**Drane and Wainright Transcription**

**I’m Dashay and I’m with Sean, the date is the 16th November 2012, we’re with London Bubble and I’m with Bert. And Bert can you please say your surname and spell it out for us?**

**Bert:** Er, my surname is Drane. D-R-A-N-E.

**Oh thank you, and can you tell us when you was born? (repeats)**

**Bert:** Yeah, the 30th November 1931.

**Ok, thank you. Ok can you tell us a bit about work please? (repeats)**

**Bert:** Well, y’know, I didn’t join the, the, the docks ‘till I was 33, so before that I used to be on a building trade, y’know, I done a lot of building work n’that for John Molans and travelled around a bit, and er I liked it, building trade. ‘Cause I was only a labourer, y’know so I used to like to move about a bit (pause) that’s where I get all the different jobs I ‘ad then (laughs) see.

**Ok, so who did you work with?**

**Bert:** Ay?

**(Repeats previous question)**

**Bert:** Er, who did I work with? Different firms, y’know.

**(Cuts in)** **Could you name them?**

**Bert:** B-before I went, yeah, before I went with that, I used to do oh, I wo- I done a bit, bit of work up in the merchant navy when I was 20, had about 18 months, 2 years of that, y’know Australia and back and all that sorta thing and er you could come and go when you went if you didn’t wanna go anymore you didn’t go back and sign on.

**Erm, how did it feel going to these different countries, like Australia?**

**Bert:** Oh, lovely.

**Could you, any experiences that you remember?**

**Bert:** Yeah we did love it (pause) I did, I did, mind you I used to like, mind you I used to get home sick.

**Aw, a lot?**

**Bert:** Yeah, I wanted to come back, y’know and er, a lot of them the younger ones then, they used to be like that. They get down there and they might be crying for their girlfriends that they’ve left behind (laughs).

**Joan:** I didn’t know ‘im then.

**Bert:** Yeah.

**Were the journeys like quite long from London to Australia? How did you cope?**

**Bert:** Yeah, 8 weeks there weren’t it, 8 weeks there and 8 weeks back.

**Joan:** That’s a nightmare, that.

**Bert:** Yeah. Eight-eight weeks.

**Joan:** Through the Suez Canal.

**How did you cope travelling for so long?**

**Bert:** Yeah the Suez Canal, ay?

**(Repeats question)**

**Bert:** Oh, it was alright, we didn’t mind, I mean we was, we had our cabins, 8 of us in a cabin (pause) y’know and-er we got by, quite good, yeah.

**Do you mind describing any, like, sort of the people you might have worked with in the past?**

**Bert:** Oh yeah, I’d seen there was someone there that I knew from around London, y’know you have seen ‘m before, er-er, used to enjoy it really, y’know, it’s nice to get away somewhere innit.

**Bit of peace and quiet.**

**Bert:** And the first trip, y’know what, I got, what’s name o’ that fever, vaccine fever, ‘cause they vaccinated me against small pox n’all that sorta thing and it backfired on me. Y’know what I mean, put me down, ill. (Pause) I was in hospital for about 3 days on the ship (pause) yeah

**So, did you need any qualifications? Or did you have to be good at something?**

**Bert:** Not really. No, not really, you didn’t need qualifications because it’s the sort of (pause) what the name work? Its only ordinary work, you were doin’ any other job, y’know you might be a, a waiter, bedroom steward or erm different jobs. I had a couple of jobs, I’s changin’ about on there, I was in er, they put me in a room where a lot of the clerk people or bedroom staff worked, I didn’t like it in there but I, I got a change. Y’know where I finished up? (pause) Plate house.

**Plate house. What’s a plate house?**

**Bert:** What you call the crockery. Y’know what I mean? Just to get out of there, I went anywhere. (Laughs)

**Ohh! (Laughs) So could you describe a typical day at work for me please?**

**Bert:** Well at one or two, you’d have to---

**Joan:** (Cuts in) Which job? (laughs)

**The docks, the docks.**

**Bert:** Oh the docks! Oh yeah, yeah, well, I used to work for John Molan in Surrey Docks, y’know we was doin’ all the quay work, new quays n’all. They were shuttin’ it up, and yet they were still buildin’ like for that man that’s on the telly, they’ve given the big reward n’t they, somebody accusin’ him. Well that’s who we was workin’ for. M-molan n that sorta thing y’know, of course they get a lot of money from the government, those days, still do I think and er (pause) it-it was alright on there but what happened was (pause) we used to do quay work n’all that and when I was in there I was goin’ past the dock gates y’know Surrey Docks, that road that goes into the docks, its-the dock office is there (pause) went in there, and I was only taking a chance but I said ‘is there a chance I could get in there as a docker?’ he went (pause) no he says (pause) very unlikely. So he says because, y’know, they was really closin’ up y’know, gradually and I went to walk away and he said ‘hang on a minute, I see what I’m gonna do for you, I’ll put your name down in the book.’ He put it down and y’know how long in waited?

**How long?**

**Bert:** ‘bout 13 years.

**13 years!**

**Bert:** And then I done, I wasn’t- didn’t know what to do then, but I still went for it, Port London Authority, they nominated me y’see what I mean (pause) so I’m more likely to go in, do a lot of jobs, quite a lot the dockers don’t like, pulling all that timber about, up, that sorta thing, so, I, I, soon as I got a job in there, I stuck to it, y’know what I mean, but it was pretty good, work y’know.

**Joan:** Liked it didn’t ya?

**Bert:** Then they started movin’ us about, y’know, ‘oh you gotta go there tomorrow’ Tilbury or something like that, long way a way. But you knew you was comin’ back, *a lot* of the people who worked in the timber used to start work in the mornin’ and say I want my book tonight (inaudible) (laughs)

**(laughs)**

**Bert:** See they didn’t like it (inaudible) It was hard, hard work. on the labouring again, on the labour exchange in the docks, and course if they know you hadn’t been at work all the week, come Friday, they woulda sent them to work to earn their days money whatever it is, about 40 quid. So that’s what they used to do, they say, ‘you been at work this week?’ and I say ‘yeah I have been at work everyday,’ ‘give it to ‘im!’ (laughs) and he give it to me, cause he thinks he didn’t wanna go ‘cause he aint gonna earn nothin’ he’s only gonna get that one day.All what woulda got anyway he’ll get that anyway, that’s how it all went on and then eventually they moved us about so much they told me ‘you gotta go to Tilbury’ and stop there. So I left. Took me money, you know they money I was entitled to get. So that’s, s’what most of ‘m done, just took their money and left, ‘ent they Joan?

