



The Friends of Chain Bridge Forge

Interview with Alec Willson and Family

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PART ONE

Q: So it is the thirtieth of November 2011 and this afternoon I'm talking to Alec Wilson, his sister Doreen Whiting, formerly Doreen Wilson, and also to May Clark, and they're going to be sharing their recollections of life in Spalding over the preceding decades, just as a way of putting context around what was going on in and around the Chain Bridge Forge. So my thanks to all participants for agreeing to talk to me. And if we can just start with you Alec, how long have you lived in and around Spalding?

ALEC: Sixty-five years.

Q: Sixty-five...

ALEC: All me life.

Q: All your life. And Doreen?

DOREEN: All my life.

Q: OK. And May?

MAY: Not all my life because I worked away for about twenty or thirty years, but I'm back again now.

Q: OK, thank you very much. And really what I want to start by talking about is really what were your earliest memories, if I can put it like that, what were your earliest memories of growing up? If I can start with you Doreen.

DOREEN: Well I think my earliest memories is when me mother used to take me shopping in a pram. I don't know how old I was, but I can remember her pushing me in a pram across the road to Woolworth's, as it was then.

Q: Woolworth's, OK. And can you remember many cars about at that time?

DOREEN: Well no, I don't think I was the age where I would notice cars though.

Q: OK, OK. And when did you start going to school?

DOREEN: When I was five.

Q: OK. And I know it's a very indelicate question to ask a lady, what's your age?

DOREEN: I'm seventy-four.

Q: Seventy-four. You don't look it.

DOREEN: Thank you. (laughs)

Q: So when would you have actually started school? Can you remember what year that would have been?

DOREEN: It would have been 1942.

Q: 1942, so that was really in the middle of the Second World War?

DOREEN: Mm hmm, yes.

Q: And what can you remember about the school?

DOREEN: I can remember having to go into the air raid shelter (laughs) that was the worst thing. When the siren went we used to dash in this cold concrete, sit on cold concrete. (laughs)

Q: And what did you feel about that, did you, was it scary?

DOREEN: Well we, we were terr, yeah, we were terrified.

Q: OK. And were there ever any air raids that you can remember or were they just drills?

DOREEN: There was an air raid, but I can't remember what year it was. It was when Ayscoughfee got bombed, and Pennington's shop.

Q: Yes. And can you remember looking at the damage or was it something you steered well clear of?

DOREEN: No, we saw the, we used to go, have to go into town, to Pennington's, and it was known as Pennington's bombsite, and there was a big hole in the ground. And in Ayscoughfee they bombed the birds, the an, the birds and animals in there, and I can't remember what year it was, I might be able to find out for you. They, I think it was that afternoon that it was bombed. We was in the front, in our front room, waiting for, to have tea (...) had got tea all ready, these bombs dropped, she, and all the, our ceiling fell down (laughter) onto the tea table, so the tea was damaged.

Q: So your mother wasn't best pleased? (laughter)

DOREEN: I don't know about that, I think she was more frightened than anything else. (laughs) I know we, she, we, we ran upstairs, and I've often told me grandchildren this and they laugh at me, cos we, I saw, I saw the bombs, actually saw the three bombs coming, I could draw a picture like that, coming out of the aeroplane, and those are the ones, I think, that landed on Ayscoughfee.

Q: Right, yes, yes. And apart from, I mean obviously that was very serious, but what other changes can you remember about the war, things like rationing or any other sort of effect that it had on your life, if any?

DOREEN: Well I think when you're younger it doesn't, you don't notice it affects your life really, do yah?

Q: Mm.

DOREEN: I mean I know me mother had, was, you know, had rationing, sweets were rationing, clothes was rationing, you had to have coupons for everything.

Q: And I'm right in saying rationing on sweets, for example, didn't end until the mid, early/mid '50s?

DOREEN: I think I was still at school so it would be the '50s, cos my mother, when I come home from school one day, me mother said to me "You can go up the shop and get what sweets, get some sweets, you don't need your coupons" and I wouldn't go...

Q: Wow. (laughs)

DOREEN: ...I was too frightened to go, because I'd always gone like with her to the shops. And I said "No, I can't do it" you know, because I was so used, we had to have our coupons.

Q: Yeah. And in relation to the Chain Bridge Forge, what can, what can you remember about the Forge when you were very young?

DOREEN: I can remember watching Mr Dodd shoe the horses.

Q: And which Mr Dodd would that be?

DOREEN: That would be Geoff, Geoff's father.

Q: So some, I think his name was Banks Dodd but people used to call him Jim, so I'm told.

DOREEN: Oh.

Q: (Laughs) The, the nickname, but certainly...

DOREEN: That ties up, because I thought, now you say Jim, that rings a bell. But you did tell me his name was Banks, wasn't it? So I, so I don't know.

Q: Mm. Because there were, in my recollection, there were three generations of Dodds that worked there. There was G R Dodd who was the grandfather, who bought the Forge in 1898; his son Banks Dodd, who I'm told by his son often used to go by the name of Jim...

DOREEN: Mm, that's the one I would...

Q: ...and we've got Geoff Dodd who, thankfully, is still with us today and who carried on the business until it closed in the last part of the last century.

DOREEN: Mm.

Q: So you remember him shoeing horses?

DOREEN: Yes.

Q: And were there lots of horses about at that time?

DOREEN: Well I can't really remember. (laughs) I know we used to watch, we used to watch Mr Dodds swing the Chain Bridge round, as it was known, but its proper name is Albert Bridge.

Q: Yes, OK.

DOREEN: But we used to, when we went to school he'd swing the bridge over to let the barges through, and we want, as children, wanted him to swing it across before we went across (Q laughs) so we could be late for school and watch the barges, but he wouldn't do that. (laughter)

Q: OK, OK. And if I can turn to you May, if that's OK? Again, I'm going to ask a very indelicate question, may I ask your age please?

MAY: Seventy-three.

Q: Seventy-three. Again, you certainly don't look seventy-three. So you were born in the Spalding area, whereabouts in Spalding?

MAY: Albion Street...

Q: Oh right, so right in the centre.

MAY: ...which is almost opposite the Forge, on the other side of the river.

Q: Yes. And what are your earliest memories?

MAY: A few about school and then the war. I think the war one's the most vivid, the, the memories that I have of the war.

Q: And following on from what Doreen has said, can you remember the air raids, can you remember that sort of thing happening?

MAY: Yes, one thing that has always stayed in my memory is the material on the windows, it was a patterned material, I can't remember what it was called, and I can remember that being torn off when the war was over. I can remember the blast wall in front of the back door, which was simply a brick wall right in front of the back door, so you had to turn right or left to get out. And one occasion in particular, when the siren went, my father would often go out, and on this particular occasion I was pushed under the kitchen, big strong kitchen table, with the dog (laughter) and the eiderdown, and I can remember voices outside, very low, and it was my father talking to Mr Hodson next door, there was a zinc fence between them, and it was a matter of "How many did you count Lou?" "Ah yeah, and they're ours aren't they?" "Yes". "Oh well, we'll see how many come back shall we?" And then when they came, and then later on the siren would go again, they'd go out and it would be a matter of "How many have you counted Lou?" (laughs) And say "Yeah, that's what I, we've lost one, haven't we, we've lost one?" And then it would be "Hang on, look over, there he is, look" and the sound of joy when they saw the, the last one "Oh that's the hanger-on, yes, he's, they're all back then". And it was, it, that's lived in my memory ever since, the joy that they were all back safe...

Q: OK, that's, that's a lovely memory, yeah.

DOREEN: Mm.

MAY: ...and they knew from the sound of the planes whether they were German or whether, I could never tell, but they didn't ever go out when they were German, because of the light and so on.

Q: I see, I see.

MAY: But those were sort of the conversations between them. Incredible that was really. (laughter)

Q: And can you remember rationing or can you remember there being shortages?

MAY: Yes, not all that much. I can remember my father bringing home the first bananas and the look on his face when I tasted one. "Ooh" he said "you'll love these". And obviously he'd taken a lot of trouble to get hold of this hand of bananas "You'll like these". And I took one and he showed me how to unpeel it, and I'd put it in my mouth and "Oh I don't like this". And the sad look, it, it... (laughter)

Q: He was crestfallen?

MAY: Oh he was so, yes. And, and I said "Ooh, well wait a minute, wait a minute" and I scraped the bit on the outside, because to me it was slimy inside...

Q: I see.

MAY: ...but on the outside it was great, so. And mum said "Ooh you'll like it, you'll like it when you get used to it". (Q laughs) But I'll always remember the look on his face again (laughs) but, oh dear (laughter) (...).

Q: And as far as school was concerned, can you remember a lot about your lessons or your teachers?

MAY: I can remember most of the names and the, and the vision of them.

Q: And did they all used to live locally, your teachers, or...?

MAY: I think so, yes, yes. One, we had a headmaster and his, one of his sisters taught in the school, it was Mr Sid Andrews...

Q: And which school is this? I beg your pardon.

MAY: The Parish Church, which was down Church Street, opposite the Church.

Q: Yes. And what sort of, what was the curriculum like? I mean what were they teaching you? Was it very similar today or, what, what are your recollections there?

MAY: I, I don't know much about the primary teaching now, but they, it was very broad, and ones that I can remember, and again I link it up with what I eventually became. I remember the nature classes, bringing in, collecting loads of coloured leaves, and then identifying them and drawing them and all sorts of things like that. Now they would use those leaves to do scientific things with them. (laughs) But I do remember those, very well.

Q: And do you remember, the Chain Bridge Forge, do you remember the Dodds and them working?

MAY: Yes, oh yes.

Q: What recollections do you have there?

MAY: I have, like Doreen, seen the horses there. Two or one, it was usually one or two in, just, just enough room for them in that side piece, sometimes one waiting outside. Big horses, not, not slender racing things, but big working horses weren't they?

DOREEN: Mm.

MAY: And Mr Dodd in his long leather, I don't know what you call it, like apron...

Q: Like a jerkin almost, yes, yes, yes.

MAY: Yes, a big apron at the bottom, and with the horse's foot on his knee, yes.

Q: Oh right, OK. And were they considered, local personalities is probably the wrong phrase, but were they local people that people knew, that's what they did, they were part of Spalding life?

MAY: The Dodds?

Q: Yes.

MAY: Ooh yes, yes, I think they were, well everyone knew them as Mr Banks Dodds. And I know I was at school with Geoff's sister, Pat, and then there was another brother that, or another youngster, but he went to Rhodesia, I believe. I didn't know him at all, but I did know Geoff and Pat.

Q: Yes, OK. And if I can turn to you Alec, again, not such a delicate question because you're a man... (laughter)

ALEC: I'm younger.

Q: You're younger anyway. Can I ask your age?

ALEC: I'm sixty-five.

Q: Sixty-five. So what are your earliest memories of Spalding? You've said you've lived here all your life, what are your earliest memories?

ALEC: Well I, I was born at 28 Willow Walk, where I stayed until I got married. And the thing I always remember is all of us children playing together with big skipping ropes across the road, and put, and I can remember 'em putting the main sewage pipe into the pumping station down the bottom, cos they came back one morning and they'd lost about fifteen foot of pipe, with the silt under, underground it had just washed it all away.

Q: I see. And you went to, you attended Westlode Street School as, the same as Doreen?

ALEC: I did, yeah.

Q: And what do you remember about school life?

ALEC: School life; it was all reading, writing and arithmetic. (laughs)

Q: OK. So very structured?

ALEC: Very structured.

Q: And can you remember it being quite a harsh environment, were, was there discipline or...?

ALEC: Well there was no discipline but you knew, you knew your boundaries and you just, you just stuck to 'em.

