

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.

* Transcript ID: TR-95-041AT001

* CCINTB Transcript ID: 95-181-5a-y

* Tapes: TR-95-041OT001

* CCINTB Tapes ID: T95-26

* Length: 00:41:26

* Thornlea Residential Home, Manchester, 4 May 1995: Valentina Bold interviews residents of Thornlea Residential Home

* Transcribed by Joan Simpson/Standardised by Annette Kuhn

* LS=Lily Sutcliffe, EW=Elizabeth Woods, JD=Joe Dowlag, PM=Peter McDonough, WS=Wilfred Sevin, NE=Nelly, VB=Valentina Bold, OP: Other person

* Notes: First interview of one with Thornlea Residential Home residents; follow-up interviews were conducted with core informants Lily Sutcliffe (LS-95-181) and Elizabeth Woods (EW-95-180) on 29 May 1995; Sound Quality: Poor.

[Start of Tape One]

[Start of Side A]

[VB tape introduction]

VB: I like it here very much. I've been in Manchester for about a week and I'm enjoying it very much.

[OP brings in informants]

VB: Well, the reason I'm here, I'm just saying to the others, is, I've come from Glasgow, from Glasgow University and they're doing a project at the moment which is about talking to people who remember going to the cinema in the 1930s. So I was hoping that I could ask you a few questions, just about your own memories of going to the cinema, if that's okay. Before I start that, I wonder if I could ask everyone what your name is? So that I have an idea.

JD: John Dowlag. [spells out]

VB: That's great. I think we're running out of seats here. Can I get a seat from anywhere?

[person gets chairs]

VB: So, can I ask what year you were born in?

JD: 1928.

VB: 1928. That's great. Erm, can I ask what your name is?

LS: Lily.

VB: Is your name Lily?

LS: Yes.

VB: Can I ask what your second name is?

LS: Sutcliffe.

VB: Right. Can I ask what year you were born in?

LS: 1917.

VB: And can I ask you the same question? What your name is?

EW: Eh, Miss Woods.

VB: Sorry. Your second name again?

EW: Woods.

VB: And can I ask what year you were born in too?

EW: Eh, 1912.

VB: That's great. And can I ask your name?

PM: Peter McDonough. [spells out]

VB: Right. And what year were you were born in?

PM: 1916. [date and month redacted].

VB: Right. That's great.

WS: Wilfred Sevin.

VB: Right. Can I ask how you spell your second name?

WS: Sevin. [spells out] Wilfred Sevin. 1913.

VB: That's great. Just so that I can get an idea about everyone.

[conversation going on in background]

VB: Erm, was everyone born in Manchester? Were you born in Manchester? Oh right. Salford. Right. Can I ask you how old everyone was when you left school.

[everyone talks at once, but most say fourteen]

VB: Can I ask you how old you are? [response inaudible] The other thing I was wanting to ask, just so that I can get a bit of an idea as I say, is, what sort of work everyone's done. Did you work yourself?

LS: Oh yes, I worked till I was sixty-five.

VB: What was it you did?

LS: Well I worked in the mill for so many years and then I worked in the hospital--

VB: Oh right. Right, right.

LS: For twenty-odd years.

VB: Okay. And can I ask what work you've done?

LS: What work did you do?

EW: Work? Mill worker.

VB: Mill worker. That's great.

JD: Railways.

VB: Right. Railways.

JD: Glasgow. Edinburgh. Perth.

VB: Ah right. What about yourself? What sort of work have you done?

EW: [beginning inaudible] And then I went into the wholesale business.

VB: Right. And what about yourself?

PM: Plasterer.

VB: Plasterer. That's great. So is it mainly locally that everyone's worked round about here? That's great. Right. So that gives me a wee bit of an idea about everyone, so, I'll move that over just now. Erm, I wonder if I could just close that door 'cause I think we're going to get disturbed if we're not careful. Erm, the first thing I wanted to ask was, what were the cinemas round about here in the 1930s? Were there cinemas locally?

LS: Used to be tuppence.

VB: So what cinemas did you go to when you were growing up, when you were a child?

LS: Well I never used to go out much.

VB: Right. Did you not go to the cinema much?

