they put the Christians all to the lions.

HG: That was *Ben-Hur*.

HC: I hated it!

PK: [laughs] That is the [inaudible; laughter]. I don't like cruelty.

HG: That was before the World War that was, wasn't it?

HC: What?

HG: When the Christian films were on at the Marina cinema, that was the--

HC: That's right.

HG: That was the only one that did. And then the Odeon when that was built, we used to have them there.

PK: 'Cause they never, the cinemas didn't used to open did they, before, on a Good Friday?

HG: No, no.

PK: That was the, the religious films. But they were really good, weren't they?

HG: Oh they were, they were very nice.

PK: What was the one where Moses parted the Red Sea?

HC: Oh yes!

PK: [laughs]

HG: It was the--

PK: *The Ten Commandments!*

HC: Oh yes!

HG: My God, my brain's isn't working!

[general laughter]

PK: *The Ten Commandments*, that's right.

[general laughter]

PK: Erm, [whispers] what else have we got to think about now?

VB: 'Cause I was interested when you said that long list of cinemas just now. Did you have any favourites?

PK: The Odeon, because that was the, the newest one--

HC: The Odeon was beautiful, a beautiful, theatre. They should never have took it down, it was ridiculous--

HG: Yes, yes, never.

PK: It was the, it was the atmosphere of, of going into the, into a cinema, it was, it wasn't it? It smelt lovely. Hilda'd got memories before--I didn't realise this--she's got memories of the old cinema that, that, that the fella I married used to work up there, and she can remember him, going round with the squirter and squirting the perfume! [laughs]

HG: You [inaudible].

HC: Who're you talking about, are you talking about George?

HG: George.

PK: George. Like I said George that married me.

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: George who I married. She said, Hilda said, "I can remember your George"--

HG: Yes, yes.

PK: She said--

HG: He'd used to put the music on, and if he wanted to be in a hurry, he'd put it on right quick and all the children used to run out, and then perhaps another Saturday that'd be, he'd got plenty of time, and that would be slow dance!

HG: That's right!

HC: So you always got them going round, and there used to be gallons of this.

PK: It was ['June'?] perfume. 'June' perfume. George used to tell my mother that the lady that used to play the piano in front on the Saturday she used to have to wear her rubber boots because [laughs] the children all used to wee! [laughs]

[general laughter]

VB: That's made up, **isn't** it!

PK: [laughs] My mother used to tell us! And he said he used to take some of this perfume home! And his mother used to absolutely reek of it! [laughs]

HG: Yes. [laughs]

HC: Dear, oh dear!

PK: I didn't know, I didn't know that though, Hilda, that you knew George before then.

HG: Oh yes I did, yes, I did know George before then.

PK: I didn't realise that.

HC: Mhm.

HG: I knew him as a fairly young lad.

HC: Yes.

HG: I should think thirteen.

PK: He used to wear a bowler hat, he told me, and a white silk scarf!

HC: I couldn't imagine that!

VB: Can I, can I ask, if it's not too rude.

PK: That's all right.

VB: What year everyone was born in, just so I can--

PK: I'm 1920.

VB: 1920.

HG: I'm 1919 and you're before that.

HC: I'm 1916!

VB: Really!

PK: She doesn't look it, does she?

VB: Not at all, no.

HC: Yes, I shall be eighty in January. That's disgusting, isn't it?

PK: You were the first person I went to work with.

HC: I'll be eighty in January, isn't that dreadful?

PK: No, not really Hilda, I see how well you are.

HC: Yeah, well my top half's twenty-one! [laughs] It's just my bottom half's a hundred and one!

VB: [laughs]

PK: We've got to be very thankful, haven't we, that we... [general assent] But then there was also the bands that used to come on the South Pier, didn't they?

HC: Yes, they used to have, do you remember [Palm Court Orchestra?] on a Sunday night that used to play?

PK: That used to be lovely, didn't they?

HG: Yeah, beautiful.

HC: Lovely, we used to have some real good times, didn't we?

PK: And who was it, the accordion band that used to come on, Hilda?

HC: Yes, they all used to come, didn't they?

PK: I remember Harry Davidson coming.

HC: Mhm.

PK: Then who, what was the band that, I can remember what all the fellas used to wear, where they all used to wear these nice, grey tailored suits?

HC: Suits, yes.

PK: With red ties.

HC: Red ties. Yes.

PK: Well of course people, eh, sort of bands and that, used to dress really immaculate, didn't they?

HC: That's right.

PK: So did we!

HG: Yes.

HC: Oh yes we did.

PK: Yes.

HG: We did.

PK: Definitely. Well, as we were saying, the special Sunday nights, when you had the big bands you had to book your seats because the, the whole cinema used to be full. They even used to be sitting down the aisles for people who didn't book the seats, and standing at the back.

HC: Mhm.

PK: But we used to wait till everybody was seated, and we'd book our seats about two rows from the front, didn't we! [laughs] But three minutes to eight we'd make our entrance.

HC: We'd walk the whole length of the cinema and that curtain never got up, went up until we sat down at the front!

[general laughter]

PK: 'Cause we were known, weren't we?

[general laughter]

PK: We always went by coasting!

HG: 'Cause some people liked us, there was a lot disliked us but some people liked us. [pause 1 second]

PK: We were all very smart and [d?].

HC: That's right.

PK: The funny thing was, you know we used to go dancing on the South Pier, they had an open dance place and they had the band in this pavilion and then there was this big dance, there was this nice big pavilion there where all these fellas used to stand on these balconies, didn't they?

HC: Mhm.

PK: And, erm, the chappie who was at the desk, he used to see us coming, didn't he?

HC: Yeah.

PK: "Come on, girls," he said, "I'll let you in for half price".

HC: That's right.

PK: 'Cause he knew the fellas would all follow and then, so we used to say, "Let us in for nothing then we'll come in!"

HC: [laughs]

PK: And then the, the sequel to this was, my daughter was now about ten years old and she was in, erm, she used to go to a dancing school, and they were putting on this play at the Sparrows Nest [local park and entertainment complex]. And I was up there helping, like a wardrobe mistress and we were moving, they were moving, these chappies right, they were moving all the scenery, you see, and every time this sort of chappie, he kept looking at me, and he said, "I know you" and I was, "I know you" and I mean, after several days went by all of a sudden he looked at me and he said, "Let you in at half price if you start off the floor!"

[general laughter]

PK: And I said, "If you let us in for nothing then we will!"

[general laughter]

PK: It was strange! And so of course we used to get on and all the others would follow on, wouldn't they? The chappies would all come down then, which was good--

HC: Yes, [Frank and I?].

PK: When did you go away, Hilda, it was the beginning of the war, weren't it? You went away--

HC: I, yes--

PK: We went nursing didn't we?

HG: We did do nursing, yes.

[general laughter]

PK: We volunteered, didn't we, to do nursing?

HG: Yes, we volunteered, we were going to drive the ambulances at first.

PK: There were only two things we could do, was go into the country and to be evacuated with children, or be a nurse.

HG: Yes.

PK: So we said we'd--

HC: Did we have a choice?

PK: I think we had a choice, then.

HC: We weren't--

PK: They weren't drafting anybody, were they, it was just that we had the choice.

HG: Yes.

PK: So we said that we didn't want to go in the country, we'd be nurses.

HC: I first went to the old workhouse, weren't they?

PK: You went to the workhouse.

HC: What did they call that?

HG: [Lothingland?] Hospital.

HC: [Lothingland?], that's right, thank you.

HC: Thank you dear, yes.

PK: How did we get separated then?

HG: I went to [inaudible].

HC: Yes, but I went to Shrewsbury.

PK: They, they sent you away to the factory, didn't they, you were a nurse in the factory, weren't you?

HC: No, I went to hospital.

PK: You went into the hospital.

HC: [Hawthorne?] Hospital in Shrewsbury.

PK: I thought you were a nurse in the factory, now you went down--

HC: After the war, when I went up--

HG: I went down to Weymouth.

PK: You went down to Weymouth, that's right.

HG: Yeah.

PK: That's right, Hilda, yes.

HG: Yes, yes, and was sort of cancelled everything out, didn't it?

HC: It did, it spoiled everything really, didn't it?

