

Pat Lewis

Interview by Jess Jephcott at Ditchling, Quilters Green, Fordham.
Theresa Jephcott and Robert Lewis in attendance.
A Fordham Local History Society project.
Transcribed by Theresa Jephcott January 2015/January 2016.

(JJ) OK, this is a recording that we're doing on 1st August 2004, part of the Fordham Recalled series of oral histories and today we're having a chat with Patricia Lewis, well-known local historian, associated with Fordham. So, thank you for coming along Pat. Now, we are going to start with a bit of your life story, from earliest memories, so can you tell me your full name, when you were born, and the name of your parents and dates, anything you can think of.

My name was Patricia Berta Grub and my parents were Evelyn Grub and her original name was Potter, her maiden name, and my father's name was Albert Edward Grub. Now they were married in 1924.

(JJ) And when were you born?

And I was born at Forrest Gate in East London in Capel Road which was overlooking the flats at Wanstead.

(JJ) So, what were your earliest memories?

I really can't remember anything about Forrest Gate, because when I was two, we moved to Clive Road in, no I'm sorry it wasn't Clive Road, it was Litton Road in Romford and I can remember there, being in the garden and I had a friend who lived at the bottom of the garden and we used to climb over the fence and see each other, her name was June Terry. They're my earliest memories.

(JJ) So what school, what would have been your first school?

When I was five, I went to Hare Park School, which was a private school, in Manor Road, at Romford. And, in the end, it moved to Gidea Park near the Liberty School and I was there until I was eleven, when I took the eleven plus and then went to Romford County High School.

(JJ) Right so, your father, what did he do for a living?

He was a bank clerk in the Bank of England. He had had other jobs. I believe in the Port of London Authority, but not all the time that I was alive, he was a banker.

(JJ) That was in London.

Yes, in the City of London

(JJ) So, he'd commute in?

Every day from Gidea Park, yes, very quick. The trains were very reliable then, more than they are now.

(JJ) What sort of man was he, as a father?

Rather distant, I suppose. But he was very interested, he made a violin and was interested in music and singing and photography and did a lot of painting and various things like that and really my mother did the same, except that she was an excellent pianist and she had worked in a bank, the London Counties Bank at Wanstead and then she went to St Mary Axe in London and, when she was twenty four, they were married and she had to leave when she was married, she could no longer work in a bank. And that happened to me when I married. I had to come off the permanent staff and go on the temporary staff - my daughter Debora couldn't believe it, but it's true.

(JJ) Changing times!

Yes.

(JJ) So, father, where was he born?

He was born in London, Upton Park, I believe.

(JJ) A true Londoner, and his parents before him, do you know?

Well, they were all living in the London area and various places, yes, um, some of the family that he married into came from Bristol, the Tanner family, but on the whole they were Londoners.

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

He was 25.

(JJ) So, was he ever out of work, presumably not?

No never, no. No I don't know. Now I know in the Civil Services in the depression of the 1930s some people had their money reduced but I don't think that happened in the Bank of England, but it was being talked about.

(JJ) So was it a comfortable upbringing for you as a child, do you think, compared with other children?

I didn't understand, comparing it with anybody else, but it was comfortable, yes.

(JJ) So, it was a happy childhood, growing up in the Romford area?

Yes, yes. Yes, I would say so really.

(JJ) What about mother's side of the family, what about her parents, where did they come from?

Well, her father came from London and he was born Sydney Herbert Potter was born within the sound of Bow Bells.

(JJ) A true Londoner.

And her mother came from Scotland, Patterson's came from Scotland.

(JJ) What did Sydney Herbert Potter do for a living?

He was a solicitor's managing clerk, in Coleman Street in the City of London. All the time that I knew him and he worked there until he was over eighty, he loved London.

(JJ) And do you remember much of your grandparents?

Oh, I remember him. Another thing he did when they lived at Forrest Gate, he ran a quadrill band. It wasn't his job, it was his hobby and he played the ocarina and the flute and the tambourine and they used to go round and play for dances and my grandmother used to go with him and when someone else was there, conducting, she would, they would dance together and I can remember my mother said in her diary that she would be taken sometimes from Oxon and see her mother in a lovely ball dress, coming so...

