

Friern Barnet & District Local History Society

INTERVIEW BETWEEN PERCY REBOUL AND DORIS COLE AT 1228 HIGH ROAD, WHETSTONE ON 15 JUNE 1988

PR This morning I'm interviewing Doris Cole. She was known to my father and his generation as Dolly Catchpole and we are talking together in her house at 1228 High Road, Whetstone, which is very near to where the old Police Station used to be – next door. Dolly says that she's 85 years of age in November.

DC I was born in 1903. 5th November.

PR You were actually born in Whetstone. Whereabouts?

DC Jacques Cottages.

PR So you were born in 1903 in Jacques Cottages. I want to talk to you about your mother and father, but do you remember your grandfather or even your great grandfather?

DC No. My grandfather never came to Whetstone, I don't think my father was born in Finchley, but his father came from Norfolk. I don't know what part – Ipswich way. I worked for a headmaster of languages and when he heard my name he asked if I came from Ipswich. I didn't know – I'd never thought about it. I told him I thought my father was born in Finchley but perhaps his people had. He said: "Catchpoles have got loads of shops in Ipswich and Cracknells name and Catchpoles' name come together".

PR What is Cracknells then?

DC He was the headmaster at Owens School. I worked there.

PR Oh I see. That's why he took an interest. Then let's talk a bit about your father who was born in Finchley. What did he do for a living?

DC He was a painter and decorator for Dowells at North Finchley.

PR Was he that all his life?

DC Yes.

PR When did he die?

DC Um..... I've got the Death Certificate somewhere.

PR It's not important we can find that out.

- DC My mother died in 1941. She was born in Long Ware. She lived there all her life and her brother, Jack Taylor, lived there. Her name was Taylor.
- PR Do you know anything about her parents at all?
- DC No. Nothing. I know her mother died quite young and my uncle Jack brought her up. And that is my auntie Emma.
- PR I ought to say for the record here that Dolly has very kindly given me a photograph of her whole family standing outside the cottage. Babes in Arms, mothers, fathers, grandmothers....except your father, but on the back of the photograph there are all the names of the people. Let's talk a bit about your mother and your early childhood. Going back to the house....
- DC I had a very happy childhood.
- PR What about Jacques Cottages? How many room where there there?
- DC We had two bedrooms and two rooms downstairs.
- PR How many where in the family?
- DC Only my brother and my father.
- PR What was your brother's name?
- DC Alf Catchpole
- PR So you had two children and the two parents. You were saying they were rented from whom?
- DC Well they belonged to a company. Nobody actually knew who they belonged to. We used to have different landlords. As one man died another man would come and collect the rents. We didn't know exactly who they belonged to and when we had to get out my mother said to the chap "You can't sell them, you don't know who they belong to and you can't put us out". There was a terrible row about it. Well the agent came down one night, and he said: "I've brought the money for you to take to get out". I said "You haven't. You don't handle the money". So he said "I do, I've got it". I said "No, you haven't" I worked for Chartered Accountants and I asked one of them. He said: "I'll put you on to my solicitor in town". I worked at Hadley Woods then and he phoned me up and I told him what had happened. He said "You tell your mother not to move from that house. If they offer her £99 tell her to throw them in the gutter. Don't get out that house under £100. They can board her up but they can't move her". Well this chap bothered us so much I really went for him. My mother was ill, and I really went mad.
- PR What year are we talking about now?

- DC Well I was about 20 then. I told her that my boss had told me what to do and I've done it. I got on to the agent. I don't think he'll come again. Well he didn't come. He done a moonlight. In the cottages there were Coopers, Wallages, us, Mrs. Panter, Jack Cooper and Mrs. Charge.
- DC Dolly, I must get you back now to your childhood. I want to get a description of the house. Now did you have tap water?
- DC Yes, a tank outside. We all had to use that one tank.
- PR And this was then piped into the house?
- DC No, we had to go outside for the water. We had no water in the house and we had no gas.
- PR It wasn't like an old village pump, it was just a tank?
- DC No, no. It was run straight from the main into the tank. It was in a big square in the gardens. All the gardens went together you see. There were no fences. There was about that much (?) outside the doors and then there was this big tank. Well my father built a shed so we went through the shed into the back garden. Well next door was Mrs. Panter and she was fenced off from the other two houses and Goody's yard came at the back of that garden.
- PR What about lavatories now?
- DC They had a toilet outside. Every house had its own toilet.
- PR Was it a water closet? The normal.....
- DC Yes, flush and everything. My father used to get in that tank and clean it out.
- PR How was it fed? By rain water or....
- DC No, it came off the mains somewhere.
- PR Now how was the house lit and heated?
- DC Coal fire. All coal. We never had gas; we used to have oil lamps. We had a big oil lamp. We had three and if it was foggy we had a big window. On foggy nights my mother would put a lamp there so that the traffic could see that it was a house and our doors were never locked and if I went to a dance at night they used to lock the window and put the key in the window then I used to lift the window up and get the key out and go in. But if my brother was home before me he'd put everything in the front room, so I fell over it as I walked in. He knew what time I came home.
- PR I see, they checked on you in those days. So you had these three oil lamps.
- DC Yes, a lamp, more or less, for every room.

