

**Interviewee: Etherl Leverett**

**Interviewer: Malin Lundin**

**Date: 26/01/2013**

Interviewer: Would you be able to tell me your date of birth please?

Ethel: Yes, I was born in September 1933 at Oxley Street, Bermondsey. I lived there till about 1936 when we moved to Peckham. There was a big clearance of all the older houses in Bermondsey and people were moved out and we went and lived in a new flat an LCC, a London County Council flat and that was 12 Lynn House, Peckham Park Road. I went there with my mother and father, my mother's parents and also mother's bachelor brother, who worked on the docks. And we were there until 1941 when we moved to Dulwich.

I was only evacuated for two weeks. That was the phoney war in 1939. It wasn't a government or a school run, I went away with a daughter of the people who owned the dairy in Peckham Park Road called Evans and it was Mr. Evans who found the place for us to go and it was at Watford. We went down on a Sunday afternoon in their van and we were billeted, it was his daughter and myself, were billeted with a Mrs. Katz, with a "K" and a "Z". Unfortunately she hardly spoke any English, I rather think she was probably a refugee from the war. I didn't like it, I wasn't happy there and when my parents came down to visit I said "I don't like it here and I want to come home and I'm not happy" and my father said "Right, it's no good of her staying here and being unhappy, she's coming home and we'll be together and if anything happens we'll all go together." Which seemed to be the things that people said then. So that was the end of my fortnight in Watford, and back I came to Peckham Park Road.

Interviewer: Do you remember what date it was that you were evacuated?

Ethel: It was the phoney war so it would be 1939. It was when everybody thought something was going to happen and they thought, oh we're be all advanced and yes we'll get things going. It was only that mother used to shop at Evans the dairy and they said their daughter was going and Mum and Dad discussed it and thought perhaps that'd be a good idea, she would be away out of any danger but as I say it only lasted the fortnight and I was back home again.

Interviewer: Do you know, were other children in your area evacuated as part of larger government schemes with the schools or....

Ethel: I should think so because I used to go to Arthur Street School and there probably was the evacuation there but I never, I never went. I don't know if it was ever mentioned or whether my parents said no, they didn't want me to after I wasn't happy in Watford. I really don't know but I

never was evacuated, I stayed the whole time in London.

Interviewer: Do you remember what your parents told you about you being evacuated? Did you understand why you had to leave your family?

Ethel: Um...I don't think you really, you know, took a lot of notice it was just saying that you would be out of danger but I don't think one understood what the danger meant because nothing had happened then. There'd been no bombing or anything like that, so I don't think one realized you know, I would be what 6 then, but if it did it never sunk in, you know. One soon knew it once you were back because it was on my 7<sup>th</sup> birthday that the Blitz started, the Blitz of London so I well remember that.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit about that?

Ethel: Yes, it was a Saturday afternoon, it was a lovely afternoon, sunny. I'd been out shopping with my mother and we were coming back and we were walking, walking home 'cos you walked along there and there was this drone of aero planes it was the most terrifying noise. It just went on and on and on, and you could see them coming over, cos we weren't all that far from the docks, in Peckham. And people were all looking up and, 'Oh what's it y'know, what could it be? What can it be?' I think Mum, we run along and somebody had got their front door open, she said 'Come in, come in – come in, they're enemy planes!' and [cough] we stayed in it was like in the passage way of the house. Then when it quieted down a bit we managed to get home and my poor dad was frantic 'cos he wondered where we were and 'cos he knew we'd only just gone to the shops. Then this dread, it was all night long as well, the bombing, you know, the sky was just lit up it was just fiery red y'know. We had no shelter and we were on the first floor of the block of flats and I remember us sitting in the kitchen 'cos that was the place with the smallest window – and just listening to the explosions and the noise y'know the frightening noise.

