Bunty Fawcett (nee Miller) and Pam Evans (nee Stocks) 1952 - 1954

Interview: 2 May 2023

12:00pm

Chandler Building, UCLan, Preston

Present:

BF Bunty Fawcett (nee Miller)

PE Pam Evans (nee Stocks)

KV Keith Vernon

HH Helen Howell

KV So, if we just start again, if you tell me again, your names, maiden names, and if you don’t mind, your date of birth.

BF Bunty Fawcett, 30th of the 9th ’38.

PE Pamela Evans, 25th of February 1939.

KV …and when did you actually come to the Harris, and what course were you doing?

BF ‘52 to ‘54, Commercial course.

PE ‘54, yes, both of us.

KV So that was the Junior Commercial School?

PE No.

BF It was just known as Commercial School.

KV Ok.

PE It was when we were 13, you had to pass the scholarship, at 13, so we, yes. Course we didn’t pass our 11 plusses did we?

BF Some were actually 14 when they started.

PE Oh, were they?

BF Yes. Well Margaret Garstang was, her birthday’s August.

KV What schools were you at before?

PE In Penwortham.

BF Ribbleton Avenue Methodist.

PE Cop Lane School in Penwortham.

KV Ok, and how…so you had to do the exam, how did you find out about the exam, were you…

Bf School put you in for it.

PE Yes school put you in for it.

KV And did you do it at the school? Did you have to come in…

PE We came here.

BF Bring your own pencil! [all chuckle]

PE I didn’t remember that! Are we in that building still?

BF Yes.

PE Now…

HH Not quite, it’s just next door.

PE Next door it was. It took all…I think, as far as I can remember, it took all day.

BF It was a really long time. Bring your own ruler and pencil.

PE I can’t remember that!

KV Was it English and maths, or was it general knowledge and that kind of thing?

PE No it was English, and maths, we had to do essays, didn’t we, do you remember doing essays?

BF Yes.

PE …and maths.

BF …and general knowledge. Some of the questions you’d think ‘Those are rubbish,’ but obviously there was a reason for it.

KV …and were there many from your schools that came?

BF 8 passed from my school that year, which was good.

PE Two, three…the twins, me and Sylvia - about 4 I think, from mine. I don’t know how many went in for it from my school. It wasn’t like the 11 plus where everybody goes in. There was just the, I’m sorry to say, ‘the select few,’ who they thought just might get through.

KV Ah ok. So - everybody was put in for the 11 Plus…

PE Yes.

KV …but then it was a bit more selective who was put forward for this?

BF Yes, they didn’t put you forward if they didn’t think you could get in. ‘Cause it was a bit of an accolade, wasn’t it, for the school.

PE Yes it was, yes.

KV But 8 is a lot from the school... were there only about 60 or something, that came?

PE I think there were 4 of us…

BF And they came from Wigan, St Annes, all over.

PE St Annes, yes. All over, yes. Longridge…[BF Mm] Was it just Lancashire?

BF Mm.

PE I don’t know. All of Lancashire? I’m not sure. [03:26]

KV And did you used to have to get the bus in?

BF Yes. And legs [all chuckle].

PE Yes. I used to get the bus to the railway station.

BF No mummy taking you, was there?!

KV So can you tell me a little bit about the course – what kind of subjects you studied?

PE I was looking at them the other day…

BF General, the general – history, geography, maths, English, plus shorthand typing, bookkeeping, and commerce.

PE Geography – oh you said geography didn’t you. All the usual things you had at school, plus a few wasn’t it, shorthand typing, and bookkeeping, commerce.

BF Commerce.

PE Commerce, that was it, yes.

KV And was it well equipped, did they have typewriters and all that kind of thing?

PE Yes. We typed to music.

HH Oh, did you?

BF Yes, and they covered the keys up.

PE They covered all the keys up, they put a keyboard – picture – on the board, didn’t they, so you’d to type like that [mimes typing while looking up] because you didn’t…so you ended up as erm, what do you call it, typist?

BF Copy typist, but you didn’t look at the keys, [PE No] and they timed you.

KV Ah, sort of ‘words per minute.’ [BF and PE mmm]

PE We had to take exams in the end. I’ve got many exam papers, I could have brought them all today.

BF I thought we’d given you…

PE I thought we’d given you them.

KV You might well have done…

BF I think we gave you the School Certificate. And if you didn’t pass in every one, you didn’t get it, full stop. [KV Ah ok] And you couldn’t re-sit. Margaret didn’t get it…

PE And I think it’s the equivalent to GCSEs, am I right in thinking that?

BF Or O level, or whatever came next. [PE Mm.]

KV And what was the…when did the day start, and finish…

BF It started at 9, we had an hour for lunch, but you didn’t have a break during the morning or afternoon, and then…

PE I can’t remember what time we finished, can you?

BF 4.

PE 4, was it 4? I thought about half past but..

BF 4.

KV Some of the people have said that it was slightly staggered, so you weren’t the same time in the schools?

BF Well, for ours, it depended where they lived, and the train times.

PE Oh, you’ve got a better memory than me.

BF Lorna, she used to have to go, because I think her train left at 4 o’clock from Preston station, so she could go 10 minutes before. [06:12]

PE We weren’t in the same form, they had 2 forms, a year, didn’t they, but we weren’t in the same forms. But we did the same things, you know, just they split us. I don’t think it was a split on merit were we?

BF No, they just…well, my previous school, I daren’t tell you some of the things I did…but they said to Myra [a school friend] and I, ‘See that door? Get through it and never come this side of it again’ [all chuckle] ‘and I’ll make sure that you two are not together.’ And we thought ‘Phoo, he can’t do that!’ But he did.

PE He did, yes, she was in my form, was Myra…

BF Yes, Myra was the only one [from her school] put in it [the other form]. And he blamed Myra, and I think it was only because she was such a big girl.

KV So you were put in different… because there was an ‘A’ class and a – two classes…

BF A ‘B’ yes.

PE Not because ‘A’s were better than ‘B’s at all, was it? [BF No.] So many that they just had to split us. How many were in the class, about 30?

BF I thought it was 20, but I couldn’t swear to it.

PE No, I think it was more than 20.

