

Margaret 'Girly' Playle

Interview by Jess Jephcott at Ditchling, Quilters Green, Fordham.
Monday 21st April, 2003.
David Playle and Theresa Jephcott in attendance.

(JJ) We'll make a start, now I'm going to have to ask you some silly questions.

Right, I'll give you some silly answers.

(JJ) 'Cause you know who you are and I know who you are. So, could we start with your full name, how were you christened?

I've only got one, Margaret.

(JJ) Margaret?

Playle, or, I was Margaret Beard, to start with.

(JJ) Margaret Beard, and when were you born?

The 22nd April, 1908.

(JJ) And where were you born?

The bungalow at Wash Corner, Wash Cottage.

(JJ) Wash Corner in Fordham.

On the outskirts, you see.

(JJ) Or Ford Street, I suppose.

No not Ford Street, no, it's still Fordham, Ford Street is the other side of the bridge.

(JJ) So, present address is the same.

I was born in that bungalow.

(JJ) And you've been there just about all your life.

Well, apart from about 2 years, when I married.

(JJ) How about brothers and sisters?

There were 8 of us, well actually, 9, well to start with there were 12. The first two, never knew anything about, I know they must have died in childbirth, then the third one, was a cripple, so we never knew her, she was in a home. Then there were eight of us after that.

(JJ) And where did you fit in?

Seventh.

(JJ) Number seven.

Seventh child, so I was blessed.

(JJ) Can we go through the oldest in order by name, so number four, the fourth?

The fourth?

(JJ) Well, unless, you know the first three names.

My oldest brother was Robert, then my sister Nellie, then brother Frederick, then I came, Margaret, then there's Charles, then Sidney, then Mary, Harry and then there was a baby, she died 1917, my father was out at the war then.

(JJ) When you were nine years old, you would have been.

Yes, I would have been, wouldn't I?

(JJ) Right, father, what was your father's name?

Charles

(JJ) Charles?

Beard.

(JJ) No second name?

No.

(JJ) And where was he born, do you know?

Somewhere up Fordham here, but the old cottage was pulled down, that was in one of Playle's fields.

(DP) Down Church Road

Where?

(JJ) Church Road, so how old was he when you were born, or do you know when he was born?

Who?

(JJ) Your father.

Oh dear, let me think.

(DP) He was born in 1878.

(JJ) So, where did he work, what was he doing?

In the building trade.

(JJ) In and around Fordham, bricklaying?

I think Theobald at Chapel.

(JJ) Yes, nothing to do with the big Chapel viaduct, I suppose, that was before then?

Well, I think he was a little bit, but I'm not quite sure.

(JJ) Of course, that was the time of the railway.

I don't know if he was building it or whether there was any repair. Just a little bit connected, but I'm not sure.

(JJ) So, did he have just the one job or was he doing all sorts of things?

Just, you know, just building houses.

(JJ) He didn't build Wash Cottage.

Oh no, do you know, before that was a dwelling place that was a sack factory.

(DP) Hessian sacks.

'Cause there was a mill down at Ford Street and a mill down at Fordham and one was a water mill, at Ford Street, and one was a weaver, don't know whether it was wool or what. Anyway, they made sacks for these mills and, then, we've never found out, when it was made into a dwelling place. They built the back place on, so the front part was older than the back.

(JJ) Often happens, I suppose! But the eldest child, presumably, would have been born there when your parents were married?

We were all born there.

(JJ) So, it was certainly a dwelling by then. So, as far as you know, was father ever out of work.

No.

(JJ) He went to be a soldier in 1914.

In 1916, and he was wounded in 1917.

(JJ) And do you know which regiment he was with?

Fusiliers.

(JJ) Royal Fusiliers, OK, let's talk about mother, what was mother's name?

Edith Ann Broyd.

(JJ) A local girl?

Brook Farm, just above me, but that was called The Traveller's Rest, because that was an off licence.

(JJ) Oh, was it? Brook Farm was an off licence and that was up this end of town was it?

Well actually, I think that was called The Kiln, 'cause my grandfather, Mum's father, made bricks there. The brick kiln.

(JJ) So, Brook Farm, above you then.

(DP) Towards Chapel.

On the main road

(JJ) Oh I see, so she was born there, as far as you know.

Yes, is that right?

(DP) Your mother, yes.

Yes, she was born there, and then, of course, went to Fordham School.

(JJ) So, do you know when she was born or how old she was when you were born?