We had more raids after that and my father worked for the Dulwich College Estate, which was in Dulwich Village and he said, 'Oh we can't stay', 'cos though they had public shelters the flats went round a block there, a block there, block like that, in three and there was a large green in the front, big grass and they built some shelter which you could go down into. But my mother always thought that if the flats were hit the flats would come down on top of the shelter so she wouldn't go down there. So we used to stay in the flats and – in like that time, potatoes used, new potatoes used to come in big high tubs like a plywood round tub with big rope handles so my Dad and my uncle got two of these and they filled them with sand and every night the two of them would lift them up. It was quite a wide windowsill in the kitchen and they would lift them up onto the windowsill so that if there was a blast the sand you know would stop the – and I remember that's how we used to sit in the kitchen, like that every night. And then it was getting worse and worse the bombing as they were making for the docks all the time. And so my father said he

would try and get us somewhere where he worked you know so we moved from Peckham up to Dulwich and to Park Hall Road. I remember Mr. Dunich [??] he was the, one of the governors at the college, he came and got us in a car and we just had a suitcase. My Gran and Granddad wouldn't go. They wouldn't go with us because my uncle still worked on the docks and she said 'Oh he won't have anyone to look after him'. So they stayed but they could have come with us. We were, our first night was in Ye Olde tuck shop [laughs] Park Hall Road in Dulwich. And the electricity wasn't on so we had candles and the gas wasn't on and it was the little flat above the tuck shop, very Olde worlde tuck shop. I can remember we had the fire and we had a boiled egg with the saucepan put on the fire. Boiled egg and toast and I can remember that as plain as anything. I suppose we were there for a few days and then the house was ready for us further down, same terrace but further down and that was quite close to the bridge that used to run over Park Hall Road and Alleyn Road, that it was a main line bridge for all the soldiers and all the troop transport going to the coast. So it was very much aimed at by the bombing and they did hit the bridge and I remember that the engineers built it in two days, over a weekend they rebuilt the bridge 'cos it was so essential for the coast and 'cos the house we were in was damaged so we moved out of there and we came back up the terrace of houses to the first house right next to the tuck shop where we started off at. And we were there till we were bombed, till mum and I were buried under the house.

My Dad died in 1942. He'd been to, he was a fire watcher and he'd been to a meeting and they had to go through a gas filled chamber and he was walking back with the other men. Where we lived the whole of the row of cottages were all people that were associated with, working on the college to do with the college and he was walking along back and he collapsed and died on Dulwich Common he had a heart attack and that was 6<sup>th</sup> August 1942. And then Mum and I were in the house and the next year I was very ill. I had whooping cough and my grandparents came and they were elderly they were well in their eighties, they came to help look after me 'cos Mum had to work and when I was better they went home and they used to get the number 3 bus to Herne Hill and then the 37 bus to Peckham and then a 78 bus 'cos it was all buses then and my grandfather was taken ill as he got off the bus at Herne Hill and he died a couple of days later. And then the next year, that'd be '44 mum and I were in the house, it was night time and the doodlebug dropped outside the house and the whole of the house was, you know, just blown up. We were in a Anderson shelter, um Morrison shelter we couldn't have a Anderson shelter 'cos we had the water main in the garden so you couldn't have the outside shelter but we had the Morrison shelter, like a steel top and wire sides went round it. It was just this explosion and it took us, the force of it took us right down into the footings of the house. And I'd only just been and got out to go to the toilet and I remember hearing the doodlebugs, they used to cut out, the motor would cut out and I thought it's right over head and I remember running as fast as I could up the passage and I just got in by side of Mum and then there was this terrible explosion. I think it

knocked us out for a bit because when you came to it was just, everywhere was dust and what I can always remember is the terrible smell of gas. Awful smell of gas and you could hear flames, you could hear the crackle and Mum, she sort of kept going a bit unconscious coming to and you just kept calling out it's what I can remember, calling and calling. Then like eventually someone did come and what it was in the war you could either be registered at a shop for your eggs or you could be registered with someone who had chickens and we were registered with a man who lived in another road and he kept chickens so we had eggs off of him which was fine while the chickens were laying but when they went broody you didn't get any eggs at all, but that's how it worked out. He said to his wife that was close, he said, that's close that I'm going to get up and have a look and he got up and he came round and he saw like it was our house and three people were killed in the house next door and he said, 'There's a woman and child' and [pause]. Anyway he said there was a woman and child underneath and so they start, 'cos they weren't even looking for us I think it was all took up with the fact that like three people had been killed next door. They weren't in a shelter and they started digging and – when we they finally got us out and, oh, and when they were digging they kept, can you hear us, are you there, we're saying "Yes, yes" and I can always, Mum said "Do come in" she said "Come through the front door, we're in the front room" . [Laughs] Well, where the front door was I don't know, probably half a mile down the road, you know. But it always stuck, we always used to laugh about it after she "Do come in, we're in the front room". But where the front room was I don't know, you know, and – Mum was taken to hospital, she went to, they took her to Sutton Hospital and I was taken in by Audrey Smith, which was a friend of mine, she lived in the sweet shop just round the corner and I was taken in by her mother and father, that was on the Wednesday morning and then on the Friday morning we were bombed out of there. They called it bomb alley, it was such a quiet little out of the way spot but I don't know, I've never known so many bombs fall round in just such a small area, you know...