(JJ) What about religion, was religion...?

No, in my father's family, they were Baptists, very strong Baptists and he became, suddenly, he became erm confirmed when he was about 57, in the Church of England, but my mother's family, none of them were religious at all. My grandfather always said, if you want to make money, found a religion. So, they weren't religious.

(JJ) So, it wasn't a, well it was a strong part of your upbringing, I presume.

No, I wouldn't say so.

(JJ) No.

No.

(JJ) But you were a church goer.

Yes, I did go.

(JJ) Which church would that have been?

Well, I went to the Church of England and ??? Methodist, but I had friends and we used to go there when we were teenagers.

(JJ) Well, returning to your childhood days then, were you born at home?

Yes, in Capel Road at Forrest Gate and next door, my mother's cousin lived and she had a baby the same time as I was born, the same date and she died of purple fever.

(JJ) Do you know who delivered you? Would it have been the nurse or?

Er, no, the local doctor, as far as I know. And then we had, she had a monthly nurse after that who came and looked after us. Nurse Bolter, but of course I don't remember that, I just heard about that.

(JJ) As a matter of social history, what about the house. Obviously you had electricity, water and

Well, which house? The one in Chapel Street? When we moved to Romford, to start with there was gas lighting and then it was changed to electricity and, of course, we had water but heating was by coal fires.

(JJ) Toilet facilities, wasn't out in the garden, was it?

Oh, a nice garden, yes with big lime trees at the bottom.

(JJ) But the WC, was it out in the garden?

Oh, no no, it was a small three up two down, modern, built in 1935.

(JJ) Still there presumably.

Still there, yes.

(JJ) You've seen it?

Yes, in fact we lived, much later, when I married, in the next road, in a house that was exactly the same.

(JJ) What sort of heating?

Coal fire.

(JJ) Coal fire.

And the water was heated with geysers.

(JJ) What about home help, did mum do everything.

No, mum always had my father's shirts, no not shirts, yes shirts and collars were sent to the laundry. You could send them off in a little box, there was, of course, the stiff white collars and they'd come back again. That was beyond her to do that and she always had the sheets sent to the laundry as well.

(JJ) But otherwise, she did everything.

But, I can't, think I don't think in that house she had any help she had help later but not there.

(JJ) Who did the cooking?

She did, yes.

(JJ) And how was the food cooked? It was gas?

On a gas cooker, yes.

(JJ) Yes, in keeping with the city, I suppose.

In keeping with the?

(JJ) With the city, you know, mod cons, not like village life.

Oh, yes.

(JJ) So, what about household chores and pocket money, did you have much to do, did you get pocket money?

I can't remember doing any chores and I had sixpence a week up until I was seventeen. And, so I can't really remember much about that, I think it went quite a long way, almost like the old tale.

(JJ) So, what would you have spent your sixpence a week on?

Film magazines, generally, I just say generally film magazines, I wasn't frightfully keen on sweets I don't think, not like my later family.

(JJ) So, mother and father's work at home then. Did mum do any sewing, needlework or..?

Yes, she made my dresses, made me all sorts of dresses as time went on, evening dresses and things like that as well.

(JJ) What about shoe repairs and things like that?

They were taken to a shoe repairer and, of course, all the tradesmen called at the door then, which was wonderful, you didn't have to go out and stagger about with heavy things, the butcher and the baker and the candlestick maker, all came to the door.

(JJ) No gardening, allotment or growing vegetables.

No, my father did the garden, no I don't think so.

(JJ) What about callers to the house, tradesmen.

Well, they always had, of course, my mother and father were very keen on music, they used to have people in, they used to play chamber music and, all the time, people came and went, the neighbours, that sort of thing, as far as I can remember, this is difficult really.

(JJ) Mmm, absolutely. Right, so going through school, what about memories of your school days, anything strike you.

The first school I went to, the private school, was really educationally better than the second school, I think. Probably because there were fewer pupils in the first one, but erm, of course during, I took the school certificate during the war and we sat in one room and there was just a path between us and the air raid shelter and if the alarm would have gone we would have had to have taken in down the shelter, some people taking other subjects did. When the war started, of course, the school closed and we had to have work outside but it didn't last very long and we weren't evacuated 'cause we weren't right in that area.