PK: Yes, it did. And Eileen, who was with me, I rang her and she... [discussion of Eileen who still lives in Saxon road, she would have come but said she couldn't get her words out; PK re arrangements, said HC was getting a taxi but she didn't, as her family arrange everything for her!] [laughs] Anything else dear?

VB: Erm, well I was interested because you were telling me on the phone about how you used to, erm, get ideas about clothes from--

PK: Oh yes.

HC: Yes.

VB: And hairstyles from the films.

PK: We did, didn't we, get ideas from the pictures about what we were going to wear.

HC: Wear.

PK: And how we did our hair.

HC: We did our hair.

PK: Well especially our hair.

HC: Especially our hair.

PK: Now Hilda would do, eh, all the pipe cleaners, now how many you put in in a Saturday afternoon?

HG: Oh I've put in as many as a hundred and twenty pipe-cleaners--

PK: [laughs]

HG: To have all the curls, you know, in my hair.

PK: [laughs]

HG: And then on top of that I put a wreath of roses.

HK: Roses!

HG: At the back, wouldn't I?

VB: Gosh.

PK: 'Cause you see we wore long evening dresses.

HG: Oh.

PK: Not all the time but, eh, 'cause we used to go to the hops.

HG: Mhm.

PK: There was a dance on every night, you see? So, we would dress up and go to the different... But when they had the [tailored?] dances.

HG: We used to share clothes, didn't we?

PK: That's right.

HG: 'Cause your mum used to help me with mine.

PK: Yes.

HG: 'Cause I couldn't afford a dressmaker because my mother was a bit poor, we were a bit hard up.

HC: We were all hard up at that time.

PK: But my mum could sew.

HG: Your mum could sew so she--

HC: I **could** sew and make dresses, I used to make dresses.

PK: **Yeah**, I know you did Hilda, you were pretty good.

HC: I used to [earn?] mine, I can't thread a needle now.

HG: Oh, Hilda! [laughs]

PK: She's, it's arthritis.

HC: Yeh, arm went longer! [laughs]

PK: And we used to do, that's right, then we got these hair braids, didn't we, these false hair braids we had.

HC: Braids.

PK: And we used to put them on our hair.

HC: That's right.

HG: Yeah.

PK: And we had them on, you know, because somebody had them on the cinema. And then, erm, the dresses, you would definitely, whatever they wore on, on the cinema, we dressed like it, didn't we?

HG: If we saw a style of hairdressing, or clothes, in a film, and we liked it--

PK: Yes.

HC: The four of us would be out the next weekend wearing that style.

PK: That's right.

HG: With our hairs done and whatever we'd made. We had dresses, up the, well we had, erm, I've got a blue dress. [inaudible; overtalking] Right long to my ankles, and then I've had them a bit shorter. I mean we kept with style--

PK: All the time.

HG: Although we were pretty hard up because we **didn't** earn much money.

PK: No.

HG: And once we'd paid our mothers there was a very little left. I mean if we were going to the Odeon on a **Sat**-, on a Sunday, we'd go to the dance Saturday, Odeon Sunday, we had no more money till Friday when we got paid, probably mother would lend us sixpence.

PK: [giggles]

HG: To go to, to go, to the dance with but, you know, if you wanted to, like buy stockings say, silk stockings, Woolworth's was the best value.

PK: Best value.

HG: We used to get a pair for sixpence there. Yes. But erm, if, now, one of us were going to a dance and, eh, especially during the war years and if they hadn't got stockings to go in well we'd bring our bundle of stockings and match them up, wouldn't we Peggy?

PK: That's right.

HG: We'd match them in strong teal and--

PK: Yeah.

HG: That's a colour. We used to save all our odd ones, if one got a hole in we'd have to get rid of it.

[general laughter]

HG: And then we'd have a bundle of the others and then we'd bring them to whoever was going out, or if we were going to a dance we'd probably lend somebody our dress to go in.

PK: I was going to say about the dress.

HG: Yes, and, and all those sort of things we, we helped--

PK: Each other.

HG: If we had a date we helped each other, made you up especially because we couldn't afford.

PK: You couldn't buy make up then.

HG: And we really said, we--

HC: The thing you haven't remembered is, when Marjorie [surname redacted] went out in her coat mantle.

[general laughter]

HC: And it was all pinned up!

PK: We were all going to make her this white coat, you see, 'cause we saw one on the film but I was fortunate, as I said, 'cause my mum made my things.

PK: Yeah.

HC: [laughs]

PK: And we used to, we used to meet at the station and, eh, we got there first, now Lena used to call for me and then Hilda used to, and we'd always be waiting for Marjorie [surname redacted].

HC: Yes, that's right.

PK: And then she comes, very tall, smart young woman. Very good-looking girl, wasn't she?

HC: Yes.

PK: A short--

HC: A real madam, a real madam.

PK: Yeah, long skirt, and she came up and "Oh my god she's got her white coat on!" And she came up, "Don't anybody touch me, don't anybody touch me," she said, "because my sleeves are only tacked in," she said--

HC: Tacked in.

PK: Tacked in, she said, "I haven't had time to sew it up properly so **don't** get hold of my arm anyone!"

HC: [laughs]

PK: Don't nobody touch me anywhere!

[inaudible; laughter; overtalking]

PK: She was like that, and I remember going to one dance at [Wallace?] and I think I was three, I lent three girls a dance dress, as I was a bit, I was fortunate 'cause, as I say, mother made them, and I remember I then started courting and George said, "I don't know which one to dance with!"

[general laughter]

HG: 'Cause he was a dancer. It was a lovely atmosphere, wasn't it, Hilda, in the laundry that we all helped each other?

HC: We were all girls, yeah.

PK: Helped each other.

HC: 'Cause we worked in the laundry you see.

HG: We all worked in this laundry and we were all good friends, and, we all shared everything and Sundays we'd go out Corton Beach for the day.

HC: Yes.

HG: We only used to go because Hilda was sweet on a man up there and we--

[general laughter]

HC: [Damn sauce?]. [inaudible; overtalking; laughter]

PK: Yes but the thing that we're not going to talk about is--

HG: Yes.

PK: That he was courting.

HG: Yeah.

PK: And he used to meet her after he took the other one home! [giggles]

HC: I wasn't going to talk about that!

[inaudible; general laughter]

HC: How could he have been like that? I'd have killed my husband if he'd have done that!

[general laughter]

PK: Yes, we were very much--

HG: Yes.

PK: Influenced in what we saw.

HG: That's right, yes.

HC: Oh yeah.

PK: Mhm, and when we were in the laundry we then seen Alice Faye in... 'Boa Noite' [song from *That Night in Rio*] with Carmen Miranda?

HG: Oh yes, and all their hair.

PK: And somebody sent in, 'cause we worked in the laundry, somebody sent in this blue chiffon scarf and I've got it draped around my head.

HC: Mhm.

PK: And I've got it slung over my shoulders, somebody else's got it and I was going across the [pause 1 second] room like that [gestures] and I walked, Howard come in and--

HG: Howard come in, yeah.

PK: He sent me home.

[general laughter]

PK: Yeah, he said, I got sent home twice when I was there. Once 'cause I put on those big corsets and couldn't get 'em off!

[general laughter]

PK: And he sent me home and my mother said, "What're you home for?" I said, "Because I got sent home." She said, "Why?" I said, "Because I got this woman's corsets on!" [laughs raucously] Couldn't get them off!

[general laughter]

PK: And the, [laughing] the other one was, the other time was I had somebody's lace curtain on and I was a bride!

HC: Bride, yes.

PK: Oh it was great fun, we used to have down there.

HG: I think one of the funniest things of all that I can remember too, was when, the men used to come and meet us at eight o'clock on... [pause 3 seconds] Thursday nights to go down dancing.

PK: Yeah.

HG: 'Cause we used to work till eight o'clock.

HC: That's right.

HG: They used to come and meet us by Boots, and we all used to go one at a time.

PK: [laughs]

HG: Outside to the toilets and make up, didn't we?

PK: [laughing] That's right!

HG: Without the manageress seeing us!

PK: [laughs]

HG: So she come down here, there, one day and we'd all finished, and we were all working away in the packing department, and she said, "Oh," she says, "what a smell of oranges!" And we'd all been to make up so our, our makeup couldn't have smelt very good!