- PR Can you describe the two....
- DC Very much like here.
- PR This little place you have here? So you got a kind of sitting room, would there be a blacklead stove in there?
- DC Yes, all blacklead stoves.
- PR And what was the other one?
- DC An old kitchen fire place. The fireplace there, the oven there and my mother used to cook cakes with about a handful of fire and we one fireplace exactly the same in the front room, a big open one and it had an oven, but the oven was cracked so she couldn't cook in it, but in the summer she used to keep her butter and eggs in there because there were no fridges in those days but we had plenty of cupboard room.
- PR But no heating upstairs, obviously.
- DC Yes, we had fires upstairs, a small fire in one bedroom. My mother's bedroom was, like, there and my bedroom was there so if that fire was alight, my room would get warm too.
- PR I see. Now, Dolly, they were fairly hard times for most people. What would your dad be earning at this time?
- DC I don't know. I haven't the faintest idea.
- PR Did you ever go short of anything?
- DC No, never. When I first started work I earned 13/6d. a week. My mother said "Five shillings in the bank, five shillings for me and you keep the rest. Don't go on instalments because if you do that you'll never have a penny to your name.
- PR She was a good housekeeper, was she Dolly?
- DC Yes, she was a house parlour maid all her life and she kept it up till the day she died.
- PR She ran a good home. You were saying you'd had a happy childhood.
- DC To help neighbours – you see, in those days, if neighbours heard you at night – she had a very bad haemorrhage one night and Dr. Poole came. Our doctor was away. Mrs. Wallage who lived next door, she heard me and she shouted out through the back window "Doll, what's the matter?"
- PR Would year would this be, roughly?

- DC Well I was at work.
- PR So in the '20s.
- DC She said "What's happened?" I said: "Mum's got a haemorrhage". She said "Right, I'll be down". She came down, we got sheets because in those days all your beds were white, everything, there was no coloured bedspreads or anything like that, it was all white and it just oozed out like a fountain. The bed was all covered in blood and the doctor stood with a little lamp in his hand. There were no lamps upstairs and she come in, she lit the copper, we had a copper in the kitchen and my father was handy. He'd done it all in with a curtain over it so you'd never know there was a copper there and also, she'd light a copper and if it smoked I used to have to go to Rose's up the road in Whetstone, in ironmongers, and buy two penn'orth of gun powder. She'd roll that in paper and put it up that chimney.
- PR And blow the soot out. It'd be a bit dangerous but you could actually buy two penn'orth of gun powder for cleaning out the flues?
- DC And then my father would get out the top on the roof and scrape the pot round and send the soot down and then he'd take the copper out and clean it all out.
- PR That reminds me. One of the big chores was washday, wasn't it? Was it always a Monday, Dolly? Tell me about washday when you were young.
- DC It was all done on a Monday or Tuesday, when she felt like it. But if I was at home and it was a nice day she'd say: "Come on, we'll do the blankets today" so we'd go and fetch all the blankets down. They were washed and we'd put them through the wringer and hang them out. We'd borrow everybody's line to put all the sheets and blankets out.
- PR So you had one of these old-fashioned mangles did you?
- DC Yes.
- PR Were you the only person with a mangle?
- DC No, they all had mangles.
- PR They were kept in the back yard weren't they?
- DC Yes. My mother's used to close down as a table. She was a big woman and she used to have bad legs and my father made her a step so that she could go down, straight down. Well, if we were doing the kitchen out, scrubbing the floor (everything was scrubbed in those days) she'd say: "Turn that over and scrub underneath it". Well, my sister-in-law came down one day and she done it so my mother said "Have you turned that over and scrubbed it"? She said "No". Well she said "Do it. I want that done underneath" They lived like that those days.

PR So they scrubbed rather than had carpeting or things like that?

DC We had oilcloth. We had a carpet in the front room.

PR A carpet was a bit of a luxury.

DC Well it was. She lugged that out one day. She got mad over something. That came up and all we had was lino. So that was all scrubbed and polished. Mind you, she carried her housemaid right through to the end.

PR She was working as well as running a home?

DC Yes.

PR Now I want to establish were you actually born in the cottage?

DC Yes, in Jacques Cottage

PR And your father was born in Jacques Cottage?

DC Yes.

PR Do you know who attended her?

DC Dr. Wakefield. I was his first baby. He always called me Doris.

PR Whereabouts did he live?

DC He lived along here in Whetstone. You know Rasper Road? Well there was a big house that stood back. There's a block of flats there now.

PR Yes, Coldharbour.

DC That's where he lived. A very nice man. His wife was a lovely woman. She was a matron, I think, in a hospital.

PR Did your mother say anything about childbearing in those days? I mean it must have been a.....

DC No, she never talked about it. She lost one baby, but we never knew what happens or what. She never mentioned a word. It was never mentioned. One day I said something to my Dad. He said "Don't talk like that. I don't want anything mentioned in this house like that".

PR You don't know why?

DC No.

PR Perhaps she had difficult confinements?