(DP) About the same time as grandfather, I should think, wouldn't you?

Yes, dad was two years older than my mother. Mum died in 1933, she was 54.

(JJ) Did she work before she was married, do you know?

No, 'cause her mother died when my mum was 3, therefore, she stayed at home.

(JJ) And looked after the home.

After Dad, grand-dad, I expect.

(JJ) Did she work after marriage?

No, no.

(JJ) She had enough to look after.

I think she had enough to do.

(JJ) How about grandparents, do you remember your grandparents?

Well, me grandfather Broyd, yes, he lived to be 86.

(JJ) And what was his name?

William Broyd.

(JJ) So, what were they like? What was he like, especially?

Well, a bit stayed, didn't see much of them.

(JJ) But, again, a local man?

No, they came from Gestingthorpe.

(JJ) And he's the only grandparent you knew, is he?

My father's father, we never knew him, he died quite young with cancer. And then, the grandmother, she, we didn't know much about her but she went to Kent and lived with one of her daughters. So, we didn't know much about the Beard family. (think she meant the Broyd's here).

(JJ) So, where did the Beard side family come from? The Broyd's were Gestingthorpe.

No, the Broyd's, not the Beard's, the Beard's were all Fordham.

(JJ) Oh, they where, so again, good local people. Well, let's go to childhood days. Where you born at home?

Oh, yes.

(JJ) No hospitals in those days.

No, all born at home.

(JJ) Do you know who delivered you?

Oh, crumbs!

(DP) Doctor Wort.

Oh, Doctor Worts, and then we used to have...

(JJ) Would it have been him or would there have been a midwife, do you think?

They used to have a midwife or such as.

(JJ) So the house that, well, you now live in, can you describe it, as it was then? Has it changed much? What do you remember from very earliest days?

Where there's a third bedroom, now, there was a big pantry, and that was, we didn't have a bathroom until 1964.

(JJ) How did the washing go on, where did the hot water come from?

Copper, you know, coal, old fashioned copper.

(JJ) Where did you draw the water from?

We used to have a great big water butt under the ...

(JJ) There was a well?

Not till, when we were small, there's a brook the opposite side of us. We used to fetch water from there for washing, if there wasn't any soft water, and then for our drinking water, we used to have to go over to Friars House, with buckets.

(JJ) He had a well, presumably?

(DP) Eventually.

But afterwards, dad bought the house, 1929, 'cause that used to belong to Sir Worthington Evans.

(JJ) But he got the opportunity to purchase the freehold?

He'd been renting it from Worthington Evans, and then he sold up Penlan Hall, Friars Farm and our bungalow. That was 1929.

(JJ) Any ideas how much he paid for it?

£250.

(JJ) So, how many bedrooms were there in the house?

Well, you see, in the front, there was two bedrooms and then another one, which we used as a bedroom. So actually, that made three bedrooms.

(JJ) With several children in the house at one time, it was topping and tailing, was it?

There was two double beds in one room where the boys slept, three in a bed or three and two, wouldn't it be, with the five and then us three girls were in the middle room in one bed and then, of course, mum and dad in the other room.

(JJ) You didn't have a bathroom, so there wasn't a bathroom until much..

We had a great big bath, you know, what you hung outside.

(JJ) Zinc?

Galvanized, zinc, or I don't know.

(JJ) Bring it in, bath night was when, once a week?

Yes, Saturday's, in front of the kitchen fire.

(JJ) So, did you all get in the same water, or?

Oh, I don't know.

(JJ) Start with the big one and work down.

I don't think we all went in the same water.

(DP) Start with the cleanest one.

(JJ) What about lighting?

Oil lamps and candles.

(JJ) And eventually you went electric.

Electric.

(JJ) Before the war, the Second World War?

About 1929, I think, and then after dad bought the bungalow, he sunk a well for our drinking water.

(JJ) Of course, you're quite low there, anyway.

It was marvellous, he didn't have to go very deep, all the springs.

(JJ) Yes, you're right on it, aren't you? So, what form of heating, what about heating the house?

Coal.

(JJ) One fire, two fires?

We'd got a great big stove so there was the, what do you call it, on the side, where you heat the water, you know, and there was all the lovely tops, quite a big stove.

(JJ) So, housework, presumably, mother did all the housework or did you have any help?

Oh no, not the beginning, later on, 'cause she got so she was ill quite often. In the finish, she, her died, from pneumonia and worn out heart, which was understandable.