LS: Oh, I used to go to the pictures.

VB: Right.

LS: And there used to be eh, a music hall, you know, not far from where I lived.

VB: Oh right.

LS: Yes.

EW: Playhouse? Playhouse?

LS: Yes.

JD: [inaudible].

VB: Oh really.

EW: That wasn't expensive. It wasn't expensive.

VB: No.

[conversation inaudible]

VB: Did you go much when you were a child?

EW: No, I didn't.

VB: Right.

EW: We had to do housework, me and my sister, between us.

VB: Aye. So did you not go out very much?

EW: Only with the people from work.

VB: Ah, I see. So it was more with your pals from work when you were a bit older.

EW: Yes.

VB: Ah, I see. That's interesting. I mean, did people go to the pictures much as a rule?

[Everyone speaks at once; inaudible]

LS: There used to be four picture houses near where I lived. About five minutes' walk.

VB: What were the picture houses where you were?

LS: Eh, one was called the Oxford. There was another one called Dickie Banks's [probably referring to New Central Hall]. [laughs]

VB: Oh right.

LS: Eh, oh there was about four or five pictures.

VB: Was that in Collyhurst? Someone was telling me about Dickie Banks's actually the other day.

LS: Yes, yes. Used to get in for tuppence.

VB: Yeah.

LS: And in the tuppenny one you was well off.

VB: Right. [laughs]

LS: You used to get [someone coughs; conversation inaudible] like that.

VB: Sort of cone-shaped things.

LS: Yeah. Used to get a little bag of sweets for ha'penny.

VB: You would take that in with you when you went.

LS: Yeah.

EW: There was the [Butler] Playhouse.

LS: Yeah.

EW: Up [?] Road.

LS: Then there was the Oxford.

EW: The new Royal.

VB: What was that like?

EW: The new Royal [possibly referring to the Theatre Royal].

VB: When you say some people went quite a lot, how often really? Once a week? More than that?

WS: Used to go every week.

VB: Yeah.

EW: There used to be big queues for the pictures then. Now it's all finished.

VB: Yeah.

JD: The Regal. It was two cinemas in one building.

VB: Oh right.

EW: I used to like the theatre the best.

PM: There was only one now. Used to be three or four.

VB: Yeah.

PM: Called the Odeon.

VB: That was a big, huge one, wasn't it?

PM: It's in Manchester.

LS: There was the silent pictures. And them what couldn't read, they had it, to talk, for them.

VB: Who were your favourite stars? When you were first going to the pictures. Did you have favourites?

JD: [inaudible]

VB: Right. And you mentioned Charlie Chaplin.

JD: Yes. Ah yes.

VB: Yes.

EW: Jeanette MacDonald.

VB: Jeanette MacDonald. I'm interested you say that, Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. Were they very popular?

EW: Yes. They had beautiful voices.

VB: Yeah. 'Cause they were in, was it *Rose-Marie* they were in together? What pictures do you remember that they were in?

EW: I don't know. Only that I knew they were in it. They were the stars. No.

VB: Yeah. What was it you liked about them?

EW: Oh, the singing. The singing. Like a musical.

VB: Yeah.

EW: Like *The Sound of Music*, you know.

VB: Yeah.

LS: I used to like Arthur Tracy, *The Street Singer*.

EW: Don't like him.

LS: He died. Lovely singer him, Arthur Tracy.

VB: Was he, when you say *The Street Singer*, did he...

LS: They called him *The Street Singer*. Lovely singer, him. I'd sooner have him than Jeanette MacDonald and whatsit? Josef Locke and all.

EW: Oh yes, Josef Locke.

LS: He were another one of my favourites.

JD: Laurel and Hardy.

VB: Hiya.

OP: [Speaks to one of residents and VB].

VB: That's okay.

LS: Do you know anything about years ago? Can you remember?

OP: Years ago? Oh yes. Eh, you've to come down for tea now.

WS: What time do we go down? Any time?

OP: [discussion about when to go down for tea] Well, when the lady's finished. Do you want a drink?

VB: Eh, that would be nice. Yeah. That's great.

[discussion about tea; general discussion]

VB: I brought some pictures along of some of the stars. One of them that I brought was Gracie Fields. I don't know if she was someone you liked.