Q: Right. Very often, my father always used to say that if you got in trouble at school, you got a thick ear there, and then when you came home and told your parents about it, you got another thick ear as well.

ALEC: Well, well most people would have done but I'm afraid I didn't get that. I managed, I managed to miss all that.

Q: (Laughs) And what are your first recollections of Chain Bridge Forge and the Dodds family?

ALEC: I should say it would be when I was about seven or eight years old. We used to make the (soapboxes?) out of planks of wood and pram wheels, and the axels was prone to break (...) really into something, and remember we'd go there and think it was marvellous that Mr Dodds could mend this bit of metal somehow, it used to be

magic how he used to do it. And they always used to leave it till the next day and the only, he would, he would never charge us, but he, he used to go into the (Ship bar?) drinking with me father and he used to say "Take him, take him a bar of chocolate, that's all he wants". That, that was his payment for mending our axels.

Q: OK, that's good, that's good. And as far as your recollections are concerned, what sort of local personalities, what people do you remember being around and about at that time? Lots of people remember there was Mr So and So who lived here or, you know, you'd always used to see so and so walking round town, what do you remember from those years (...)? (talking together)

ALEC: Well, well opposite us there used to be a fairly big orchard, which belonged to the Hodsons, if I remember right, and obviously we used to find a gap in the hedge and go and find eating apples to help ourselves to. And coming further up the road, sort of the top end of Willow Walk on to, backs on to Commercial Road, I remember the Cross brothers which used to go singing in the pubs. They used to be known as the All Brights. And the younger one, whose proper name was Simon, he was a bit of a, a card magician, and he reversed his, reversed his name to make it Nomis, and he used, he used to go into the picture house and do it, do these card tricks in the interval.

Q: Right, OK. (laughs)

ALEC: That used to be fun. (laughs) And the, and the Cross, the Cross brothers, well I think all of 'em, used to work on the old dustcarts where the, where the sides slid down and they, well that was, that was (...). As I say, night-time they sang for, sang for their beer. (laughs)

Q: And do you remember the bakery that was just along Willow Walk?

ALEC: Ooh yes, I remember we used, used, used to go there and get the, if I remember right, he used to do little loaves, and we used to go and take one of those and go into, up to the chip shop, which is right next to the Forge, and we'd get, get a, a, chips with bread ro, bread roll and go down the street eating them. And if you, if you was a bit short of cash, you used to go round and collect all the newspapers you could and take those back to the fish shop, which the chips'd, the fish and chips'd always be wrapped in newspaper them days, and you used to get a bagful of the, what we call the scraps, which are the oddments of batter, and if you were really lucky you'd get four or five chips put on top, and that was free. (laughter)

Q: And we're talking about the 1940s, the 1950s, I would say, in, in that sort of area, how was, how was shopping different in those days? So these days we're used to, you know, you go and perhaps take the car to Tesco or to Sainsbury's or wherever and you do the weekly shop, how was shopping different in those days?

DOREEN: Very different.

ALEC: (Laughs) Mm hmm, it was.

DOREEN: You went into a shop and you had personal service. And the grocer used to come round and bring your gro, deliver your groceries, the baker used to come and deliver your bread, and the butcher used to come and deliver your meat.

MAY: And the milk lady used to come with her churn of milk, that's, I think, before the '40s, but churn of milk, with a ladle, and you went to the door with your basin or your jug and you had, I don't know if it was a pint or what it was, two ladles or three ladles, I remember that.

Q: Wow.

DOREEN: Oh, I can't remember that...

MAY: I can, yes, to the front door.

DOREEN: ...I remember them coming round in the van, bringing the milk in the bottles.

Q: And would you have shopped most days or would you, you know, these days people do like a weekly shop or whatever, would you have shopped more frequently or...?

MAY: Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Q: Tuesdays and Saturdays. And what about, that leads me on to sort of housework in general, if you like, what was life, we probably didn't have the labour saving devices that we've got now, were there specific tasks that were done on certain days?

ALEC: (Laughs) There, there was.

DOREEN: Yes.

ALEC: Washing, washing was Monday with everybody...

MAY: Oh yes, Osier Road.

ALEC: ...and down, Osier Road would be covered, washing lines, right the way across, all, everybody's washing hanging out, and no groundsman ever came down on a, on a Monday (Q laughs) because if anybody really wanted something they'd walk, they'd walk down, because they, they, it was too much trouble to take all the washing lines down.

Q: OK.

MAY: And the wives didn't like it. (laughter)

Q: Oh right.

DOREEN: No, well everyone had got a small yard, there was nowhere to hang your washing, so everyone put it out, well it's as, known as Osier Road now, which was a back way to how, where they walked, so.

Q: OK. And as far as appliances were concerned, excuse my ignorance, but in this sort of period would you have had refrigerators or anything like that?

ALEC: No.

DOREEN: Oh no, it would be what they used to call the safe, not a money safe (laughs)...

Q: No.

DOREEN: ...it was a wooden, like a wooden box with a hinged lid on the front, and it had some wire to let the air in, and you kept your things in there.

Q: Yeah, my grandmother used to have one, and she used to have a larder, and I always remember a big slab of marble that was, even in the height of summer, was very cold to the touch.

DOREEN: Oh we didn't have one of those, but I remember me grandmother having one. Did you have one?

MAY: No, we didn't but Auntie Flo did.

DOREEN: Oh mm, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: So you had to be very careful that things didn't go off?

DOREEN: Mm, you couldn't keep them long like you do now. You'd got to get something and sort of eat it and, within a few days, hadn't you, or cook, cook it?

MAY: Mm.

Q: And if we can talk briefly about diet, so we're used to convenience foods and pretty much having fruit and vegetables from wherever it is all the year round, what would you have generally had for breakfast?

DOREEN: I think we used to have Cornflakes.

Q: Cereal.

ALEC: I was going to say mine was Cornflakes or porridge.

MAY: Yeah, mm, Cornflakes, I can't really remember, yes.

ALEC: Or Weetabix was about as well.

Q: And would you have taken the main meal in the middle of the day or...?

ALEC: (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: We, we did, yes.

MAY: We did, well my mum and I did when I was at school, but my father was out all day so he had his at, in the evening.

Q: I see.

DOREEN: Well we had ours midday because my father worked as a builder locally and he came home for his midday lunch, like as they call it now, and then we'd just have a normal tea at night.

Q: OK. And...

ALEC: That's, sorry, if I remember right, half past twelve on the dot, weren't it?

DOREEN: Yes, well he only had an hour so he'd got to get his dinner and get back. (Alec laughs)

Q: Yeah. And what sort of, was it meat and two veg or what sort of...?

DOREEN: Mm.

MAY: Every time.

Q: Every time?

MAY: Yes, yeah.

ALEC: Yeah, yeah.

MAY: Variety of meat.

ALEC: Sausages sometimes, definitely.

MAY: Yes, yes.

DOREEN: Well we had, we had a joint, you had a Sunday joint, which wasn't, didn't seem very big at the time, we used to have it for Sunday lunch cooked like with meat and, you know, with vegetables rather, and then it was cold on Monday and then the next day it was probably minced up and made into a cottage pie or shepherd's pie, whichever you like to call it. (laughs)

Q: Yeah, right, OK.

ALEC: Fridays, Fridays was always fish, I can remember, and Saturdays was always sausages, but there always had to be three or four left over because my breakfast, and me dad, used to have it in bed, and it used to be sausage and gravy with big chunks of bread in it... (laughter)

Q: Fair enough.

ALEC: ...and that was, that was Sunday break, Sunday breakfast. (laughs)

Q: And tea was a lot lighter, what sort of things would you have had for your evening meal, or tea, or whatever you would call it?

DOREEN: You would have like a salad, jelly and blancmange, or prunes.

ALEC: That's Sunday weren't it? Or was...

MAY: Or sandwiches of some sort.

DOREEN: Oh I suppose it was, oh yeah, that was Sunday, sorry, that was Sunday.

MAY: Sometimes jam sandwiches, but always some fruit.

Q: OK. So quite a balanced diet?

MAY: I think as far as possible, yes.

DOREEN: Well it, it was, it was plain but it was balanced wasn't it?

MAY: Yes, yes.

Q: OK. And what were, if I can sort of ask you in turn, starting with you Doreen, what were the, what were the treats that you looked forward to? What was your idea of, ooh yeah, I'm glad we've got that tonight, or I'm glad we'll have that today?

DOREEN: I don't know really. The only thing I do remember which I did like, it's, wouldn't say, well I suppose it was a treat, we, we used to sit by the fire and toast, toast the bread beside by the fire, and we thought that was a nice treat on Saturday, that, this was Saturday teatime. (laughs)

Q: OK. And May?

MAY: I can't think of anything special. But thinking about the toast, I used to like the pikelets, and that was done on the long fork in front of the fire (Doreen laughs) and the weekends usually. (laughs)

Q: And you must have a favourite Alec?

ALEC: Definitely.

Q: What's that?

ALEC: Sundays.

Q: Sundays?

ALEC: Sunday was nearly always a tin, tin of salmon with salad, followed by either blancmange and, if you were very lucky, ice cream or jelly, which was nearly always a Sunday, I can always, always remember that as a Sunday. (laughter)

Q: Oh very good, very good. And you mentioned about delivery vans and, you know, them delivering food and so on, can you remember it being very busy in and around Spalding? Was, was there a lot of traffic, or was it a different sort of traffic?

DOREEN: I can't remember being, well I can't remember there being a lot of traffic because there wasn't the cars about, not when we were younger, was there?

MAY: No. I can remember traffic becoming more popular, as it were, throughout my school life. By the, I used to cycle to school, my mother used to take me originally, but then when I went to the secondary school I cycled, and by the time I left school it was becoming quite busy on the roads and not easy cycling over a high bridge and places like that.

Q: OK. And as far as developments were concerned, when I've been speaking with Geoff Dodds, he's mentioning that after the Second World War especially, that you've really got a lot of development in and around Spalding after the war. So things didn't change very much in the interval period, but then after the war things used to increase. So, for example, the use of horses had pretty much phased out by the 1950s and so therefore they weren't having horses shot, and it was becoming more mechanised. What sort of developments can you remember from when you were at school? Roads being built or this being changed or that being changed.

MAY: St Paul's Estate being built. Do you remember that?

DOREEN: Yes.

MAY: Because that was all fields, where St Paul's Estate is now.

DOREEN: Yes.

Q: And for those who don't know Spalding, whereabouts is that in Spalding?

MAY: (Pause) Low Walk.

DOREEN: It's off, it's off Albert Street, off Albert Street.

MAY: Yes, it's beyond Albert Street.

ALEC: East, east, east of it isn't it?

Q: Yes.

ALEC: To the east of the Forge.

MAY: Yes, that's what I was trying to, to (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: (...) yes.

Q: So much has changed.

MAY: Yeah, yeah.

Q: So there being lots of housing built?

MAY: Oh yes, mm.

Q: And can you remember other things, so perhaps businesses going by the wayside or other ones springing up, that sort of thing?

ALEC: Well all, all, all I can remember is that the, where the St Paul's Estate was built, they had nice concrete roads and ours was still a dirt track, literally a dirt track...

DOREEN: Mm, yes.

ALEC: ...and Albert Street was, which the potholes was, in there were about six inches deep, and obviously in winter it was water all over. Cos I can, I can remember me, the one, our road, it used to be, up to our house there was virtually no holes in it because all the (...) dad got from the builders, he used to drop it in the holes, and the man who worked at the top got the ashes from the furnace, or the fire, and he, he's levelled it over the top, so we'd got a nice level road up to our house. (laughs)

MAY: Yeah, and, and, the, my mother used to put ashes out, all, all the people lower down the road would put their ashes out and therefore we had a, a relatively good road didn't we?

