

TOM HARRIS: born 1917

Interviewed by Tony Wright: 17-10-06

[TRACK 1]

The first thing is, can you tell me your full name and where and when you were born?

Thomas James Harris, 22 Watson Street, Gateshead, County Durham.

Can you tell me a little bit about your family?

Well, family, yeh....me father was on bad times, out of work; he couldn't find a job. We were in a proper run-down area and we were a bit neglected. Long shot, we got taken to an orphanage. Mother died...I never did find out when she actually died, and only thirty-five. There were three of us, two sisters and me and we were rather badly neglected, and oh they was out of work and getting his dole money twenty-three shillings a week but he could still afford to smoke and drink and make a real mess of his life you know, so we were taken away and put in an orphanage so that was the start.

I see - when were you born?

17th...9th of September 1917.

So did you spend all your early years in the orphanage?

From five to sixteen. As soon as you got a certain age they moved you somewhere else and then they moved you somewhere else.

Is that right?

Yeh, so I was in three different places as I grew older.

Did you continue contact with your sisters?

I've sort of lost contact with the first number of years you know, really lost contact, except me older sister 'cos she was taken in the orphanage as well as I was, but me third sister she wasn't.

What happened to her?

I don't know – she just stayed with her father and that. It was a long time before I got in touch with her and I suggested to her she come down and get a job and we could get to know each other you know.

After I came out of the orphanage there was no work to be had of any kind so...they found me a job down in Watford, Hertfordshire so I moved down there, and I got my sister to come down and she got a job and I gave her a sort of taste of life down there, and getting work and that.

Did she come down?

Yeh, yeh.

What kind of work did you get down there then?

Well I got a job in a kitchen cabinet factory and I was...at first of course I didn't know anything, I was on a job what they called 'pulling off' – as the...they were doing the machines, making the moulding and stuff, and pulling off - you took it off from there, and then for a while, and then later on I got on to some of the machines – circular saws and band saws, things like that, yeh.

Did you enjoy that work?

Yeh, not too bad, yeh, but then they all joined a union and then six months later – I think I was there for five years, and after joining the union they demanded more money, and in the end I got sacked! It's the usual way, then did one or two odd jobs and that till the war came along and I got collared for that.

Did you volunteer then?

No, everybody was given medicals and they graded you according to your state of health. I got graded B3 because I wasn't all that... as athletic as some of them, because my early years was a bit bad you know, and in fact it might have done me a good turn because instead of being plonked straight in the infantry I got in the Pioneer Corps, and at 1940 I got called up, yeh - all over the place in England training and that, and then I went abroad when the first army went, the whole first army went out and landed in North Africa

you know.

Would you like to talk about what happened in North Africa?

Well we was in a docks company unloading the boats and first of all they, when they dropped us off in Algiers then later on over night they took us up the coast because there were U-boats about you know; we landed at one place, Bougie, unloaded some cargo ships then they stuck us on a train and went further up the coast to a place called Phillipville with docks you know, then that was our job for the next few months - unloading the cargo boats of all their stores - bombs, ammo, petrol and everything. I had a few scary times there getting bombed at the docks, and eventually we landed in Italy and up through Italy through Italian campaign into Austria, just by the end of the war the...war ended and we was looking after the German troops who were giving themselves up. They weren't called Prisoners of War, they were called SEPs – Surrendered Enemy Personnel.

I married an Austrian girl [someone coming in]

So you met an Austrian girl while you were there?

Yeh, 'cos I was in with Army of Occupation and course it lengthened me stay a bit with that and I was in there from forty-five to forty-eight, I was three years in Austria, and they shoved me... they moved my into a job at HQ Vienna and I didn't like that so they had what they called a gentleman's agreement. If you sign on for extra, to stay on a bit longer and if it didn't suit you, you could

say 'Well I'll have me cards, I'll have me de-mob now' and then I came back to England then.

So did you wife come with you presumably?

