RES-061-23-0032-A

Dr S. Todd.


Background

This study of the working-class between 1945 and 1970 tested the hypothesis that social class retained experiential and analytical relevance in postwar England. Historians and sociologists had argued that a rise in Britain’s GDP during the postwar period led to the decline of, or significant changes to, social class as a structure and identity. Additionally, historians influenced by the ‘cultural turn’ asserted that the connections between economic and social change were tenuous or non-existent. Recent studies of poverty by Tim Hatton and Roy Bailey, and Mike Savage’s reanalysis of attitudes to class within the Affluent Worker study, had challenged this thesis, by demonstrating the survival of poverty and working-class identity respectively. However, no study had analysed the connections between living standards and social identity across the period 1945-1970. I proposed to re-analyse four postwar social surveys and to undertake and analyse twenty oral history interviews. I provisionally defined the working class as manual workers, but I intended to test the utility of this definition.

Objectives

I aimed to:

1. Digitise four postwar social surveys of working-class life and conduct twenty life history interviews with self-identified working-class respondents in Coventry and Liverpool. **Objective fulfilled.**

The surveys identified were: the Crown Street study of 1955-56 (Liverpool); the Kirkby...
Study, 1958 (Liverpool); the Affluent Worker Study 1961-62 (Luton), and the Shipbuilding Workers Collection 1968-70 (Tyneside). At an early stage of the project, I substituted the Crown Street Study of 1963-64 for the Kirkby Study. This was prompted by Liverpool University archivists’ discovery of the original questionnaires from this second Crown Street study, which was far larger and richer than the Kirkby Study. I created three Access databases (the Crown Street studies are included in the same database) and these have been deposited at UKDA. I am awaiting repository classification.

Twenty-two oral history interviews were conducted and the recordings and transcriptions of twenty-one of these constitute a fourth dataset, ‘Coventry and Liverpool Lives’ (one interviewee requested that her interview be excluded). Qualidata has accepted this dataset for deposit (see nominated output 1).

2. Test the hypothesis that social class remained a significant form of social identity in postwar England, and retains analytical importance for historians examining this period, through a study of working-class life. **Fulfilled. See results pt. 2.**

3. Produce a socio-economic history of working class life and analyse the social consequences of economic change through a study of social relations, networks and identities. **In progress: on schedule.**

The major publication arising from the study will be a monograph to be submitted to a publisher by September 2010 (see objective 8). See **Results pt. 3** for preliminary analysis.

4. Analyse the experience and description of socio-economic status, social identities and networks. **Fulfilled (Results pt. 4).**
5. Assess the extent of social and economic fluidity in English society, 1945-70, by using the databases to assess levels and definitions of inter- and intragenerational occupational and social mobility. **In progress: on schedule.**

This aspect of analysis is at a preliminary stage, as was anticipated in the original application. See **Results pt. 5.**

6. Analyse change and continuity in gender roles and relations. Specifically, to examine the reasons for and extent of married women's increased labour force participation, and the consequences of this for the individual and the household. **Fulfilled (Results pt. 6).**

7. Analyse race relations and the effect of immigration upon working class communities, primarily through interviews with white respondents, but also, if possible, through interviews with Black and Asian Britons. **Partially fulfilled.**

Advertisements for interviewees in the Coventry and Liverpool press brought an overwhelming response – from an exclusively white British constituency. Contacts with local reminiscence groups enabled the RA (Research Associate) to interview an Iranian-born woman who emigrated to Coventry in the 1940s, and a Punjabi man who settled in Coventry in the 1960s. Preliminary discussion of these results is offered in **Results pt. 7.**

8. Disseminate research results through one academic symposium, the delivery of two conference papers, and, in the five years following the project, the publication of at least two peer-reviewed articles and a related monograph. **In progress: on schedule.**

We have undertaken all the activities promised for the lifetime of the project and exceeded our target of two conference papers (see **Activities**). One article has been
published in a peer-reviewed journal (nominated output 2). The RA will submit an article to the journal *Social History* in 2009. I will co-author a monograph with the RA (I was originally to be sole author, but the RA’s significant contribution to the project merits her inclusion as co-author. She will also assist with the planning and editing of the monograph).

9. Engage with non-academic users by disseminating the results in the media and via interested community groups. **Fulfilled** (see Activities and Impacts).

**Methods**

I used the National Register of Archives and the UK Data Archive to identify postwar social surveys. I was keen to use these sources because they generated influential publications (for example Goldthorpe et al, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, 1968). In addition, initial evaluation revealed that the original datasets contained rich information on employment, education, living standards, aspirations and class relations that had not been fully analysed in the resulting publications.

I chose to focus on four surveys which cover a broad chronological and geographical area and distinct labour markets, and which had been unusually well archived. I designed Access databases into which the paper datasets were inputted by myself and the RA. All the records in each dataset were inputted, with the exception of the very large Affluent Worker study, for which a sample of 30 cases was selected. This was based on a random sample of one box of the Affluent Worker interviews, which was checked against the publications arising from the original study to ensure that it was representative across important variables (employment, earnings, and housing). Although the Affluent Worker sample was small, I felt it was useful to include it both because the study has influenced
subsequent historical and sociological work, and because the interviews contain rich data on class and social networks.

Oral histories contextualised the ‘snapshot’ data offered by the postwar social surveys within a longer, life history, timeframe. A Qualidata search found few relevant archived oral history collections. Consequently, we undertook twenty-two life history interviews. The time-consuming nature of life history interviewing (each interview took approximately six hours over two or more meetings) determined the sample size. Liverpool and Coventry were chosen as the loci for this phase of the study after a survey of Census data revealed that both were major postwar population centres, but had contrasting labour, housing and demographic characteristics. Coventry experienced earlier and more extensive postwar industrial and housing redevelopment; greater Commonwealth immigration, and a lower unemployment rate than Liverpool.

The interviewees were self-selecting. The majority responded to articles placed in the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* and the *Liverpool Echo* in 2007. A small number of interviewees were drawn from personal contacts and reminiscence groups. Further details of selection, response rates and methodology are given in nominated output 1.

I contextualised these data by consulting Censuses; papers from the Departments of Education, Housing, and Social Security held at The National Archives; publications arising from the social surveys; local government data in Coventry and Liverpool, and 50 archived oral testimonies held at five archives. Nuffield Foundation funding enabled me to employ a Research Assistant to digitise a 1979 survey of inner-city Liverpool and to survey press coverage of poverty and affluence in post-war Liverpool and Manchester.

**Results**

The first seven objectives have been addressed as follows:
1. Four datasets have been digitised and deposited at UKDA. These are: Crown Street, 1956-64 (406 cases); A Digitised Sample of the Affluent Worker Collection, 1961-62 (30 cases); Shipbuilding Workers Collection 1968-70: Digitised Questionnaires (223 cases). Each contains details of employment for all members of respondents’ households; earnings; aspirations for children; consumption patterns, and social networks.

The Crown Street database comprises two household studies centring on inner-city Liverpool. The first was undertaken in 1955-56, under the supervision of Charles Vereker and John Barron Mays. A number of publications arose from this study including Vereker et al, *Urban Redevelopment and Social Change* (1961), which outlines the methodology of the study and demonstrates that the seventy-five remaining questionnaires are typical of the wider sample. The second study, comprising 332 questionnaires, was undertaken in 1963-64; little contextual information survives from this. The latter study includes weekly budgets for all adult members of the household. Eighty percent of interviewees were women. The samples are more likely to be employed in unskilled work than the Liverpool or English workforce as a whole (see table 1 for initial earnings analysis). However, a sub-sample of ninety-three households in the second study was drawn from South Liverpool suburbs and provides data on manual workers in the vehicle industry and twenty-four households headed by professionals (I have yet to analyse these). More details are given in nominated output 2.

The Affluent Worker and Shipbuilding Worker studies focus on workplaces within contrasting sectors – car manufacturing and shipbuilding – and this reflects the investigators’ interest in manual workers’ changing working conditions, earnings, and lifestyles. The earnings of the Affluent Worker sample demonstrate that they were relatively affluent (table 1), although their mean earnings were identical to the mean for all vehicle workers included in the 1960 Ministry of Labour *Average Earnings and Hours*
Enquiry. All interviewees in the Affluent Worker and Shipbuilding Workers studies are male heads of household, but wives were usually present and their contributions were recorded.

Table 1: Average Weekly Earnings from Ministry of Labour Earnings Enquiry, 1960; Affluent Worker and Crown Street Studies (comparable data not available within Shipbuilding Workers dataset)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Youths</th>
<th>Women (part-time)</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>148.3</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-3</td>
<td>Affluent Worker</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>Crown Street</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Class was a significant social identity in postwar England. Respondents to the Affluent Worker and Shipbuilding Workers studies were asked to state their social class. Over 75 percent of respondents identified as working-class; less than 1 percent identified as classless. All of our interviewees self-identified as working-class, and a recent MORI poll suggests that 70 percent of Britons share this self-description. As the respondents in the Affluent Worker and Shipbuilding Workers studies are male manual workers, it is not possible to use these sources to reach definitive conclusions about the relationship of gender or occupation to class affiliation. However, Shipbuilding Worker respondents were asked to state the social class of their relatives, and 98 percent of those who identified themselves as working-class gave their relatives the same categorization, even when these individuals were employed in clerical occupations or school teaching.

Class retains analytical importance for historians of postwar England for three reasons. Firstly, as the postwar social surveys show, much of the socio-economic data available to historians of this period are framed by a concern with class, and this needs to be taken
into consideration by researchers. Secondly, the data analysed here suggest that class was considered important by a large proportion of the population and continues to frame the oral history testimonies of those generations who lived through the postwar years. Thirdly, contemporary understandings of class are shaped by the postwar investigators’ conclusions. Recent academic studies of the working-class focus on neighbourhood studies of everyday life. They are influenced by the postwar social scientists’ assumption that socio-economic change destroyed ‘traditional’ working-class communities. Government policies designed to eradicate social ‘exclusion’ are shaped by the assumption that social inclusion was achieved in the recent past. The accounts of respondents and interviewees analysed here do not support these assumptions (see pts 3 and 4).