DOREEN: Mm.

MAY: As well, Albert Street was, it, the people down Albert Street did not do anything to get rid of the holes and they got bigger and bigger didn't they?

DOREEN: Well my mother used to put ashes out too, in there, cos it was terrible riding on your bike, cos I remember falling off because of the potholes. They were really deep and you had to ride your bike zig-zag to miss the...

Q: Were, were the main roads...?

DOREEN: No, this was the dirt track down, which is now called Osier Road.

Q: And that was prevalent, that was the, the usual way of doing things on the side streets, or was that most roads?

DOREEN: Well they were called un, unadopted streets weren't they?

Q: That's right, yes.

DOREEN: Because they made that up in 1964, just before I got married, because I think it was July, July and August they were doing it, and I said to the builder at the time "I do hope you're going to have this road done before I go to Church to get married" and I was getting married on the twelfth of September. And he said "Well if we haven't got the road done, I'll take you to Church in, in a dumper". (Q laughs) But I didn't go to Church in a dumper, he got it finished in time. (laughs)

Q: Good, good, I'm pleased to hear it.

MAY: But the strange thing is, Osier Road was a dirt track, Albert Street was, but Willow Walk, we used to skate up Willow Walk.

DOREEN: Mm, yes, yeah, mm.

MAY: That was a, I don't know...

DOREEN: It was all concrete wasn't it? Well (...). (talking together)

MAY: Tarmac.

DOREEN: Tarmac then I suppose.

MAY: We used to skate up there.

DOREEN: It was smooth anyway, wasn't it?

MAY: Mm.

Q: And people...

ALEC: But don't forget the Willow Walk is only about four foot wide, four foot six wide...

MAY: Oh yeah.

ALEC: ...and there's a, just a cut-off right at the bottom that goes into Albert Street...

MAY: That's right.

ALEC: ...and it was only, only about four foot wide. But that's all been tarmacked, and the top end of Willow Walk that leads up to the blacksmith's shop, that was always tarmacked as well.

MAY: Yes, I wonder when though, I wonder when.

Q: Yeah. And they, people often talk about, you know, when they were growing up, I can certainly believe this, summers seemed longer and they seemed hotter, and winters seemed colder and there was always snow...

DOREEN: Yes.

Q: ...which was probably never the case. But what are your recollections about the seasons, especially being in and around Spalding, it being a big farming area, can you remember certain winters that were particularly harsh or summers that were particularly lovely?

DOREEN: Well yes, we knew the seasons. We knew if it was summer it was hot, it was autumn it went, got cooler, if it was a winter it was freezing cold, and then in spring it started getting warmer. You had got the separate seasons. And I think it was 19, ooh I forget the date now, there was a very bad winter, I can't remember, was it 1947 would it be?

Q: Yes.

DOREEN: Winter, the bad winter.

Q: That's, yes, 1947, yes. There being sort of icebergs of East Anglia and, and the whole country, it seemed, ground to a halt for three or four months, and people started running out of coal, because presumably there was no central heating...

DOREEN: No, ooh no.

Q: ...it was all coal fires.

DOREEN: No, we used to walk up the road and see who'd got the prettiest window, down our street, because all the frost would be inside. You'd get pretty patterns, wouldn't you, inside your window?

MAY: Mm.

DOREEN: And we used to go up the road seeing, seeing which of us had got the prettiest windows.

Q: And this is frost inside the house?

DOREEN: Inside the window.

Q: Not just outside, but inside the house?

DOREEN: No, all the pretty, all the pretty pattern was inside the window. (laughs)

MAY: Thinking about the seasons, I remember the flooding in '47...

DOREEN: Mm, yes.

MAY: ...High Street afloat, as it were...

Q: Really?

MAY: ...the, the river level across High Street, do you remember that?

DOREEN: Yes, mm hmm.

MAY: That was a year before I started secondary school...

Q: Wow.

DOREEN: Yes, that, that would have been 1947.

MAY: ...and the schoolgirls in the High School were doing sandbags up London Road, they were filling sandbags and putting them aside.

DOREEN: Yes, they'd got sandbags all along Commercial Road, opposite the Vine Inn, there. I can remember the river being right up to the top and the Chain, the Chain Bridge we're talking about near the Forge, now I used to go to Sunday School every Sunday, I was a good girl... (laughter)

Q: Glad to hear it.

DOREEN: ...I had to be...

ALEC: You went in. (laughs)

DOREEN: ...and I can remember I went to Sunday School and when I came back the river was gone, must have gone up, and it was just about touching the bridge and I was frightened to come back home (laughs) because it was so near the bridge. So I took a leap and run across it and I, I can remember, you know, it coming over there.

Q: And I know that there were extensive drainage works and, and there were locks built in the, or channels dug in the early '50s, I think people call it the...

DOREEN: Coronation Channel.

Q: ...the Coronation Channel or something...

DOREEN: Coronation Channel was cut for, that's right, cos of the floods.

Q: ...was that a reaction to the floods?

DOREEN: Yes, yes.

Q: So it didn't happen again. So you can't remember there being severe floods after that time?

MAY: No, no, that was an ideal solution.

DOREEN: Mm, that was it weren't it?

MAY: I think we would have been...

ALEC: Not in Spalding did they?

MAY: No.

ALEC: They had it further down, was it further out towards the Wash?

Q: Yes.

MAY: Yes.

ALEC: When they built the lock gates, it didn't, it didn't just come over there a bit, cos the banks weren't high enough.

Q: OK. And you've alluded to the fact that there's quite a lot of, you know, community spirit, so everybody in the street used to put the ashes down to try and help with the potholes...

DOREEN: Yes.

Q: ...what was it like in the community? So did you all know your neighbours?

DOREEN: Ooh yes.

ALEC: Oh yes.

MAY: Yes, yes.

DOREEN: We all, at bon, when it was bonfire night, we all gathered together didn't we?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: We each bought a few fireworks, used to bring them in front of our house, cos we were sort of in the middle, and my mum used to either make chips for everybody or she used to be making jacket potatoes. (laughs)

MAY: Yes, bonfire night.

DOREEN: Yeah.

Q: What about big celebrations, so I'm thinking, you might not remember this, but, you know, things like VE Day or certainly the Coronation, for example, do you remember any of the celebrations for that?

MAY: VE Day we all dressed up, there was a party in the field at the top of the road, wasn't there?

DOREEN: Yes.

MAY: And we all went in fancy dress, and it was a typical, bit like a street party but it was just the children. Do you remember that?

ALEC: No, it was before my time. (laughs)

DOREEN: No, Alec wasn't born, Alec wasn't born, he wasn't born then.

MAY: Oh.

DOREEN: I do, I remember that, yes.

MAY: But yes, that was, and it was all Willow Walk, a lot of Albert Street...

DOREEN: (...) (talking together) Road wasn't it?

MAY: That's right.

DOREEN: We all, all went together.

MAY: It was quite a large area really.

DOREEN: Yes, yeah.

Q: And I know it, very often it's like a, what they call a truism, but did you lock your doors, did you, did you, was there that sort of same necessity to do that?

ALEC: No.

DOREEN: No, you could go up to the shop top of the road and leave your door open, it was fine.

MAY: Well we used to have the front door we could leave on the chain, it was only a little hook and an eye on the door, and just used to leave it like that quite often.

DOREEN: Yeah.

MAY: Not go out of the house, not leave it like that unoccupied, but generally you could leave it like that.

DOREEN: Mm.

ALEC: The only, the only time you'd lock, you'd lock your house was if you went away on holiday. It, it was nothing, it was nothing for, if we was playing and you'd gone down Willow Walk and you suddenly decided you wanted to go to Osier Road, you'd, whoever you was playing with, you'd say "Come on" and we'd just walk straight through the house to get to the, out through the back. (laughs)

Q: And that leads me nicely on to, if we can start with you, Alec and Doreen, and I'll move on to you May, if I may, is holidays, obviously not everybody was lucky enough to have holidays, but do you remember going away or having even days away at the seaside?

ALEC: I can, I can remember having a week, week away, it used to be in Yarmouth, in a guest house, for a long while, and then I should say when I was about ten or eleven it got that we started going to a Butlins, which was a, which was a low cost holiday then for, and everything, everything as it is now.

DOREEN: We never had holidays. (laughter) We used to go out on the Sunday School outing, that was our treat every year, we'd go on the, either a bus or train. But then when you was younger, I remember, do you remember Auntie May had been on holiday and left you a bucket and spade at Skegness, and that was the first holiday we'd had, well we, sort of thing, but you did get the, more holidays.

ALEC: Well you went abroad more on your own, didn't you, afterwards?

DOREEN: Yeah, well that was when I was at work, wasn't it? Yeah. (laughs)

Q: And you May, did you, were you lucky enough to go on holiday?

MAY: Yes, we used to go most years to Skegness, that was the annual holiday, the one week, and very enjoyable. We went on the train, occasionally, on one or two occasions my cousin, who'd just recently got a car, took us over. But that was the holiday, yes. And like Doreen, days, Sunday School trips, that sort of thing, yes, but that was it.

ALEC: Well we did used to get a day out when me brother got a car cos, cos I used to be learning to drive and it used to be then, oh we'll go, go out to the, one of the stately homes or a day at the seaside. But that, that, not until he got his, till he got his car, which would be, what would that be? '66, early '60s I think.

Q: Early '60s. And do you remember there being, I mean obviously you were school children at the time, but do you remember there generally being, as you got older, a little more money being about? Do you think things were a little bit comfortable?

DOREEN: No, no. Oh I don't, I didn't notice that. We all, we all seemed to be short, I think.

MAY: Mm.

Q: And people were paid weekly or...?

DOREEN: Yes.

ALEC: Weekly.

DOREEN: Weekly.

ALEC: Weekly in cash. (laughs)

Q: In cash?

DOREEN: We never seemed to have spare for treats, it was just general, you know, I mean me mother used to write a list out for her groceries, and I can remember saying to her one day "Can't we have, can't we order something different mum?" And she used to say "No, that's all we can afford". It was flour, sugar, butter, marge, and lard for baking, and that was it.

Q: And I know it's a very hard thing to remember from so long ago, but if you're talking about, I don't know, the early 1950s, let's say, and we're talking about the old pounds, shillings and pence, how much was a loaf of bread? Just to put it into perspective for people today.

DOREEN: Ooh, I don't think I can remember, can you? (laughs)

MAY: No.

ALEC: I think, I think I can remember fetching it for about sixpence.

Q: Sixpence. And...

ALEC: It didn't stay there long though. (laughs)

Q: No. And can you remember anything about the other sort of staples that you would have had, so things like milk or cheese or bits and pieces like that, what did things cost?

MAY: I can't remember.

DOREEN: No, I can't remember.

MAY: That was (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: You see, as a child you don't remember those things. Your mother sees to that so you don't sort of remember, do yah? I can't, I can't remember (...). (talking together)

Q: But it was a few pennies?

MAY: It, yes, I, I (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: Well it would be, wouldn't it? But I can't say, I can't remember, no, I can't remember that.

MAY: I can remember going to buy them though, with my mother, when you bought a bag of sugar, so, in a blue bag...

DOREEN: In a blue bag, yes. (laughs)

MAY: ...usually, yes, a stiff blue bag, and going into the shop and the smell of the coffee grinding was delicious. But you bought, you didn't buy it as we buy it now, ready packed...

Q: It was all loose?

MAY: It was all loose, wasn't it?