**Joan:** You had some good jobs though didn’t ya, I mean you was in the ware-the carpets and Cupper warehouse.

**Bert:** (Cuts in) oh yeah! Worked for the, for the, er, Cupper Street, Cupper Street Carpets.

**Joan:** Carpets were thousands, you know.

**Bert:** Expensive carpets really. Oh big Chinese carpets, see that one there, bigger than that, I mean thicker that that as well (laughs).

**Joan:** They were all hand woven.

**Bert:** Oh yeah, oh they cost thousands of pounds.

**It seems like you’ve seen, done a lot.**

**Bert:** Jobs yeah.

**Joan:** That’s what we was sayin’ to you, you could move out of one job and into another, then.

**You’re just getting different experiences.**

**Bert:** Well we still under the Dock Labour Board then, you see, you was still under them really. If you leave there or they shut it down they still have to get you a job, because we all had regular jobs, they couldn’t sack us. They didn’t make a (inaudible) she don’t know what she was gettin’.

**Joan:** That’s why there no docks (all laughing) have you ever seen the docks, in the nun, films of the old docks in the Port of London?

**I, I haven’t seen any film footage.**

**Joan:** They used to be ships from one, practically one side of the river to the other, they reckon you could walk across, y’know and erm all the stuff was goin’ and Tooley Street, y’know this is known as the Port of London, so you could walk on all the ships, jump off the warehouses.

**Bert:** (cuts in) Especially in Surrey Docks, it was really overcrowded in there y’know, you could jump from barge to barge, y’know. But, erm, it was pretty good, we liked it, I mean I’ve always liked near the docks, I used to live in Devon Mansions up London Bridge. Barnham Street, but then ‘cause you got a big families they said ‘We’re movin’ ya, you got 7 children,’ to my mum and dad, ‘You’re going downtown,’ you know where that is don’t ya? Down Redriff Estate and we moved down there, Olio in 1936, when I got there it was only ‘alf finished, they finished it off when they flats got full up, Olio House next to the church, Trinity Church, next to the church. And-er I was evacuated ‘cause I was comin’ up for 9, 8 and 9, y’know what I mean, in the war, so I missed a lot of the war but I did come back before the end of the war y’know (pause) but er (pause) it was er, really good really y’know. I liked it. Where we used to go, I was evacuated to Brighton, Exeter. I mean they bombed Exeter ‘cause it was a Cathedral City wasn’t it, I think our people went over there and bombed Dresden after that, all that sorta thing.

**Joan:** Yeah, terrible, wasn’t it.

**Bert:** But yeah it was, and-er--

**Joan:** Near Coventry.

**Bert:** ‘Course then, they bombed Exeter, bombed it, y’know what was behind my house?

**What?**

**Bert:** The barracks.

**Barracks?**

**Joan:** Army barracks.

**Bert:** Barrack road it was called.

**Joan:** (Laughing) So they went, evacuated to there!

**Bert:** That’s what they were after y’know, I mean we had a near miss when we were livin’ in there, ‘cause one plane come over, it was being chased by one of our people and he let the-these mines go, they were land mines. One down, you just saw, cross here, cross that road there, killed a load of people in a block of flats, blew a lady round her house back through the kitchen, yeah, it blew her up y’know, but a lot of them people living in them flats were killed, course the next day they got us out of there, they took us to North Devon, you know where we went?

**Where?**

**Bert:** Combe Martin

**Where’s Combe Martin?**

**Joan:** Do you know that?

**Bert:** North Devon. Barnstable

**Joan:** Barnstable, that area there.

**Bert:** Yeah, it was lovely, lovely place

**Joan:** You was on a farm there wasn’t ya?

**Bert:** Yeah, I was in the bakers shop. I used to move about you see, if I didn’t like it (laughs) I used to go and see (inaudible).

**Joan:** (cuts in – laughing) it’s a wonder we’ve been here forty years. I think he got rid of, rid of his wonder lust when he was young, so, yeah (all laughing).

**Bert:** Yeah, I say I used to get bored a lot, I didn’t like it in there ‘cause all my brothers had been separated and gone live some-lived somewhere else and I said well I don’t like (phone rings – makes inaudible)

**Joan:** I bet that’s June.

**Erm (pause) Okay. Well we’re now here with Doug. Doug could you spell your last name for me please?**

**Doug:** What?

**Spell and say your last name for me please (has to repeat)**

**Doug: (**Says something)

**June:** No, spell it!

**Doug:** Oh, spell! Spell it.

**Bert:** Your last name, Bert-well my name’s Drane, and--

**Doug:** No your name ain’t Bert. (Laughter) Well, Wainwright my name is, last name is Wainwright

**June:** Spell it. W-

**Doug:** Oh, smell it, spell it (laughs)

**June:** Come on, spell it!

**Doug:** Spell it. Wainwright. W-H-I-N-W-I-G-H-T

**June:** No, you’ve said that wrong. W-A-R-I-

**Doug:** There’s no R in it.

**June:** W-R-I, see he’s getting me spelling it wrong, now, innit!

**(laughs) What is your last name, sorry?**

**June:** W-A-I-N--

**Doug: --**W-R-I-G-H-T.

**Wainwit?**

**June**: Wright.

**Oh, Wainwright.**

**Doug:** Wainwright. Wainwright, round the block there’s a place with all my relations who’re dead, all boxes n’ all that, all named Wainwright.

**June:** W-A-I-N-W-R-I-G-H-T.

**Doug:** That’s it yeah (laughing).

**(Laughing) Do you want to tell us a bit about the work you did, in the past?**

**Doug:** The work?

**Yeah**

**Doug:** I was carrying a lot of timber on me shoulder, at one time. (pause) Load-unloadin’, we used to unload the barges, done some of that.

**June:** That was called dill porting.

**Doug:** Oh dill portin’, dill portin’, they used to call it that didn’t they. Used to have a leather thing we used put over ‘ere, you can slide it off there better, sometimes it might take part of your ear ‘ole off, know what I mean? So you had to be careful.