Interviewer: Were you in the shelter when that happened?

Ethel: Yes, yes and oh the sweet shop, it wasn't completely wrecked but you couldn't live there it had dropped – another doodlebug had dropped on the other side of the road. So we were taken in by some friends of theirs and, I say, that was on the Friday and they came, brought me down to see my mother at the hospital on the Sunday and Mrs. Smith said "I'm awfully sorry" she said but "we can't keep Ethel, we've got someone to put us up but there isn't enough room for her. So we're taking her to the orphanage". [Laughs] And Mum discharged herself out of the hospital and I remember the sister saying, "You are silly Lucy, Lucy, Lucy. What a stupid thing you know if anything happens, you know you've discharged yourself" and she said "No, she's not going to the orphanage" and she said "But how are you going to get back". So 'cos we'd been in our night clothes when were bombed so, I'd got some clothes that belonged to Audrey Smith and the sister

said "I'll have to find you something Lucy". So she found her a skirt and a blouse and I remember it was – it was summer time but it was cold and drizzly and I remember that and she said "I'll lend you a half a crown to get back". [Laughs] so I remember us standing on Sutton Station to make our way back to Dulwich and we slept in a public shelter. We just sat on the seats in a public shelter, there was a public shelter quite near to where we'd lived and we just sat in there all night long. It couldn't have been, 'cos no one was a more chilly mortal than my mother who felt the cold terrible and all she'd got was this little skirt and no stockings and a blouse [laughs] and we sat. And because what she was worried we'd, she'd got thought if she could find her purse, you know, anything that belonged to us in the rubble so in the Monday morning we went down to Mr. Clout, who was the college bailiff and he said go back and stay there and I'll come with a couple of the work men of the college, he said and we'll dig and see if we can find, 'cos her purse and that was in the cupboard under the stairs. They dug and they found, they found the purse, they found those photos that's in there and her engagement ring and that was about the lot, you know, that was about all. But at least then we had some money you know, her purse and that. Then we found somewhere, a lady that used to come round and feed the cats that were stray after people had been bombed and moved away and she said "Oh I think I know somewhere where you can stay" and so we moved to a funny little couple of rooms in Rosendale Road but at least we had somewhere to live then.

Interviewer: Can you remember what kind of support that you received from the government after you were bombed out?

Ethel: Then it depended on how many people there were so it didn't matter what sort of home you had lost you were, it was completely – um – the amount of people it was. So you only got help for like two, well I would be a child, adult and a child and I know you used to get um a wardrobe, we had a single wardrobe called utility wardrobes and I think we got a table, a table and two chairs but everything else. We got bought, Mum saved and we bought at the second hand shop, 'cos you couldn't but new things then it was all like second hand and we used to go to Day's at Norwood which was a big second hand shop and as we got the money so we bought, you know, a little bit more to furnish it. But very basic, no frills but you got the essentials of what you wanted and life carried on from there. [Laughs]

Interviewer: What did your mother do during the war, was she working?