[general laughter]

PK: What about Mary?

HG: Yes, yeah.

PK: We used to start doing our hair in the afternoon and doing it up so we'd look nice for the evening.

HG: How many times did we have our hair done during the day, I wonder.

HC: I can't think, fiddling about.

HG: Fiddling about.

PK: Having curlers, you know these long piece curlers stacked up [underneath our hair?]

HC: That's right.

HG: Daren't let the manageress see it though.

PK: Who was it they went, somebody had this, I remember going to the pictures she had this big blonde streak so we had a saucer of hydrogen peroxide.

HC: Yeah! [laughs] That's right.

PK: And we all had a blonde streak, didn't we!

[general laughter]

PK: We put a bit of cotton wool in it and any time I went by I picked up the cotton wool and went like this! [imitates pulling wool through hair] you see?

HG: [laughs]

PK: So I was getting my blonde streak! My mother said to me, "Your hair has gone a funny colour."

HG: [laughs]

PK: I said, "That's the sun, mother!"

[general laughter]

PK: And then we had, who was it, the film star that who had this row of kiss curls? So we mixed up sugar and water.

HG: That sticky--

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: That was awful, it went all sticky and then--

HC: I know.

HG: Yes.

PK: And you can get the curls you see and twist them round and when the wind blew it'd lift them up and put them down again! [laughs]

HC: I remember I dyed my hair once and that went blonde like that and we got--

PK: Dyed hair! We used to dye our hair.

HG: We had every colour under the sun!

PK: I think that's why I'm white now! [laughs]

HC: Is that natural white or have you dyed it?

VB: [laughs]

PK: No that is natural, that is natural that, that is natural.

[discussion of when PK stopped dyeing her hair went grey natural; HC's hair has gone grey, HG says HC's hair has a lot of dark in it, PK says HC's hair was blonder in youth, HC was naturally blonde but still hasn't gone grey, HG has 'help', where she washes her hair grey round there, but not grey yet (although her teeth are falling out!); great hilarity.]

PK: Another thing was the swimsuit, swimwear. [inaudible] still can't see it. What is now the, how they wear the halter, round here, and little shorts, we've got them all!

HC: Yes, we, we'd always had that.

PK: We had a suit and we were always wearing those, weren't we?

HC: Yes. Mine was white.

HG: What was [H?]?

HC: Or off-white, and we used to go in Corton Flats, didn't we?

HG: That's right.

PK: That's right.

HG: That's where we'd go.

HC: And there was a [inaudible].

HG: You've got the photograph, you've got those ones, haven't you?

[inaudible; laughter; overtalking]

PK: But we were as healthy as anyone, I know about.

[inaudible; overtalking]

HG: We all used to meet--

PK: We would all meet, you see.

VB: Aw! [handed photograph]

PK: On the beach, where shall I start? This is, that's Hilda, that's me, going up in height.

VB: Aw, lovely.

HG: We had the most wonderful times, didn't we?

HC: Well we did enjoy ourselves. And they weren't horrible like they are nowadays.

PK: [inaudible; overtalking]

VB: Mhm.

PK: You see that, you have a look.

[inaudible; multiple voices at once]

HG: We used to go nights. Moonlight swimming.

PK: Who was the swimmer?

HG: Esther Williams?

HC: Yes, that's right.

PK: Well we saw her in a film, and she was wearing.

HC: That's right.

PK: And she did all these circles and we thought we would try it out, weren't we?

HC: [laughs]

PK: So we got in the water and we couldn't quite, couldn't take the photographs so we all laid on the beach and did it! [laughs] And the boys stood on each other's shoulders to get the photograph!

HG: Yes!

PK: You see! [laughs]

HG: We had a laugh in them, yes.

PK: There used to be nobody else on this beach where we were as you can see, look. [indicating photograph]

HG: 'Cause we were in the bushes, see.

PK: And when the boys used to, something put. [inaudible].

HG: And then we used to come home after that day out and then go up the seafront, didn't we? On the South Pier--

PK: We always had--

HC: It never ended really.

HG: No, no.

HC: You see the things, the clothes we wore--

PK: Do you remember going on the gunboat?

HG: Yes, I remember that gunboat.

HC: What, 'Renown'?

[inaudible; multiple voices at once]

PK: I saw that about a month ago.

[inaudible; overtalking and showing photographs; HG talking to HC about living friends, they've seen recently, PK, meantime, passing VB photos; PC says Eileen has lost her husband; HC goes out solely with Susan now; HC talks about her sore leg; shingles]

VB: These are great photos, they're smashing.

[general assent]

VB: It sounds like you had so much fun in the--

HG: Oh we did.

HC: We did have, didn't we? A tremendous lot of fun.

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: And didn't do anyone any harm.

HG: And we never got into trouble, any of us, did we?

HC: No.

HG: And we never mixed with the wrong company.

[inaudible; overtalking; laughter]

HG: Told me to be in at ten and I went in at half-past.

PK: We had to be in early, didn't we?

HC: My mother was very strict. I mean there was eight of us, five girls and three boys. And Dad was, well he was in the Navy then.

PK: That's right.

HC: As I was saying, she had to look after us.

PK: 'Course she did.

HG: They all looked after us, that's what they were doing. But we didn't realise this, did we?

PK: We had to be kept in.

HG: And, my mother, the breakfast table was all laid for the next morning as soon as she, couldn't get at me.

PK: [laughs]

HC: Couldn't get at me, 'cause I ran upstairs like a [inaudible].

PK: [laughs]

HC: Got hold of half a can of margarine, threw it across at me, I ducked, and it hit the paper, didn't it? And they'd freshly papered it the day before!

[general laughter]

HG: And you've never seen, I mean they had to get it repapered that was so bad! But--

[inaudible; overtalking]

HG: But she was a good mother.

HC: Well of course they were, they just had to be kept in.

PK: But we did try to keep out late, didn't you, when they had the big dances.

HC: That's right.

PK: When there were two bands at the--

HC: Then you were allowed up later, weren't you?

PK: Yes, yes. I used to say to my mother, "Can I just keep out till the end of the dance?"

HC: Mhm.

PK: So I said, "It takes you half an hour to get your coat." 'Cause we all had a [ball?] cloak, [laughs] half an hour to go up for your coat, another half hour before... [laughs]

HG: We always walked home, didn't we?

PK: Always.

HG: I know one night.

HC: We used to come out the Palais and swim on the way home.

PK: Oh, that's right.

HC: In our pants and bras! [laughs] Lovely. And this would be about midnight. And the water has phosphorus, you know?

HG: You don't see it now, do you?

HC: No, why not!

HG: Because we don't go swimming in the moonlight, do we!

[general laughter]

HC: We don't go swimming midnight, do we! Somebody said that to me the other day 'cause I said it used to be beaut--

PK: On that note, now I will argue that that moon used to come over the sea was beautiful, wasn't it?

HG: It was, it was, you never see it never like that now.

PK: The only time I saw it.

HC: We were young and romantic then!

PK: The only time I saw it I saw a postcard, Hilda.

HC: [laughs]

PK: I saw a postcard or was it one of the tapes of Lowestoft, and it showed you.

HG: The tapes are nice.

PK: The lights of the pier and that big moon.

HG: That's right.

PK: I said "There you are!"

HG: Yeah.

PK: That moon was like that.

HG: It was.

HC: It was though, yeah. That's your age.

HG: Don't you think time and, and, and weather and all that sort of thing are all changed.

PK: But it hung, huge, didn't it, and it hung just over the sea and all that phosphorus used to be on the water.

HC: It was lovely, lovely.

HG: I mean I used to have loads of time when I was young but since I've been older.

PK: Time's passing. [laughs]

HG: I don't have enough hours in the day!

[inaudible; overtalking]

HG: How many times have I looked at the clock, "Quarter-past twelve, you should be in bed!" But I can't go yet, I haven't read the daily paper. I'm really tired, I'm up every morning at quarter-to six.

PK: You're not.

HC: I am!

PK: Oh I get up a little bit later than you.

HC: Are you out of bed?

