**Summary:** During the interview the interviewee talks about working as an office Clerk on the docks and for P and O. In charge of shipping paper work for each dock a ship would port into. The interviewee tells of their volunteer work with the Police, Dulwich Helpline and Time and Talents. They also talk about living conditions in Bermondsey during the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s and remember when they first had electricity in their home.

**Great and can you tell me where and when you were born?**

I was born in Bermondsey, in London, and I was born in nineteen fifty.

**Nineteen fifty fab, Ok, erm, can you tell me a little bit about where, what you’re working life, starting from where.**

My working life started in erm, a shipping company. I worked for most shipping companies when the docks was functioning. And, erm, everything, as a typist I used to do the bill of ladings which, you can’t have your products of a ship without one. And I done port entries and port rates.

**Can you elaborate a little bit about what that is?**

Alright. Um. In the docks, you know, you got a ship and everything has to be on paper before you can get it off and they have to be cleared by customs. So I was doing all that stuff.

**Wow, ok.**

So I was a Clark as well as a typist. Erm, and that was mainly down Tooley Street. Which was buzzing. Really buzzing with life. And, um, and I went on to different, when the docks shut, you know I then went on to other things, like working as a civil servant for the police.

**Ok and what sort of time did you start working?**

I was fifteen.

**Fifteen, when you started working. Ok, and how many, so how many years, was it, what time, what sort of transit, when you changed jobs?**

Changed jobs. Well I worked in the docks, with the docks, up until about nineteen, ooh, would have been seventy-five, seventy-six.

**Wow. Ok, erm, so can you describe, maybe as a fifteen year old then, starting work there? Can you remember a little bit about the…**

I started work er, in a pair of, ‘cos we never had no money, you can bear in mind y’know, there was lots of things like, my dad going on strike’s if it was like a week where there was no money, there was no money anyway and I remember going to work in a pair of, erm, hush puppies with long socks. And I felt horrible, really horrible, ‘cos you wanted to be grown up. And then on my first weeks wages which got paid in a little brown envelope, erm I got my first pair of stockings.

**Ah Ok. \*laughs \* that’s when you knew you were working, a working woman!**

Yep! I, my salary was five pounds ten shillings.

**Five pounds ten shillings. So what was the first, erm sort of responsibilities then? At fifteen you had?**

I had to give my wage up; well I had to give half my wage up.

**Ah right, to, to er, what…**

To mum.

**To** **mum. And the rest was for you to…?**

Well, look I cleared about four pound ten shillings, which is four-fifty, now. She used to take about two fifty out of it. But you could do a lot on what you had.

**And so what were you, when you first got to work, what were sort of your thoughts and feelings when you first started.**

Oh it was lovely. It was lovely. Because you had, you know, you didn’t have, luxuries really. You know you had basic foods and that’s it. So you know, with your money you could, you know I used to go out on a Friday night to the Lyceum and dancing. I could purchase some clothes and even the basic essentials that I didn’t have, which everyone else had, who had money.

**When you started working. Yeah. And what, as part of your job then. So when you were fifteen, did you have a job title? What was**

I was a clerk typist.

**It was called a clerk typist.**

And then I started off as a junior. And you learn like the switchboard and telex and sh... Plug, you know like the plug, it was like a plug one when you put through a call you’d have to it was that old, that’s how I started.

Bit different now, but then, typists, you know, erm, they sent me to an evening school to teach me to type. And then you worked switched board for when you learned all them jobs. And then they train you to become a bill of ladings typist.

**So how old were you when you started doing that?**

Within a year. Yeah, and as I say it, on this bill of lading it had the consignee where is was, what dock it was coming from, and what the goods was, and it would have to be signed and sent to the ship and what they had hauled the ships bag, which was captains bag, before, erm, the people who wanted anything of the ship, would have to produce their side of the bill of lading.

**Ok. So who did you, who did you come into contact with as part of that role? Who were you answering to and who was above you, like who, erm, like who were you working with?**

Well I was working with another lady. We done the same sort of job. You know, erm, but you all kind of worked in one office. Er it would be like an export and import. I was export. And er, but you know, it was all, all different people.

**Erm, so, what did, as, kind of what aspects of the job were like your favourite parts**.

I couldn’t say I had any. It was just knowing I was filling a wage. But as I got older, erm, you kind of, you get interested.

**So when was that do you reckon?**

Oh, well you know, ‘cos I didn’t stay at that company all the time I went on to other places and you do different sides of shipping. And I worked in a place, part of P and O, it’s not there anymore its down Southwark street, where you would do, erm, the ship’s lists and er, ship’s freight etcetera. And you would have erm, you might have job come in a boat, a ship’s coming in the dock at Tilby, on such and such a date. And you would type all these things up, you know all different ports. And it, you know big thick set of them and you’d have to do it in a certain amount of time. There was two of us doing it. And you get it all photocopied and everything. And you might get a phone call to say the ship’s not going to dock there now. So you lost all that work and you got to start again. And that’s so…It would be with wherever it was going to be docked.

**Oh no! So what, you were tracking where the boats were coming in and what was on board?**

Yeah.

: **Yeah. Everything like that.**

**So in terms of the fact that equipment you were using took, you mentioned photocopying. How was that done?**

It was a proper machine, nothing like you have now…You used to push this in, push it in, it used to put the numbers, how many you wanted and it would section it. But it was a machine that if it went wrong…it went wrong! Do you know what I mean? And you had to call somebody out ‘cos you just couldn’t fathom it out.

**Wow, ok. So would it take quite a while? That process?**

Oh yeah. You’d spend a whole day doing that. You ‘know what I mean?

**So was, there, erm, technology changes did that impact, like over the years?**

Oh yeah well I was on a typewriter, like, one of that used to what’s the one, there’s all different things now, I mean, there’s was also what they used to call a banding machine.

**What’s that?**

Er it’s a, the piece of paper was like a shiny, er, like a backer, and you would type on it and there was like a carbon at the back. And you’d clip it to this machine, which had erm, like an ink in it and with the forms that you had to use, you would, on a pedal, \*laughs \* pedal this through and it would print.

**Wow**.

Erm but it was a mucky job and it ruined your nails and you used have to clean it with meths and all that.

**How often would you be cleaning it?**

Oh every day.

**Every day. Doing that. Wow. And what, erm do you reckon there was a point when you were working still, was there something that came along that really changed how you worked and made it easier or…**

Not in them times no.

**No. What about the other people you worked with? What were they like, a little bit about them?**

Erm, we had one in, in the first office I worked in there was a guy called, er, Tom who, used to play jokes, he had this book, anything funny that went on the in the office he wrote it down. And I’ve had to, I’d like to contact him, he works down the tunnel.

**He works where?**

At the tunnel. I wonder if he’s still got the book.

**Ah that would be brilliant.**

Yeah. But he used to put all antics down, you know, about what, if something that happened that was funny, or.

**Yeah. Can you remember any of what he was writing down?**

Oh he was always, I had a, erm, I actually don’t like being late I hate being late but there was times when you could get our bus properly or, you know, and erm me and this other guys walked in, we sort of crept in you know, and our boss would say epic cos the governor was sitting at the end, but this governor would come out one day and shouted out “what do you do, sleep together?”

**What in front of everyone?**

Yeah, and we all…\*laughs \* and this’ll go down in the book. Y’know.

**So was he doing that every day?**

Oh yeah, Yeah.

