

IMPORTANT

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THE NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Ref. No.: C466/102/10-16(1CD0209051-52)

Playback No.: 1CD0209051; 1CD0209052

Collection title: Artists' Lives

Interviewee's surname: Knowles

Title: Mr

Interviewee's forenames: Justin

Sex: Male

Occupation:

Date of birth: 19.11.1935

Mother's occupation:

Father's occupation:

Date(s) of recording: 30.07.2001; 31.07.2001

Location of interview: Interviewee's home, Devon

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[Track 1 Side A]

[transcriber tape 1A]

Could you tell me when and where you were born?

Exeter, 19 November 1935. From the date, you'll see that I was really a war childhood; by that it means I was moved around. As my father was in the Territorial Army and was called up, and my mother was left alone, there was a divorce involved, she marrying a regular officer in the Royal Signals, whose name was Webb, he retired as a lieutenant colonel. And my memories really were being shunted around from grandparent to grandparent.

Tell me about the first house that you do actually remember.

I think what I do remember is being with my grandmother in Totnes, who was separated from my grandfather. Most dynamic memory was being taken away in an ambulance, because I had diphtheria, and at that time it was considered to be a difficult disease, and put in an isolation hospital. Apparently, Totnes Council had a meeting about it. And I remember all my toys being burnt, and, I mean I was taken to this ambulance screaming, and that wasn't much of a beginning. I must have been about, maybe five. I'm not, I'm not very good with dates or timing or names or anything.

That's OK.

Mm.

The house in Totnes, can you describe that from the outside?

Yes, it was a, a bungalow, and, she loved fuchsias, the whole garden was full of fuchsias.

A large bungalow?

No. It was... My grandfather who was called a weird name, quite a character also, he was chairman of Dartmouth Council at one point, was called Finch Portman Ingram[???], and, they separated, and he bought my grandmother this bungalow at Totnes. And my grandmother was quite, quite devoted to me really. And because of the war, and because I, you know, had no stability, I was shunted from one grandparent to the other.

So the first house you actually lived in, shall we say on a permanent basis, with your parents, tell me about that. Or was there never a permanent house?

I never remember living with my parents together ever.

You don't?

No. My father was very involved in the Army, Territorial Army somewhere[???], and then the war came, and then he disappeared. And my father was a complete stranger to me. I never heard anything in the period of the war from him whatsoever, not even a letter, or anything. And during that time my mother divorced, and, it was quite sort of complicated, because, although I was living with Mother basically, for some legal reason, which apparently wouldn't be allowed today, my father had custody of me, although I was living with my mother throughout the war, and when my father came back he sort of claimed me back with his new wife and so on. And both of them were complete strangers, and that was a very traumatic experience.

I would have thought in those days the mother would always get custody, but, that was not the case?

No, not then.

Why was that?

She went[???]... It's to do with the particular judge or situation at the time, you know.

OK. If we move on to your grandparents, on...

Mm.

Your grandparents on your father's side to start with.

Mm.

That grandfather.

Mm.

What was his name?

William Knowles.

William Knowles.

Mm.

Do you know when he was born?

No. He was a very modest man. He was a manager of a sawmill at Trebartha, which is near North Hill, near Launceston in Cornwall. And, they come from very a strong Methodist kind of, chapel background. Where they were is...there's no road that can go any further. It's on Bodmin Moor. And he used to walk, walk to work every day, which is what, four, five miles to the sawmill and back to the cottage, Mill Cottage, Trebartha. And, I used to spend all my holidays there.

What do you remember about that cottage?

Well it was just, it's, you know, stone-built. They had no electricity, no gas or anything like that. And I remember the, you know, their larder, no fridge of course, and the larder was just outside. My grandfather and grandmother were very modest

themselves. The postman used to come, if there was anything for them, which was not often, on a pony, because he was delivering the stuff on the moor. But that, at that time during the war, they had some land girls who rather adopted me, because they were working in the woods, taking the wood out, you know, for the sawmill and things like that, and they used to pull the, pull the wood out with horses and so on.

Did the family all come from Trebartha, your grandparents and their parents et cetera?

My whole family comes from the West Country.

So what did your grandfather look like?

He was quite critical of my father actually. I mean he was very, he was very unpretentious.

Yes.

Unpretentious. And they used to come, when I went to school at Tavistock, they used to come and collect me, because we had what was called, every so often we had red letter Sundays, and, and I was always sent back with half a crown, and usually a chocolate cake. And they made a big effort; it must have cost them a lot of money for them doing a sort of, a lunch at their place. And, it's...the whole thing's very significant to me, because, you know, it was...the landscape's so beautiful, very... In fact I think they're now listing all the trees down there, and it's very important landscape, it's in this valley, river and so on. And, I was very much on my own, but, I think it's quite a formative, formative part of my life really. I think, I think, I think the interrelationship of my father and my grandparents were remote.

Why was that?

Different philosophies. I prefer my grandparents' philosophy, simplicity and honesty. My father was more ambitious.

Was he dishonest?

No no, certainly not, but, but he had pretensions really.

They would be regarded as working class, would they?

[hesitates] Heavily respected. I mean for instance, being a manager of an old-fashioned sawmill that's probably employing at that time about twelve, fifteen people, plus the, the logging going on in the estate and so on, Trebartha estate, he would be respected, but he had no pretensions whatsoever.

So he actually earned a reasonable living?

He earned a living, yes. I think he was given it by the estate, this cottage, and presumably he must have had a wage. I know, I was very upset when he died that my father decided to, there would be[???] a few things they had left, were sold at Launceston market.

For next to nothing?

Well, for very little I imagine. But, you know, I thought it was very, a bit insensitive.

Did you visit the sawmill?

Certainly did, yes.

Yes?

Mm.

What was it like?

Old steam engine. Whacking around was a long band driver[???] machine, cutting the stuff up. I had no idea at that time what the function of the product was, but...

And what was the function?

Again it's during the war, so...

Yes.

Maybe it's for pits, or...or...just timber generally. Because they had access to great resources from that point[???].

How did he treat the staff?

Oh he was a very mild-mannered, generous man.

Did he get a reasonable pension when he retired?

No, certainly not, no.

No?

You're talking about times when pensions didn't really exist.

What about his religious beliefs?

Well both of them came from, he was a Methodist, so he never drank or, he never swore, or...

He didn't drink ever, not at Christmas, at no time?

Never, no. But... And also, my grandmother, she was a, comes from a Plymouth Brethren background, and that was even more severe.

Mm. Did he smoke?

No.

No?

No.

So what were his vices, did he...he didn't have any?

No. Not as far as I know.

Right.

I can't think of any. No they were both very pure people.

Was there much land round the cottage?

We're talking about a valley with a river, and fields. That's where I first got interested in fishing actually, because I used to fish in the...

And from what you're saying, you didn't have many friends of your own age in that area at the time.

None at all, no.

Inside the cottage, do you clearly remember the layout?

There's a fireplace, which they...because they had no [inaudible] and things, it was basically a wood fire, you know, and just had a few local sort of copper things, you know.

And how many bedrooms?

Two.

Two.

I mean, it's a very small, working man's cottage really.

What about things like paintings?

No.

No? Ornaments? The brass...

Well there were these[???] brass stuff, yes.

Books, many books in the house?

No.

Bible, that's about it, was it?

Mm?

Bible?

Oh, I'm sure there was a Bible there.

Did they read newspapers, magazines?

No. No, certainly not, you never saw a newspaper or a magazine or anything like that. No.

So what did they...?

No radio.

No?

Nothing. No. It's very, very puritanical. It's very chapel.

Moving on to your grandmother. Do you remember when she was born?

No.

No? What did she look like?

Small and, Finnish.

Right. What kind of personality did she have?

Caring and generous.

Was your grandparents' house a particularly social household, were there neighbours popping in, or relatives?

No, it's very remote.

Did many relatives visit?

No.

None?

No.

No? OK. If we move on to the grandparents on your mother's side, what was that grandfather like?

Well he was quite a character. I think I told you his name previously, which is Finch Portman Ingram[ph]. And, he retired successfully at the age of, early age of about forty-something, and... He was in the silk trade, and, was also a sort of, inventor.

And, he was the first person in Devon, one of the first people in Devon to have a car, and certainly one of the first to have a television set. And he made, one of the funniest things about him was, he had, he made a quint, that's a five-wheel bicycle. No, maybe it had four wheels, I don't know, but, apparently, he used to drive this, well bicycle, this thing, and the police at that time did a trap for this machine, and they whipped off the last man, and none of them, none of the other ones in front knew the other one had gone. But, apart from that he did more seriously things, like researching life-jackets, and my grandmother was, you know, said she could never go to the lavatory or a sink or a bath without seeing bits of cork, various types of cork, with numbers on floating around. And he actually, I think patented it and produced a life-jacket. But he was always... And the last thing I remember about him was that, sitting at Dartmouth, because he had a flat in his last days, with a periscope, and he used to sit in this chair with this periscope, and being able to see the boats coming in and out of Dartmouth Harbour, without having to move out of his chair. He was...he was, you know, he was quite a strong character. But my mother and he didn't, never got on. In fact, when he died, he left everything...I mean he was quite a, quite, reasonably wealthy man, everything to his nephew, and to my mother nothing. And, this is very much Ingramesque[ph], there's an Ingramesque streak in the family, and, he left my mother literally nothing.

Did he inherit wealth from his parents?

I don't know. I don't know, I don't know his background. At one point he was chairman of Dartmouth Council. And also he was a very shrewd man, I mean, I mean when he retired he sort of bought and sold bits and things like that, and property and things. But, none of us ever saw anything of it. I used to, you know, he was quite an amusing person, I used to get on quite well with him, but, that was it.

How did he manage to retire at forty? Was that from the silk side of the business?

He must have, he must have made money from that, I suppose. But how he did it, I don't know.

What did he look like physically? Tall, small?

He had quite a strong face, and as for being fat or thin, I don't know. He...he did have a sort of, heart problem I think. And, he had a housekeeper; what their relationship was, I have no idea.

Did you like him?

Yes I did actually, yes.

And he liked you?

I think so, yes.

Yes? What about his religious beliefs?

Nil, I should think.

Atheist?

Well, if you're talking about religion, it's too simple to say atheist. I mean, you may want to talk about religion later, but, I would say he had certain... The only thing I'd say, he gave a pair of gates to a church, you know, whatever that means. It doesn't mean to say necessarily he believed in that particular church, but...

Was he a sociable person?

Well he must have been to...to be involved in the Dartmouth politics I suppose.

Could you describe the house that he lived in?

Bayards Cove it was called, which is a flat above the old Customs House I think in Dartmouth, Devon.

And what did the flat look like inside?

Pretty meaningless to me.

What about books, were there many books in the flat?

No.

Newspapers, magazines?

No.

No? OK. Moving on to your maternal grandmother. What was her name?

Mabel Alice[???] Ingram.

Which of your grandparents died first?

My father's, paternal grandmother. I was the only person to see her when she was dying, in Launceston Hospital. And obviously they'd hyped her up with...being quite, very shocked, with drugs, and she was hallucinating, and asking for ice-cream of all things. And, I phoned up my Aunt Peggy's husband, who was a doctor, complaining that the hospital hadn't given her enough drugs, but in fact actually they'd probably given her too much. And then my grandfather, he died very shortly afterwards, and then, my grandfather Ingram died, I mean, through his heart problems I think. I remember being met by, at Dartmouth, I went to the funeral, by my mother, who said I wasn't, wasn't supposed to speak to anyone. And it turned out that, because she was so sort of fraught that she had not been left a penny by him, and being left to... But both my grandfather and my grandmother on that side are buried near Dartmouth.

How did you react to their deaths?

I was upset with all, because, they were all very supportive to me during this war period.

Any one in particular, or...?

Two were buried, and two were, went to a crematorium, but...and I vowed I'd never go to a crematorium again, because I was so upset. I suppose the thing about death is, is the finality, so that, there is a discipline I suppose of coming terms with death, but... I don't think that's/I was[??] making comparison.

What about yourself, would you want to be buried or cremated?

Well definitely I don't want to be buried, that's for sure.

Why not?

Well, it's all to do with my beliefs, you know.

What beliefs?

Well, I've developed to be, you know, earnest[??].

What does that mean?

Well you know what it means.

I know, but, you tell the tape. (laughs)

Well it means that, from an interest in Buddhism, which is very complicated, and very difficult to come to grips with, you know, that, I've become, from my sort of deep interest in ethnographics and no so on, and my sort of, several visits, particularly to certain hill tribes and so on, that, where their belief is beyond, it's nothing to do with Buddhism, it's to do with gods that are related to natural things, whether it be a building or you or a tree or a river, and so on, and normally they burn them, you know, they, you know, they burn themselves, and that's it, you know. That's if I don't kill myself, you know. In fact last week a friend of mine killed himself, which had a terrible effect on me.

I don't understand why you would want to do it really.

Well, it's to, to get rid of the kind of, anxieties and tensions that one, one is under, you know.

Monetary, or, or several?

Well money is, whether you like it or not, is a factor of life that... Also it's a sense of impossibility of going forward I suppose or... But it's more complicated than that, because it's, it's, you know, it's on record, I mean if you see my medical records and so on, I mean I'm sort of, defined as a sort of depressive person, and...but I refuse to take any drugs for it, but it's to do with the...a combination of things, which is, one, the impossibility of producing my work; two is the suicide of my own son, Tom; and also, [inaudible] wanted to divorce, my second marriage; and three, a general feeling that, life seems to be a terrible problem, you know.

OK. If we change the subject, and move on to your father.

Mm.

What was your father's full name?

William Arnold Knowles.

Where and when was he born?

He must have been born in the West Country. I don't know when or where. He died aged eighty-four.

Can you describe him, physically?

As a young man he was very sporty, and, considered to be very handsome and, physically good really. He was a bit of a, slightly macho I think, and he used to have a moustache during the war and things like that, and afterwards, you know.

What about his personality?

He, you know, tried to create an element of sort of upper class respectability. I remember him saying to me, 'It's not what you know, it's who you know,' kind of thing, which is completely alien to me. And he could be kind in some ways, but a complete snob in other ways, the way he... I think it's to do with the period, possibly, of, you know, how one dressed, and how one behaved, and, complete lack of sensibility. In the house, you know, there were no books, and no music, and, it's as though I was put in the saucepan with the lid on top, you know?

Could he be a kind person?

Yes, I think he could have been, yes.

Could. Yes. Was he strict with you?

I think he didn't understand me.

Did he try?

No. That's part of the problem.

Was he particularly religious?

Not at all, no.

Didn't ever go to church?

He used to just go to his friends' funerals, where he also used to wear a bowler hat.

And you briefly said that he was in the Army.

Yes.

So that was his initial main occupation, was it?

Well no, he, he was a, he was a chartered surveyor, specialising in agricultural things, like farms, you know?

OK.

And he was a partner in a firm called, at that time Weller Eggar in Farnham, Surrey.

Did he go to university?

No. No he, he did his articles in Exeter.

Mhm. He was working for a firm in Exeter?

Mm.

Yes.

And, what happened, he was a member of the TA and then, then when the war came, then he went off, he was in the Royal Engineers, and ended up being a lieutenant colonel. And he was always known, at the end of the war, as Colonel, he liked to be called Colonel.

And what did you think of that?

Oh, it's a bit, a bit stupid really, a bit pretentious, you know. Unnecessary. I did my National Service, and, you know, I don't call myself Lieutenant and all this thing.