(JJ) That's right, it was hard days.

I mean, she had eight of us to look after when my father was gone to the war, but she was a lovely mother.

(JJ) Hard days indeed, so no servants at all, ever, nobody came in to do anything?

No not till later on, then, we used to have a woman come and do the washing.

(JJ) So, who did the cooking and how was the food cooked, I suppose?

In this big oven, my mum did it, yes.

(JJ) Like a big Aga or something. What about the laundry? Again, mother?

Mum did that, to start with.

(JJ) She took charge of all this. So, did the children have to help with household chores?

As we grew up, we all helped.

(JJ) You all had a go and did you receive any pocket money?

No.

(JJ) You did it for the love of it.

When I got eighteen, 'cause I never went out to work, I had to stop, I was the little thing of the family.

(JJ) I'm just going to take a little break and just check that this is OK on the camera. Yes, that looks good, that looks... I can't see it from there. Right, I can edit that out later on.

(JJ) Well, pocket money then, you didn't get any but..

When I got about eighteen, I used to go and catch the bus, into Colchester, and go to Woolworth's, Fridays from 1 o'clock, Friday afternoon, 1 o'clock to 8, I used to have 5 shillings and then on Saturday, that was 12, no wait a minute, 1 o'clock 'til 8 and I had 8 shillings. So, I used to have to buy my own clothes then.

(JJ) So how old were you then?

Eighteen and I went until my mum died when I was 24.

(JJ) Sorry, tell me again where did this money come from?

Pardon.

(JJ) How did you earn this money?

Woolworth's in High Street, Colchester.

(JJ) Retail, yes, OK. Mother and fathers work at home. Did mum do any sewing or needlework, was she a seamstress?

Well, she had to do all the darning and whatever, patching and this, that and the other.

(JJ) Did she make any of the families clothes or were they bought?

No, no, she didn't have time.

(JJ) No quite, so were clothes bought new or secondhand.

(DP) Handed down, maybe, from aunts and uncles?

I think we had some handed down, some, we always had new shoes.

(JJ) And who repaired them, did father?

My dad did, yes, we all had good shoes.

(JJ) How about father, did he grow his own vegetables, had an allotment or was it use of garden?

Yes, we had a big garden and then the allotment at Church Road.

(JJ) There're all still there, aren't they?

Yes.

(JJ) What about callers to the house, what arrangements were made for sweeping the chimneys, for instance?

We used to get a chimney sweep, yes, and then, the butcher, the baker, the fish man, they all used to call.

(JJ) What about the doctor, how often did he call?

Well, if you needed him he would call, if not, we had to walk up to Penlan Hall.

(JJ) This was Doctor Worts?

Doctor Worts, yes, but they were all very good. They used to call quite a lot.

(JJ) How about an insurance man? He figured in young life?

(DP) Penny a week?

Yes, there was some insurance, not much, and then, I think, they paid thruppence a week, later on, for the hospital.

(JJ) Mealtimes, what sort of things did you have to eat, I suppose, what was Sunday dinner?

Course, we used to have breakfast before we went to school, toast and eggs and that, and then, of course, we had to take lunch to school, sandwiches, and then mum used to cook, I don't know, about five or half past when me dad come home from work. We always had plenty of vegetables and we always had chickens in the garden and a pig, so, we were well provided for.

(JJ) How many pigs did you get through, was it once a year?

One a year, I expect.

(JJ) And you were out of the way, when he was dispatched, were you?

Oh, he went to Colchester to be slaughtered.

(JJ) So, up to the abattoir. How about wine, jam, pickles, did mum make anything like that?

Oh, mum used to make all jams, pickles and dad used to make home-made wine.

(JJ) Was he a poacher, dad?

Pardon?

(JJ) Was he a poacher, did he have a gun? He'd go out and shoot a rabbit, would he?

Oh, yes

(JJ) With or without permission?

Oh, permission, oh yes. To start off with, we had the meadow next to us, which we thought was ours, but it wasn't, we used it, and then there were fields, well I expect belonged to Worthington Evans, we was always allowed up there. I mean, years ago, people were more friendly than what they are now.

(JJ) I know what you mean. So, thinking about meal times then, what about table manners and saying grace, was that important?

We had to sit and we were not allowed to talk too much, behave ourselves, speak when we were spoken to.

(JJ) Moving on, discipline and punishment, what time did you have to go to bed, as a young girl?