**It’s a really good idea isn’t it. So you mentioned the governor. So how many people, how did the like, er, management hierarchy, how did that work?**

Well you’d have like, a manager on each department, like import and export. Erm, and there was some other and they were with us on export. And a bit more on the import.

**And you’d have…**

Then you’d have the boss higher up. Who used to actually, be like a lorry driver and he owned the company.

**And then you’d have the governor who was…**

No, it was just him.

**That was it?**

Mm.

**Ok. Erm, so what hours were you working them.**

I was working from nine to five.

**Nine to five.**

Hour lunch.

**How long would it take you get to work and back?**

About half an hour. I often used to walk. Save my money.

**Yeah. \* laughs \* your Friday nights out!**

Well thing is I mean, it used to cost about, about, I suppose about sixpence each way, on a bus.

**So, does save.**

It’s a shilling. Twelve pence now but, you know, it was a lot of money then.

**Yeah. And erm, I was wondering how many days a week, was that Monday to Friday**?

Yeah. Monday to Friday.

**And was your, erm, mentioned about your family. Were they working in similar places?**

Erm, my dad was a docker. Er, he died quite young. He died in nineteen sixty-six.

**Ok.**

And, but he worked, like, his dad was a docker. And in those times the worked on a daily basis. You got paid by the day. There was no unions then. And erm, you know you’d see them in their caps and their scarves and go down the dock and hoped they got picked out. You got chosen. And often in them times you’d have a foreman who had his favourites. You know. And if then, that didn’t have work on that day; they’d have nothing to eat.

**How many people were going down?**

Oh loads

**And how many were getting picked?**

You might be like, say a hundred going and you only get about thirty picked.

**Right.**

But you keep going, you kept going naturally. And then they brought in the, the unions.

**When was that?**

Erm, in the seventies I suppose.

**How did that change?**

Well, sixty-eight. Something like that. It changed a lot. Because they were then, by being in the union, erm, they were had to be given by the employers, a flat wage. That they could live.

**So then, even if they weren’t working…**

If they were working. If they weren’t working, they got the flat wage. But if they got the jobs, they got more money.

**Oh. Ok. And did it change as well like turning up on the day or did they still do, was like that the nature…**

They had to do it weekly and then they just went in every day and then you know, but at least they had, outside a wharf or whatever, you’d see all the Dockers. Waiting. And that’s like you, you, you, you and you. You know.

**And they got their basics covered.**

They got their basics. Still it wasn’t up to, it wasn’t social security. You know what I mean? You’d have pawnshops, we still do got have pawnshops, but they had pawnshops then and you’d take whatever you had down.

**And get your money…**

I mean I can remember going as a child, erm, there was like a pawn shop up by St James’s church, which isn’t that far away and I lived around this area and I used to have to take my dad’s best suit, his best shoes, which my mum polished all the soles and er, a pair of sheets that had never been used. I would get a half crown, which was two shillings and sixpence, er, you know, just for food. And when he did get, if he didn’t get have any, money by Thursday, erm, my mum would ask my aunt. And that’s how it would go.

**So then would they get that stuff back?**

Yeah if you’d pay it

**Yeah. And how did that, was that just something that you kind of got used to or did, was that quite hard to give…**

It was er, inevitable.

**So it was part of a routine.**

Part of your life. When someone in the family, like me older sister went to work, things were much better.

**When was that?**

Well my sister would have been, erm, seventy-two now, she died, pretty old, but she was eleven years older than me. So she would have started work, say, in the, you know, in the fifties or sixties.

**Yeah. When did, you started working in, you said it before, but can you?**

Uh?

**Remind me when it was?**

Sixty-five.

**Sixty-five.**

Mm. Fifteen. And you weren’t like the fifteen year olds now. You know you were more like; you do as you’re told. You know you’d have, like twenty-one was the age when you could choose yourself what to do. But even to go to a doctor you had to take your mum in.

**Oh really?**

Sat in. You know so from fifteen to twenty one you were under their thumb.

**Did you feel that, did you feel that your working like changed when you were twenty-one? Did you notice the difference?**

Yeah because, you could…you didn’t have to go, you didn’t have to think about what you’re going to offend, not that you done anything bad…but to offend your parents. You’re old enough then to, you know, do what you like.

**Yeah**.

Still have morals and all that drummed into you.

**Yeah. Were you living at home still, d’you mind me asking, when you were twenty-one?**

No I left, I was living in Peckham.

**Ok.**

In, like, a bedsit.

**And that was paid for by your wages and.**

Yeah.

**Um, did you find that you socialised with the people that you were working with?**

You did tend to then yeah. You’d go out Friday lunchtime for a drink, shouldn’t be drinking but we used to have a drink at lunch. And sausages and chips it’s just in the pubs. And we’d go out Friday night and Saturday night. With people.

**And would that be local as well?**

Um, more or less, yeah. I used to go to the, erm, Mayflower and there used to be, down Albion Street there used to be a little pub called the little Crown. That’s not there now. Yeah and we used to go shopping. You know, go out in the evening.

**Was that like the main, so would work would those people be that main people you’d socialise with or did you find that family or friends from school.**

I never so much went with friends from school, though saying that, I got, I still got a friend that I knew when I was five. And I’m still in, well I see her perhaps once a month. And the girl I worked with from the age of fifteen, we still each other about once every few months. ‘Cos we’ve all gone our different ways.

**Are the people that you were working with, are there many still in the area or**…?

There’s only one.

**Oh really?**

Yeah, yeah. They’ve all moved out. And…

**Different places.**

Yeah it’s changed so much round here.

**Yeah. What, when did you think, what sort of time did you really notice the changes sort of taking place?**

When the docks went. When the docks went. And, there was no work, people on the dole and erm, you had, if you live in around this area, in the docks, with the docks, it was like a community. And if say one man was on strike, the man next door who wasn’t, you know, whatever they had to eat they would bring in to you. D’you know what I mean it was that type of thing?

**Yeah**.

You had a, erm, a little hole in the door, the front door. You wouldn’t lock up of a night; you’d have this little string hangin’ out, which you pulled it and you gone in.

**Oh really?**

Yeah. And you left that out all night you didn’t need to lock up.

**Cos of the sort of safety of the community.**

Yeah.

**So how many, so, what was the impact of the docks closing?**

Oh it was massive. Sad. I wish they were back now I tell you.

**Really.**

Yeah.

**Will you describe a little bit, erm, sort of touching on the idea of the community then, erm before they closed, erm, maybe just a little bit more of what you can remember, what that really meant for people?**

Well it was it meant everything; it was there livelihood really. But as things like, erm, I’ve got to

**Yeah go for it. Are you ok do you want some water? Just let me know if you want a break or whatever.**

Now we had things, like different things, like on a Sunday. You would get people come round, like the muffin man, and there was such a muffin man. Who use to wear this great big, kind of tray on his head, but with muffins.

**Wow. Is that how he carried it?**

That is how he carried it. And you’d get like erm, like six muffins for say a shilling it might have been less than that. You’d get a man who’d come round on a bike and sharpen your knives and your scissors.

**Right.**

You’d get, erm, toffee apple man.

**They’d come door to door then?**

No they used to ride round and you’d just come out with whatever you wanted to do.

**And would there be certain times that they’d come round or would you just go out…**

In the morning. In the morning on a Sunday, And in those times, like when you go to the supermarket don’t you, you go to shop, you had to, there was no supermarkets and like little shops, but on a Sunday if you bought anything you always had to put in a bag, ‘cos it would be against the law, then, to open on a Sunday.