Did he join up right at the beginning of the war?

Yes. In fact he had quite a distinguished war record, in that he was in the...did one of these Norwegian kind of, commando raids and things, and, in the desert and so on. He met his wife during his war service, at Cyprus I believe, and he married this person called Barbara. I mean, she was a housemistress at Benenden School, and I had the problem of having to cope with that.

What kind of problem?

Very strict and very autocratic and very, fixed. In fact, I think...we had a sort of, developed a mutual dislike, to the extent, in the last few years of her life she wasn't, we didn't communicate whatsoever.

So once the war finished, your father went straight back to being a chartered surveyor?

Mm.

And did he carry on with that for the rest of his life?

Yes he did.

He did.

Until he retired, yes.

Yes. Again, would he have had a good pension?

[break in recording]

[End of Track 1B (according to summary)]

[Track 2 Side A]

I know nothing about his financial affairs, and, all I know is that in addition to his professional work at his office, he was manager for Jenkin[???] Place, or... The farm was called Bury Court, b-u-r-y Court, Bentley, near Farnham, Hampshire. The owner of this was Gerald Cook[ph]. But Gerald Cook[ph] was a City man of, you know, distinguished background going back to the Cook[ph] family in Norfolk, who handled, whatever money my father had made or was getting, through SG Warburg where Cook[ph] was a director I believe. So when my father died, he did actually have quite a lot of money, and before he died he gave various things to my half brothers, and, in his will he left masses of money to the half brothers, and because he thought I was vulnerable, he left nothing to me at all, other than a small amount to my daughter, which... So in fact, basically he sort of, cut me out.

Because he thought you were vulnerable? What...?

Vulnerable.

Does that mean he thought you would just blow it, if he left it to you?

Oh yes, he probably thought I'd blow it; and also he thought, he didn't really respect what I...well, I wouldn't say... He didn't really understand what I was trying to do. Whereas my half brother's, William's, you know, a respectable, successful solicitor, lawyer, with Clifford Chance, he's been successful. And also, my other half brother, Giles, who's got various problems. So that, in a way, my father sort of, distanced himself from me, through probably lack of understanding, I think.

And did he ever make any great effort to understand what you were doing?

Certainly not interested in my, my art at all. I remember, even as a teenager, him saying[???], I remember my stepmother saying, 'Oh well...' because I was very obsessed by visual arts, and saying that, 'Oh well it's a nice hobby to have on Sundays,' or something, you know. Classic, you know, cliché kind of expression. And, so it was not taken seriously at all, you know, they didn't encourage me to... In

fact they prevented me from going to university, which my headmaster wanted me to do. I mean the theory was that I should go into my father's business, and, and as you may have seen, that, I resented it enormously, and was immediately put in the most insensitive part, at the drawing office, doing trays[??] and stuff on maps, and being totally frustrated, you know.

How intelligent do you think your father was?

I think he was sensible. I mean intelligence is a, you know, it's a strange thing to define isn't it?

It's very difficult.

I mean, for instance I am amazed when you see these people on quizzes and doing crosswords, and, but doesn't necessarily mean intelligence.

No.

Mm.

Things like cryptic crosswords, I couldn't do to save my life, but...

No.

Perhaps because I've never tried.

No. No.

What about his interests and hobbies, apart from the Territorial Army?

Shooting.

Did you approve of that?

No, I've never done any shooting in my life.

No.

Other than when I did my National Service, from a tank, you know. Not at birds or anything like that.

Did he encourage you to go shooting with him?

Tried to a bit, mm.

But you wouldn't go?

No. No.

When did he die?

About, four years ago.

How did that affect you?

Not much.

You went to the funeral?

Yes.

Yes. Was that a well attended funeral?

Yes it was. It was in the local parish church. And I read a thing by Gray, a ballad on fly fishing, the last bit.

You actually went fishing with your father, did you, sometimes?

Yes I did, yes I have done, yes.

Was that enjoyable?

Not really. I mean, my relationship with my father was not enjoyable.

What was your mother's name?

Iris Webb.

When was she born, and where?

Don't know.

Was she older or younger than your father?

She must have been a bit younger.

How would you describe her, physically?

I've seen early photos of her, and she's, she's really quite beautiful. And... But, as I knew her, she, in character, she was very autocratic, and, one tried to resist this, you know, this kind of dominance. I mean she was very very strongly opinionated. She was very successful in her own interests, like, she was a judge at Chelsea for flower arranging, and things like the chairman of flower arranging societies and things like that. But was very very opinionated about people and one's relationships and things like that.

So did you...

And, and the trouble is that, my relationship with her was very difficult, because, we used to argue a lot.

About what kind of things?

About our thinking, and opinions.

Any particular things you can remember?

Well mainly to do with, life direction I suppose. Whereas my half-brother, which was the product of her husband who was a professional soldier called, he was a lieutenant colonel, Richard Webb, was a son called Richard, and he basically pandered to my mother, you know. And I didn't resent that whatsoever, but, he, he sort of, caved in to this kind of pressure, which I resisted, you know.

Why did you resist?

On principle, you know. I mean, you know, you know, just didn't... It's a question of carrying through one's belief really.

You said he was a very opinionated person.

Mm.

Was she generally a fairly happy person, do you think?

No, I think she was very unhappy.

Mm.

No, she was quite bitter about my grandfather not giving, you know, leaving anything to her, and that carried on all the way through her life, you know.

So that's a bit sad isn't it?

Sad, yes, but, it's not worth thinking about.

Did she...was she particularly depressed, did she go into great bouts of depressions?

She had a very bad, she had obviously a bad operation in France where she had a kidney removed, and it never healed, the wound never healed, and she had to be seen every day by one of the district nurses. And I admire her for, for, you know, sort of, sustaining that treatment through the rest of her life, you know, the last part of her life. And, you know, she had a very rotten time of having to be dressed every day, and then getting allergies, you know, on, on that.

Was that constant pain then?

It must... I don't know whether it's pain or not, but it was certainly, must have been an irritation. But she had to be dressed every day, you know, an unhealed wound. Mm.

This is probably a tricky question, but, who do you think you were closer to, your mother or your father?

I resent them both. She lived in Dartmouth, the same place as my grandfather, and, I think she bought and sold bits of property, and the same thing happened with, with my father, is that, when she died she left me nothing, and left it to my half-brother.

For the same reasons?

Yes, she, again didn't... Because I resented her for abandoning me, you know, as I believe, and she strongly disputed that the whole of her life, you know, but, but also, she knows, she knew I think that, it's true. She abandoned me towards my grandparents, and her situation with... OK, it's all to do with the war situation. Well I mentally certainly believed that she'd done so; this is why I sort of resisted her opinions right to the end. So it may, it may have, may have created some psychological kind of, aspect in my life, which may have been recognised by both of them. And they... But the thing is, I didn't sort of pander to either of them, you know.

Would you consider that she was intelligent?

Yes, I'd call her intelligent, mm.

Mm. More intelligent than your father?

Different ways.

Yes. In what ways was she intelligent?

Well she was more sensitive to things around her, I'd say. But I wouldn't say she was very sophisticated in an aesthetic way, or...not aesthetic, I mean aesthetic's the wrong word, but... I mean the fact she could produce, you know, beautiful flower arrangements and all I suppose is sensitive, but, I don't consider either of them very intelligent in terms of, my interests anyway.

So they were too narrow-minded, do you think?

Yes, but, I mean I suppose everybody's narrow-minded aren't they. Everyone has their own opinion, and they stick to it, and, you...you don't dislike someone for being narrow-minded.

No.

I mean there's... You know, we can walk down the road and I can meet you to...introduce you to some of the most narrow-minded people I've met in my life; I still don't dislike them.

What about her interests?

Oh, garden, she's a great gardener I must say. I think, one thing I've inherited from anybody is, her interest in plants. Not academically; by that I mean not sort of, botanist or anything like that. I have a natural feeling towards plants.

When did she die?

Three years ago.

And how did that affect you?

A sense of relief.

Did you inherit their good looks?

I wouldn't say so, I don't think, I don't think about my looks at all.

You never have?

No.

No? It's unusual isn't it?

No, I don't think it is. I mean, what's...I mean what are looks? They're nothing really, they're just, how you are.

But they influence a lot of people, don't they.

Well, yes some people... If I look, if I'd been, if I go through some of the early photographs, and you know, I'll try and sort out things, and, you know, people have said, you know, 'You looked handsome,' or something like that, and I'd say, well, to me it's totally irrelevant whether people are handsome or not. Although I must admit that if I see a beautiful girl, it's not irrelevant, you know.

Were you punished as a child, as an early child really, what, at the age of five or...?

Yes, I mean, I was sent to this terrible school, preparatory school.

Was that a punishment?

Well, it was a punishment... Well, I mean, the experience is a pun.....

[end of transcriber tape 1A, start of 1B]

.....that time[???], they moved in the war up to Litchfield for a bit. There was a very sadistic headmaster. I mean some people got worse treatment than myself, but, he certainly used to beat children, you know. And, in fact today he'd be probably imprisoned for it, I should think.

He actually enjoyed it, do you think?

I think so. I think that, looking back on it now, I can understand that he is [inaudible]. I found it very difficult at that age, on certain subjects, particularly to do technical things like mathematics and things like that, and actually beaten for being...which of course created even more problems of not being able to come to terms with subjects you didn't like, or couldn't do. So that was, that period was a rotten period for me, definitely.

Was it decided, as far as you know, was it decided that your parents would get divorced immediately, or did they try and reconcile?

They didn't try and reconcile, no.

No. So it just went through straight away?

Mm.

Yes. And then...

Well it went to, it went to court, and my mother put the argument that, she should have custody of me.

Yes.

But, that didn't happen. And I was, I was not told, no one discussed it with me at all.

No. It didn't happen because, well you said before, the judge at the time just decided your father was the better parent?

No, I think it was to do with the fact that my mother had gone off with someone else or something, that...

Mm. I'm surprised that mattered then. It doesn't seem to matter now, does it?

Well I don't know. I mean, it's...it's not even worth talking about.

No.

[End of Track 2 Side A]

[Track 2 Side B]

[separate transcriber tape – recopied]

.....tell you anything about sex when you were a child?

No. No, I was a very late... Basically I, I was brought up in a very monastic situation at preparatory school and the second school. And, I think that, you hear about people today having sex in their teens, early teens and so on like that; I had no sex till my twenties certainly. I was given no, we had no sex education whatsoever.

No?

Mm.

Were there such things about, like pornographic magazines, were they around at school?

No.

Nothing of that type?

No, my interest was in music.

So how did you learn about things like contraception?

It never occurred to me.

OK. How old were you when you had your first, shall we say, serious girlfriend?

Probably during my National Service, because, I must have been twenty...twenty-two, something like that.

Why were you quite late?

Naïve and unaware.

Partly because of the schools you attended?

Oh yes I'm sure. That's not to say that, subsequently that I had a fairly promiscuous life I must say.

OK. Do you have brothers and sisters? I know you have half-brothers.

Mm. They're all half.

They're all half.

Mm.

Right. What were their names? I know we've talking about two.

Well on my mother's side there's Richard.

Mhm.

And then on my father's side there was William and Giles.

What did Richard look like? He's still alive I assume, is he?

He certainly is, yes.

Yes.

Average and unattractive.

So he didn't inherit your mother's good looks?

No.

No.

But, if you want to talk, need to talk about Richard, I will do.

I do, yes.

He's...he and I don't communicate with each other at all.

And never have done?

Oh yes, we did, but, it's my belief, rightly or wrongly, obviously I believe it's rightly, that, he's been extremely mean on reneging, on, what's the word?

Reneging.

Reneging, reneging, yes. When I was on the dole, you know, about, some years back, when he agreed to pay, this was a meeting with my solicitor, I wasn't there, a certain amount, which was not a lot, I think it was... And he reneged on this deal, and, after a few months. Also when I was ill in hospital he never bothered to either see or contact me and so on. And also sent a very patronising letter giving his opinion about my illness when he's got no knowledge of it whatsoever. And he's generally an extremely mean man I think. And, it's not jealousy, the fact that my mother left most of her wealth to him; it's just that he has no interest in my welfare, either physical or financial, whatsoever. So, I just want to cut it out of my life, you know.

Mm. Why is he like this?

Because, I think, he's rather a sad person. Got no family. And also that, my own aspect of the family, like Emma, my daughter, when my son Tom killed himself, Richard didn't come to his funeral, on the pretext of having a bank meeting. And, we've never forgiven him for that. That's, that's, that's the root reason actually why

we don't... So therefore, as far as I'm concerned, Richard has no part in my life whatsoever.

Why did he originally agree to pay you these amounts of money?

Because he was rich and I was...I had nothing.

Right. Was that more or less out of guilt that the mother left him most of the money and...?

Oh no, this was before then.

Was it before?

Mm.

Right.

He made, he made a fortune from, you probably don't know the book, it's called *Diary of an Edwardian Lady*, you know.

I do, yes.

Yes. And it was a student of mine who brought it in one day, and I, I, you know, together with another tutor, suggested that we should see it, because he's a book publisher, you know. And, that has been the basis of his wealth.

Is he still in that business?

Yes, what he's doing is, selling off the rights of his books I think, you know.

Where does he live now? Well, he lives in Dartmouth doesn't he?

Mm.

Yes?

Well he's got my mother's house, and he's got various things.

Mm.

Mm.

What about William?

William's completely different in character. I mean William sussed Richard out the first time he met him really. William, being a lawyer, has got a very clear mind and so on, and he...when things collapsed with me, I made the mistake of giving him back personal guarantee of this house where I'm living, you know. And, William bought the house from the bank and has let me live here for nothing, so that's extremely generous. Also, last year when I had... He's... There's was a shortfall in an exhibition, and he made up the difference. So although he, he's rolled out my[???]... Although he doesn't understand what I'm doing, he's made an effort, so he's been to a couple of my exhibitions and talked to Mel for example and things like that.

Has he bought any work?

No.

No.

No. He's not into that at all.

He doesn't buy any sort of art, or...?

No. I never...no, none at all. But he's...I would say he's remote, but supportive.

Mm. He has children, does he?

Twins, yes.

Do you know them well?

No no.

No?

No, don't.

So you don't visit the family very often?

Well the last time was a disaster when, Christmas Day when I was asked up there, and I was stopped by the police for going too slowly or something, and, was taken in, and I refused to take a breath test until I talked to the solicitor on duty, who couldn't be found, and there was a rather belligerent sergeant who said, 'It's been too long, so we're going to book you.' And I was photographed and fingerprinted and treated like a criminal, and then that was it. So, that was the last time I made an effort to visit.

Driving too slowly. Was this on a motorway or something?

Passed two accidents. Mm.

Yes.

I think, the policeman just pulled me in on the way back just out of curiosity or something, I don't know.

And Giles?

Yes, Giles is a teacher, and he suffers from, epileptic...

Epilepsy.

Epilepsy [inaudible]. And, he teaches botany at a girls' school. He's OK, but, we're not, we're not all that close I would say.

No.

Mm. But he did bother to come and visit me when I was ill, which was good of him.

Has he helped out money-wise?

No.

I assume he hasn't got as much money as William, has he?

No, because I mean, in fact what's happened, my father basically put all the control into William's hands, and... But, Giles is a lot better off than I would have ever been.

Was William your father's favourite?

No, he...my father considered him to be the most sensible.

I'm going back to this word 'intelligence'. Was he the most intelligent? I know it's hard to define.