- DC She lost a baby but we don't know what happened, what caused it or anything
- PR But going back to your mother, did we establish what her name was? What was her first name?
- DC Emma.
- PR Were you saying that in addition to running the house she also had a job? Who did she work for?
- DC She worked for some people in Oakleigh Park.
- PR One of the big houses there. Any idea what she earned a week?
- DC No I haven't the faintest idea. About half a crown a morning
- PR But did you get the impression as a young child that whatever this small income was, it was essential to keep body and soul together.
- DC Nothing was on hire purchase and she just.... Christmas time she'd clean cupboard out and that would all be prepared with all the knives and forks, cakes, glass and everything for Christmas weeks beforehand so that Christmas Day all she did was lay the table.
- PR Well let's talk a bit about the kind of food you had.
- DC We had good food. She used to make all rice puddings in the oven, in our kitchen oven. Always a rice pudding in there. It didn't matter what the weather was like, if she'd got a handful of fire she's put a rice pudding in.
- PC And that cooked slowly during the day. What about breakfast, for example?
- DC Oh yes. My brother was on a milk round, the A1. She'd get up and make him hot toast and tea before he went out. We always had a hot breakfast before we went out. Then at night when we came home from work we'd have a hot dinner. I used to have my dinner out, but she always got my dinner ready at night. My mother believed in food. I had a man here not so long ago. I have my bread off the U.D. and they got in the habit of sending me backdated bread so I said: "I'm not going to have it. I'll phone up every time you do it", so my milkman ticked me off over it. I said: "I don't mind paying but when you give it to me I'll have it but when you don't and I pay for it I'll have what I want". So this man came and he said "I think I know you". I said: "Oh do you?"
- PR What year are we talking about, Dolly?
- DC Recently, about a year ago. He said: "You used to live down the road, didn't you?" He said: "I knew a woman and you're exactly like her" I said: "Did you work at Friday's?" "Yes", he said. "I was a butcher boy at Fridays. Your mother lived in those cottages, didn't she?" I said "Yes". He said "I thought so. I said to the manager at U.D. I don't know why you're sending her down

bread like that because she'll send it back if she's anything like her mother". He said "I'm pretty sure I knew her mother, she's the dead image. She won't have it." He said: "I don't know why they send it to you because you're not going to have it, are you?"

PR But where would your mum have bought her bread from?

DC Harpers. Mr. Harper used to deliver our bread every day

PR Fresh baked?

DC Yes

PR And what about her meat? Friday's?

DC Friday's and my mother would just open it, look at it and take it back and tell them "when I want foreign meat I'll ask for it".

PR It was English only was it?

DC Yes. She'd pick anything out.

PR She sounds as though she knew exactly what.... she had good standards.

DC. Those days they used to have a piece of beef called Jacobs Ladder. It's like the bone part. A piece of rib beef with bones in it. She'd put her finger right through it (You couldn't do it now) and she'd say that's tough. I don't want that". He'd say "alright". But every Saturday night she used to go to the Harpers, pay for her bread. I used to go with her and I used to get a cake or a bar of chocolate. We used to go in Fridays and I always got my cat's pieces from him. I never paid for them. I used to just walk in and he'd say: "There you are."

PR You were obviously dealing with the small shops here. I want to ask you one thing about this business of cleaning the house because in a way places got a lot more dirty with the soot and other things. What did you use? Sunlight soap?

DC Yes, always Sunlight soap

PR There were no detergents then.

DC Soda, plenty of soda.

PR Tell me, what would be a Christmas dinner in those days. There would be no turkeys then. You'd be lucky if you had a chicken.

DC Yes, you did. My uncle that used to live at Finchley used to run a club and they used to pay so much a year into this club and they all had a turkey. My father used to dress it, truss it and everything.

PR Did you cook it at home?

DC Yes.

PR Because I believe that sometimes they used to take them to the bakers.

DC Yes, they did used to, but my mother used to manage on her own.

PR But some of the people did take them?

DC Yes, not round here. My husband's people always took hers because Tom's mother was left with eleven boys and she used to take her turkey out. As a matter of fact, I've got the tin she used. I've been going to chuck it out, but I haven't done so.

PR It's a museum piece. I want to get you, now, to school. You had a happy childhood when you were young and there came a time to go to school. Now at what age did you go to school?

DC About 5

PR And which school did you go to?

DC All Saints in Oakleigh Road North.

PR Do you remember the names of the teachers there?

DC Miss Goodall was one.

DC Yes, the headmistress. Winnie Goodship was there and another elderly lady named Mrs. Wallis. The school went up to class 6, I think but they altered it so much. A church school, it was you see. Vicar Miles used to come in.

PR So you had a good religious training?

DC We had to go to Sunday school every Sunday. When we came home we had to change all our clothes, my brother and me.

PR So Sunday school was essential. Did you pay to go to school at that time?

DC No.

PR What were the sort of things that they were teaching you there? Was it just girls, incidentally?

DC No it was boys too.

PR Up to the age of what?

DC I think you all left at 14.