BF Probably 30, yes.

KV What were the teachers like? [07:25]

PE OK. Well…

BF Miss Wood. We thought she was ancient, didn’t we…

PE I know. She was a gym teacher, it was a shame really, and what-was-his name was hopeless, the one that took French?

BF Oh! He was shell shocked wasn’t he? [PE I don’t know!] That was what was wrong with him.

PE All he talked about, was Hitler and the war.

BF Well, he was. He used to stand there with all these pens [indicates position of pens in a top pocket of a jacket] and click these pens…

PE No, he wasn’t a good teacher.

BF What was his name? He was…

PE Mr Allen?

BF Yes, it was! [Pauses] Mrs Griffiths…

PE They were all alright weren’t they? They were all good teachers. Mr Griffiths…

BF Yes and Miss Griffiths, Mrs Griffiths.

PE Miss Stewart.

BF Miss Stewart, she was nice.

BF She took us for shorthand.

PF Oh and French, we didn’t say French when we gave you a list, did we? We did French as well.

BF Yes, but Miss Woods, she was probably early fifties wasn’t she?

PE I bet she wasn’t even that. We thought she was amcient.

BF And we thought she was absolutely ancient, because her hair was grey, and she used to say ‘Right! We’re going to do something new. Bunty’ll show you how to do it…’

PE Yes! She couldn’t do it, Bunty was good and she was the gym mistress, but she couldn’t do it.

BF We gave her a bit of a hard time, it was a shame.

PE I know – it was a shame.

BF When we locked her in the changing room [all chuckle].

PE I’m learning a lot today! [All laugh] You wouldn’t be in…Oh yes, you were same time as me in the gym. I remember you vaulting over the horse.

BF And we had to walk through the boy’s department, so you went and kept your plimsolls handy!

PE You had to change into your navy blue knickers, now can you imagine, having to go through all the boys school, and they were all outside the classroom door, shouting and whistling, you’ve no idea! [all laugh]

BF And for games, we went to the Harris Art…

KV Ah, ok.

BF To get changed. And you were in the lecture room, like that [indicates the curved nature of the tiered seats] and you were high up, and you’d got about that much room [indicates a width of about a foot], hadn’t you, to get changed…Margaret Garstang, this friend, she had polio as a child so she was quite crippled, and she broke her ankle. She fell, and there was no health and safety then, poor Margaret. [09:57]

PE You had to get changed there, to go across the river, ‘cause that’s where the games field was, that’s where we played hockey. Anyway…

BF Cow pats and all…

PE Cow pats…! This man’s asking us questions! [10:10]

KV No that’s, you’re fine. This is the…we can read about it in the books, but this is the what it was really like… I do want to know more. How did you manage to lock the games mistress in the changing rooms?

PE I don’t know, I didn’t do that.

BF I don’t know. It was me, Myra and Margaret, I think, in on it. And she used to go in this…it was like a…

PE She had little shorts on, didn’t she?

BF It was like a skirt with long knickers on underneath - Harvest knickers - “All is safely gathered in,” and she used to go in there, we locked it and came away. Nothing was ever said.

HH Wasn’t it?

BF No.

PE She cried sometimes, really cried. It was a shame.

BF Oh yes.

PE Now I think about it.

BF And we really liked her, didn’t we, but we just…

HH She never knew!

PE It’s a good job isn’t it, because if we didn’t, she’d have probably been murdered!

KV How did you find…was it different coming…was the teaching different here, than you were used to at the school?

BF Yes. I found I enjoyed it much better here. I was happy.

PE I was, very happy. But they treated you as more grown up than they would at ordinary school.

BF Well they made you more responsible, didn’t they?

PE Yes. Well it was different, I don’t know how you’d say it…

BF And we didn’t get homework as such, because they thought if you’d done a full day’s work, what they’d set you, you’d worked hard enough. If you didn’t get it done, you’d to have it done for the day after, which I think’s very good.

KV Oh that’s interesting.

PE Also, we never, ever got religion. I mean, at school we always did – it was say a prayer in the morning, then you’d sing a hymn, then leaving at night…

BF Well it was like Magdalen, I mean I should have known with a name like…

PE With a name like Magdalen she was…

BF It never entered our heads, what religion anybody was. In those days, in Preston, it counted.

PE But it was never, ever, mentioned at the school…at the… that was a big difference as well.

KV That’s never occurred to me before, that is interesting isn’t it.

PE It is a big difference isn’t it? There wouldn’t be so many schools, in those days, that didn’t have religion anywhere.

BF They were all associated with…

PE Yes, you either went to a Catholic School, or a C of E School…

BF Or a Methodist.

PE Or a Methodist…

BF I was actually C of E, but…

PE Yeah. Well I was, I went to…

BF But the first school I went to..

PE I went to school, in fact Cop Lane was a Church…

BF I had TB, so I was 7 when I started, and he was horrible about it, was this Headmaster, so my mum got me transferred to Ribbleton Avenue Methodist because it was, and my auntie lived round the corner, so that’s how she could get me in there.

PE But it was…you never knew, it was never mentioned. It was never, ever, mentioned. No connection at all with religion. I presume they were all Christians, I can’t think of anybody who wouldn’t be, I mean in those days, there were no Muslims, or anything, but it was never, ever… [BF No] That was very different, that was very grown up to us. In a school, you had, you always had prayers and things, even if it wasn’t a church school, we did anyway, I don’t know if you did?

BF We had a, well we called him the religious maniac!

PE Probably said a prayer a day…

BF No, he - bang, bang, bang, bang like mad - ‘I’ll get religion through to you if I die!’

PE So you were treated more grown up, I would think, than ordinary schools. [14:15]

KV But there were some punishments, like doing lines and…

Bf Oh yes.

PE Yes, definitely, but that was given to you by prefects, it wasn’t given to you by the teachers, was it?

BF I never got any! I just think I didn’t get caught!

PE I think I remember going ‘I, I, I, I, must, must, must, must, not, not, not, not.’ I don’t know what I had done. I probably didn’t have my hat on.

BF And your skirt had to be…

PE A certain length…

BF …and there was no way you could tuck it up or anything [PE No], and as I say, if you were seen on the bus without…

PE A hat…

BF …you were in trouble.