(JJ) So, you would have been fifteen, fourteen, when war started.

Yes, that's right, yes, fourteen.

(JJ) So, you stayed put.

Oh yes, we stayed, we weren't evacuated.

(JJ) No necessity, did you see any bombs coming over or anything?

Well of course, then we moved further out towards Gidea Park station then and I can remember going down into the shelter and we had incendiary raids and a landmine very near and all the windows came in. I still have paintings that were pierced with glass from the

windows and, but of course, being young, I didn't really understand it. If I'd been older I'd have been far more frightened and if I'd have had children myself at that time I would have been. But I can remember other things about the war. I wasn't old enough, just that strange in between age, erm, to think about things like that. I travelled up to London when I started work, during the war, we had planes would buzz, machine gun always seemed to survive, the train was always on time, erm, so that's difficult to see what it was like for other people.

(JJ) What about your teachers, were there any remarkable characters?

One in particular, English teacher, she was very good, impressed me and made me interested in Shakespeare and all sorts of things like that.

(JJ) The classics.

And, but my history teacher, and I was very interested in history, wasn't any good at all, so she actually, she was, but as a family historian, you see, learning about the 1834 poor law amendment act, I've been thrilled but then I couldn't stand it. She didn't make it interesting so actually when I took the exam I answered questions on something else, so that's not good.

(JJ) So when did you leave school?

When I was seventeen, yes.

(JJ) So that was in the middle of the war.

In the middle of the war and, actually, I started work at Lloyds bank in Upminster. But I, and I lived in Gidea Park. I could get a bus to Hornchurch but the buses from Hornchurch up to the Drill were always full with May and Bakers workers, so I got fed up with that and I had to walk by Haynes Park and, sort of fog, and it was completely dark in the blackout and sort of raids and things so, in this ridiculous way really, I thought I'd be better off, so I went and worked right up at number 1 Moorgate in the City of London, in the middle of the war.

(JJ) Doing what?

I was an insurance clerk in an insurance company there and in the end I became reserved there...

(JJ) Reserved?

Reserved occupation, because we covered, well I covered East Anglia war insurance, but there you are.

(JJ) Not much use insurance if you're being bombed, I suppose.

Yeah, and also we used to fire watch, that was not right in the height of the blitz but later on and of course we loved it. Once again being young you see you remember the things, we would make apple pie beds and all go down in the basement. But the rest of it, the unpleasant bits, hardly remember it.

(JJ) How did it affect mother and father, father was presumably still working.

Oh yes, he worked all the time. He became, he was an air raid warden at home and in the Bank of England, he used to do fire watching.

(JJ) As a matter of interest, just going back to the first world war, was father involved in the first world war?

No, you see he was just, he'd just joined the Royal Flying Corps and the war ended. Once again there's a strange gap and he was just not quite old enough. In the second world war, 'cause he was too old.

(JJ) So,

As far as my mother's concerned, she... they say that the world war, preparations for war, before the 193. But she passed gas exams and everything before then, crawling through tents full of gas and that sort of thing. And, during the war she, they had a WVA class, the first one in our area, started in our house, so she was involved and she was directed and worked serving lunches at a British restaurant, so she was involved in various ways.

(JJ) So, the war dragged on and what memories of the end of war?

Well, of course, I can remember seeing the, all the planes going over on D Day and they filled the sky. I believe people saw that from here as well and then, of course, we had the rockets, the V2s.

(JJ) Did you see any?

The V2s and the V1s, oh yes, where I worked in the city, one dropped just opposite and blew all the windows in etc but luckily it was just before the office opened so we were on our way there and not actually there when it happened. And very near us, in Gidea Park, a V2 killed some friends of ours there.

(JJ) That would have been in 44/45?

Yes, oh yes at the end of the war. And I remember going up into London on VE day and walking around and I saw Churchill and the king and queen on the balcony there.

(JJ) Lovely memories.

All sorts of things.

(JJ) Just going back a little bit to childhood days again and birthdays and Christmas, how were they celebrated?