I'd to find somewhere to live and that was a bit tricky you know – you couldn't find... the council had about four or five thousand on the council waiting list and it doesn't matter that you'd been abroad or in the army, that didn't count you know – that's why you put your name down soon – they'd say 'you must be joking, how do you know you're going to come back?' Eventually I had a bit of savings and I managed to get a mortgage and get a house, yeh. The mortgage was seventy-three per cent in those days so it wasn't too bad.

Whereabouts was that?

In Watford, yeh, I was in Watford for quite a long time yeh, but...I'd one daughter when I came back here, I had one daughter in Austria and I had another girl and a boy later on.

So you lived in Watford for many years?

Yeh, I lived in Watford from...oh I lived in Watford about twenty-odd years, yeh, and then...trying to think...my wife met with a fatal accident – she got killed; she was biking home from work; she had a job in a hospital, auxiliary nurse and she got run over, and was killed almost instantly and I had three children on my hands for a few years. I did marry again, yeh....

So did you raise your children then?

Yeh – yeh - yeh....it was..

Was that unusual in those days?

Nobody came to see or anything; you just had to manage your own way somehow.

When did you come up to Hebden Bridge?

I'd been in...I fancied a change and I saw these adverts about properties in Spain and I thought 'I'll have a go at that' and I went...you could go out for a long weekend and they showed you all the different estates where they were building, and I thought 'okay I'll go for one of these' and I moved out to Spain in eighty-six and...quite good, I enjoyed it but what I used to miss was the footpaths – there was no footpath signs or walks anywhere and they seemed to build along the coast and I tried going along coastal paths, and every now and then you had to go away – there was properties built and that, and I got a bit bored actually in the end with it and I sold up and came back in eighty-nine – three years I was there

My son said 'Where are you gonna settle down now?' I said 'Well, got any ideas?' I said 'It's got to be walking country' and he said 'I think you'd like Hebden Bridge; he lived in Leeds, he'd gone to college and stayed up there from Watford, and...where was I

now?...yeh, I came back and he said 'Where are you gonna settle down?' I said 'well there's got to be...I've thought about somewhere in Wales or Scotland' but he says 'oh it's too far away is Scotland – you're too far away for keeping in touch with one another' he said 'I think you'd like Hebden Bridge' so I came house-hunting, I looked around and I picked out one up there and it was one of the bigger gardens you know, I had to have a bit of a garden and that was in ninety-one I moved up here ninety-one, and Calderdale, I think it's fantastic is Calderdale, I fell in love with Calderdale and the first thing I did was join a walking club, the next thing I did was get a bus pass [laughing] and I've been exploring the footpaths of Calderdale ever since and still am!

You said earlier that you lead some walks – is that right?

Yeh, they make a syllabus out for the whole year you see, they have walks Thursday, Saturday and Sunday and you just pick the ones you want to go on. At the turn of the year, they ring you up and say 'we've got a few blanks if you want to do a walk' andi said 'yeh okay, put me down for about four' so...this time I'm busy trying out walks, I think I'll manage a few more yet!

Do you take people on your favourite walks?

Yeh, yeh – I try and make them different; if I did a certain three or four walks in this area I try Todmorden area or Walsden area or Luddendenfoot or Cragg Vale, I try different areas which I didn't do last year you know, so I try and find paths that I haven't taken them on before so it gets more difficult year by year, because most of

them are locals you know and have lived there all their lives.

What's your very favourite walk then?

I did quite a nice one on Sunday – I went up...you know Knotts Wood? Yes. Up Knotts Wood, leading down that way and it comes down and there's a path leading to...connecting with the Pennine Way where it goes up steeply up hill from Hebden and I thought 'I won't do the obvious Pennine Way' I did...there's one called the Wainwright Way – you know Wainwright? *Hmm.* And I did his walk, and it is a different way to get back on the other route you know, and I saw one walk I'd never noticed before, it was called...at the bottom it was printed 'Alice Townley Loop' – I want to ask Stuart if he knows about it – I've never noticed it before, 'Alice Townley Loop'. *We'll have to ask him later.* Yeh – then it goes right to Rawtenstall you know, and then down into Eaves, Colden Valley, then up the other side – it's a real up and downer you know, they're gonna bless me if I take them up there!