- PR So what kind of education did you have?
- DC It wasn't bad. It was a proper church school, which I don't think is so advanced as ordinary schools, but we learned what we wanted to learn.
- PR Were the girls taught different things from the boys?
- DC We'd have to go to Garfield Road, Southgate to cookery. We had to walk from All Saints to Garfield Road. If you wanted to ride you had to write a letter to the headmistress to state why. It was alright. We all left at about 13 or 14.
- PR How do you feel about school days? Were you happy at school?
- DC Yes, it was alright. I used to play up. I remember going in a shop and buying some balloons. They have you a balloon if you bought a ha'p'orth of sweets, or something like that, and I'd got a pocket and I put all these balloons in my pocket. We were late back dinner time. The headmistress said: "The girl that's got the balloon in her pocket is getting six strokes with the cane". I got six strokes with the cane.
- PR They actually caned you. Did they do that in front of the whole school?
- DC Yes, they do. They did then. I don't know whether they'd do it now. One girl said: "I'll give her cane" and she snatched it from her hands and caned her legs with it.
- PR They would have caused a bit of a rumpus.
- DC There were lots of things that happened. We had quite a good time. We used to play hookey and things like that.
- PR Were there any big feast days that you remember? Or holidays that you remember well?
- DC No. Only Barnet Fair time, when that was on. All the horses racing about the road. We used to keep our front gates locked.
- PR During the fair time. Because that really was the big social event of the year, wasn't it Dolly?
- DC Oh yes. That was the only time we were allowed out at night late. We used to go out with the Goody boys and all those at night, in the evenings. Of course, there was no traffic along here. We used to play in the middle of the road and I can remember tram lines being put down. They were a lot of Irishmen. They used to fight terrible.
- PR You actually saw the tram lines being laid. You saw them putting down the cobbles and the granite sets as they call them, and they were done by Irishmen mainly, were they?

- DC Yes, nearly all Irishmen. They used to fight.
- PR Is there anything else about them that you remember?
- DC No, not really. I wasn't allowed out there very much. We had to go in the paddock at the back and play.
- PR Did you see the first tram come through?
- DC I don't know whether it was the first one but in the 1914 war a tram went through when the Zeppelin came down at Cuffley and there were people all waving flags on it and I can remember that going through on it. I can remember that going through, but I couldn't tell you anything else.
- PR It's said, Dolly, (and we've always sought someone that can confirm this) that during the 1914-18 war a tram which had a searchlight mounted on it used to come down here during the night. You never saw that?
- DC No.
- PR No I think it's just a story.
- DC I remember seeing this one going through and my Uncle Jack – there used to be a bicycle shop down the road – he had an old motorbike and sidecar and he took my uncle Jack to Cuffley in it and my auntie was having fits because he wasn't a very careful driver and it was a real old thing but anyhow, they got back safely.
- PR Yes, because that caused a sensation didn't it, that thing
- DC But then, after the war, we had a party. We had it in the middle of the road, in the High Road. We had a band and gramophone and all sorts of thing. There was a big family of Cooper boys, about 7 or 8 of them and some of them were home on leave and there was one special, named Percy, and he was a real character – he fetched a gramophone out, stood it in the middle of the road and we all danced in the middle of the road. You never saw anything come through. There used to be one haycart come through about twice a week and his name was Timberlake. He'd start for London and come back again, put up at the *Blue Anchor* for the night then go back to out Harpenden way – he lived somewhere out there – then he'd come back again another night and do the same thing.
- PR Do you remember, Dolly, did he come back loaded up. He went with hay from Hertfordshire.
- DC He went to London and came back empty.
- PR How many horses where drawing that?

DC One, as far as I can remember, and he used to put up at the *Blue Anchor*.

PR You would have known the *Blue Anchor* quite well.

DC Tuckers were there then.

PR They were the landlords, were they?

DC Yes. There have been several after that.

PR I heard about two sisters that used to run it.

DC Oh, they were Ferrys. Jess Ferry and her sister

PR Did you know them?

DC Oh yes. They were quite characters.

PR Someone said to me about their awful laughs that you could hear all the way up

DC Yes, you could hear them a mile off. We used to go in there and she used to have a big fire in the back room.

PR What sort of year are we talking about?

DC I was about 14 and she used to have this big fire and they used to sit round and have cheese, bread and cheese around the fire. We used to creep in there and she'd say "Out, you". But they'd got terrible laughs, you could hear them a mile off. Another actor and actress came in. His name was Jack...um....He was in *Hit the Deck*. Stevens. Jack Stevens. His wife was an actress, dancer and he was an actor and they had two sons and she learned my friend and I the Charleston and we went to Finchley Dance Hall and won first prize.

PR Where did they teach you that?

DC In the *Blue Anchor* in a private room at the back.

PR Where did the Stevens live?

DC At the *Blue Anchor*. They took the *Blue Anchor* over.

PR Oh, I see. They had been on the halls and then they came here. What about the *Black Bull*, Dolly?

DC I didn't know much about that. People named Mouse used to live there but I didn't know them. I knew nothing about the *Black Bull* only that the boys used to lock us in the old barn place they'd got there. The rats used to run about.