DOREEN: Ooh yes.

MAY: Biscuits and sugar and, flour I can't remember whether that was in bags.

DOREEN: Hmm, I don't know, I think it might have been in bags.

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: I know we used to have a market stall, on the market in Spalding, and they used to have biscuits, they used to have rows of the deep tins of biscuits, all in rows, and we, they wouldn't allow that now, and they were all open. Do you remember that?

MAY: Mm, yes, yeah.

DOREEN: And, cos they used to be nearly all, I can't remember how much they were, but they used to be the same price and I can remember we used to say to mum "Can we have one of every one?" You know, and she used to say "Can we, will you mix them?" and they would mix them up for yah and then you'd take 'em home in the little bag. No, no pre-packed bags.

MAY: There was a range like that in Woolworth's, they had them...

DOREEN: Mm.

MAY: ...and the, when I was in the senior part of secondary school that was our joke, if we didn't pass our exams that's where we were going to work, the biscuit, the biscuit counter in Woolworth's. (laughter)

Q: The ignominy of working at the biscuit counter. (laughter) OK, OK...

DOREEN: Oh sorry, I was going to say you, going back to, you were talking about us playing together and, and all that, we haven't mentioned that, do you want that mentioned?

Q: Absolutely.

DOREEN: I've got a list here of what we used to do, if, if I've left any out you'll have to tell me. (laughs) Yeah, so we...

MAY: We were very lucky because there was a group of us and we got on very well together, didn't we?

DOREEN: Mm, all the children down the road, the boys and the girls...

MAY: Yes, there were six of us, weren't there?

DOREEN: ...all mixed together.

MAY: And we were regularly playing together, in Osier Road playing.

DOREEN: Mm.

Q: And how long have you two known one another, Doreen and May?

MAY: A long time.

DOREEN: Yeah. (laughs)

Q: Many, many decades?

DOREEN: Because we were more or less the same...

MAY: Number 28 and number 34, and then there were two lads at 33 and a girl at 35, and we were the nucleus of it really, weren't we, for many years?

DOREEN: Mm. And then there used to be the Hinds the other side, weren't they...

MAY: And the Hinds came to join us as well.

DOREEN: ...they, a big family they was as well, yeah, yeah.

MAY: And we had somewhere to play, in the lane we used to call it, and that was great wasn't it?

DOREEN: Yes, yeah, we just made our own fun.

MAY: Sorry, I, I interrupted you there Doreen.

DOREEN: It's all right, don't worry. No, well you wanted to, cos I, I've just got a few things what I, what I forgot here. We used to play leapfrog and we used to play bowling a hoop. I don't know whether you know what that is?

Q: I know what a hoop is and I know what bowling is, but what's bowling a hoop?

DOREEN: Well we used to have a big round metal hoop, everybody used to have one didn't they? We used to have a piece of stick, sort of roll this hoop along and sort of keep hitting it with the stick, you know, like this to keep it rolling, rolling all up the street, didn't we? We used to do that. We used to play hide and seek, whip and top. We had the mushroom shaped...

Q: What's whip and top, sorry?

DOREEN: Oh sorry (laughs) don't you know what a whip and top is? So, well we used to have a pie, a piece of wood with a string on it and we used to have these, like a spinning top. One was shaped sort of, they ca, they called it the mushroom shape, and some of them were like a carrot shape, if, they used to call them carrots, I used to love them cos people, other people used to say "I can't make them go". So yeah, so we, we used to wind the string round this top and then sort of go like that with it, and then the top would come off the string spinning and you kept whipping it until the top went.

Q: It sounds like there was an art to doing it?

DOREEN: Yes. (Q laughs) And when I showed my grandchildren how to do it, they laughed and they giggled and giggled and giggled, they thought it was hilarious "Grandma, you can do it".

Q: (Laughs) I've seen my mother hula-hoop but I mean, you know...

DOREEN: Oh no, we didn't, I didn't hula-hoop. I don't think I did, did you?

MAY: No (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: No, that came in when my, when Mandy was at school, yes, yeah, yeah.

MAY: (...), (talking together)

ALEC: No, yeah, it came up before then...

DOREEN: And then we...

ALEC: ...I was hula-hooping.

DOREEN: Sorry, mm. And then we used to, you, you can still get whip and tops I think now, cos I bought a set for my grandchildren, well, you know, but anyway, sorry, going off. We used to play tennis, didn't we, and, and we used to draw the tennis court, didn't we, do you remember? We used to draw the tennis court at, on, on the soil, cos it, it was a soil lane, and then we used to play the cricket and mark the cricket pitch out. And, like you say, play rounders, we used to play obstacle races, and we made our own obstacles to jump over.

MAY: Yes, it was always a matter of making your own stumps...

DOREEN: We even...

MAY: ...for the cricket...

DOREEN: Yes, yeah.

MAY: ...and how, where are we going to, when we did rounders, that gatepost first post, that one's the second (Doreen laughs) it, it all came from us, we made it up as we went along.

DOREEN: Yes, we did, yeah, yeah. And then we used to play what they called off the ground, do you remember that?

MAY: No.

DOREEN: We used to, a group of us used to be, we had one person who was chasing like, and we, the group of us used to run around, and when this, if, the person who came near you, you had to get somewhere so you was off the ground, you know, you used to climb up on something, and if you was off the ground of course you got caught so then you had to chase the others. We used to do that.

MAY: Roller skating was the best thing.

Q: Ah right.

DOREEN: Oh yes.

MAY: Oh that was great (...). (talking together)

Q: And could you buy the roller skates or would you, did you...?

MAY: They were gifts, Christmas gifts "Ooh I must have roller skates".

DOREEN: Yes, that's all I wanted for Christmas was my roller skates. (laughter) And that's the only time I was allowed out on a Sunday to go and play, to have a little go on my roller skates. Cos we were never allowed to go out to play, were we, not on a Sunday morning?

MAY: Not usually, no.

DOREEN: No.

MAY: No, no.

Q: Wow.

DOREEN: And then, like you say, we, we used to have a big rope, even the, the parents used to come out and turn the ropes for us, didn't they?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: And we all used, the boys and girls, we all sort of played in the big rope, didn't we, skipping and...?

Q: So Sundays were very different, so...

DOREEN: Yes.

Q: ...what would I, you know, if I was back in, I don't know, let's call it, if I'm back in 1950 and it's a Sunday, what options have I got open to me as a child? What do I do?

ALEC: You play, you play in your own...

DOREEN: Well I was...

ALEC: ...sorry, you play in your own yard, or in your sandpit or with your Dinky toys or, if you was lucky, you'd be playing cards with your parents and your family. But we was, we was never, I was never allowed out the gate on a Sunday.

MAY: No, we didn't play on a Sunday.

DOREEN: You was allowed out probably but we weren't. We were allowed...

ALEC: I wasn't.

DOREEN: ...we had to do, I, I used to sit and do jigsaws on a Sunday morning, then we used to have dinner, then in the afternoon I had to go to Sunday School, as I said before...

MAY: (...) (talking together) yes, Sunday School in the afternoon usually.

DOREEN: ...and then at night we used to sit colouring, I suppose, colouring your colouring books and whatever.

MAY: I used to, in the summer particularly, I can remember going for long walks with my parents on a Sunday evening, that was lovely. We used to go for miles. And then when I had a bicycle, I can be, remember being taught to ride, terrified of falling off the bike, and my father used to hold, or my mother, used to hold the seat at the back, and I, apparently I used to say "Don't, don't, don't let it go, will you? Don't let it go". And there they were, they were walking it and let it go ages (away?). (talking together)

DOREEN: It was already let go. (laughs)

MAY: Yes. But we did, we, and we used to do cycle rides then when I could ride.

DOREEN: Mm, mm.

Q: And all shops were closed?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: Ooh yes.

MAY: Yes.

Q: You, so could you buy anything on a Sunday?

DOREEN: No.

Q: So it was very different from today?

DOREEN: The, when I was saying about having to stay in, that was winter-time, I was the same as May, we used to go for long walks. We used to walk from Spalding right down to Pinchbeck and back again.

MAY: And the droves were there then, Heck's Drove and Cunningham's Drove, and that was, that was a lovely walk, or they were lovely walks, mm.

Q: Yes, yes. Sorry, I interrupted you.

DOREEN: Oh that's all right, I think I then, I'd got most of, oh we used to play, we used to play paper chase. Do you remember playing paper chase?

MAY: No, no.

DOREEN: We used to hide little notes different places, and sometimes, so the parents used to, I can remember Win West, she used to play with us, you'd sort of, used to write a little note to correspond with somebody's house, you say you'd probably, well (...) I put here, you'd probably put 'I am not east but I am at somebody's house. I'm not east, so where will I be? North, south, east or west?' (laughs) (...) a clue. But you see this particular one, she'd, she'd always write 'I'm not east but I am at' this was west, we had a Mrs West...

Q: I see.

DOREEN: ...and then, you see, another one would be 'I am baking' or cooking 'in the' blank, so where am I cooking and baking?'

Q: In the kitchen or...?

DOREEN: That's right, cos we had a Miss Kitchen didn't we? (laughter) So we sort of, you know, and we used to go round, you know, hiding these little notes and we, you know, we had, we had some good fun really like, didn't we?

MAY: I don't remember them.

DOREEN: And we used to play high, we used to play high jump as well, you know, we used to have, somebody used to hold the rope and put it up, no fancy bars or anything, but just hold the rope up, didn't we?

MAY: Yes, yes, yeah. Yes, I think we were very lucky in that, that respect because we had the facilities, like the, the road where we could play and (...)... (talking together)

DOREEN: Yeah, there was no cars, sorry. (laughs)

MAY: ...boys and girls, so I think we were very lucky.

Q: Yes, yes.

DOREEN: We, we all get on well together, we never fell out or anything, did we?

MAY: I don't remember any fighting or (...) (talking together) no, no.

DOREEN: No, you know, but...

Q: Do you remember the wireless, do you...?

DOREEN: Yes.

Q: As it would be called then.

DOREEN: Mm hmm.

Q: You had the wireless. What programmes can you remember listening to?

MAY: Dick Barton Special Agent. (laughter)

Q: Dick Barton Special Agent, right, OK.

MAY: And the, the road would clear wouldn't it? Everybody would go into their own house. (laughter)

DOREEN: Everybody (...). I didn't particularly like it, but everybody used to go in, but I, I used to go in until it was finished and then go out again. But everybody did, didn't they?

MAY: Yes, that (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: And we used to listen to the Archers and the, Mrs Dow's Diary and that sort of thing. You see, we just used to listen to all the programmes, was it, In Town Tonight programme wasn't there?

MAY: Yes, there was, yes, yes.

DOREEN: Yeah.

Q: And what sort of music would you have, were they big band orchestras or, you know, what sort of...?

DOREEN: I can't really remember, I can't. (laughs)

MAY: Yes, Bing Crosby was, I know my father always wanted to croon along with Bing Crosby. (laughter) What else was there? Yes, there were big, Victor Sylvester.

Q: I, I've heard of that name, yes.

MAY: Yes.

ALEC: Well they were, they were big dance bands weren't they?

MAY: Yes, they were, yes.

DOREEN: It was mostly the news I can remember because it was always "Sssh". You always wanted to say something when we was watching the news, and they all used to say "Quiet". (laughs)

MAY: Tommy Handley rings a bell as well.

DOREEN: Oh yes, it, it (...) was it (...)?

MAY: (...) (talking together) that's right, yes, that's right, that's right.

DOREEN: Yeah.

Q: And what was the one with the, it always strikes me as a bit funny, having the ventriloquist's dummy but on the radio, I could never see how that works.