3. The ‘affluent’ post-war working-class was a small, fluid group who appeared in the late 1950s. The Affluent Worker sample was the only study in which a majority of respondents owned their home. Forty percent of this sample had a refrigerator and 38 percent of Shipbuilding Workers, but only 19 percent of the Crown Street 1963-64 study and less than ten percent of households in Crown Street 1955-56. Households with two or more wage-earners were most likely to own all of these commodities in both of the Crown Street studies and the Shipbuilding Workers study. This was not true in the Affluent Worker study where the majority of respondents were their household’s sole breadwinner. Most households in all of these studies relied on credit to buy domestic appliances, televisions and cars. In Crown Street 1963-64, the average household paid 28s per week in credit payments, generally relying on cheque traders and hire purchase. ‘Affluence’ thus depended on the continued operation of household breadwinning and budgeting strategies that originated in the century before 1945.
These findings support Hatton and Bailey’s conclusion that postwar social security benefits alleviated the worst effects of poverty but did not eradicate it. Respondents were vulnerable to poverty at certain stages of the life-cycle, particularly early childhood and old age, and in periods of sickness and unemployment. Fifty percent of Crown Street’s wage-earners and 43 percent of the Shipbuilding Workers had experienced spells of sick leave or unemployment since 1945, indicating that there was no static ‘underclass’. Most of our interviewees experienced periods of relative poverty and relative affluence across the life-course. Fifty households in Crown Street 1963-64 relied entirely on benefits for subsistence; most comprised one or two pensioners living on an average 84s per week. Average household expenditure on bills, rent and food was 125s per week, and this, together with qualitative responses, suggest these households lived below the means of subsistence. Households relying on benefits to supplement wages fared better. In Crown Street 1963-64, average weekly income in such households was 417s per week, compared with 388s per week in households relying entirely on wages. The former households were larger, with an average of 4 dependents, well above the 2.9 mean for all households. Nevertheless, benefit entitlement enabled these families to pay for essentials and some domestic appliances.

Social networks changed as a result of housing and industrial development, but this should not be characterised as the demise of ‘traditional’ working-class communities. The data reveal a variety of neighbourhoods and the Crown Street studies indicate that not all 1950s inner-city communities were characterised by the long housing tenure and extended kinship networks illuminated by Wilmott and Young at Bethnal Green. Housing tenure varied according to local labour market and housing developments. Sixty-seven percent of the Affluent Worker sample owned their own house, mainly on new private estates, but only 25 percent of those in the 1963-64 Crown Street study
(many of these were professionals in the suburbs) and 22 percent of the Shipbuilding
Workers (also see nominated output 2).

The majority of our interviewees and social survey respondents moved house during the
postwar years, most commonly from privately rented accommodation to a council house
or to buy their own home. The vast majority were positive about their move, particularly
when local labour demand enabled wage earners to find convenient employment and
local amenities were well-maintained. Our interviewees suggest that dissatisfaction with
suburban council estates only grew during the late 1970s, due to public spending cuts and
industrial recession which reduced local employment opportunities.

4. The majority of respondents and interviewees believed that there were two classes in
England: those who have to work for a living (the working-class or ‘ordinary people’)
and those who don’t (‘the rich’). This challenges the Bourdieuvian emphasis on class-as-
culture, by suggesting that economic distinctions were of primary significance in many
English people’s understandings of class.

Although class was primarily economic, it is not possible to define social class as
exclusively occupational or income-related. Class was understood as relational in the
manner outlined by E.P. Thompson; an understanding of difference and similarity
grounded in local and wider social and economic relationships. These relationships were
not exclusively forged within workplaces; schools, streets and households were also sites
for class formation. It is impossible to construct a more specific definition of social class
than the two-class model outlined above, because class as a relationship changes
according to time and space.

There was no clear-cut division between the ‘rough’ and the ‘respectable’. People’s
relations with neighbours and family, and the type of community they lived in, changed
according to circumstances and the poverty cycle. No division existed in the leisure activities or breadwinning strategies of skilled and unskilled workers. Our interviewees include skilled workers who combined ardent trade unionism with bare-knuckle street fighting and gambling; and families whose social and familial networks bridged the supposed divide between the inner city ‘slum’ and the new town or suburban estate.

Specific circumstances helped to make working-class identity a source of pride during the postwar years. Respondents to social surveys expressed a sense of entitlement to social security and state education and healthcare grounded in recognition of their value as citizens, workers and contributors to the ‘People’s War’, and particularly as survivors of the Blitz. Local government records indicate that war service was an important criterion for the allocation of scarce resources like council housing. However, the extent to which class was remade in the postwar period was limited by the continuation of economic inequality and its effects.

5. Preliminary findings suggest that respondents to the surveys experienced very limited inter- and intragenerational social mobility. Only a tiny number of adult sons and daughters were professionals, but between six and twenty percent of them were clerks in each survey. However, these individuals’ occupational mobility cannot be easily defined as social mobility. They shared the same living conditions as manually-employed household members. In addition, pay rates included in the Crown Street studies, Shipbuilding Workers’ job histories, and oral history testimonies suggest that a large proportion of clerical workers were young, concentrated in the lower grades of the sector, and experienced downward mobility into manual work when they qualified for adult wage rates. Census data support this, demonstrating that a larger proportion of the teenage workforce was employed in clerical work than the adult workforce.
Social mobility was shaped by local services and labour markets. Almost 30 percent of sons and daughters aged over fifteen were recorded as clerks within the Affluent Worker study, but only 12 percent of those in the Shipbuilding Workers study. More of our Coventry interviewees experienced social mobility than did our Liverpool interviewees, and fewer of them were employed in unskilled labouring work. Three Coventry male interviewees attained managerial status, two within the financial sector and one as works manager of a factory. Their experience testifies to the city’s buoyant labour market and good educational provision. All three passed the eleven-plus exam (a distinction shared by ten percent of school-age children in the surveys and fifteen percent of our interviewees – in line with earlier studies of class and educational selection in post-war England) and were able to find higher-grade clerical work locally when they left secondary school. Preliminary analysis indicates that the three managers shared the ambivalence towards social mobility that was expressed by other interviewees and social survey respondents. They also continue to identify as working-class. These results require further analysis.

6. Married women’s labour force participation increased in a wide range of local labour markets during the 1950s, largely due to increased demand in the retail and manufacturing sectors. Over 25 percent of married women worked in each of the surveys consulted. In most households their money was used to buy food and clothing, following a pre-war pattern. However, unlike the pre-war period, when many working-class households relied on two or more full-time wage-earners to make ends meet, these women’s labour force participation lessened dependence on children’s wage-earning, enabling sons and daughters to remain in education until their late teens or (more frequently) to take up poorly paid apprenticeships. The Affluent Worker study indicates that in the most financially secure households by the mid-1960s, married women’s
earnings were used to buy luxuries such as holidays and cars.

This development did not result in a dramatic change in gendered roles within the household. In areas that had been characterised by a strict gendered division of labour before the Second World War, an older tradition of male financial autonomy survived. Most wives included in the Crown Street surveys and our Liverpool sample did not know what their husband earned. Men’s testimonies indicate they often withheld overtime payments for personal leisure expenditure. Although an increasing number of men in this area were employed in the expanding manufacturing sector, these households retained a budgeting pattern established in the prewar decades when reliance on casual dock labour characterised this part of Liverpool. In financially secure households established away from these inner city neighbourhoods, it was more common for men to pay their wives a fixed sum towards housekeeping, to disclose their earnings to their wives, and for couples to make significant purchase decisions jointly. This pattern characterised 60 percent of the Affluent Worker households. Economic development shaped, but did not determine, gender roles.

7. Race fractured working-class identity. The small number of Black and Asian respondents within the postwar social surveys testifies to the concentration of immigrants and Black Britons within relatively small urban areas. It is possibly also due to the investigators’ assumption that whiteness was a pre-requisite for working-class identity, though this is not made explicit. Additionally, the focus of the surveys, on change within and the future of the communities concerned, appeared of little relevance to the few non-white respondents interviewed. Most of those questioned viewed their residence in Britain as temporary.
The poor response from Black and Asian people to this study’s call for interviewees suggests that the term working-class has greater salience for white members of those generations who lived through the postwar years. The two interviewees who immigrated to Coventry in the postwar years shared common experiences and social networks with white neighbours and workmates, but also experienced racism that cut across class boundaries. Similar memories emerge from oral history archives that document the Black British experience of postwar Britain. These testimonies indicate that my decision to use the word ‘ordinary’ in press advertisements for interviewees may have excluded potential black volunteers, who are not used to being represented or treated as ordinary within British society.

Our interviewees did not suggest that they viewed the working-class as exclusively white. Several opposed immigration in the abstract, but many included Black and Asian workmates and neighbours within their memories of class and community. Most emphasised the importance of tolerance and adaptability in surviving changing socio-economic circumstances since 1945, and several cited tolerance towards immigrants as evidence of this. Many emphasised the ‘cosmopolitanism’ of the districts where they grew up. Half of the interviewees had grown up in racially mixed neighbourhoods, but it is less clear why other interviewees integrated tolerance and cosmopolitanism into their narratives. The wider context within which they constructed their narratives may be important. The interviews took place during a period of extensive media debate about the conservatism and racism of the ‘white working-class’ in 2007-08, and some took place during the BBC’s White Working Class season of programmes in 2008. No respondent mentioned this directly, but several criticised a representation of the working-class as parochial and narrow minded that they felt was widespread but unjustified. Archived personal testimonies of Black and Asian Britons reveal that racism was far
more widespread than our interviewees suggest. Nevertheless all of the personal testimonies analysed indicate that neighbourhood and workplace networks did cross racial boundaries, and that working-class communities were not exclusively white.

Eight of our ten Liverpool interviewees were Catholics, although all but one had stopped practising their religion in early adulthood. Several recalled that they or their parents had moved from the inner city to suburban estates to escape the sectarianism that characterised prewar Liverpool. Three interviewees felt that rising labour demand eroded sectarianism in the workplace and meant that they had better employment opportunities than their parents. Sectarianism was not eradicated: one interviewee recalled that his mother had to campaign for her children to be allowed to attend their new local comprehensive school rather than the older Catholic secondary modern schools several miles away to which the local authority allocated Catholics’ children. Others recalled the continuation of Orange Walks on major streets and within workplaces. More analysis is required before I can suggest specific reasons for the religious bias in our pool of interviewees. Clearly religion played an important social role in postwar England that requires further examination.

Activities

A conference to disseminate findings was held in Manchester (10-11 July 2008). The thirty-five participants came from a range of UK institutions and disciplinary backgrounds including Anthropology, Economics, Education and Sociology. Speakers included Dr Claire Langhamer (Sussex), Dr Sean O’Connell (Queen’s Belfast), Prof Diane Reay (Cambridge), Mr Leslie Holmes (youth worker, Salford), Ms Melissa Benn (journalist, London) and Ms Lynsey Hanley (journalist, London).
An exhibition of initial findings was held at Liverpool's Next to Nowhere Centre in September 2008. Seventeen interviewees accepted the invitation to attend, accompanied by family members. Representatives of community groups; arts organisations including Liverpool’s Bluecoat Arts Centre; archives and libraries; and academics from Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores, Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan Universities also attended.

In August 2008 the RA established a website, www.voicesofpostwarengland.com, to showcase the oral history component of the project. The website will be maintained for at least two years, funded by my institutional research expense allowance. The site attracts an average of 50 hits per day, with 50 percent of viewers coming from local history websites and from universities.

We have delivered or plan to deliver the following presentations:
1. ‘Class in Britain from the Bomb to the Beatles’, York University, Canada, October, 2007 (PI).
5. ‘Narratives of home in the ‘Boom City’ of Coventry after 1945’, Social History Society Annual Conference, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, April 2008 (RA).
6. ‘Voices of Post-war England’, Class in Modern Britain symposium, University of Manchester, July 2008 (RA)
7. ‘Class and Crown Street: Reinventing the working-class in postwar Liverpool’,
Liverpool John Moores University, December 2008 (PI)

8. I will deliver papers at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow in January 2009 and at the Universities of Sydney and Monash in April 2009.
These presentations have been uploaded to ESRC Today where possible (most were extemporised).