Well, I reckon we used to have to be put to bed about half past six, in the winter, I suspect perhaps not quite so early, but we hardly ever saw our dad. And, if sometimes they were building houses, we'll say away, Kirby, or that way. I don't know, I don't quite know how they got there.

(DP) Walk.

but my mum used to give him a tin and pack sandwiches, you know, for a day or two, and then, we always reckoned when there was babies, we used to say, they come in the Kirby tin.

(JJ) So, no education that way.

We never knew where they came from, only from the Kirby tin.

(JJ) So, were parents strict with you or did you get away with all sorts of things?

No, I don't remember, you know, I don't ever remember being any bother.

(JJ) Well behaved children.

We all helped each other.

(DP) Goody goodies.

We really had a happy, happy home.

(JJ) But if you did step out of line, what was the punishment?

I don't remember - we were so good!

(JJ) What about authority then, you were presumably brought up to respect authority?

Well, I think we always respected everybody. As I say, people were always friendly with us, we didn't have to....

(JJ) But you could take any problems to mum and dad.

Not really.

(JJ) You've already said you were to be seen and not heard, certainly at meal times. How about Sundays, did parents believe it was right to work on a Sunday

Didn't have to, did they?

(JJ) Did your parents attend church?

Yes,

(JJ) Both of them?

Yes, well, Mum more so than Dad, 'cause you see, really, I only remember my father as being wounded. He was wounded in 1917. He first came from France to Manchester and then, from there to London, Shepherd's Bush, I don't know, he was there a long time

(JJ) And what were the extent of his injuries, how bad was he?

A shattered hip.

(JJ) Hard times, so, did you attend church or Sunday school.

When we were quite small, young I expect, we used to go to Fordham school to Sunday school, Sunday morning, and then from there we had to go from the school to the church service.

(JJ) This is the church up on the hill?

Fordham church, and go home for dinner. My father used to take us for a walk up the fields so Mum could have a rest. And then, in the evenings, when we got a bit older, we used to walk up to Fordham church

(JJ) Across the fields?

Yes, and in the winter, there used to be what they called, a mission room, down at Ford Street, and we used to go down there, Sunday evenings. So we used to have to go to Sunday school and church, morning, afternoon and evenings.

(JJ) So the denomination was Church of England?

Church of England.

(JJ) And the mission school was Church of England as well, was it?

Fordham church, yes.

(JJ) So, what about a choir, were you in the choir?

No.

(JJ) Any singing ability?

No, I don't think so, no I wasn't, me brothers were.

(JJ) Did either of your parents have any position in the church?

My mum and my uncle Frank, they were both in the choir, they'd got lovely voices. Then, Sunday evenings, before we went to bed, we all used to sit round the fire and my mum used to sing to us.

(JJ) Just Sundays?

Sunday evenings, yes.

(JJ) Presumably, you had to wear special best clothes on Sunday, for church?

Oh, yes.

(JJ) What about temperance associations or the band of hope, was that anything you knew about?

Oh yes, there was a kind of band of hope down that mission room, we all signed the pledge.

(JJ) Did you? Did you keep to it?

No, not lately, well, we were never allowed, we used to have a little tiny drop of port when we got older, Christmas morning, and that was all, ever.

(JJ) I'm sure they wouldn't have minded, would they? Did you share in any other activities, organised by the church?

I don't think so, you see, actually, we were on the outskirts of the village, we never felt we belonged to the village, much.

(JJ) Well, I'll come on to entertainment, but did you have to say your prayers at home?

Not really, I don't think, we used to say them when we got to bed, on our own.

(JJ) So, what else did you do on a Sunday?

Well, there wasn't much else to do.

(JJ) That was taken up with most of the time. So, if we talk about family gatherings and entertainment.

Oh, yes.

(JJ) What about birthdays and Christmas?

Do you know, I was trying to think what we did for birthdays, but I don't think we ever did much, but for Christmas, you see my mum's sister, lived down, I don't know if you know the Clampins, next door to The Shoulder of Mutton? They were builders, weren't they, and that was my mums' sister, we used to go down there quite a lot and we always went down there Boxing Day or was it Christmas Day?

(JJ) There was music, was there, was anyone musical in the family?

My uncle used to play the accordion, my mums' brother, and then for New Year we always used to have quite a big family party, Christmas Eve. (think she meant New Year's Eve).

(JJ) Lots of silly games?

No, just sit round and the grown-ups used to sing.