**Oh right so you had to disguise.**

You had to di…you had to…well it did open, but they’d be open say for a couple of hours. If you had say bread or anything like that, it would have to be put in bag. Hidden.

**That’s interesting. Of course because of Sunday opening laws cam in quite a bit later did they?**

Mm.

**So erm, just to get a little more of a sense of, cos we’ve kind of got, erm, you said that worked for like a number of different companies, so a bit later on, maybe, around twenty we kind of got to around your twenties. Where did you start working after that?**

I was working for, er, metropolitan place.

**And** yeah, what kind of age would that have been?

Well I would have been about twenty, twenty-one.

**Ok so is that in this area?**

I used to work for Southwark, and then I went on to Scotland Yard. And I’ve done typing, erm, really interesting you know. But they, you have to take like an exam every so often and if you don’t want to do it, you stay where you are. But it’s to go up to the ladder and all that and I just used to stay where I was. And er, it’s like…you get boyfriends and you, you move around you know…so.

**Was it the exams that put you off?**

Yeah probably. But it was like a typing exam. You know. And you perhaps get a pay, I mean when I went for an interview. I had to do typing and I had to do the front of the Sun newspaper. Type it.

**Oh really?**

Yeah it was so long and you think I’m not going to get this, but I did and I was quite surprised.

**So you had to, was it like a, how quickly and how accurately.**

Quickly.

**From just sight. Cos of course you didn’t have the delete button then would you**?

No. It was lovely. You had to sort or, do the erm, you had to not have a mistake, or if you did you just go like that and carry on, but if you was doing it normally you’d just tippex it but computers, ah they took over the world. Just do delete.

**Can you remember when they came in then, the computers?**

J: Not really. As erm, I didn’t really have a computer till I was fifty. I went to a college. And er, it was just for women. It folded up, it ran out of money.

**Oh really**.

Yea it was just round Surrey docks. And erm it was for, they advertised it on a stall at surrey quays, and er to teach women how to do computing. And it was also you could become a decorator and things like that. And we all, well, the girl I’ve know from five, she went, so we went together. And you made friends there. And you, like from ten till three two days a week. Only I’m now got an equivalent to and a level.

**Oh wow.**

I’ve done the beginners course, I’ve done the intermediate. Passed them. On a computer. Erm, but I was fifty. When I did that.

**When you did that. \* laughs \* So when was that about two thousand…?**

Two thousand and three.

**Two thousand and three.**

Something like that.

**Ok.**

But I finished, ‘cos I was there for a couple of years, in two thousand I was fifty, but you, worked for a couple of years…

**So when you did that course, was that to help you for any work that you were doing at the time or was it more for your own…**

No, I think what it was, was, erm, I looked after my mum for ten years, she had Alzheimer’s, my son, he was at college and things like that, erm. And I wanted something to do. My mum died in two thousand and three and I lacked confidence at the time. And I thought that’s a good way to get it back.

**Yeah**.

And er I liked it. But I mean recently I bought myself one them little things.

**Oh what like a laptop? Type thing. Yeah. I was gonna say have up kept that up then?**

Yeah because, erm, I write stories and I write poetry.

**Ok. Ah!**

So erm,

**You do that on your…**

I do that and I’m trying to get that published.

**I don’t know how relevant it is but what kind of thing are you…?**

I write a lot of holy poems. Erm, I kind of, I won’t say it on the, I’ll tell you off the record afterwards but I write a lot of holy poems and I write stories, short stories. Erm, but I’ve been writing from an early age.

**Yeah, so you doing that through the**…

Yeah I like to do that its, it’s quite interesting. But erm, I do other things, y’know I don’t just to that, I think, now I’m sixty two I don’t want to be one of these that sits in a chair and watches T.V you know what I mean I’m an active person.

**Yeah. So doing volunt…I see you’ve been doing voluntary work?**

I have been yeah.

**And when, so when did you, you worked for the metropolitan, so you were working for the police**

I worked there as a volunteer as well

**Ok**

That’s our training, you had do go about three evenings a week, erm, and you had to learn how to mingle in fact, with the public, y’know what I mean how to handle them.

**Oh really? So how did they, how did they help you do that? What was the training?**

Well the training is what you get erm, cos I was working on the front counter in Camberwell police station, and you know if a person came in and said I’ve lost my wallet blah, blah, blah you’d have to take details of what happened and all that.

**You must get some interesting….**

Really interesting.

…**things coming in.**

And I worked for them for about two and half years before they closed.

**They closed, how come? Why?**

Money. They’re shut, shutting all the police stations up.

**So** **what year was that when they closed?**

That was about two thousand and seven, something like that.

**Seven**.

But I got a star award. Er, and I got a certificate which I put in a frame from the, erm, the star award was awarded to me buy the, erm, Mayor of Southwark.

**Ah Ok yeah the Mayor of Southwark.**

At the, they had like a function at the hotel down Tooley street. There was papers and all that there.

**Wow!**

And erm, the borough police commissioner, sort of thing, I got the certificate in a frame to say, you know I’ve, cos I done so many hours with them, I done over a hundred, well over a hundred.

**What did the star stand for? Or is it?**

It’s because I done so many hours. As a volunteer.

**To get that award, Fantastic**.

I got it!

**Brilliant! So you were working with them when you were younger and then you, did you leave, or what that kind of a transition?**

No, I left, because you know in those times you could walk in and out of jobs you know as you left one you could go next one start another.

**Really?**

You were that age where you don’t know what you want to do and you know,

**Trying different things.**

I suppose really I wanted to do…writing. But in those times when you were, erm, you were working class and the working class it wasn’t noted to have careers.

**Ok. Was what, so what was the option for working class then?**

Nope! You just done, worked for a living.

**To survive**.

Yeah.

**To get on with it. So what did you do then when you left the police? How old were you? When you were younger?**

Well, I was about; I don’t know what age I was. Must have been about twenty five, twenty six.

**And where did you go from there?**

I just done, I worked for Trust house Forte for eight years.

**Trust hal forty?**

Trust house Forte

**Trust house Forte.**

Like, erm, catering, big, they had all the hotels. You know like on the T.V the Hotel Inspector? Have you seen that?

**Yeah, yeah I’ve seen that.**

You know the woman?

**Ruth…?**

Erm, you know what I’m talking about.

**The presenter who presents it? Yeah.**

Well she’s, she’s a cousin of Mr Forte who owns all these hotels like the Cumberland and Ritz, and Pearl and all them hotels.

**Oh. Ok.**

So I worked for him. And I was in credit control.

**What did that involve?**

Oh that was interesting. It was erm, any hotels that did credit or complaints. And muggings was, but I liked it because you got to know, you really got to know the people.

**Yeah. And where were you based**?

I was based in spar road.

**Spar road. Is that near here?**

Yeah. It’s not far away.

**Ah. And do you, were you in an office, is that where you..**

Oh I was in an office.

**So they’d come through to you.**

They’d telephone through and er, you know, have a little moan.

**Yeah.**

I’d come and cheer them up and we’d have a laugh on the phone.

**Ah! And what hours were you working there?**

Erm, well I was working nine to five but if you worked longer you got paid for it so I often used to work, longer. Get a bit more money. But it was um, I lived in Peckham so it was only a question of getting like a bus through.