Outputs

1. Digitised dataset of 30 cases sampled from the Affluent Worker Study 1961-62, deposited with ESDS.

2. Digitised dataset of 406 cases from the Crown Street studies of 1955-56 and 1963-64, deposited with ESDS.

3. Digitised dataset of 223 cases from the Shipbuilding Workers study of 1968-70, deposited with ESDS.


5. Website: www.voicesofpost warengland.com based on the oral history dataset and related archival material.


Impacts

1. Project findings will be featured in the BBC Radio 4 documentary series, Whatever Happened to the Working Class? (February 2009).

2. Preliminary results were used to justify my successful Nuffield Social Science Foundation Small Grant application to analyse working-class life in the 1970s (2008).

**Future Research Priorities**

My priority for the next eighteen months will be completing the monograph related to this project. I am exploring two avenues of related research. The first is a comprehensive social history of post-war Britain. The second is a study of the changing definition and ongoing influence of the ‘problem family’ within European social policy. This project would also contribute to my understanding of why Britain remains the only European nation in which a majority of people identify as ‘working-class’. I plan to submit funding applications to the ESRC and the British Academy for grants to develop these projects.

**Ethics**

The datasets produced all contain personal information relating to respondents. In accordance with the University of Manchester ethics code I have arranged to store copies of the new data generated by this award (the twenty-two oral history interviews) in a locked filing cabinet in my possession for ten years, after which they will be destroyed.

The Crown Street studies were anonymised prior to deposition, on the advice of the Liverpool University archivist in charge of the paper datasets. Individuals’ names and addresses do not appear. The Affluent Worker and Shipbuilding Workers datasets were already anonymised. The same access restrictions that apply to the paper datasets will be applied to these databases. Bona fide researchers will be able to consult these databases on request to UKDA.

Following the Oral History Society’s ethics code, all interviewees were provided with written and verbal descriptions of the project. All interviewees signed copyright and
clearance forms covering the archiving of their interviews and the use of these in the project website and subsequent publications produced by ourselves and other researchers. Each interviewee checked his/her transcription and was given the opportunity to edit their interview or to withdraw from the project at that point. We did not offer full anonymity since this would undermine the value of the dataset, given the importance of time and place in shaping the interviewees’ memories. One interviewee withdrew permission for her interview to be archived. All interviewees refused our offer of a pseudonym. I remain in regular contact with the interviewees, all of whom have been given copies of the papers and articles produced from the study and of this End of Award Report.

[4955 words]
User Guide

These twenty interviews were conducted by Dr Hilary Young in 2007 and 2008 as part of the ESRC-funded project ‘Living standards, social identities and the English working-class, 1945-1970’ (Principal Investigator: Dr Selina Todd). This User Guide includes interview summary sheets for each of the interviews Dr Young carried out.

Each interview is with one person, with the exception of the interview carried out with Billy and Barbara Rainford, in which both participated jointly. Each interview took place over one or more occasions. A transcription is available for each separate meeting. One interview summary sheet is available for each interview and these are included below.

Researchers are welcome to use the interviews without the further permission of the interviewees or of Dr Young or Dr Todd. A condition of access is that researchers do not seek to contact the interviewees without first consulting Dr Young.

Interviewees

Number of interviewees: 21
Number of women: 11
Number of men: 10

For further information please consult ListofInterviewees.xls.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Watkins
Title: Mr

Interviewee’s forenames: Alan

Date of Birth: 1942

Place of Birth: Ebbw Vale, Wales, moved to Coventry with family aged 3 months.

School: Cheylesmore Secondary Modern left aged 15

Qualifications: Pre-technical certificate, National O.N.C Engineering Drawing

First Job: Apprenticeship Triumph 1958-1963

Jobs: Worked in garage at evenings at weekends during apprenticeship.

Triumph c.1963-1965 in planning office

Tool Factory- Production Controller

Tool Factory- Production Controller 5 years

Works Manager Coventry Council

Adult Education: Industrial Management course

Father’s place and date of birth: 1906 Ebbw Vale Wales

Date of death: Died aged 63

Father’s Occupation: Coal miner, brick worker in Wales. Territorial Army and regular army during SWW. Rubbing down in car factories in Triumph Coventry.

Mother’s place and date of birth: 1908 Ebbw Vale Wales

Date of death: died aged 68
Mother’s Occupation: part-time cleaner in Wales. Housewife.

Siblings: Two older sisters 11 years older and 13 years older

Wife’s name: Veronica
Occupation: Clerical work in Triumph.
Year Married: 1965
Children: Michelle born 1969
Paul born 1971


Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Coventry

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.
Interviewer’s Comments:

Alan Watkins replied to the article in the Coventry Evening Telegraph about the project. The interviews were conducted in his home in the evening as at the time of interviewing he was still employed by Coventry Council. He and his wife Veronica subsequently retired a year later.

Topics Covered:
Childhood in Coventry; household in inner city slum area of Coventry; feelings about school and the decision to go to a Secondary Modern as opposed to a Grammar school; apprenticeship in Triumph and working practices both on the track and in the offices. Teenage leisure practices, dancing, in band, played guitar. Marriage, family life and later life.
Interviewee’s surname: Littlewood

Interviewee’s forenames: Angela

Date of Birth: 1935

Place of Birth: Coventry

School: Stoke-Aldermoor, scholarship to attend Priory High later amalgamated with Frederick Birds to form Lyng Hall

Qualifications: Two O-levels Art and English; Pre-nursing cadet; started Nursing training Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital but did not complete

First Job: part-time sales assistants

Siblings: Andrew born 1920, Celia born 1922, Charles born 1925, Carol born 1927, William 1932 (died prematurely as a child)

Father’s place and date of birth: Coventry

Father’s Occupation: Served apprenticeship as cabinetmaker; during SWW Hawker Siddley; Jaguar Factory

Mother’s place and date of birth: Coventry

Mother’s Occupation: Courtaulds weaver; housewife; the part-time retail assistant after children at school
Husband’s name: Norman

Husband’s date and place of birth: Coventry

Married: 1960

Children: 4 children; the first born in 1960; Paul 1965

Date(s) of recording: 15 May, 16 May 2007

Location of recording: Narrator’s friend’s house in Coventry

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: pseudonym to be used; [all names are pseudonyms];
10 years closure on material.

Interviewer’s Comments:

The interviews with Angela were very good. She spoke freely about a lot of subjects.

The interviews were conducted in her school friend’s home in Coventry, Hazel Wood.

Both Hazel and Angela volunteered for the project after reading the Coventry Evening Telegraph article. As well as the individual interviews with each we conducted a joint
interview with both which was interesting as it revealed two very different friend’s narratives about their life histories.

Topics Covered: Look area around Stoke Aldermoor, neighbourhood, home, household chores; family relationships; family moved house to Mitchell Close-change in family outlook at this point. Schooling- passed the 11plus gained a scholarship to Priory High and was doing well prior to the merger of Priory High and Frederick Birds to form a new Comprehensive Lyng Hall. Pre-nursing cadet at Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital; attitudes and experiences she felt when she had to cut her nursing training short when she became pregnant.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Ennis                          Title: Mrs

Interviewee’s forenames: Betty

Date of Birth:
Place of Birth: Iran
School: Iran
First Job: Cleaner in Chase Hostel; GEC; Leyrolles Electric

Husband’s name: Michael
Married: 1949
Children: 6 children

Date(s) of recording: 1st May 2007 and 3rd May 2007

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Coventry

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:
Betty is a member of the Willenhall Reminiscence Group. Betty moved from Iran to England in 1946. The interview was going well when Betty was freely recalling her early childhood in Iran, Shiraz and Tehran. Her father was English and had been stationed in Iran during the war where he met Betty’s mother who was around 16 when she married Betty’s father. She and her family travelled from Iran to Liverpool in 1946. She detailed the difference in standards between Iran and England that she was not used to. The interview was paused for about an hour while her brother-in-law and a friend popped in for a chat. Betty has spoken a lot about her experiences of moving to England and living in the hostels in Coventry. The reminiscence group that she is a member of is mainly interested in finding and recording details of people who lived in the hostels in the immediate postwar period. Betty’s experiences feature heavily in this work. When I went along to my first meeting of the group Betty’s name was automatically mentioned as someone who I should speak to.

Topics discussed in the first interview included migration, childhood activities, growing up in Iran, school.

Details of first interview

Betty met her husband while she was living in a hostel Baginton Fields Hostel in Coventry. Her husband Michael was Irish. They were married in 1949 and initially they lived separately as they were both still living in the hostel but they then lived
together as Betty had a single room of her own eventually. The hostels were changed into a blocks of flats and Michael and Betty had their own flat. Eventually the family moved into the house she still lives in on Remembrance Road. Betty continued to work throughout the period when she had six children.

Betty could not speak English when she first arrived in England. tried to keep away from her mother to learn the language. She tried to get a job in the GEC, the money was not enough to pay the hostel bus fares etc. They went into a printing place to try get a job there. Everyone look at her. The money over there could barely cover the cost. The manager of the hostel gave her a job in the sick bay. Her accommodation was paid for, her meals were paid for and she would receive £1.50 which she saved in order to buy a sewing machine. The second thing she bought was an electric fire for her mother to warm her food up on because she refused to eat in the canteen. And then the third thing was a bicycle. Father got five shilling pocket money and the children got half a crown pocket money and the rest of the money went to the hostel.

Worked in GEC

Sickbay, the blocks and then canteen and then had baby. Worked until 6 or 5 weeks before he was born. Then after a couple of weeks she went back to work. Worked in canteen until 1950 when they converted to the flats. Moved to the flats. Robert born in (1949), Mickey (August 1950) and Frank (July 1951) were born in D block. Mother’s house had 3 bedrooms. Mum and dad, sister, brother was in boarding school and sister in other room. Big living room and kitchen.
One big bedroom and one bedroom divided in half, into a box room and a garden and a living room and kitchen. Back had a clothes post and fields at the back of the garden. They had a vegetable garden. Carrots, peas and runner beans, lettuce. Rent in the flats was £1.18 shillings. Just over a pound. The rent went up to £2. She always paid extra money on her rent so that she could be in advance with the rent instead of arrears. The rent man would come round to collect the rent. If you had any complaints you could tell the rent man. Rent and electric were priority. Then food and other things. Insurance. Council owned the flats. Relationship with rent collector and the council.

Michael worked in a car factory, then Singers, then Rover. Inspector and then arc welder in Rover. Born in Dublin in 1926. Sixteen when he moved to Coventry. When Rover closed down, everyone went to Birmingham and he took his redundancy when he was 52. Would go dancing. Michael played football. Chace hostel to dance, Casino dancing. In hostel in the evening play table tennis, play cards. Play badminton.