HG: Out of bed. Get, get moving well I have a lot to do you see, always got someone to look after who's ill. [looking after family and friends, her sister Clarice? who worked in Marks and Spencer for sixty-eight years; brother dead, sister in law died too, lost several family members in the past few years: PK asks VB if found a photograph of football yet]

VB: You were going to tell me about the League of Health and Beauty.

PK: No, I can't think what's it, oh Prunella Stack!

VB: Right! [laughs]

PK: She's Lady Somebody now, isn't she?

VB: Ah.

HG: Who's Prunella Stack?

PK: Used to be, used to call the Lady, the League of Health and Beauty.

HC: That's right, yes.

PK: Used to be up the Sparrows Nest.

HC: Prunella Stack, she stayed in a house where I went in Shrewsbury.

PK: Yes. [looking at photograph], League of Health and Beauty, the Sparrows Nest, yes. She came down, that's her sitting there, she's some lady, she was on television not long ago, she still does all this, you know, I think she writes, writes books now, we had to wear this.

HC: She's got to be getting on too.

VB: What was the League of Health and Beauty?

PK: It was like, I suppose, today's 'Keep Fit'--

VB: Ah! I see.

PK: Where we wore black.

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

PK: It took me ages, I went through all the photographs and got them all in dates.

HC: Did you?

PK: Yeah! and I got them all, all the way through now, all the ones of us sat on the Corton beach.

HC: Strewth!

PK: And that, this one here where we're out to sea, I mean if I thought of, if a child of mine doing that, I'd have died.

HC: [laughs]

PK: This one here [indicating photograph].

HC: Mhm.

PK: Was going, did you come over Lowestoft Bridge?

VB: I didn't, no. I--

PK: Well, it's the bridge that goes out to the North Sea. Going, going to meet the girls up here, going along this bridge.

[inaudible; overtalking; laughter about the North Sea and the river going to the sea: PK tells Hilda to shut up!]

PK: You'd go through the pier head you see, going over to meet this lot up ahead.

HC: [laughs]

PK: And these two, these three fellas were in the boat going out, and they called out, "Peg," [laughs] "do you want, erm, do you want a lift?" Well, I went down these steps which, which are not there now, and got in this boat and went through, out [Killit?] and went through the pier head, right out in the North Sea.

VB: Yeah.

PK: Along to Corton beach, if I thought my girl or one of my grandchildren done that--

HG: Had done that. You'd do it again! Because you didn't feel no fear then at that particular time, 'cause when you're young--

HC: I remember going on the German gunboat, Eileen [surname redacted] and I.

VB: Mhm.

HC: [Was it the one?], was it the German one we went on?

HC: We got right on the ramp to go up on the ship.

PK: Yeah.

HC: And a hand come like that [indicates] on my shoulder and I went "That's Eileen's mother!"

[general laughter]

HC: "You can get off here!" she went, and I looked at her, and she said, "And if your mother saw you"--

[general laughter]

HC: My mother and her mum, they were friends you see, "If your mother could see you," and I'm damned, as soon as our backs went turned she went on the boat herself!

[general laughter]

HC: Eileen said [inaudible]!

PK: Another place we used to go was the Great Eastern, wasn't it?

HG: And the [Alma?].

PK: You could whip round to the Great Eastern 'cause, you're forbidden to go, you're going aren't you!

HC: The dancehalls and that they weren't very apt to--

PK: No, we didn't.

HG: You need places to go!

PK: And now where there's **McDonald's**, used to be at the Suffolk Hotel where that had, it had a very bad name but we weren't allowed there but we still went, didn't we?

HC: We still went.

PK: Just once, just once! Just to see--

[general laughter]

HC: We got found out though, didn't we, always got found out!

HG: Always, never... I remember going to the Railway Club, do you remember the Railway Club?

PK: Yeah?

HG: Going there.

HC: Happen I saw you!

PK: Yes!

HG: Yes, it's true! And I.

[general laughter]

HG: I used to go dancing and I did, I was engaged to Harry, and I was waiting here, he was away, and of course, erm, [pause 1 second] mother would say, "You know what that chaps are apt to be, you're not to go dancing!" so I said, "No, I know but just this once, I won't go any more." And of course my cousins came after me and away we went, and, erm, I looked round the room and there's nobody there who're liable to tell Harry's family, nobody at all, and I walked in and went to pay my money and when I looked at the man at the desk, that was only a relative of Harry's!

PK: [laughs]

HG: Harry's cousin was taking the money. He never told on me, no, he never let, told on me, but, erm, that's just how it used to happen.

HC: That's right.

HG: We used to go because we wanted to go and the nicest thing as I said, not one of us ever landed herself in trouble.

HC: No.

PK: No.

HG: We never did anything wrong. And if we weren't sure of anybody we wouldn't go with them, that's how we were. And of all the times we, when I walked home right from the Palais, eh, which is now Pontin's holiday camp, eh, you know, or Ministry of Fisheries--

PK: The fisheries.

HG: The fisheries, sorry.

PK: That is a shame.

HG: That's right.

PK: You know what I mean.

HG: From there and back and it was all, all nationalities, you remember? Nobody ever stopped me.

PK: They never ever locked cars up was another thing, did they?

HC: No!

PK: The cars in the car park, at half-time you'd go out and sit in somebody's car, wouldn't you?

HG: What about when you go see Solly, see Sid [surname redacted].

[general laughter]

HG: I say, Solly and Sid [surname redacted] had a car, didn't they?

PK: That's right.

HG: And [surname redacted]--

HC: They had a little dinghy--

PK: That's right. When I said to my grandson they had a little dinghy, he says, "What do you mean, gran," I said, "What you call a boat, [inaudible; overtalking] you put it this way and the [dinghy?] goes that.

HG: They got as many in there as you could sit, and it had no top on that!

PK: Wasn't it your cousin had the car?

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: Wasn't it your cousin?

HG: Yeah, he had one.

PK: What was his name?

HG: Cousin John.

PK: Cousin John. What was it he called his car?

HG: Erm.

PK: Was it Elizabeth?

HG: No, no.

PK: We all used to pile in that car.

HG: Yeah, yeah.

PK: I think our heads used to come out the top, didn't they!

[general laughter]

PK: And it, they had, the two skid boards.

HG: They had the special name for that, didn't they?

PK: Yes, I can remember we all used to say, "Here he come, here come John and"--

HG: Yeah.

PK: And you know the one had a car.

HG: We all used to go in there, didn't we?

PK: Yeah.

HG: We used to, "He can come with us dancing."

PK: [laughing] 'Cause he had a car!

[general laughter]

HC: We didn't, we didn't particularly want his company but, eh--

HG: Who was the other car?

PK: He could come with us, couldn't he! [laughs] Oh no, that was. And they always had two bands at the Palais, didn't they?

HG: Oh yes. Always did.

PK: And he, used to [inaudible], they used to do, all the hockey club boys--

HG: All the hockey club boys used to come down.

PK: All, all from over the county, they all had hockey teams, so we used to go up there.

HG: To pitch and play, didn't we?

VB: Mhm.

PK: Watch and play. Choose which one we'd want.

[general laughter]

HG: Yes, and we'd have a fella to take us to the dance at night, wouldn't we?

HC: And who'd, you remember when, when we got up there, they paid for us to go into the stars and we all had full evening dress on.

HG: Full evening long dresses.

PK: When we got there we didn't like it, did we?

HC: No, we didn't like it.

PK: So who did we say'd come to take us. [laughs]

HG: But I was sent to give them their money back.

PK: Take the money back.

HG: And we met some, four other fellas.

PK: Four other fellas.

HG: That we knew. We weren't, we weren't very sure of them because they were foreigners, weren't they?

PK: Yeah, that's right.

HG: Peggy.

HG: And we weren't very sure.

PK: But we didn't want to take advantage--

HG: But we went together and we thought we would probably come to trouble if we--

PK: That's right.

HG: [Lingered?], so we went.

PK: If you went too far with them--

HC: Yes, that's right.

PK: But we weren't going to take advantage, so we'd got to give them their entrance fee back.

HG: We gave them that back.

PK: Said, here. Hilda!

HG: We said, "You take the money back."

PK: You take the money back! So what did you do? She goes across, "Here's your money!"

[general laughter]

HG: And they didn't understand! Understand! Because they were foreigners! They didn't--

PK: Of course you had your roses in your hair, didn't you?