**June:** What about when you worked on the railway?

**Doug:** I was on the railway yeah, beep beep (laughs).

**June:** See what (laughing, inaudlible) Come on they’re being serious, here-don’t-!

**Doug:** I was on the railway yeah.

**What route?**

**June:** He wasn’t on the rail as such, he worked on horse and carts, tell ‘em!

**Bert:** Horse and carts

**June:** Yeah

**Bert:** I used to have ‘ave a mate,...

**Doug:** Oh yeah, horse and carts, yeah.

**Bert:** ...son of a woman, was a mate that helped out.

**Doug:** I’s over there pickin’ stuff up, like, and takin’ it back to the yard.

**Oh, okay.**

**June:** ‘S still the railway, but they used to have horses, big carts---

**Doug:** (cuts in) horses, yeah.

**June:** --and they used to pick up and they used to use horses, what was your horse name?

**Doug:** Bill

**June:** Bill.

(all laughing)

**Bill what?**

**June:** (aside)Just believe it.

**Doug:** And I went there one mornin’, I used to always go up there, put his harness on that take ‘im back, used to go out. Went down there one mornin’ and I was looking for him, where’s Bill? And they come up and say they put him down. I started cryin’ didn’t I?

**You would do.**

**Doug:** Old horse it was, yeah.

**Did you find that like—you said you were carrying like timber on your shoulders; did you find it sometimes kind of hard?**

**Doug:** Oh yeah, we used to get like a, what’d you call, like a-a leather thing I used to put on there. But it used to- still, makes you sore.

**Bert:** Yeah they did, I remember ‘m, them flats I moved into, the docks was just over that way, ‘know what I mean? And I could see them runnin’ up and down the planks.

**Doug:** Oh, Hard work weren’t it? Hard work, cor--

**June:** They used to run up the planks, and they used to have to run. Because you couldn’t just walk with it, you had to do the runnin’and---

**Bert:** Oh, they throw it over

**Doug:** Chuck it. Oh, you’d get it so you could chuck it, so it’d go right in place, and-er, you got used to doin’ it, y’know.

**Jeeze, a lot of hard work. How long would you have to do it for? How many hours a day?**

**Bert:** 8 hours.

**June:** Well, yeah, 8 hours a day.

**Doug:** Musta been, 8-8- 8, ‘bout 8 odd hours, yeah.

**So how much did you lot get paid? Sorry, if you don’t mind me asking.**

**June:** Cor

**Doug:** Not a lot, I mean (laughs)

**June:** Not a lot, I suppose.

**Doug:** I forget how much it was, I suppose--

**Bert:** Well about £12 weren’t it?

**June:** Well not even that I don’t think Bert.

**Bert:** I think dockers was.

**June:** I think it yeah, but Doug wasn’t actually classed as a docker at that time, no he worked for a firm, doin’ dill portin, I would have thought his money was about £9.

**Bert:** Coulda been, yeah.

**Doug:** It was hard work it was.

**Did any of you, you and your workmates go to a particular place to have lunch? Or did you all have lunch together?**

**Doug:** Oh you might see at weekends and go for---

**June:** No, no, no, dinner time, you mean, when they’re workin’?

**Yeah, when they’re workin’.**

**June:**  Dinner time, where did you go for your lunch? Did you go in a caff? You used--

**Doug:** Well the caff might be a book out, where it is, wherever you was, yeah.

**Bert:** The dock (inaudible) had ‘em all over the place.

**So what were the best bits and what were the perks?**

**Doug:** The perks?

**Yes.**

**June:** Well you didn’t get many perks!

**Bert:** Nothin’ much was it, that what you took!

**June:** The only ones that got perks was the ones that knicked it! (all laugh)

**Doug:** Got a (inaudible) down his trousers!

**June:** ‘specially among dockers! On the boats, they’d come with, erm, legs of lamb down their trousers, tied round and walk out.

**Bert:** You see that clock? That come out the dock.

**June:** Did that come out the dock, did it? (Laughing) I know, my brother was a docker.

**Bert:** It was one of my uncles that give me that.

**Joan:** Yeah.

**Bert**: And do you know what I heard? ‘Cause its got that-that, er, that lightin’ up, it lights up done it, that causes cancer, they used to say. Y’know what I mean, and when they worked and done that job, but that’s why a lot of people got rid of ‘em I think, they took ‘em then somebody put the wind up ‘m didn’t they?

**June:** They never used to get perks otherwise, only ones than what they stoled. (Laughs)

**Doug:** What work you done, it was well worth it, y’know.

**June:** Years ago they did work hard.

**Doug :** It was draft, yeah.

**June:** It was, yeah, and you ‘ad to, you had foremans standing there makin’ sure you ‘re doin’ your work.

**Bert, erm. you said you was working on the docks, do you remember a particular smell? Were there particular smell you can remember, or..?**

**Doug:** Smell?

**Bert:** Timber n’ that, I did do, I done a lot of timber, ‘cause we used to all those funny shapes of timber, and that used to- we used to get on the quayside, make a big pile of it then the lorries come and take it away, used to smell that sometimes a bit strong, y’know. Or if you was workin’ with something in the bar-in the ship, loadin’ the ship, y’know, there be-might be something strong in there, y’know.

**June:** And the river wa-didn’t smell very good then neither, did it?

**Doug:** Terrible.

**June:** Though, we used to swim in in thought didn’t we?

**Doug:** Yeah swimmers, Thames, in the Thames.

**Bert**: Oh the Thames, she’s talkin’ ‘bout.

**June:** Yeah, the Thames, yeah.

**You used to swim in the Thames?**

**Bert & Doug:** Yeah!

**Doug:** I mean no one does it now, do they.

**It’s too dirty, yeah.**

**June:** I don’t think that they do it now, but we used to do it.

**Bert:** They still do it now!

**June:** We wasn’t supposed to’ve.

**Bert:** They still do it. Yeah, my broth- my eldest brother used to still go down the tunnel there, the-the Royal Tunnel. And there’s little staircases and...