**Not far. What, erm, were you strongest memories of that work place then?**

Um, it was just nice to be there. It wasn’t like work.

**Yeah.**

There used to be three of is in one office and then there was the big accounts outside. And then you had like the factory part where they used to prepare all the vegetables. But you had different branches like one would be down long lane, an old place you know where they do all different, like bread and like pastries and all that and then you’d have the fruit and veg and then you’d have the meats and all that sort of stuff.

**So these were, so those were the different branches of…?**

They was all was Trusthouse Forte. All, all our suppliers would go to the hotels.

**Oh right so they were all local then? These branches…**

Yeah but, but the erm, hotels were all different you know, erm even the like little chefs on the motorway, we dealt with them.

**Wow oh yeah so what other, er you mentioned the Ritz earlier on**

**And**

Yeah.

**And little chef so what other erm**…

Well there was the little Chef and there was like the erm, er, like the taverns that you stay in on the motorway. That was quite interesting. You know. But then the firm’s kind of folding up in that area and going somewhere else and it was travelling that I didn’t do it.

**Did you give it, give it a go or were you just not…**

No I’ve got two it was too far.

**Where did it move?**

Well it was out, the place, it was out of London, you know so it was no good for me.

**Right. So when was it, you’d been with them eight years?**

I’d been there about seven years. And then I worked as a temp taking orders, like telesales in a company at Spar road under the arches and they asked me to stay in the end and I was with them for three years.

**Oh right so you started temping and then…**

I started temping and then they kept you know, asking for me and then they said would you like a job here and I said yes please!

**So what, you said under the arches can you describe a little bit? What that was like.**

It was like trains over the top. Not very nice, I mean, under the arches you have that stuff called Kia Ora.

**Kia Ora? No.**

Orange drink and lime drink.

**Oh, Yep yeah.**

What you got in cinemas.

**Yeah I think I’ve…**

In a tub. In a long tub.

**I think I’ve heard of it yeah.**

Well I used to sell that. But they used to make it in the arch.

**Oh there where you were, based?**

I used to work upstairs but they used to ring people up and ask for the orders that’s all we did really. But it, it was nice there were only three of us.

**That’s quite small. So what, just to get kind of an idea, ‘cos obviously gonna put this into sort of, onto the stage, to just get a kind of sense of what it felt like having the trains above you, can you describe a little bit?**

Well you’d get a lot of pigeons. You opened the window there was lots of pigeons. Which I have… I feed pigeons now, but at the time I didn’t like them. Erm, Cos you was frightened what they gonna do, at the other end. Um, You know, but you’d get the trains overhead so there was lots of noise. If you were on the phone you know. There was cold air and even in the summer.

**Oh really? So it was quite draughty. What were the smells like?**

Not at all that nice! You know it was like the warehouse just smelled of juice really. All you could smell was the different flavours. Cos it was all done, all hygienic, all nice. Erm, But I didn’t like it I didn’t like the drink so. I didn’t like it.

**Mm. So wasn’t the best smell.**

But that folded up that went to Aylesbury so there was another job you know.

**So what was next?**

Well next, well then by that time I’d met my partner and, erm he was in the Merchant Navy.

**In the Navy.**

And I stayed up in Scotland for a little while.

**Oh ok. So you went to…**

Um. Yeah. Not something I’d always do, but yeah I left the area, erm, but he died. He died when my son was about three.

**Ok.**

Erm, and now my son is a nurse.

**Oh really? In the area?**

No he lives in, er he lives in, he lives and works in, well he lives in Hammersmith but he works at the London chest hospital. He’s a cardiac nurse.

**Oh right so he’s still in London.**

yes.

**How, how old is he?**

He’s twenty four.

**So when you, when he was about, so did you stop working when he was…**

Well I stopped working when my mum became ill which was about seventy- six I suppose, nineteen seventy six, I done that in two thousand and three. Nineteen-ninety odd wasn’t it? I think it was…I can’t re…unless I got…

**Dates go yeah…**

About nineteen ninety, something like that.

**That’s when you stopped?**

Cos she, um, she was actually mugged. And um they stole her money and it made her mind go.

**Oh, traumatic.**

Mm. She, um, oh she started acting really strange and that. And I, you know, people, doctor and that, and they just said to me she got early stages of Alzheimer’s. So I looked after her for ten years. Drained me I tell you. And then two years before she died I put her in a home. Like, one down Red Lion but I still went in there every day. But it was just like relief you know that you…

Getting some support.

Yeah you had that time to yourself.

**Yeah. So then you started, so during that time you kind of went, you had a period of obviously looking after you mum…**

Yeah and when she died I did a bit of voluntary work and you know just to do something.

**What did you get involved with them?**

Um, I went to Dulwich helpline. They do befriending, but they also do like hospital visits erm, I used to do that. I used to go to a lady at Peckham. Cos she was blind, or semi-blind. And I used to open her post for her and put it in big letters on a blackboard, the next appointment she’s got. I used to go once a week or we’d go, I’d take her down Peckham, she liked to go down Peckham, shopping. She’d…

**To support her…**

I lied to you she’d hold me arm. But yeah I done that sort of thing.

**Was that Dulwich line based here or how did you hear about them?**

No I’d just I don’t know where I got that from to be honest. I was just looking for somewhere to do voluntary work. And they mainly dealt with, ‘cos they, I think they are still based at Dulwich hospital. And but yeah I quite enjoyed it. And then um I done something round here in Time Talents as a befriender.

**Yeah so tell us about that?**

You just went to people’s homes really and erm, you didn’t do any, you could take them shopping but you didn’t have to hold the shopping. Or just sit in and do anything they wanted.

**Were they living round here?**

Yeah. Cos they used to go to this couple and the erm the wife would go shopping for a few hours I would be left with David who was blind and we played dominoes, like all the Braille…

**Oh course, yeah…**

And cards. And he used to crack jokes all the time he was really funny. And erm, and then I left as something else come up. Can’t remember what something was.

**Yeah. Good to do. Going back to like, memories of the changes, I know you said a couple of times how, significant it was when the docks shut, what, what, what did that process in involve. Was that a gradual closing or how did that…**

Well there was, they started, erm, they started putting in things like, erm, containers. There was lots of thieving on the docks d’you know what I mean, it’d be, it’d come in a box, a big wooden box or it would come in a cardboard box…

**All the goods would…?**

They started putting in all containers which was sealed. And, erm, it was better really, you know it would have on it what, but it stopped the thefts. I know it went on. And erm, then they were talking about closing the docks down er, and then that’s what they did you know. And its, it destroyed everyone I think.

**Why did they, erm, what was their reasoning for closing them.**

J: It was, I don’t really know they left the docks like for a little while. The London docks like, west London and east. Tilbury docks is still now functioning. But the local docks down here were shut em. And they started taking the warehouses round here and putting into flats. Just doesn’t seem right. But they’re not; they weren’t the Bermondsey people going in.

**They were coming in…**

The people coming in who had money. And that’s what you get, it’s like, erm, a few years ago, it was all, if you walk up the river it was all lovely houses. And it wasn’t for us. It was for other people.

**People who could afford…**

There was a riot up here.

**Really?**

Oh it was quite some time ago now. About nineteen eighty-one. Something like that.