When you do the walks, what sort of things do you talk about – is it about the nature, or is it about the history of the place, or is it just going out for a good walk?

Yeh well, sometimes we might talk about the place, especially if there's...talk about how they did the tracks in the old days when they used to go from village to village, like down the causies [causeways] and sometimes I like to write it in poems, like I've written about Calderdale and the dry stone walls and the causies, I've written a few poems about things like that. *You'll have to show*

me. I will yeh, I'll bring it another time.

Apart from the walking, what is it about Hebden Bridge and Calderdale that you like?

I try and imagine when I go up the causie, I try and imagine what sort of...what they'd be carrying all the time you know - salt and coal, and I don't know what else they'd be carrying – carrying lots of cotton stuff, like what they used to take to the piece mill once a week I think, took all the stuff there and I wonder what it was like, and like the one down....Hardcastle Crag, the old mill down there - Gibson Mill you know, and we were occupied in helping with that and it was very interesting, reading about how many mills there used to be; there was twenty-one up Colden Valley alone, there was mills everywhere. I've had Swiss friends used to come and they'd say 'why are things so black' and I'd say 'so would you be if you was next door to a mill pumping out smoke all day long!'

Do your children come to visit you here a lot?

Not so much – I try hard, they want to go everywhere else but here! They have been you know - my son he lived in Leeds, and then he moved to Otley so he's handy; he comes over perhaps once a month, sometimes I go over there; I get the train to Leeds and then I get another train to Menston, it's just two stops from Leeds and he picks me up from Menston or usually, I prefer him to come out here because it makes a longer weekend you know. He brings his daughter with him.

So you've got grandchildren?

I have to think, I forget whether it's eleven, I'll have to count again – I think it's eleven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Do you all get together then, like at Christmastime?

Yeh, I either go down to my son's at Christmas sometimes, sometimes to me other daughters and change round you know, yeh, I go for a couple of weeks, and then we try - I keep on about having a holiday all together you know which is not very often, some years we never even made it, not all of us you know - there's been somebody missing, but this year we managed it – we went to Whitby, then there's one of them didn't come this time, but my son and the other two daughters, they came so that was okay.

I'd like to go back a little bit if possible to when you younger really, when you were raising your children on your own – were you working when you looked after them?

Yeh, there was...where I lived in North Watford there was on the road, there was a pre-fab with a little family there and there was a disabled woman and of all the people....they used to go there till it was time to go to school. I used to take the boy on my bike, I had a saddle on my bike, I used to take him to one of these places where...a nursery I suppose you'd call it, I used to take him there and pick him up on the way back from work; he was on his own when I'd finished work.

So how long did that last for, all of that?

[pause] about...about three years I think, two or three years.

I suppose because when you were young and you went to the orphanage, then when you had your children, did you feel as if you should be looking after them?

I felt, no way am I gonna part company from the children, no way after my experience, yeh.

Like I said earlier, it must have been a bit unusual in those days for a man to look after the children on his own mostly. Did you get any comments from people about anything, or no-one offered to help or anything like that?

No, no – only this woman, this disabled woman, who you'd think would be the last one, you know. They just used to go in her place till I came back, you know. I'm just trying to think now [pause] lost my train of thought there [pause] they all used to – they often pull my leg you know and they used to say what kind of food we used to have, and I'd say 'we knew nothing about healthy food in those days' you know, it was...only come in the last, I don't know - thirty or forty years.

What kind of things did you eat?