PE Winter or summer…yes. What else? What else can we tell you?!

BF And Mr Cobham, the headmaster, if he walked in…

PE You had to stand up.

BF You stood up, yes, when teachers walked in, but some people, he’d walk in, and he’d speak to them, and they couldn’t answer, and he was super, he was a good teacher…

PE Was he? He frightened me to death!

BF Well this is it, he didn’t… [PE yes] He frightened them to death – without doing anything!

PE I got a good reference from him though.

BF He was good.

PE Yes.

KV With the uniform, can you remember whether…because if you passed the exam, there was a scholarship, wasn’t there, to pay for your fees…[PE Yes] Was there anything to help pay for the uniform?

BF No.

PE There was, I was looking at it the other day. My mother kept everything – where you could buy the uniform, what you had to buy, etc. I think you’ve got copies, I think I brought copies in before. If you want some more I can give you them, but it does say at the end, if you need help…with transport, I think it was…paying for transport, you got it, I think…

BF I know my mum found a guy on the market that sold seconds, shirts, which were a lot cheaper, and that’s where I got… and my sisters skirt - I got dyed, because she just couldn’t afford it.

PE No, but I think you did get help if you were poor.

BF Oh, and I know she went to see Mr Cobham about our summer dresses, because I’d grown a bit, [PE Of course] and could she put a white band in, and he did let her. [KV Ok].

PE They were very strict, very strict about the uniforms, but they were nice uniforms, weren’t they?

BF Oh I was proud of mine.

KV Some of the chaps we were talking to, said that they could wear a sports jacket, in their second year, was there anything for girls?

BF No.

PE No. We had to wear the uniform.

BF You had to wear the blazer, gabardine in winter.

PE Mm. Blazers, no we didn’t have any different uniforms in the second year, did we?

BF No.

PE No.

HH Did you wear the blazer inside as well as when you were outside? So, in the lessons?

PE and BF Yes.

PE Didn’t we have a navy blue…We could have had a navy blue sweater, or cardigan, what was it, we could…?

BF Cardigan.

PE Cardigan, was it? Mm if you didn’t have your blazer on. But you had to have your blazer on. It was more that colour, wasn’t it [indicating cornflower blue colour.]

BF It wasn’t Royal Blue.

PE No, it was lighter than Royal Blue. I think it was more that colour [cornflower blue].

BF Between that and French navy.

PE It wasn’t navy anyway, that’s what made it stand out.

HH What colour was the summer dress?

BF Floral.

HH was it?

PE Blue flowers, wasn’t it.

BF And a white collar.

PE You had to buy the material at, erm, I nearly had it…where was it? It’s still there…Hellewells!

HH Oh yes.

PE You had to buy the material and get it made up by somebody.

BF My mum knew somebody that worked in Horrockses, and she got it cheap. I think she swapped something for it.

PE And a straw hat…

BF My sisters cast off, with…just with another band round it. [18:32]

KV So, did your sister come here as well?

BF No, she went to the Park School.

KV Ah, OK.

PE Oh she must have passed the scholarship.

BF Yes, because my dad said to me, when I didn’t pass for the Park School, ‘Well, you haven’t a cat in hell’s chance at the Tech, because it’s harder.’

PE Well it was, it was different. You know this 11 plus was fast, fast, fast - find out what the difference is between that, and then they said, ‘Turn over now.’ But this exam was essays and problems, and you’d all day, so that suited me, I could do that. I couldn’t do it fast, I couldn’t do…

BF …but not everybody was suited.

PE No, no.

BF It was the same for the Park School, and the Headmaster, the Principal, and Miss Woods, got me in the office - I wondered what I had done! - to try and persuade me to go in for teaching.

PE Oh did they?

BF Well could you imagine me teaching?

PE No.

BF No, exactly!

PE I wasn’t asked.

HH Did it not appeal to you?

BF Oh I’d have…the little….

PE Ooh she would! Don’t tangle with Bunty!

BF No…

KV When you were at the, were there any extracurricular activities? Did you meet up with…were there clubs or anything after school, or did you meet up with people…

BF No, you just went in, did your work, and came away, didn’t you.

PE No, the only thing outside was games, you know, hockey, which everybody had to do. Or football for the boys.

KV Were there any teams that played against other…

BF Yes, we had...

PE Four.

BF Yes. Red…

PE Yellow…

BF Yellow, Green…

PE and BF …and Blue.

PE Blue was Harris – oh not it was red!

BF Red was Harris. Yellow…I can’t think what yellow was.

PE I’ve got it written down.

BF Green. One was school.

PE I can’t remember. There were four teams anyway, four colours.

HH Was one Ascroft? No…

BF Yes, yellow, I think.

PE Was it?

BF That’s right.

PE I’ve got a picture of me, when it was the sports day, and I’ve got a red band, because I was the House Captain, whether that was why I wore the red band I don’t know. That was the Harris, I don’t know. [BF Yes] It was blue, red, yellow and green, but, I think you told me not long ago, and I wrote it all down, so I do have it if you want it…

BF But I can’t remember.

KV So they were like for games within [PE Yes] the college [PE Yes, nothing else].

BF We didn’t go and play anybody else did we…

PE No.

HH So, it wasn’t a house system as such?

PE Yes.

HH But just for games, not for anything else?

PE No, because I’ve got, which I still have, though I might have given you that though, a House Captain badge, so it must have been a house thing…[inaudible]

BF Yeah, it only really…

PE Prefects got a badge, and House Captains, and I think I’ve given it to you, because I thought that’ll go in a skip when I go, I’d rather it came here, and that’s red, yeah. No there were houses.

BF But we didn’t separate as houses in the classroom, did we?

PE No. But we did at games, and the gym, I think.

PE and BF Yes.

KV Ah, OK. [22:05]

HH Can I just ask something about the entrance exam? I was just wondering if it was the same for boys as it was for girls, and would you know?

PE No, I don’t know…

BF No. Commercial was different from the Technical.

PE The exam, to get in?

BF Yes, they had a different one.

PE Was it not just English and maths like we had?

BF No, I don’t know what they did, but theirs was different.