- PR Talking about the *Blue Anchor* I believe that the old Royal Mail coaches used to stop there in the early days.
- DC I don't know.
- PR Is there anything else about the *Blue Anchor* you remember?
- DC When Tuckers were there they had a girl about my age and there were two sisters, I think. There was an elder sister. She took us to the Crystal Palace once to a fair that was there. I remember going there with them.
- PR As very young children what kind of entertainments were there? Did you do any reading, for example?
- DC Yes, reading and writing and all that.
- PR What kind of things would you read? There was no library was there?
- DC Books, just ordinary school books.
- PR Did you have comics, for example?
- DC No. I don't ever remember them. We didn't have enough money to buy comics. Our parents were very poor.
- PR Did you ever go to the pictures?
- DC No. Not till I started work.
- PR That was after the First World War, so before the First World War they were very simple pleasures like playing in the streets and that sort of thing. What kind of kids' games did you play?
- DC Used to play hopscotch and all that. The boys used to get up to different things; knocking at people's doors and that. I remember coming home from school once after cookery classes. We took a fit and knocked at people's doors saying did Miss So-and-so live there. We knew jolly well they didn't. Well one day we knocked at our headmistress's door. We didn't know she lived there and she answered it. Caught on the hop, we all were.
- PR Can we just talk about Whetstone in the '14-'18 war, Dolly? Apart from the Zeppelin at Cuffley, which is one of the big events (did you see that by any chance?)
- DC I saw the Zeppelin but I never saw it come down. I saw it go over. I was looking out of my bedroom window.
- PR What time of the day was that?

- DC It was evening, late evening, night, midnight, more or less. Then the tram came along full of these people shouting and bawling, going to Barnet. That was as far as they could go. They'd have to walk back if the tram had gone home.
- PR Someone very reliable told me that the following day after that Zeppelin was shot down that they were selling souvenirs and bits of the clothing which seems a terrible thing.
- DC Very likely. I remember the bomb falling in Totteridge Lane. Vardon's house, wasn't it? Harry Vardon.
- PR Yes, near there. Did you know Harry Vardon?
- DC Yes. I worked for her.
- PR Did you, Dolly. Now tell me this. I'm a member of the South Herts. Golf Club and any memories of Harry Vardon..... So you did for the Vardons?
- DC Mrs. Vardon but not while he was alive. Very nice woman. Different altogether to Harry Vardon. I didn't know him.
- PR That wouldn't have been his wife, though, would it. That would have been his niece who was his housekeeper after his wife had died.
- DC No, his wife was there. That was his wife. There was somebody else lived with her, a Miss somebody. I can't remember her name.
- PR That would have been the niece.
- DC But I didn't stop there too long because it didn't pay me but she was very nice, very different to Harry Vardon. I couldn't imagine her mixing with the people at the golf club.
- PR Had you ever met Harry?
- DC No, never. I've seen photos of him, but I never met him. On her table she had a most beautiful bowl. It was silver and it took my eye and it was terribly tanned – you know, not been polished or anything. She had a girl who worked for her for years. I don't know why she left but she did. I said to her one day "I'll clean that". She said I shouldn't worry. I said "I'll clean it. Shame to let it go like that". It came up beautiful and I used to do it every time I went. She said to me one day "I'd give you that bowl, but it's left in my will".
- PR Did she say who she's left it to?
- DC No.
- PR I rather think it's with one of the big golf clubs now. I think its one of the trophies that they compete for.

DC Once I was there and a golfer came to see her, but I didn't see him. She told me afterwards.

PR Would it have been Dai Rees?

DC No, I'm sure it wasn't.

PR One other thing I want to find out about in those early days – we talked about the trams but before the trams do you remember the old horse buses?

DC No.

PR Those were just before your time?

DC Yes, before I was born.

PR So if you wanted to get anywhere how did you get there?

DC We had to walk to Finchley. My mother and her neighbour used to go every Friday to Buckles at Finchley. They used to walk there and walk back. They didn't mind doing it. My mother was alright then but then her leg started getting bad. We used to get a lot of old gypsies along here and she got very pally with a real Romany gypsy. I think we had iron holders and kettle holders by the dozens. They were made very beautiful. She was pretty bad once and they called one Sunday morning and this girl said: "Can I see your mother?" I said: "she's in bed" but my mother heard and said: "I'll see her". I took her up and she said: "I've brought my mother to see you". I didn't understand a word she was talking about, but they translated.

PR You mean she was speaking in the gypsy

DC Yes, the gypsy language, and her daughter was telling my mother what she was saying and she told my mother to do her leg with scorched rag. In her bedroom she had a big cupboard and in that cupboard was a big case, well it was like a box, like a seaman's box. She kept sheets and odd things in there and sheets that were no good. When they went, as they were going, my father came home and he said: "What are they doing here?" He's been on the allotment. He said: "I won't have it". My mother said: "I like to see them" so my dad said: "What's that sheet for?" I said "They've told her to put scorched rag on her leg. I've got to tear these up in squares". I did it and it healed her leg up. When Dr. Wingfield came back from his holiday she was sitting in the front room with her leg up. She told him what had happened. He said "Well, Mrs. Catchpole, if you're going to take notice of what a gypsy tells you there is no need for me to call". She said "Any doctor will come that I pay. You please yourself about that". She was very outspoken. She said "Well it's healed up, hasn't it?" It did heal it but she was never the same woman. You see instead of it coming out it went into her body.

PR She'd got a poisoned leg?