Well, I suppose you could, you could say academically, because, he went to university, he got his law stuff, and he's now a senior partner in this big law firm and so on. But whether that means intelligence or not, I don't know.

Mm.

He's an obsessive worker.

What are his interests outside work?

Nil.

Nil.

[inaudible], no.

Mm. Giles, does he do anything outside work? No? Is Giles interested in art at all?

No. He didn't turn up to my exhibitions or anything.

No? Right, moving on to early hobbies. We've talked about fly-fishing, which you started very early on and...

Mm.

...and you still do.

Mm.

That more or less started in Trebartha, did it?

Mm.

Right.

And continued when I was at school, Kelly College.

Yes.

On the moor, in rivers like the Walkham and Cherry Brook and Tavy, the River Tavy.

Yes. What do you enjoy about it?

Well being there. It's not catching fish.

No.

In fact I won't eat any fish I catch or anything like that.

It's just the quiet and the...?

No, it's not...I wouldn't say quietness; it's a question of movement, water movement and the environment. And also, yes a sense of isolation I suppose, yes. Not having people around you.

But isn't it just as good just sitting in that environment?

No, because, it's... The thing about fishing is also to get a reaction from the unknown. You don't know whether... I mean you can fish on the river, and there couldn't be anything, couldn't be anything in the river at all.

Doesn't it get boring when that's the situation?

No, because, there's lots of things happening on the river. You go down, I can take you down on the Bovey River now and I could probably show you lots of different species of things, you know.

Any other early hobbies?

No, just early jazz records.

From what kind of age? What age were you when you started?

At school, you know, at school. I used, all my money used to go on records.

Mm.

In fact George Melly said to... I told him I used to buy the early Parlophone records with my pocket money at school, and he said, 'Oh, Justin, we wondered who the one person was buying our records.'

So would that be...

But I used to do, I used to write to a place called Dobell's in the Charing Cross Road at the time and buy second-hand 78s and things like that, mm.

This would be what, from the age of twelve or...?

Well my interest in jazz developed I suppose when I was, about fourteen.

Yes. Where did you first hear it?

I don't know where, but...

It wouldn't be at home I assume; at school?

No no no. No. But I used to...I used to play a bit at home, so it must have been earlier than that, yes.

Mm.

So there's been a, a thread that goes through my life. But I'm not a musician. I'm very, quite jealous of composers, and... Also writers to some extent; I feel very inhibited on writing and so on. There's a big disadvantage of using materials that I do, in comparison to composers and musicians, because, they just have to have some paper, you know. Whereas, you know, you're lumbered with having to get materials. I mean even, I find it very difficult... We'll come on, we'll no doubt talk about this, but, even a painter is better off than the kind of stuff I'm doing.

Do you remember what the first jazz record you actually listened to was?

Undoubtedly... I was extremely purist, and I used to... By that, I mean I...there was one point when I played a bit, I wouldn't play in a band that had a piano in.

Why not?

Well, because, you know, I was very interested in the earliest possible jazz, traditional jazz this is. You know, I used to like sousaphone...

Yes.

...banjo and front line cornet and clarinet and trombone and things like that. But mainly we're talking about sort of, early Armstrong and Biderbeck and... Even some of the unknown ones, almost unknown bands, you know.

And do you still have a lot of records?

Not a lot. I've sold, as I've sold most things, most of the stuff, and, I have...I have some, but not a library.

Mm. Can you get most of those early things on CD now?

Yes, I mean they're beginning to do that, putting collections on CDs, yes.

Mm. OK. Sport.

Yes.

Were you interested in sport as a child?

Well funnily enough, well not interested in it, but I actually did it, because I was trying to prove myself I suppose. So, I was reasonably successful at rugby, where I was a reasonable club player, and then played for Devon Schoolboys, and tries for Devon, and Hampshire. And also at school I was captain of boxing, and in the Army I boxed for the regiments and so on.

So there are fairly macho sports.

Yes, they sound like it, don't they, yes.

Did your father encourage you to do things like rugby?

Yes, well, well my father was captain of rugby at school and things like that, so, I was probably trying to prove something to him, whatever he could do I could just, do as well.

Did he help you play?

No.

No?

No.

Did he come and watch you?

Not as far as I'm aware.

No?

No.

Are you still interested in rugby and boxing now, do you watch it on television?

I'm more interested in football, because it's got, you know, use of space and skill. So, I look at sport in a slightly academic way now, you know, not... I mean I'm not a sort of manic, like people who... There's someone in this village who is a Reading, of all places, which is miles away, who goes to every home and away game. And, in fact, I went down to Torquay because they were playing Torquay as a friendly or something,

and this guy, he actually wouldn't sit next to me, he had to go where the Reading people were. Obviously it's a tribal thing, you know, football. But I'm more interested in the actual use of the space. Many sports are very boring, you know.

Golf?

Certainly, yes. Mm.

Tennis?

A bit. A bit, yes, mm.

Would you say that you use something like football to help the work you do, to, I don't know, for using the use of space in. I don't know if you can convert that kind of thing.

Not consciously.

No.

No. We... I think... Visual work like... Well any kind of creative work, there has to be a sensitivity towards movement and space. And it, I suppose some of it seeps in. For instance, whether one line has... It's a question of having any... Also a sense of energy about it. It's very interesting seeing a live football match as opposed to seeing it on television, because you, you get a sense of energy going on, commitment from the particular player and so on. It's a very edgy kind of... One person can do one line; another person can do another line. There's a big difference between one that's got sort of, energy and sensitivity and dynamics, you know.

Apart from records, did you collect anything as a child?

Not as a child, no. But I've collected things since.

OK, we'll come on to that in a bit.

Mm.

How old were you when you first learnt to read?

No idea.

No? Because you didn't go to your first school until, six?

No, I obviously went to dame school.

Right, from the age of what, four or five?

No idea.

No?

No.

OK.

I mean if you're talking about schools...

I'm just about to.

Right, OK.

OK.

[break in recording]

So the first school you went to, I think you've already said, is Belmont Preparatory School?

Mm. Not the first school but...

No.

Preparatory school.

Yes. That was at the age of six?

Mm. Boarding school.

Boarding school.

Mm.

Full-time boarding.

Mhm.

So you only came out at the end of each term or whatever.

That's right. That's it.

Yes. All boys?

Yes.

Yes. Don't suppose there were mixed boarding schools then.

No.

No. Can you describe that school?

Well, it was a, a country house converted into a boarding school. So, you slept in great rooms with about twenty or thirty people. It was like a, almost like a prison I suppose. Worse than prison in a way. And, extremely regimented, bearing in mind it

was in the war as well. Like, you had to queue up and be given about three sweets every week, because everything was rationed of course. And, it was in grounds. [inaudible] odd thing about that school, we used to do archery for some reason, which I used to do. But I think it's, it's a classical kind of sort of, entrepreneurial kind of business I suppose by the people who own the school. You meet all these unfortunate kids who were sort of shunted in there.

So it was a fee-paying school?

Yes it was, yes.

Why were you sent there?

Well I suppose, perhaps, my father and mother sort of communicated that was for me; probably thought it was the easiest solution. Or at that...

Because of the war?

Well, I don't know. At that time it was conventional, you know, for the middle classes to send their kids away to school.

Were William and Giles sent to school like that?

Yes, they...yes they were, yes.

Yes?

We all were, yes. But they were... I mean the second school I went to is, which is in Tavistock, Kelly College, actually is where my father went to, which is... But the others were sent to more fashionable schools, which, I'm not saying they were better at all, because in fact, I was quite happy, well reasonably happy at Kelly College, because it's on the edge of Dartmoor, which I'm very fond of, and the headmaster then was very encouraging for, for people to go on the moor and so on.

What was a typical day like at Belmont, were you up at the crack of dawn and...?

Oh extremely regimented of course, yes.

Into assembly?

Yes, that's right. You had to actually say whether you'd been to the lavatory that morning or not.

What happens if you hadn't?

You tick it down, and then after about two or three days, everyone lied of course, but otherwise you'd get sort of some purgative[???] kind of drug which was...

How many children to a class?

I don't know, about, I guess about, twenty-five I should think.

And what kind of subjects did you study there?

Well.....

[End of Track 2 Side B]

[Track 3 Side A]

[transcriber tape 2A]

Can you describe the college from the outside?

Yes. It's very austere looking, with a leat, which is a small stream, going through, which I suppose must come from the Tavy river. And, almost Gothic looking. And is split into the main building and then where the school rooms are. And then there are three houses, meaning that, that's where people live at school. And at that time, I think it's completely changed now that they have girls and, which of course they didn't have when I was there. And the number of pupils has increased now, but, I think at that time there were about, no more than 300, it was quite small, a small, minor public school.

Was this a boarding school again?

Yes.

It was?

Totally boarding, yes.

Full time, yes.

Mm.

Yes.

It had no day people at all.

Mhm. What was a typical day like? What time did you get up?

Chapel was the first thing.

When would that be, nine o'clock?

No, probably a bit earlier than that. But... I can't remember times of things like that, but then, it was chapel definitely, every day. And...

Did you enjoy that side of things?

Well I used to sing in the choir there. And in fact I had singing lessons.

At the college?

Mm. For some reason they thought my voice was OK, you know, for singing. But of course I couldn't read any music. I was very friendly with a quite well known jazz musician called Mike Westbrook; he couldn't read a note of music either. But we used to play jazz in the music school. But I'd, academically I wasn't very brilliant. I made history in the school by not coming to terms and refusing to do – well not refusing, but I gave up subjects I couldn't come to terms with, which were chemistry, physics and Latin. And I also tried maths, but they wouldn't let me give up maths. And, it's interesting that the sort of art people have often asked me, including some of the Tate people, 'Were you...have you always been interested in maths?' because they think my work is, you know, Systematic, or it's based on proportion and things like that, which is, which is not true, because it's all intuitive. But, the fact is, they wouldn't let me give up maths, although I found it very very difficult.

I'm surprised they let you off the other things, like Latin and things like that.

Mm. I was once caught in the Latin... Because what happened, I did alternative subjects, you know.

Mm.

Caught in the Latin class reading a Zen Gray Weston[ph] story. And I remember the, the teacher actually threw a book at me for doing that.

Was this studying for School Certificate?

Yes. Mm.

Yes.

Yes.

So, so you could pick and choose, like...?

In the end I did quite well, I got eight, you know, sort of, whatever they were, and I got an A'level and all that kind of stuff and... So academically, it turned out, I was almost OK. I'm not sure about the level of teaching there at that time, but anyway.

But it was mainly art subjects that you were taking, English and art and things like that, history, geography?

Well, my main interest, my main sort of, interest, was art, you know, mm. And we had, we were lucky, because they had a new art guy from, I think he'd got, his name was Michael Groom, and he was recently from Goldsmiths' or somewhere like that, you know. And, he... Well my, I sort of naturally got interested in the sort of, European artists, you know, the, you know, Cézanne, Matisse, Braque stream of things.

And naturally got interested, or it was...

Naturally, yes, naturally.

By looking at, in the library for books, or...?

Well, there wasn't much of a library there, but, it's... For some reason I sort of, became, had a natural sort of direction towards that. And...

So I assume this art teacher would show you photographs of works by these artists?

No, I'm afraid they didn't have those facilities.

No?

No. So it was...

How did you find out about them?

Sort of second-hand bookshops.

OK.

Mm. Yes.

So did you do art from the age of twelve?

Well the first memory of my art was at my preparatory school where they stuck up, where they do in kids' schools, once a year a few bits, and I remember doing a picture of a, a horse. And what interested me was not that they, not that they put it up, but where they put it up, which was in the, it was in the gymnasium, behind the parallel bars, and seeing the bars going cross it and... But, going on to the Kelly College at...and also at home on holidays, I was working fairly consistently, mainly, mainly in the sort of, mainstream kind of influences, you know? And as you mentioned, I did this mural in the art room, which was actually, it was a very long thing on, just linen, of a jazz band, and it was about, fifteen or twenty foot long. And it was up there apparently for, about twenty years. It's probably buried now I should think.

So how did you come to do that?

You mean... How do you mean, physically?

Did they say, did they ask you, 'We want a big mural; would you do it?'

No. I just did it, yes, mm.

Did you provide those materials, or they provided them?

I think, I think they did provide the materials there, you didn't have to buy your own materials.

Mm.

Oh, didn't have any money to do that anyway, so, they must have done it. Mm.

And what was the theme of this mural?

Well, just said, jazz band, yes.

So it was actually jazz figures playing?

Yes, like...

This.

Yes. Mm.

OK. Was there anything modern about it, or was it quite traditional?

Oh, thinking about it, it was probably, probably Matisse influenced I imagine. Not consciously, but, thinking about it now, but, if I saw it today, one would think that. Almost dancing figures, you know, sort of... Rhythmic kind of thing, you know.
Mm.

So, at that stage, were you...were you mainly drawing, or you were you painting as well?

Well, at that time the discipline was plant drawing, just whatever you wanted to do. And then, architectural, church architectural stuff, so you had to memorise certain churches and things like that.

Mhm. So was this art teacher encouraging you to do anything in a modern way?

Yes, he was very, quite laid back, and... I mean, he could sense I was, you know, was quite serious. I mean he had a difficult job teaching art to people who didn't really want to do it. But, he recognised, you know, I'd got... He recognised that I was quite serious about it, yes.

Was there anybody else in the class that was, that was any good?

Well this friend Mike Westbrook, this musician, whenever I, as long as I've known him, he's always been working on one painting only, different tones of purples. And, there's another bloke called Roger Elliott[ph] who was an astrologer, turned out to be, and a poet, and the three of us thought, we sort of.... We went to France to stay with my mother who had been, whose husband had been posted to Fontainebleau, and my mother tells me that we arrived in a taxi from the station with all these canvases piled up on the top, and these canvases were actually old Victorian paintings which were all valueless then. And what we used to do is, we couldn't afford to buy proper materials, and we used to just emulsion over them, and use them for painting. And, Mike Westbrook continued with his mauve painting, and the rest of us, you know, we used to go out and paint the landscapes.

Did you visit any exhibitions while you were at Kelly College?

No, we didn't do that.

No?

Mm.

So, the teaching was...

Pretty sterile.

Yes, just, sit down and do your own thing, and...

No, I mean there was no such things as slide shows, or...

No.

...or books.

Mm. Apart from the art teacher, which other teachers do you remember?

Well I had this guy... I did a painting for him actually which he was quite moved by, it was the music teacher, Dr Dally[ph]. And he, he took a group of us, about four of us, to Wales on a holiday visit, to... I don't remember the name of the poet. Anyway, he was pretty sympathetic. Also the headmaster was in a way, Westall. I was quite interested to see that when he died, he left some money to the college for an art centre, although he never really talked about art at the time. By art centre, I mean art sort of, complex or block or, art school.

Apart from art, what were your favourite subjects?

I think I disliked everything.

But you got reasonably good grades, so...

Yes. I mean it's only because, you know, one was part of a system, you know, you were sort of grinding through it. But, anything sort of English orientated I think, you know, or English language orientated. But then, I'm very conscious that, one of my inhibitions at the moment is, well throughout my life is not feeling that I...I'm unable to write English, you know. So I spent, I suppose the result is, there's an awareness of Englishness, but being aware that I'm unable to do it, you know.

So why did you have such a dislike for physics, chemistry and Latin?

Could be bad teaching; it could be... I'm not a very practical person at all, so that, it could be that, the logic of doing something is alien to me. For instance it's very difficult for me to knock a nail in the wall, or... Although some of the things that, that I do, could be very perfect, it's usually helped by people infinitely better at...technically. I'm a totally non-technical person.