**And that was people who had been…**

Well people were I was only little, but because you was, you had slums. You lived in slums when you were younger. Or and we had outside loos?

and things like that. Didn’t have a bathroom. Erm, having to traipse through every saturday through the park to like Seven Islands where it is now, used to be like what we called the baths, where you could do your washing with these great big iron things that come out where you, you air all, dry all your washing and that you know, erm, and the kind of, looks like a weir but it was an ironer and you put your sheets through an iron. People then put it on; they’re washing on to prams and go home. You know an it’s all done.

**And how often do people do that?**

J: Once a week. My mum went there once a week. She used to do an early morning cleaning job. She’d get home and put a meat pie, a meat pudding on the gas on a low heat so it would be ready in time for my dad to come home at twelve. And she get all her washing strapped up on the pram, and walk to Tranton road, like Southwark park road right through to the Oval park like where the police station in lower road is, or to Seven Island do her washing and then walk all the way back. To get in they’re to do the potatoes and greens before my dad came in.

**At twelve o clock so all this has been going on before midday. Incredible isn’t it.**

You had a hard life you know what I mean. It was hard.

**Yeah. Different. Um, memories of being down, working down in the docks. for you When you were a clerk. What in terms of like visual memories, and smells and so on?**

If you went down Tooley Street you would have, you would smell cheeses, ‘cos there was cheese factory I never worked in it, I never smelled of cheese forever and erm there was also like a lemon place? So you have smells of \*pie and there was an egg, several egg places.

**So for egg.**

Eggs. You know proper eggs. But you would have like; my mum would send me with a basin and sixpence. I would have about, quite a long walk from down this end to Tooley Street. Where you, you know I’d have to ask for broken eggs or cracked eggs.

**What was that because they were?**

Cheap!

**Yeah.**

They were just cheap and you can make and omelette out of that you know. Is really interesting. Are we still on?

**Got my backup! Erm, is there anything like that I haven’t necessarily indicated that you feel you want to tell me about? You think would be quite significant.**

I think like the community. It was different. You haven’t got the, the trust, if you like. You can’t trust anyone now. I know it sounds awful. But you in a community everyone knew everyone and if there was a stranger there they know. You know they’d say “Who’s he?” or “ Who’s she?” you know and…

**People were interested.**

You don’t get the trust. You’re kind of, when I go indoors now I lock up. You’d never do that.

**Mm. Not in this area?**

Not in this area no.

**And you do find, erm accessing the community in this area now, sort of feeling part of it, do you? Or.**

Not always. I mean I’ve, I’ve moved into that flat three years ago and I lived in p… I knew the flats, when I was little, I used to play in it, erm but they’re all a bit kind of snobby if you know what I mean. And it took me about a year for someone to say hello to me back. I thought, when I moved in, this isn’t going to be for me. But gradually the people get to know you and they say hello to you. But it’s still very private. D’you know what I mean. Whereas where I lived before, I lived there for twenty-one years.

**Right, where was that.**

In Cherry garden. And it was, erm, people talk to you, you talk to some of…

**And what was the layout like? Cos you said that, you said that where you are now, is that like a block?**

Oh yeah, tall, Fifth floor block.

**Whereas what was Cherry garden like? What was the layout?**

Well I was on the first floor. Them like little houses you have set flats in each, so there was like three houses, but everyone was kind of, not being nosy but everyone kind of knew you. Speak to you have a laugh with you, you know and all that. But this place is a little bit different. A bit upmarket!

**Yeah! I guess it’s linked to what you were saying before about some of the buildings not necessarily being for people who’ve been here the whole time.**

I mean now, you go, our, although its council, you’ve got several that are private. And I’ve got living next to me a private couple. And I’ll say hello to them but I don’t know ‘em.

**Mm. That’s what you get.**

Yeah you knew your neighbours before you don’t now. Erm, I got a guy, up above me, he talks to me, have a laugh, things like that. And the lady underneath, we’ll say ‘ello but I couldn’t say I actually knew anyone.

**So you, when you were living in the place before, erm that was for twenty-one years, so that would have been, so you been in the new place for three years?**

I moved in the August of nineteen eighty-eighty. In my other flat.

**In to that. Into Cherry…**

Into Cherry gardens. And my son was four months old. And I moved out in August. I always move in August, I don’t know why. In two thousand and nine.

**So you were there for a while. And when you were living in Cherry Gardens, were the people that you knew, that were living round you, were they all working locally as well, did people often work together as well?**

A lot of them I suppose yeah. A couple of jobs some round here an’ that.

**Mm. Was it quite, um and during that time how what was getting work like for people, in that time. Do you remember**?

Erm…

**Cos the docks would have shut what five years before that, so.**

Yeah. Yeah. No there was lots of unemployment. Yeah. There really was. Lucky if you got a job in a sort of, cos there were supermarkets then. But get a job in a supermarket. But you were kind of taking jobs you wouldn’t normally have. Do you know what I’m saying?

**Yeah.**

Not being a prude, or nothing like that.

**No.**

But like if say, erm, like my brother who worked on the river, erm, he then went to the erm, work on the river bus right and he done that for a little while, ‘cos he knew about the river. And when that folded up he became a caretaker and it was, it was a job that perhaps an older person would have took, when he was younger. So you were going out to your each, to the job that you really wanted to do.

**That sort of changing nature of a job for life, sort of thing**.

Cos there’s quite a lot of training to be become a Lighter man.

**Mm. Did you visit your brother when he was working?**

No. I didn’t go about Lighter man, cos they used to, on tugs they would take freight up and down river.

**They would take?**

The freight. The commodities all up and down the river.

**Oh ok its called freight. Good to know this terminology! I’m getting to know a bit. So did you come into contact much, while you were working, with people on the boats and stuff.**

No not really. But you knew, you kind of knew about it what it was…

**What’s going on?**

What was going on? Erm, but er, he worked there all his life really. He started off in a florist making the wires for flowers, like for the wreaths. But he didn’t like that. And then he, by knowing someone on the river he got on the river. You had to know someone to do that.

**Oh really? Who is, what was it a friend or, would they put a good word in.**

Yep.

**So when did he, when did he start working on the river.**

Oh I don’t know. I’m hoping he’ll write this down.

: **Yeah.**

Cos then you’ll have it on paper.

**For the next generation. So erm, in the offices you were working in, mainly women?**

A mixture.

**Yeah. Doing the same job as you?**

Well, er, no, in the shipping place you mean?

**Yeah.**

No it was women that would type. Men would talk; speak on the phone to docks and things like that.

**Ok. Erm, right, er how did you feel that like work, I know you mentioned it a little bit, but in terms of affecting, changing your home life, I mean you mentioned a bit about when you were younger, the independence that came with that. erm, but is there anything else that you feel was quite significant when you started working, changing, depending on what work you did? How that affected…**

Yeah I think that, erm, I just think that things, you know as you got older changed. It was very kind of, you were kind of brought up with manners and morals d’you know what I mean that were droned into you and you have to respect and you would dream of saying to your mum, for instance, “No I’m not going to do that” you know, so you had to do it. And erm, very different from now. You know, you’re lucky if you get a child that behaves, you know, but you didn’t have a mind if you like, until you was twenty one. Cos they decided for you.

**Did you know that was the age, did you look forward to that age knowing that that was what it would involve?**

Oh I couldn’t wait till I was twenty-one! I couldn’t wait till I was twenty-one. When I could do what I liked and come in when I liked. I mean at the age of, like, say nineteen something like that, an I started going out with a…a… bloke and saying to him I got to be in a ten o clock d’you know what I mean? But they accepted it.

**Yeah, because that was what everyone**…

That was what everyone did.