**June:** Yeah, that’s where we used to go up the Tunnel and sw---

**Doug:** Did you have a lot of brothers, did ya?

**Bert:** 2, no I had 3 brothers

**Doug:** Oh I had a load of brother didn’t I, how many brothers did I have June?

**Bert:** He had a load of brothers.

**Doug:** Oh, a load of brothers, I did.

**Joan:** How many did he ‘ave June?

**June:** Err.

**Bert:** 6.

**June:** 7, I think.

**Doug:** Oh I had more than that

**That’s a big family.**

**Doug:** Yeah.

**Erm, so while you was working the docks, workin’ with timber, was there any concerns about health or safety?**

**June:** (laughs) ‘get on with it!’

**Doug:** That’s it, you had to do the work, and you did do the work---

**Joan:** Did anything collapse when you were there Berty, the timbers, ‘cause they used to have them stacked right high.

**Bert:** Oh yeah, well you had to get that out under the shed sometimes and put it, y’know winch it on a crane, mobile crane, they get it out, swing it out to get it to get it onto the laws. So, it used to be quite dangerous y’know.

**So what would you do if it did drop?**

**Bert:** Did what?

**If the, erm, if the timber did drop?**

**June:** Run out the way!

**Bert:** Run, don’t dodge it.

**Doug:** Run, if something was coming on top what would you do? I’d run away wouldn’t you?

**June:** Unlucky, the one it fell on, but you’ll find there used to be a lot of accidents

**Bert:** Oh yeah, one of my mates, used to live in my street, (inaudible) Road, do you know what happened to him? They dropped a-a-a a car or somethin’ on top of him. Out of the crane y’know, he was takin’ it out the ship, y’know on the hooks and all that lark and it just let go of it and it went down and killed him outright.

**And did you guys, did you ever complain about your health and safety?**

(All laugh)

**June:** There wasn’t any health and safety (laughs) there was no health and safety, you just got on, I mean if---

**Doug:** There might be health but there wasn’t safety.

(All laugh)

**Joan:** I mean if anything went wrong you might’ve made the-tried to make a claim on the company, but then you had to get your own solicitor, or then... Did they ever, did the unions used to help?

**June:** Yeah you did used to have a union they had, the union, at some places.

**Was the union helpful in anyway?**

**Doug:** They’re suppose to be yeah.

**Bert:** They stand by ya, you know what I mean, the-mean ‘Oh, there wasn’t enough light in there,’ or something like that, you know.

**Doug:** I mean a lot of ‘em had fingers missin’ n’all, where they caught on site. My father had --

**June:** (Cuts in) my dad did, didn’t he?

**Doug: ---**Missin’ some of his fingers, wan’t he?

**Bert:** Call, they call ‘m strops ‘cause you’d get your hand caught in ‘em n’all that. Or chains, and-and-or chains, y’know all that stuff..

**Joan:** That’s why they didn’t want you to wear rings, wasn’t it? You shouldn’t have worn rings, yeah.

**So, how did you hear about the job and how did you get the jobs?**

**Joan:** You talkin’ to..

**Yeah, Doug.**

**Joan:** Oh, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry.

**Doug:** What?

**Erm, how did you hear about the job and how did you get the job?**

**June:** You just went, just went to any-went there, didn’t ya?

**Doug:** You go down a place what was it, when you were out of work, you had to go over there didn’t ya?

**Joan:** Oh, to the, er, job centre.

**June:** Oh the job centre? Down the tunnel?

**Bert:** Oh yeah,that-that-that, I don’t know if that was the Dock Labour Board though Doug, I don’t know. Was it the Dock Labour Board?

**June:** But, normally you-you knew one job and someone says oh they want somewhere, somewhere else and you go, but they ‘ave, did ‘ave that but I don’t think you ever went down there Doug.

**Doug:** Oh, no, no, I wasn’t**.**

**June:** Down the side of the tunnel, the labour exchange.

**Joan:** Oh, the labour exchange.

**June:** The labour exchange.

**Joan:** I mean that’s was there up until a while, that’s the what s it now, innit.

**June:** That’s where you can go and see if there was any jobs goin’.

**Bert:** They did move you about a lot, in the docks. If they wanted to they could say no you’re not goin’ there today and so on. And they’d send you there, and you’ve got to go there, you know what I mean?

**June:** As I say, Doug was never in the docks but he used to do similar work to the docks.

**Joan**: Oh, yeah, yeah you could, yeah.

**Doug:** Yeah I wasn’t a docker.

**June:** You didn’t end up going, did you, after all.

**Doug:** If some blokes dropped out they’d pick me up, got to take his place.

**Erm, do you feel the docks had any effect on the community in any way?**

**June:** Oh it was a big whats-a-name around this area, it was all dockers.

**Doug:** Used to be a lot of pubs n’all. When you come out, you used to go to the pub.

**Would you say there was a close knit community then?**

**Joan:** Oh yeah, I mean, the thing was as Bert said, if anything happened to one of the chaps in the dock, they’d all come round, yeah they would all, y’know they’d all help and everything, yeah. Different atmosphere wasn’t it, I think that’s what a lot of the dockers missed when they had to go, y’know, ‘cause there was no discipline. There wasn’t, I mean you’d tell the foreman to ‘eff off and seriously, and he couldn’t do a thing about it. I mean he used to come in and say what people had said to him. How about your first day down the Surrey?

**Bert:** Yeah, he said to me, as a matter fact I was on that shed, building it, number 8 it was, down Plower Way and it was an Indian shed. All the Indian boats went in there y’know and when I went there the first day to work, they sent me round there, got round to the number 8 shed. Got work there today, when I went round there there was a bloke driving a fork lift truck and he said, I said, his name was Roy. ‘what’ve I got to do Roy?’ he said, ‘well if anything falls off the truck you got to pick it up and put it back on.’ (all laugh) Well I was only a labourer weren’t I? Then the next minute y’know what he said to me? ‘Bert, stop, stop! You’re not doin’ no more’ I say ‘what’s the matter?’ he said, ‘We’re goin’ on strike.’ (Laughter) I said, ‘I just started here, what’d you mean strike?’ I say, ‘I’m their favourite they even nominated me into this dock!’ (All laugh) So when I went in there with him I think the bloke behind the counter knew, y’know, he knew I’d only just started and he-he, he crossed it off a bit, y’know what I mean. Made me feel real guilty, going to strike and I’d only just started in the mornin’! (all laugh) Oh, and another thing they do, they came round to look at the barge and went, the senior men, y’know the man you work with, they got another look at the barge full of whatever it was, timber or whatever it is, well it might be tinned food and all that, and he say ‘Oh, we’re not doing this today’ I said ‘what you mean?’ he said ‘we want double day work.’