PE Was it? I don’t know.

HH Thank you.

KV You [before the recording] mentioned about a trip to the Lakes?

BF Yeah, Mr and Mrs Bairsto…

PE It was only a weekend, it was only Saturday and Sunday. I think, if I remember, we had to walk 20 miles, and I was absolutely exhau…well we weren’t used to walking that far - hiking. We stayed in YMCA.

BF That’s right, yeah.

PE It was pretty primitive. That was the only trip we ever had…[BF Yes]…in two years.

BF Yes, there was nothing.

KV Did the whole Commercial School go?

BF No, just anyone who wanted to go.

PE Oh no, you weren’t…they didn’t say you’ve got to go. If you were interested, which I was and you were, ‘cause we’re on the same photograph aren’t we…

BF And Myra, and Lorna. Margaret didn’t come, because as I say, she was a cripple.

PE Yes, it was just at the YMCA for Saturday and Sunday, I would think it was, yes, that was it.

HH Just girls…

BF Just girls, yes.

PE Ooh of course! Good heavens…we didn’t mix with the boys! I don’t know if they ever went anywhere, do you?

BF No.

PE We must have mixed, because I had a boyfriend in the boys… Peter…

BF Peter Rimmer? He was every girl’s boyfriend.

PE Oh thanks very much…[All laugh] I never knew that! Was he? Don’t know why…

BF He went to Ribbleton Avenue Methodist.

PE Did he?

BF Yes, he lived on Miller Road.

PE So we must have met somewhere, was it just outside school?

BF I don’t know, I don’t know what you got up to!

PE Not much, I’m afraid…but yes, we did mix with the boys, but not *in* school, it must have been, rather, you know, in the evenings, if we were all going out together, I suppose. We definitely mixed with the boys, didn’t we?

BF Oh yeah.

PE But not during the day, of course.

KV And did you go out in the evenings or weekends with people from the..

BF No…

PE I didn’t, did you?

BF No.

KV And did you keep in touch with former school friends?

PE We have done, since you’ve been having these lunches that the Vice-Chancellor’s put on.

BF I’ve, well I’ve kept in touch with Myra…

PE Yes, you have, but I haven’t.

BF and Magdalen.

KV I was thinking that erm, when you came here, did you have much contact with people who didn’t come here, so your previous school friends?

PE My friends fortunately passed the exam when I did, so I was with them all weekend, we lived near each other, but I don’t think…

KV Ok.

PE I must have, because when we left, I went on a biking tour with erm…can’t remember the name…Dorothy Parki…

BF Oh yes…Dorothy Parkington.

PE Dorothy Parkington, and Beth…I don’t know what her name was…we were good pals at school, so when we left, we wanted to keep together, which we did for a bit, but apart from that, I don’t think we ever saw them in the evenings or weekends did we…

BF Well, we didn’t go out the same then.

PE No. I only…my friends, my good friends, happened to pass the exam like me, so we just carried on, we’d have carried on if we’d have gone to different schools.

KV You sometimes hear about people that went to the Grammar School or something, that they kind of, got a bit separated from old friends and neighbours or something [26:18]

PE The only thing that separated us from each other was Catholics and Non-Catholics. Because they went to a Catholic School…

BF One of my closest friends, she went to the Park School. She’s now in Australia.

PE Well that’s Grammar School. [BF Yeah] No, I don’t think there was any difference – people that were in your class at the junior school were, if they passed to go to the Grammar School, we all still stayed friends.

BF Stayed friends.

PE No…except they, we got separated by religion, that’s the only thing that…

BF I had Catholic friends…

PE Well I did, but…

BF My dad wasn’t happy, oh no.

PE Was he not? Oh mine couldn’t have cared less…

BF My mother didn’t, she didn’t bother, because she was from east Yorkshire, and they didn’t have it like they had here.

PE No, Preston was a really erm big catholic town, but some places, you couldn’t get a job if you weren’t a Catholic, some places you had to be. It was like that when I started work.

BF It was when…

PE Even in 1980s, I had a few years at British Aerospace, and somebody said to me ‘How did you get that job?’ I said ‘Oh, I went for an interview, I did shorthand and typing,’ they said, ‘You’re not a Catholic are you?’ I said ‘No.’ But you had to be, you had to be, to work there.

BF One of my brothers from the Grammar School, he went for an interview, and the first thing they said was ‘What religion are you?’ He said, ‘I’ve come to work, not to pray,’ and walked out.

PE He must have been like you, you’d have done that.

KV What did your parents do?

BF My dad was bus conductor, my mum worked at County offices, and during the war she worked Army Pay Corps – 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, with 5 kids, no cars, no washing machines, how did she manage?

PE My dad was electrical engineer, but mother was a housewife.

KV Had either of them gone to secondary school or anything like that?

BF No, my mum was very clever, my dad was dim.

PE Mine was, yes they were both clever. My dad went to night school. He was in the First World War, he’s as old as that you know.

BF Well I was going to say, my dad was 15 when he went in the First World War.

PE Yes, mine was 17 I think. But he did go to night school, to be electrician, then, you know, carried on to his electrical engineer – I don’t know if…would he go here, would it be going in those days?

KV Yes, he might have come here, he might well have come here.

PE He might have come here then, I don’t know. [29:12]

KV Ok.

PE I’ve still got some of his school books, I’ll have a look.

BF Well three in our family, well there were five, and we all got scholarships.

KV Excellent.

BF They thought I was the dim one.

PE [You’re more than that[?]

KV So when it came to the end of the course, was there anything to help you? Were you expected to find a job?

PE Yes – there was no help. They didn’t have careers people, did we?

BF No, occasionally they’d let you know if there was one going somewhere and tell you where.... Well, what was that book binders further down Corporation Street?

PE Corporation Street or Friargate?

BF No, Corporation Street…

HH Was it Askews?

BF That’s it. [30:00] ‘Cause I was sent there for one. And, we were sat outside, and Margaret Minshull got it. And I heard them say ‘Oh we’re not having her, she lives in a council house’ and that was me.

PE You’re kidding!!