**So when what erm, what was really noticeable for you. Did everything change when you were twenty-one. What is really noticeable?**

it was like freedom. It was just like having the shackle off. Cos you could go and drink, you could vote, you could speak up and say what you think. You know before you just didn’t do it but you could put your view to your mum and dad.

**And did that, do you think affect your confidence in the workplace as well?**

Oh yeah. Probably. Yeah. I mean if I was going to a doctor. You had to take your mum with you; the doctor wouldn’t see you without her there. And it might be something you don’t want her to know about!

**Oh yeah!**

You know. Really, I can remember, when I was, going on the pill when I was nineteen. Er, and I went to a different area?

**Oh right, so ‘cos did you know your doctor? A while or.**

Well you don’t know he’d tell her? And I couldn’t tell her that. I actually, they actually sent me to family planning, cos I didn’t know about them places d’you know what I mean? And I just used to go there and it as a secret with them anyway. They didn’t tell anyone anyway, so it was ideal. You know everything then was kind of coming in to different things like you know the pill, more fun in your life, You know you didn’t have to worry so much…

**Yeah, about your parents. Erm, in terms of your health and working conditions, what did you, did you notice anything significant about that over the years?**

Erm, not so much in my work life. Er, I had, from an early age, bronchitis, which they now say would have been asthma, because I am asthmatic. An’ I had bad, not so much bad chest but wheeze and all that. But you kind of lived in houses with coal fires, you had freezing cold bedrooms, you had a bucket in the middle if it rains, you had an outside toilet. All them type of things. You didn’t have central heating. You know, you just had a paraffin fire in the kitchen and a coal fire in the living room and that’s all you had.

**Right. That was it, to warm the house.**

And the fumes from that would make my chest bad. Erm, kind of, school, I can remember having a lot of time off in my first school cos of my chest, there wasn’t the food around, I mean I’m not saying we starved, but you would have foods to fill you up. Like you’d have, say, say mincemeat with potatoes and some veg and then, on the side of your plate, you’d have a great big thick piece of pudding, like suet pudding, plain, to fill you up.

**Yeah.**

And the grease, would grease your insides that what they used to say!

**Right.**

That’s why I’m fat now. You know it was all foods that would fill you up ‘cos they didn’t have the money. There wasn’t the money there, I mean now, I’ve got all sorts of things wrong with me, but not through I don’t think I think it’s just an age thing. You know, it’s not through what parents had done or way of living. But you made yourself, I mean to go to a doctor years ago would cost you half a crown, so you did a lot of remedies yourself. Done a lot of remedies yourself until you was really unwell then you paid the two and six.

**So as well if I suppose, in terms of the workplace, like keeping that warm. Was that ok or did it...how would they go about that, was that ok or did it tend to be sort of?**

Well I think by, I think we just had in the offices, like, er, what do they call it? Double-glazing. But I couldn’t never remember any radiators in, you know?

**When did double-glazing, when did double-glazing come in?**

I’ve no idea. I think companies got it first didn’t they? And then it was like…

**Yeah, and into the family home later a bit later**

But I mean the place that we lived were like slums. And it wasn’t till, I mean I was aged; I was aged about nine when we had electricity. Before that we had gas and men…mantels, you know that you’d light, all round the room. Ooh, in the room and it was lovely cos I playing when they put in electric. Oh it was lovely and you kept turning the lights on \* our dad said don’t keep doing that!

**Blow a fuse!**

Cost me money!

**God yeah so did someone come round and install it, do you remember that?**

Yeah. But I just couldn’t believe it; I got a light you know.

**And did things like that, any changes like that, were there any changes that you remember while you were working that really changed how, erm, you worked. I mean that had same sort of impact that you described there?**

J: Yeah, no, I mean I used to have; there was a big, er, like a lot of power-cuts in them times. They had one that oh went on for such a long time.

**What did you do?**

Well we had to work. We were given, we had to work only two, say three hours that day, and you’d only get paid for three hours as well. So all the time we had the light, it’s all to do with miners when they went on strike.

**And how did that impact?**

Well you just you didn’t have the work; you couldn’t do your work. So you do say three hours in the time that your lights would be on, and then you’d be working by candlelight, if you couldn’t work by candlelight, which was hard, on a typewriter, erm, you’d have to go home.

**And then you wouldn’t get paid.**

J: And you wouldn’t get paid.

X: **And were the power cuts, you were saying that was the result of the miners’ strike.**

Yeah there was the miners’ strike in nineteen I think it was nineteen seventies. But it was well-known, big one you know. And it just affected you that way. I used to try and get home, if I was going out on the night, to get my make up on before I had to use a candle you know what I mean.

**To catch up the daylight.**

‘Cos you couldn’t put your eyelashes on in that, you know, you’d have a beard or something!

**I don’t know that one! Ah. So, erm, so when you were working by candlelight, would you be supplied, would there be a supply of candles?**

Oh they’d give you the candles but you couldn’t do it. You just couldn’t work like that.

**No, I suppose the impact that would have on your eyes as well.**

Yeah, well I have got eye trouble now, I got like, on this eye, I’ve got a cataract. I’m waiting for an operation. But on this eye, I can’t wear mascara. Which is annoying. Cos I do like mascara. Erm, my eyelashes fall out, and when they grow, they grow inward, so I have to kind of clean it very well. Nothing I can do about it. So, you know, I shouldn’t but I do. I wear eyelashes. Cos if you going out you know…

**yeah, what the fake ones? Or do you get the mascara out?**

Oh no, The fake ones.

**Do you get them done or do you do them yourself?**

No I do them myself!

**Yeah.**

I’ll sit here, I’m not supposed to use it ‘em but I do it, I’m I can’t…do like to go out for a drink.

**yeah. Definitely, erm, what, erm sort of things…what work…what did you feel, how much of a sense of purpose, much of your identity do you feel was affiliated with the work you were doing at the time?**

The work I was doing at the time when I started work, the time in the docks was just working for a living. Because that’s all you could do. As you got older, erm, you felt more important if you like, you felt like you had purpose, you were, erm, serving the community. And but that wasn’t until I was much older. But you know, it was always droned into you, like, cos I used to always say to my dad I’d love to write, be a writer. He say, oh it’s a pipe dreams. Because it was. You know now they got opportunities and good luck to them because it’s great. But you wouldn’t…it would be drummed into you you’re going above your station, you’re working class.

**So was that a sort of self-awareness about that.**

Oh yeah, you were pushed down all the time, especially as a woman. A woman wouldn’t be allowed, to have a career. Your place was in the home and you know, bringing children up. Thank god that’s gone. So pleased, it’s like women, you know has got their say. But it, that’s how it was. You weren’t allowed to do it.

**And I mean it sounds like you, I know aside from when you were looking after your mum that you’ve always been working?**

Mm.

**So did you feel as a woman in the workplace, did you feel empowered, did you feel like you, like your voice mattered?**

Not always.

**No.**

Not always.

**More so in certain jobs?**

Yeah, when I worked for the police, really erm, and more so as a volunteer, you know rather than…you know you could have your say and you felt more important because, erm, you were helping the community.

**Yeah.**

I don’t know what it was it was just something you didn’t feel like a drudge that you were made to feel years ago. You were just there to earn a living, give to your parents or to give up your wages. But you were always labelled working class.