Ethel: My mother worked what was called The London Meal Service which was something that was brought in by the government for people of London and it was set up in church halls and different things like that and your dinner was a shilling and a sweet was sixpence and I think you could get a cup of tea. And it was the workers you know you didn't have a ration, didn't have a ration book for it and she worked there, she used to do cooking there. And it was funny because

she was working, it was the hall above the big south suburban coop in a Brixton and that was in a restaurant there and she was working there and it was badly damaged by a flying bomb and it was put out of operation. But the Brixton synagogue said that people could use their hall if they could bring all the equipment down and they could use the hall and the meals could carry on. The day that we were actually bombed, 'cos it was summer time and I was off from school, it was the summer holidays, I'd been helping Mum and the other women carrying all the things and stacking them all up ready for the restaurant, like, to start the next day. Of course it didn't 'cos it wasn't there [laughs]. It was bombed and I know it was, it was quite late, it must have been about 9 o'clock before we got home. Time we come home on the bus and it was a lady was waiting there for us who was a friend of mum's and she said, 'I've been waiting for you to come back, Lucy', she said, 'to ask if I could borrow your black dress', which mum had had like for my Dads funeral because she'd lost her daughter and two grandchildren in another raid in, you know, another bombing. Mum sorted her out so it was quite, getting on late, before we went to bed and then course all that was to happen in the early hours of the morning.

Interviewer: Did your mother go back to work after?

Ethel: Yes, she went back to work, yes. I went back to school, went to a different school then because we'd moved a bit further away from the original school I went to Salters Hill School at West Norwood. Then when I was 11 I went to Gypsy Roads School and there at Gypsy Road School it was not far away from the Jewish orphanage in Norwood and we used to, the children from the Jewish orphanage would be pupils at the school. A lot of them were over, had come over and their parents were still in Europe. I remember they always used to have, always, a blue and white checked dress all the girls. They would join in all the lessons but course they never ever came when we used to have assembly they would have their own prayers and the boys were in the boys half of the school. 'Cos a lot of the lessons would be interrupted, you'd have to go into classroom, we used to have classrooms set aside that had got a brick, extra brick wall built round on the inside of the room and you'd sit in there while the raid was on. So it was very disruptive schooling, very disruptive. I was there till 1947 when I left school, but yeah – we managed.

[Laughs]

Interviewer: And if you were to summarize your experience of the war, in a few sentences?

Ethel: Well, happy times when you were playing with your friends, and very sad times, you know, because often you'd be in the class room and suddenly say, oh so and so is not here today, and they'd been bombed and perhaps been killed. You know it was quite a common occurrence, really. And also I can remember like before we were ever bombed out – it was a, dad had already died, so it must be about 1943 and it was a lovely summers lunchtime and we was all out playing, we used to play in, along the front of the houses. Dulwich College was just across the

road, just under the bridge and across the road and you were into the playing fields. Because we were all children to do with the college, the Dulwich College School was called the new college but where Dad and all the other men worked was called the old college. Edward Alleyn's College of God's Gift it was called. So we as children used to play, we could play 'cos all the groundsmen knew us and the school would be broken up, you know, for the summer holidays but we were able to play. But we were all out playing in the front and we saw a parachutist coming down and Jean Beth rushed in got her Dad, he was home on leave and he was just, they were just getting ready for their diner and he's got the carving knife and Ken and Ollie Rudduck rushed in and got their dad and her was out digging in the garden and he'd got the garden fork. We watched him circle and he came down on the playing fields of the college. We all run, run in, run in and there's Jean Beth's Dad with a carving knife and [laughs] Rod Rudduck with a garden fork and it was just something like Dad's Army 'cos he'd only have had to have got a pistol, he could have gone bang bang bang and we'd [laugh] have all been – [laughs]. But he just put his hands up and all the parachute came down round him and then the police came and the ARP came and ooh we thought, we've captured a German. I remember running indoors to Mum, Mum saying, 'Where on earth have you been? I've been looking for you everywhere. You dinner's all ready' and I said 'Mum, Mum, Mum, Mum! We've captured a German! We've captured a German!' She said 'Oh yes, yes, wash hands and sit down [laugh] that dinner'll be stone cold'. [Laugh] And just things like that you remember, you know.

Interviewer: And what was your experience of sheltering, especially after you were bombed in 44? Did you rather than shelter in your flat did you go down?