Christmas was very low key, I really didn't like Christmas. I was the only child of an only child, as well, and various relations lived a long way away so I wasn't very keen on Christmas. But birthdays, we would have a little party in the garden and that sort of thing with school friends.

(JJ) What sort of things would you get for presents, do you think?

Books, I honestly can't remember.

(JJ) What about family, you know, did you have big family get-togethers? Who would have come, was it a big family?

No, my grandfather or rather my mother's mother and father lived very near and once or twice we went to other members of the family but we were never really much for gatherings.

(JJ) Right, so victory in Europe is declared, how did that change your life?

Well, personally, not at all really.

(JJ) Still went into work!

Still went to work just the same, yes, no not at all.

(JJ) So we're working up to the change of subject. We're working up to a connection with Fordham.

Yes.

(JJ) Can you tell us a little bit about, really the family connections with Fordham or....

Well, my, going right back into the past, my ancestors William Potter and Sarah Davey were married in Fordham in 1782 and they lived here until 1802, when he died. And actually, today, I went to see Rosemary Morris at Well Cottage in Hemps Green and we think that that is the house they lived in. It seems to be the one that's on the tithe map but do a bit more research because it has been added to and altered greatly and that's where they lived. But when he died, they moved into Colchester, and my direct relation, Robert Rivers Potter, was apprenticed to a printer in High Street, Colchester, Swinburn & Walter, And he was there for seven years. I have his indentures and a portrait of him when he was about 25 and a photograph of him when he was in his seventies. And then they went up into London and lived in Carmell Street and then his son, Robert Samuel Potter, was the head of Waterloo's ticket printing offices and he also had other interests. He was very interested in the beginnings of electricity and various subjects like that and he also made artificial limbs for a doctor Sequira, who lived there who was in charge of the Whitechapel cholera epidemic and they had a little shop and many children. I could tell you a lot about them, going on and on and on. And then, his son, of course, was my grandfather, Sydney Herbert Potter.

(JJ) So, whilst you would consider the family to be Londoner's, obviously their roots are up in Essex.

Up in Essex, yes of course.

(JJ) And going back how far do you think?

Well, I've really never researched enormously before 1750, but having looked at wills, they had land in Earls Colne and Tollesbury, many places.

(JJ) Not a particularly rare name, so not that.

No Potter was a very common, it's very easy to be confused, to be able to get, difficult to find the right one.

(JJ) OK, well that gives a bit of a historical background to the family, so we are coming back again, ok, we've talked about the end of the war but I know that in 1942 you joined the Civil Defense Operatic Society, how about a little bit about that.

Well, we met in the depot, the civil defense depot in Collier Row and we all got together and they even painted the scenery and we made our own costumes etc. and had performances there and what happened was; we'd be in the middle of a Gilbert and Sullivan or some sort and the siren would go or there'd be something happened, something dropped somewhere and half the cast and the orchestra would disappear up to deal with it and we'd all wait and

when they came back we carried on. Em, that was quite interesting and we actually performed Merry England, many times, and once at Hornchurch, to buy a Spitfire.

(JJ) And did you?

Well, we gave some money towards it, I don't think we ever made enough to actually buy a whole Spitfire!

(JJ) So how did this interest in opera or the stage follow on after the war?

Well, I carried on and joined the operatic society at the YMCA and we did things like Rose Marie and Desert Song and I used to make up the dances and teach everybody and I also did that at the Walthamstow Tech.

(JJ) Scottish ancestry.

Oh yes, well because of that, I joined the Romford Scottish Association and became the secretary and joined the team so, as well.

(JJ) So what is the Scottish ancestry? Where does that come from?

What the Pattersons, my mother's mother, came from Cooper in Fife and they all, like so many people did, they came from Cooper down into London.

(JJ) So, is there any connection with the Fordham Scottish dancing that we have here now?

No, not at all.

(JJ) It's just something that they do do here

Yes, I know they do, yes it was wonderful exercise, fun and my friends went, it was good. We used to go to, sometimes we'd go to a class in the school in Heathbut Road in Romford, the old Romford County High and for two shillings we would be taught for half the time and have a cup of tea and dance. We'd have been happy to have just done it on a glass of water, it was so exciting.