**Joan: (**Laughs)That’s double money.

**Bert:** ‘Cause he knew we could earn £12, so for one single day, he wanted double day work so it’d be £24. That’s how they used to go on and they asked us to stand by it, the-the- the office, they’d say we’ll never get that barge unloaded, we better give ‘m it. And they used to give us...

**Joan:** Sometimes they’d get the whole lot on strike, didn’t they?

**June:** Oh, yeah.

**Joan:** Or else the ship couldn’t go.

**June:** No wonder they wanted to close the docks! (Laughs.) Whenever they moanin’ about the docks, well they were always on strike, wasn’t they! Yeah, oh yeah.

**Bert:** You know what they used to do? They’d go in on a mornin’ and only 8 of us turned up and they’d say, ‘We’ve brought four more new men, we brought four more-we’re not starting the job, this gang, we’re not starting, we want four men,’ Y’know, to make it up to 11 or 12 or whatever it was. And then when the office done it, got ‘em, they’d send ‘em round and we’d start work then.

**Joan:** And what did you used to say?

**Bert:** You, you and you, go on.

**Doug:** You, you and you.

**Bert:** They said I’m talking about, this is 3 times, if you wanna go and its his turn tomorra, don’t start shoutin’ when you go, these 3 are goin and that’s that. Get someone to cover.

**Doug:** Didn’t someone used to buy ‘em a pint of beer? Said you can go in it then.

**Joan:** It’s funny when he had to go on the really early shift, that, when they did-altered the hours, he’d say ‘I’m going now Joan’ about half past 5 and I’d be in bed, before I could get out of bed he’d be back and say they send me home. They got enough men to do the job so they sent him back. But he still gets paid, y’know.

**Bert:** It was getting worse and worse, it was gettin’ bad, y’know. They could even tell us, you’d better not come in tomorrow, don’t bother. They-they put me in for Sunday once and said you’re gonna get 40 quid for it. By the time I got up there, arrivin’ on the ninety, time I get there I see a couple of our blokes walk toward me, I said what? Go home Bert, they done it yesterday. So we still got paid for it! (all laugh)

**Doug:** That was cheatin’ weren’t it!

**Joan:** That was bad, yeah, that was bad, but, that’s it. That was what they did.That’s why your tinned sugar costed so much.

(All talk together.)

**Joan:** Carry on, then. We keep reminiscing we’ll be here all day!

**No it’s good! Got more information.**

**Yeah, the more information the better. So, did work affect your home life in any way?**

**Bert:** Not really no. Our home life? Nah, we was home at 5 o’clock usually, you know.

**Joan:** When you had early finish it was lovely. I’d come home and the dinner was ready (laughs) yeah, yeah, ‘cause he used to do cooking.

**Bert:** I’d get home, she’d still be in bed. (laughs)

**Joan:** That was only early in the mornings! (all laugh)

**Bert:** See I’d be back before 7, or some-just after 7 if I was working over at the West India Dock, through Rotherhithe Tunnel, down there, y’know, what’s that road, the Dock Gate down, the East India Dock Company, and we used to go under there and the office would say, ‘Oh nothing today, off you go!’

**Doug:** But you get paid didn’t ya?

**Bert:** Yeah

**Doug:** Jeeze! Wasn’t bad was it?

**Bert:** You know why they shut ‘m up? Because every time they chucked us out of a job they knew they had to give us another job. It’d been forced on them, wasn’t it? Maggy Thatcher done anyway with it, didn’t she. You ain’t got a job for life no more.

**You never know, you’re thankful when you do have a job. So what did the factory look like and could you describe it to us? (phone rings) (pause)**  
**Erm well, we’re still here with June, Joan, Doug and Bert now. June and Joan would you like to say your last names and spell them for me please?**

**June**: Er, Wainwright. W-A-I-N-W-R-I-G-H-T.

**Thank you June.**

**Joan**: And you know mine, Drane, but, er, D-R-A-N-E.

**Thank you, alright, well, could you tell us where you worked please?**

**Joan:** Well I started work for an insurance company in Blackfriars, and I left there, went for a paper company down Café Street, they were, and-er, right down Paradise Street in the old buildings, er, doing typing and secretarial work and, where did I go to from there..? Then oh, I went down the docks, worked for a docking firm, didn’t I, do you remember, that? Yeah.

**Bert:** That was in Paradise Street wasn’t it?

**Joan:** No, that was a paper company, and then I went down to the docks too. I changed about a lot, but the longest job I had I worked for Old Oak Ham, I was there for 8 years. And I worked for Molin’s, the cigarette factory.

**Doug:** Molins, oh Molins? The timber one?

**Joan:** No, cigarettes, down, down A..Street. They used to make cigarette making machines.

**Doug:** Quite a few jobs at one time.

**Bert:** I worked there, I worked there.

**Is that where you two met?**

**Joan:** No, no, we met in the pub. (all laugh)

**Nice and traditional and classy**

**Joan:** That surprised you’se two didn’t it! (laughs) We met in the pub me and you, yes. The Drednal wasn’t it?

**Bert:** The Drednal, by the Red Lion there, at Surrey Quays.

**Doug:** Been chucked out there a few times!

**So what were Bert’s first words?**

**Joan:** Oh, God! It’s too long ago, do not ask!

**And yourself, erm, about work?**

**June:** Erm, well I lef-I left school at 15, and I went to learn to do machining, and because my wages at that time was only £1.50, a week, and someone told me they was earnin’ £3 a week, so I packed my job up and went and got the job and it was in a cheese factory. (Laughs.)

**Joan:** Where was that June?

**June:** That was at, er, Swifts at London Bridge.

**Joan:** Oh there was a lot of, yeah, cheese factories over there.

**June:** My mum went mad, because she wanted me to have a trade, doin’ machinin’ and so from that day I come out of one job, into another job, into another job. But every one was factories. I worked in a, er, factory where they done powder. I was told it was powder, and it turned out to be cement powder!