Betty only went to Coventry once when she first arrived. Only started going to Coventry when she moved to the flats. Never shopped there. When in the flats she would shop near the Gaumont cinema. Groceries from there. A butcher was there also. And the markets to get vegetables in the market. Roberts furniture shop. Smiths furniture shop. Picked her furniture and would give her money every week for when she was going to get her house. Husband had accident in car factory and leg was in plaster. Moved to new house and had acquired a lot of money in the shop, carpet, three piece suite, china cabinet, carpet for bedroom, dining room table. Curtains, red velvet. Only a few more pound left to pay. How much do you owe? Over a hundred
pound. Wife been paying you every week, now she’s having the furniture. 73 pound for 3 piece suite. Chandelier, 13 pound, carpet 20 pound. All that’s been paid, I want 5% discount for paying cash. Gave birth to number 4 son. Wanted a writing bureau. Went to another shop to buy it.

Husband used to give her 5 pound a week. Her own wages also. GEC got more money. Paid rent, electric, paid all the clothes and put money in the shop. Never asked how much he earned, never knew. He never knew what her wages was. Her money was her money. And if she wanted more money she would ask. She could manage with the money he gave her. Always tried to manage with the money he gave her. Never any argument. He smoked, a couple pints of Guinness. Husband got together to run the Willenhall Working Men’s Social Club.

Wedding in 1949. plain and small. Married in St Thomas More. A few people in the hostel came. Only hostel people there. Party in the common room. Lived in hostels. Wasn’t allowed to stay in hostel. He used to stop because she had a room of her own. Married in 1949, beginning of 1950 moved to flats.

Worked in sickbay, from 1947 in sickbay, then blocks, 1948, then in canteen pregnant. Left canteen in GEC Spon Street. Sister working on spray and Betty on wiring. Pregnant with second child. Left GEC have child. Then worked in BTH, coil winding and wiring. Then in 1952 father died and sent for. Mother looking after three children Francis in 1951. went back to work to BTH in 1952 and then moved into new house. In 1954 worked in GEC and then fourth child in 1954 while working in GEC. Moved to Brandon Road with GEC then back to GEC stoke again in 1974. Wanted to

When children were small worked from 6-10 at night time. Cook a dinner, leave the children having dinner at the table as he came in with his bike I went out with my bike. When the kids went to school worked 9-4. Never object to Betty going out. His life was Willenhall social club. Used to go on holiday with friends to Sweden, Italy, and Tenerife.

Can’t remember wages. When I went to Leyrolles Engineering always called us by first name but at GEC was different. Started at 8 o’clock. GEC started at 7.30. I had a car. When they were made redundant went to Leyrolles. Used to sit with the gaffers. GEC- wiring.
Interviewee’s surname: Leather

Title: Miss

Interviewee’s forenames: Betty

Date of Birth: 1935

Place of Birth: Coventry

School: Willenhall School

First Job: Sales Assistant in Aunt’s grocery shop;

Clerical work GEC

Married: Single

Date(s) of recording: 15 February 2007 and

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Coventry

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.
Interviewer’s Comments:

The interview took place in Betty’s house on London Road. Carol Hinde had shown me where Betty lived after the interview I conducted with her last week. I had previously met Betty twice before, once at the Willenhall Reminiscence Group and once at a group interview we had conducted at Carol’s house.

Betty was born in 1935 in the house that she still lives in, a cottage with two bedrooms up stairs and two rooms downstairs. Betty’s father was born in Coventry and her mother was born in Bubbinghall. Betty has a younger sister by 8 years. Her father died when she was 15 years old. Before marriage her mother was a barmaid and was married at the age of 19. She met Betty’s father in the pub who was ten years older than her. She went back to part-time work once Betty’s sister was born working in the sugar beet fields. This money was not spent and was put aside in a savings account. Betty’s father ensured that he provided for the family and anything that needed to be bought was paid for by the money that he earned. He was paid on a Friday and would not give the money to Betty’s mother until the Monday when he left it on the mantelpiece for her.

She recalled that her father would take her to the pub with him on a Sunday although he did not drink to excess. He would also go for a pint in the evening after his meal and a game of darts. Betty explained that this was his source of male friendship. Her father also kept a garden where he would produce a variety of vegetables for the family and which could be exchanged for other items from other people or used for payment in kind if someone had done him or the family a favour.
They also kept pigs at the bottom of the garden which would be slaughtered and the meat stored. They would swap a side of bacon with other people for other items. Betty recalled the variety of different sellers who would bring produce such as bakers, and the milkman.

Betty explained that some families who lived round about were hard-up, big families with a number of children to feed. There were better off people living round about such as garages owners, farmers and the landlords of the local pubs. Betty also recalled that some women felt that they and their daughters were better than others. Betty described herself as a rural person up until the surrounding area of Willenhall began to be built up which began with the building of the Chase estate which Betty emphasises that some people think of as the central area of Willenhall. This estate did not begin to be built until the mid 1950s.

Betty went to Willenhall School. She sat the exam for a scholarship but did not pass it. She went to Cheylesmore School. Betty started working at the age of 15 in her aunt’s grocer’s shop in Bubbinghall. She worked there for 5 years until she had a disagreement with her aunt. She then went to the labour exchange and got a job at the G.E.C where she worked until she retired. She was a clocking in clerk on the shop floor for the majority of her time there. She was initially paid weekly and was a member of the Transport and General Workers Union. Although she did not agree with unions she and the other clerks were pressurised into joining. Once they joined there was a strike for 6 weeks at the works over pay.

We suspended the interview after 3 hours of recording as Betty was getting tired and rescheduled a future date to continue the interview. Topics discussed in 2nd Interview: childhood youth organisations, Girl Guides, leisure, youth culture, politics,
religion, courtship, changing perceptions of Coventry, living standards higher or lower than her parents.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Rainford       Title: Mr

Interviewee’s forenames: Billy

Date of Birth: January 1948
Place of Birth: Liverpool
School: Joseph Williams Primary School; Gateacre Comprehensive
Qualifications: O-level English and History
Occupation: Sheet Metal Worker aged 16; Telephone worker; Ogdens 1968/9-1990s.

Father’s place and date of birth: Liverpool 1918
Father’s Occupation: Bus driver

Mother’s date of birth:
Mother’s Occupation:

Siblings: two sisters born in 1946 and 1950

Wife’s Name: Barbara
Married: 1969
Date of Birth: 1949
Wife’s Occupation: Ogdens full-time, then various part-time jobs after having children
Children: 2 daughters

Date(s) of recording: 5th February 2008, 14 February 2008, 27 February 2008, 11 March 2008

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Liverpool

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.

Interviewer’s Comments:

The set of 4 interviews include Barbara’s memories of living and working in Liverpool. When I first started to interview Billy, Barbara sat in on our conversation and listened. She was eager to remain quiet throughout. But it became clear after the first interview that her memories and experiences were just as important and contributed to Billy’s story. So with her agreement I invited her to join in our conversation which she did. Billy and Barbara look after their grandchildren regularly and at some points throughout the interviews the grandchildren and their daughters are present. The interview took place in their living room.
Billy was born in January 1948. Family lived in Fairfield area when born. His sister was born in 1946. When he was six months old they moved to the prefabs. His mother had six siblings and her youngest brother was born in 1930. In 1939 his father was called up. His parents were married in 1941.

Belle Vale 1948-1957; Lee Park Housing estate

In 1950 his mother’s youngest brother moved in with them into their two bedroom house. Moved to Lee Park housing estate in April 1957 to a 4 bedroom house.

Left school aged 16, engineering sheet metal worker; Edge Lane factory- telephones; 1967-Ford; Ogdens; 1967/8? Tobacco Manufacturers- retired after 34 years- met his wife Barbara there. They were married in 1968/9.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Hinde (nee Elliott)   Title: Mrs

Interviewee’s forenames: Carol

Date of Birth: 1942   Sex: Female

Place of Birth: Napton, England, moved to Coventry when a small child

School: Willenhall Church of England School; Cheylesmore Secondary Modern for 12 months; then Whitley Abbey.

Left school age: 15

First Job: full-time Harvey’s of Coventry stationery shop;

Next job: AWA Armstrong Whitworth stores accounts for 1961-1970

Child minder

Interviewee Married: 1965

Children: one daughter born 1970 and one son 1972

Father’s place and date of birth: Coventry

Father’s Occupation: Store man; track worker Rootes Factory

Mother’s place and date of birth: Napton.1921

Mother’s Occupation: various part time jobs after marriage and having children

Siblings: one younger sister

Date(s) of recording: 12/02/07 and 26/02/07

Location of recording: Interviewee’s home in Willenhall, Coventry
Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Marantz PMD660

CD copy made:

Length of Interviews: 22.51 mins, pp. 1 – 8

MP3 version:

190 mins pp. 9 – 64

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full Clearance

Intervener’s Comments:

Carol agreed to take part in the project when I presented the project at the Willenhall Reminiscence Group in December 2006. The interview took place at her house in Willenhall. Her husband and her granddaughter were in the kitchen. Our interview took place in the living room. I had spoken to Carol previously when we conducted a joint interview with her mother, Chris Elliott, and a friend, Betty Leather, which was also conducted in her house. Carol was also present for about two thirds of an interview I conducted with her mother. The first interview was cut short as the memory card became full. Carol and Betty Leather are the oral historians of the Willenhall Reminiscence Group. Carol empathised with me when I discovered that the memory card was full as she had also experienced problems when conducting an interview such as not turning the power on. Previously, when I had interviewed the group she had asked me question about my technique of interviewing such as what
questions do I ask to get people talking and at ease with the recorder. She suggested that she tends to ask people what is their earliest memory of Willenhall.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Elliott (nee Allsopp)  Title: Mrs

Interviewee’s forenames: Christine

Date of Birth: 1922

Place of Birth: Napton. Moved to Coventry aged 7 (1929) so father could find work

School: left aged 14

Qualifications: aged 12/13 typewriting course

First Job: Bluemalls Bicycle Factory; Brace Factory; several part-time jobs after
marriage including working in the Chase Hotel as a cleaner; school meals until 1969;
bakery until 1969; canteen worker until retirement aged 60.

Father’s place and date of birth: Napton

Father’s Occupation: Bricklayer; unemployed; means tested

Mother’s place and date of birth: Napton

Mother’s Occupation: Domestic servant prior to marriage. After marriage took in
washing

Siblings: 3 elder siblings

Year Married: 1941

Husband’s name: Jack

Occupation: track worker at Triumph but also several short-term jobs; hospital
maintenance man
Died: 1976

Children: two daughters Carol Hinde born 1942 (also interviewed) and Pauline born 1945

Date(s) of recording: 7 February 2007

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Coventry

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.

Interviewer’s Comments:

The interview took place in Mrs Elliott’s home in Willenhall, Coventry. Her daughter Carol was present for two hours listening to her mother remember.