Did your parents take much interest in your school work?

No. I never got a letter from my mother or father most terms, you know.

Mm. Did they have parent-teacher days in those times?

No.

No? Did they give you any extra tuition at home?

I did a post-preparatory school. Because my maths was so bad, they did bring in someone once an hour, once a week, in the holidays, on mathematics. Because it, to me it's a complete blockage, you know.

Because at the school I was at, all boys were expected to do maths, physics and chemistry, and if you didn't, you were beaten up more or less every day.

Really?

Because anything else, anything arty was for girls.

Oh yes.

So it was different at Kelly College was it?

No. Well, well, maybe I was lucky then, you know, because they, they could have insisted I carried it through. And ironically the, the chemistry master, who actually lives, he's still quite old, yes he's still alive I think, used to take me out fishing and things like that, and didn't resent it. He understood my mind to some extent, you know. So, maybe I was lucky. Yes.

Were you popular at school?

I never thought about that. I was successful, I was head boy there, for a time, and...

Doesn't that mean that you're popular?

Well, it could mean that I was popular with the headmaster or something like that, but, with the boys, I don't know. I mean I... I didn't seek popularity with anyone, either staff or the boys, you know, it was just... To me, I was sort of floating through it, you know, it wasn't... It was... I was being programmed, I thought, in a way. And whether one's popular or not, is neither here nor there.

Because I've got a feeling you resented authority at times.

Yes.

And yet you've become head boy, which is, is going along with authority, isn't it?

I know. Well, I feel... I mean today, I wouldn't have...I wouldn't have... Now, I probably would have... It wouldn't have occurred to me then, to have said, 'No, I don't want to do it,' or 'I'm not going to do it.'

But yet you said, 'I don't want to do physics, chemistry or Latin.'

Yes I know. But, saying, saying, going on to National Service, that, I wouldn't have put up with that, but I did it you see.

Yes.

But... Because, I think for a certain point in my life that, I just followed the conventions that existed, without challenging them very deeply. I mean I did, I certainly challenged things at certain points, and certain things, like, I think 1964 was it, when the art schools had their upheavals and so on, I got unpopular with the principal of Corsham for taking the students' side, you know. But also, I don't get on with authority very much.

The fact that your father was head boy, would that have had some influence?

I think I, I think...I think... I think the psychological influence would have been, that I was trying to show my father that I could be as good as him. And so, fuck it, you know.

And what did being head boy entail, did you have to give speeches in assembly, or...what do head boys do?

Well it's usually being part of a structure, I suppose. I was not, certainly not authoritarian, and, it was symbolic I think rather than defined roles.

So there weren't things like, is it called fagging or whatever that happened there?

Mm, no.

No?

No, it's quite a liberal school at that time. I mean, for that time it's quite liberal. I mean for instance, we never wore collar and tie or anything like that, and... It wasn't... It could be that they made the right choice to send me to the right place.

Apart from Mike Westbrook and Roger Elliott[ph]...

Mm.

...were there any other school friends you remember from Kelly College?

There was a guy became a priest.

That was Brother Peter, was it?

No, no no. No he was a visitor then, and he came into the...you know. [pause] No, my friends developed really after school, yes.

Well we just mentioned Brother Peter, so, he was a visiting lecturer, was he?

Well he wasn't a lecturer. He's a, a monk, you know, who came to talk. And he had to sort of... He had a sort of aura about him, sort of, had quite a heavy influence on me. And by coincidence, I met him purely by chance two or three times later, and when I was really quite desperate, I phoned up his monastery, and was told that he had been killed in a motorbike accident.

When you said he had an aura, what do you mean by that?

Well, an aura is almost indefinable isn't it? I mean how do you...? I don't know what it... I mean, aura means a presence, or a, spirit, or an influence, you know?

Yes.

Indefinable.

So you didn't get to know him at Kelly College particularly; it was after when you got to know him well?

No, I spoke to him, no I spoke to him.

Spoke to him.

Yes, certainly, yes.

Yes. When did...when did you start to meet him regularly?

Well I didn't meet him regularly, it was by chance. It's weird, you know, on a train once going up north, and... By, totally by chance. It was a fate in a way, you know.

Did he advise you about life, or anything like that?

No, there was nothing heavy about it at all, it was just, I just sensed a certain spirit, which gave, you know, it gave one confidence about life to some extent.

Mm.

I mean he... I mean, I wasn't influenced or aware at that time about, the fact someone had made a commitment to be a monk, you know, which it was, and, he just had this sort of... I suppose it just gave me confidence about living. Or one's work, you know.

Do you think it's a strange thing to do, to become a monk?

No, it's conviction, isn't it?

Mm.

I mean it's... The same thing happened to me in Bangkok once when I was on a boat, on a, one of these taxi boats, you know, which, a mass of people. And as you may know, there's a whole structure of societies, monks, to do with Buddhism over there, and, a monk came up and sensed something, and he actually asked me back to, not his, not his temple, but another temple, and, involved me in a discussion, which was not heavy at all, just talking about sort of... He just had this sort of, sense, or aura about, feeling about something, and... And that kind of thing has an influence on, on one I think. And he wasn't seeking out to be a spiritual kind of, converter or anything like that. It was just, these things happen in life every so often. In fact I feel a slight thing about this guy Canon Walker actually, because, you know, first of all it was

very sort of, straightforward kind of, straightforward thing, that, someone had suggested that my work should be shown there and things like that. But... And the more I talked to him, I mean he's a rather extraordinary man who extends one's thinking. Everyone has got a limited mind, you know, and sensibility beyond oneself. And this is why I suppose Buddhism is something, because these people are able to create that kind of thing.

So it's mainly religious people have this aura?

I never thought about that, but, it seems so. But I'm not religious, you know, other than... I'm not a religious person, it's just the... You know, as I explained before, I'm more interested in animism now. And also, ethnic traditions, you know.

I believe another person you met who had an influence on you was Nadia Boulanger?

Oh yes.

Yes? How did you come to meet her?

Well my mother was in Fontainebleau, and she...

That's where she lived, was it, at that time?

Mm?

Is that where she lived at that time?

Yes, because her husband was to do with the Army there. And we used to go to these mini little, wouldn't call them concerts, but, people she was teaching, because she was a very famous teacher of musicians, and composers and so on.

Yes.

And, every week someone would give a performance, and... And the person who wrote all the music for Nadia, you know, I mean, I got to know her a bit, and she had a great influence on me. But, she was a musician, and I was not, and so, I couldn't talk musician language, but I could understand the, again going back to the, her spirit of it, you know.

So in what way did she have an influence?

I think...

Can be defined?

I think artistic commitment really.

Because she was so committed to her music.

Yes. Yes, convinced.

Yes.

Yes, what she was doing was right, and what she was doing was right as well.

So it gave you a more positive attitude?

Yes, that's one of the problems I think with an artist, is they...I mean they've got to, they've got to be convinced and have confidence and be committed, and if they lose confidence, then you lose your work.

Are you still in touch with any school friends from Kelly College? I think maybe, you mentioned Mike Westbrook.

No.

No?

No. I went to one of his concerts once, and, we obviously talked, but not consciously.

No.

No, well not...I mean the answer is, no.

Were you bullied at school?

No. Not really. Teased sometimes, but not bullied.

Was that because you were fairly tall and...

I was quite fat.

...you were a rugby player?

No no. No no. No, I'd... No, I wasn't... I got through school OK. Although I disliked, disliked it. Mm.

What do you think you were like as a child, were you happy, moody, extrovert?

Well, I've never been extrovert.

You were obviously unhappy for certain periods weren't you.

Yes. I think, I was sort of conditioned into following a, following a, a system or syndrome, until I had confidence. I think I lacked confidence really. Mm. Or conviction.

[End of Track 3 Side A]

[Track 3 Side B]

What were the first things you remember about the war?

Well, not the first things, but, the things I can remember about the war is, rationing books, people sitting down at school with flags on bits of, small bits of butter, with their names on.

Small bits of butter?

Yes.

What, stuck into their butter?

Yes.

I see what you mean.

So you could...you were allowed two ounces or something a week. And, also, at preparatory school, having to wait on the staff and things like that. Not have...never having white bread, or, or roast potatoes. And we, our diet really was dripping and bread, basically.

Mm. That's what my grandfather's lived on all his life, and he's ninety-three I think, so...

Well, yes, I'm sure it wouldn't be recommended today, but... The other thing I can remember about, is, air raids, and, what they call doodlebugs, these self-propelled missiles that were sent from...which where we were in Sussex used to come over. They had a whistling sound. Where they landed, I don't know, or what happened, I don't know. And also, in the holidays, having to sleep under tables for air raids. Air raids were quite, something you got used to in a way.

Did you have these, what were they called? Were they called Anderson shelters, in the garden?

No, we used to sleep under tables

Mm.

Mm.

So did you see rationing as a real hardship?

No, just, you had rations for clothes and food, and just, you know, at that time, at that age one just took it on board, you know.

So it didn't devastate family life, it didn't have that much effect?

Not really. I mean I think the country people did better, because they grew their own stuff, you know.

Mm.

Mm.

Your mother didn't serve during the war, only your father.....

[end of transcriber tape 2A, start of 2B]

Any other things you remember?

About the war?

Yes.

Devastation.

Any real hate, did every...?

No, there was no hate.

No.

But it's...it was... Obviously there's a propaganda element came through that, everything seemed totally unnecessary and destructive. And, looking back on it, it was...seems totally unnecessary to me.

When did you do National Service?

Well I did, I think two years in my father's office as, as a relief when... I think I was one of the last National Servicemen, and I was aged, probably about twenty, when I was sent up to Catterick camp in Yorkshire on a train to be met in snow it was. And the training regiment I was sent to was 7th Dragoon Guards. They obviously resented having to train National Servicemen, and we were put into these trucks, almost like cattle, prisoners, and sent to these enormous barracks, and the snow coming down. And I remember there were two stoves in this barracks which contained about fifty people, fifty or sixty I think, and, near one of the stoves, [inaudible] I thought I'd keep myself warmer. And this guard, corporal came up and said, 'You think you've clever. You'll get up half an hour earlier, before everyone else, and black[???] that stove every day.' But then it went on from there, you know. I mean at that time, it wouldn't be allowed, even some Marine kind of, commando kind of training, but they literally, the philosophy was to break you, you know, [inaudible] where you were, and, it was a very tough basic training.

How did you find the physical side?

Well I was all right, because I had been... In fact I did better than a lot of the others, who I felt, you know, quite sorry for, because... I mean literally, when you were given your equipment, they stamped on your brasses to scratch them, so you had to use Brasso and cardboard to get them back to be decent kind of presentation. You had

two pairs of boots, and also a set of underwear, and shirts and things like that, which all had to be nine by four and a half if I remember, inches, to be inspected. So, of course no one wore them. And the best boots had to be so immaculate, you never wore them either, and, because they had to be mirror-like, you had to use hot spoons and polish to build up the thing. And, a lot of people sort of broke under it. But I think because of my schooling and things like that, I got through it. And, then I, I got sent to a place called Mons, which was in Aldershot, to do Officer Training Corps, which was almost as bad, not quite, and where I eventually passed out as a second lieutenant going into the Royal Tank Regiment.

Did you volunteer for Officer Training Corps?

I didn't volunteer; it was just a sort of, progression of things. It's rather like schooling, you just followed the system. And, there, you know, the first thing you're told, as soon as... Being, being in an armour corps regiment, or situation, the first thing you were told, they say, 'You realise that you have the highest mortality rate in the British Army.' Because tanks, as soon as they get hit, you get brewed up, you know. Which never occurred to me. It was only because my godfather was in the Royal Tank Regiment originally, that when they asked, you know, whether I have any sort of preferences and so on, I put that down. Then, then I was sent to, then I was sent to Germany, I was assigned to the 8th Royal Tank Regiment, which is in Paderborn in Germany. Extremely naïve young man, you know, it was just in December I remember, and all the kind of, revelries that were going on, and, I was given all the rottenest jobs, like being ordinary[???] officer. And we were on standby to attack the Russians, and, the tanks were all bombed up and got fuel. It was the ex-Panzer barracks, and, they used to take the piss out of me, and saying, 'Tonight, tonight Justin.' And you had to sleep in a small room with about three phones and code books. And they were on, like pre-Christmas sort of, carol singings and things like that. And they sort of kidded me into thinking that tonight was what they call crash mock[???], which means that basically attacking the Russians I suppose. And about three o'clock in the morning the phone went, and a voice at the other end said, 'Water melon,' which is a code word, and I didn't bother to look it up of course. So I picked up the other phone to the guard house, and sirens wailed. And, I had the job of having to wake up the officers' wing, and all drunk. And, I was attacked, and all my

sort of, clothes were taken off, and things like that. And then the scout cars were going out to get the married people who were living outside the barracks in. And I remember I was wearing red silk pyjamas, and being, the uniform for Tanks at that time, well probably is today, dead black, you know. So I had about an inch and a quarter of red silk pyjamas showing from my formal uniform. And, the colonel who had been alerted, obviously checked, or somebody double-checked, and, apparently it was just, you know, divisional headquarters was checking that someone was there. So the whole thing was a sort of, almost false alarm, and... I remember the regimental band coming out of the window playing *Colonel Bogie*, [inaudible] solitary figure than[??] me was going across the parade ground. And the next day I was called before the colonel, who was so angry with me, he forgot to punish me. But anyway, that all[??], National Service is quite, you know, quite a jokey situation really, because, you were working alongside the regulars who took things much more seriously, because their career was at stake, where[??] us, it was like imprisonment really. And the two days before I was demobbed the regiment had been sent back to England, and was at Tidworth, and we were doing what they call a battle run, which means the tanks, being a subaltern, or a second lieutenant, we were in charge of four tanks you see, and communication was by radio. And it's quite an intimate thing, because, you know, you've got, at that time you had...you had to be trained as a, a driver, a gunner, a signaller and, you know, blah blah blah, all this bit. And, people were being very slow about going along this battle run at Pembrokeshire in Wales, and I said, 'Well let's get through this as quickly as possible, let's not be too serious about it.' And they sort of went along with that. And, so we just rushed through things. And then at the end there was a little coaster, all the shipping had been warned to keep away. At that time, [inaudible] quite a long distance [inaudible] one shell ahead of the target and one before, and then the next one, theoretically, was to hit it. So... But it was quite stupid, you know, if you think about it, or do it. But we did that. And have you ever seen, you know, a coaster change course, or increase speed, [inaudible], but they complained, quite rightly, the Ministry of Defence. And I was called up before the colonel who said, 'Justin, we've enjoyed having you, you've given another dimension to the regiment, and National Service and so on. But, had you been...had you been not going for the next, you know, two days' time, you would have been cashiered.'

Would you recommend that National Service should carry on nowadays?

No.

No? You've already said that your father didn't want you to go to university, but your...

Mm.

...your head teacher did.

Mm.

Why was your father against it?

[inaudible] want me to follow in the family business.

[inaudible]?

It's a...

But he hadn't followed in his father's business, had he?

No, he never discussed with me, it's one thing[??] [inaudible], he never discussed my[??] forward-thinking or direction, ever. A very remote man.

Because, William went to university?

Yes he did.

Yes. And your father didn't object to that?

Well he didn't object...no he didn't, certainly didn't object to it, mm. Mm. I mean, I mean, William and Charles both went to Radley, which is a, probably by, probably they talked through their situation.