**Joan:** Oh my good, Joan!

**June:** Me and my friend one mornin’ and as the powder come down into big sacks, we had to bang it (laughs) we come out and we were smothered!

**Joan:** No health and safety then.

**June:** No! Nothing to put round our face, or, y’know, we were just- So we come out of there, we didn’t even go back to get our money. (All laugh.)We had half a day’s money to come! But that was that, then. And the other place, Monk and Glass. Which was, erm...

**Bert:** (Cuts in) Oh I remember them

**June:** They was custard people yeah, then, er, our-my last job I had before I had my children was the sausage factory. (Laughs)

**Joan:** Was that Richmond?

**June:** That was Richmond.

**Bangers and chips.**

**Doug:** Bangers and mash!

**June:** Spa Road that was, as well, Spa road.

**Joan:** I told you there was a lot of factories down there..

**June:** I didn’t, y’know, work for so many years ‘cause of having 3 children and then I went back, and I worked for the co-op and I was there for 27 years, ‘till I retired. I wasn’t very brainy, I only had to do all...

**Joan:** Didn’t you used to do the till?

**June:** Oh yeah, I done, I mean but I wasn’t brainy, in office like, y’know.

**The till is still brainy.**

**June**: Yeah, right. (35:00)

**Bert:** The co-op, I got a job there, I was only 15 and I was only in there 6 months, I said ‘Mum I’ve had enough of that job, go and get my cards.’ She went up to the governor to get the cards and-er, he said ‘What’s the matter then?’ and she said ‘Berty wants to leave’ he said he’s a very silly man, she said why, he said he’ll be manager one day! (laughs) that was when it was in that place, the post office (inaudible)The co-op was in there, up Southwark Park Road weren’t it, the big one, the big co-op up Southwark Park Road

**June:** But yeah, years ago you could come out of one job and straight into another job. You just went, you said ‘You got any vacancies?’ ‘Yeah, when do you wanna start, tomorra?’ And, you’d just…

**Joan:** I mean cause I had that when Bert had his heart attack n’that, and there was a job at the Sparrow, remember you used to get the Southwark Sparrow free and there was a job in there to go back to the Spa Road, for the Credit Union, so I thought it’s only so many hours a week, so- you know, off I went and I was there ‘till I was 72! I did one day a week then, but that was alright, I didn’t mind that. It was good. I enjoyed it that yeah, ‘cause it was good…

**Doug:** Sometimes it was nice weren’t it, some jobs. You got to get to know the people there, didn’t ya.

**Joan:** It was good working for the council. Good wages. Quite a varied career.

**When you was working, did you ever feel that- was you ever made to feel that men were seen as more able to work than yourselves?**

**Joan:** More able?

**June:** Well it was a main thing for us, no, it was a thing we accepted. Well I did, I don’t know about Joan. I mean I always expected a man to get more money than me. Because, as we used to say, they-they’re married, they got children and things like...

**And that’s the head of the house.**

**June:** Oh yeah. So really, no, it never worried me to thin that I was doing the same job as a man and he was getting more money than me.

**Joan:** I suppose ‘cause I did different type of thing, yeah, I-I didn’t— ‘cause when you work for the council you were on a certain grade. Like A2 or whatever and all the A2s got the same. Whether you were a man or a woman. So erm, but course you-I think some of ‘em get more perks than others but y’know that was it.

**June:** But it was a main thing wasn’t it, really.

**Joan:** Oh yeah. It was the done thing.

**Doug:** I worked for the council once didn’t I?

**June:** Yeah, that’s where you learnt to paint and decorate.

**Doug:** That’s it, yeah. Paint-paint and decorate, yeah.

**Bert:** I, I worked for the council.

**June:** That’s what I say there were so many—you came, just go in and out jobs.

**Doug:** Once they knew you could paint, you could get a job painting anywhere, used to be a lot of jobs going for painting.

**June:** He learnt. He couldn’t use and brush and you went on the council and he said he was a painter so you had to lie (laughs) said you was a painter..

**Bert:**  (In background, mostly inaudible throughout)… almost twenty years ago…

**June:** And then they learnt you how to do it all, didn’t ya? Then they learnt you how to wallpaper and from there he went on to different jobs, you went to Molans, but for the painting part of it. And then what, 30 years ago he built my house what I’m in!

**Doug:** And I feel tired now (all laugh) thinkin’ about it!

**June:** Yeah,that’s what I was saying, you learn as you go along in times.

**Joan:** And they didn’t have apprenticeships a lot for that, did they have a council apprenticeships when you were there Bert? Or did they…?

**Bert:** Yeah, I think they did, yeah.

**June:** To think the council taught him to paint and decorate and you ended up building-doin’ my house.

**Bert:** I used to love decorating.

**Joan:** Oh yeah, he’s got the patience. I would not have the patience, he’s got…

**Oh yeah, yeah I don’t have the patience either.**

**Bert:** Well I did the bathroom there about 30 years ago and it’s still the same, good paper, y’know what I mean, stays as good as tiles.

**Joan:** I would’ve pulled it down ‘RRR!!’ I could not have done it. I couldn’t have done what he did. No, not got the patience. (chuckles)

**June:** Was there other questions? (laughs)

**Doug:** Ask me another one.

**How did your job make you feel?**

**Doug:** Happy! Happy to have a job.

**Happy to have a job?**

**Doug:** Happy, happy.

**Any other feelings, emotions, like the workers, the employers…?**

**The atmosphere?**

**Yeah the atmosphere?**

**Doug:** Some was alright and some wasn’t.

**June:** Yeah that’s right.

**Could you describe some of the ones you liked and some of the ones you didn’t like for us please?**

(long pause)

**Doug:** Well the ones we didn’t like we’d give them a punch on the nose (all laugh).

**Bert:** You always got a mixture didn’t you, different, y’know.

**June:** Yeah, that was the trouble with Doug, if he worked somewhere, and you’d get foremans over ya, normally they’re quite nice but you can always get a tricky one. And Doug couldn’t stand any tricky people. So, he’d lose his temper with that person and he’d be off (pause) no he don’t like anyone takin’ it out of him, ‘cause years ago when they think they can take it out of ya or make you feel silly, Doug didn’t like that. And he let them know that he didn’t like it.