Mrs Elliott (nee Allsopp) was born in 1922 in Napton. She describes the family home in Napton where she spent the first 7 years of her childhood. She was the fourth child in her family. Her mother had been born in Napton and had been in service up until being married and then after having children she took in washing. Mrs Elliott’s father was also born in Napton. He had worked as a bricklayer until being made unemployed
in 1928. The family moved to Coventry in 1929 to Willenhall in order for the father to find work. At this point though he was on the dole and was means tested. Mrs Elliott’s elder brother was working at this point in Coventry and he was able to support the family. Mrs Elliott left school and entered work in a factory. She recalled that her mother had wished that she took a job in an office as a secretary and was even provided with typing lessons after school in order for her to develop the potential to get a job in an office after school. However, Mrs Elliott viewed working in an office as a “posh job” which she didn’t think she was suited for and instead preferred to find work in a factory. Towards the end of the interview once her daughter had left she appeared to open up a little bit more about her youth and growing up working class in the area. Her husband had come from a more wealthier background than her, his parents ran the post office and a shop and she explained that his family did not get on with their family.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Lloyd

Title: Mrs

Interviewee’s forenames: Dolly

Date of Birth: 1922

Father’s place and date of birth: Liverpool

Father’s occupation: Dock worker

Mother’s place and date of birth: Liverpool

Mother’s occupation: bag worker in bag warehouse in docks

Siblings: one sister

Occupation: ATS during the Second World War; full-time hospital cleaner after 1945 until she had her first child; housewife; back to work cleaning part-time; campaigner for homes not roads throughout the 1970s and 1980s; involved in setting up YTS schemes

Married: Ronnie 1946

Date of Birth: Born in Wales

Husband’s Occupation: bag warehouse worker when first moved to Liverpool 1946; Cart and horses work for a few weeks

Dunlop

Died: aged 62

Children: one daughter born 1947
one son 1950

Date(s) of recording: 29 January 2008 and 28th April 2008

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Liverpool

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.

*Interviewer’s Comments:*

Dolly lived in the Scotland Road area of the city. And was heavily involved in the anti-inner ring road protests in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Dolly volunteered to be interviewed through Tenantspin at FACT.

**First interview 29th January 2008**

The first interview with Dolly was good. I used the Marantz and the camcorder to record the interview and Dolly seemed at ease with all of the equipment. I was accompanied by Laura Yates, the project officer on Tenantspin. When we first arrived showed us the film which documented the campaign Dolly and other activists had been involved in during the 1970s and 1960s, Houses Not Roads. After this we started
to record the interview. Dolly spoke for roughly 30 mins detailing her life from childhood up to the present. She lived with her grandmother and mother and father until 16 when her family got a house of their own. She found this difficult as she was away from her grandmother. She joined the ATS when 16 and was stationed in Wales. She spoke very curtly about her war service as if it wasn’t a happy time for her. She met her husband when in the services- but spoke as if there had been no love to begin with. He followed her back to Liverpool when she was demobbed. She suggested that there had been no affection prior to this.

The interview begins to tail off and we arrange another interview.

28 April 2008 The second interview returns to Dolly’s experiences of living in Liverpool after 1945, marriage, working, and bring up a family. It also goes into detail about her involvement in housing campaigns throughout the 1980s and 1990s.
Interviewee’s surname: Gogerty  Title: Mr

Interviewee’s forenames: Frank

Date of Birth: 1916  Sex: Male

Place of Birth: Blaby Leicestershire

Mother died 1918.

Brought up by his Uncle and Aunt in Brinklow, managed a pub.

School: Brinklow School, won Scholarship to go to Lower School of Lawrence Sherriff, Rugby

Left school: age 15 and moved to Coventry to find work

Occupation: Panel Beater, skilled sheet metal worker; Commercial Dome Wing Company; served in the army during the Second World War; Carbody’s; A. P . Metalcraft; doing odd repairs in own time; set up own business G.B.A

Married: c.1935

Wife’s Name: Rita

Date of Birth: 1917

Wife’s Occupation: domestic service; part-time shop work 1950s

Children: two sons

Date(s) of recording: 28 February 2007 and 1st March 2007
Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Coventry.

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.

Interviewer’s Comments:

The interview was conducted in the interviewee’s home. Frank was recruited for the project through his involvement in a previous oral history interview by a student at the University of Warwick who had advertised in the local Coventry Evening Telegraph for people to take part interviews for a university course. Frank was willing to talk and was very thoughtful to make sure he told was he thought was a ‘truthful’ story about his life and sometimes about things he had not necessarily spoken about with members of his family. He noted when his interview was returned to him that he asked both his sons to read the transcript. They recognised their father in the interview and found it interesting that there were some areas of their father’s life that they had not known and were now learning about such as how his eye was injured. Frank said he was very proud of the interview and was happy with what was contained within it although to him some aspects of the interview were not very ‘attractive’ as he put it.
Interviewee’s surname: Wood

Interviewee’s forenames: Hazel

Date of Birth: 1941

Place of Birth: Sunderland; family moved to Coventry so her father could find work

School: Passed the 11 plus, scholarship to Priory High, then amalgamated with Frederick Birds to become Lyng Hall

Qualifications:

Left school: aged 16 and a half

Pre-nursing Cadet Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital

Nursing training Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital 1959-1962

Staff Nurse Surgical Ward 1962- May 1964

Father’s place and date of birth: Sunderland

Father’s Occupation: Factory worker Courtaulds

Mother’s place and date of birth: Sunderland

Mother’s Occupation: Department store floor walker prior to marriage; housewife after marriage

Siblings: one elder brother, one elder sister

Husband’s name: John

Occupation: Jaguar Service Manager
Year Married: early 1960s

Children: one daughter born in 1964 and one son

Date(s) of recording: 8 May 2007, 31 May 2007

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Coventry

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Blake                  Title: Mr

Interviewee’s forenames: Howard

Date of Birth: 1941

Place of Birth: Coventry.

School: Winmore Road School, passed 11plus; scholarship to King Henry the Eighth’s Qualifications:

Left School: aged 16

First Job: Alfred Herbert Commercial Apprenticeship; completed HND at Lanchester College of Technology Exhibition Manager

Took early retirement in late forties.

Father’s place and date of birth: Wales

Date of death: age 58

Father’s Occupation: Coal miner and then suffered unemployment in Wales; bus driver with Coventry Corporation

Mother’s place and date of birth: Wales

Mother’s Occupation: Housewife; once her children were both at school part-time dinner lady at school
Siblings: one elder brother

Wife’s name: Diane

Occupation: Language teacher; part-time lecturer

Year Married: early 1960s

Children: one daughter

Date(s) of recording: 8

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Balsall Common

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.
Interviewee’s surname: Carroll  

Interviewee’s forenames: James

Date of Birth: 1935

Place of Birth: Liverpool

School: evacuated during Second World War.

Occupation: First job after school milk man;
Boilermaker’s labourer
Apprentice boilermaker Cammell Lairds 1952-1957
National Service c.1957 – 1959 Oswestry
Shipbuilder/Boilermaker until 1980s – various firms across Mersey Side
Contracted emphysema through working with asbestos
Married: Divorced
Children: one daughter and one son (?)

Father date and place of birth: born in Ireland, large Irish Catholic family
Father’s occupation: dock worker
Mother’s date and place of birth: Liverpool Protestant

Returned to adult education in later life and enjoys writing poetry.
Date(s) of recording: 1 April 2008, 2 April 2008, 25 June 2008

Location of recording: First two interviews were conducted in a room in the History department of Liverpool University and the final interview in the interviewee’s home in Liverpool.

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material: The interviewee has donated his Apprenticeship indentures to the archive.

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.

Interviewer’s Comments:

James volunteered for the project after reading about it in the Liverpool Echo. He was born in 1935 and grew up in the Scotland Road area of the city.

In our initial telephone conversation he mentioned that the family moved out of Scotland Road when more "affluent", moved to Stanley Road, then Crosby now. Went to night school as an adult learner and he now writes poetry about his life and uses this to recall his memories.

Boiler maker, plater in the shipyards. Now has an asbestos related illness
Father was Irish, Grandfather Jewish. Remembers friction in the family because one side of the family was Protestant and the other Catholic.

*Notes from first interview 1st April 2008:*

I met Mr Carroll in the History department at Liverpool university. During our telephone conversations it became clear that although he had lived and grown up in the city centre he did not know the area around about the university today and was a little bit anxious about getting to the university and finding his way about. I sent him a map and some directions to find his way to the department. I wondered on my way to meet him this morning what he would make of the area and how he thought it had changed. Also I wondered how conducting the interview in the university setting would impact on what he said and how he recalled his memories. He began the interview by recalling his first memories of his mother and father which were during the blitz and was about how the family sought refuge in the air raid shelter and then in the basement. He also remembered his father stoking the fire and he remembered the warmth from the fire. Jay is one of five children, he has three brothers and one sister. He is the eldest and then Ronnie is 14 months younger than him and then Irene (Faith) and then is two younger brothers. He was evacuated to Wales when he was 5 at the beginning of the war and he remembered the traumatic feelings he felt when he realised that he was being sent away from his family. He was housed with one family but he remembers behaving badly, setting the mother’s knitting on fire, after this incident he was rehoused with another family, Mrs Roberts and her two daughters. Mrs Roberts would hit Jay with a birch and she would also lock him in the coal bunker when she went out. His memories of his evacuation are of a very difficult time when he was not happy and was always hungry. He would spend a lot of time by
himself and did not socialise with kids as the farm was far from other houses. His younger brother was also housed there eventually and Jay says that Ronnie also found it difficult but Jay acknowledges that because he was such a young age he was not aware of how his brother was being treated as he was barely able to look out for himself. His mother and father visited twice but he had been warned by Mrs Roberts not to say anything about how he was being treated so he didn’t as he was too scared. He recalls that when he returned home to Liverpool he used to flinch when his mother or father walked past him in the house as he expected to get hit like at Mrs Roberts’s house.

There was some slight confusion during the interview as both Jay and myself tried to place in order the houses that he had lived in as he produced a photograph of a pub, The Swan, on Scotland Road as a house that he used to live in. Jay was also slightly confused as it says on his birth certificate that he was born in Oxford Street (?), his father seemed to have another address and then they lived on Scotland Road. His maternal grandma was the licensee of the Swan, and his mother had returned to live in the pub when his father was in the army. When he was evacuated he was evacuated from a terraced house on Olney Street at County Road and he returned to this house. But he recalled that he used to return to the pub often to see his grandma who he was closer to than his father’s parents. There was some familial tension between his mother and father’s families as his father was Catholic and from a large Irish family and his mother was Protestant.

He reflected that his mother had converted to Catholicism because she was in love with his father. His mother had been a machinist and also a good hairdresser prior to
marriage. She had no qualifications but he recalled that his mother always had very
good manners and kept herself well, values that she insisted her family retained. She
took a part time job when the family got older working in a hardware store on
Scotland Road. The money went towards items of value that she purchased from the
pawnbrokers for her family. He thought that had she had more money she might have
made a bit more money from her purchases. He was unaware if she used the
pawnbroker but would not be surprised if she had. Sunday was the day that his father
took over the responsibility of cooking from his mother. He would take breakfast in
bed to his wife and allow her to sleep in on that day. Sunday was a boring day for Jay
as it was taken up with chores and mass. Although the one good thing to look forward
to was his dinner. His mother died aged 47 when Jay was 26 and he regrets not having
asked her more or spoken to her more. He acknowledged that at that age young boys
and men are more interested in other things and not their mothers and families. His
mother was ill for five years and had been treated for something else when she died of
another ailment.