If you had have gone to university, what do you think you would have studied?

[pause] I don't know. I mean, what it would have done... I mean, the only benefit of National Service that I can think about was, it gave me space to think a bit. And maybe the university would have done that, you know, I probably would have found myself earlier, as a person.

So you left school at, eighteen?

Mm.

And what was your first job?

Immediately going into, as an articled pupil, my father's office.

And did you enjoy that?

Well, obviously not, I hated it. And, it's why I deliberately bungled my exams and things.

And that obviously didn't please your father too much.

No. It's why National Service in fact was the escape route to some extent.

Obviously[???] your father didn't actually sack you; you went to National Service instead of being sacked.

Mm. Mm.

OK. So when you finished National Service, what happened then?

Well then, I had to get a job, because I had no money. And, I was naïve enough to think that with[??] my visual interest, I thought, advertising, and being paid for something was logical, and I was naïve enough to think that advertising equals some[??] visual activity. But of course, eventually when I got a sort of trainee job at Mace's[??], who it was then, but of course, I didn't go in the creative department. And they immediately shipped me off to one of their clients.

What, you were one of the suits or whatever they call them, one of the salesmen were you?

Not a salesman, but, I was a trainee [inaudible], I don't know what they call them, but... So what they did, they talked to one of their clients about it[??], which was a soap company, Colgate Palmolive it[??] was, and they sent me to Manchester. So [inaudible] to be a salesman for six months to, supposedly to learn what the [inaudible] marketplace was. And there, I quite, in retrospect quite enjoyed it, because it was...they deliberately sent me to the worst territory, because no one else really[??] worked there. It was in Collyhurst and Cheetham Hill and, [inaudible] was that bad actually. [inaudible] walking around with [inaudible] shoes[??] and porn[??] shops who wouldn't buy anything, hadn't got any money and things like that. And, I remember when I first, one of my first calls was to a wholesaler called Swann[??] Brothers, and, I sort of, spluttered [inaudible] kind of presentation, and one of the brothers said, 'Here's sixpence.' So he gave me sixpence and said, 'Go outside Justin, have a cup of tea, and come back when you've got your mind sorted out[??].' And I did, and they gave me an order.

What else did you do?

What, in Manchester?

No, just with the job.

Oh, yes, [inaudible]. The thing is, I was too serious about it, and, and they thought, because I'd got through all this, that, the company, Colgate Palmolive, wanted to hang

to me, and they sent me out to Africa to set up subsidiary companies. So I was sent out to East Africa basically, you know, where I travelled very extensively, and got very interested in the, you know, the, not the gold[???], but the ethnographic [inaudible], [inaudible] and things like that.

What particular things?

Well, the topography[???] and the people and, you know, things like that.

The art, tribal art?

Not, not consciously, not at that point. But obviously it had an influence, you know, I was aware of it. No, I used to be very interested in some of the dancing and some of the rituals and the objects and things like that, mm. It's probably where it all started, my interest in ethnic stuff, mm.

How long did you spend in Africa?

I think, probably about a year.

Yes.

Yes.

You obviously enjoyed it?

I had a good time there.

How did you find the climate?

All right. I never really liked [inaudible]. I think where I was, was reasonably OK, apart[???] from West Africa, [inaudible] I was there for a few days, and made me quite ill. But, East Africa was all right.

And you got on quite well with all the people you met?

Yes, certainly, mm.

What happened once you got back after that?

Then I went, eventually back to this agency, which, they basically seconded me. And then, then I became what they call an account executive. At that point my interest in art had developed quite[???], and I used to spend every lunchtime going down, you know, Cork Street and looking at exhibitions and [inaudible], and [inaudible] and [inaudible].

So what year, what year would this be?

Don't know.

About the Fifties?

Yes, would be Fifties, definitely. Early Fifties.

Early, so that's...you would be too young then, wouldn't you?

[inaudible] Fifties, no doubt[???].

1955 you'd be twenty, so...

Mm. [inaudible] age about twenty...twenty-three, twenty-four, something like that. Twenty-five. Mm.

Was that the time when you first decided that you wanted to be an artist?

No, it developed a little bit later, because I was working at home, you know, I was doing art at home. I know I got married when I was about twenty-seven. And

[inaudible], who I met in East Africa, and she was the daughter of a small farmer.
Now[???] seems to be a radio presenter.

How did you meet her?

Well, in East Africa.

Yes, but [inaudible]?

Oh, no, it's through Swann[???] in England who knew their family, and I was asked out for lunch. Nothing[???] very romantic about it.

So you went out with her while you were in Africa...

Yes.

...for, how long?

Well, [inaudible] six months, and then she, she [inaudible]. I didn't really want to get married, it was only that, she thought it was right. [inaudible], you see. But I was very emotionally immature even at that age, which was, must have been twenty-six, twenty-seven I think, mm.

Did you live together before you got married?

We didn't live together, no. We were together for a bit[???], but we didn't live together.

And probably[???] [inaudible].

In fact I lived with [inaudible] two other blokes and myself[???], so basically[???] [inaudible].

Where was that?

Just [inaudible], you know.

Who weren't[???] English, were they?

Yes. Well not...yes they were English, yes.

So [inaudible] when you were living with them?

No, pretty wild. [inaudible], [inaudible].

Did you actually physically meet Anthea's [inaudible] parent[???] in Africa?

Oh yes.

You did?

Mm.

What were they like?

Fine. [inaudible]. And they were [inaudible] that Anthea's mother came over and dumped herself on us, [inaudible]. So that wasn't very good.

Was Anthea interested in art at that stage?

[inaudible] one thing in favour of Anthea, she never [inaudible] negative about my interest in art, never tried to prevent me from doing it. Never prevented me from giving up everything to do it. I mean apart from that, what she objected to in retrospect was my hopelessness with money, and, also, [inaudible] promiscuousness[??].

Why wasn't it terribly happy?

Well probably[???] [inaudible] loved her.

[inaudible] she pushed you into marriage?

Yes, that's [inaudible], that's my feeling, yes. Yes. I was made to feel [inaudible] to get married, yes.

So did you have a lot of affairs when you were married?

Quite a few.

Yes?

[inaudible].

[inaudible].

Well all people that [inaudible] respect, there's no resentment or, [inaudible] sustain mutual respect. There's no...no resentment or... A lot of[???] [inaudible]. I mean [inaudible] that, [inaudible] [inaudible]. So it's all [inaudible].

OK, going back to the days in the late Fifties when you first started looking at exhibitions in Cork Street and things.

Mm.

What kind of things were you looking at then?

[inaudible] where it was, but it's, where I worked was in St James's Square and.....

[end of transcriber tape 2B]

[End of Track 3 Side B]

[Track 4 Side A]

[transcriber tape 3A]

.....*your first wife, Anthea.*

Mm.

Could you tell me her surname?

Fear, f-e-a-r.

What was she like as a person, can you describe her physically? At, well the time you met you met I suppose.

She was good-looking.

Blonde, brunette?

Very dark, but... I mean, I don't see the relevancy of that actually at all.

OK. This is not relevant either, but, was she older or younger than you?

Oh, a bit younger.

A bit younger.

Not...not a long younger, but...

Yes. Did your social life change dramatically after meeting her?

No, because we just carried through in what we were doing, the three of us, you know, us three blokes.

Yes.

It's only, the marriage materialised when she came over to England.

OK. So when you were both back in England, where did you live at that time?

I was then in a bedsit in Chelsea.

Do you remember the address?

Draycott Avenue.

Oh, so it was quite nice.

Which... Yes, in a basement, in a single room.

Yes.

Which...

Just rented?

Oh yes.

Yes.

Mm. Mm.

By...did you have friends in the house, or was it just you?

No no. No, just a, a tenant. Mm.

OK. Why did you choose that area? Close to work?

Well, yes, it was...I was working in St James's Square, so, it was functional. I mean, at that point, at that period it wasn't all that...well I suppose, you know, it wasn't all that fashionable anyway.

So, what did you do when you were both together, apart from the obvious things, back in England, I mean, socially, did you go out to restaurants, cinema, theatre?

No, when Anthea and I got married, we, I'd found a, a small flat in Milner Square, Islington, which is a, at that time a very run-down, big square, and I took a tenancy on that. And it was tiny, it was a one-bedroom flat. I think it was the only one in the square that had a bathroom, so we used to let people have a bath sometimes.

Did you choose that area because it was reasonably priced, or, or for other reasons?

Well yes, because I had no, I just had no money, because I was still working in this agency place, and...

Did she have a job?

I may have been... I think I was being paid, £350 a year or something like that, at that time.

Did she have a job when she was back in England?

Yes, Anthea worked for a, basically a sort of secretarial thing, you know.

What, in central London?

Yes. Yes.

Where did you get married, which church?

Brompton Oratory in Knightsbridge.

Whose choice was that?

The...Anthea's mother's.

Were there many people invited?

Well I suppose anyone that was known to the family, yes.

Did your family all turn up?

Yes. My father said...said, 'It'll probably last seven years, the marriage.'

How did your mother feel about it?

I mean the whole thing was just a terrible experience really.

Did you have a reception afterwards?

Yes.

Was that good?

It made it even worse.

Did it? Why?

Well, the formality of it, and the... I just felt very uneasy, you know, about the whole thing. In fact I don't even want to talk about it.

No.

You know, it's not, not a good memory.

So, you had two children?

Mhm.

And the first...Emma the first one?

Right.

How old is she now?

I know her birthday is on the 24th of June. She must be in her thirties now.

How involved did you get in the early days, as in the nappy-changing, and staying up all night?

Well I think I...I certainly was a committed father, and also with my two early, earlier half-brothers, I was involved in that. But Emma and Tom, Tom, my son, you know... I mean the thing about those two is that, in their different ways they were quite strong characters, and I think when the uneasiness or conflict came between myself and Anthea, in retrospect it probably affected them, and I know that, whilst I made great efforts to get them to, they went to Owens School, which is a comprehensive, and at that time it was a good school, you know, probably is now. But they both reacted against going to school. I mean to the extent they bunked out, or, if they an exam, they wouldn't, they'd write their name and they wouldn't write anything else. Which became a problem with Tom. And, I had to fight for him to see a sort of educational psychologist, you know, which he did, and the guy said, 'This kid should not be at school at all.' So he had a short-term one-to-one educational thing. But he was always interested in boats for some reason, and invented an element to go on the boat which I photographed. We initiated an interview at Falmouth Technical College, boat technology, which is quite difficult to get into, and they take foreign...at that time they were taking foreign students, and highly qualified people, you know, doing boat architecture and things like that. Tom of course was completely, had no academic background whatsoever. And, they took him as a student on the strength of his own natural work and ability, and you know, it was great. And, to such an extent, he, they gave him an extra year for ability, and then, became an apprentice at Brixham

building traditional trawlers and so on. I remember taking him about six o'clock in the morning with his tool chest, which he made himself of course, with his own tools. But then, he had this girlfriend in Falmouth, and got a job with a boatyard down there, which went bust promptly. Meanwhile he had children with this girl he'd got married to. Then got another job with another boatyard, and they got into problems, it was a recession time or something. And then, I think the whole thing got so much on top of him, he actually killed himself, which had a terrible effect on me and Emma, my daughter, obviously.

What about Emma?

Emma is rather similar to Tom. I mean, she, again, was a bit of a rebel, and left school refusing to take any academic things. But now she's being very successful, she's now at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital being an admissions officer and doing, being seconded on a government course to look at things to do with NHS. But she's, she got...she's never been married, she's had, well got three children from two different men, and lives where I used to live for a bit in one of the Barnsbury Housing Association's flats in Barnsbury Street.

How old was she when she had the first child?

Very young, sixteen.

Did you encourage an abortion or anything like that?

Yes, because I...only on the grounds that I knew the father, and it was good, never going to work out. He was a sort of, pub disc jockey at the time I think. Now, but since then he's been sort of wheeling and dealing in East End markets, and...

Did they actually live together?

Yes they did, yes.

And for how long?

Well it must be...I mean Emma, being stubborn, she stuck it out for, about three years I think, yes.

Her children, actually, are they almost grown up?

Yes, I mean the... Victoria, who is the eldest, works for a hospital, is living with a bloke. Elliott[ph] is a bit of a problem. I mean he's sort of got, he's into sort of gang elements and the police have been after him. He must be aged, seventeen now, eighteen, something like that, seventeen I should think. And then there's Sam, who's much younger. And Emma has held all this together, to her credit.

Do you see them very often?

See Emma quite often, yes.

Does she come here?

Yes. Mm.

Has she had an interest in art over the years?

She's not involved in it, but she's certainly followed through what I've been doing. I mean she comes to see, see what's happening.

Mm. Has she got some of your work at all?

There is...I think there is one thing up there, yes.

Yes?

Mm.

What about Tom, did he take much interest?

Well Tom was a very practical person. He...

Where did he get that from? Because you're not terribly practical.

No, not from me. I don't know. I wouldn't say Tom's...he's, well, very practical, otherwise he wouldn't have been a boat builder, you know. Mm.

If we move back to the arts side.

Mm.

We again talked briefly at the end of a tape about your initial trips to Cork Street, and you were going to tell me what sort of exhibitions you were looking at at the time.

Well I used to... I mean at that time Cork Street wasn't, is not...I haven't been in Cork Street for yonks, but, at that time there were probably a quarter of the number of galleries that there are now. I just used to look at anything that was there.

So what would have been there? The Piccadilly Gallery was probably there.

Yes it was. It did exist on the top end, yes. And then Waddington's at the bottom.

That was Victor Waddington was it in those days, before Leslie got in?

Yes, well Victor about that time was just about giving up I think. But, I got to know Leslie a bit, and, I was quite...the first picture I bought, because I bought, at that time, I had no money but I used to buy things on so much a month, and I remember seeing in the window a picture by Patrick Heron called *The Lamp*, which is heavily influenced by Braque, you know, but as in fact I was quite a fan of Braque's, I thought, well anyone who can paint like Braque couldn't be too bad, you know. I think that was the first painting I bought.

When did you first decide that you actually wanted to be an artist?

It wasn't a decision, it was a natural evolvement. It came to a point where, I was working in the evenings and at home and so on, and, I felt that, it's the only thing I've really felt convinced about. I didn't feel convinced about anything else really.

Can you put a year on, on this? Early Sixties?

It must, must have been...it must have been...must have been Fifties at some point

Late Fifties?

Mm.

So in the evenings you were going home and you were what, drawing and painting?

Not so much drawing, but, painting certainly, yes.

What kind of things were you painting?

Mainly non-figurative canvases, you know.

Can you describe a typical one?

Well at that time I was, my sort of work then was using a raw canvas, not primed, and then, under-painting on the areas that I was painting, to give greater intensity. So, I used to under-paint with white for example, to let the intensity of, say, yellow to come through. And also putting, you know, an element of, of...edge element, to give it even greater intensity.

Would you describe these as Hard Edged paintings?

No I wouldn't, because I mean that, that period, era, there are Hard Edge painters which, I talk about Tyzack, Kidner and people like that, you know, which I felt were rather preconceived and academic, you know. But I, I wasn't interested in the.. The

only person I respected I think, in that sort of area of art, was someone called Robyn Denny, who was instrumental in helping me to get my job at Bath Academy of Art, together with Howard Hodgkin.

So what did you like about Denny's work?

Well it wasn't, wasn't academic, you know, in terms of Hard Edge. You asked me a question about Hard Edge.

Yes.