HG: That's right.

PK: Hilda used to have a white gardenia, didn't she?

HC: Yes.

HG: I had pink roses, didn't I?

PK: You had to go, and you used to pull the roses between each hair.

HG: The rose used to have to go right in the middle of each curl, didn't it?

PK: Yeah.

HC: The hours I spent doing that!

PK: We used to spend all Saturday afternoon getting ready to go out Saturday night! [laughing] So we'd look lovely! [laughs]

HC: And we did look lovely!

PK: Well we did. That's what we were saying, and we did dress, didn't we?

HC: Yes.

PK: We dressed nicely.

HC: We weren't at all bad, though I say it myself.

HG: We didn't have much money but we knew how to conduct ourselves.

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: And I said to Hilda, I said I've heard more since I've been older--

HG: Yeah.

PK: Of men who've come up to me and said, [imitates masculine voice] "Oh, when you lot used to go out."

HG: Go out.

PK: "Oh!"

HG: The four.

PK: Oh! He said.

HG: [laughs]

PK: I've heard more. I've said, "I wish you used to tell me this when we were younger, then!"

[general laughter]

HG: One man once said to me, "You don't know who I am, do you?" I said, "No, I'm sorry. I haven't got a clue." This is since Harry's been gone.

PK: Yes.

HG: Where had I gone?

PK: We've each lost our husbands.

HG: To a dinner somewhere. I think I was at [G?] Hall. And he said, "Oh, I remember you as a young girl. And your three friends," he said. "But you were all so smart and nice," he said, "I was afraid to come and ask you out."

PK: I know. 'Cause someone said to me they were frightened to—

HG: We put men off really, didn't' we, because we were choosy, weren't we, and we all did well, we all married well--

PK: And had good husbands, didn't we?

HG: And not one of us had [inaudible; overtalking]. We never had one, not one of us ever split up or anything like that. We were all happy, weren't we?

PK: Good husbands.

HG: So, you know, we were lucky in the end. I mean--

HC: We had one or two nice evenings, didn't we?

HG: We had lovely times.

[inaudible; overtalking; mention of Hilda's wedding and Christmas time?]

HG: I remember when I was married, my twenty-fifth Silver Wedding, you came to ours, and yours, Peggy, we came to yours when you had your fiftieth Golden Wedding, so I mean, we haven't sort of cut ourselves off from each other, although in between we haven't had a lot of time—

PK: We've had spasms, haven't we? We've had spasms.

HC: Well yes, let's just say we don't hang around one another [necks?]. But if we want it, we're there.

PK: But we pick up as if we only saw each other yesterday. [laughs]

HC: That's right, yes.

HG: That's what friends are about. When my grandsons said they'll go and collect one or two friends for our fiftieth, the little rascals were taking bets on which ones was going to last out the longest! "How long you've been friends, granny?" I said, "If you can keep friends for over fifty years, then you'll be lucky". Still have the same friends.

HG: My Harry used to think that was lovely that we were still friends after starting work so young and then, all through our lives, he used to think that was lovely. He loved my friends, Harry did, you know.

PK: Yes.

HG: Spoke very well of them, and really--

PK: I mean the laundry girls were lovely. We used to take, two of us, there's nothing to do with it, what you're on, is it, but we used to take two of us to, we used to take a bread and butter cheese sandwich, you see--

HC: [giggles]

PK: Down the laundry. And there used to be the ironers, they had big gas irons, you see, and they used to be ironing a shirt, and these big white coats and, erm, I was only a young kid, so I had to keep cave [vigilant] and wait, watch from the boss to come out from his office, they used to get these slices of bread and they used to iron erm, to do their toasted cheese!

HG: Cheese! Their toasted cheese! [laughs]

HC: And you've never eaten anything till you ate that!

PK: And they were good! And they, they, if I saw the boss's head rise, 'cause he had a lace curtain there, "Psst!" That was the noise, that was the noise.

HC: Yeah, that was the noise, yeah.

HG: That the machines made!

PK: So everybody's cook, used to cover over the cheese and they'd put it down!

[all laugh uproariously]

PK: And then Hilda and I, we, we, we had a little room, didn't we, Hilda, along with that.

HC: Yeah!

PK: And that had radiators in it with, with erm slats across where, where was the drying room, now we used to put our bread and cheese between this, these erm slats.

HC: Yes, toasted lovely, didn't it?

PK: It was a metal radiator and the butter used to run and the cheese used to run.

HC: The cheese used to run!

[general laughter]

PK: And that meant you eat it too hot! That way you liked it!

[all laugh uproariously]

PK: I got the kettle on look, all these things!

[PK offers coffee and tea around; general discussion about preferences]

HC: I've been wondering have you come down from Scotland?

VB: Mhm.

HC: For this?

HG: Have you?

VB: Yes!

[PK returns with coffee and tea, serving it round, out again to prepare food]

HG: Is this the work you do? This sort of research work?

VB: Yes.

HG: And, and, how do you get in touch with here?

HC: What give you the idea of Lowestoft?

VB: Well, we're doing the project, erm, throughout Britain, actually.

HC: Throughout Britain, yes.

VB: Eh, we've got four areas that we're looking at, erm, Glasgow because we're based in Glasgow, eh, Manchester, North London and East Anglia, generally.

HG: 'Cause we're the most easterly place in Great Britain.

HC: Mhm.

HG: So I suppose you've come, and then you wrote in a magazine, or a letter?

VB: That's right, we had some coverage in the paper.

HG: Mhm.

HC: In the paper, yes. Peggy answered it, saw it and answered it.

VB: Yeah.

HG: I see.

HC: Mhm.

HG: I didn't even see it, I probably wouldn't be, I don't read very many newspapers.

VB: It's easy to miss that sort of thing anyway, erm, but I'm very glad she did reply.

HC: Mhm.

VB: 'Cause it's really great getting to meet you all.

HG: This is very interesting work but it means you've got a lot of travelling, do you? Do you go by road, do you?

[VB explains gets a train usually but is a lot of travelling; HG asks if going back tomorrow; VB explains just from Ipswich, in Lowestoft for a week and then off to Norwich for a week; HG thinks more to find in Norwich, HC points out library up in smoke! discuss local appeal to give local books to replace in the library; HC has an old almanac of fishing trawlers from about 1890, prices give a great carry on; PK returns to hear the conversation again]

HG: You see, my dad started going to sea when he was twelve years old, and my grandfather and great-grandfather—

PK: That's right.

HG: It goes back a long way. And erm, 'course my brothers too, 'cause my brother [Leyman?], eldest brother went to sea,

PK: That's right, I remember them going. I was so pleased to see your brother, have you seen 'Lowestoft at War', Hilda, the tele—

HG: Well, Harry's—

PK: Harry's on that, I nearly jumped—

HG: Because of course, you see, when they had that bomb [inaudible; overtalking]--

HC: Your Harry's on--

HG: Yeah, brother Harry.

HC: Your brother Harry.

HG: 'Cause when you see, when he erm, when the Imperial was hit, he was going down those steps—

PK: That's right.

HG: It was near the men's toilet, and that got a direct hit, so the, there was twelve in the—

PK: I didn't realise he went through so much there, Hilda.

HG: [inaudible; overtalking].

PK: It was horrific, weren't it?

HG: Yes, it was dreadful. And there was thirteen people, men in there, actually, when they took the bodies out, they'd got twelve, they brought twelve out, but he was lucky he was going down, no he was coming up when the others were going down—

PK: That's right.

HG: So he was nearly out when that had a direct hit. And of course they had to dig for him, and those people down below, if it hadn't been a water place, they would have been saved, but you see the water mains burst so they got drowned--

PK: So he held his head, didn't he? Did he hold somebody's head or did somebody hold his head?

HG: No, he held the chap underneath him, blown underneath him, a young naval boy—

PK: That's right, yeah.

HG: And erm, and he said he, he held his head because he couldn't move [apart?], you know all the debris was on top, but there was a little way where he could get his hand [inaudible; overtalking], this boy what was dying said "Say the Lord's prayer with me because I'm dying." And when they took him out, after Harry, Harry said his legs had all been blown off so he was in a terrible state.

HC: Oh dear.