His father was born in Ireland he thinks and moved to Liverpool with his family.
Some of his brothers were left behind in Ireland. His father was out of work when he
was demobbed from the army. He had been in the Black Watch but did not see active
service as he was injured during training and was given a job in the REME instead.
Jay also recalled that his mother suffered from nerves and this meant that his father
got compassionate leave. His father never spoke about his time in the army. When he
was demobbed he was out of work, jay can’t recall how they survived at this time. But
his father got a job as a milkman and then got a job in the English Electric as a turner.
He was a big man and was very involved in a number of sporting teams, darts,
snooker and football as well as boxing. He came from a family of about 12 children. Jay spoke of a couple of brothers Jo and John who were also good fighters and would stick up for each other. He seemed to suggest that one of the brothers thought he was posher than the rest and would talk with a different accent. His mother also made her children speak differently in the house compared to in the street and there were children in the street who he was not allowed to play with as she though they were rough. He was told to play in another street where those children were not. He was not very close to his father’s parents as they appeared to be quite anti-English and were not a close family. Therefore Jay recalls that he didn’t have a close or warm family life. His mother did not show much affection either until he was leaving to go into National Service, she was ironing and a tear rolled down her cheek.

His parents brought him up to have good manners. His father was strict. He does not recall any violence between his mother and father apart from some arguments over how much of his father’s wage would be given over to his mother, especially when she needed a bit more. His father would go to the pub on the way home from work instead of after dinner as if he waited he would not go out again. His mother and father socialised together on a Saturday night down the pub. His mum liked to dress up. They would often return home with a group of friends and they would sit in the front parlour and sing while his mother played the piano.

Some of his aunts and uncles lived close by and others did not. There was some tension between the families.

School
He left school at the age of 14. He was desperate to leave as he had not enjoyed it. He did not like the teachers as they were strict and they did not encourage him even when he showed talent. He had problems reading and writing and was taken out of class of 44 to a group of 5 to help improve his reading. However he was not encouraged effectively and instead he found it really difficult. He did enjoy comics though as he was able to follow the pictures and understand the story. He does regret not having more qualifications as he wonders if this would have meant that he would a better job and not have worked in the shipyards and not suffered from ill health. His parents did not understand how or why one son was unable to do well at school and he dreaded taking his school report home. He did not gain any qualifications. The one thing he enjoyed at school was commercial art and also swimming. He has subsequently returned to adult education.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: McGuirk  Title: Mr

Interviewee’s forenames: John

Date of Birth: January 1931

Occupation: Merchant Navy from age 15 until 23; Erector Motorway construction for 21 years.

Wife’s Name:

Date of Birth:

Wife’s Occupation:

Date(s) of recording: 31 January 2008; 25 February 2008; 10 March 2008; 1 May 2008

Location of recording: FACT

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material: photographs
Interviewer’s Comments:

John is a volunteer at Tenantspin and was recommended to the project through the Tenantspin co-ordinator Laura Yates. He was born in the 1931. He lived and grew up in the Bootle area of the city. He left school to join the Merchant Navy at 15 for 8 years. After some short term work he then worked on the motorways for 21 years.

The first interview with John was conducted in FACT Liverpool and was recorded using a digital voice recorder and a camcorder. John has taken part in a number of initiatives with FACT and Tenantspin and is therefore very comfortable when being interviewed with both a voice recorder and a camcorder. As we were interviewing in a working community arts area we had a room booked for an hour, then a break and then another hour’s booking. Between both interviews John was very candid and spoke openly about periods of his family’s history to do with domestic violence between his mother and father. He has three half brothers and sisters. The set of interviews chronologically cover his childhood, local neighbourhood, school, youth, working in the Merchant Navy and on the motorways and marriage.
Interviewee’s surname: Walker          Title: Mrs

Interviewee’s forenames: Judy

Date of Birth: 1940
Place of Birth: Coventry
School: Frederick Birds
Left school: age 15
Occupation: Sales Assistant BHS, Blouse Box left aged 21 when married; started working at B.T.H aged 21 on coil winding. Lived for a period of time in South Africa in the 1960s. Nursery nurse.
Married: 1961
Two children
Divorced: late c.1966
Re-married: c.1968
Two children
Divorced:
Re-married: 1985

Father’s place of birth: Coventry
Father’s occupation:
Father died when Judy 16 in 1956
Mother re-married: 1957

Mother’s occupation: housewife; then managed a pub in Coventry city centre with new husband

Siblings: one younger brother

Date(s) of recording: 23 April 2007, 30 April 2007, 9 May 2007, 21 May 2007

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Coventry

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.

Interviewer’s Comments:

Judy replied to the Coventry Telegraph article. She was born in the Hillfields area of Coventry in 1940 and lived with her mother and father in her grandmother’s house, which was a two up two down. Her father worked as a fitter at the Humber works (later to be Rootes Group). Her mother stopped working after she gave birth to Judy but went to work part time in a café called Dominoes when Judy was at school. She would always be at home when Judy got home from school. She describes the house
in Albert Street where she lived with her grandparents and parents. She explained then that she moved to Adelaide Street with her parents once her brother John was born, eight years her younger. However, later on in the interview she recalls moving to Saul Highway prior to moving to Adelaide Street. She describes the neighbourhood round about in Hillfields, the local shops privately owned, the differences between the shop keepers and those that were the same as her and then those families that were poorer than her. When Judy was 16 her father died of cancer. This was one of the most traumatic episodes in her childhood that she remembers. Her father had been a quiet but loving character and she and her family were his sole concern. Her mother remarried one year later, Bill a police inspector and the family moved to St John St. to a pub. Her grandmother at points in her life had three jobs as her husband would often drink his wages down the pub. She was an usherette at the Hippodrome and she had two other cleaning jobs, one in a bank and another private one. Judy, aged ten or eleven, would sometimes go along to help her grandmother clean the bank to reach the areas that she was unable to as she was getting older. Judy would receive some sort of payment for helping.

Judy attended the Fredrick Bird School from aged 5 to 15. She disliked maths and English but enjoyed netball, singing, acting and cooking. Her time at school was marred because she was picked on by being called fatty.

Her mother and father socialised mainly with her family who lived throughout Coventry. They would visit family on a Sunday and would often end up singing along to the piano. As a family they would go along to the Howitzers club in Hillfields where her father and grandfather and uncles would play dominoes and darts and
upstairs Judy would join in singing. She sung throughout the clubs in Coventry when she was a young girl.

Judy left school when she was fifteen and began to work in BHS earning £2.13.6. When her father became ill she stopped working at BHS and got a job locally in a newsagent so as to be closer to home to help look after him. When she was working at this point Judy would tip up the whole of her wage to her mother as it was needed more than ever since her father was off work ill. Her mother would in turn pay Judy her bus fares to work.

Judy recalls her time working at BHS with fond memories. She was a teddy girl and remembers her tight A-line skirt, her velvet collared jacket and her long eyelashes and stilettos.

Judy married when she was 21 to a man who was eleven years older than her. Her grandmother warned her not to marry him as she felt he was not suitable, he was in the RAF and was a bit of a loner. After three weeks of marriage he started to hit Judy. Judy had two children with this man. She subsequently left him and married another man, who also was violent towards to her. She had another two children with him before leaving him. She married her current husband 22 years ago.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Rigby

Interviewee’s forenames: Nellie

Date of Birth: 1928

Place of Birth: Chesterfield, Doncaster

School: left school aged 14

First Job: seasonal agricultural worker while still at school; left home and lived in as a cleaner in Cookeridge Hospital, Doncaster; cook and cleaner Leeds Infirmary; many part-time jobs after having her children- cleaner; sales assistant; factory worker Crawfords; part-time cleaner in later life.

Father’s place and date of birth:

Father’s Occupation: Miner Hatfield Colliery

Mother’s Occupation: housewife but also worked as seasonal agricultural labour

Siblings: eight sisters and two brothers but two brothers and two sisters died of T.B in 1940

First Husband’s name: Rob

Occupation: ex-RAF; injured during war service; Lever Brothers- mail room worker

Year Married: 1946

Died: aged 65

Children: two daughters Carol born 1946 (died aged 24) and Julia born 1958
Second Husband: 11 years after Rob’s death Nellie married Danny

Occupation: Plant Manager, Crawfords Factory. Had done 2 years national service and then worked at Crawfords until 1992 when the factory closed.

Date(s) of recording: 9 April 2008; 16 April 2008; 23 April 2008; 30 April 2008

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Liverpool

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.

Nellie volunteered to take part in the project when I went along to meet those involved in the Belle Vale Prefab project.

Nellie was born in 1928. She moved to Liverpool in 1946. After a brief period of time of living with her husband’s sister in the inner city they moved into the prefabs.

The interviews with Nellie Rigby were conducted in her house in the Netherley area of Liverpool. Nellie is 80 years old and lives in sheltered accommodation. She moved
after her second husband died. She wanted to be in accommodation that was manageable and she didn’t have to worry about things.

Each interview lasts for 2 hours. Nellie is still a very active woman and she has frequent meetings and clubs to attend. Nellie was able to talk freely at points but often needed direction when she began to talk about the present and how the present has changed.

9 April 2008 The first interview focused on her girlhood growing up in Duncroft Doncaster. Her father was a miner at the Hatfield main colliery. There were 10 children in the family, 8 girls and 2 boys, 6 died in the TB outbreak in the 1930s including her father. Nellie worked on the fields during the seasonal work in order to contribute to the family.

16 April 2008 The second interview focused on her working life after leaving home and then meeting her first husband Rob. Nellie left the family home aged 14 to work in Cookridge hospital outside Leeds because her mother had remarried and she did not get on with her step-father. She was going to leave Cookridge due to a misunderstanding she had with the head cook. The Sister asked if she would work for her mother and father as a live in domestic. However, Nellie didn’t want to do this so she went home to her mother. Aged 15 and a half she started work in Leeds Infirmary.

23rd April 2008 The third interview focused on marrying Rob and living in the prefab. Married Robert age 18 because she was pregnant. Met him on the military ward in Leeds Infirmary where she was working. He was from Liverpool and lived in a 2 up 2 down with 4 boys and 2 girls. Robert was 16 years older than her.
Moved into prefab in 1947, her first daughter was born in 1946. Would help women who worked in the prefabs by looking after their children and helping out at a nursery ran by a single mother who charged 6 shillings to look after the children.

Rob received a war pension from the government due to being injured and disabled. Nellie went back to work after her first child was born to begin with in a grocery shop, then a sweet shop. She gave up work when Robert went back to work in Lever Brothers as she needed to look after Carol. Moved to the Maisonette in 1968. Moved to a flat in 1970 which was on the ground floor and easier for Rob to get in and out. Second daughter Julia was born in 1958. Nellie’s eldest daughter died aged 24. Nellie found this very difficult to handle and suffered from depression.