Because his...you know, he had greater subtlety, you know.

So, your early work, would you say it looked a bit like Denny's work, or totally different?

No certainly not, no.

What did it look like?

Didn't look...as far as I know, it didn't look like anyone's. I mean, I mean some people have said that, you know, some people have likened my work to Ellsworth Kelly and so on, but, in fact I know very well that a lot of my stuff is earlier than his. At that time, you must understand, if you're coming to talking about art now, that art politics, particularly from America, and it's been shown to be true, is heavily influenced by American input, to use art as a sort of instrument of respectability, and they're pumping through certain artists into England at that time, especially via the Whitechapel and so on. But you're talking about a big subject now.

At what stage had you actually seen some of this American art? Because the British...

Well I was aware, aware of it of course.

From magazines, or actual exhibitions?

Well both of course.

Both.

Mm.

What exhibitions do you remember seeing?

I used to go to Kasmin, Kasmin Gallery. I was... In fact, Kenneth Noland came down to stay with me, and I was amazed that he was knocked out by landscape, and he wasn't interested in landscape at all, and he talked about buying a farm down here, and things like that. And I did...this is the difference I think, is that, why one feels very European is that, one has to come through an understanding, a formal understanding of landscape, to get to a certain point, you know. There's of course Morris Lewis around at that time, and, heavy Greenberg influence obviously, school of New York. And when I went to the States I met Motherwell and Helen Frankenthaler, and both of them, I think they were married, or certainly were living together, but, spent most of their time rowing together. But I've never been conscious of being influenced by anyone. You can talk about Frank Stella and people like that, but, I was probably more influenced by a giant lump of ice outside melting, outside the Whitney Museum, for the course of the exhibition, than any particular painting I think.

Did you use photography, if you saw something like that lump of ice, would you photograph it and...?

No.

No?

The only time I've used photography is, I've done a series of landscape pictures on Dartmoor, and done simulated drawings on them. What they are, they're... So, I'm not a photographer. In fact, when I go away I do take a camera with me, but usually

for jokey things, not serious things, and...because I'd rather do a drawing than take a photograph.

Did you go to art school?

No.

Did you have any other art tuition, evening classes or anything like that?

Well, you know, I went to, when I was working in my father's office, I was arrogant enough to think I didn't need to be told anything about painting, I thought I could evolve that myself. But, I was aware that my sort of, technique if you like, drawing technique particularly, was, should be improved and worked at. And the principal then at Farnham Art School was someone called Hockey[ph], and he said to me, 'Well perhaps you should come an evening a week to life classes, to a life class.' Which I did. And, it was really quite amusing really, but, it's one of the best lessons I've ever had I suppose, is that, it was taken by an ex-Polish pilot who had part of his arm taken off, and... I walked in, and all these people were on these sort of donkey stool type of things doing very academic and rather predictable drawings, round a circle in this dark room looking at this model on the dais, you know? And it was the first time I'd ever seen a, a naked woman in my life, and obviously, I was extremely embarrassed and blushed enormously. And this Polish tutor sensed this immediately, and he just pulled up one of these funny stools and told him, asked me to sit next to him, and he just sat down and put a chalk in his artificial limb, and did an infinitely better drawing than any, any of the other twenty or thirty people there. But anyway, I don't know whether I learnt anything other than that one lesson really, beyond that. I got to know one of the other, some of the other tutors, you know, who were painters...

Who were they?

...in a different way. Someone called Achison[ph] for one person. And, they were quite sympathetic to me. So, it was, in a way it was the...it was healthy for me being in an art-orientated atmosphere, more sympathetic atmosphere than the constraints of where I was living.

What age were you then?

Nineteen, twenty.

So while you were doing your National Service, you didn't do any art work during that time?

No.

No. But you started again straight afterwards?

Mm. Well, only in a, in a natural way.

In a natural way?

Not a conscious way.

I don't understand what that means.

Well, a natural way is not necessarily thinking about it.

You just came home in the evening and just, did it?

Yes. Mm.

Right.

I mean you don't sit down and say, 'Right, you know, I'm going to do some art, full stop.'

Well you do to some extent, don't you, because you've got to get a bit of paper in front of you, or a canvas or whatever.

Well it's something that's been in my blood I suppose, or in my mind.

[End of Track 4 Side A]

[Track 4 Side B]

[separate transcriber tape re-recorded]

So did you make any decision as to whether you wanted to be a painter or a sculptor or...?

No. I mean, as I said, it was an evolvement, and it's been a natural thing from the outset. There was no conscious decision about that, it was a development; as the work developed a bit, it became more and more 'important', in inverted commas, to, to clear, to clear oneself. It's like coming out of a closet if you like, out of a closet.

So when did you sell the first thing that you produced?

I've hardly sold anything in my life to date, and the first thing I, the very first thing... I sold nothing from the... Because my work in charac...you know, physical and in character is pretty unsaleable, and... I think one of the first things I sold was to the City Art Gallery in Plymouth, who gave me a major exhibition. They've got quite a large painting.

What was the title and the date of that first piece you sold to Plymouth?

Well the date of the work was 1967, and the title was called *Crimson and Orange*, and it's only[??] four inches in diameter. As far as I know they've still got it.

That was a work on canvas, was it?

Yes, it's canvas on wood with paint, yes.

What kind of paint?

Well I was using acrylics.

Do you think your days in the drawing office helped your art in any way at all?

No, I'd say it's extremely negative, because I was copying plans and things like that. In fact, it did more damage than anything else.

In those early days, were you meeting other artists?

No.

None at all?

Other than whoever I met at Farnham Art School, you know, in the evening.

Mm. So when did you first start meeting other artists?

I never consciously sought to be socialising, you know, with other artists, and, I just came across people, maybe by going to exhibitions. It's not sort of a romantic thing, like, Paris in the Thirties or the turn of the century. The only person who used to drop in to me sometimes was a painter called Albert Irvin, who used to teach at Wandsworth Prison at that time, which happened to be round the corner, or near where I lived in Milner Square. But I, I...you know, in a way I was, I was quite insular, and in a way, I wouldn't say arrogant, but, disinterested in a lot of other artists' work. And I didn't really rate a lot of them, and still don't, being quite fashionable, you know.

So at the Farnham Art School, you learnt, well, something about drawing. How did you learn painting techniques or preparing canvases, did you just use books for it kind of thing if you needed to?

No. Well, just by... Certainly not books, but, just by experience. At that time I was buying in auctions these Victorian paintings. At that time they used to put lots of about five or six, and sell them for virtually nothing, and I just used to put emulsion paint on and then paint on those surfaces.

And you'd have the frame as well, would you?

Yes.

So there was nobody you could really turn to for any practical advice or anything at those...

No.

...in those times.

No.

Did you feel that it would have helped if somebody had been around?

The only person, the only person who did talk to me was someone called John Verney[ph]. He's a baronet, who was a painter, but also illustrator for a magazine called *Elizabethan*. And my father said to him, 'I've got this problem son Justin who's talking about art all the time, would you speak to him?' And I remember going to visit him in his studio, he'd got a vast studio. And obviously, you know, he was quite affluent, and, and I was obviously very nervous and things like that. And he used to paint rather Braque-ish kind of pictures. And, so I thought, well he must be reasonably serious, and things like that. And he advised me not to have anything to do with art. I remember getting a mammoth glass of whisky, it was the first drink I had in my life I think, obviously to try and sort of, ease me down, talking to me, to, you know... But he is a very generous man.

When did you first start collecting?

What, paintings you mean?

Well collecting anything really.

Well...

Apart from records.

Well, yes. It must have been when I had my first job. I spent all my money on... And, I was very interested in Patrick's stuff at... Because, I identified it with the development of my interest, because he had a sort of Braque/Matisse kind of interest. But then, I got all, you know... Then I got less interested in his work, because I found it a bit too, mannered, I don't know, a bit too... He's extremely talented. It's one reason I have a dislike of[??] Picasso, he's over-talented, I mean too, having too much a negative effect on artists and things like that. But I used to, used to buy things which I liked, you know, like, I bought, say, early Hockney drawings, and Howard Hodgkin and, I remember paying sixty quid for two sort of, a Japanese screen or something, and [inaudible]...

What sort of age were you when you started doing this? Twenty-three or...?

All my twenties, twenties.

Yes?

Twenties. And then...

That's quite early isn't it?

Well I had...the story of my life really, I was spending too much money and not, not being able to afford it. That's the pattern of my life really.

Were you borrowing to buy?

Well I... Yes, I borrowed, throughout my whole life I've borrowed much too much money. But that's, you know...

Would you be borrowing from banks at that sort of age?

No, I was borrowing from galleries I think.

Just paying in instalments?

Yes.

Yes.

Mm.

And the main galleries you were buying from were...? You said Waddington's.

Yes, Waddington's certainly, yes.

Because they're quite expensive. They are now. Were they then?

Probably not then. I've got some early statements actually funnily enough, and, it's interesting that, because the paintings they were then showing were not expensive, were not, well by today's standards they weren't all that expensive. I'm trying to think where else, you know. Yes, Hanover I bought, I used to like William Scott a bit, and... I don't know, there was no pattern to it.

Did you deal with Erica Brausen at Hanover?

I don't know. I just bought, I mean, I think one, one is in with Exeter Museum at the moment I think.

Because Hanover were, as far as I'm aware, certainly very expensive in those times.

Was it?

From what I can gather, yes. I assume the auctions weren't the same then, were they, you couldn't go to an auction and buy cheaper, I don't know.

I don't know. I had, I had one big William Scott, and then, a small one with orange. And I bought from Tooth's as I said, and Waddington's and... I had some good things, including Nicholsons and things like that, and in fact the British Council borrowed some of my stuff [inaudible], which they shipped around, you know.

You bought Alfred Wallis as well?

Oh yes. I mean, I created a total exhibition on that[??] for Waddington's.

Did you get them direct from him?

No, got them from, well, he was dead of course, but, from the owner of his cottage in St Ives.

So you bought them quite cheaply, did you, at the time?

Well I made nothing out of it. But, I had about forty of them I think. And I gave one to Ron Lannie[ph], because I gave him a lift back to London, driving like a madman. I think they were glad to get back. And I had, yes, several, I had several Alfred Wallises, yes.

So at what stage did you have to start selling this early collection?

Well, I've always had this problem of being, getting broke, and the only thing I can do is sell what I've got around me.

But did this happen very quickly, did you buy some things for six...?

No, I was never dealing in it. No, it's a question of, being put in a corner and having to resolve something. I mean, I told you the story about the Bacon, that, I bought that, and I was forced to sell it. But I don't resent it particularly. Although I was bugged by people phoning me up from Paris and Switzerland wanting to know the origin of it.

Well did having children, did that cause a financial crisis which meant you had to sell things?

Not consciously.

I'm just trying to establish sort of events that caused you to lose your precious collection.

Well I never...well, the thing is, I was never earning enough money I suppose, that's what it boils down to.

Yes, so it was just an ongoing thing; it wasn't one or two calamitous events, it was just, if you need a bit of money...

No, it wasn't about collecting. Then I got interested in African art, and...

How old were you then when...?

That was later, it was about, again, must have been in my twenties, but there's a, there's a dealer called Herbert Riser[ph] who I used to visit every lunchtime, and used to talk, and became very friendly with him, and he... I put together a really good collection of African art.

Which you could buy very cheaply in those days.

Well it wasn't cheap. I mean, I mean it's... But I had to sell it of course. Mm.

Whereabouts was Herbert Riser's[ph] gallery?

It was off, near, not far from Baker Street. He was a special person really. But we had quite a lot in common. But it was quite a major collection. And also, also I was collecting books on Africa, early books on Africa. I had to sell that of course. And that took nearly a full day's sale, a full day's sale at Sotheby's, to sell that. And it turned out that I'd, OK I got my money back, but it had been sort of ringed by dealers

and so on, so, it didn't get its value. But again, I was philosophic about it. There were things like first editions of, signed by Stanley Livingstone, obvious things, but rarer things than that too.

So in the tribal art collection, what specific pieces can you remember having?

Well I can remember by tribes, I mean...

Senúfo rhythm pounders or something?

No, it's one reason[???] I used to title[???] some of my works at that time by tribal names.

Yup. What particular tribes then did you like best?

Well, a lot of the Congo tribes and, things like Dogong[???] and... As you may know, there's multiple tribes by area, I mean sub-areas. And in fact I was then a member of the Royal Anthropological Society. So you can't, you can't generalise by particular tribes. I mean some of the best stuff came from the Congo I think. And of course West Africa. East Africa was not so good.

I assume, as you were buying Patrick Heron pictures, you met him at quite an early stage, did you?

I don't know what you mean by early stage.

In the late Fifties?

Possibly.

Yes?

Mm.

Had you read any of his critical pieces?

Oh yes, definitely.

Yes? So what did you think of him as a critic?

Well that's one of the things that attracted me, because I, I was very interested in his *Changing Forms of Art* book, which I lent to someone and I haven't, never been able to get another copy. But, I was interested to read what he was saying about his contemporaries. And also I found him extremely articulate.

Do you remember...

And then we became extremely friendly.

Do you remember any particular quotes?

No, I don't think like that, no. But, his mind was extremely visually lucid.

Do you remember any particular artist that he was criticising?

Well, I mean, if you know the *Changing Forms of Art*, you know who he wrote about. But, he wrote about, he's very...he's always been very supportive to certain English artists, and also lucid about classic European artists and so on. And subsequently quite critical of the American situation.

And you agreed with those comments, did you?

Well I know Patrick was a bit manic about elements of the American situation, but...but in a way it's quite truthful, you know.

Mm. Because he considered artists like Trevor Bell were probably better than most of these American Abstract Expressionists or whatever.

Well I think someone like Trevor, who I know a bit, is valid with[???] some of the Americans at that time. Wouldn't say, you know, [inaudible] better or worse or things like that, but he just is valid.

And did you meet any of the other well-known critics at the time? Herbert Read, Penrose, Gombrich...

No.

...David Sylvester.

No.

No?

No.

Were you reading many art magazines again at that sort of time, late Fifties, early Sixties?

No.

No? Studio International?

Yes, I...yes I used to read that sometimes, yes.

Mm.

Mm.

Would you have subscribed to that, or just read it, other people's copies?

[inaudible], mm.

Your early paintings. Would you just start straight into the painting? You wouldn't produce a small study or something before you leapt into the find thing, it would just, you'd just go for it?

No, at that time I was...it was...it was very much a reacting to the scale in front of you, you know.

Yes.

So I wouldn't...I wouldn't do any preliminary work.

No.

[inaudible].

Would you have any ideas in your head of what you are about to do, just before you start it, or would you just...?

No.

No, so you would just bash paint onto a canvas?

So it would be rather, almost expression...you know, expressionistic in a way, you know.

Mhm.

I mean, one consistent thing in my work is that I do consider things formally and emotionally, so that, I wouldn't sort of have a can of pens[??] in front of me and immediately dive into it. I'd be thinking about it for a long time, and then decide instinctively what to do, you know. So it's not predetermined, but on the other hand, what is predetermined is one's reaction to the material or the form that you want to do.

It would be instinctive reaction.

Yes. Well particularly at that time, yes. Now it's more, more considered in terms of scale, like for instance, you know, I've got three exhibitions coming up, and it's very important to me to know the scale of the, of the particular spaces. And, so therefore, the work is geared to the space you're geared into.

Would you ever say that you'd ever produced what I think we used to call Action paintings?

No.

No? Did you like that kind of work produced by other people?