LS: Gracie, oh yeah [inaudible; multiple voices]

JD: Yeah. Mill girl.

[inaudible; everyone speaking at once]

PM: From Rochdale.

WS: Gracie Fields. Oh aye. Gracie Fields.

PM: Yeah, outside Rochdale.

VB: Right.

PM: Six mile. Six or eight mile is where she's from. Rochdale. The house is not there. I used to pass the house. The house is not there though.

VB: I see, so...

WS: She changed her voice.

VB: Did you not like her voice much?

WS: She was a good singer, she could sing.

[inaudible; everyone speaking at once; mention of Rochdale]

WS: She used to change her voice a lot.

[inaudible; everyone speaking at once]

LS: Well I thought she wasn't bad looking. Not like some of them that's going today.

WS: Who? Gracie Fields.

LS: Not bad looking, like some of them today.

WS: Lisa Stansfield.

VB: Yeah.

WS: Lisa Stansfield.

VB: I heard that, that she was related to Gracie Fields. Is that right?

WS: No, I don't think so love. No relation. Was she Peter?

PM: Who?

WS: To Gracie Fields. Lisa Stansfield.

VB: Was she not? No.

WS: She was a nice singer.

PM: [beginning inaudible]. A very good singer.

VB: Yeah.

PM: Her name's Stansfield.

VB: Yeah. Well that's what I was saying. Yeah.

PM: Lovely singer. I've heard her.

VB: Yeah. That's what I'm saying. I'd heard that she must've been related. Yeah, yeah. Another one I had on the other side of that was Robert Donat. 'Cause I heard he was from Manchester as well.

JD: Yeah.

PM: A [teacher?].

[inaudible; multiple voices]

PM: *Goodbye Mr Chips.*

VB: Yeah.

PM: Who's that?

WS: Robert Doughnut! [referring to Robert Donat]

PM: Oh, Robert Doughnut!

VB: [laughs]

PM: He come from Manchester.

VB: I heard that.

WS: Very good looking. Didsbury. East Didsbury.

VB: Right, yeah.

PM: Six mile from here.

VB: Right. Yeah.

PM: Five or six mile.

VB: Yeah. [pause 2 seconds]. The other star that I associate with this area, was George Formby. I don't know if he was popular.

EW: Yes, he was very good.

PM: Bit [inaudible].

VB: Do you think so?

PM: A bit old-fashioned.

VB: Who else have I got? I've got Janet Gaynor here as well.

LS: Yeah. Oh I used to like her.

[Everyone speaks at once; inaudible]

VB: I can't remember who's on the other side of that.

WS: Montgomery. Richard Montgomery [probably referring to Robert Montgomery]. I've probably seen him. But eh...

PM: Don't remember him. All good looking, the- fellows, aren't they?

WS: Yeah.

VB: Yeah. Did you like the good-looking ones? Was that an attraction?

WS: Yes. There were one or two films stars came from round about. Eh, there's one come from Salford, two from Salford. Eh...

PM: Michael Caine, was it?

WS: Sorry?

PM: Michael Caine? Did he come from Salford?

WS: Cook. Well, Peter Cook.

VB: Ah.

WS: The lad, Finlay.

JD: Richard [name?]. He's on television. A series.

VB: Right.

WS: Albert Finlay comes from Salford.

JD: Albert Finney. That's Albert Finney.

VB: There's a lot of talent.

JD: His [pal's?] a bookmaker.

VB: Yeah.

WS: There's another one from Salford. A very good actor. I just can't get his name.

VB: Mhm.

JD: Albert Finney, Good wasn't he? Albert Finney, good accent. Getting on a bit now though.

VB: Yeah. That's interesting, yeah.

JD: Very good him, yeah.

VB: Yeah. I've got some other stars here. People like Deanna Durbin. I don't know if she's...

WS: She's from Manchester.

VB: Was she quite popular then?

[inaudible; tea trolley brought in]

PM: Have you heard of her?

OP: Who?

PM: Deanna Durbin.

OP: Yeah. Would anyone like a juice? Do you want juice, Will? Anyone else? Yeah. Right.