There was corned beef hash and things like that, and those sort of oval tins of herrings; it was good food I suppose. They always pull

my leg about how I ate then and how I eat now, 'cos I used to....I had a bit of bother the old veins you know, and I got into thinking about...I happened to read a health magazine and I thought 'oh I'll have a go at this' so I changed my diet and got into what we call health foods, I mean that was getting on towards middle age before that happened, till I was fifty-ish, I got into healthy eating and whole foods you know, and that's the way I've lived ever since you know.

Do you think that's been good for you then?

Oh definitely, I think that's why I'm still fairly mobile you know.

What kinds of wholefoods did you eat then?

Well I cut out red meat you know all together, I cut out tea and coffee and acidy things you know, lots of vegetables and fruit and so on you know, and I hate going to the doctor's – I'd rather go and see about any homeopathic things than go to the doctor you know.

Do you see a homeopath then?

Well no I don't - I've got a book on it you know, and I read it up and try it out for myself. I've got into making things myself, like I've got a holistic bible I call it and it shows you how to make things with things that grow in the wild you know, like nettle tea, nettle soup and I've made elderberry cordial, I made that and chestnut tincture, I make that from chestnuts you know, the kids are collecting them to make conkers and I'm collecting them to make tincture. I collected a bagful on Sunday.

What do you use that for then?

It's good for the circulation, it helps the old arteries you know; as you get older your arteries tend to get clogged up, especially if you have too much fat, and I did...actually about five years ago I cut out dairy foods all together because you've got milk, cheese, these things – butter and you're taking in quite a lot of fat you know. That's some of the reason of the obesity about nowadays you know.

Do you think the homeopathic remedies you make – do they work for you?

They seem to, yeh.

Do you recommend them to others then?

Definitely, as a matter of fact sometimes, especially in the summer, they used to say 'your legs are a bit red and swollen, does it hurt' and I'd say 'not pleasant, but it's there and I still do my walking and that' and then I did find out, I read an article somewhere in one of the health magazines that horse chestnut tincture would set it right and I tried it, and after about three or four weeks it worked, and my legs never swelled up any more after that so I know it works you know, and I used...they sell it in health stores, it used to be about six pound odd and it's jumped up to seven ninety-nine now, but I found out that Suma had it, but theirs was only two eighty-five so I switched to them. I get stuff from Suma – you've heard of

Treesponsibility? Yes. Well they do a sideline where they take orders to get from Suma you see, and then that was okay, then all of a sudden they discontinued it, so after that I could get dried chestnuts from Suma in a kilo pack, that went on for a while then that was discontinued so I'm left with the thing of hunting for chestnuts and making my own, which I'm doing and I've done ever since.

How do you make it then?

Well it's a heck of a job to get the skin off - I soak them in water for twenty-four hours, it softens the skin then I chop it in half and peel the skin off, then take so much – perhaps a couple of tablespoonfuls and boil the water and soak it in the water for twenty minutes or so, drain it away and that's it.

And you just drink the water then?

I just drink a teaspoonful with each meal three times a day, so I know it works.

Does it have to be a certain amount, like a cup of water....

It's amazing how little you need because it says a teaspoonful...a tablespoonful of chestnut things to a cupful of boiling water, I mean I make enough to last me months you know, 'cos there's the season of course, so I've got to make a lot while they're still going. September and October's the month for most things anyway, collecting

Also I make hawthorn tincture from hawthorn berries, they're

everywhere they are.

What's that good for then?

Same thing, good for the circulation so I'm well into that you know. I told my daughters you know, I said 'get out and do something' she said 'I'll have a go' I said 'make sure you do'. I've got to find out if she's taken any notice of me – she's probably forgotten!

It's fascinating this – I know it's much more common these days – health foods and homeopath and alternative things like that, particularly in Hebden Bridge there seems to be a lot of that sort of thing. What do you think then of the younger generation and their attitude to this sort of thing?