PK: I didn't realise that was so bad as that. I remember all that happening, but--

HG: [inaudible; overtalking] you knew all about that then, 'course it was in the wartime, and we didn't, you know, and we never saw--

HC: I wasn't here, not then.

PK: [inaudible; overtalking] [on the TV that said?] things didn't go through to you, you were young and you couldn't, I remember going up the dance, at the Palais and all the lights going out, and we, and they lit candles, and I, coming home, and my mother was down the dugout. First thing mother said was there'd been five, and I didn't realise till I see it on that 'Lowestoft at War' that five [dornies?] had come and machine-gunned Lowestoft and dropped bombs. All the lights went out and everything, she said "All the lights have been out. They've been dropping bombs! Where have you been?" I said, "Dancing." [laughs]

HG: Well, you had no alternative, did you?

HC: Yeah, you're talking about [loss of war?] on there?

PK: On the tape. The boys have always bought George all the books of Lowestoft at war and all the tapes--

HC: I've got books, I don't know if we've got--

PK: And the last one we bought George just before he died was 'Lowestoft at War' and erm, we never ever played that, and I only played that this, this year--

HG: That was the one with John [Easters?], wasn't it?

PK: That's right. All the books are there of Lowestoft at war and all the tapes.

HG: Mhm.

PK: 'Cause George liked, in one of the books was where he used to live, up—

HC: Where George lived?

PK: Yeah. 'Course it's all gone now, hasn't it?

HG: Terrible experience, really. When you saw all that, because, eh, you see, a cousin of mine said that where they saw Harry last thing and he hadn't come home, it was about two o'clock in the morning, I'm running round the town and I finish up at Lowestoft Hospital and it was absolutely chaos in there that night—

HC: I bet it was.

HG: And little Mr Jude, do you remember Mr Jude who had his head on one side, little dark man, and he used to belong to the Red Cross, didn't he? And he erm, he came up to me and said "Ooh," he said, "Whatever's the matter?" He said, "Are you hurt?" "No," I said, "but I think my brother might be in here somewhere." And when he took me into the men's ward, he said, "Come and have a look." I have never seen, Hilda, so much chaos and so many beds and men, men laying all on the floor. It was a terrible sight. And I walk, and I thought, "Well, who's that in that corner bed?" And I walked there and that was my brother there. And he says on this tape that the first person he saw when he come round was my sister and that was me [inaudible; overtalking]—

PK: Were you still down the laundry when we were bombed down there, Hilda, or had you gone? When they bombed [inaudible].

HG: I was still [inaudible; overtalking].

PK: We had to go back.

HG: I was back at the laundry then.

PK: We came from the hospital, and they said that erm, because that was a cold war at the time, there was no casualties, we all got to go back to work, to the laundry. We went back to work and while we were there, it was made a reserved occupation, so we couldn't get out any more. They sent for you from the hospital, but you couldn't go out any more. I remember we had the dugout, a wind-up gramophone two Victor Silvester records. [laughter] And I think we played, we had thirty-six crash courses in one day! We were up and down them stairs—

[inaudible; overtalking]

HG: 'Course that was when Wallace was born [inaudible; overtalking]--

PK: January thirteenth, I bought a green hat that day.

HG: Terrible, terrible--

PK: A big green felt hat, and there was all these, and being young, all I could think about was my hat all right. [laughs] All I could think about, "My hat is in there," I said, "Is my hat all right?"

HG: Terrible, terrible--

PK: My poor mother ran from St John's Road there, and [Day's?] garage, there was this motorbike that had blown over--

HG: Right on the top of our dugout.

PK: That's right. And we couldn't get out, could we? And, oh my goodness, all I thought about was my green hat!

HG: That was a new one for us, but we still came through it.

PK: That's right. [inaudible; overtalking]

HC: Digging all that memory up, I thought we'd forgotten all that.

[general discussion until 0:55:11 with preparation and consumption of tea and snacks; Peggy was surprised to see HC's brother on the tape; HC asks HG if Gertie is still alive, she is; PK is now dealing with dishes in the kitchen, out the room; re. Gertie's family; HC's daughter Susan is now forty-three or forty-four and very well, takes Hilda about, HG thinks HC is lucky to have such a lovely daughter who is such good company; discuss another mutual acquaintance who is 'elderly'; PK comes back and offers sugar around, sandwiches and slices of chocolate gateau. PK asks Hilda if she has a dog, Hilda used to have a dog. PK asks VB where she's staying, on Pakefield Road; HC lives up there, in the Water Tower. Serving round of drinks and snacks. HG remembers lovely parties in PK's house, she used to spend all Saturday morning baking; HG used to do that and have a scoff after church; PK re baking a cooking apple with mincemeat in the middle, crust round it and bake it in the oven; now she does it in the microwave; HG's mother used to make it; yesterday HC had a cream doughnut which she doesn't normally do and a vanilla slice; PK gives cake to the dog; PK is fond of a cream or jam doughnut; HC says doughnuts now are not what they used to be; mention of Sanders' doughnuts being "out of this world"]

PK: When we were kids, I mean they used to always call us kids at the laundry, when you started, when you were young, you had to go in Saturday mornings and scrub the laundry.

HG: Floors, didn't you.

PK: From door to door, wall to wall.

HC: Mhm.

PK: And we all used to wear these sack aprons [indicates shape] and all get in a row, then we'd have a dwile final [possibly related to the East Anglian sport of 'dwile flonking']!

[general laughter]

HC: And she doesn't know what a dwile is!

VB: I don't!

HG: A dwile is a dishcloth, floorcloth!

[general laughter]

PK: And I remember that going, the old, the boss's office was in the middle, I was in, doing this floor, and Lena was on that floor and I threw the dwile at her and that missed and it went into the box, now you had to get in there after it, didn't you, so I was crawling in, and I just got in it and his foot just went like that on it!

[general laughter]

PK: And then they used to send us down to the Co-op.

HG: The Co-op used to--

PK: We used to buy them Nelsons.

HG: Yes, the Nelsons and, and, cream doughnuts from there as well, didn't they?

PK: And those Nelsons used to be oh so [gooey?]

HG: And we used to go and provided you could get six because there was seven doughnuts for six pence—

PK: That's right!

HG: She used to have the one for nothing! For going.

[general laughter]

PK: That's right. That's right!

[general laughter]

HG: And we used to put a penny each for our doughnuts, didn't we?

HG: That's what, they were lovely.

[inaudible; overtalking; several conversations going on at once]

[VB refuses doughnuts because of big breakfast; PK asks where else going, she says going to see, they want to know who else seeing in case they know her]

PK: Who else have you got?

VB: It's probably someone you know, yeah. [inaudible; overtalking] I'm seeing a Mrs Lyell tomorrow.

PK: Mrs Lyell?

VB: Yeah.

PK: Eileen?

VB: Doreen.

PK: Doreen Lyell. Yeah. I know her. Went to school with her.

VB: Ah right. And then there's a Mr and Mrs Pickess. They live in Gunton Park.

PK: Oh, no. That's the other end. [inaudible; overtalking]. That'll be in the posh area, wouldn't it?

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: Wouldn't be quite so bad.

VB: Ah. That's it actually, and then I'm moving on to Norwich.

PK: That's good. And then you're going on to Norwich?

VB: Yeah. I'll have to say hello to Mrs Lyell for you then.

PK: That's right. Doreen Lyell. Eileen Lyell. Doreen Lyell.

HG: Doreen used to be—

PK: Now I met Doreen—

HC: I don't, I can't remember her.

HG: She lived on our route, didn't she?

PK: We had a reunion from Kirkley, what was then Notley Road school down here. Of the people who started when it first started. And we all had to have a badge when we went in, so we didn't recognise one another. [laughs] And the first one, do you remember Leonard [surname redacted]? Do you remember Len [surname redacted]?

HG: I couldn't remember him.

PK: He was organising it, he was giving the badges. When I got to the door, he said "I've waited all my life to do this to you, Peggy!" I said, "Well, just make sure, just be careful where you putting your hands then!" [laughs]

HG: It was a pity though that the laundry never had a reunion, wasn't it, 'cause there's still a lot of those girls left, isn't there?