DOREEN: Oh (...). (talking together)

MAY: (...).

DOREEN: Yes, Peter somebody...

Q: Peter Brough.

DOREEN: ...Peter (...)... (talking together)

MAY: (...) Andrews.

DOREEN: ...with (...) Andrew, that's right, yes, yeah, yeah.

Q: And I suppose on the radio it wouldn't really matter if he, if you saw his lips move, I suppose. (laughs)

MAY: No, no, no, it didn't matter.

DOREEN: And of course we'd not seen it, after seeing it on the television you would think no.

Q: No, it's not much good. (laughs)

DOREEN: With us, we didn't see it, you see, so it was. Oh I tell you, I do remember another one, do you remember Leslie Welsh, the memory man?

MAY: Oh yes, yes.

DOREEN: He used to, they used to ask this man some questions and he could roll things off, they used to call him Leslie Welsh, I think it was Leslie Welsh, the memory...

MAY: Yes, who won the football programme, football tournaments or what have you.

Q: Oh right, OK.

DOREEN: Yeah, yeah.

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: (...) and weren't there another one called Twenty Questions?

MAY: Yes, yes.

DOREEN: Yes, they had to guess whatever they were talking about in, they could ans, ask twenty questions and by the time you asked, that's all you could answer, and people would sort of give you clues and then you'd got, hadn't you, got the answer. I do remember that.

Q: And do you remember tra, so you mentioned that you were lucky enough to go on holiday to Skegness and, and various places, but do you ever remember going to other towns, and how often was that? Would you have travelled to Boston or Peterborough or wherever or...?

DOREEN: Ooh no, they'd be far places to us. (laughs)

MAY: No, not, not very often. Occasionally we'd go to Peterborough when I was at secondary school. But younger I don't remember that much.

DOREEN: (...). (talking together)

Q: And would that be for shopping or was it for...?

MAY: Yes, yes.

DOREEN: We did go to, after you were born, we went, we went to Rotherham...

ALEC: I, I, I (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: ...didn't we, cos my father had got a sister at Rotherham, and you was only in the pram and then, you wouldn't remember.

MAY: Yes, we did have several trips to London. Mrs West, who lived at the top of the road, used to walk, I think they were Cockneys originally and they came to Spalding, and she used to organise coach trips, and we went to the Palladium, various shows like that. I remember cos I wasn't a very good traveller on the coach. (laughter) They were great, and I know we went for a whole day once or twice, feeding the pigeons in Trafalgar Square. And my father had been in London, lived in London for a time, so he knew the haunts a bit.

Q: OK. And would it be fair to say that really you could get most things that you needed in Spalding? You wouldn't need to go here, there and everywhere, it was very self-contained?

DOREEN: No, no, they were all shops, they were all shops, whatever you wanted was there, wasn't it?

MAY: Mm, mm.

Q: And what sort of shops would there have been in Spalding? So we've mentioned, obviously you all remember the Forge, you remember the Dodds and where they worked, but that was for a specific purpose, what shops do you remember in and around Spalding?

DOREEN: We always had the groceries and the butchers and like the bakers, the clothes shops, there was plenty of clothes shops.

Q: Can you remember any names?

MAY: Berrill's, because my mother trained there.

Q: Bells, and what did they specialise...?

MAY: Berrill.

DOREEN: Berrill's.

MAY: Berrill's. (spelt out)

Q: And what did they specialise in?

MAY: Haberdashery, material, clothing, wasn't it, they made clothes?

DOREEN: Yes, mm.

MAY: And I know my mother trained as a dressmaker there, they did a lot of dressmaking, and they, the dressmakers were underneath, the, the lowest floor, and they had to have all the windows closed because when the tide came up, it came above the windows. It was right on the waterside, no, no sign of it now.

Q: And what other local shops, can, so if I think of Spalding now, Woolworth's has long since gone but there's still Hills, the department store...

DOREEN: Yes.

MAY: Yes.

Q: ...is that a relatively new department store or, or would they have been there...?

MAY: No, no, it was, Hanson's was the other one wasn't it?

DOREEN: Hanson's was down at New Road wasn't it?

MAY: That's right. That was the other sizeable, again, it was material...

DOREEN: Dress.

MAY: ...and dress, dresses and so on.

DOREEN: And Pat, Pat Mills, do you remember Pat Mills?

MAY: Ooh yes, yes.

DOREEN: On the corner they, they were.

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: But, as I say, everything you wanted was there, wasn't it, really?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: You got your market, I mean you got your...

F: How far back are you going?

PART TWO

Q: So a continuation of the conversation with Alec, Doreen and May. Could we move on to, it just looks, at that time, it was a lot more sort of physical if, in the sense that you talked about going on long walks...

DOREEN: Mm.

Q: ...you mentioned about diet and what you ate and so on, but it seemed to be a lot more physical, people didn't have the cars to go everywhere, what are your thoughts about that?

DOREEN: No, nobody had a car, the only person who had a car when I was younger was the doctor, had a big car and came down the lane (laughs) until it gradually got a few more. But there wasn't, you know, there wasn't the cars about was there? That's why we were able to play in the lane.

Q: And would you have walked most places?

DOREEN: Yes.

MAY: Mm, yes, yes.

Q: And greater distances than today?

DOREEN: Yes.

ALEC: Ooh, we had to do a two, two mile walk when I was about seven or eight, we used to go to Pinchbeck to see grandma.

DOREEN: Mm, we used to walk there.

ALEC: Mo, mo, I think it was every, I think it was every other Sunday we used to walk there. And if we was, if we was, if there was a bit of money to spare we used to have the luxury of a ride back on the bus. (laughter)

MAY: Yes, we...

DOREEN: We used to, sorry, we used to walk down to Little London as well, to the other grandma's down there.

MAY: And a typical Sunday evening walk was Peck's Drove or Cunningham's Drove, which took one out of Spalding completely...

ALEC: (...). (talking together)

MAY: ...and they were, they were literally drives.

Q: OK. And for those people who wouldn't know what a drove was, what's your understanding of drove?

DOREEN: Well a narrow dirt track, sort of thing.

MAY: It's where the animals used to be driven, when, when they were moving animals from one place to another.

Q: Thank you for that May, yeah. And another aspect that we don't get these days is, I've heard mention that you very often used to get, the insurance man used to call, who was it in this local neck of the woods?

ALEC: I can only, I can only, well I can remember the Prudential and the Co-op and the Refuge, well it used to be, the insurance premiums, I think, was a penny a week.

Q: And insurance for what?

ALEC: On, on somebody's life. Life insurance...

Q: Life insurance.

ALEC: ...which that was, I know one was took out on me, I don't know whether you had one? Oh me mo, me mother had one as well.

DOREEN: I don't know, I know the insurance used to, man used to come, but whether, what it was for, I don't know, perhaps (...).

MAY: Yes, that was money, I think, to cover expenses of funerals if anything happened.

DOREEN: Mm, yeah.

Q: And we talked about games earlier, I think there's another game that you remember, it's to do with marbles?

ALEC: Mm hmm, definitely.

Q: What was that called?

ALEC: We used to, well we used to just make a hole in the road, in the road, and you'd got to roll your marbles, if you got, if you got your marble into the hole, you was, you was winning and you'd claim all those that had missed on the outside (Q laughs) and there'd be five or, five or six of you having a go, and if two went, two went in the hole, you'd share all the marbles what had missed.

Q: And I can remember marbles just at school, you know, with going back thirty years or more now, but you used to have different marbles, used to have glass ones and you used to have china ones, and they were a different sort of material. Can you remember that?

ALEC: Well I think, I think they were made of clay, round clay and, but I only, I only had the odd one of those, mine were all glass. But the oth, the other game we used to play, used to put so many marbles in a circle and you'd got to throw your marble to knock them out of the circle. When you knocked them out of the circle, obviously on the dirt, on the dirt one you made the circle, just made, drew round the stick to make the circle, but if you knocked them out of that circle, you claimed them (laughs) and if you, if you didn't, yours stayed in the middle. (laughs)

Q: And was it a time when you used to get, in the nicest possible way, playing, did you used to get dirty? I mean, you know, these days people are playing, kids are playing computer games and so on and, you know, very often there's stuff indoors, would you have sort of had that rough and tumble outside, would you have got...?

DOREEN: Oh yes, definitely. (laughs) We used to play in, well we used to play in an old dyke that was at the bottom, cos I mean it wasn't, it wasn't wet water, was it, it used to dry up in the summer cos it was so dry. We'd probably find a few frogs and that, and course the boys, as boys do, throw frogs at the girls. (laughter)

Q: OK. And talking of, well from one sort of animal or amphibian to livestock, we're talking about the centre of Spalding, were there ever any livestock in the centre of Spalding? Do you remember there being markets or, you know, actual animals for sale?

DOREEN: Only tho, those markets what we were talking about earlier, what were called the cattle market, we did used to go as, or as, well us as children, didn't we? We used to go and look just to go and see the animals.

ALEC: Did, did you (...) the sheep market?

DOREEN: They used to have 'em down New Road, I've read about, but I don't remember (...). (talking together) I think they did have, they did have (...). (talking together)

ALEC: I, I, well I, I can, I can remember the pens being in the Sheep Market.

DOREEN: Yes, I remember the pens, but that's...

ALEC: But I've never seen animals in it.

DOREEN: ...that's why it's called Sheep Market, I suppose, because they sold the sheep there...

ALEC: (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: ...but I remember the pens but I don't remember animals.

Q: And there...

DOREEN: Do you?

MAY: No, I don't remember any.

Q: ...were sheds in the centre of Spalding, and what were they for? They were near the bus depot.

DOREEN: Well that, that would be all to do with the auction and the cattle market, wouldn't it?

MAY: Yes, that's right. Yes, yes, the auction rooms.

DOREEN: I think.

ALEC: I mean they, they were classed as the Bulb Auction, or Spalding Bulb Auction used to be on the side. Obviously sort of in August time they'd be, when they'd be growing the tulip bulbs around here, the farmers'd be taking 'em there to be sold, you know, the, the excess stock what they got, and they'd also take the vegetables in there to be sold in, well the potatoes by the bagful or by the ton.

Q: I see. And do you remember the live, the landscape being a lot more colourful? So were there the bulbs growing, which you don't get today?

DOREEN: Yes, we used to have fields and fields of tulips, didn't we?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: And they used to have a, what they called a tulip route, and people came to see the Tulip Parade. There were signs, weren't there, used to take them all out in the country and all round, quite a long way, and all these carpets of different coloured tulips, wasn't there?

MAY: That's right. And local people, the smallholders on the way, on the route, used to have stalls on the roadside. But you used to get lines of coaches on these tiny country roads, didn't you, on the route?

DOREEN: Mm, yeah.

MAY: But it was beautiful. The, the fields really did look beautiful. Now they head them all before, before you see the beauty really.

Q: Yes, yes, yes, it's a shame really and...

DOREEN: And they used, sorry, they used to have what, what they called Paul Hart's, didn't they, down London Road?

MAY: Mm.

DOREEN: Paul Hart's.

Q: Paul Hart's?

DOREEN: Has anybody told you about Paul Hart's?

Q: No.

DOREEN: Oh. Well he was the pilot who got badly burnt during the wartime, didn't he?

Q: I see, I see.

DOREEN: Cos he'd got a terrible face...

Q: I see.

DOREEN: ...with all, he looked really horrible. Not being nasty but cos he'd been...

Q: Yeah, yeah, disfigured.

DOREEN: ...all burnt in his aeroplane.

MAY: I think he had some of the first, what they called plastic surgery, on the burns, didn't he?

DOREEN: Yes, yes.