Ethel: Do you know I can't, I don't recall us – I think it had sort, it had quieted down then because it was that period between the end of the doodlebugs, the V1 rockets, and then the V2 which was silent. There was no warning with those, there was just a massive explosion, no one could, you couldn't hear them like a doodlebug and I remember the lady in the next flats to us, her friend had just left her and was walking along back up Chatsworth Road, walking past where that school is in that photo, the church in that photo where I used to go to the girls brigade and it was just, they never ever found her. Somebody remembered seeing her going along and the church was hit and there was no sighting of her, you know. You didn't really go into a shelter 'cos you didn't know when they were gonna fall. But so I've no recall of ever going into a shelter after we moved to this little flat, after we were bombed.

Interviewer: Do you remember if you felt more anxious or more afraid of the bombing after your house was hit?

Ethel: [Pause] No, I think you just got on with it, you know. No, I can't recall sort of being more fearsome of it or fearful of it, no. No, you just made another set of friends, like going to another

school join the – Girl Guides and you know and life sort of just went on.

Interviewer: So you were in the Girls' Brigade during the war?

Ethel: Yes.

Interviewer: And what did you get up to?

Ethel: We used to just have the meetings and do marching and different things and work for badges, different badges. Very similar to the Girl Guides and have the Christmas party, we used to have the Christmas party and like little sort of jam sandwich and a cake and you'd think, 'Oh I've got to take that cake home for mum' [laughs]. So you'd wrap it up, you'd have just a bit of paper and say I'll take that home for Mum you know, that sort of thing. And you used to read an awful lot, you used to read a great deal 'cos there was no television. You'd have the wireless but they were run by accumulators. They were like square bottles like that of an acid and they used to stand, well John will know more about that, didn't they, behind the radio, the wireless and I bet you just get to the most exciting bit which was, always used to listen to was Dick Barton, Special Agent and you just get to where, oh what's happening Jock [?] and snow here and it's start to fade then 'cos the accumulator was going [laughs]. You'd turn it off for a bit to see if it'd make itself and then turn it back on and you'd get a little bit and then it'd fade again and then the accumulators had to be recharged. They had a little handle over the top and we used to take them across to the cycle shop and he'd recharge them and then back they'd go into the wireless again. But you used to read, read a lot and we used to play a lot outside as children all play all the time. The only time I think you were ever indoors if it was pouring with rain and then it'd be like, 'cos comics and all papers were hard to get you didn't get a lot of comics so if you had a comic and you'd read yours, it'd be, people, you'd all sit in the passageway of a, I can see us all sitting in somebody's passage of their house, and 'Have you read that one?' and then you'd swap them, you know, swap the comic so you could read that one. I used to like all the boys comics, the Wizard and all that [laughs] the Rover. I never liked sappy girls' comics I used to like darey do sort of things you know. Then you'd swap and Mum would say 'That was a lovely clean comic, look at that dirty old comic [laughs] you've got, full of germs that one is, give it back to him'. [Laughs] But you never caught things, you were hardy I think then.

John: What about, we used to save the papers up didn't we?

Ethel: Yes, 'cos if you collected newspapers and took them to school, papers, any books anything at all magazines, you could get, it was a cardboard disk and you worked up from a private then you could be a lance corporal and I never ever got any further. I never got enough papers, I think you could get to a sergeant and, you know, you went higher up ranks the more papers you collected for the war effort, things like that was at school.

Interviewer: Ok, were asked to collect pots and pans and things?

Ethel: Yes, and we used to have wrought iron railings right along the whole row and they were all taken down for the war effort and iron gates, you know. They were all taken, all wrought iron, 'cos there's a lot of wrought iron about then and they were all taken down. But yes it was only a blue, I can remember blue cardboard disk and whatever rank you got by the more papers you collected you went higher up the ranks. But I didn't get very high in the ranks [laughs]. And you know all things, we used to play a lot, skipping and cannon, that was some sticks of fire wood with one on the top and you would throw and hit the ball and knock the stick off and then you'd race round and get back and try and build the sticks up again before, all simple things like that. I remember, I so wanted a bicycle and you couldn't buy a new bicycle then and Mum and Dad found one in a second hand shop at Norwood and but it had been stored out the back, in a shed behind the wet fish shop so when they got it absolutely reeked, you know, wet fish. Dad scrubbed it all up and he painted it and mum scrubbed all the basket and it had a little tiny leather bag at the back where you put your repair kit, your cycle like a repair kit. But it was the most wonderful bicycle, you know, and would cycle miles on that with the other children. 'Cos the nights were much longer in the war 'cos it was double summer time so you played out, you know, later it was lighter and we'd cycle all over. We'd cycle up to Norwood to the library to get your books and that.