PK: My Wendy met somebody over in the park in a wheelchair and she never got her name. She kept looking at Wendy and she said, "I know your face," she said, "But you can't be the person I know because she used to work down the laundry." And I said, "Wendy, why didn't you get her

name?" So Wendy said, "Well, do you know my mum?" And 'course when she said who I was she said, "Of course, I worked with her at the laundry." Who do you know in a wheelchair, Hilda?

HG: Well...

PK: 'Cause you worked at the laundry after the war, weren't you? You went back to the other--

HG: Yes, yes I did. I went back.

[Discussion of HG going back to the laundry after the war, almost 36 years at the Premier, then 10 years as manageress. HC made manageress too. HG was manageress 9 years before it closed and then 10 years at the [Landa?] laundry, wanted her to keep going; Gladys was under her, therefore.]

[End of Side B]

[End of Tape One]

[Start of Tape Two]

[Start of Side A]

HG: [tape starts mid-conversation] Actually a neighbour of mine, 'cause I live in the council flats in Beccles road, on Beccles road, you probably don't know where that was, but the lady above me she born in Glasgow. [**HG:** a month ago HG's friend went back to Glasgow, she'd been a secretary in London and retired to Lowestoft. asks VB re background: explains born in Edinburgh, raised in Fife to the North in Edinburgh]

PK: Is your heart still up that way?

VB: I think it is, yeah.

[general assent]

PK: I think you do go back to your roots, don't you?

VB: Yeah, yeah. I think when you've been brought up in the countryside and, eh--

PK: That's right.

VB: Cities are never--

HG: Yeah.

VB: The same.

PK: When we had a car we always used to say, you just headed it that way to where it, but [inaudible; overtalking]--

HG: I think, you know we're very lucky here because we've got the sea.

PK: The sea.

HG: We're, we're, two or three minutes from the country.

PK: The country.

HG: And we've got all the Broads.

PK: The Broads. Yeah.

HG: So I think this area, I don't think there was anywhere else I'd like to live.

PK: No-o.

HG: I've been to several places but I don't think there's anywhere else.

PK: That's right, my husband used to say that.

HC: I'd have a villa in Spain!

HG: Would you?

HC: Oh yes.

PK: Oh I couldn't stand all that heat Hilda! That heat'd drive me mad! I couldn't stand that. Do you go abroad, Hilda?

HC: Not now I don't, but I have been.

PK: Yeah, she has been.

HC: We go every year, I go with three more, three ladies.

HC: Do you still go?

HG: Yes. We went to Corfu last year, the year before we went to the Canary Islands.

PK: Mhm.

HG: The year before that we went to Majorca, the previous year was Vienna, and Austria.

HC: I like Majorca.

HG: And that's how we do it, we go every year, we have one good holiday a year, and that's--

HC: Well go to Rhodes.

HG: Yes, well we were talking about that because I like Greece, because [inaudible] I like the Greek people, I like the Greek people.

PK: Mhm.

HG: And I like the climate there because there's lots of greenery there.

HC: Yes, the colour and the flowers are—

PK: Would you like living in Spain, Hilda?

HC: Oh yes, you wouldn't have to twist me wrist very far. I've got a lovely hotel in Spain.

PK: Well why don't you, Hilda... [inaudible; laughter]. If, if you like it why don't you do it!

HG: Well surely, Hilda, if you went out there you'd find a Spanish Count!

VB: [laughs]

HG: Wouldn't you, you know, I mean, somebody to, well to look after you! And, tend you!

HC: [inaudible] tuppence! [laughter]

HG: Probably if you meet him out there it might cost you more than that, but even so.

[general laughter]

HG: For the same man! For the same amount you know, you'll probably go there.

HC: Yes, I could go there!

PK: Would Susan like to go?

HC: Aw, no, I don't think so.

HG: Well let us know when you go and we'll all come for a holiday!

HC: Yes, I could. [inaudible; overtalking]. I go to Eastbourne and that is a lovely hotel, that's just been taken over by a fella who worked at the Grand hotel in Eastbourne. And, erm, she said they wanted a million pounds for this hotel. [inaudible; overtalking] Well last week when I was down

there, Hazel, she's the housekeeper there, and she made a lot of fuss of us, she likes me one way or another, I don't know why but she's very partial to me and eh, the, the lottery was my million.

PK: Yeah!

HG: So I say to her, "Hazel, if I win the nine million you can be the housekeeper [inaudible; overtalking] and I can come and run it with you and, erm, I'll have the suite that Peter [Hall's?] got, the [inaudible], and we'll have a hell of a time," I said. And Hazel said, "Well you do that!"

[group discussion until 1:11:06; HG says some people win the lottery and aren't happy, HC says you'd give it away, people in the family: HC has Ethel, Michael, Ann, David, James, her and Susan, they are eleven in total; forty-six in HG's family, sums up; friend who has dementia, "dreadful", last time they saw Olive was years ago, she used to go swimming and used to work in the hospital; friend has been ill for three years; meanwhile more drinks and food are being served out; PK goes back into the kitchen to sort out plates while discussion of ill friend continues, she is seventy-five or seventy-six; brief discussion of dog; cousin of PK died, he hadn't done any work and his parents left a fortune, both dead when he was twenty-six and never worked, just toured, he died at seventy-two, asked for names of cousins: found thirteen in total; thought none of the money would be left but they got £250 each; HC thinks money makes money; cousin had died intestate so she'd been asked to help by cousin who'd been left in charge; other suggest she could have fiddled it; laughter; PK bought a bottle of vodka to drink the man's health; HG thinks it was a shady deal, perhaps she was owed £1000 or so, not really legally correct; when HG's mother died all had letters on solicitor's paper; discussion of PK's uncle's death, he offered them the bungalow for caring for them but poor girl appeared just near death with a small house and she never got the bungalow although PK had to do all the running about at the hospital, at the reading of the will she only got £200; laughs; PK got the television with the money; PK's consolation was uncle was up there between her mother and aunt Ethel and they'd be giving him hell!]

[PK asks VB if she's made out a will, says she should; PC and PK have all got wills. others ask if Ethel and Barbara are coming, she phoned them this morning and was told they were getting a bus; PK always teases her sister-in-law as PK was too flashy for her brother; she wanted a good old fashioned girl but after the marriage couldn't keep her out of the house; laughter]

[arrival of Barbara Harvey and Gladys Kent; general discussion until 1:13:45; dog barks avidly; HG and HC chat while PK goes off to welcome BH and GK; HG remembers HC's 'dear old mum'; HC and HG's mums were the same type. Hilda G and Hilda C's maiden names were both Hilda James but they weren't related; VB asks their married names, Green and Catchpol; PK ushers in BH and GK and introductions are made, dog told to settle down; unintelligible overtalking as introductions are made. PK asks others for coats]

HG: Old friends are always the best, aren't they, Gladys?

GK: Yes.

PK: You know what to expect with old friends.

HG: I say we are old friends, old friends, aren't we?

BH: You ought to be back in [Pages?], selling them dresses because I haven't bought nothing nice since you left [Pages?].

[inaudible; overtalking; laughter]

PK: They've been friends at school, they were school friends and then they joined the Army together.

BH: Hello! [to dog, laughing]

[inaudible; overtalking]

BH: You're lovely, yes I know! [laughing]

PK: Cup a tea, girls? Or coffee?

GK: Coffee please.

PK: Barbara?

BH: Coffee please, dear.

GC: Fancy drinking coffee in the middle of the afternoon! Ooh! We always drink tea!

[inaudible; overtalking about tea with milk; PK exits to make drinks]

GK: No wonder we're losing all the milkmen if you're not drinking it!

[general laughter]

HG: Yes, you're right.

HC: Don't lose the milkman for gawd's sake, I'm not carrying milk about! That I object to!

BH: [giggles]

GK: Well all you see about you are people with these great big jug things all about.

HC: I don't know what the hell they do with that, I don't know. [laughter] I haven't had a milk cart [inaudible], I think that's ridiculous when you can have it on your doorstep.

PK: Have you got your brains in gears girls? Can you remember what pictures you used to see?

GK: Which one did you want me to bring today!

[all laugh uproariously]

PK: Your best one!

[all laugh uproariously]

GK: My best one! Erm, my high intellectual or my low! I didn't think! It depends on!

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: As Val's from the university we want intellectual, we want the high!