VB: **We're just talking a bit about the popular stars of the thirties just now.**

EW: Have you a favourite?

OP: Erm...

VB: **Thanks a lot.**

OP: [inaudible]

VB: **We were talking about Jeanette MacDonald.**

OP: I liked erm, what's her name? Eh, Betty Grable and Jane Russell. They used to do them films. All those big colours.

PM: Going back a bit isn't it?

OP: Right. Who wants tea? [takes orders for tea] Sugar?

EW: Yes.

OP: You got a sore throat? Is everyone all right then?

VB: **The other thing I was wanting to ask was if you went to the matinees on a Saturday.**

LS: Oh ah, yes.

JD: [inaudible]

VB: Did you like the, 'cause I know you were saying that there were two films on. Were there news and things like that as well?

LS: Yeah.

JD: News.

VB: Did you enjoy that when you were growing up?

LS: Yeah. Yeah.

VB: Yeah.

LS: We used to go to pictures and that.

PM: Used to have news places. Just news and that's all.

VB: Is that right?

PM: Yeah, programmes. News, yeah.

VB: Whereabouts was...

PM: Pathe Gazette an all that.

VB: Was that in town?

PM: [inaudible]

VB: Ah, I see. Yeah. What about erm, shorts? Did they show short films?

LS: Yes. And cartoons. Used to show a couple of cartoons.

PM: Cartoons.

LS: And they used to [inaudible] and then they used to show the big picture. You liked the cartoon sometimes better than the picture.

[general laughter]

VB: Aye. 'Cause it sounds like from what you were saying, you really got your money's worth.

[laughs]

LS: Oh you didn't get much money them days.

WS: Nothing much at all.

VB: Mhm.

LS: Not like you get now.

VB: Yeah. I mean how did you decide what films to go to see? Or did you just more or less go to them all.

LS: Well they used to have a paper with a lot of films that was on at these picture houses. Used to take your pick where you wanted to go--

VB: Right. I see.

LS: Or sometimes they used to put it outside on a poster.

EW: We always used to go to the [P?].

VB: Did you ever get any of the film magazines? Like the 'Picturegoer' or 'Film Weekly' or anything like that.

EW: No.

LS: No, I don't think we did.

VB: No.

LS: Not like that.

PM: Books. There were books in the shops.

VB: Right.

PM: Whether you could afford them or not.

VB: Is that right? 'Cause they must've been quite expensive.

EW: You got cheap entertainment didn't you?

WS: Tuppence. Tuppence.

VB: That was another thing I was wanting to ask about. You were saying that you liked erm...

WS: [Adventure?] films.

VB: Yeah.

LS: You used to go to fairs, to fairgrounds.

VB: Mhm.

LS: You used to have... [pause 1 second] But you don't see them today now, them.

VB: 'Cause I was going to ask, what else was there to do, apart from going to the pictures?

Fairgrounds.

LS: The fairgrounds.

VB: Yeah.

EW: Well they're too expensive now.

LS: Tell you what I used to like of fairgrounds. Black pea soup.

EW: They're too expensive.

LS: Bet you've not heard of that have you? Black pea soup.

VB: Haven't. No.

LS: More tastier than what you get now.

VB: Were there places to go dancing round about here? Did you go dancing.

JD: Eh, [Bellevue?].

VB: Yeah.

JD: Oh the Ritz. Ah the Ritz.

EW: Bingo, bingo's wiped all that out.

VB: Yeah. It sounds from what you were saying as if there was a lot of entertainments locally.

EW: Yeah. Specially in the town.

VB: Yeah.

VB: Did you enjoy the...

JD: [inaudible] up to Blackpool, dancing.

VB: Right.

EW: Saturday nights.

JD: At night.

VB: Is that right?

JD: Yes.

VB: Just going to Blackpool for the night.

EW: Just for the dancing.

VB: Right.

EW: I didn't go. My brother used to go.

WS: What the pictures?

JD: No, Blackpool.

WS: Oh, dancing.

JD: Dancing, yeah.

PM: I done a lot of dancing. I danced in Glasgow as well. The Barrowland.

VB: Oh yeah. Yeah.

PM: Is it still going?

VB: It is actually, yes.