- DC It was an ulcer. My mother didn't stand any nonsense from anybody. She just turned round and told them: "Well, if you don't like it you know what you can do". My husband was garden crazy. Every year we never had a holiday because it was always show time, flower shows and things like that. He used to win prizes. The last time he took 21 first prizes and man that gave the prizes was Major Cadogan, a big council bloke at Finchley and he refused to shake hands with him and asked him not to compete any more.
- PR This was the Finchley Horticulture ...
- DC Yes. They didn't like that.
- PR So he grew everything on his allotment?
- DC Yes. If I'd got no flowers here he'd go out and get something and you'd come back and find a lovely spray of flowers on your table. When we came here, of course my mother had this house first, then she moved to another house and we took over. I came here after my wedding and the house was full of flowers.
- PR So you moved in here, Dolly, on your wedding night and you've been here ever since.
- DC Yes, in '37.
- PR While we're talking about great gardens and so on, just opposite where you live was Woodside House which eventually became Woodside Home. You knew it when it was a home for elderly people, presumably?
- DC Like a prison inside, well I always thought so. All stone floors and things like that and one lady I worked for, they put their nurse in one in a poorer part. There were 2 sections. If you could afford to have a room on your own you went into another section and you had a room on your own and then the others all had to join in one big room. My father went over and put a shelf up for one of them to put a wireless on and it was like walking into a prison.
- PR It was a really horrible place, wasn't it?
- DC It wasn't nice to look at.
- PR What about the house itself?
- DC I only went in one part of it – in the hall and through to a room – but the frontage was lovely – green stuff, trees and the birdsong in the morning was wonderful
- PR How many lakes were there?
- DC One lake only – a big place and swans used to come up the path and look to see what was going on and they'd try and cross the road. Well my husband's

gone out many a Sunday morning and sent them all back, but the gardener had a bungalow built over there. Is couldn't tell you his name – a little man, a very nice man. His daughter is around here somewhere now, one of the daughters, and he said to Tom and I "Have you ever been around the grounds?" We said "No". He said: "Well come now, I'll show you". Beautiful grounds they had over there. Well then Baxendale across the road, they sold that. This new home – have you been in there?

PR Yes, I have. It's very comfortable.

DC It's nice and the garden at the back, a lake and all that. Getting away from the question, not so long ago they, when this place across here was being built....

PR: B & Q, the Do-it-yourself store.

DCwell Baxendale was there before them. I woke up one night. I sleep in the front. My room was full of light and there was something going on about 2 o'clock in the morning. There were cars going round and round, lorries and I thought "I'm not going to put up with this" so in the morning I phoned them. What I should have done was come down and got on to the police but I didn't think about it" I phoned up over the road and told them I wasn't going to put up with that. The girl said "I am the manageress. I don't know what goes on at night here, but I'll find out" A couple of hours later the manager phoned me and said he had sacked them. Apparently, a van came up with his load of stuff and they brought their wives with them. They all went out and got drunk and that's what was causing the commotion.

PR Dolly I want to talk to you about going out to work. So, you left school at 14?

DC I started work at 13. I used to go out early in the morning at half past six. I went to Athenaeum Road to clean the doorsteps and do the front door at Park Villa, Mrs. Taylor's house. She was the District Visitor. Your grandmother would remember. She lived next door to Mrs. Beaumont's where your father was born. My auntie kept that house. Mrs. Beaumont used to go and visit and do a Christmas club so that when Christmas came all us kids in the district had a book and all the mothers had a half pound of tea. Well I worked for her. She was very particular. I used to do the steps and the front gate and all that then I used to go to school. I got 1/6d. a week. My mother and father weren't pleased. I was only 13 but I was there for years. I stayed with her until he was very ill and they couldn't afford to keep the house going and I was over 21 before I left there. She would have the coal cellar scrubbed for a ton of coal to go in. All the cellar stairs were scrubbed. She had a tap fixed down there and a drain so all the water could be swilled out.

PR Were you working inside the house by that time?

DC Yes. I used to get there, when I started regular, half past eight, quarter to nine and I used to go from there to another job in Finchley about 1 o'clock. Then I started waiting at the table like my mother in that house. I was older then. I did it for a lady in Buckingham Avenue. In those days everybody knew everybody

else. I knew Vicar Miles and his daughter, the curate and his wife, I knew them all.

PR What would you have got paid for an evening's wages waiting at a dinner party at that time in the 1920s/30?

DC About five bob.

PR The life of a domestic was very hard, wasn't it Dolly. Cleaning and scrubbing.

DC It was but it wasn't to us. We were so used to it.

PR You had no vacuum cleaners etc. What were the tools of the trade?

DC We had a hard broom, a dustpan and hand brush. You might have got a box broom sweeper but no Hoovers, no electric, no fridge, no nothing.

PR What was a box broom?

DC A Ewbank (*carpet sweeper*)

PR So many of these houses would you be working at? Just the one or did you have several clients?

DC I worked in Athenaeum Road first then I went to North Mount; I went to Probyns and I went to Cracknells; then I went to Taylors and then I went to some people named Wetton, that was the last job.

PR It wasn't a very well paid job. What would you earn in a morning?

DC I got very well paid in my last job then I was called up and my mother died and I was called up for war work.

PR You were married by this time and you got called up. What happened exactly? You got a document to tell you where you were to go?