**Bert:** Take liberties wouldn’t they.

**Doug:** Yeah they was.

**June:** Yeah they would.

**Doug:** If you let ‘m.

**June:** If you let ‘m, sort of like, y’know.

**Doug:** But then it got said once, knock it on the head, if they kept startin’, well you’d just have to get into ‘m wouldn’t we.

**June:** But he was more happier when he worked on his own.

**Doug:** Yeah.

**June:** He liked goin’ on jobs, doin’—not jobs jobs, y’know? (laughs) I mean he’s worked in people’s houses and everthing and he just gets on with all of it and he come home happy as a sand boy. But if he had to work with a crowd of men, he hated it, he hated it. Because he said there was always someone.

**Joan:** Oh yeah you said that. There was always one that was a mickey taker or something like that.

**Bert:** Always got something to say, bad about you or something like that.

**You get that anywhere, though nowadays, anyway.**

**June:** Oh, I s’pose you do , you still get the tricky blokes, d’n’t ya?

**Doug:** Some, I worked with some, er, film stars at one time, didn’t I? What’s his name, P-, what’s his name?

**June:** He’s worked for a lot of people, he’s worked for Paul McCartney,

**Doug:** Paul McCartney, that’s the one, yeah.

**June:**  Erm, got to try and think now. Erm, there was, you probably don’t know them. Erm ,you know Marion Ryan, she had twin-twin sons didn’t she, and she was on our tele and the boys, her twins grew up and they started to sing but then they went more into song writing so they still now, but they do song for all the big stars, he’s worked for them. Erm. Gosh, you’ve worked for a lot of ones havent’ ya, I can’t think. As I say, when he does that you get trust, people trust you in their house and that’s what Doug done for years then.

**Doug:** (cuts in)I mean I worked with him one day, erm, film star, come in.

**June:** Yeah. Oh, Tony Curtis, he’s met Tony Curtis. (Laughter) He just missed Frank Sinatra didn’t ya, just missed him.

(All talking)

**Doug:** Old Frankie.

**June:** Yea.

**Doug:** Yeah, had some good jobs. You enjoyed goin’ to work, you know.

**Something to look forward to.**

**Joan:** Makes a difference. Oh, it makes a difference when..

**Did you guys get paid if you had a sick day?**

**Joan:** Yeah, well I did.

**June:** No I didn’t get sick pay.

**Bert:** Not always, not really, if you were unskilled-unskilled workers or sort of labourers.

**Joan:** Bert you got paid most of the time didn’t ya? Unless Yeah you get paid unless you was in the building day, when I was on the building day you didn’t get no.

**June:** But if you worked for a firm and you went sick, you-you wouldn’t get hard-hardly anything would ya?

**Joan:** Only sorta weeks money. On the council now, well it was, 6 months full pay, 6 months half pay.

**June:** Did ya?

**Joan:** Oh, yeah. It was really…

**June:** Oh, no it was dreadful, this is when no one used to go sick, really, did they?

**Joan:** No but when they used to do the wages, you’d get like ‘cause I used to do a lot of the manual workers wages and once they got their 6 months full pay, this is, you’d have to do your certain time and then when it went on half pay they used to come back to work (laughs).

**June:** I was gonna say, the likes of them probably went sick. But you used to get the normal ones that wasn’t getting sick money.

**Joan:** Oh, yeah. But the council, everyone got sick pay, even the manual workers once they’d been there so long, yeah.

**Did you get many holidays?**

**Joan:** I think we used to get a week.

**Bert:** Yeah, yeah.

**Doug:** Oh we used to get a holiday didn’t ya.

**Bert:** They used to give ya building stamps.

**Joan:** Oh when you were on the building trade, yeah.

**Bert:** Like big firms, like Molans.

**Joan:** They used to have to buy a stamp to put in a card.

**Bert:** Yeah, couple of days, this sort of thing. Fortnight, something like that.

**Joan:** Remember you left a couple of times and you hadn’t stamped your card --

**Bert:** Yeah, yeah.

**Joan: --**And you went-yeah, ‘cause it was money.

**June:** Yeah I remember Doug having them. You had to--

**Joan:** Couldn’t change ‘m ‘till the following year y’know. If you left--

**June:** ButI think it started, you had a week then they give you so long, then they give you a few more extra days and then after you worked there say 2 years or 3 years you was allowed a fortnight wasn’t ya?

**Joan:** But if you were clerical on the council, as soon as you started, like I started on the March, by the April I got 4 weeks holiday.

**June:** Did ya? God! I shoulda gone on there (all laugh)

**Doug:** Do they still want someone now?

**Joan:** You know I couldn’t believe it, it was so good. That’s why everyone wanted to get on the council!

**June:** (Overlapping) Council! No wonder.

**Joan:** There you go, there you go.

**Erm, when you guys did get paid, what-what did you like generally spend it on?**

**June:** Gone mostly same day. (Laughs.) When I was-when I was single, there used to be a lot of shops where I worked where you could get stuff on the tick. Do you know what the tick is?

**Yeah, when you don’t pay and you pay the next time.**

**June:** That’s it.

**Oh, tick, tick, tick.**

**June:** We used to go down this lil shop and we used to get five packet-er, five cigarettes each day off of him. And he’d write it all down and at the end of the week when you get your wages you had to go over and see ‘im and he’d check it all up and half of the money went! (Laughs.) ‘Cause you’d have some sweets as well, yeah, I used to smoke and erm, so half of my money went on the things and time I paid my mum, I was left with hardly nothing.

**Doug:** Oh you had to give your mum money.

**June:** You had to give your mum money…

**Joan:** Oh, yeah. Mum’s money was first.

**June:** … you had to give it back to them. But with Doug, when we got married and I packed up to have Lorraine, I can remember him coming home with £11 a week, he used to give me £10 for the rent, electric and things like that and he’d have a pound to last ‘im all the week. (Laughs.) That’s all he had.

(All talking and laughing together)

**Bert:** ‘S what my dad used to do!

**Doug:** I just had to try and suck it up.

**Joan:** I mean, we was saying it was good times, but when you think, they were sayin’ about how much money did we have? Not a lot, not a lot, ‘cause there was no child benefits, no benefits at all.