(JJ) What sort of presents did you get?

Poof! Not much, I think we used to get a sugar mouse in a stocking, and perhaps a sausage roll, or a mince pie, or an apple, orange, you know, nothing much.

(JJ) We had oranges yes, well I used to have that. What about Easter or Guy Fawkes? Did you have Easter eggs?

I expect we did.

(JJ) But not chocolate, I suppose?

Well, I expect we must have done, I don't remember.

(JJ) Was Guy Fawkes a good night?

We used to have a few fireworks, I expect dad used to do them for us.

(JJ) Let a few off.

But not a big party, or anything.

(JJ) Do you remember attending a funeral when you were a child?

No, no.

(JJ) Not that you can recall. What about weddings?

I don't think we ever went to any of those.

(JJ) There must have been some. Were you ever a bridesmaid?

Yes, what was I, four times, when I was grown up, of course, when I was a big girl.

(JJ) At Fordham?

Oh, my sister and my cousin, at Fordham, one at Witham.

(JJ) We talked about sing songs, what sort of indoor games did you play, as children, or what games, generally, did you play?

We used to play Tiddly Winks and Ludo and all those little card games.

(JJ) Inside, but what about outside with other children?

Well, in the main road, we used to spin our tops and bowl our hoops.

(JJ) Not much traffic in those days?

Hopscotch, no traffic at all, hardly.

(JJ) When did you see your first motor car?

The first one we ever saw was a Mr Alligum from Friars Farm. I can just remember there was a car but what it was like I just cannot tell you.

(JJ) You must have been very young then.

I wasn't very old then.

(JJ) So, were there books and newspapers in the home?

Oh, we used to have a newspaper and I expect we did books.

(JJ) You used to read a little bit, did you?

I expect we did, I can't remember.

(JJ) How about a library, did you go to a library?

No, not till later on.

(JJ) Let's talk a little bit about school days. So, how old were you when you started school?

Five.

(JJ) And that was at Fordham school, was it?

We used to have to walk.

(JJ) Even when the snow was on the ground?

Yes.

(JJ) Trudge up through the fields.

Through two fields and through the churchyard, and then down to Fordham school so that's about a mile I expect, well, a good mile.

(JJ) And did you enjoy it, school days?

Just did it, you do things and get on with it, don't you?

(JJ) Can you remember the names of the teachers, or how many teachers were there?

Oh dear, there's a Mrs Leatherdale and I think the schoolmaster was Mr sumniss.

(JJ) And what subjects did you do, that you can remember?

Well, we used to get there at 9 o'clock, and then there was scripture until quarter to ten. Then there'd either be arithmetic or composition or dictation, history, geography, English.

(JJ) So, which were your best subjects?

Well, I think arithmetic and reading, dictation, yes.

(JJ) And your worst subject?

I didn't like geography.

(JJ) So, were the teachers strict and what about punishment meted out?

Oh, we just got on with it, you know, I don't ever remember getting in any bother.

(JJ) What about play time, group games.

Well, we used to play rounder's or hopscotch or that sort of thing. I think we used to have about ten minutes, quarter of an hour, in the morning.

(JJ) Homework, did you have to take homework home?

Not till we got older.

(JJ) And all of your schooling was at Fordham School?

Fordham School.

(JJ) Right the way through.

I left when I was fourteen, not twenty four.

(JJ) Well, moving to the First World War, what memories there, were there food shortages, that you remember?

Oh yes, my mum used to walk to Lexden, catch a tram, and sort of queue up and perhaps they were lucky to get something or perhaps they weren't.

(JJ) Bread, or potatoes?

No, we used to have bread delivered, potatoes we grew. That was more meat and fish, the most important.

(JJ) You didn't have any soldiers billeted. Billeting of soldiers wasn't this far out, was it?

There were search lights at, Fordham, at Wash Farm, and then there were guns on Fordham Heath and, of course, there were the Americans at the top of Fordham.

(DP) That's the Second World War.

(JJ) That's the second war, thinking on the first really at the moment. We'll move to the second. You wouldn't remember seeing Zeppelins

I don't remember much about the first war.

(JJ) How about the victory in Europe celebrations after the First World War, was that something you can remember, VE day, no, the war was over and you knew father was...

No, that was it, I don't think there was much.

(JJ) So, when did father actually come home again?

He was still in hospital 1918, the armistice. I don't know how he slipped home, but he did.

(JJ) What was he capable of, when he came home, how bad was he?