30th April The final interview focuses on her later life and her second marriage. She talks about being made redundant and returning to work in later life as a part time cleaner in a domestic house and also about moving to sheltered accommodation.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Baker

Interviewee’s forenames: Paul

Date of Birth: 1947

Place of Birth: Coventry

School: Bablake

Occupation: Insurance Clerk

1st Wife’s Name: Sylvia

Married:

2nd Wife’s name: Diane

Married:

Children:


Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Coventry

Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young
Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.

Interviewer’s Comments:

Paul Baker replied to the Coventry Telegraph article by email. The interview was conducted in his home. He was born in 1947 in the Whoberley area of Coventry in a cardboard prefab, the snow was so deep that the doctor was unable to attend the delivery. He lived in the prefab until he was aged 11, when his family, mother, father and younger sister Vicky by 3 years, moved to Coundon.

The first interview lasted about 3 hours. Initially Paul was able to talk freely about his childhood and needed little direction as it appeared he was recalling his memories by association. When I asked if he could describe the prefab, he took about 5 mins to draw a diagram of the prefab and use that to stimulate his memory, the drawing subsequently triggered a number of other memories which he jotted down in keywords beside his drawing to come back to when discussing the prefab. This included the water butt outside which was used for water in the garden, the heavy blankets which his mother used in the winter to keep the family warm as the house tended to get cold, the back boiler in the living room, the utility furniture in the kitchen and in his parents bedroom, the windows, on which he often wrote his name on the frost. He described his memories as warm feelings and smells. And when I
asked him about this he explained that that was how he remember the prefab as the warmth of the family. I asked him about the local neighbourhood and he talked about “Auntie” Effie who lived close by in the next prefab and who looked after him if his parents were out working when he came home from school. Auntie Effie’s husband was self-employed which meant that they were a bit better off than other people. He also used to go there on a Sunday evening. He mentioned a family close by who he described as “rough” and then proceeded to explain that they seemed different to his family, his house always seemed clean, light and bright in contrast to their house which always seemed dark. He mentioned that he associated them with fat and sugar in contrast to his own family that always seemed to have good food. He then acknowledged that he had just made a class distinction! He recalled the gatherings that the neighbourhood of prefabs would have on the common green space in the middle of the prefabs. And mentioned that the brick houses that edged the prefab area were mainly owned by people whom he didn’t know and didn’t play with. He continued to talk about going to the shops as young boy aged 3 when his mother was pregnant with his sister to buy grapefruits because she was craving them. The shops were Hemley’s and the Co-op. The family was a great Co-op family and he can still remember the divi number. The prefab had a garden in which his parents only really grew rhubarb and maybe some other vegetables but preferred to buy their veg from the shop as it meant they were striving forward to better themselves after the war. While looking at photographs later on in the interview a number of the pictures were taken in the garden, of Paul playing, of his mother with him, of a family gathering. I asked what the garden meant and he explained that it was his father’s pride and joy and that it meant a little bit of independence for him and signified the progress they were making as a family after the war. Paul’s extended family lived within Coventry
but also in Stratford. He would see his grandmother every Thursday afternoon and they would also go on holiday together (more pictures of family holidays at the holiday camps). They would drive, as his father was keen to get a car after the war and his uncle’s family would also go to the holiday camp with them. His father was born in 1916 and his mother in 1918. He described them as street urchins who came from extremely poor families. His mother’s father was an alcoholic and was violent towards his grandmother. He was a barber and died before Paul was born due to alcoholism. After the war his mother worked in Jay’s the furniture shop and he thought that she managed to get some discounts on furniture for the house there. His parents had married c1941 and added their names to the council house waiting list. However, because his father didn’t come home from the war until 1946 they missed their spot and had to back on the list, which meant that they got a prefab. His mother had been living with her family during the war. His father worked four jobs at one point. The co-op diary milkman, from 4.30 until 11am, then the delivery driver for a confectionary company between 11 and the early afternoon, then the Coventry Telegraph delivery driver in the early evening. After dinner in the evening he would go out as an MC and compare. This money was never declared and was used as extras for luxury items. The tips on Christmas day from the milk round were important and would pay for the Christmas.

The interview was comfortable and easy going. Paul was keen to take part as he has an interest in the local history of Coventry and is currently applying for a tour guide job over the summer in the city centre. He recently suffered a stroke and has made a full recovery but does not want to go back to work full time. He explained that he can sometimes become a little bit depressed at the thought that he is no “longer useful”
and hoped that he could help with this project in a constructive way. He said he “was honoured” to be among the ten people to be interviewed from the 60 replies we received.
**INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee’s surname: Jones</th>
<th>Title: Mr</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee’s forenames: Ron</td>
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</table>

Date of Birth: 1934

School: Tiber Street Secondary Modern; Colomendy School; left aged 15

Qualifications: Leaving Certificate

Occupation: 1949 Co-operative Society- wages to mum (5/-) back for clothing,

National Service in 1953 - 1955

Returned to Co-operative society for 12 months after NS

Liverpool Corporation Public Transport- conductor for 12 months, applied to become a driver- dad joined him.

Various jobs in later life- Amplivox salesmen which required him to gain qualifications

Wife’s Name: Edna

Place and Date of Birth: Liverpool

Wife’s Occupation: Liverpool Corporation Public Transport prior to marriage and after marriage

Children: two daughters and one son

Date(s) of recording: 11 April 2008, 9 May 2008,

Location of recording: Narrator’s home in Liverpool
Name of Interviewer: Hilary Young

Type of Recorder: Digital Marantz

Additional Material:

Clearance and Copyright: Full clearance provided. No restrictions required.

*Interviewer’s Comments:*

Mr Jones volunteered for the project after reading the short article about the project in the Liverpool Echo. He suffers from emphysema and so the interviewing process did become difficult at times for him as he became tired and out of breath very easily. However, the narrator was very keen to take part and I was keen to ensure his participation was made as easy and as comfortable as possible. The interviews include a number of pauses as we stop for the narrator to have a break. It became clear when I started to talk to Mr Jones that he liked to include his wife in the conversation. I was happy to include Edna in the interview. She did not want to join us for the whole time and would often pop in and sit with us for a while, listen, add her point of view and leave us to it again.

Ron was Born 14 November 1934 Erskine Street

Parents moved into a house in Dove Street.

Mother’s parents - Grandparents had a house in Grierson Street. Used to visit quite often. House was next to the wash-house.

Grandmother moved to Thames Street when his grandfather died during the war.
Mother’s sister and two brothers lived in the same street as him.

Father’s parents- Birkenhead where his dad was born. Grandfather worked for Cammel Lairds as a leather tanner.

Father was in the army Royal Horse Artillery with uncle. Drafted to serve overseas to Crete. Father collapsed on route on the ship due to an ulcer which had burst- operated on and in hospital for weeks. Ship had been bombed and all hands lost. Father devastated- discharged medically unfit from service. ARP Air Riad Warden. Furniture remover- would move a lot of furniture to the American airbase Burtonwood. Tips in kind- sugar, jam, tinned fruit. Trips during the school holidays with dad when removing furniture to New Brighton, Southport, Blackpool

Tiber Street Secondary Modern school until 1946 and then went to Colomendy School – a short term boarding school for 12 months then returned to Tiber Street. Left at 15 years old in 1949.

Ron mentioned that if you got a council house you were lucky. Mainly private landlords- parents on the waiting list for a council house 15 years and in the end had to do an exchange with another council tenant and moved to Huyton. House was condemned- stood up until 1960s
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Singh Gill  Title: Mr

Interviewee’s forenames: Sathnam

Date of Birth: 1944  Sex: Male

Place of Birth: Punjab

Moved to Coventry: 1962


Indian Workers Association

Married: 1969

Wife’s Name and Date of Birth: India moved to Coventry 1969

Wife’s Occupation: Housewife

Children: four

Date(s) of recording: 17th February 2007

Location of recording: Interviewee’s home in Coventry

People present during the interview: Mr Singh Gill, Hilary Young and the interviewee’s son, Talvinder for the first half.
The interview took place in Mr Gill’s home in Foleshill area of Coventry. The interview was arranged through Mr Gill’s son Talvinder who was there to meet me when I arrived at the family home. Talvinder sat in on a little bit of the interview but not for the whole thing.

Mr Gill moved to England in 1962 from the Punjab. He is one of five children. He explained that his family came from a farming background. He attend school and then college for 3 months prior to moving to Coventry and was keen to continue studying. However, he moved to England because the family farm was unable to sustain his whole family. When he first arrived in England he was unemployed for 4 months as there was a slump in the car industries which were the main Coventry employers. However, he managed to get a job in a chicken factory which paid £7 a week. This was not what he had expected to come to Coventry to do. He then managed to get a job a number of other car factories and foundries throughout the area which paid
better. Mr Gill became heavily involved in the trade union movement as a shop
steward as at the time there was no union within the factories he was working in. He
described friends’ experiences of racism in trying to get work and within the
workplace. The working conditions were also a catalyst for a union to be formed and
he described the hard working conditions, the heat, the dirt, no ventilation. Mr Gill
was nominated as a shop steward as he was able to speak English and understand the
workplace relationship between the management and workers. He described two
instances when the workers went on strike late in the 1960s due to working conditions
and in according to his memory in 1973, although he does recall it was when Thatcher
was Prime Minister (which suggests an element of misremembering). The second
strike was in response to one of the shop stewards being suspended by the
management after agitation. The workforce decided to walk out unless the worker was
reinstated. The workforce was out on strike for 16 weeks. Mr Gill explained the
impact this had on himself. He was going to leave the foundry after this experience
however, he was invited to become a foreman. He then became a technical foreman.
He became redundant in 2002 when the works was moved to Wales and he decided
not to move his family or be away from his family.

His sister had already moved to England to join her husband who had moved to
England in the late 1950s. Later in the interview Mr Gill explained that he has heard
stories about these initial years of migration where people were living in houses with
15 other people taking shifts in the beds. However, when he arrived in England his
sister and brother-in-law owned their house and the people who were living there
were all relatives including his sister’s father-in-law and brothers-in-law. There were
ten people living in the house with two or three beds in each of the three bedrooms.
He recalls that the house was nice and did not describe the living conditions as difficult. When he married in the late 1960s his new wife also moved in to this house. His wedding took place in the local temple which had been built in the mid-sixties and they held a wedding party in a local pub with about 200 people in attendance. He recalls that the wedding cost around a thousand pounds which was a lot of money in those days. He explained that he saved and paid for the wedding himself. He was then able to afford to buy the house from his brother-in-law in the early 1970s. At the time he was married there were only two Indian shops in the area which were owned by his brother-in-law and another member of his extended family. I asked how he had met his wife. He had an arranged marriage. His sister’s father-in-law arranged it back in India and his sister flew to India to meet his potential wife. As the interviewer I struggled to ask further questions about this process. Although I did ask what Indian women did when they first moved to England. Mr Gill recalled that they did not work and stayed at home cooking which was usual in India. He explained that he began to see young women entering the work place lately.