Q: Maxillofacial.

MAY: Yeah, I think it was an experimental thing wasn't it?

DOREEN: Yeah, it was, wasn't it? They, they said he was a guinea pig, wasn't he?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: And he used to have lovely gardens, didn't he? It, it was all set out probably in a heart shape of tulips and (...) it really was a lovely display, but now there's houses on it. But that was on the corner of London Road.

Q: I see.

ALEC: That was just near Little London Bridge, opposite the BP garage.

Q: Yes, yes. And he obviously seemed like a, a local character, if I can, you know, that's not a pejorative word to use. Can you remember other sort of local characters that, you know, there was old Mrs So and So or whatever, can you remember, from when you were growing up, certain people?

F: Yeah, Johnny Sharman. (laughter)

ALEC: We don't want to mention him. (laughter)

DOREEN: Who, who was that, who was that lady who, who lived at the top? What was her, oh Maggie Murphy was her name called, we used to call her Maggie Murphy...

MAY: Oh yes.

DOREEN: ...do you remember Maggie Murphy? She was a bit of a character. She used to go round Spalding with a, a pram and it seemed to, always seemed to be full of clothes and rags and things. I, I don't quite know what she used to do, but she always pushed this pram about, didn't she?

MAY: Yes, yes.

DOREEN: Do you remember?

F: The lady, the lady who used to, we used to call her a witch, next door to the school.

ALEC: Oh Ginny.

DOREEN: Oh Ginny Sparks.

ALEC: We've had her. (laughs)

DOREEN: Yeah, that's where she used to get, we used to get our little penny things, or halfpenny things from when we was at school, yeah.

ALEC: I always remember me dad, always can remember, ran Geest when he started. He came round with a hand cart selling bulbs in, that would be when he first came over here from Holland, and then he gradually built it up into the empire as we knew it. (laughs)

Q: OK. So, cos Geest did, was a very big local employer, wasn't it, before it was taken over?

DOREEN: Mm, mm, yes, yes.

Q: But that all started with a hand cart?

MAY: Yes.

ALEC: Mm. But don't, don't forget then after, afterwards, Geest actually took over Spalding Bulb Company but it was still ran, still ran as the Spalding Bulb Company. But it still, was still, it was still a massive, part of the Geest empire.

Q: I see, right.

DOREEN: There is another thing I thought about, don't know whether it'll be interesting, we did used to have a scissor grinder come round, didn't we?

MAY: Yes.

Q: A scissor grinder.

DOREEN: Do you know what a scissor grinder is?

Q: Somebody who used to grind scissors, but... (laughs)

ALEC: He used to sharpen them, sharpen them.

DOREEN: He used to sharpen them. He used to have a little...

F: (...) bike. (talking together)

DOREEN: ...little, like a, well a trolley thing, and he'd pedal up and down like this, and his wheel of, whatever it's made of, wheel spinning round, and he puts the scissors on it and he's pedalling away, didn't he?

F: And the carving knives.

DOREEN: Yeah, yeah, knives. The sparks used to be flying, but he used to, didn't he, he always used to come round and have, I think your mum had her scissors didn't she?

F: Yes, and your hedge, hedge shears.

ALEC: It was, it was, it was a foot, a foot operated grinder, very much like the sewing machines...

DOREEN: Yeah, cos he was pedalling.

ALEC: ...but he used to have a double pedal on it...

Q: I see.

ALEC: ...when one foot was down, the other foot was up. So he was sort of almost like on a bicycle. But he, but he always used to come afterwards with the piece of cloth or something and, just snip it, so it used to prove that it was sharp.

Q: Sharp, OK.

DOREEN: Sorry May, did you want to say something?

MAY: I've just written it down, because I (...)... (talking together)

DOREEN: I was going to say we... (laughs)

MAY: ...a few characters. Mrs Parsons, I would think she was probably, she taught at the Church School, and I don't know if you remember her, she was a councillor, she took part in quite a bit of the local community then, and she was quite a notable lady and very forthright. But I don't know if that's, Mrs Parsons. (laughs)

Q: No, no, I mean they would all have been people that would have been about at that time...

MAY: That's right, yes.

Q: ...and, and, and known about.

DOREEN: Well yes, yes, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MAY: Yeah.

DOREEN: As I said, cos our headmaster was Mr (Lees?) from Pinchbeck, at the Westlode School.

MAY: Yes.

Q: And can you remember the Flower Parade starting?

DOREEN: Yes, yes.

Q: And I believe the first Flower Parade proper started in 1959, or the late '50s...

DOREEN: Oh, it might have been, yeah. Could have been, I was thinking '53, but I don't know why, why '53 came (...). (talking together)

Q: I think there was some sort of Flower Festival, but as far as the Parade was concerned I think that's a lit, a little later...

DOREEN: Mm, perhaps it is, I'm perhaps wrong. And they used to, they used to make, what do they call 'em? Dec, like decorated plaques, somebody would make one in, with a teapot sort of a shape, you know, it'd got a teapot pouring tea out of a cup. And different badges, they used to have them all over the town, didn't they? All different things made of tulip heads, don't you remember?

MAY: No.

DOREEN: Yeah, near Ayscoughfee, there always used to be one there.

MAY: No, that was probably before I...

DOREEN: Oh you perhaps, yeah, yeah, perhaps so...

MAY: ...or after I'd gone, gone to Hull.

DOREEN: ...yeah, yeah, there used to be lots of little things all about like that, you know, of all different shapes and things, they were quite good actually, but.

ALEC: Well you could (...) somewhere, I thi, I think some of them used to be the ones that they took off the float to re, redo, or re, renew the float in a different shape, and they'd just put a stand on 'em and just use 'em in town.

Q: And you mentioned May that you, although you were born in Spalding, there was a period of time when you lived away from Spalding before you returned, what were the sort of key changes, if you like, that you remember from when you sort of left, from when you came back? What, what were the key things that sort of struck you if you thi, if you can remember?

MAY: Hmm, I can't think of anything specific. I always came back for holidays, cos my contact was still there. I think it was the, the size of Spalding getting so much bigger, with all the building and so on, that would be the first thing. And the alterations in the street systems.

Q: And were you in another part of the country or were you outside of the coun...?

MAY: No, no, I was first of all in Hull...

Q: I see.

MAY: ...and then March for a short time, but then most of my time was in St Helen's, which is Merseyside, so. And when I came back there were very few people that I really knew well, Doreen's one of them, you know (laughs) that were still here, because, like me, they'd all moved away.

Q: Yes. So things were changing?

MAY: Yes, very much so, mm.

Q: Yes, I see. And you mentioned about the way that homes were heated, what you did for power, you used to use coke at home, or coal rather...

DOREEN: Coal, coal.

Q: Coal?

DOREEN: Mm.

Q: And you used to have to go and fetch it or would it be delivered?

DOREEN: No, we, no, the coal was delivered. (...) used to fetch the coke for people who wanted the coke to burn.

Q: OK. To those who are a stranger to such things, coke differs from coal, how?

F: Burns slower.

Q: OK.

ALEC: It's been, it's been, it's been heated up to get the gas out of it...

Q: This is coke?

ALEC: Coke has. It actually starts as coal and it goes through a process, i.e. at the gasworks it used to, it used to heat it to get, obviously to get the gas out of it, and then it was, that was a residue that was left which looked like a very, a dark greyish irregular lump with lots of holes in it, lots of very small holes in it.

MAY: Like cinders...

Q: I see.

MAY: ...looks like cinders, doesn't it?

DOREEN: Mm, mm hmm, yeah.

MAY: (...). (talking together)

Q: And it burnt more efficiently, you, you...?

MAY: You banked the...

DOREEN: Banked your fire up.

MAY: ...fire down, or up, with it, so that the coal lasted longer and held the heat. That's right isn't it?

DOREEN: Mm, yeah, yeah.

Q: And lighting would have been gas?

MAY: Yes, initially, yes.

Q: Initially.

MAY: Yes.

Q: And did you used to have to sort of turn the nozzle or...?

DOREEN: Yes, turn the gas on and then light it. It used to have a mantle, and light the mantle, the gas used to come where the mantle is.

Q: Wasn't it dangerous?

DOREEN: I suppose it was but we didn't notice. (laughter)

ALEC: But on the outside of our house wall, there used to be the outside one, which was the main lighting then, and at a certain time every day you'd hear the, this person come round specially to light them, and he used to have a stick and he used to just up the, up the le, up the switch, and you'd hear him pull it, click it down and then light it. That used to be his job, to go round all of 'em in a certain area, to light them, and then put them out in the morning. But I, but I can remember gas, gas being in our house, so it must have been in the mid, probably mid '50s when we got electric.

DOREEN: Yeah, I was at Gleed School when we had, so it was, would be '50s, wouldn't it, cos I was at Gleed School when we had it, yeah, when we had electric all put in (...).

Q: And as far as, you know, heating and, and, and things like that were concerned, you wouldn't have had things like fitted bathrooms...

DOREEN: No, no. (laughs)

Q: ...if it's not too personal a question, where would you have, where would you have had a bath?

DOREEN: In front of the fire in the tin bath.

Q: OK. And how long did it take to fill up the bath?

ALEC: Well you used, used to have a big, big, what we called a copper, which was like a, about a twen, I'd say about a ten gallon container, which was, which was heated by a gas, a gas burner underneath it, and that would, that would be where you got your hot water from, and dad'd get it in a, bring it in a bucket and tip it into the, into the bath, along with the hot and cold water, so it was about the right temperature, and that's how you had a bath, in front of the fire. And when, and when we had a, when we had a bath actually put in upstairs, in what we called the bathroom, it was still using this gas boiler full of water, and they used to carry up the stairs, a bucketful of boiling water nearly, carry it up the stairs, to tip in the bath...

Q: I see.

ALEC: ...and that was the only way you could get hot water upstairs then.

Q: OK.

MAY: We were very resilient in those days. (laughter)

DOREEN: When, I don't know whether you, we had a, the copper outside, was actually a fire one, wasn't gas, mum did have a gas one...

ALEC: No, well I can remember the gas one.

DOREEN: The grey, no, no, before then, that one in the washhouse, it was like a big, concrete weren't they?

MAY: Mm.

DOREEN: Were they concrete, big concrete...

ALEC: It's, it's (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: ...like a font in a Church, you put some water in...

ALEC: It's a, it's a metal...

DOREEN: ...and you had a fire underneath it.

ALEC: ...it's like a metal, it's like a metal half circle, or cast steel, which you filled with water, and you just lit a fire underneath it with your wood or coal, and then when you'd finished you had to scoop the water out of it to, to whatever you wanted to do, and that used to be, Monday morning, that was dad's first job on a Monday morning (two conversations taking place at same time) cos it was always filled the day before from the rainwater reservoir,

or the (Cessna?) as you call them, and that used to be his job, to light the fire first thing in the morning, so that it was ready for doing the washing. (laughs)

MAY: Yes, I was going to say that, that was the washing, in, in, we had one of those in the washhouse, a little fire, I think...

DOREEN: Yes, that, that's where ours...

MAY: ...the old mangle, and then that was replaced by a slightly smaller one with rubber rollers. But the other one was a very big one, very old one.

DOREEN: Oh with the wooden rollers?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: Oh we didn't have one of those, my grandma did, the, mum had little ones with the, little ones with, she just had a little one with the, I don't, don't know what they were, rubber I presume, weren't they, rubber?

Q: Mm.

MAY: Oh and the dolly.

F: Oh yes.

MAY: (...) dollies I think.

DOREEN: (Posher?).

MAY: Posher.

DOREEN: Posher, and the dolly. Dolly and the posher.