PE My mother saw an advert in the Evening Post, Lancashire Daily Post then, for a job in a bank, and she said, ‘You’re going for that,’ and ‘I don’t want to work in a bank,’ she said ‘Well you have to’ so I had to. I remember borrowing her coat, because I didn’t have…I only had my school uniform. And I got it, so, but that was because she saw the advert in the paper. [30:41]

BF Yes, oh yes.

PE No help from anywhere, was there?

KV Ah ok. Some of the boys said that employers would come in and talk to people, or…

PE I can’t remember…

BF We didn’t, no.

PE Well they were boys… in those days, boys were expected to work, I don’t think it mattered about the girls so much. Although there was, us girls, when we were at school, we were supposed to do well, weren’t we.

BF Yes. They sent me once for an interview to the slipperworks.

PE Who sent you?

BF From the Tech, when we were coming up to leaving.

PE I was never sent anywhere…

BF It was along here, Fylde Road. [PE I didn’t know that] It was known as the slipper works.

PE I was never sent anywhere They must have written to the school, these places, mustn’t they. ‘Have you got anybody suitable?’ We never, well I never had any, well I was never sent anywhere…

BF And as I say, there was that one at Askews, and that’s what I had, and my mother was livid.

PE Did you start at Askews?

BF No, they didn’t take me…

PE Oh no, because you lived in a council house didn’t you, I’m sorry, I’d forgotten about that.

HH May I…I was just wondering if they treated the boys in the Commerce School in that same way, with jobs?

PE Well they were only in my… [to BF] they weren’t in your form.

BF No were they were only in yours. Were there four of them?

PE Yes. They weren’t treated…they were treated the same as us as lessons went, but after that, I’ve no idea, I’m sorry, I can’t, I don’t…

BF And I don’t know what they did for PE?

PE They must have gone with the boys.

BF Down there.

PE I always wondered why these boys went into the Commercial bit, full of girls. [HH Yes] Now why would they go into the…they must have been interested in shorthand and typing? I can’t…why would they apply to go to the Commercial? [32:52]

KV If they wanted an office job rather than a…

PE Rather than at a lathe or something…

BF Because [Alan Wright?] went to Berry’s.

PE What’s that, the…? In Leyland?

BF Yes, and he became a director eventually, yeah.

KV So, did you get a job after leaving?

BF Oh yes.

PE I got one straight away, I didn’t even have a time to have a break…

KV Which bank was it?

PE Preston, TSB.

BF I used to love going in there when I was a kide.

PE Did you? It’s now Wetherspoons, unfortunately, yes.

BF Yes.

KV And how long were you there?

PE I was there for 16 years, and then I went into the Foreign Office. I was the general manager’s PA in the bank, and he retired, and I thought, ‘Now’s your chance.’ I’d always wanted to travel, and I applied, I never thought I’d…anyway I did apply, I went down to London for an interview, and a test, hated that…[BF Yeah] and I got the job, so, I was there for 10 years, then I got married.

BF My first job was Royal Bank – what was it…Royal Scottish Midland Guarantee Trust Limited.

PE Was that in Preston?

BF Winckley Square.

PE Oh, was it?

BF They financed cars.

KV Ok.

PE I don’t know that one.

BF No, it doesn’t exist any more.

PE No.

KV What was your…

BF Well, dogsbody initially, but, to be fair, the, what would you say she was – office manager- Cath Crabtree, no, she was brilliant, she really was good and then you just worked your way up.

PE The thing is, when you left here, you had qualifications in shorthand and typing. Now I had friends that went to the Grammar School, and they had to go to College after to take shorthand and typing, so they were always two years at least behind us. We could walk straight into a job, as a shorthand typist, which I did, start at the bottom, but they were at…Smarts College? [BF Yes] You had to go to Smarts, and they’d been to Grammar School. I think they were expected to end up as teachers or something else, but they wanted to do office work, so they’d to start again with shorthand and typing, which we already had the qualifications for.

PE So we were already qualified just to walk into a…it was a good school, it was a *good* school, wasn’t it. [35:49]

BF Well, I went for an interview, and the guy said to me, ‘Let me see this certificate,’ and he said, ‘I’ve been dying to see one of these,’ because even from the Grammar School, they didn’t get as many qualifications.

PE Did they not?

BF No, well, you think what they took.

PE I don’t know what they took.

BF Well, they took maybe 6, 7 subjects, that was it. And I’d never looked at it like that.

PE No.

KV So you were…

PE We were already qualified when we left. They were qualified with GCSEs and what have you, but they couldn’t just walk into a job like we did, well I don’t think so.

BF No, not if they wanted office work.

PE No.

KV So you worked at the bank for 16 years?

PE 16 years.

BF Was it 6, or 16, [PE 16] Oh!

PE I started as an office junior…

BF You did stick it out, didn’t you?

PE Yes, well, I enjoyed it, and I was general manager’s PA for 10, and then he retired, and oh, I hated the man that came after him. Anyway.

KV And what did you do at the Foreign Office?

PE PA again. PA again, yes. That’s all I’ve done all my life.

KV And did you get to travel?

PE Yes [37:06] I was 2 years in Africa, in Zambia, and then 2 years in Trinidad, in the West Indies, all very nice. And 4/5 years in London. We worked in Whitehall. Yes, it was very interesting.

BF Well, you met your husband…

PE Met my husband. Well, that was when I was abroad. It was interesting in London. It was, I mean, I was in an office right outside, across the road from Number 10, so you saw everybody, well I did, every time somebody went in…so it was interesting. As long as you weren’t a communist, you could get a job there, ‘cause, you know, they had people coming up to your school, talk to your parents and everything, make sure that you weren’t in any demonstrations or, I don’t know…

BF My eldest brother went in the police at 16, and I remember them coming and even interviewing me, and I was only 8.

PE Ooh, heck! You wouldn’t know much would you?

BF No, but kids blab don’t they?

KV So what did you end up doing, Bunty? [38:24]

BF Anything. I helped my son out with his business, anything really, I was prepared to, but it was…I never wanted to…why, I don’t know…I never wanted to go in an office, but I did. I worked at Atkinson vehicles, I loved that, I really did like that, because I like that side, engineering and what have you.

PE You should have gone into the boys, but they didn’t take girls, did they?