(JJ) So, come on, we'd better get round to the subject of Clayton, tell me about Clayton.

Well, I worked at the Northern Insurance Company, as I've said, and after the war, a friend of mine introduced me to Clayton. It was on a blind date to go to a dance and at the time he was in the Metropolitan Police and Scotland Yard, and then we married in 1951.

(JJ) And his full name was?

Clayton George Frederick Lewis.

(JJ) And, how old was he?

Erm, he was born. When we married he was 26.

(JJ) And you were?

26.

(JJ) A meeting of equals! So, tell me a little bit more about Clayton, his life, his family background.

He was born in Rickmansworth, no, I'm sorry he was born in Swindon and then moved to Rickmansworth and his father had quarries, sand and gravel and, of course, in the 1930s they were worth a lot of money one day and worth nothing the next day. So they, I mean he was bankrupt and they had to move but, of course, he couldn't have a business of any sort but Clayton's mother managed to find a hundred pounds and they moved up to Whatfield in Suffolk and bought a shop and a range of buildings including a house and all sorts of things.

(JJ) When was this? Before the war?

It was in the 1930s, probably 33/34, about that time, and Clayton, of course, it was an urban family moving to a country environment and he went to school in Hadleigh to start with and then he went to Sudbury Grammar School and then he went into the Grenadier Guards, during the war. And when he came out, he didn't ever return to Whatfield, he lived in London. And after he was in the police, he was an insurance inspector at one time, some damage to cars.

(JJ) When was this?

This was about 1980s, I suppose, and then after that he worked for the design council, which he loved very much.

(JJ) So you were married in 1951.

In 1951 and then in 1958 we had Robert Clayton Lewis.

(JJ) We should say that Robert is with us here.

Robert is with us and in 1962 we had a daughter, Deborah. And Robert now lives in Burmeal with his two children and Deborah is now Deborah Connor and she lives in Hern Hill in London with her two children.

(JJ) OK, so after you were married, where were you living?

Now, after we were married, we started, we were very lucky and managed through a chance encounter that my mother had with a relation on top of a bus, that they had a little house, a funny little house, in Brentwood Road, Romford that we could rent and we lived there and it was a funny little place, I don't know it would never have passed a building inspector now. It had been a hairdressers. We found out the man had been tapping the below the company fuse for a long time and my father, decorating, just managed to avoid being, you know, the whole thing burning the wall on the other side, but we had fun there. We had two dogs, we lived there and then in 1953/54, something like that, we moved to Clyde Road which was a house exactly the same as the house I lived in in Litton Road, earlier. And we were there until we moved to Mill Lane, '58 that was and we were there until we moved to Gidea Park again. I can't remember what date that would have been, '69 something like that and then when we retired we moved to Frinton.

(JJ) So, when did you retire and when was that?

'80, let me think, '83 I suppose.

(JJ) 1983, you moved to Frinton on Sea, sleepy Frinton on Sea.

Absolutely, but it was really a compromise because my mother and father still lived in Gidea Park and they weren't well and I had to get backwards and forwards. I don't drive and Frinton had a station. And also, Clayton would have liked to have gone back to Suffolk. I wasn't very keen on living in Hadleigh, really, but it was a compromise because he could easily get there and he was a member of the Masonic Lodge there and so it suited both of us and, of course, we drove. So we came to Chelmsford, as you know, all the time and went about but of course when he died, it is a sleepy place. It's very nice for a holiday but not much to do.

(JJ) So Frinton was one of your choices.

Well, it was the best compromise that suited everybody. It wasn't far from Hadleigh, it was easy to get on the train back.

(JJ) Did family history research play any part in moving up this way?

No, we did think of coming here but on the other hand, I don't drive, so that would have been a disadvantage.

(JJ) So at what point where you members of the Essex Society for Family History? Before you moved up this way?

Oh yes, years before that. When would that have been? '76 I think and we stayed in that, well I'm still in the family history society now, and we spent a lot of our retirement doing things like that, involved in things like that and running about looking at places and people that lived.