Q: Now you'll have to tell me what a dolly is, I, I'm thinking of a child's dolly. (laughter)

DOREEN: Not a dolly, not a dolly what you hold like (laughs) well a dolly is a wooden, bit of wooden post with like, like a spade handle, then it's got a round bit un, un, underneath, and then underneath there it's got three pegs, three sort of, about that size, wooden pegs coming out, and you put that in your dolly tub, as they call it, like a, a barrel, and...

Q: Yes. To agitate the...?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: Wash your clothes like that. And the posher, do you know what a posher is?

Q: No.

DOREEN: (Laughs) It's not a posh person, it's not me. (laughs)

F: Straight handled with metal (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: It looked like brass didn't it, or copper...

F: With, with holes...

DOREEN: ...no, copper weren't it?

F: ...with holes in it.

DOREEN: Yeah. Like a ca, copper...

F: It was like a dome...

DOREEN: Yeah, a dome...

F: ...a dome.

DOREEN: ...and it'd got holes in it, so you see what you did, you pushed it like this...

Q: Oh OK.

DOREEN: ...clothes...

F: (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: ...and as you pushed, lifted it up, the water came out these little holes, so you didn't keep it for the water, and that's how we had to wash our clothes. (laughter)

F: (...) somebody.

DOREEN: Oh I used to love doing that, I always used to want to do that. I used to enjoy doing it. (laughter)

MAY: No, thank you.

Q: And if, probably the most sort of intimate thing now is (laughter) going to the loo, going to the toilet, in, indoor loos or...?

DOREEN: No, right out, outside loo at the bottom of, well ours, we'd got a shed at the end of our, we'd got a long row, pathway to the dirt track, right, and we'd got a shed there and the toilet was there, and then we'd got more coalhouses and washhouses.

Q: And did they flush or did they...?

DOREEN: Yes, yeah, they were flush ones, weren't they, they did have flush?

MAY: Yes, yes, our toilet was at the bottom of the gard, at the bottom of the yard really, it had a bit of garden on each side, but it was path...

F: Yeah, we had (...). (talking together)

MAY: ...and then the washhouse was next door to it.

DOREEN: And it wasn't very nice going out when it was dark (laughs) was it?

MAY: No. And you had to watch, if you went down there, I didn't ever want to go down there after dark...

DOREEN: No.

MAY: ...with, on my own, because if the door had been left ajar, there, there was a, like a bucket piece in the corner for any bits and pieces, and one night I'd gone in and something had run from the back of that, you see (laughter) out of the door.

DOREEN: Oh dear.

MAY: So, so I didn't like going down on my own. (laughs)

Q: I can well imagine. (laughter)

ALEC: What, the other thing what I do remember was the toilet being right down the bottom, obviously with no heating anywhere near it. You used to light a little paraffin lamp, and in winter you used to put the paraffin lamp in there and light it...

Q: In the basin?

ALEC: No, standing at the side of it, just to stop the tank, stop the water freezing in the tank a little bit. It used to be, used to be a very small one, but it always used to work. You, obviously you shut all the doors...

DOREEN: It was against the stop tap, you know, you have a stop tap what you can turn water, like you have a stop tap underneath your sink there, it was that, and it kept it, didn't it?

F: (...). (talking together)

MAY: When I, no, it's all right, when I was small, our water tap was also at the bottom of the yard. We didn't have it in the house. You did, I think, didn't you, in your house?

DOREEN: We had a pump in our gar, in, didn't we, we had a pump?

MAY: Yes.

Q: So if you needed to fill the kettle...?

MAY: You had to go to the bottom, yes, yes, that was when I was very small and then it was (...)... (talking together)

DOREEN: We had a pump in our garden.

MAY: ...but I do remember that.

DOREEN: You know where the, that shaped window was, the kitchen window? There, we used to have a sink on there with a pump, you pumped the water, I don't, it must have come, I don't, it must have come out the cistern, wouldn't it?

ALEC: Cistern (...)... (talking together)

DOREEN: ...come out the cistern, yeah, mm.

ALEC: ...well I can show you one cos I've got, it's just a handle and you just do it backwards and forwards and it's a, just a basic pump, it just pumps the water up and out through a spout and out into whatever you've got underneath it.

MAY: Yes, because the cistern water was used for washing, wasn't it?

ALEC: Ooh, ooh, always.

DOREEN: Oh and bathing, wasn't it, everything, we used to...

MAY: Was it?

DOREEN: Yes, yes, we used to...

MAY: Oh we always had the water tap and that was from the mains water down the bottom of the yard, and I'm not sure, I don't remember mum ever getting the water out of the cistern. I think if she did occasionally, me father used to do that, and all our water came out of the tap.

DOREEN: Oh we used to have to have a bucket on a long piece of rope...

MAY: Mm, yes, I remember, yes.

DOREEN: ...and scoop it out, cos dad always used to, he used to carry the hot water up, he wouldn't let us carry the hot water up, when he put a bath upstairs, we, but we had to carry the cold up. (laughs)

ALEC: But that, that was, that was his, that was what they do on Sunday, was lift a big square lid up, about two foot by eighteen inches, well, was, was it a square one? Yes, it was a square one. And he used to scoop the water out with the bucket, put it in the copper, and obviously put the lid back on. But every, every summer, when it got low, he'd lit, literally go down it, scrub the sides and then re...

DOREEN: (...). (talking together)

ALEC: ...and then wash it all out and then sort of repaint it with cement and water, just to re-waterproof it.

Q: I see, I see. And lastly, if we can move on to the sort of neighbours that you can remember and what they did. So the three people here, so we've got Alec Wilson, Doreen Whiting nee Wilson and May Clark, you all lived near one another, what sort of neighbours lived near you and perhaps what you can remember about them and even what they did, if, if, if that's something you can remember?

ALEC: Where do you want me to start? (laughs)

DOREEN: I've got a list here, look, if you want a list?

Q: Yeah.

DOREEN: (Laughs) Well at the bottom of, of our, right down the bottom, on the right-hand side, you were talking about land, that was Bunting's, wasn't it, who used to have a lot of (gip?) and then there was another man...

Q: And which road are we in at the moment?

DOREEN: This is down O, this is down Osier Road...

ALEC: Off of Osier Road.

Q: Osier Road, right.

DOREEN: ...on the right, looking down from what, from Marine Road, from Marine Road, weren't there?

ALEC: (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: There was, and I can't remember, oh Mr Hayes, do you remember Mr Hayes, having the land, he used to keep a pig, and he frightened me to death when he killed it. (laughs) And then there was the (...) I can't, perhaps you can remember more that was opposite you. What was opposite you?

ALEC: Nothing.

DOREEN: Was that (...)?

MAY: (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: ...that was all...

MAY: ...it belonged to Mr Hodson, the, the orchard...

ALEC: I don't know who it was before.

MAY: ...but actually it belonged, it was Mr Garner.

DOREEN: Mr Garner.

MAY: Mr Garner.

ALEC: Mr Garner before him?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: I think Hodson's had it afterwards.

ALEC: Ah (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: (...) Mr Garner.

MAY: And then Mrs, Mrs Hodson, Mr Hodson bought it...

DOREEN: Yes.

MAY: ...because I know the lads and I used to go and play in there. They, they were twin boys, next door to us, at number 33...

Q: I see, yes.

DOREEN: Mm, and they, yeah...

MAY: ...and we used to, I don't know if you ever played?

DOREEN: No, no, we didn't go, no.

MAY: We used to climb trees with them.

DOREEN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then there was another piece, oh there, there was a small bit of land where a man...

MAY: The orchard went right up didn't it?

ALEC: Mm (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: (...) my house up to, there was...

MAY: Lees.

DOREEN: Dr Lees, yeah, there was a family, Lees there weren't, she was a nurse weren't she? Cos we always used to call her Nurse Lee, who lived there, do you remember?

MAY: Yes, and then Mr West...

DOREEN: Yes.

MAY: ...the, the Cockney people that I was saying, yeah, and they, he had a garage there didn't he? He used to do work on cars.

DOREEN: Oh yes, he did, yes, I'd forgotten that, mm yeah. And then we, then there was Moorland and then there was the Harpham's at the top.

MAY: That's right, yes.

DOREEN: I don't quite know what they did, do you?

MAY: Carpenters.

DOREEN: Were they carpenters?

MAY: Well Mr Harpham owned land, because (...) Harpham's father was one of his son's...

DOREEN: Oh was there? Yeah.

MAY: ...there was two or three sons, I think, and they owned land...

DOREEN: Oh, oh I can't remember.

MAY: ...but his, the son that lived at home with him was Cyril and he was a carpenter, cos my grandfather worked for them when he was still in Spalding.

DOREEN: Yes, yes, yeah, I was going to say you'd remember.

MAY: Yes.

ALEC: (...) Miss Gaunt's house.

DOREEN: No, that...

MAY: No, that's the other side.

DOREEN: ...that's, that's West's, that was West's.

MAY: Oh.

ALEC: Was it West's first?

DOREEN: That was West's first, yeah.

MAY: Yeah, yes, yeah, yes.

DOREEN: Mrs West was there when we were young, yeah, then Gaunt's came after that.

Q: I think this is when you're going to have to defer to (laughter) your system Alec.

ALEC: Who was the little one next door, who was the one next door to the Gaunt's?

DOREEN: Which way? Which way?

ALEC: It joined on to it.

DOREEN: That was Lees, that was Lees.

ALEC: Oh that was Lees was it?

DOREEN: Yeah.

ALEC: Well that's all right then. And then that, then past, past that, well they've had various issues haven't they? They've been, been sto, storage for house removals, they've been engineers...

DOREEN: Yeah, Gordon Cushing, was it Gordon Cushing? He used to keep something and he had big AI, do you remember him having big Alsatians?

ALEC: Oh well, no, that's, he had a little shed didn't he? Had a little garage at the end of Lees' garden.

DOREEN: Yeah, yeah, where are you talking about?

ALEC: At the end of Lees' garden, they used to go there, cos I used to go and, used to go and brush the dogs.

DOREEN: Oh I can't remember that one.

ALEC: Yeah, I was going to say in...

DOREEN: Well you would remember cos you'd go.

ALEC: Yeah, I was going to say in, in Gaunt's yard, I think Gaunt's, when it was Gaunt's, I think he started the radiator repair business there, which I think is joined, then joined with somebody else and moved further, right to the top of Willow Walk. But in-between times it was, I think Robinson's moved in there after Gaunt's, and he had a removals there and there was a big eng, engineering place at the top that used to do engine tuning...

Q: I see, yeah.

DOREEN: Mm (...). (talking together)

MAY: ...and they, they used, they used to work for Paddy Hopkirk who was the, he's the Mini racing driver, and then he moved down to (...) that's the name of it.

DOREEN: Yeah, that's it, yeah. Yeah, I do remember that.

Q: So they were all neighbours of yours, and they, did, did most people work?

DOREEN: Yes, they all went to work, didn't they? I can remember, well George Boothby was there, but I don't remember him working.

ALEC: I was just going to say, did he? I don't remember him working.

DOREEN: (...) (talking together) a Miss, Miss...

MAY: (...) I think (...). (talking together)

DOREEN: ...I don't know what he did, I don't...

Q: I see.

DOREEN: ...I know Mrs, Mr Hinds worked at (Elsome's?) who lived next door to us, didn't they?

ALEC: A lorry driver, weren't he?

Q: Elsome's?

ALEC: Elsome's Seeds.

DOREEN: Elsome's Seeds.

Q: Elsome's Seeds. Right, OK.

ALEC: Which, strangely, I started work for (laughs) later on.