BF, No I just, I never, when I think about it, I did stick a long time but, if I started getting fed up, I’d look for something else.

PE I wasn’t allowed to change jobs – we didn’t do that in our house. Once you were working somewhere, that was it, you didn’t.

KV Did either of you do any more studying, part time or…?

PE Yes, I did, I went in for more exams for shorthand and typing.

KV Did you do that here, or…?

PE No, locally, in Penwortham, at the schools there, at night school.

KV Right.

BF No I only went for soft toys at night school. Only because Jane wanted to.

PE Well in the civil service, the more exams you got, the more money you got. You got a rise every time you passed an exam.

BF Yes, fair enough. Best graffiti I ever saw was at Priory School, where they did night school.

PE That’s where I went.

BF Well it said…

PE It wasn’t me, I didn’t do it.

BF It said, ‘My mum made me a lesbian.’ And someone had written underneath ‘If I get the wool, will she make me one?’

PE I never saw that!

BF I thought it was fantastic.

PE I never saw that!

BF Go on, we keep stopping you.

KV No, you’re fine, erm [40:20] have you got any more questions Helen?

HH I just wondered if you’d ever done anything when you were at the Harris – I’ve noticed in the Prospectus, or it could have been the Annual Report I was reading, that sometimes the schools would put on a little concert, or singing in the choir. I just wondered if you had been involved in anything like that?

BF No, there was nothing, was there, when we were there.

PE I sang in the school choir at the Public Hall, but I can’t remember which school it was now. Did you not go? Was it not this school?

BF No I certainly never sang…

PE We did plays in the classroom – Shakespeare and things.

BF Yes.

PE We didn’t put on a play, no. There was nothing was there? You know, we haven’t even got a school photograph, they didn’t take any school photographs.

BF You were there to work.

PE And I can’t tell you what a good school it was.

KV Is that, because you enjoyed the experience, or what it led up to?

PE I loved it.

BF Yes, I did.

PE But I learned a lot and it got us good jobs. You could walk straight into a job.

BF I used to love going in every morning.

PE Yes. Well, I don’t know if I loved it that much… I walked into a bank, and got the job.

BF You could more or less choose, couldn’t you.

PE Yes! Well, mother chose…

BF Oh yes.

[inaudible chatter]

PE She was right, she was right. [41:57]

KV So it was really, quite…almost instrumental in a way. You went in, and you worked hard, you were well qualified, but, doesn’t seem to be much social, or…

PE Wasn’t any, that I can think, was there?

BF No, there was nothing. In fact, when we went that weekend, it was a one-off.

PE Yes, we never went again.

BF And I don’t think they went before.

PE No.

BF And that was just Mr and Mrs Bairsto I think.

PE Yes, they just took us, this couple, that were both teachers here.

KV And when you finished, at 4 o’clock or so, was it straight home? Or did you…

PE Oh yes, we had to go straight home, in those days.

BF Yes you went straight home.

PE You couldn’t be a teenage girl and not go straight home. I don’t think you were allowed to linger, were you?

BF No. And if Mr Cobham saw you…

PE You were alright as long as you had your hat on!

BF As I say, going to the Olympic café on [Caton?]

PE Oh I see, I never went there, so I don’t know.

BF Well, I used to pass it on the bus.

PE Oh of course, I went the other way.

BF So I knew about its reputation. Poor Anne!

HH Did you ever come across Septic Fred’s? One of the other interviews we’ve done, was mentioning a café down, round the corner…they named it Septic Fred’s.

PE Septic?!

BF Well it must have been filthy then…No.

HH Yes, he said his friend just used to drink coca cola out of a bottle I think he said, didn’t he, he said ‘Why are you having that?’ he said ‘Well, they haven’t tampered with it!’

PE Ooh, no! I wonder where that was…

BF And yet when I was ambulance liaison officer at Ormskirk, there was a young boy brought in, and it took them a long time to find out what was wrong, and that was drinking out of a bottle, straight from a bottle…mice running over it in the warehouse [collective ‘Oooh’] and it was, what is it called, Weil’s disease? Out of the urine?

KV Oh dear.

PE Long time ago is this you know. Although that won’t be a long time ago will it?!

BF No.

PE It’s not like it was when we were children. Oh…

BF I only went to the ambulance after Simon decided to sell his business, and I went for this interview, and they want…it was peculiar, they wanted somebody on the phones, repairing freezers over night, getting engineers. Anyway, I went and worst interview I ever had that, and then they contacted me and said ‘No, we’ve decided not to do that, we’ve come up with something else,’ and they wanted somebody on the phones, that could come in, with no children, ‘cause Simon was grown up obviously, at short notice, and cover, just as backup. So I went and I was the experiment. After a fortnight they said ‘It’s working’ so, they got some…and one of the girls, that worked there years, came to me, first day, and she said, ‘I don’t want you to take this personally, but we don’t want you. The union’s not happy.’ I said, ‘Well, tough,’ you know, I had to…anyway, she did have the grace to come and say ‘It’s worked.’ [KV Excellent] I couldn’t believe the way they worked there. I know where all the money goes, in the health service, there’s a lot of wastage.

PE I just think that when people heard you’d been here, as a school, I think they just took because it must have had the right reputation.

BF Well yes, like that guy saying he wanted to see one of the certificates because he’d heard about it. [45:54]

PE I think people knew, well the people who were employing kids, knew that you would be alright if you’d been here.

BF I think there was only one lost cause, and that was Kathleen Howarth.

PE Oh I don’t remember her.

BF She was in our f… filthy [PE Ooh dear.] Poor lass.

PE We’re talking a heck of a long time…

BF Seventy years!

PE Thanks Bunty! [All laugh] But it is, it is isn’t it! It is!

KV Did anybody drop out, part way through?

PE Not that I knew, did you?

BF No, it wouldn’t have been allowed, unless you were poorly.

PE The school was – what did they used to call them at school? They came after you if you didn’t go to school. The school….

BF Oh!

PE Not inspectors, what did they call them?

KV Oh yes.