Well, he was on crutches.

(JJ) But, could he resume work?

Not for a quite a while.

(JJ) But, he did eventually go back to his trade.

Yes.

(JJ) So, how about leisure time then, out of school.

Well, as I say, we just played hopscotch, spinning tops, bowl the hoops went bird nesting and primrosing, that sort of thing.

(JJ) And who were your special friends?

Only your neighbours, you know, we all got on very well together.

(JJ) And what were their names?

Well, there was Florrie Bugg, they lived just across the road.

(JJ) I've heard that name. Did you go to seaside, ever?

Not till we were grown up.

(JJ) No days out then, did you do any cycling?

No, couldn't afford a bicycle.

(JJ) What about pets?

Oh, we always had a dog and a cat, oh yes, oh, and rabbits, used to keep rabbits.

(JJ) But you used to eat those, I suppose?

No, they used to go to the market. We couldn't bear to eat them.

(JJ) Any special hobbies, or interests?

Well, I expect, we used to do knitting and needlework, nothing spectacular.

(JJ) Dancing, music lessons?

Not music, no. I wasn't allowed to go dancing until I was about 17 or 18, and we used to go up to the village hall.

(JJ) How about the guides, Girl Guides?

No, I didn't ever belong to any of those.

(JJ) So, the village hall, would that be the one that's there now?

Yes.

(JJ) 1920 something, that was built.

That was quite late, wasn't it?

(JJ) OK, starting work, what was your first job, I think Woolworth's was the first?

That was the only one I did, just those two days.

(JJ) So how did you get that job?

Well, just went and asked if I could, I think a friend of mine, she was doing the same thing., 'course then she told me about it, so, I suspect my mother went with me, I don't know, I forget.

(JJ) So, how did you spend your wages, was that mainly on clothes?

To start with, I had to pay me bus fare and that was 10 pence return.

(JJ) Well, you had five shillings, so that wasn't too bad, was it? Five shillings and eight shillings, you said.

Yes, so that was two 10 pence returns.

(JJ) Do you remember the people you worked with, how did you get on with them, what was the boss like?

Well, at Woolworth's, oh, they were alright

And Woolworth's was then in the high street, was it?

Yes.

(JJ) And did men and women work together?

No, it was mostly all girls, I don't think there were any boys, 'course there was the manager.

(JJ) So, you wouldn't have really, that was really part time, I suppose.

Yes.

(JJ) Talking about your parents, then, their social life, did father belong to any club that you know of?

No.

(JJ) Did he go to the pub?

He used to go down to the pub for a drink.

(JJ) Which one was that?

The Queen's Head.

(JJ) Across the border, across the river. And did he have any special hobbies?

Well, he didn't have time, he was out doing the gardens, and then mended our shoes.

(DP) Shooting rabbits.

Well, shooting rabbits.

(JJ) Out doing a bit of hunting, or whatever. Did mother belong to any sort of organization, club?

No, no.

(JJ) And did she ever go out with your father?

Not much, never went anywhere much, any of them, there was nowhere much to go.

(JJ) So, how about politics, then, did father support any particular?

Oh, the Conservatives.

(JJ) He was a Conservative. Did he get actively involved or did your mother.

No.

(JJ) So, did your neighbours sort of enjoy a similar standard of living to you.

We were all much the same and, we were really, it was like a big family. You would go to theirs for a cup of tea, they'd come to ours and if you needed any help - we'd help each other. My mum was ever such a kind lady, she'd help anybody.

(JJ) But you were, obviously, brought up to show respect for certain people?

Yes, yes.

(JJ) The doctor was obviously a, presumably, a special personage in the area, the vicar as well, or rector?

Well, they used to visit.

(JJ) And were there any particular rough sort of characters around that you kept out of the way of?

Don't remember any, no.

(JJ) So, you say that father bought the house in 1929.

1929.

(JJ) Did he have a mortgage? Or was that...

Oh yes, well, I expect that's what you'd call it. Pay so much a week or a month, I forget which.

(JJ) So, when you were older, you went to the cinema, is suppose, and the theatre, in town, did you?

Well, I think we used to go on a Saturday morning, that used to be the children's special.

(JJ) And where did you meet your husband?

He used to come round our way with bread, 'cause he was Fordham, you see. Playle's had the shop, the bakehouse.

(JJ) And you took a shine to him, did you?

Or else he did me, I'm not sure which.

(JJ) And what about smoking?