Interviewer: Were there ever any periods where you were out of school wasn't – because they closed school?

Ethel: Well, sometimes it was a morning, morning school only and sometimes it was afternoons. You didn't always do a full weeks schooling. I can always remember you always had to take your gas mask and I remember I forgot it and got almost to school and this other girl had forgotten hers and I remember the headmistress had made a special point that you must have the gas mask and I hadn't got mine so we hopped the wag and went to her house and stayed at the house. But silly thing 'cos if anything had have happened no one would have known you were there. I used to have to have school dinners 'cos mum was at work and our teacher, Mrs. Lucas, oh she was very strict, she used to wear very strict suit and her hair in a tight roll round. She never smiled much and she would walk all the way round while you were eating your dinner watching you all like that so if you had a gristly bit, which you often did get gristly bits, and you'd put it to one side she'd come over she'd pick up the fork, lean over and she'd go 'Why haven't you eaten that?' 'Its gristle miss, its gristle'. 'Men are losing their lives to bring you food, get on and eat it!' And she'd stand [laughs] behind you, or if she wasn't looking, you'd wrap it up in your hanky. We used to have navy blue, fleecy lined knickers then with a pocket on it, 'cos you didn't have a pocket anywhere else; you'd stick it in the pocket [laughs]. Bring it home and throw it away. Mum used to say 'Look at the state of your hanky! What you've done?' 'Oh, I fell over and it was mud' [laughs].

Interviewer: How did you cope with rationing?

Ethel: You managed. You used to have plain food but it was filling and you got the butter and it was margarine, it wasn't like the spread you get it was real margarine but if you used the butter you could only have margarine. Mum used to mix it together, beat it together so at least you got a taste of, wasn't so horrible as the plain wartime margarine. And we used to have suet puddings and things like that with syrup on, that kind of thing, filling sort of food you know, nothing out of tins except for the dried egg was in tins, jam used to be, jam would be in tins. Other than that it was all, Dad used to grow vegetables and grow tomatoes and 'cos everything was horse drawn, the bakers van, the milk van, the coal. So course as soon as the horse had gone by we'd pick up all the manure in a bucket and dad would water that down and then that was the feed for all your vegetables and, you know, your tomatoes and all that sort of thing. Plain sort of food but we never went hungry I don't think.

Interviewer: Do you remember the end of the war?

Ethel: Yes, yes big party, street party, that's when we was living in these funny little couple of rooms in Rosendale Road and a big fire built up all in the middle of the road, I don't know what the council would say now, but it was [laughs] all the asphalt melted. Everybody was bringing out all the spare wood you could find, you know. I can always remember somebody saying 'Look they'll do fine for Hitler's legs' 'cos you had a big effigy, stuffed effigy of Hitler. It was two beautiful mahogany legs of a table, probably be worth some money now, they'd probably be on the Antiques Roadshow saying that was Queen Anne or something like that. But these great big mahogany legs all stuffed in with straw and he went right up on the top of the bonfire. And there was tables in the road and jam sandwiches and [laughs] orangeade and all that kind of thing. You remember the thing John?

John: Oh yes, yes.

Interviewer: What did you do then for the end of the war? Did you have a street party as well?

John: A street party, yes. All the mums used to contribute, save up their points to...

Ethel: I was nothing grand but it was wonderful.

John: The funny thing, even now Ethel and I still like roly-poly pudding....

Ethel: Yeah all those kind of things I suppose...

John: Still enjoy those sort of things...

Interviewer: What was your experience of the latter part of the war then John?