**Mm.**

Working class don’t do this. I mean years ago they used to have trains, I can remember trains being, erm in a compartment, like, ‘ladies only’ or working class, third class second class and first class. You know and how humiliating is that?

**Mm, it just reproduces as well…**

Yeah, and it, I so glad all that’s gone.

**Do you feel that, do you notice that?**

Oh yeah. I mean it’s still first class, but you still might get someone that’s erm, kind of, erm, specially if they got money, you know and er, but feel they’re above you and you just put them out, put them in their place d’you know what I mean…

**Yeah \*laughs \***

You don’t allow that to happen, but then you didn’t do that.

**And I suppose do you notice that when you’ve been volunteering more recently, within a workplace, erm do you notice different dynamics from when you were younger?**

Yeah, but more so, you know you could, years ago you wouldn’t speak really, to people like that, erm, it wouldn’t be in a nasty way but, you couldn’t have a conversation because you were two different classes if you know what I mean, but now you can.

**So what kind or roles then would you, so did notice that there you would be working alongside people from different classes?**

I were yeah.

**What roles were they be doing then?**

Same as you.

**Oh really? But you’d still not…**

Oh only its, now, nowadays, they do same role as you and if they had money or were well spoken you got a long together.

**Yeah.**

You know what I mean, because that’s how it should be. And erm, people, you know different colours and nationalities get along together. Years ago, it wasn’t like that. Erm, like nineteen fifty-five and people from Africa coming over. And it was a novelty I suppose at first ‘cos you’d never seen anyone that colour before it was terrible, and there was you know, then we got on ok. You can get along with people now.

**Right.**

You were separated; you seemed to be separated years ago.

**Where did you find, when you were younger did you ever work alongside black people?**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Yeah. But the communication was different?**

Well, er, you could talk to them. You couldn’t if I was working with, years ago, if I was working with someone er more educated than me, say, erm, they would make you feel you were lower than them, which was humiliating, and er that don’t happen, because you can work with each other. For mostly anyway.

**Yeah I guess it’s sort of like relative it depends what you’re doing, what kind of work you’re doing and so um, but I suppose for your experience round here. Ok well brilliant. Erm, were you, was there any time in your life you were made redundant.**

Oh yeah.

**Yeah.**

Yeah. Erm, from, you could say from Schweppes, like from Cadbury Schweppes, ‘cos although I was offered…

**What was that sorry? Cadbury Schweppes?**

Yeah, Cadbury Schweppes.

**Oh when did you work for them?**

When I was erm, at telesales.

**Ok.**

At Kia Ora.

**Oh right yeah…**

Yeah

**…same time?**

Erm, I was offered a job in Aylesbury, cos that’s where they were moving. But it was too far away for me. I would have had to find a place to live etcetera etcetera. And erm, and they then offered me redundancy money.

**And, so you took that?**

I took it.

**Yeah. And that was after three years you were there, was it?**

Well, yeah.

**As a temp as well wasn’t it? So of the places you worked in are there many left are many still around?**

Erm, the company, the freighters down at Bermondsey Street are still there. Erm, yeah I cant, there’s a big P and O is in the city. And perhaps the little... down Southwark street moved over there I don’t know. Erm, Southwark police station is still there, juvenile bureau where I worked as a typist, it moved to erm, down Walworth road I believe. I don’t know, that’s... Schweppes moved out. Which is a shame. They should have more people round here. Instead of kind of, I know we need places to live but they should do more work round here. That, you know ‘cos there are tons round here that haven’t got a job.

**Mm. Yeah and having to commute to find work. What sort of skills then, as you’ve gone through like, doing slightly different jobs? Talk me through a little bit like the skills you required, that you felt you needed in the different roles?**

Right, well, erm, typing I was, er I went to evening school for. And they taught during that first job to use certain machines.

**Which machines?**

Switchboard did that.

**Oh. I might catch you on camera doing that.**

Really funny that was, really, you really had an achy arm by the end of it!

**Did you swap arms?**

No, ‘cos I’m right handed.

**So you only had the one…**

But you had these things on your head these earphones and I had to plug…you’ve seen? Have you ever seen the switchboard?

**Not sure…**

You got two plugs.

**Oh that you kind of change them over?**

Yeah. Well they done one where you have a switch that you pull down and it would ring a bell to the extension. But the first one I ever done it didn’t have a bell it had this, thing that you’d push the plugs in you need to

**Spin it round.**

So it would really \* laughs \*

**How much, long would you have to do that for?**

Oh till they answered.

**Oh I see.**

You had like, ‘cos you was all in one big room, you’d hear everything.

**How many people would have been in there?**

Oh must have had about thirty.

**Thirty of you on these switchboards?**

Oh no no, it was just me.

**Ok.**

But you would cover all that area, the phones.

Ok.

Well in the next as I got, the next switchboard there’d be one with the plug but you’d push back the switch, push back it would ring, and it would show up it’s been answered.

**So when**, when, what year or about what time was it when then went out.

Sixty-five.

**And then the switch came in.**

Well that was different. As different companies you know. But I’d, erm, like, telex machines.

**What machines?**

At…I. You don’t even know…!

**What’s telex?**

I actually seen one in a museum. It’s quite frightening! A Telex machine was like what you’d use as a fax now.

**Ok.**

But what you used to do was type it on a tape er, you message, wherever you wanted it go, and on the tape you threddle it through, ring the number, press a button and the tape would go off through to a machine at the other end. And it would type up on this board.

**Ah, so it would like read the tape…?**

Yeah. And type up on screen, on a piece of paper and they just tear the piece of paper off and that’s you telex.

**Ah interesting, so how long was that, when did that erm, when was that used until? Do you know?**

I’ve no idea.

**No idea.**

I mean I was still using that in the police…

**When you were working**?

When I was working. They started bringing faxes in. When I was a volunteer.

**Oh so that was in…remind me of the date so we can…**

Oh two thousand.

**Two thousand…Ah’s crazy isn’t it?**

But the telex was erm, what would happen in police stations, you would have, say from reporters, of a crime in that area, come up on the tags, they’d just tear it off and get in their cars and go off.

**Oh really so that’s how they used to receive information of what was happening? And what was did you, when you were working, erm, for the police station the first time, erm, were you receiving those as well and were you letting them know.**

Well if it came in the office and I was there I just used to tear if off and give it to someone.

**So when you know you said, about the training for part of that role which was like how to like negotiate and speak with people in public?**

That was when I was volunteering.

**That was when you were volunteering, so did you get that, when you were working for the police before did you get anything like that?**

No.

**No.**

You just, you just got thrown in it.

**Yeah!**

You…’cos I was working in like a bureau, for young offenders, and erm it was er, police officers interviewing someone that had committed a crime and I was doing the typing.

**So would you be in there? In the room?**

I’d be in the room taking notes and erm, type, and I’d have to type it. See I’m a quick writer I’ve always been a quick writer.

**Yeah. But you had to be able to type what was…**

Yeah.

**What was the atmosphere like in those, in the room there?**

Oh it was lovely. In there it was.

**Really?**

Yeah, you had your own office. It was like a little flat within the station.

**Ok**.

But they would go out, if they had to go to court or anything like that they’ all be out. I’d be sitting there; I’d be sitting there, sitting reading a book, or something…

**And then would you get called in to the room, when they had someone in?**

Sometimes yeah.

**What about the first, what did you f… do you remember how it felt the first few times of having that responsibility of going in and…**

Oh well…

**Just get on with it.**

I used to hate it really.