PM: I danced in the Barrowland. And Edinburgh. I danced in Edinburgh. In the Army, in Army then.

VB: Yeah.

PM: I did a lot a dancing.

VB: Mhm. I was going to say, the Barrowlands is very different now.

PM: Ballroom dancing.

VB: Yeah. Yeah. Did you like the music from the pictures?

PM: [inaudible]

VB: Were there organs in town?

JD: The Odeon.

VB: Yeah, the Odeon.

JD: It come up from down under.

VB: Yeah. That must've been quite something to see actually.

LS: I used to like to be at the fairground.

EW: Yes. I used to like the fairground. In [H?] Street. And it was a big market. At Christmas. And eh, when it was New Year time, they'd it all covered...

[Tape cuts out; end of recording]

[End of Side A]

[Start of Side B]

VB: The other thing as well about the fairs. It must've been lovely. Did you go on trips to Blackpool during the day as well?

JD: No. I worked through the day.

VB: Right. What about, when you were growing up, did you ever go on holiday or go out for the day?

EW: Oh yes.

VB: Yeah.

WS: You [would go?] to Blackpool with the trains. Half a crown.

VB: Yeah.

WS: To Blackpool. Night time.

PM: Night time.

WS: The dance train.

PM: Yeah.

VB: The dance train.

WS: The dance train. Two and six, half a crown--

VB: Yeah.

WS: To Blackpool.

PM: In the evening that was.

VB: Right.

PM: You would come back at 12 o'clock.

VB: So it must've been a question of rushing to get that last train.

PM: They was happy days. Was happy days. Better than they are today.

VB: 'Cause it sounds like that from what you're saying. A lot of good fun. What did you feel like when you were going to the pictures?

PM: What?

VB: How did you feel when you were at the pictures?

EW: Well, you just went to the pictures.

VB: Did it make you feel...

JD: [inaudible]

VB: Yeah.

PM: A night out. For half a crown.

LS: Think I'll go and get a bit of fresh air.

VB: Very hot, isn't it?

PM: Well the last train, miss the last train and you were stuck there all night. Blackpool. The last train. Twelve o'clock, midnight.

VB: Did men and women get that train?

JC: Yeah, dancing, yeah.

EW: Parties.

VB: Yeah. It sounds like a great night out, that. [pause 3 seconds]

WS: Used to work six days, worked six days a week.

VB: Yeah.

WS: Saturday mornings and all. Didn't we, Peter?

PM: Oh ah, Saturday mornings. Ah.

VB: Did the cinemas round here open on a Sunday at all?

EW: No. No.

PM: It's a long while since I went to the pictures.

VB: Yeah.

PM: I can't remember. Since I went to the pictures.

VB: Yeah.

PM: The Odeon. And the Gaumont. Saw some good films, then.

VB: Yeah.

PM: Now, I don't know.

VB: Yeah.

EW: It's such a big place, this church hall.

VB: Do you want to open the window a bit more? It's really hot, isn't it? Actually, the one other thing that I forgot to ask when I was asking a few background questions was erm, I was wanting to ask people what it was, what sort of jobs their parents did as well?

WS: Jobs?

VB: Yeah, what did your father do?

WS: My father?

VB: Yeah.

WS: A plasterer.

VB: Ah right. Did your mother work herself?

WS: No. Women didn't work like they do now. They looked after the kids. Four or five kids. So, they couldn't go out to work, could they?

VB: Yeah.

WS: Not like they do nowadays.

VB: How many were in your family?

WS: Mhm?

VB: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

WS: Four. Four was average then.

VB: Yeah.

WS: Big families.

VB: Yeah, can I ask the same questions?

PM: What's that?

VB: What sort of work did your father do?

WS: What work did your father do? What work?

PM: Plasterer?

WS: Your father?

PM: Yes.

WS: [laughs]

VB: And did your mother work?

PM: My mother?

VB: Yeah.

PM: No, no.

VB: That's great.

JD: My mother was in the mill.

VB: Yeah.

JD: My father was on the rails. Fourteen till sixty-five he retired.

VB: Right. How many were in there in your family?

JD: Two girls and...

VB: Right. Can I ask you the same? What was it your father did?

EW: Me?