PE There was something. If you didn’t go to school, these people… Well, I wasn’t allowed to have a day off, in my house, if you were ill. You had to go in, never mind drop out – drop out?!! Mother would have had a fit. No, no. I don’t ever remember anybody…

BF My brother Doug, he, one morning, my mother said ‘Up’ he said ‘Why?’ She said ‘You’re getting a job today.’ And the last thing he wanted was an office job. Anyway, they interviewed him, and asked him ‘When can you start?’ and my mother said, ‘After lunch.’ [All chuckle] And he did, he started, but he got the next apprenticeship that was going. He just wasn’t shaping himself, but he had to if mother said. [47:34]

PE In those days that’s what you did. I mean today, they’d probably tell the mother to so and so off, but if your mother or your father said you’d to do it, you had to do it.

KV And do you think that all the people that came to the college, do you think that they were from similar kinds of backgrounds and…

PE I would say so, wouldn’t you?

BF Yes. I think there’s only a couple that I can think of that maybe didn’t have the backing from home, that we had.

PE I can’t even think of anybody.

BF And I don’t know because I wasn’t all that pally with them.

PE No, I think – well they must have had, because we all sort of ‘got on,’ if you will.

BF Yes, there was no…

PE It’s not like…Well we did in junior school, little school, but, that’s because we all lived in the same area. But no, I would say yes, they were all the same background. I can’t think of anybody – nobody in my form was any different, I don’t think.

BF There’s two I can think of that…

PE But you didn’t think about it in those days. I mean children don’t think about backgrounds, do they?

KV And…

BF Unless you’re Sylvia…

PE Mm well yes. I’ve got a friend who is like ‘Mrs Bucket’ [pronounced ‘Bouquet,’ referring to a TV character.] She thinks about background all the time, yes.

KV But then when you went back to your homes in the evening, your neighbourhood, there was no, kind of, friction or anything…

BF No.

PE What, because we came to this school? No.

BF No. My sister experienced it with a couple of friends of hers, when she passed for the Park School. They were horrible with her. And she was so soft.

PE I think it was, yes, I think people were sort of, put off by people going to the Grammar School, well, not ‘put off’ by people going to the Grammar School…

BF Jealous. These two girls were jealous, because I waited for them one night and I got sods and dipped them in water…they left her alone after that. And she was five years older than me! But she was so soft.

PE No, I don’t think anybody - nobody was funny with me. Once you put on your uniform, you just went, and no. I can’t recall that at all. [49:52]

KV Is there anything that we haven’t covered, that you think we’ve missed, or…

BF No.

PE You know we played, well you know the sports field was across the river? [BF Yes] We played in all weathers.

BF And if the hockey ball got in a cow clap, you made sure you got there first didn’t you! [All chuckle]

PE I don’t know!! I can remember playing hockey one day with T-shirt, shorts, little shorts, and it was snowing – sideways, and I remember thinking I can’t… I don’t know where the goal posts are, but we had to…there was no, ‘Oh there’s no games today girls,’ you had to go, and nobody ever got colds, or we weren’t ill were we? We changed in the Harris art place, do you know where it is? [KV Yes] Yes. Even when they were painting! We got changed…

BF Yes, that was the only place you could get changed.

PE And then we walked there, down the Colonnade, over the river, and played in any weather. Did we play tennis? Did we have tennis rackets? I can’t remember playing tennis, can you?

BF No.

PE I did play tennis at home, but I can’t…what did we play in summer then? Did we play rounders?

BF I don’t remember doing anything in summer…

PE Did we play rounders? We played at other schools, I can only remember playing hockey at this school.

BF Well I liked hockey, so…

PE Oh netball! …Did we? I played netball – where were we, in the gym?

BF Well when we went down to the gym there was that open…

PE Right, we played netball, I’d forgotten about that.

BF …there was like a yard, in there.

KV Ok.

PE It seemed to be…concentrated on hockey, didn’t it. I don’t know where the boys played. Did they play football on the same ground as we did?

BF I’ve no idea - I think they did.

HH Yes, I think so.

KV Yes, they talked about going over to the river…

PE Is that where they played football? [BF yes] They must have had a different day then. I think ours was Thursday was it, am I right?

BF Mm, Thursday.

PE Fancy remembering that.

BF I used to love sports.

PE I did, and the gym was – it was a good gym. You had to climb up the ropes to the ceiling and hang upside down on the bars.

BF It was good for what you’d come from, from the other schools. Today, it’s probably nothing.

PE It was a grown-up gym, yes. But there was no excuse like ‘Well it’s a rotten day today, it’s pouring down…’

BF I don’t remember them taking any excuses for PE, either.

PE No.

HH Did you take your PE kit with you on the day that you had PE, or did you have like a locker, or somewhere to keep your stuff?

BF No, you’d to bring it on the day, but we had lockers there to leave your books in.

PE We had lockers. We did have lockers, here in this building [Corporation Street] [52:47]

PE Where did we do PE?

BF In the gym. When the lads used to be a damn nuisance.

PE I know they did. They’ll be dead now. They’ll all be dead. But…

BF Peter Rimmer is.

PE Is he? Well, there you are you see. Saw them all off. As I say, I was made House Captain, so it wasn’t just hockey, it was…you had to be good at gym, you had to be good at everything, in fact, funnily enough, I heard today, it was between us two I think, and I couldn’t understand why Bunty didn’t get it, because you were more agile than I was in the gym…

BF Yes, but I was a bugger wasn’t I?

PE Yes you were a bugger. I was good at hockey, and I was good at netball, I was good at gym, I was good at swimming. [BF Yes] You know, I was an all-rounder really, so I got it. But I thought you’d get it, you were…I can see you on that horse now. Could you do it today, if we went in the gym? Could you get over the horse? [Chuckles]

BF No.

KV How many prefects were there?

PE Was it two in every…

BF One for each house.

PE Was it not two?

BF No ‘cause Myra was one…

PE Sylvia was one, she was in your form?

BF Yes, but she wasn’t in the same House as me.

PE Oh, I thought it was a Form prefect. Oh, don’t know. Sorry. I thought there were two in each, but I don’t know…this ‘Mrs Bucket’ I was talking about, she was a prefect.

BF And she used to sit two in front of me. She wasn’t a nice person really was she.