Well when they've had fun days here and they lay on this that and the other, I'm sorry they're still having the old fizzy stuff and crisps and all these fizzy drinks and everything, burgers and that and I think 'oh crikey, I'm a lone voice'.

Don't you think you can convince some of them?

No.

But you're a walking example!

No.

What do you think about young people in general and their values

– were they the same sort of values that you had when you were younger?

They're so....cock-sure that they've got their rights, you can't touch them, you can't punish them in any way hardly and they've got their rights, you know, also I think there's a lack of discipline nowadays I think, yeh.

Do you think that comes from parents or society in general?

Well you could say it starts off with the parents really. If the parents bring them up the right way the children usually follow them you know, but if the parents are glad to get rid of them for a while and push them onto somebody else...they're not all the same, some are okay but on the whole I think there's a lot of them want to see some discipline and respect for older people. A lot of them don't seem to know what dustbins are for – they chuck their rubbish everywhere. You want to see the playground sometimes when they've been there.

I've travelled a bit and I have friends who have come from different parts of Europe, like in Ireland and Germany and various countries, and they seem to be incredibly clean countries and do lots of recycling and that, so don't you think perhaps it's the society here or the government who don't ask people to do it properly?

We're top of the league in untidiness, binge drinking...girls getting pregnant – we're top of the league in all these things we shouldn't be!

In the time that you've been in Hebden Bridge which would be about – would it be about seventeen years? Fifteen years, yeh. Has it changed in those fifteen years?

I think it's got worse.

How?

The kids, they're roaming about...vandalising and writing stuff all over everywhere, on bus windows, on doors and shops you know and it's costing the council a fortune to remove all this stuff, and it's money that could be better spent elsewhere.

Have there been any good changes do you think?

[pause] The schooling's getting better, I think education's getting better, and healthcare is getting better in that respect, yeh.

Have you met any of the people in Hebden Bridge that you might call character, or a little bit unusual shall we say?

I was a member of Treesponsibility for while but it got a bit much because I used to go with the planting and that, but the planting's got that it's usually on steep hillsides and it's getting really hard, so I haven't done any since a year ago. I've had enough to do with my – I've got an allotment you see and my back garden's a vegetable plot as well, so I've got plenty on my hands without sort of doing the tree planting any more. I do, if there's an easy one, I

might go on it, 'cos it's not only going up these steep banks, it's carting the stuff up there, you know – the plants and all the things that go with it, and I think one person I really, I really think she's terrific was Penny, Penny Eastwood – she used to be like, who does all the spadework and organising the thing, I think she's a real fantastic person you know. We used to meet one day a week and go up to where they were planting trees, and they'd finish about three, and she always made certain I got a lift back home you know, and she's really good that way. Penny, Penny Eastwood, yeh.

Do you think that's a good cause, what she's doing then?

Yeh, it's causing the old climate, the old stuff, the carbon dioxides in the air you know, and the more trees, the better it absorbs it all you know.

Have you ever heard any of the like the old sayings around in Yorkshire, Yorkshire old saying – have you heard any of the locals say any of them, that struck you as being funny or different, or you weren't quite sure what they were to begin with?

I'm trying to think, I know what amuses me – they say 'hiya' and 'see you in a bit' [laughing]

Do you go to any of the events that they hold around here; I'm trying to think of a few – some of the fairs, the galas, some of the parades or the Christmas singing, any of these sort of things?

I went to a...I went to a thing in the Town Hall for veterans – people who'd gone through the war and that was interesting, yeh, that last year you know.

Was that organised by the Council then?

Yeh, it was good. I think you had to put your name down because there was only a certain number, I'm trying to think how many there was – probably about a hundred, might have been more. A group sang all the old songs that you used to sing you know, Vera Lynn and all those sort of songs, and some of the old First World War songs – I'd love to get those old songs like that – a long way to Tipperary, The Old Kit Bag, Maid of Trallee, things like that and Vera Lynn you know – I used to like to hear those old things.

Do you like music then? Do you sing or play an instrument?