VB: Yeah.

EW: Sheet metal worker.

VB: Right.

EW: Eh, she did sewing.

VB: Right. And how many were there in your family?

EW: Pardon. How many sisters and brothers do you have?

VB: How many sisters and brothers do you have?

EW: One sister, one brother. But they're all dead now.

VB: Right. That's great. This is gonna be tricky for us both. I was wondering what it was your father did.

WS: She can't hear.

VB: What sort of work did your father do? What did your father work at?

[Everyone asks Nelly question]

NE: My father?

VB: Yeah. Right.

NE: I don't know. He was killed in the war. Before I was born.

VB: Oh I'm sorry to hear that.

NE: We only had a stepfather.

WS: Got killed in the war, Peter.

VB: Yeah.

WS: Your father got killed in the war.

NE: Yeah.

VB: The other thing I was wanting to ask.

PM: First war.

VB: Yeah.

OP: Sorry to disturb you, love. Are you finished with these cups?

VB: Yeah. Think so. And I wanted to ask as well, if you don't mind, if you'd been married at all.

PM: Yeah.

VB: And do you have a family yourself?

PM: No, I don't.

VB: Right. What year were you married in?

PM: Mhm?

VB: What year were you married in?

PM: Year?

VB: Yeah. Just roughly.

[pause 4 seconds]

PM: 1951.

VB: I know, it's hard to remember these things offhand, isn't it? And do you have a family yourself?

JD: Eh, one daughter.

VB: That's great.

[Lot of background noise; conversation inaudible]

VB: So I'll just ask these same questions just briefly. Erm, have you been married yourself?

NE: Oh yes.

VB: How long were you married? Do you remember what year you were married in?

JD: I got married in eh [pause 4 seconds] 1941.

VB: Right. 1941. And do you have children?

JD: [One?]

VB: That's great. Have you ever been in a political party or do you have any strong,

JD: Sorry?

VB: Do you have any strong political views? Have you ever been in a party?

JD: No, not in a party. No, never.

VB: Right. And the one other thing I was wanting to ask was erm, this is just so that I can get a sort of background idea. You know, it's all confidential, I can assure you on this. The other thing I wanted to ask was what religion everyone was. Just to get an idea.

WS: What's your religion Peter? Church of England? Church of England?

PM: No, RC.

VB: Right.

WS: One, two, three RCs.

VB: Yeah.

WS: C of E.

VB: Right.

OP: I wouldn't believe anything what this lot tell you.

[general laughter]

LS: You better get out! Get out!

VB: What about, what religion are you, Lily?

LS: Church of England.

VB: Church of England. That's great. And have you been married?

LS: No.

VB: Right. That's great. I think I missed you out there. [laughs]

EW: Church of England.

VB: Church of England. Right. And have you been married yourself?

EW: No.

VB: Right. That's great.

EW: No, no one'll have me.

VB: Aw, I'm sure that's not true. [laughs] Has anyone got strong political views or have you ever been in a political party or anything?

WS: Any what love?

VB: Have you been in a political party.

WS: Mhm?

VB: Have you got strong political views?

WS: Oh, Labour love. Labour. We all vote Labour. You vote Labour aren't you, Peter? Vote Labour?

PM: Oh, definite Labour.

VB: Yeah. Well that's great. Thanks very much for helping me by answering these questions. That's really very good of you. So as I say, thanks again.

WS: Oh, thanks for coming.

VB: Not at all.

LS: I've got a lady near me, that works in a home, something like this. And she was asking me the other week. She was asking me are there any old, you know, the old-fashioned irons?

VB: Oh right. Yes.

LS: I said, well, I had three. But I said I got fed up with them. She said she only wanted these things to show the old ladies to see if they remembered, you know, the days that's gone by.

VB: Yeah.

LS: You know. That they do remember.

VB: Right.

LS: The irons and that.

VB: Yeah.

PM: What's that?

LS: Irons.

PM: Oh yes, irons.

EW: Ooh, they were heavy.

LS: Same as those scales. You know one of them eh weights--

EW: Yes.

LS: Weight that you used to weigh. Used to have the [inaudible].

VB: Great. [laughs].

[End of Side B]

[End of Interview]