PE No. I’m still in touch with her.

BF I got blotting paper, and dipped it in ink and [mimes flicking it] on her white blouse.

PE And she says she wasn’t a nice person! But she was the one that was doing it!

BF When I think some of the things I did, poor souls. [54:47]

PE But it was disciplined though, wasn’t it.

BF Oh yes.

PE And you had to call Mr Cobham, you know, the Headmaster, and the Principal ‘Sir.’

BF And there was a Mr Seed – big, pot-bellied Seed.

PE No, I can’t remember him.

BF Well Margaret, this girl that was crippled, she was caught firing [indicates throwing things around the room], and he made her go on her hands and knees, and pick all the litter up, everything she could find, and this was a girl that was a bad cripple. But she didn’t tell her mum and dad ‘cause she’d have been in trouble at home.

PE But it was – it was a disciplined school.

KV Yes.

PE Probably, that’s why we did pretty well. There’s one or two, not me, I wasn’t asked, but… would we do GCSEs, GC… what was it then?

BF I thought it was ‘O’ levels.

PE Oh – School Certificate…no.

BF No School Certificate was…

PE ‘O’ Levels. It was ‘O’ levels. The very clever ones, which I wasn’t – you must not have been either – were invited to do ‘O’ levels, but there were only one or two weren’t there.

KV So what you left with, was your Leaving Certificate. So it was by the College, it wasn’t an external examining…

PE No, it says on Harris Institute. I’ve still got mine if you want it… [56:18] I’ve got everything.

BF I thought I handed mine in.

KV We probably have, but we’ll check.

PE But if you saw the list of what this child had to have, that was sent to our parents, you had to be pretty well off, I think, to have the whole of the winter uniform, and then start again, plus all the hockey things, and then all the summer uniform…

BF Mine were all cast offs…

PE Well mine weren’t because nobody had been before me.

BF …even my sister’s satchel. It didn’t bother me.

HH You mentioned…sorry…you mentioned about the dress, and the material, so…and you got the material from Horrockses, did you say?

BF No.

PE No, Hallewells.

BF No, my mum found a source, and it was from Horrockses, somebody who worked there.

HH But it wasn’t Horrockses material?

BF Yes.

HH It was?

BF It was.

HH Oh right.

PE Was it the same?

BF Oh, I worked in Horrockses, fashions for a period.

PE Oh did you? Was it the same material?

BF Exactly the same material – well they did it.

HH Nice!

PE Oh!

BF Because I did, I went to work in…

PE That was very posh, wasn’t it!

HH I was just wondering about the pattern as well, was it a specific pattern, or did you

BF Yes.

PE Yes. Once you got the material, you just had to go somewhere, to have it made up.

BF To have it made. My mum made mine.

PE Did she? My mother couldn’t do it I don’t think.

BF I don’t know how my mum managed all she did.

PE They were nice dresses. I’ve got a lot of pictures of me in the dresses.

[Pause]

HH Right.

KV Any more for anymore?

BF No, when I worked in Horrockses, I worked in the fashions department, and they used to do four colour ways of any pattern, and Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret used to choose, and what they chose, that was taken out and the rest was destroyed.

HH Oh!

PE I heard, a few years ago now, it was on the car Radio about Horrockses, and it said you were somebody of you had a Horrockses dress, [BF Oh yes!] including - the Queen’s dresses were all Horrockses, I hadn’t realised that. And Elizabeth Taylor, all these big film stars, I didn’t realise, I thought ‘Oh!’

BF Well Nottingham House used to sell them…

PE Oh, well that was a posh shop.

BF And I got one, I saved up and I saved up, and I got one. I was married and we went to this special do, and I came home, and Gordon said, ‘I’ll tell you now, it’s like a dish cloth at the back.’

PE [laughs]

BF So I took it back, I don’t think they’d had anybody take anything back! I got my money back, yes.

PE Oh dear.

HH Would it have had the same reputation when you were at school? Was it like, a big thing, that it was Horrockses material?

BF Well, we didn’t think about it, did we.

PE I don’t think, I think, personally, I think I only had things made up when I was late teens, or early twenties, I don’t think that, I can’t ever…well do you think it was Horrockses material at Hallewells?

BF Yes.

PE That’s - No, I didn’t know. It must have been – it was always a good reputation, I think.

BF Oh yes – went all over the world.

PE And did the boys…where did they get their uniform, was that Hellewells?

BF Yes.

KV Thank you very much.

PE It was expensive, of course.

HH It sounds it, yes.

BF Well this is why my mum found alternatives.

PE Well the thing is now, you see now, where children, it’s about £1.50 for a shirt, in Asda or something. They’re perfectly alright.

KV Yes.

PE People resented having to go to the expensive shops in Preston to get the children’s uniform.

BF Lingards [1:00:00], they did a lot.

PE Lingards [illegible] - Hutton Grammar School, yes …

BF They did a lot, Hutton, and, yes.

PE So you’d no alternative but to go there so, you had to be fairly well off to have a child…I remember people saying to me, that they wanted the children to go to Grammar School, but they couldn’t afford it, the uniforms and things.

BF Couldn’t afford it…

PE So you had to be pretty…Anyway.

BF Oh yes, a lot wouldn’t let them go, even if they passed [PE No] and yet my mum would have done anything to get us…

PE A lot, wouldn’t, well they couldn’t let them go because they couldn’t afford the uniforms.

BF Shall we [sound?] away?

PE Anyway, it was a good school, and I’m glad I came, aren’t you?

BF Yes. Oh, I was over the moon. I did behave better here than I did…

PE Oh did you? Good! I don’t know how you behaved when you were at the other school.

BF Oh dreadful! When I think about it. One teacher refused to have me in, full stop! She called the register and ‘Stand outside.’ Think I did for two days and another teacher …

PE I got that in the sewing class once. They didn’t do things like sewing or anything, or baking, there was no – what did they call it? Where you went for your cookery classes?

HH Home economics?

PE Yes, nothing like that.

BF They didn’t call it Home Economics.

PE It was too academic, wasn’t it?

BF Yes they kept you [inaudible].

PE That’s why I can’t cook properly. Thank you. Oh, I thought we’d finished!