PR I had a notice to say I was to register for war work. I did and I got a job at Frasers & Glass, they were something to do with electricals, I don't know exactly what they did there but during the 1914 war it was DeDion & Butons Muniton Factory. I got that job, but they wouldn't let me take it. I had six interviews. I played up and they said if you don't take what we offer you this time you will go whether you want to go or not. I went before six different people. One woman said: "Why do you want to do part-time?" I said well I've got a father over 80. He's working and my husband's on Air Rescue. He needs a meal when he gets home at night. I can't do full time. So she said "Why can't your father go to a kitchen in Holden Road?" I said: "If you want my father to know that you go and tell him and see what he tells you". She said: "Have you ever worked in a laundry?" I said "No, and I don't think I want to" She said "you can't talk to people like that. You'll never get fixed up if you're going to talk to people like that. Will you come with me to the Advance? You

don't have to take it if you don't like it". Well I went. It was alright, it was near. It was clean; there were no dirty machines or anything like that. I said I would try it. I came home, and I told my father and when Tom came home he said "Well it's near, if it's wet it's not far to go". I was there 21 years.

PR What were they doing during the war? Was it just domestic cleaning or was it uniforms and...."

DC It was hospital and forces work. I was doing shirts; I was on racking packing, shirts.

PR Where would this laundry come from?

DC North Finchley. They were partly American. They used to do all American work.

PR So these would be servicemen stationed in the area, perhaps on this gun site just at the back here?

DC We used to go out as far as Enfield

PR that would come into Advance and they would be laundered in the usual way?

DC All American – hospitals only. They weren't allowed to do private work.

PR What time did you start?

DC 8 o'clock till 1 p.m. We used to get a shilling an hour. The last job I had up there was shirt folder. I used to fold 400 shirts a morning.

PR That was your quota was it?

DC Didn't have to.

PR One of the things I remember about the Advance Laundry, curiously enough, was their vehicles during the war. They had these gas bags on top. I remember them. There was a stage when petrol was so short that vehicles used to run on coal gas. The delivery vans.

DC Well not when I went there. I wasn't anywhere near transport.

PR Did you have a canteen at work?

DC Yes, quite a good canteen. A good governor

PR How much was the dinner there?

DC I can't tell you. I never had a dinner there. I only had lunch. We got lunch for about a shilling.

- PR What about air raids? Did you have shelters?
- DC Yes, we used to go downstairs.
- PR Were you interrupted very often?
- DC No. There was a bomb dropped at Potters Bar one Saturday morning. Nobody took any notice. They had 36 incendiary bombs on the laundry. All on the walls and the ceiling. The whole laundry was swimming in water and we were tootling about getting all the forces work out, unpacking it, getting it washed.
- PR How did you get to work in the morning?
- DC Bus outside and they stopped across the road facing the laundry.
- PR Have you got any particular things you'd like to talk to me about about the Second World War?
- DC No, only 15 guns at the back of us. You got used to it. They came and asked us if they should evacuate us. I asked where to and he said he didn't know. I said "You board me up. I'm not going to move me out of here for anybody".
- PR Did you get to know any of the people on the gun site?
- DC We used to have a shelter along here. Tom and my dad built a shelter and, one night Mr. Cooper at the end, he was a cripple. We were all talking and he came up and he fell over. He said: "Here I am in the bloody potatoes". They could hear it all over there. Then another night I came round and made some tea and we had a cat then and directly the warning went next door this cat would go and sit on a post and wouldn't move. All through the war that cat sat at that post while the guns were firing. I came round to make some tea. I put a coat on, but I'd lost my belt. My husband shouted "Doll, come on. They're going to fire". I said: "What do you expect me to do – go and tell them not to?" not thinking they could hear me. I said "Wait, I've lost my belt". He said: "You can find that in the morning". I said "No, I want it now, it's a new one". Anyhow, in the morning the chaps came down from gun site. "Are you the girl that lost her belt last night?"
- PR Going back to the 20s and 30s, Dolly, we've now got the year of the tram and you've seen the trolleybuses and the buses but what are your memories of the 20s and 30s. I mean this was the great age of the cinema. What were you doing as a young girl?
- DC Going out dancing.
- PR You were a keen dancer, were you? Where did you go to do that?
- DC Finchley Dance Hall
- PR Where was that?

- DC Down the main road, just before Squires Lane. (*Gainsborough*) Hall down Woodside, Bohemia at Church End Finchley
- PR Do you remember the Bohemia cinema being opened?
- DC Yes, and the Gaumont. I used to go dancing more or less every Saturday night. Alice Beaumont, her husband was a Harrier, well I used to go with them. He was a very good dancer.
- PR I can imagine, as well as a fine athlete. Were you fond of the cinema?
- DC Not all that much.
- PR You had the wireless?
- DC Oh yes.
- PR What did you think of that?
- DC We didn't listen to it very much
- PR Did you go to the Theatre at all? Did you ever go to the old Golders Green Hippodrome?
- DC Golders Green, yes. Up in the gods.
- PR Can you remember any productions that you saw there?
- DC Quite a few variety turns. I never saw Gracie Fields there. I think she did go there but I never saw her there. We used to go up in the gods for 9d. I think it was. Wood Green Empire – we used to go there.
- PR In the 20s & 30s you did your shopping all locally here, like your mother had done before you?
- DC Cullen's, Friday's, all the shops. Christmas Eve May and I used to go in all the shops and get our Christmas boxes. From Friday's we used to get a bit of steak...
- PR You got a Christmas box?
- DC Yes, we used to go in and ask for our Christmas box.
- PR We mean because you'd been a regular customer all year? And what did you get from Friday's, a bit of steak?
- DC Friday's a piece of steak, Cullen's box of chocolates and at Cullen's we had mince pies and ginger wine out of jam jars for a drink. Got a box of chocolates from them. A tablet of soap from Oliver Ballas; Barry Proctor used to give us