BH: Oh my goodness, oh dear!

GK: Want intellectual stuff!

PK: Well I did change before I come out! [laughter]

HC: Eh, Hilda's got, she can remember all the cinemas right from the top of the town, see if you can elaborate!

PK: Do you know, Gladys, she can remember when George used to spray the perfume!

GK: Yeah.

PK: There's a thing.

GK: He worked there, didn't he?

HC: Yeah!

HG: Yeah. I knew George worked, quite a young age really.

GK: Yes, he did.

HC: Yes.

HG: I saw your brother-in-law the other day.

PK: See, you knew him before I did really.

HG: I did know him before you.

[general discussion; multiple voices at once; mention of brother-in-law and the way he looks now; he goes to church; moves on to general conversation; PC re the summer sun now, wears glasses or she'll be sneezing, she suffers from hay fever but is not allergic to dogs; PG has asthma and sometimes has to go to hospital although the last four years she has followed doctors orders re medication and avoiding animals and has recovered now, central heating in hotels affects PG badly, discussion of heating systems in various houses; BH admires PK's 'heirloom china'; the other day PK (who used to run a knitting class) has a woman seeing her and telling her "Hogar" is the correct pronunciation for 'Hogarth': this is a mutual friend's wife according to the others who helps a lot with Oxfam, this woman belongs to the Townswomen's Guild, PK thought to herself it was "another Mrs Bouquet" [referring to character Hyacinth Bucket in TV comedy series]; discussion of transport, PG won't walk the streets, HK offers around sandwiches to VB]

PK: Now she was interested in, if the pictures the cinema years ago influenced you girls. Now, I say girls, we use the word loosely!

[general laughter]

GK: They did, it did to a point, didn't it?

PK: Girls! [inaudible; overtalking]

BH: Well up to a point because we, what you saw, that, all that lovely way of living, especially all that lovely old song and dance.

PK: Yeah.

GK: Oh, I love those song-and-dance films.

BH: They seemed to have such an easy life, don't they, you know?

GK: Well we did, we--

[inaudible; overtalking]

BH: Perhaps one life will be like that. [pause 2 seconds] And we loved the fashions and the, the way they did, the styles of their hair and, shoes and everything that the film stars wore you could just imagine you in them clothes so we always did our best to try and look like them, didn't we?

GK: I always wanted to dance like Ginger Rogers!

[general laughter]

HC: That was going through my mind, yes.

BH: Oh dear! [laughing]

VB: 'Cause I was, when you, when you mentioned that--

BH: Yeah.

VB: Hairstyle with the plait.

PK: That's right, yeah.

VB: Ginger Rogers.

PK: We bought the separate hair, hair braids and put it round but, but when other people followed what we did.

HC: We changed it, didn't we?

PK: We changed.

HG: Then we went up, didn't we? [indicates hair piled on top of head]

PK: Oh, up. It was swept up.

HG: Swept up at the back, always at the back, didn't we?

PK: That's right.

HG: Because we--

HC: Oh I used to.

PK: You had a page boy, didn't you?

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: Big, big sausages!

GK: All, all your group were great readers of fashion magazines.

PK: Oh weren't we?

[general laughter]

HG: Yes, we were leaders of fashion, yes!

BH: And as soon as somebody copied, the next day.

HG: We had something different, something different.

PK: Yes, we did.

HC: Oh yes.

PK: But it was lovely though, weren't it?

HC: Yes.

HG: It was nice.

PK: What a lark!

[general laughter]

HG: I, I tell you one thing, it was jolly hard to keep up with it, financially.

PK: Yeah!

BH: I bet it was.

HG: We didn't earn very much, did we?

HC: No.

BH: How exciting to go out when wherever you were free on a Saturday and you had a shilling pair of stockings, Bear Brand. [laughs]

GK: I didn't get Bear Brand, I used to go to Woolworth's, we got theirs for sixpence!

HG: Oh did you!

GK: Not a shilling, sixpence.

[inaudible; overtalking]

HC: Does anyone remember the tall floorwalker in Woolworth's?

[general laughter]

HC: And we used to call him Timothy!

PK: [laughs]

HC: Timothy had blasted spots round... [laughs] What made us say that we thought he was a dreamer, and we called him Timothy.

[general laughter]

GK: What about the [inaudible; overtalking] fella with the limp wrists.

HG: Fairyfeet?

BH: Oh I know who that was! He had lots of names!

[all laugh uproariously]

VB: Who were your favourites in, in the male film stars? Did you have?

PK: Oh yes, we had a lot.

GK: Cesar Romero was mine. That tall, handsome looking, with a moustache.

BH: I liked Robert Taylor.

GK: Robert Taylor?

BH: I used to like his films.

PK: Robert Taylor.

GK: William Holden.

PK: Erm, and erm.

GK: Clark Gable.

[general assent]

BH: Yes, he was very good.

[general assent]

BH: And Laurence Olivier.

GK: I must've been mad, because last year, it was winter time and I thought, when I looked in the Radio Times, Robert Taylor was in a film called London Bridge [probably referring to *Waterloo Bridge*]!

BH: Yes.

PK: Yes, That's right.

GK: And that was late at night, didn't come on till about, a quarter to twelve, and I sat and watched that! [laughing]

PK: Did you!

GK: Oh but I did love him ever so much when I was younger.

PK: Do you like that 'Pride and Prejudice' that's on now [referring to TV series]?

GK: Oh yes, I watched that. I'd have loved to have lived in those days with those dresses!

PK: We'd never have got dressed and undressed, you wouldn't have enough day in between! [all laugh] Would you, if you'd got all that on? How did you fit that, how did we fit that all in? If we were working all day and we used to have a game of tennis, eh, go to a dance, and have a swim, how did you fit that all in a day? No wonder we used to feel ill sometimes. No not ill [inaudible; overtalking].

HC: No wonder we're worn out now!

[general laughter]

GK: Your mother often used to say to you, Peggy, "Don't you think it's time you had a night at home!"

PK: I know!

GK: We did, didn't we?

PK: I know, but when I kept at home nobody wanted me!

[general laughter]

PK: I was too much trouble at home!

[general laughter]

BH: But it was all innocent fun, wasn't it?

PK: Yeah.

PK: My sister was so quiet.

BH: Yes she was, wasn't she?

PK: She'd sit up straight like this [demonstrates] and she used to sit and knit like this, with her hands, there.

GK: Very genteel.

[general laughter]

VB: Ah.

PK: She said. [inaudible; overtalking]

BH: Lily was like my sister, Ethel.

PK: Yeah, Ethel was the same.

BH: My sister used to.

PK: Yes, Ethel was a nice girl.

HC: Let you get away with murder compared to what I did.

PK: But then you see my mother used to say she had four, and she wouldn't like four like me anyway!

[general laughter]

PK: 'Cause I mean, they couldn't have, they could've managed you!

HC: [inaudible; laughing] job wouldn't she?

[inaudible; overtalking]

PK: Hilda and John are still like her and, when he married such a quiet girl.

HC: Yeah, yeah.

[discussion about Thelma? and John complementing each other, the old dears at the Co-op factory used to love John, he would joke with them, they would ask if PK was his wife, no his sister, old woman remembers John helping her when she slipped in the Co-op, and remembered this years later, relating the tale to the old dear's friend and pointing out she had red knickers on; all dissolve in laughter; he's 'dreadful' but always gives food to PK that he buys, the free one in a multi-pack from Iceland; PK says HC should stop smoking the Woodbines and would help her collapsing while laughing; HC only smokes in her kitchen or in the garden. HC doesn't smell though!]

[HC's garden--others ask re it, she has a new gardener, recently sacked the old one who charged £85 a month and didn't come November to February; after she'd paid the £85 he came back a fortnight later demanding another £85, she wanted an excuse to get rid of him so said she'd pay him so no one would think she was in debt; Susan wrote a letter to him dismissing him then. other gardener does 4 hours for £20 and if he doesn't come, which he doesn't have to always, doesn't come, pays a quarter she needed to the last one.

[BH saw HC's garden on a bus ride and it looks lovely; HC has altered new curtains and still has to pay for them! discussion re odd jobs, PK waits a while when she has visitors before giving them (male relatives) the task!]

[End of interview]