DOREEN: Then there was us, of course dad was helping with like in the building trade, with the builder.

ALEC: Well he, he, he always used to come, that's one of the first vehicles I can remember, was him coming home with a little, like a little one, one and a half ton lorry when he used to come home for dinner every day. That's the, that's the first vehicle I can remember.

DOREEN: I can't remember what the Quinton's did, can you?

MAY: No, I can't remember what Mr Quinton did.

DOREEN: I know, I think the family went in the Forces, but...

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: ...and Mr Arnold, I can't remember what Mr Arnold did.

MAY: No, between those two there was Mrs Griffin...

DOREEN: Oh yeah, that's right, Mrs Griffin.

MAY: ...but she, she was on her own, yes.

DOREEN: I do vaguely remember Mr Griffin, only vaguely. But I don't know what Mrs Arnold used to do, and I don't know what Mr (Hurry?) used to do, do you?

MAY: No, no.

DOREEN: I can remember Mr Hurry coming home, he came home after the wartime, you know, the, when he came home in the war, he brought us all, he brought us all, well I couldn't understand how he brought one pineapple, and I thought as a child he brought one pineapple out and divided it all up the road, but obviously he must have brought a few (laughs) we'd never had a pineapple before. Do you, do you, do you remember?

MAY: No, no.

DOREEN: Yeah, he brought, he brought, obviously he brought this pineapple wherever he, I don't know where it was, and gave us all a piece of pineapple. We thought it was lux, was luxury this was (laughs). That was before your time.

ALEC: Yeah, definitely.

DOREEN: But I can't remember, what did Mr Hodson do?

MAY: He worked for the telegraph, the telegraph, he used to construct your telegraph wire, put your telegraph wires up.

DOREEN: Oh was he? Oh, oh I didn't know that's what he did.

MAY: I can't remember what the firm was called then, I don't know.

ALEC: Well, well it'd be...

Q: GPO.

MAY: GPO, that's right, yes.

ALEC: Like the line, like, line erector isn't it?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: Oh was it? Oh is that what (...). (talking together)

ALEC: Cos his son, he went to be a technician (...) tech, technician. I don't know what, I don't know what the other one did.

DOREEN: Frank.

ALEC: Frank.

DOREEN: Frank did (...) Frank was...

ALEC: (...) (talking together) he still does.

DOREEN: Yeah, I don't know what Jamie did.

ALEC: What Jamie did, I don't know.

DOREEN: No, I don't know what he did.

MAY: No, he died very young didn't he?

DOREEN: He did, didn't he, yeah? And then we come to your dad, well you can tell 'em what you dad did, can't yah? (laughs)

MAY: He, yes, he worked at Johnson's, he was an engineer...

Q: I've heard of Johnson's.

MAY: ...he built the first combine harvester in the area, you know, it came in pieces and it was a flat pack thing (laughter) and then he went on to oil burners, did that. And then Mr Harrison next door was a paper hanger, decorator...

Q: I see, yes.

MAY: ...and the house that I live in now, when it was stripped, the front room had got Mr Harrison's signature in the corner (laughter)...

DOREEN: Oh had it?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: Oh lovely.

MAY: And the date, I can't remember the date but it was long ago. And he also worked at the sugar beet factory. He used to, they used to have so many in on a seasonal basis, and he always went there during the season.

Q: Can you remember seasonal workers? Because when I've been talking with other people, Geoff Dodds, for example, mentions that there were lots of Maltese women who used to come in...

MAY: Ooh yes.

Q: ...and quite a big Irish contingent as well. Can, is that something you can remember?

MAY: Yes, I can remember...

DOREEN: I can't, I can't remember, well we, we had the Land Army girls, but I don't know whether that, is that...?

ALEC: Mm, it was after them.

Q: I suppose they were incomers of a sort.

DOREEN: They, I know mum had two, two Land Army girls staying with her, when me dad, cos me dad was at war then.

Q: I see, yes.

DOREEN: She did have those, we did have two Land girls, mum looked after them, and I don't, can't tell you where they were (laughs) cos I don't know.

Q: Because if the fields, if the crops weren't brought in...

DOREEN: No.

Q: ...there would have been trouble.

DOREEN: Well yes, yeah.

Q: And, you know, it was as vital as war work.

DOREEN: Cos I mean there's been programmes on the television about the Land Army girls, we did have two, cos mum, you know, she took them in and they stayed, that was before your time. (laughs)

ALEC: (...).

MAY: I think the Irish people came before the Maltese, didn't they? They came for the potato seasons.

ALEC: That's right.

MAY: And in some of the fields, I don't know if they're still there, but when we used to go round for little rides and that, there are still, dare I say it, Paddy houses, as they were called...

ALEC: Yes.

Q: I've heard of that phrase, yes, yes.

MAY: Yes, just small brick buildings with little, no windows but holes in the wall, where the workers who came over from Ireland used to live for that time they were in.

ALEC: Some, some of them, some of them had wood, just wooden buildings with just a stove in the end.

MAY: Yes.

ALEC: They lived very basic, cos they, they used to follow...

Q: I should say.

ALEC: ...they used to follow the potato crop from right down south...

MAY: That's right, yes.

ALEC: ...and obviously work their way up here.

Q: And was it seasonal? I mean did they used to go back to Ireland or was it, once...?

MAY: Quite a lot of them, I think. A lot of them didn't, they didn't settle as the immigrants have now.

Q: I see.

ALEC: No, they used to...

DOREEN: No, no.

MAY: They used to send the money home and (...). (talking together)

Q: That's a key thing May because Geoff Dodds has made the distinction between the wave of immigration that we've had recently, people have settled, they're paying taxes and, and, and, you know...

MAY: That's right.

Q: ...they've changed the look of Spalding, there are different shops and so on, but in times gone past it was very seasonal...

MAY: That's right, that's right.

Q: ...they might come for a few months and then they'd go again and they may come back the next year.

DOREEN: Mm, yeah.

MAY: Yes, cos often you did get the same ones coming back.

DOREEN: Yeah.

ALEC: But, but you see, a lot of 'em, in later years, they got their own caravans and they'd start doing, I don't know where it starts, but they'd start right down south hop picking, which would go from hop picking to potatoes, and gradually creep up, up and up where the work was and just follow it.

MAY: So it was seasonal but in different places, wasn't it?

DOREEN: Mm, mm, yeah, yeah.

ALEC: Mm, yeah. It always is earlier down south to what it is up here.

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: I know these Land girls, they came from Leeds, who was at me mother's now. I can't, I know they stayed so long, but as a child you don't remem, realise how long. (laughs) But, as I say, I don't know whether they moved on or not, but I know they was with us quite a while, while me dad was away, you see, in the, in the war.

MAY: And you talked about the Maltese, I think they were mo, mainly girls, weren't they, or young women, and some of them are still here. I've had two ladies that helped me in the house, and they've settled here, well one has gone back now, but she lived here for many, many years, and the lady I have now has been here goodness knows how long... (laughs)

DOREEN: Oh.

MAY: ...and she came at the end of her teens, ni, eighteen/nineteen, and is still here, married with a family of course, but maybe they made less impact than the immigrants because they were women, they were on their own, or with their pals, but they didn't have any family coming with them...

Q: I see, yes.

MAY: ...did they? And they, they married here and therefore it wasn't quite the same.

Q: Yes, yes. I mean it was, it was the same but different, if that makes sense, it was, it was...

DOREEN: Well yes, yeah, yeah.

MAY: They weren't setting up businesses, they were, they were doing smaller jobs, as it were, different kinds of job, rather than wanting money to bring up a family.

ALEC: I think several of 'em did go back home...

MAY: Oh yes, yes.

ALEC: ...but I should say about half of them went back. But, you see, they, they come, normally starting for the canning, for the canning at what was Smedley's then, there was a big dormitory thing at the back where they used to sleep. But, as I say, they come probably, what, till September/October time, and then some of 'em, obviously some of 'em'd stop and some'd just (laughs) disappear back home.

Q: I see.

DOREEN: Well after the Heinz family, I don't know whether you remember, there was a lady who came to live here, and she, she married a prisoner, a German prisoner-of-war. You remember, you remember...?

F: Yeah, Mr (Bieber?).

MAY: Yes, we had a (...). (talking together)

Q: Was there a reaction to that? I mean would, that would that have been usual?

ALEC: No (...). (talking together) (laughs)

DOREEN: No, no, no, we didn't, he was very ni, well I don't, not as I know of, I mean I don't know, perhaps I was, cos I mean he was always all right with us, weren't he?

ALEC: Yeah.

MAY: But we had a camp, didn't we, we had a camp?

DOREEN: Ooh yes, we had...

MAY: They were mainly Ukrainians, I think, weren't they, at this place...?

Q: Who fought for the Germans?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: Mm, yeah.

Q: I see.

DOREEN: Yes.

MAY: And a lot of those stayed on, didn't they, in Spalding...

Q: Oh.

MAY: ...and, I don't know, he was probably one of those, because there was a lady...

DOREEN: Oh yeah.

MAY: ...living opposite me who married one of the people, one of those Ukrainians, and settled in...

DOREEN: Yeah (...) mm, I can remember 'em coming...

ALEC: Were it the camp at Sutton Bridge or Long Sutton, the prisoner-of-war...?

MAY: I don't know. There, there was the camp down Low Road (...)... (talking together)

DOREEN: (...).

MAY: ...in the, there were Nissan huts. There's a big house, where Geest used to live at one time. If you go straight down Low Roads. And it was the, the Nissan huts really at the side of the road...

DOREEN: Mm, they were, weren't, yes, yeah.

MAY: ...and I know because they used to walk past, up Willow Walk, past our house, yes.

DOREEN: They used to (...) (talking together) didn't they?

MAY: Yes.

DOREEN: Cos I used to be frightened of 'em, and I remember me mum saying "Don't worry, they won't hurt you, they won't hurt you". But there was something about them, cos they were all dressed the same.

MAY: Yes.

Q: Yes. So it was a bit unusual to...?

DOREEN: I can't remember whether they'd get arrows on, like you, you know, suits with, I mean I don't know, but they was, I don't know, like you see in the films. But I remember they were all dressed the same, they all used to come together, they used to frighten me, and I remember my mum saying "It's all right, they won't hurt yah".
(laughs)

MAY: Yes, yes.

ALEC: And a Niss, a Nissan hut is like a half circle with corrugated sheets, very cold at night. (laughs)

MAY: The, these, these were (...). (talking together)

ALEC: (...) although, although like the...

MAY: Sorry, I...

Q: The main frame.

DOREEN: Oh no, I was thinking about (...) they probably called them all the same.

ALEC: (...) (talking together) just the shelves weren't it?

MAY: Yes, yes.

Q: And can you think of, before we finish, can you think of any, anything we may not have touched on that you think it's important to have noted down or, because we've ranged far and wide this afternoon and, and, again, thank you very much for giving up your time to share your recollections, but is there anything that you think we have forgotten to include?

DOREEN: The only thing I did, but it's probably not important, I used to go bulb cleaning and gooseberry picking when I was at school, and that sort of thing, you know, but perhaps that's not important. (laughter)

ALEC: Well that, that, that was for pocket money, weren't it?

DOREEN: Yeah.

ALEC: I think everybody did that.

Q: Yeah, I think, I think the fair, the fair thing to say is that any recollection is important, because, you know, if it's something that people need to know about, or certainly it's different from what goes on today, it is important...

DOREEN: Well that, that's right (...) (talking together) in't it? Well that's right, yeah, yeah.

Q: ...to, to record it somewhere, so thank you very much, again, and it's very much appreciated, so thank you.

DOREEN: OK.

(End of Interview)