Sport played a significant part in Mr Gill’s experience of living in Coventry. He is currently the president of Coventry’s Kibbaddi club which he helped found in the early 1960s. He described his first match in Coventry which was on the local park in Foleshill. He had being sitting having a pint in the local pub when some friends came round and asked if he wanted to play a match against some men from Pakistan. From that match he made some good contacts and lots of friends who he has staying in touch with since. Until that match he had only known two or three people. He also played in volleyball and hockey teams.
The interview went well and Mr Gill was willing to answer questions relating to the time period. He was less willing to discuss his family life in India prior to coming to England and it was on this topic that I decided to end the interview. We were talking about what he had hoped for this children and I asked what he thought his parents would have hoped for him. He had mentioned early on in the interview that his father had died suddenly the month after he had moved to England. My question about his parents’ wishes triggered difficult memories to talk about which Mr Gill called an “awkward” question. He also became emotional when he attempted to answer the question, his eyes visibly welled up although he did not breakdown. I also began to feel the strength of his emotion and became a little teary. At this point I decided to respect the narrator’s emotions and feelings and we suspended the interview. Mr Gill has agreed to follow up the initial interview at a later date when he comes back from India. 26th September 2008- despite trying to contact Mr Singh Gill I have been unable to arrange a second follow up interview.
INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Interviewee’s surname: Rimmer

Title: Mr

Interviewee’s forenames: Terry

Date of Birth: 1937

Place of Birth: Liverpool

School: Catholic school

Qualifications:

First Job: Lybro-

Recees Dairy

National Service: demobbed 1958

Engineer Railway worker c.1958-c.1963 Completed Engineering course

Liverpool Corporation Public Transport Bus Driver c.1963-1964

Fords Halewood

Own Jewellery business started c. 1983 with second wife.

First wife: Joyce

Married: c.1959

Children: Michelle 1959; Billy 1960; Terry 1962; Mark 1967.

Second Wife: Margaret

Married: early 1970s

Children: Lee
Terry Rimmer replied to the article in the Liverpool Echo.

He was born in 1937. His father was a builder. He left Crown Street in 1957. He had lived there between 1941 and 1957. The area was Jewish. He used to go into a Russian woman’s home and rake the fire for her. He was a war orphan. His father was killed during the Second World War. He recalls the moment his mother found out her husband had been killed – mother fainted. His auntie picked him up. He recalls that his father had been a bare knuckle fighter. Terry started work in Jeans Overall factory aged 15.

First Interview 22\textsuperscript{nd} January 2008

I arrived at Sankey station and was met by Terry Rimmer. He drove us to his house in Penketh. He struggled to contain or refrain from talking about his childhood until the microphone and recorder were turned on- which we managed to do quite quickly after
getting in the house. As soon as the recorder was turned on Terry launched into his monologue describing his family and the area of Sheardley Street which joined onto Crown Street where he lived. During the course of the interview Terry revealed a number of traumatic events.

The first interview focuses on the period in the house in Sheardley Street and the Crown Street area. We jumped forward at points to discuss key moments in his later life- two marriages, 1st wife Joyce who he had four children with. He had an affair at the age of 28 with a girl of 18? He had one illegitimate son with this girl. He remarried and was with his second wife for c.30 years but she left him f in the 1990s.

His father had been killed during the SWW when his mother was only 21 years old, leaving her with two children. She subsequently had a number of relationships with married (unknown to her) men, two if which resulted in her becoming pregnant with Terry’s two younger brothers. His younger sister by a year taunted both of these brothers about not having her father. Terry’s grand father wanted (his father’s father) to see his dead son’s children but did not invite Terry’s two brothers who were not Rimmers.

MOTHER: Terry recalls his mother being singled out or called derogatory names by other women in the street especially if Terry did something wrong or was caught by the police or got into trouble, they would comment that his mother was “no good anyway.” Terry felt bad when this happened and tried not to bring shame on his mother. His mother held down two jobs sometimes three when he was growing up. The only money that kept the house going was that brought in by his mother and his
grandmother. His mother worked at Lybro from 8.30 until 6pm roughly at night. And also worked in a pub in the evening. His grand mother died in 1958. His mother received money from her death and used this to buy a house in Picton Street.

The most traumatic topic we discussed was the abuse he and his sister suffered from his uncle. His mother’s youngest brother lived with the family and shared a room with Terry prior to his younger brothers being born. Terry recalled how he used to dread going to bed as his uncle would come upstairs and join him in bed. I think terry used to call out and this would make the uncle stop. But Terry did not know that the uncle’s attention then turned to his younger sister. Terry felt guilty for not speaking out about what had happened to him as this could have potentially stopped his uncle abusing his sister. Terry felt that he had failed to protect his sister. He speaks about this period with amazing openness and it did not seem that he had difficulty in talking about this issue with me. However, he explained that this experience had made him question his sexuality as he got older and had also stuck with him and effected him deep down.

Terry’s memories jumped around as he recalled experiences, something else would spring to mind and he would move on to talk about that. I didn’t guide him as he was able to talk freely by himself. I wanted to see how he would continue to recall-freestyle remembering I think. He asked for direction at points when he ended up talking about difficult topics.

Other topics recalled included girls, courting, first dates, knowledge of sex. Again he spoke freely about “first” experiences and feelings. Wakes, death, close friends’
deaths as children. Cinema going, reading, school experiences. All of these topics were touched upon by Terry during this first interview.

SCHOOLING: He attended a Catholic school. He was an able student, sitting close to the front of the class but was the class clown. He could have got a scholarship but was aware that his mother could not have afforded the uniform and so he declined the offer. Particular teachers engaged his interest, especially Mr Saunders, who taught literature and introduced Terry to classic texts. Coral Island, .

FATHER: His father was a strong-hard man from what he described. He showed a picture of his father in which his knuckles are bound as he was a bare knuckle fighter.

The subsequent interviews work chronologically and cover topics such as school, national service, work on the buses in Liverpool, Fords and own company, marriage, family, and later life.
Jean [Janet] was one of 13 children. She grew up on Myrtle Street in Myrtle House. She was born in 1946. Her mother was a housewife and her father had various jobs but was often out of work. She later learned that he father had 3 illegitimate children. She used to attend the Rodney Rooms Youth Centre which was further along Myrtle Road. Her family appeared in a BBC documentary in the 1950s. And she recalls that Myrtle House also appeared in the film The Violent Playground.

**Topics Covered:**
Childhood in Liverpool; growing up in Myrtle House; family lived closed by in Myrtle House; relationship with extended family; childhood chores and roles; Jean’s role to look after the younger children; schooling; move from Myrtle House to Minto Street; leaving school; make own clothes; first job; marriage; in-laws; religion; divorce.
COVENTRY AND LIVERPOOL LIVES ORAL HISTORY TOPIC OUTLINE

PERSONAL

Name, age, date of birth, place of birth, no. of siblings, family position, parents and parents’ occupations.

GROWING UP

Experience of childhood

Where they grew up

Neighbourhood – experience

Try and get past notion that everyone left doors open. When were people allowed in house and why, was there an extended group of people who helped out?

Did they move house/neighbourhood/further afield? Experience of this – traumatic, exciting? Socially upwards or downwards?

Neighbourhood as defining them in any way?

Would they have said they were poor?

EDUCATION

Schools they attended

Memories of choosing school/11 plus

School experiences

Social composition of school – social class experiences at school.

Qualifications
FAMILY

Relations with parents as child and teenager. Parental attitudes to schooling. Gender difference?

Siblings and relations – any differences between their early lives.

Helping out at home in any way?

YOUTH

Leisure pursuits.

Amount of spending money and how received

First job

First wage

Subsequent jobs and wages

Work experience – daily life, friends, relations with employer, labour process.

Changing jobs – why, when, result

Work training – offered, taken?

Ambitions as young man/young woman – what did they fantasise about, and what did they hope for?

Difference if any in family relationships and status when began work.

Youthful consumption – who bought their clothes, did they feel well off

What Coventry/Liverpool offered to them – what they thought of it.

COURTSHIP

Courtship – when allowed, how they met people, what they looked for.

Marriage – why, when

Wedding – what kind, money spent on it?
Early married life – changes from previously?
Where they lived – finding a home, how decisions made about this and things generally – mutual, separate?
Finances – mutual, separate?
Aspirations at this point – what did they want out of life?
Perceptions of Coventry/Liverpool at this time.
Did they do anything different to their parents in terms of married life or children

CHILDCARE
Children – how many, when, how many did they want and get, evidence of birth control, childcare – shared or not?
Do things differently to their parents?
Read any books about childcare, get any assistance?
Did family relationships change with extended family?
Neighbours or friends help out?

INCOME AND WORK
Married women and part-time work – did they do this, where, why, what was money used for?
Benefits – did they receive any state benefits? How did they feel about this? Was there a stigma attached? Maybe here make comparison with 1980s to try and get past fact that since 80s a great stigma attached to benefits.
Workplace – labour process, career history.
Workplace – member of trade union, relations with employer, participation in strikes, memory of period as a period of industrial militancy.
Unemployment – ever any periods of that.

LEISURE AND CONSUMPTION

Home and domestic work – who did what?

Domestic appliances and when?

Leisure time – what they did, with whom.

Keeping themselves to themselves, rough or respectable behaviour – was this part of their life, their way of defining themselves or others?

Socialising with workmates?

Holidays? Where and when?

How were purchases paid for – Hire Purchase, savings etc?

Living standards higher or lower than parents? Why?

HOME

Neighbourhood – did they move house, neighbourhood, further afield. Why.

Perceptions of their neighbourhood – comparisons with elsewhere in the city.

How neighbourhood relations differed from when they were growing up.

Aspirations for children

What children did in terms of schooling and career.

Class – what class meant to them then, what it means to them now. How they define class.

Has Britain changed.

What are the major changes that have occurred in Britain over their lifetime.
Liverpool Life 1945-1970  
Information Sheet for Participants

This project aims to explore people’s experiences of living and working in Liverpool after the Second World War. We would like to speak to people who were born between 1920 and 1950 and were living in or moved to Liverpool between 1945 and 1970. We are especially interested in speaking to people who moved into Liverpool during this period from other countries or from another part of the UK or people who lived in the inner city area such as Crown Street and its environs. The topics to be discussed during the interview will include childhood and growing up, the local neighbourhood, school and education, your family, how you spent your leisure time and your experiences of work, among others.

An oral history interview aims to capture people’s memories and feelings about past events and everyday life experiences. An interview generally takes the form of a conversation and can last anywhere between one to three hours. Sometimes we may need to return to conduct further interviews. Hilary Young, the project researcher, will conduct the interview, and would like to record it. We can conduct the interview at a place and time that is suitable and convenient to yourself. After the interview the recording will be transcribed and you will receive a copy of the transcript to check. A Clearance and Copyright form is available for you to sign to show that we have your permission to use the material in our research. No names or material will be used in the final research without your consent. The oral history project is part of a wider project looking at people’s living standards in England between 1945 and 1970 being conducted by Dr Selina Todd, Department of History, University of Manchester.

If you would like to take part in the project or discuss any of the details further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Hilary Young  
28th November 2007

Dr Hilary Young  
School of Arts, Histories and Cultures  
The University of Manchester

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