No, I've got a croaky old voice, I'm hopeless at singing – if you're in with a crowd it's not noticed [laughing] sometimes I listen to Sunday evening, the old Songs of Praise and try and sing but I can't keep on the right chord!

Did you used to go to church then when you were younger?

Well in the orphanage it was crammed down you three times a day on Sunday, I mean you know it was rammed down your throat.

So did you give it up as a bad job?

Yeh, I think of nature, I think of nature and I like to think somebody created nature you know. I look over and say 'there's people stuck indoors, they can't see what I'm looking at now and seeing the sweet little countryside' and it's fantastic scenery. My neighbour, he said once 'oh I'll go with you sometime' but he never did, his limit is going down to the pub every day and that's his entertainment! He doesn't walk back either – he walks down, he doesn't walk back! [laughing] Can't blame him – it's a bit of a slog coming back up.

Have you read up about the history of Hebden Bridge then?

Well I've got The Century of Change, I've got that.

What do you think of that?

It's good, you get to know the history of the place and how hard they had to work...what things were like, yeh. They had it tough, yeh. When you think that the cotton mills supplied the world with cotton in those days.

What do you think then about what we've been talking about – do you think it's important to pass on your experiences to the next generation?

I think it's good for them to know what sort of lives they led, I mean I was unlucky not to have a family life and they need to see how lucky they are to have their families around them, how lucky they are you know.

Would you give any advice to people younger than yourself?

[pause] Well, try and eat well, healthily...and try and mix in with the local activities, like this community. Sometimes it's hard getting the older ones – they're all busy with their own attractions and so on.

Outside of this community centre then, is there a broader social life that you're involved with in this area?

Not really no, apart from Halifax Ramblers, apart from them. I used to...I used to do a bit of...I did one day a week for people with learning disabilities and that was down Church Lane you know, I used to really like it there and I had two or three with me and I used to make dinner for them as well. They shut that down and moved it to the...Vale Centre and then I did meals-on-wheels, I did a day on meals-on-wheels as well, I did two or three years at that, I did Todmorden area and then somebody had been finished what they'd been doing and they wanted to put it on a full-time basis so somebody took that after and they said 'would you do somewhere else?' I said 'Yes, as long as it's not too far away I'll do it' I said 'I'll do a day a week at Mytholmroyd' so I did that for a couple of years, and I got a bit fed up - a bloke, he was a real – once or twice I got there...we had to meet at the Vale Centre where they collect the stuff with all the meals in, and I'd come on time and he'd already been and gone, and I got a bit fed up with that because he must have been in a hurry to go somewhere, and although I was on time, he'd still gone early, so I stopped doing that and another I didn't used to like – he used to exceed the

speed limits and when he's doing a job like that you know...he thought he was Stirling Moss sometimes! So I said 'oh well – if he's in a hurry, he can do it himself or get somebody else' so I stopped doing it then, but I used to like it, but I've sort of got busy and what with gardening and walking, I'm pretty full up.

There was one who used to walk - a young woman you know, and she used to belong to Treesponsibility and I said 'do you do any walking?' she said 'Yeh' I said 'if you fancy a walk, I'm harmless – you could do one or two with me' so I did used to do, and she moved to Halifax so that was the end of that.

Do you know any jokes?

I might know some – it's trying to remember them – the memory plays tricks, it does as you get older sometimes.

My neighbour, he said 'do you make' - he had some feverfew in the garden and he thought it was chamomile. He said 'do you make chamomile tincture?' I said 'I'm afraid it's not chamomile, it's feverfew – if you get a headache, that's the stuff you want, feverfew.'

I've got nice neighbours you know, but they're not walkers. Maureen next door, she's a nice person, and Cedric her husband, he's the one that says 'that's your exercise –walking down to the pub down Albert Street', that's his exercise! And Rita the other side, she's a bit frail, she used to try...I said 'are you gonna stop smoking, it's not doing you any good you know' – she even tried

them tapes but last time I saw her, I said 'you still smoke then? You're killing yourself!'