fruit and we used to end up at Morleys the fish shop. We used to get a cutlet of fish and chipped potatoes.

PR What would fish & chips cost in those days?

DC You could get a piece of fish for about a shilling and a penn'orth of chips.

PR Did anyone ever talk to you or did you ever know about the Whetstone Workhouse?

DC I never knew there was one.

PR There was one. It was closed years before you were born but it's just possible that someone may have known about it.

DC I don't know anything about that.

PR What about any of the great characters of Whetstone that you remember? Any stick out in your mind particularly?

DC Down the road there was a laundry

PR No, I want to talk about some of the people that were in Whetstone; some of the old characters.

DC Quite a few. Old Bill Smith across the road. He was an odd job man. He would do anything. He was quite a character.

PR I heard about this man called Jesus the other day.

DC Who?

PR Jesus. Did you know him? He lived not far from here. He was a kind of gypsy. What others? You probably knew my grandfather and my grandmother?

DC Oh yes, I knew your grandfather. Quite a character he was. He had a brother at Barnet, didn't he? A dentist.

PR Yes. He's dead now.

DC Your grandfather was quite a character, so was your grandmother.

PR My granddad did have a brother, Horace, who was up at Finchley Central. He had a practice there. He died when he was 88.

DC Your grandmother used to work at Barnet General didn't she?

- PR Yes, she did. Into her old age. When she became widowed she worked there for years. I think she was in charge of the laundry there. You were talking about your mother being a bit formidable, my grandmother....
- DC She was quite a character. We used to call her Ma'am.
- PR I didn't know that. Mary was her name.
- DC She'd tell you anything with a very straight face and we used to look at her and think are you telling the truth?
- PR Are there any other memories that you'd like to record for me?
- DC Do you know anything about de Rivers of the A1?
- PR Yes but you tell me.
- DC Well my brother worked there, he was a roundsman. He joined up in the 1914 war and then he was blinded in one eye. De Rivers never forgave him. He wouldn't take him back when he got discharge.
- PR Did you ever meet Mr. de Rivers?
- DC Yes.
- PR What did you think of him?
- DC He was alright. Quite a nice man really. She was a very haughty sort of person.
- PR No-one has ever mentioned Mrs. de Rivers. Tell me about her.
- DC I upset her. When my mother was ill she said: "How's your mother?" in a shop down Whetstone. There were quite a lot of people in there. I said: "She's quite alright – much better." "I'll send her some soup down". I said: "I don't want your soup. I can make my mother all the soup she wants"
- PR She was being a bit condescending, was she?
- DC So that was the end of that.
- PR Everyone speaks very highly of Mr. de Rivers. The Goody liked him very much, for example. You knew the Goody family quite well, didn't you? Tell me something about the Goodys.
- DC I could tell you lots of things but I'm not going to.
- PC Finally, then Dolly, what do you think about modern Whetstone? Do you regret the passing of the old days?
- DC I'd much sooner have Whetstone as it was.

- PR Why did you like Whetstone?
- DC It was different, somehow. We could go in a shop and say “We’ve run out of money. Can we have what we want?” “Yes”.
- PR Not everyone could give credit.
- DC No, but we could always have what we wanted.
- PR I’ve not found anyone that can answer this, Dolly. Perhaps you can. Whetstone has really got nothing going for it. It’s not and never was a beautiful place. It’s a very ordinary place.
- DC You didn’t know the old Whetstone
- PR That’s what I’m getting at. If you look at the old Whetstone it really hasn’t got a lot going for it and yet the people who lived in it absolutely adore it and never forget and they come back to it.
- DC The A1 Dollis Dairies, then there was a farm where Brook Farm allotments are. There used to be a farmhouse there. We used to spend our holidays there.
- PR But it was a very ordinary farm. It was nice with the old tram... but I’ve never understood why people like yourself and my dad find Whetstone such an attractive place. You can’t offer any explanation why people come back to it.
- DC It was nice in those days. Homely, everybody spoke to everybody else.
- PR More a kind of village atmosphere? And is that the thing you regret the passing of?
- DC Yes. I don’t know anybody down.... I don’t go down the shops. I don’t know one tradesman down there now. We used to walk in the shop and say “Run out of money, Alright? They give you what you wanted and pay when you like. You couldn’t do that now.
- PR And that’s the thing you miss, is it?
- DC Everybody spoke to everybody else. Everybody helped everybody else. If you were ill a neighbour would come in and offer to do something or make something for you but not any longer. Nobody wants to know, do they?