John: The very latter part, that was when the V1's and V2's. My sister was very frightened, very scared person and we had an aunt, the one who'd got evacuated, moved to Luton with her husband and we went and stayed with them for a little while. And my mother as well but then she came home with my brother and I stayed on with my sister, down there. But after when it started getting less raids I came home as well but Valerie stayed at my aunts. One incident while we was there, they was near the Vauxhall Motor Works and they used to test these lorries up the, called Somerset Avenue, a very steep hill and used to be all convoys come up with these new lorries that they'd built. My brother, he was only a little, what was he four, had got this stone and thrown it and it had smashed one of the windscreens and they'd reported it to the police [laughs] and the police can round looking for a boy of twelve years old. They said where is he? The boy who threw the stone and they said, 'Describe him, where he was?' And they described my brother and he was only four years old, they said 'How on earth, it's supposed to be bullet proof glass, he's thrown a stone and smashed the windscreen?' [Laughs] We never heard any more after that but there was a big report went in about, you know, well if a little might could throw a stone and smash the windscreen, there's gotta be something wrong with it. I remember these convoys used to come quite often off the assembly line and trying them out all round, but it was a steep hill wasn't? Somerset Avenue.

Interviewer: What was your experience of the bombing?

John: I went to school in Luton for a while. I didn't like it very much there. I was mighty glad to get home and get back with my mother, you know. Yeah, the end of the war, you just used to carry on because I think you got so used to it that you just went to school and carried on. 'Cos I left school at fourteen that was the age. I didn't leave with any qualifications but you went to work, you got a job and went to work, yeah.

Ethel: Very disruptive – the schooling.

John: And when Ethel was talking about that bomb alley. A lot of the German pilots went to Dulwich College for their education before the war and so they knew exactly if they aimed for Dulwich College where that bridge was, that's how it got hit so many times.

Ethel: And when we went, had a trip out one afternoon a couple of years ago and we went to the Shoreham, Shoreham in Kent, the little air museum they've got there, it's in like a hut. A man it's his hobby and its grown and they had all the parts of like German planes and maps and all that and there was a German pilots map on there and there was Park Hall Road as plain as anything and the bridge marked out. That's why they reckon so many, for such a little quiet backwater, and it was a little quiet backwater, very picturesque. Next to the tuck shop was the little two spinster ladies used to have a little cake shop, it had the little bow window, very much like Quality Street with the bow window and the little panes of glass. I used to go in and I remember they had brass

scales and they used to make little bits of sweets and things and she always used to let me go in and help and weigh the things out, you know, make a bit of rock cakes and things like that. But it was such a picturesque and the tuck shop, all the boys from the Dulwich College used to there you know, could get a fizzy drink and things like that. Little tables outside, it was a very pretty little spot to. 'Cos my dad was originally born in Dulwich Village so we were going back again to where he's originally come from.

Interviewer: You moved to Dulwich because you wanted to get away from the bombing...

Ethel: From Peckham, yes 'cos it was very near the docks, it wasn't far from the docks. But as I say, I think that we encountered far more bombing by going back to Dulwich than had we stayed in Peckham but that's, one wasn't to know these things.

John: It's funny these – unfortunately Ethel was in hospital three times last year, she was quite poorly and our sons always say 'The Germans couldn't kill her and this won't kill her either'. [Laughs] both of them say that.

Ethel: And the grandson always says 'Right [laughs] Hitler couldn't do it to Nan so this won't, we knew she'd get over it' and touch wood I did.

Interviewer: Did you escape without injury then?

Ethel: I did because what it was, it was the debris coming in on the side that was open. As I say it was a steel top, steel bottom and like a steel column in each corner and then you had a wire, like a steel wire mesh went round. Well if you wanted to get out to the toilet or anything you couldn't, it had a little pin, it hooked on to so you would be fiddling about in the dark so we used to keep one side open and that was mums side. It was the debris coming in, it caught her back you know, like badly bruised it and damaged it you know so.

Interviewer: Did she suffer from those injuries later on in life?

Ethel: She lived till just short of a hundred so...

John: Six months short of a hundred wasn't she?

Ethel: Yes – six months short of a hundred. Well, unfortunately I've got my Dad's side of, with the illness 'cos he died of heart trouble and so that's where I get my dicky ticker from, you know. She worked jolly hard, jolly hard.

**End of Interview**