No, never allowed.

(JJ) Never allowed, never did. So, when you started courting, where did you go, did you go out much?

Not really, 'cause, as I said, then a baker, he used to have to make the dough in the evenings. He used to just come down, perhaps, we used to sit indoors with the rest of the family, didn't do anything very spectacular.

(JJ) Didn't go nipping off into the wild blue yonder on a motorbike, or anything?

No, no.

(DP) You used to go dancing, didn't you?

At Fordham, when I was eighteen.

(JJ) It wouldn't hold many, would it, that village hall. It must have been a bit cramped, bumping into people.

It was alright, you know, just, not exceptional, but, I expect, all we were used to.

(JJ) So, talking about early memories again, transport, you remember horse drawn traffic, more than cars in those days, I suppose.

Well, I expect what you used to call a horse and cart, with just a little cart thing.

(JJ) Were the streets dirty with horse manure, or where they dusty, were they metalled?

Don't remember.

(JJ) The road outside your house, was is a mud road, or

Just sand.

(JJ) Did it get muddy in the winter?

Not particular, mud, sand isn't mud is it?

(JJ) A little bit messy.

That was better on the main road coming up to Fordham. I can remember grass in the middle of the road, coming up to Fordham, what we call Ponders.

(JJ) Ponders Road, yes, but there must have been carriers going up to Sudbury, Halstead.

Not to Sudbury, there was a carrier into Colchester, but we didn't go much. If anybody went, that was my mother.

(JJ) What about characters, were there any regular tramps you used to see?

There used to be some from, what's the place at Stanway, Albrights. But they didn't call it Albrights, years ago, but there used to be the old tramps, walked from Stanway to Sudbury, I think. They used to call at ours.

(JJ) Men, were they?

With a tin, you know, with tea in, and would we give them some boiling water. But they were never any bother, we weren't afraid of them.

(JJ) How about gypsies.

Yes, they used to come round selling this, that and the other, pegs and that, but they were no bother.

(JJ) Do you remember anything about the workhouse, there wasn't really a workhouse in the area, was there?

No, that was Colchester.

(JJ) What was people's attitude, in those days, to mentally handicapped people?

Well, I think they were more in a home, we didn't come into contact with them.

(JJ) Did you see cattle and pigs and whatever been driven to market?

No.

(JJ) Not something that would regularly come past you. What about local shops?

Well in the Ford Street there was the blacksmith and then, of course, The Queens Head, and then the bakery and the shop and then a little further down there was another shop and the post office and then across the road there was that pub..

(DP) The coopers.

Yes, The Coopers and then the scouts, a Mr Head lived, forget the name of the house, next door to the pub, and then, where the old house is, Mitchells, there was the scouts, had a room just on the edge outside. That's where the scouts, but I didn't have Girl Guides, I expect they were in Colchester and perhaps were in Eight Ash Green, but we never.

(JJ) Well, moving on up through up to, well, when you were first married. So, when were you married and where?

1936.

(JJ) And where were you married?

Fordham church.

(JJ) So, where did you live?

Well, when we were first married, we went to a cottage down Ford Street, because Playles had got some cottages along Church Road, but there was an old lady, who hired one, but she had gone to live with her daughter at Bures, but she hadn't given the house up. So we had to wait for that, to go into this cottage. And then, we weren't there all that long, before my father come up to me, he was on his own, and we gave our home up and went and looked after me father. Took David home, he was seven months old.

(DP) Victorian father.

(JJ) So, how many children did you have?

Who me? Two, a boy and a girl.

(JJ) David and

Diane.

(JJ) So, David and Diane grew up at Wash Cottage.

Yes, no David was born down Ford Street.

(JJ) Not at home, oh sorry, yes, at the other house, yes.

Diane was born in the bungalow.

(JJ) So, what characters do you remember, let's say, as you grew up? Who were the characters, the interesting, the eccentric people, or, people you knew, like the gravediggers, or, I don't know? Where there any interesting people that you can remember?

Not particularly, we didn't actually go out much.

(JJ) But there was no particular people that used to...

(DP) Where are you now Jess, when mum had married, or before marriage?

(JJ) Well, just Fordham characters really, I suppose, right the way through.

Well, you see, as I'd say, living down where we did, we were not really in the village.

(JJ) You didn't tend to see that many people, no.

Not village people. Once I'd left school, I didn't come up to the village much.

(JJ) Were the landlords of the pubs interesting people or didn't you see them?