(JJ) So, your grandfather, Sydney Potter, died in the 1950s and left a lot of family information.

Yes, left that to my mother and we used to look at it and photographs and all sorts of papers and wills and things. Because when my mother died in 1988, then I inherited it all and we really worked on it a lot.

(JJ) There is a lot of research to be done.

Oh, absolutely, I mean I've got photographs of goodness knows who. Great thing of course to do, which I'm always saying, telling everyone else to do, is to make sure you write the name on the back and a date if possible.

(JJ) So, as a retired couple, what were you mainly involved with, what did you do?

Well, the family history society was an enormous part of what we did, in every way. Our friends and various things, a lot of the time and Clayton, of course, was a Freemason and belonged to Virtue and Silence Lodge in Hadleigh and also, he was a joining member at Frituna Lodge in Frinton and he became secretary there, at the same time as secretary of the family history society, so we were quite busy. This is without the family.

(JJ) I know that you worked in the local history library at Balance, when was this?

That's at Dagenham, it's in Beckentree Avenue, in Dagenham.

(JJ) Before you were retired?

Before I was retired, yes I worked there 14 years I think and it's a wonderful place because it's very old Balance House, which is behind the library, it's very old, probably 14th century and it has a moat, most extraordinary in the middle of Dagenham. And I was so privileged, I'd have paid them to work there and they didn't realise that, because there were just two of us and we had a wonderful store of books that you wouldn't find really this side of London.

(JJ) So you did quite a bit of research before then.

Well, yes and every possible way, family history. It was my job when somebody came in, asking about an Essex village, to know where to find what they wanted.

(JJ) So, WEA classes you were involved with.

Well, we, once again about Essex history, we even came to West Bergholt to a session given by Doctor Arthur Brown, about farming.

(JJ) Deceased.

Yes he's dead now, yes, absolutely.

(JJ) He died last year, I think.

And then, we went to the Essex University and had wonderful lectures there and courses and I went on courses and got a certificate and that sort of thing there. So, that was very good and he gave a lot of, made it easier to research Fordham.

(JJ) So, where were the records for Fordham when you were doing your research? Where they at the record office or...

Well, the registers, when I first came to Fordham, were in the vestry here.

(JJ) Original documents.

Original documents, but that was before the synod measure that said they had to go into the record office and I used to, we used to come here in the car with our dog, Fred, and I used to go into the church and be in there, shut in on my own with a little tiny light above, pouring over these registers and Clayton would talk to Mr Barbour, who was the rector at the time, or take the dog for a walk. That was wonderful and when they had to be taken to the record office, I bought photo copies and they're now in the church, of the registers, because I thought it was, to take the people away from where they were..., I didn't like the idea.

(JJ) So, they went to Chelmsford.

The original records are at Chelmsford and, of course, the Countess of Huntingdon, have we got on to that? Because I was interested, my Robert Rivers Potter, of course, must have been literate to be a printer, so I thought where did he go to school, and of course, there were no records about the education in Fordham at all but I found that there was a school at the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Also, I was interested in the chapel and I started thinking about that, so I set to and wrote two books about it. But the great thing about the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, because by the time I started, it was redundant, except they did have some connection with the church here. And they lent me their records, which they won't even lend the record office, because they don't believe in that sort of thing. Their records are stored in Rayleigh, in the church there. So, I had those, I had access to records that people don't have access to.

(JJ) Is that still the case?

Yes, as far as I know, it might have changed. Well, the Countess of Huntingdon was an Anglican and she never intended to be anything else. People say she was a Wesleyan Methodist, which she wasn't. She was intrigued by Wesley and you could say that she ran things by method but her chaplain was Whitfield who was a Calvinist. Now Wesley believed that you could be saved by good works. Whitfield believed that you were pre-destined to be saved and she followed him. But she also set up a college in Wales, where her ministers were trained and, because she was an aristocrat, she managed to get them ordained. And in London, in particular, in Chapels that she set up there, she thought she could appoint her ordained ministers to take charge of her chapels but, of course, the incumbent, the actual Church of England incumbent in the parish wasn't very happy and there were two court cases and she had to register as dissenter to keep going.

(JJ) And that applied in Fordham as well.