Can you understand the accents up here?

Oh yes – me first school was Sawley School in Bolton-by-Bowland, that was where I started off in the orphanage and I was there until I was fourteen, so I'm not entirely a foreigner! It was at Grindleton, Sawley School was, and I'm not quite sure where the border was 'cos it's about three miles from Clitheroe and that's in Lancashire, but the school was in Yorkshire, West Riding, Sawley School yeh, and I went with my daughter, my eldest daughter one year, and she said 'you know, be nice to see where you were' so we took a week, we went to a youth hostel for a week and went to look at the orphanage, and went to see the headmaster and secretary, he said 'yeh feel free, have a roam around, it's still just exactly as it was' it was you know, apart from one addition they'd put on the side you know, but...and then we went down to the school, as luck it was open, it was not a school any more, it was used...it was used for different women's groups, what do you call it, women's voluntary groups and we went inside and I said 'I went to school here so-and-so long ago' he said 'like to come and give a talk?' I said 'I'm afraid we won't be here tomorrow! [laughing]

Did you enjoy going back – did it bring back memories?

I enjoyed it, yeh, it was just the – I thought it was just the same, you know.

Were they hard times then when you were young there?

Yes. You were lucky if you saw a thre'penny bit in your Christmas pudding, that was your luck if you got an apple and an orange and that was about it, [laughing] and a bit of coal.

You got coal for the fire?

Yeh.

Did you have your own room there?

No, no – there was twenty-six; half in one dormitory and another half in another dormitory, so you can imagine what went on in there - there was pillow fights, woe betide if we got caught!

Was it all boys?

Boys one side and girls the other, one thing about those days - never the twain shall meet, oh crikey – you never came into close contact with the girls yeh, you were kept far apart yeh, apart from when you went to school, we had...we used to call them sisters, they were just people looking after us, I don't know their proper titles but we had to call them sister, there used to be two of them take us to school, marched in twos to school, in clogs, we wore clogs, yeh.

Did you like clogs?

They were good for slides!

Did you like school, did you enjoy school?

Yeh I enjoyed school, I really enjoyed school, yeh. I remember getting a certificate once for the best essay in the class you know. The school was up to fourteen, elementary school as they called them in those days and...iron gates, boys' entrance there, girls' entrance the other side of the school; their playground was at one side and our playground was on the other, never together; they were very strict in those days, yeh very strict.

Can you remember your teachers?

Yeh, it always brings a tone of sadness when I used to think she's a lovely teacher, and she was riding pillion on a motorbike and she got killed, I remember going to her funeral – it was sad that was, she was a lovely teacher, yeh.

We'd play football with clogs on, it was a bit risky!

Did you like football then?

Yeh - yeh, I used to play football – I used to play left back when I was in the bigger teams to the last orphanage, I used to play football yeh. Used to play football when was stationed at Preston for a while, we went up to....Caister, got called up to Caister on Sea, then we moved up to Glasgow and then we moved for training, learning the mysteries of arms drill and foot drill and all

that, and then we moved down to Preston.

So you went all over the country then?

Yeh, then we went to East Ham...got bombed out there.

Were you ever wounded?

I was wounded, I was on the...when we went in Italy we had to march to the site of the dockside and it wasn't a docks, it was just where the landing craft used to - we got on board this landing craft and went out past the Isle of Capri of all places and when they landed on the Anzio landings on January 2nd 1944 yeh; then we was on..you know what a duck is? they used to come with stores, ammunition and everything from the ship 'cos the beach head was all under shell fire so they had to unload on to these ducks – they'd come up the beach with ammunition and we were unloading then with ammunition and petrol and stores and that, and I happened to...one landed nearby and we got hit with the explosions and I woke up on a hospital ship and I got

[END OF TRACK ONE]