We weren't allowed.

(JJ) Just checking time, Ok, well, let's carry on do a little bit longer. Right, Margaret, can you tell me a little bit about your husband, his name was Jack.

Jack.

(JJ) Describe him to me.

He was just a happy, ever so easy-going, I don't think we ever fell out, at all. He was so easy, wasn't he? He really was.

(DP) Very tolerant.

Tolerant, yes.

(JJ) He was John Playle.

John Charles

(JJ) John Charles Playle, but known as Jack, and what did he do, for a living?

Baker, village baker.

(JJ) He ran it on his own?

Well, him and his brother, Stanley, but that actually belonged to their father. They started in Fordham in 1910 and the post office and shop and I think they had the bake house but I don't know if Jacks dad, if ever he was a baker.

(DP) No, he bought it from Mr McCann.

Pardon?

(DP) George, dad's father, George Playle came to Fordham in about 1900 and started acquiring things, if you don't mind me just nipping in, and he bought the post office, didn't he, George, and then he bought the bakery, from a chap called McCann, yes, he did. And, then he bought a farm, he used to go down the pub and buy things, you know, you might buy a pen knife, he'd go and buy a farm, and he was that sort of guy. He borrowed money, he didn't have any money.

Houses, he bought houses, didn't he?

(JJ) But, Jack, eventually entered into the trade.

(DP) Well, he was pushed into it.

(JJ) He was pushed into it, so, was it just bread that he was doing or was he a master baker, was he doing cakes?

No not cakes, just bread, hot cross buns, seven for sixpence.

(JJ) So, what was the competition, where was the nearest bakery to him?

My brother, down at Ford Street.

(JJ) Oh, right.

(DP) Brother in law at Bures.

(JJ) Yes, very close to each other, yes. So, you were married, two children, so, what did you do for fun, how did life go on for you, of course war broke out quite soon afterwards?

Well, I didn't go anywhere much, of course, I'd got me crippled father.

(JJ) But, you used to get out to see family

A bit.

(JJ) Or they'd come to you, of course.

But, you see, wherever I went, I'd either got to go on the bus or walk.

(JJ) So, war broke out then, and there was an airfield constructed in Fordham, what do you remember of the airfield?

Nothing, at all, 'cause I didn't ever go up that way.

(JJ) So, there were no limitations placed on you, for security, or...?

No

(JJ) Happenings during the war, did you ever see the planes coming over?

Oh, the planes used to come over, over our way, to get to London.

(JJ) And what about coming from the other side, what about bombing raids, or anything like that, what do you remember of anything like that. Where there any bombs?

(DP) Colchester, yes.

Colchester, not much.

(DP) Not Fordham, apart from the Doodlebug.

There wasn't really...

(DP) Colchester had a lot.

Not much, no, considering that was a...

(DP) Military.

Military.

(JJ) There were doodlebugs there?

(DP) Well yes, but only one.

(JJ) Just the one.

(DP) Locally

(JJ) So the war came and went and didn't affect you too much.

We had German prisoners and Italian prisoners.

(JJ) Where were they, you saw them in the village, did you?

Well, yes, they used to, sort of, cut hedges.

(DP) Working on the farm, weren't they?

Farm work.

(JJ) And you got to know them quite well?

No, no bother at all, no.

(JJ) What about the local people, then, around and about, the farmers. You mentioned the Doe family at Archendines?

I didn't know much about Archendines, but the one down at Wash Corner, they were very friendly.

(JJ) And what was their name?

Doe

(JJ) They were Doe, yes, and at Fordham Hall, a bit further away, but you walked through their fields, I presume, to get to...

Yes, well that was a public footpath.

(JJ) And the farmers name?

To start with, Warren, Rowley Warren, we called him. We weren't allowed to go through the farm yard.

(JJ) No, it's the same today, I think. Well, there we are then, well, girlie, thanks very much for coming and talking to us and your son, David.

(DP) Pleasure.

(JJ) I should say that today is Monday 21st April 2003, so that we have a record, but it's been very interesting, and this will form a record for people in the future.

Nothing, very interesting.

(JJ) Wanting to know something about Fordham, well, Wash Corner.

As I say, living down there, you felt out of everything, you didn't really feel you belonged to the village.

(JJ) Well, very much part of it.

I used to go to Aldham more than Fordham

(JJ) Well, thank you very much for coming along and for being our subject today.

Transcribed by Theresa Jephcott.