Absolutely, and for, until she died, even if it was the litany of the Church of England and she was very keen on music and all these things but she had to be claimed dissent.

(JJ) Is there any record of any animosity in Fordham between the Church of England and...

Well, yes, if you look at the queries to the before they came, the Archdeacon came from Colchester to visit, visitation, the rector had to fill in a questionnaire and he says lots of funny things about dissenters and non-conformists including Quakers and all sorts of people. And, this went on and Thomas Twinning, of the tea firm family, who was the curate here, he of course, lived almost opposite the chapel, so there must have been animosity there, really, because you know she wanted ordained clergymen like he was, he didn't like it much and this went on and it even happened right up into the 1880s where the non-conformists at the school and at the chapel complained that they received bad treatment from the Anglicans. I think it became better as time went on but tempers were high.

(JJ) You wrote two books.

Yes.

(JJ) What were they called?

Big Round Hand was about education in Fordham from the earliest times. I only ever cover up to 1900 because after that I think it's almost in living memory and that's for people here.

(JJ) Although a time will come.

Oh, of course, that's true but they can do that. I mean I gave a talk at the school when it was the anniversary but...

(JJ) And the other book?

The other book was This Barren Land. And that was about the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Why it came here, and how it influenced, it did influence the whole of the village parish, considerably.

(JJ) So, there was another publication, was there?

Oh, I wrote the church guide.

(JJ) So, that's three in total.

Oh, three about Fordham, yes.

(JJ) And, what is your connection with John and Jenny Kay?

Oh, well because, they asked me to do the church guide and, of course, we wanted somebody to print it and do the illustrations and, of course, I was introduced to John and Jenny Kay. We were very friendly with them and it's true that, in a roundabout way, the local history society was started here.

(JJ) So, there was a gathering or an interest amongst, in the village, amongst all sorts of people. So, when would that have been?

Yes, not so much it grew, I wouldn't say to start with but then it grew. And you know with this book that they have, that the society has published of photographs. That grew, people to start with, were reluctant to give photographs. But after a while, they came from everywhere, people sort of, the momentum grew.

(JJ) It's a lovely book. Certainly, we've got copies ourselves.

Yes, it is, excellent.

(JJ) And, was there any influence or input from the Victoria County History series?

Oh, yes, because they have written volume 10 for this area of Essex and, of course, volume 10 covers Fordham and if you look in there Jenny and I contributed to it. We are very proud to have done so.

(JJ) It's an excellent section. So, since then, what are you doing now, are you actually involved in research.

Well, I've done the book for the Society of Genealogists on My Ancestor was a Freemason and, at the moment...

(JJ) Was he?

I'm sorry?

(JJ) Did you have an ancestor in the Freemasons?

Yes, I did, I had lots of ancestors as Freemasons but what really made me do it. I know my husband was a Freemason etc. and when people said oh you can't find anything about Freemasons and of course that's nonsense. You can find everything about Freemasons and they're very happy to help and you can go to the Grand Lodge in London and they'll give you every facility. And, there's going to be a revised one coming out soon. And the other thing I researched is local and county friendly societies. That's before the affiliated societies came in 1854, I think. This part, they were either in a town in a pub or something and then, of course, the Church of England got worried that they were losing people who attended their services, so they decided to run these county friendly societies, run by the incumbent of the parish plus the principal land owners and there wasn't any meeting in a pub and all that sort of thing. Most interesting, but it was sort of social services of the time. Wonderful, and farm labourers joined, where, as you'll read, that the only people that joined friendly societies

were artisans and above, but that's not true. In fact, you could find lists of names in the Essex Record Office of the people, men and women, who joined.

(JJ) So, a publication will come out of that will it?

Well, I did a paper for the University but I've never had anything published. I've given talks.

(JJ) Is there a book there, do you think?

Well, I suppose so, yes I suppose it's interesting, there's nothing else about it.

(JJ) No plans at the moment. Well, that's lovely. Well I think that's as far as we'll go today. That's a very complete biography and we may come back to do some more at some stage but for the time being, we'll end there. Thank you very much Pat Lewis.

It's a pleasure, well it wasn't painful.