**That bit.**

Yeah ‘cos you got like a little kid here that’s done wrong, you know what I mean?

**Yeah. Were they quite hard on them, would the police officers be?**

I think they tried to be so they wouldn’t come back.

**Mm. Make the experience sort of… as unpleasant as possible really.**

Mm.

**Ok, And then, so in terms of the voluntary work a but later on I suppose, being paid for a job changes the, there’s training or…**

Yeah, er, being a volunteer, so it was voluntary, so I didn’t get paid, you got your fares and things like that, but it was just nice in one way to feel wanted. Like, er, and helping the community.

**I suppose, erm, ‘cos I know that you said when you first started working when you were younger it was a means to an end, well cos I mean like you were earning money erm, so the work that you’ve been doing more recently sort of was a bit of a knock-on effect for what happened like with your mum so did you find that you were bringing skills, don’t like skills, don’t mean say skills, experiences?**

Yeah well you learn all through your life really don’t you?

**Yeah.**

And, er, you know like when I was younger even when I was working and me self, like as I got older it was still that having enough money for the week to survive, erm, going on to another job if it was more money, where you per’aps didn’t want to leave where you were, but if they wouldn’t give you a rise you left. And you got another job easy. And then that all changed and all of sudden you couldn’t get a job. And then you found you were taking a lesser job than you would normally. And it was a vicious circle going round again, ‘cos you were surviving.

**So you felt like you’d kind of progressed and then you had to go…**

**Yeah. But I mean nowadays, you know young people go** to college they go to university, unless they get a job, not always, but they, if they’re lucky they get a job and they got their career. And I’ve never had that. And at the age of my age, I was sitting writing poetry and stories, what, what I wanted to do years ago.

**Did you do, have you been doing that all the way through? You’ve been writing?**

I’ve been writing. I wrote, the short…

**the stories…**

Yeah I write short stories and poems all the time.

**And would you be, would you consider now doing something with those professionally, or would think…**

Yeah I want to see if I can get them published.

**Maybe it’s like…. yeah its now that you feel able to**…

Well I’m retired, I must be, well I’m still there for my son actually but he’s old enough he lives, he lives er in London, he was in Harlow actually he was living there erm, and working at a hospital there, but he, career wise, he erm, he couldn’t kind of move up the scale ‘cos they all lived in that area, and they all worked in that area and he had to be someone that retired for him to go up the scale.

**Ah ok.**

So he come back to London.

**Ah so he came back. When did he move out of this area? How old was he when he moved out?**

Moved out. Of…?

**Home.**

Yeah.

Home. He was, erm, nineteen. In two thousand and nine he went to university.

**Mm. Where did he go?**

Oh. Erm, Buckinghamshire, er, university er, and then he er, he did his course there and.

**Now he’s a nurse.**

Now he’s a nurse yeah.

**or did you want him to go, was that something you were quite keen for him to do? University or…**

Well I was I’ve wanted him to get on. He was quite brainy. I don’t know where it came from. He could have gone to grammar school. Things like that. He was always a child that had his head in a book, d’you know what I mean, he never went out into the street with boys. Erm, he went to senior school and became head boy and…

**So yeah, on it!**

J: Oh, but he also liked, you know, he likes company, and going out

**A lot of us do don’t we!**

So do I.

No but he’s good, he’s good. Erm, he works quite high dependency, you know like open heart surgery, so you know, he looks after you when you come from theatre let’s put it that way. And you’re on his ward for about two weeks.

**Wow. Brave work. And is there anything else that you feel that we haven’t covered that you think?**

I don’t know

**I mean we’ve done loads. It’s been really interesting it’s just if you feel…**

Yeah, I should just er, different values, are different now.

**That’s really what you feel** is significant?

Yeah I mean they’re not the values we had…

**Is that, I mean I know you mentioned the role of women and I know you’re glad that those values have changed so is…**

I know I mean you get…I’ll kind of paint a picture for you you’d have, you’d have, you’d have know you got these overall that go over, d’you remember the pinafores?

**Yeah.**

Well that’s what your mum would wear all the time. Unless she went out. There were two, you’d roll, and that was how they’d dressed and they’d all stand in doors chatting. And they were people, and though they were quite poor, erm, they were clean. They had always done their windows and erm, their, their steps you know. Erm…

**Very home-orientated.**

Yeah, erm, and made do. If you like. They’d sew. I mean I can actually darn I can sew anything. I can…

**Practical things…**

Practical I don’t throw anything away if I can mend it ‘cos that’s the way I have been brought up. Do you know what I mean its erm, good in one way, but I get my sons socks sometimes and he says can you and there might be a great big hole I says if, “No just throw them away,” I cant darn that! If it was a little bit..

**You might be able to…**

You know but you know all them skills, you know I know how to put together again like a dinner that you don’t have a lot of money with, d’you know I’m happy for that sort of thing. But I’m so glad that things have changed in that respect that you’re individual, you’re not, ‘cos you’re working class you’re just as important as those with higher status. Whereas it never used to be like that. But you were happy if you like in them time’s cos you didn’t have much and when you did…

**Appreciated it.**

You appreciated it.

**I suppose as well, when the docks closed did a lot of people move away from here?**

Yeah. They moved to Essex and, there’s more London people in Essex.

**They went outwards. There was that programme did you watch on the BBC about Deptford, and Camberwell…**

Oh I see all them yeah… interesting.

**Yeah. Really interesting. I suppose that’s a little bit similar, separating the community.**

Mm. I don’t suppose you know, just along, just along here there’s, er, sands films and they got a picture library. I don’t know if she’s aware of that. Cos I do my family tree, I have been for year, and someone told me about it and there’s photographs of different things in Rotherhithe.

**Oh right, that sounds brilliant yeah.**

And you can go in there, erm, you kind of go in the door and there’s kind of like a restaurant you can’t, that’s for the staff, but you got to know one of them, and you just ask a member of staff if you can read there, you know if you can have a look and they say yeah sure, but they’re all different volumes of photographs of how people used to go to Beano’s and…

**Beanos? What are Beano’s? The magazine?**

No! You used to get like from the company, you pay so much money a week, and then once a year you’d go on a coach trip and you wear a silly hat and have a balloon and go you go down to the coast. And they had, they take you down and they had this like, um, like pictures outside the coach and having a good time. But there was all different things and all different photographs of how things used to look.

**Oh right.**

How things used to look years ago.

**Sound like a lot of erm, I know you said as well that it was really buzzing, down Tooley Street, is that what you described?**

Yeah it was a buzz it was happy it was busy. Everyone had done their job well and erm, you know to er, their best ability I suppose, but you done your job and um if you never kind of, if was ill you still went to work, you didn’t take time off, cosy you didn’t get paid.

**Mm, so you’d get people there whatever their, whatever…**

Oh yeah you could be dying…unless they sent you home you know. But you’d go to work whatever you felt.

**The atmosphere within the workplace then, it was generally, really**…

It was erm, they were, bit like if you ever met someone from the East End, erm, they’re the same sort of people here, years ago if you had a problem everyone helped. It was kept within that community. You know, they looked after their own.

**Did people kind of have a role and then kind of stick with that role or did people kind of erm, so would you know certain people could have been depended on for certain things or,**

Yeah.

**People sort of shift around within that…**

No you could rely on them.

**Ok. Well, I think if you’ve…**

Finished.

**Finished yeah? Brilliant. Well thank you very much, erm I’ll just.**

END