**Doug:** Different all together weren’t it, yeah.

**Joan:** Yeah I mean if you didn’t have.. if you didn’t have the money…

**June:** (Overlapping) The cheap-the cheapest food was sausages or minced meat, well you’d have that quite a few times that week (all laugh)

**Joan:** Yeah, as I say, you think about the good but now you’re saying about the money and you think blimey. No it wasn’t a lot.

**June:** This was when Doug used to work for the council, we used to get 3 weeks of that, we call that his bare money, then on the fourth week he’d get his bonus. So that fourth week oh it was lovely. Money to spare.

**Joan:** But it didn’t last for the 3 weeks (All laugh) you didn’t say I’d put it away for the 3 weeks!

**Bert:** But when I first had a job across the road here, only across the road, saw mills. You know how much the money was? 31 shillings a week. One pound 11. Friday to Saturday, well Monday to Saturday. Well that wasn’t a lot of money, I give me mum a pound, and I keep the 11 shillings.

**Doug:** My brothers worked on the old timber, didn’t they? My brothers. Saw mills, they worked on them, didn’t they, my brothers?

**Joan:** I did a paper round and all I got was 10 bob a week.

**June:** I used to do a paper round.

**Joan:** Yeah.Mind you my sister was crafty, when I was gonna pack it up, she said well, I said, you gonna take it over? That’s 50p by the way (laughs) I can see them two looking at eachother and she said, ‘cause she was younger than me, she said ‘I’ll take it over, but you gotta get me a rise before I do it’ so I got her a rise silly cow and ended up doing it for that. Yeah 50p a week, 6 days a week doin’ a paper round. But you did it.

**June:** Ya went out in the freezing cold and rain!

**Doug:** Snowin’ and…

**June:** You know I got, they said, ‘She’s been readin’ my paper on her way ‘round!’

(All laughing)

**June:** Oh, dear.

**Do you think, erm, like the docks have left their like imprint on this area?**

(long pause)

**Joan:** I think it’s lessening.

**June:** Well no, because now…

**Joan:** I mean since they’ve called it Surrey Quays…

**June:** It’s all gone now, ya got all flats.

**June:** It’s gone all upmarket.

**Load of apartment buildings.**

**June:** Yeah, so it’s not the same now.

**No, it’s not.**

**Joan:** I think they shoulda left it as Surrey Docks.

**June:** I don’t know why they changed the name, I mean I still say Surrey Docks, I don’t-I don’t say Surrey Quays, ‘cause it’s Surrey Docks to me y’know? And I suppose really, even though it’s supposed to be better.

**Joan:** I don’t think the community exists.

**June:** Oh no the comm, ‘cause theres no, no one don’t know no one now.

**Joan:** You don’t even know your neighbours.

**No, just because everyone stays enclosed nowadays.**

**Joan:** And then-well because, as Bert was saying to you earlier on, we’ve got, the- this is owned privately now, next door by an agent and the-the people just keep changing and changing. I mean we do know still know some people along the balcony and in this square, we know quite a lot of people.

**Bert:** But they hardly talk to ya, they won’t even say hello some of ‘m.

**Joan:** Oh no, I mean, y’know this is it. But it’s life now innit.

**June:** There’s probably massive change everywhere, it’s the same innit.

**How does that make you feel, like to see, like your area so close knitted and to see it tear apart?**

**June:** Annoys you at times.

**It must!**

**June:** It does annoy. Got to be honest with you, it does annoy ya, it does.

**No, it does.**

**June**: Yeah.

**‘Cause its like, since 1999 to-when it started to get to 2000, that’s when everyone started to break apart.**

**Joan:** Yeah. And the council didn’t help, because at one time there was a policy that your families, like your sons and daughters could move into a flat near you, but now, then no it wasn’t...

**Bert:** They’re all gone, all gone, over the country.

**Joan:** I mean I think that was a bad policy to you know to shut ‘m out.

**Bert:** Now they’re all left on their own, an-and they’re not getting’ a lot of work for themselves, they seemed to run away.

**June:** They think they done it for the best, but it’s not is it, it’s not the best, no.

**Joan:** It’s not the best, is it?

**June:** You’re very lucky if you get mums and daughters living local now, y’know what I mean, but at one time you was everywhere, all local.

**Joan**: Yeah.

**June:** You could get a place and stay there --

**Doug:** You had to line up for the toilet, there was that many of you.

**June:** Oh there was 13 of you in your house.

**Doug:** All lining up waiting with a bit of paper (all laugh) I say ‘you want more than that mate!’ You see, it’d be packed in our house, always fighting with all my brothers.

**June:** And what annoyed them, goin’ back to Surrey Quays, when they put all them---

**Doug:** Can I get a bit of paper? (Laughing)

**June:** When they built all the new flats n’that, the likes of normal people can’t afford to buy ‘m.

(All agreeing no, talking at once.)

**Bert:** They’re not as good as these places, are they Joan? Not as good as these places.

**Joan:** Oh no. So small arnt they, a lot of ‘m.

**Bert:** They’re no bloody good. I wouldn’t move.

**Joan:** No, ‘cause…

**June:** Even the street where I live, I mean my house, and I’m not braggin’, but we could get nearly five- was it 500,000 for my house, just because I live in Elwood Grove and it’s local to everything. I mean he has done my house quite nice but there’s people buyin’ m, and even makin’ m, I mean Doug done my house30 years ago but what we got a man facing us and there’s one on the end, well what they’re doing to their house god knows what it’s gonna cost afterwards. But it seems unfair that normal people can’t come and buy a house because it’s too expensive for them.

**Bert:** I used to work on all your houses down Elwood Grove.

**June:** (Cuts in) and what is it? Just a little 3 bedroom house isn’t it?

**Bert:** I worked for West Estates didn’t I, West Estates? All them that like Dougy, decorating and all that, they’d all do it.

**June:** I mean my 3 children had to move out because they couldn’t live round here.

**It’s all like 500,000, 20,000, where you getting that money from?**

**June:**  It’s ridiculous!

(All talking)

**Joan:** How we doing with the questions?

**Any more questions?**

**June:** Done m’ all?

**Yep, anything else?**

**Doug:** Can I speak to someone on it? (Laughs)

**(Laughs) Who you tryin’ to talk to, the mayor?**