I like the, the rhythm of a good Pollock. Yes, that's the nearest thing I know about Action painting. I can't think about... I suppose you can think about certain other painters, but... It's never... I can understand...well, I can understand it, but I don't...I don't see it as, as a philosophy.

Have you always been meticulous about recording all the work that you've produced over the years?

Not as much as I should do. I remember Bryan Robertson giving me some good advice saying, you should photograph of things you've done, which I've tried to do, and when my studio burnt down in 1973, I was glad that there were some photographs of the work that had been destroyed.

Did you take those photographs yourself, or used professionals?

No. Well... No, because I'm not a good photographer, no.

And what other records, did you keep a card file index record of pieces?

No, just, you can see next door, the whole place has got stuff thrown all over the floor. I mean, I've... There's been an attempt to archive my drawings, which is up to about 3,000 odd now, systematised by subject and date. And that's been the result of three years' work, which was funded through by, partly by the University of Plymouth, and partly by David Thompson.

Who has actually done this work?

The key person is someone called Petrotilli[ph], who's a, who lives outside Ashburton.

What about the paintings and sculptures over the years?

Well, I do try and photograph them. Some of the paint...some of the things can be repeated, you know, the work at the Tate was a remake of something that was destroyed in my studio fire.

What about exhibition catalogues, do you make sure you keep copies of those?

I think they are, do exist, yes.

Including mixed exhibitions?

Well I'm not too bothered by them.

What about press cuttings?

No, I'm not interested in that.

No? Have you ever read any of the critical reviews of your work?

Well none of them have been serious, so, I don't bother with that.

So if somebody wanted to prepare a catalogue résumé of all your work, how easy would that be to do?

Could be done, but it would be...it's not complicated, but it would...time.

Mm. But you would have access to the records needed to do it?

Well stuff is, stuff exists, yes.

Yes.

Mm.

OK. And have you generally kept track of the whereabouts of your work, where you've sold them to, private collectors et cetera?

No, I've lost...I've lost a lot of work. I mean, I've lost all my work that was shown in Italy. The gallery owner, Cadario, died and all my work disappeared. I couldn't track it down at all. So there must be work floating around in Italy.

Were the police involved in that?

No, I...you know, I just, I just, you know, couldn't be bothered really. Well I was concerned, but, it's too, you know, just too time-consuming. It's some of my best work of a particular period actually, so it must still be around somewhere. And the same happened in, in America, Royal Marks Gallery. The problem was, I didn't have the money to get, to ship any work back, you see. So they gave some away. So I've no idea where it is, and whether it exists or what. I mean, and so a lot of the work, I don't know where it is.

This is very common isn't it, I've heard many artists say exactly the same thing.

Really?

Anything goes to America, you never get it back.

Mm.

Again, we're talking, what period? Late Fifties, early Sixties. Do you remember many public sculptures that you saw around that sort of time, and what particular pieces? Would you make an effort to go and see things? A new Henry Moore, or an Epstein or something.

No, I used to be... Mm. I used to be amused by... One of the most amusing things was, when I was commissioned to do a large piece at Southampton University, there were lots of Barbara Hepworths dotted around, and it just amused me to see that my painting related to Barbara Hepworth's, something[???]. I mean, it was all right, I was quite happy, they were all, everything was quite happy. But I would never...there's no point in me going to see [inaudible]. I wasn't one of these people who sort of, pedalled around looking at different things. I'd much rather look at a landscape or early stuff; I'd much rather look at Stonehenge than a, than a sort of, mediocre contemporary sculpture.

Again, we're still talking late Fifties.

Mm.

Did you have a, what you'd call a best friend at that sort of time?

[End of Track 4 Side B]

[Track 5 Side A]

[transcriber tape 4A]

.....*Dave Burnett.*

David, yes.

...*when you first meet him.*

Mm.

First met him.

Oh, in the Army, yes. And, I mean, I mean we're very different, but, and his trade has been book publisher, and, we're about the same age, and, fairly compatible characters, although very different. But also he's a fishing companion.

Once you'd decided that you were going to be an artist, did you ever have any doubts about your ability to earn a living from it?

I never thought like that you see, and, that's one of the problems in my life, is that if...I don't have much respect for, or consciousness with money, and one of the elements that goes...you know, one of the consistent elements through my life is that, I've always had problems with money.

Have you ever tried to do anything about it?

I've tried to earn enough money to keep going, which has always led to disaster. So, I'm not...I'm not a good businessman or, I'm not clever with money at all. In fact I've, I've been, my mind has been sort of, beyond money, which means money is behind me or disappeared or... Like, I mean, the artist Gillian Ayres was here the other day, and she bought one of my artefacts, and, I wanted to give it to her, and she refused that. I said, 'All right, give me £10 for it.' And she refused that. And she

gave me £100, and which embarrassed me. But the next day I spent the £100 she gave me by going to a scrap metal yard in Exeter and buying material, £200. So, whatever money I have goes out instantly, you know.

And you've never learnt any lessons from these disasters over the years?

Well I seem to have survived it. The one lesson I have learnt actually is, by going into debt, and being honest about it, is that people don't pursue you, because they see there's no point in doing it.

Are you talking about banks?

Yes, I'm talking about banks and also creditors. I mean I was in voluntary insolvency last year, you know, where people accepted I think it was 30p in the pound.

That was an IVA was it, individual voluntary arrangement?

That's right. Yes. But none of them were interested in actually putting me into bankruptcy, there's no point really I suppose. But I, I didn't get in that situation deliberately at all.

No.

It just became an impossibility. I just couldn't move, you know?

So that's normally a three-year thing isn't it? Was that with you, or was that a shorter one?

Well, well if you're talking about banks, I mean I phoned up the bank last week, or wrote them a letter, saying, 'Would you lend me some money, because I've got these exhibitions coming up, to do framing and new materials and so on?' And they said, 'Yes.' And they said, 'But we must do a check and things.' And they found, they saw that I had this arrangement, well, you know, and they said, 'Well, Justin, you know, we know you're very straight and got a good record with us and so on, but I'm

sorry, technically we can't lend you any money.' Although they'd agreed to do so, you know. I don't blame them at all for not doing it, but, it puts me in a very difficult situation, so that, somehow I've got to get some money together to meet my gallery commitments. Because most of the money these days, currently, doesn't go to the artist, it goes to the galleries, you know, from the art establishment situations. I mean if you're lucky, OK you get an artist fee or something if you're lucky, which will probably pay for half of one work out of about twenty.

Did you ever consider joining the, shall we say the St Ives group of artists?

Didn't know there was one. I thought it was just a contrived expression.

I suppose it is really, but, but you know what I mean, everybody thinks of Frost, Heron, Hilton, et cetera et cetera, as part of a group.

Well I knew them all of course.

Yes.

But they never formed themselves into a formal group.

Well only when they were part of, what, the Penwith Society and...

No, it wouldn't appeal to me. But, I don't think... I think they, they just happened to be living down there.

Yes.

And also, of course before then, there's been quite a tradition of artists being down there. It's to do with the environment and the landscape and the light and so on. But... But as I... I mean, I've done drawings of, down there. And also I've stayed down there a lot. And also, I know...I mean, I was friends with Bryan Wynter, he used to stay with me when he went canoeing and things, because he's very interested in rivers and so on. I used to, in fact used to stay with, with Patrick if I went down to

that area. And Johnny Wells I was friendly with. Terry Frost, I've never been very friendly with him as, as a person particularly, but know him a bit.

What do you think of Bryan Wynter's work?

Underrated.

I quite agree. John Wells?

Underrated again.

It's mainly his fault, isn't it, because he never exhibits.

Well he does. I mean, you've probably never seen it, but he had an exhibition at Waddington's, not...there's only one picture sold and I was the one who bought it.

That was way back, was that not 1963 or something, the last one?

Oh yes. Yes, definitely. Yes.

Yes. Apart from in St Ives, I don't think he's exhibited since, has he?

Probably not, because he doesn't like showing his stuff. Although in fact I think, the Tate St Ives has shown something fairly recently, haven't they?

I think they have, yes. And I assume he's never needed the money particularly, has he?

Oh he has.

Has he?

Quite mean, yes.

Oh.

I mean he's very frugal, he lived extremely frugally.

I assumed in his days as a doctor he'd earned...

No no no, no.

No?

No. He hated being a doctor you know.

Did he?

Yes.

Yes.

Didn't...he was pushed into it from his family a bit.

Mm. But he stopped it quite early, didn't he?

Yes, he was influenced by Ben Nicholson and Gabo a lot. And just decided to chuck everything in and be an artist, you know.

Mm. Mm. When did you first visit New York?

The English Eye exhibition.

Yes, that's 1965.

Mm.

What did you think of it when you, you went there?

Very exciting.

What in particular?

The dynamics of the place, and, I was interested in what was going on there.

Did you see much art there?

Yes, I did, yes. I met, as I said, I met Motherwell, Frankenthaler and Kienholz. There were...you know, it was quite an active period then.

Mm. What about the jazz clubs?

No. I got, I got... Not jazz clubs. I went to certain, you know, I certainly went to certain seedy areas, and I got mugged. And I had to go to, Lloyd[???] is it, one of the directors of Marlborough, the next day, and say, all my money had gone, and he said, 'You silly boy Justin. How much money do you want?' I think I said, '\$200,' and he pulled it out of his back pocket. And I got a bill from Marlborough Gallery when I got back for \$200. (laughter) Actually just, going back to music, that, I remember again going into a bar where Gene Krupa was playing, drummer, you know, and he was sort of, about seven foot up on a platform, you know, heavily into drugs at that point, and I, it quite distressed me in a way, because I quite admired him, you know.

Mm. He was a great drummer.

Yes. Mm.

Were you aware of the need for publicity and self-promotion at any stage in your career?

No.

These days, I think, well probably art schools actually teach their students how important it is, don't they.

Well I'm sure it is.

Yes.

Because, I mean, you can see mediocrity being successful very quickly. I believe, I believe it, I believe the honest thing to do is to let the work gradually work itself through.

Because even the likes of, well Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, they were all quite good at self-promotion, were they?

I don't know.

From what I can gather, Henry Moore spent quite a lot of his working week down in London just meeting the right people, giving them presents.

I know one or two artists who do that.

Yes.

And I don't respect them at all for it.

No.

But I won't say who they are, but, I see them at it, sort of doing networking and things like that, you know. It's I think quite disgusting really.

Where and when did you first exhibit your work? I assume it was at a mixed show. Maybe... Well, you already mentioned Marlborough in New York in 1965, The English Eye. Would that be the first time?

Well Bryan Robertson was always interested in my work.

OK. When did he first see your work?

It must have been two or three years earlier, because I'd... No it wasn't the first time I showed my work at all, because I had a studio show in, I had a studio in Maida Vale, and I had a studio exhibition, which was unusual in those days, and most people, a lot of people came. That was quite an event. And, because it was underneath, it was a basement of an optician's, and then, to get in there you had to climb down a ladder, because the inspection pit, you know. And then there's a big space underneath this building, and, I shared it with another painter called Alan Gelf[ph], Galk[ph], you know?

I don't, no.

No. And, it was quite amusing, because, I remember Bridget Riley talking to Kasmin, asking Kasmin why he wouldn't show her work, and he said, 'Because I don't like it,' and she burst into tears. But, then afterwards, Barry Flanagan asked whether he could put some stuff down there to... Because the British Council were going to give him a Venice Biennale show. And he said, 'All right.' And it turned out to be a lorry load of sand, which was tipped down this hole, and I was given notice to quit the next day immediately.

That was the days when he was showing just bagsful of sand.

That's what... Well I don't know what, what he was doing then. I mean I know he's going jumping hares and things like that now.

That's right. Because it's an amazing transformation.

Selling for enormous sums, you know.

Is that the first time Bryan Robertson saw your work?

I won a prize at, in, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, yes? And it...I got first prize there, and the, the judge, I didn't, who I didn't know then, turned out to be William Scott. I think that got people interested in my work a bit.

Mm.

That's when I was still[???] working [inaudible]. And, well later I met William, and, got to know him a bit, and... But, I don't know exactly when Bryan Robertson saw my work in depth. I think, because, at that time I had a studio in Maida Vale, and, I'm talking about London now, and also I had a studio behind a pub called the Albion in Islington, because I lived in Islington then.

1966 I've got down as your first one-man at Camden Arts Centre.

Ah right, yes. Mm. Richard Morphet, who was then at the Tate, wrote an introduction for my Italian exhibition. I mean the most successful exhibitions I've ever had were in Edinburgh, Demarco, and in Italy. I think it's to do with their taste probably, they, at that time they liked fairly sort of, pure things, possibly, I don't know. Who knows the answer?

What I'm trying, what I'm finding very hard to understand is, it seems to me that all of a sudden, round about 1965/1966 you just suddenly became a superstar, it seems like from almost nowhere, from...you suddenly had loads of exhibitions, and were very well known, very successful, or appeared to be very successful.

I've never been successful on selling anything, but, at that time the New Generation shows were significant, in retrospect. Although didn't consider that at the time.

No.

I mean it's just putting three or four works in, and together with other people. I often wonder how the other people are getting on, you know, some, some I...I don't know what they're doing now, but... I think it's a particular era, a particular time, you know, very much sort of Sixties time.

Mm. So, for something like that New Generation show, you had to be chosen for it; you didn't just put some things in, you, somebody decided, 'We want you'?

No, he was...Bryan Robertson was the innovator really.

Right. He ran the Whitechapel in those days, didn't he.

That's right, yes.

Yes.

So, it was his decision.

OK.

And at that time, as the time, thing...people were very bitchy about everyone, saying, 'Oh, what on earth is he putting that stuff in for?' and things like that. But Bryan did have a certain perceptiveness, perceptive eye, you know, and, it really gave me a bit of a break in lots of ways.

Mm.

But, the work was obviously unsaleable, you know. But that's not the point, you know, it's...it's the way I was working I think, you know.

Mm. Do you feel you were to some extent in the right place at the right time? Because, the art world sort of changed about 1965 didn't it, all of a sudden. I could see just by reading the magazines then, up to 1965 it was one kind of thing; all of a sudden everything changed.

Did it?

And your kind of work just suddenly became...

I don't know.

...the in thing, from what I can see, but...

I don't know. I mean, I don't know. I mean, I've been remote from the art establishment completely.

Yes.

And, you know, I've got quite a lot to say about that, but... I really don't know what to say, you know.

But you would regard meeting Bryan Robertson as, as something very important to your career?

Yes, he's definitely... He recognised something.

Mm.

And I'm grateful for him giving me an opportunity. Because that's what artists need, is an opportunity at some point.

Did you get on particularly well with him?

We did have a laugh together.

Mm. Would you go out socially, would you go to the pub with him?

No, no, no we never did that. He took me to... He used to get, he used to be, at that time he used to be a critic, and he used to get free tickets to things, and I remember him taking me to the Noh Japanese theatre at Aldwych.

So if we move on to the one-man show, was 1966, the Camden Arts Centre.

Mm.

How did that come about?

Because I was working there.

You were working there?

They gave me the space to... There was a director there called Jeanette Jackson, and they let me work in their sort of summer space, to prepare work for my Italian exhibition.

Mhm.

And they, you know, agreed to show the work, you know, there. I mean at that time, it's not, you know, strong or as well known as it is now, and...

So the Camden show came first, and then it went to Italy?

Well, certainly, as I recall, that, the work I was doing there basically went to Italy, and I remember Richard Morphet coming up and, that's where he wrote his thing[???] about, for the Italian small catalogue, yes.

OK. So the first, the first successful show was, was the first show in Milan, critically successful?

What do you mean by, what do you mean? Oh critically it was successful, yes. And the Italians liked it, mm.

What was the name of that gallery?

Cadario.

Galleria Cadario.

Mm.

And how did you met them?

How that came about, I really can't remember, but I think it was probably the...picked it up from somebody who wrote to them, I think. I didn't actually approach them directly. But then, then, after this contact, I sent some stuff, maybe slides or something like that.

Were they a well known gallery at the time?

Yes, they were, they were quite, quite respected, yes, and, in a central part of Milan, quite, smart gallery. I mean it doesn't exist now I'm sure.

Do you remember what other artists they showed?

No. I know I missed my private view, because, I was lusting after a shirt, and it's a very, very smart area, Milan being a very sort of tasteful kind of place and so on, had this shop, had one shirt in the window. And I thought, well spend all, I'll spend my money on that. And I was so anxious about this private view, because, to the Italians it's very important, these kind of events. And, the exhibition was hung, and the hotel where I was staying was round the corner, in a sort of pedestrian area. And, I was so anxious I took about, three or four Valium I think, you know. And I woke up about four o'clock in the morning, give o'clock in the morning, on this bed with my purple shirt unwrapped next to me, and I missed my private view.

And that was your first major private view.

Yes it was.

Were the gallery annoyed that you missed it?

I'm sure, yes. Mm.

Can you describe the gallery, was it a particularly large space?

It was quite a good space, on the first floor.

Yes. Was that typical of, of Milan, are most galleries on the first floor?

No, in Milan there are some very cool galleries, you know.

Yes.

But it was a good area, yes it was a good area.

Was a catalogue produced?

Yes, the small one which I mentioned that Richard Morphet wrote the introduction.

OK. And, who actually chose the work, did you suggest what they ought to show, or did they pick out of...?

No, I shipped out some work, and it was some of my first three-dimensional canvases from the Wall[???].

These were ones with tribal names?

I can't remember the titles of them, but... The other things were title...were, you know, were paintings, and I had them framed by the framer I used called Dibiasi[ph], in Tottenham Mews.

Were they all shaped canvases in that exhibition?

Not all, no. No.

But quite a few of them?

Some, yes.

How did you, well number one, how did you decide to produce shaped canvases?

Was that influenced by anybody else, or your decision, or...?

Well just, you know, being self-taught, I don't see any rules in anything, so that, it seemed quite logical to follow... I mean there's nothing...some painters will keep to the discipline of, their discipline of using a two-dimensional surface on a two-dimensional wall. But I don't see that there's any constraints about extending two dimensions into three dimensions, or, and so on. So that, there's one thing that Patrick Heron wrote about, is, the aspect of my dimensional painting.

So did you decide on the shape of the canvas first, or was that, or did you paint flat against the wall, and once the painting was done, decide how it should be shaped as it were, if that's possible?

No, because I... I mean, I'm thinking about, well, basically I decided on a form for the canvases which were made to a construction.

Mm.

And then, at that time, I painted on the result of that form. I wouldn't do it now, but, that's what I was doing at that time.

Was it an expensive process to get those made?

It certainly was, yes. I used to use a theatrical...people who did things for theatre.....

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.....shaped canvases.

Mm.

Presumably, before you got those made you had to produce a drawing of some kind of, of the shape, I assume.

Well perhaps I did, I mean, none exist as far as I know.

No.

I mean from the early shaped canvases, I developed into using fibreglass forms, and painting on that.

And who made these fibreglass forms?

Boat-builders.

Again you provided them with some kind of drawing, did you?

Yes.

Yes?

But they just made the forms, not the, not interested...they weren't involved in the painting of them.

So, when you were getting these fibreglass constructions made, were those again particularly expensive?

Yes, well, at the time of course, for me it was, so, so therefore, they had to be considered, what forms to do. I mean at the moment I'm faced with work that I would like to make which I can't afford to make. It's very frustrating. And, hence, I'm involved in maquettes to some extent. I've just developed something, a cube within a cube, which I've had made to a bigger scale, which is quite successful, but it's taken everything, all the money I've got just to do that. But ideally I'd like it to a particular scale, and in different material probably, like stainless steel rather than stone or marble.

So this has been a problem all through your career.

Oh yes. Lack of funding to carry through the work.

Just going back to your first show in Milan. Were you happy at the time with the general look of the show?

Yes, it looked great. I enjoyed being there, it's a great city, you know.

How long did you stay there?

I met one or two... I was there for, about ten days I suppose. I met one or two Italian artists, quite sympathetic, you know.

Was the gallery happy with the show?

Yes, they thought it was good. That's why they wouldn't, that's why they gave me a second show.

Did any of your family travel over there to go and see the show?

No.

Did any of them want to?

No.

Money stopping them?

Well, I mean to answer that question, none, none of them have ever been interested in seeing any of my shows, so, that's the end of that.

And why was that?

Because they're just not interested in visual art, or, you know, or my commitment to it.

What about critics, do you remember any critical response to that particular show?

There was...there was some, which apparently was quite positive, but I couldn't read Italian and I didn't...

Right.

...haven't got it, as far as I know.

I assume none of the UK press picked up on the Italian show?

No.

So what did you do after that show? Was there much work to, to deliver back home, or did it stay with the gallery?

It stayed with the gallery.

OK. And did you actually make much money from it?

No.

Just enough to buy that shirt.

(laughs) Mm.

OK, so once you got home, what did you do then? Did you sit down and think, 'Well, I'll produce some more of this type of work,' or did you move on to something different?

I think what you must understand is that, is that any artist... Well, I suppose there are some artists that plan things, and think, you know, doing doing doing doing, or something, in terms of timing and events and things. But, I imagine most artists don't think like that, they just actually produce work and if there is a show coming up they'll work towards it. It can be a catalyst. So if you know you've got to make a show, and if you're able to produce the work, it's...they'll do it. But you don't go back and sort of sit down and say, 'Well, what am I going to do next?' It doesn't work like that at all. And, this could be one of my downfalls, is, from the, you know, living point of view, is that, if something crops up, you work towards it, or, you're naturally working on things. Hence the build-up of the number of drawings I've got, which means you're working consistently, but you're not necessarily producing those drawings for a particular show, or a particular event, you know, it's just a natural thing to do. It's rather like breathing or sleeping, you know.

Do you remember which show came next after that, which one-man show? There were several in 1967, there was the Royal Marks in New York.

Mm.

Demarco, Edinburgh.

Well the Royal Marks, New York, evolved from The English Eye exhibition.

So your next exhibition was at the Royal Marks Gallery in New York.

Mm.

And how did they find you in the first place?

It's from The English Eye exhibition at Marlborough.

OK. How did they approach you, through Marlborough, or direct to you?

Direct to me.

Do you remember the person that contacted you?

Well yes, there's Royal Marks himself, and Sam Hadad[ph], that's his number two.

And they wanted to jump straight in with a one-man show? They didn't want to include a few pieces in a mixed show first?

No. I mean they were a good gallery at that time. They were showing people like Nevelson, Lady...

Louise.

Yes.

Yes.

And, so classic modern art really.

Mm. So how did you prepare for that show?

Well...

Nothing came back from Italy, so you didn't decide, let's have the unsold ones back from there?

No. Particular works that I sent over.

Yes.

Today, I do prepare more in that, I insist on looking at the space and the dimension, and the scale and the space. At that time it was usually individual works. And then, then it's, then the individual works are related to the space as best as possible. It's...today I'm veering more towards installation and scale; whereas then it was individual works.

So it's quite risky isn't it, for a, a good gallery to just leave it purely to you, and whatever turns up then, fine.

Well, you know, it's a risk on both sides. I mean I'd lost my work and they...it must have cost them to put something on, put the show on I suppose.

You went over...

It's a question of mutual, mutual trust and respect.

Mm. So you went over for that show, did you, to New York?

Yes I did, yes.

Yes.

Mm.

Did you get to the private view this time?

(laughs) I don't think they had one in fact.

Is that usual for New York, or is that...?

Probably not. I mean, by...it's...it's... They were quite a cool gallery, you know, they don't make events out of things so much.

How well did the show go?

Well critically it went well. I mean, it did get some decent reviews and things.

Were sales not so good?

Sold nothing.

No?

I mean, of all my one-man shows, just looking down the list of things, I don't think I've sold a single work. Apart from Demarco and Cadario. Waddington show sold nothing, Exeter sold nothing. Yes, so, one doesn't expect to sell anything.

Well, some of these galleries have got to think commercially, haven't they?

Well I don't...I'm...you know, I'm not...I'm not attracted to commercial galleries very much.

No. Maybe Royal Marks had loads and loads of money and they didn't care if they ever sold anything, I don't know.

Well I think like most dealers, he had his stock of sort of master, moderns and... I mean, my stuff was minor compared, in money terms, compared with their stock, I mean he had a sort of big apartment with stocks of stuff.

Well he must have had a lot of faith in your work or he wouldn't have asked for a second show, would he?

Yes, he was pleased with the first show. Mm.

Did you discuss with him the fact that nothing sold, or was that just irrelevant?

I didn't expect anything to sell.

(laughs) I can't believe that the gallery doesn't expect anything to sell, but... OK.

(laughs) So the next one is, Richard Demarco in Edinburgh.

Mm.

How did you get to know him?

Someone like Patrick Heron might have mentioned my name to him.

Because I've never met him, but I hear he was quite a character.

Demarco?

Yes.

Yes, I suppose so. But... The show was reasonably successful from my point of view, I sold about three things, including Sterling University.

Right. Do you remember what particular pieces sold, or types of work?

I think they were paintings mainly.

Mm.

And then a commission evolved from it.

Two-dimensional paintings, or, or your three-dimensional canvases?

No they were mainly, the ones in the showroom were mainly two-dimensional.

Mhm.

But, the Scots seemed to have a stronger tradition towards art for some reason, I don't know why, but... Yes.

Was there a private view held there?

I think there was, yes.

Did you go to that?

I expect so, yes.

Yes. And do you remember how well attended it was?

No.

No. (laughs) Critical reviews?

I don't know. I don't think these things are important actually.

(laughs) They are to some people.

(laughs) What? Why?

I'm sure they are to Paul Fyman[???].

Well...

So the next show was, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham?

Oh I can tell you the attendance at that place, was nil.

Was it?

Because, at that time the Ikon was not like it is today, which is all sort of, respectable and posh and things like that. But at that time it was in a small, almost a traffic island, you know, sort of, hexagonal kind of building. And it was snowing. And everyone was very embarrassed, because absolutely no one turned up at all. So that's the answer to that.

Was that a non-selling show?

Yes.

Yes.

Oh, I've told you, I've sold nothing. I mean, I've sold nothing.

No, I mean, certainly when I went to the Ikon, I lived in Birmingham, some shows, they didn't have a price on things because nothing was for sale.

Oh I see, yes.

Was it that, or...?

No, I mean, anyone could have bought anything as far as I was concerned. It just didn't, nothing sold, that's all, that's...mm.

Yes. Do you remember anything about the critical reviews?

I don't think there were any.

No? Was anybody particularly important running the Ikon in those days?

Well I think it's important that the people who founded it, I can't remember their names now, but, they, they were the innovators I suppose.

How did the show at the City Art Gallery, Plymouth, come about in 1967?

Well being a Devonian, the director then, it was quite brave of him to offer this show to me, but, I suppose the relevancy was that I was local to the actual public gallery. And you know, that was a major commitment on my part. There's a lot of work there; in fact, two works did sell to the Arts Council, and that was initiated by Alan Bowness.

So he obviously liked the work.

Yes. Yes. He still has one of my paintings actually. He's offered to give it to me back.

Has he?

Mm., to help, you know, which is generous of him.

It is, yes.

Mm.

Do you remember which ones the Arts Council bought?

Yes, there are, they're sort of illustrated in the catalogue you're looking at now. They're three-dimensional ones. And when we come to Arts Council, well talking about sort of, public situations, I'll go into more detail on that.

Well you can do that now if you want.

No, it's something I want to...

OK.

...be correct about, on dates and things like that. Mm.

So when it came to the Plymouth show, was that particularly different work to what you had done in the previous year?

It was ongoing, ongoing work.

Right. Mainly shaped canvases?

Yes, it was a mix of two- and three-dimensional stuff. There was a lot of work in it.

Mm.

It was, you know, catalytic. I mean, the result of how the work looked and things like that, looking back on it, and thinking back on it, and looking at the installation photos which I've got, I certainly wouldn't have done it as it was done at that time, but, at that time it was quite relevant.

Mm. What would you change now?

Well the use of the space I think. There's probably too much in it.

Too much in it?

Mm.

But at the time you were, you were quite happy with it?

Well to me it was beginning to show work that I'd produced.

Why was it such a great catalyst?

It's like anybody, if you've got something in front of you of importance, whether it's a football match or a, you know, what you're doing, is, it means that you think about it, or, or... It's a sense of opportunity to show whatever you're doing or have done. I

mean I've no idea who went there, or what, but, it's...it's very important for an artist to see their work in a, in a slightly different environment or different context I think.

So was that because of the size of that particularly, particular gallery, or...?

No, as I said...

[inaudible] public gallery?

[pause]

Well, I'm trying to find out why it was more of a catalyst than the five previous one-man shows.

No, they're all, all catalytic, each one.

Why?

I mean these days I prefer to work more closely with the scale and the space that's there, because my work is very different now. I mean, there is a thread of character going through, but, these days I would actually think about scale to the space available more closely than the early days when in fact I was just producing individual works, you know.

OK. Was there any press reaction to the Plymouth show?

Not as far as I know. No.

The fact that two pieces went into the Arts Council, did that have any effect on your reputation?

No, obviously not as far as they're concerned.

No? That would have been better if somebody like the Tate had bought two pieces, would that have made a, more difference?

The Tate would have probably put them straight in the basement. And the Arts Council would probably give them away to be abused somewhere. I mean actually, in fact, talking about the Arts Council, you know, I'm really quite angry about this, because, they have, well, they bought these two three-dimensional things, you know. And I wrote about, I wrote to the Arts Council about, eighteen months, two years ago, without having the letter in front of me I can't tell you what date. Got a very polite letter back saying, 'If we are coming down to the West Country, perhaps we might visit,' blah blah blah. Because I was desperate to sell something, you know. And I've heard absolutely nothing at all from them. And I think it's, I think it's irresponsibility, because, the difference between some of the American people and the English people is, the Americans are interested in welfare, health, financial situation, given that there is a, a criteria of quality of work and so on, you know. But the Arts Council are just disinterested, you know. And, I'm...I feel slightly abused by them.

And you have done all the way through, apart from the first two purchases?

Yes. Well, we're talking about, we're talking about a long time ago aren't we, we're talking about...

We are.

I think probably, the problem is that, that these people they're, you know, it's bureaucracy, and these people, academics and, are unaware of actually what's been happening. They have their own fixed ideas about what's been happening historically, but they don't research it enough. And, they're not...they're unaware that people have been being sort of, completely forgotten, and not being supported. And the money's going to institutions, it's easier to, you know... But I've got quite a lot to say about this, particularly on...I mean, I've been faced with a touring exhibition; I mean the rules they put down to do with space and so on, have got to show the same works in each venue, which is quite ridiculous, you know, for work like mine which is related to space. And it scared off York City Art Gallery for being the sort of

mainstream gallery for a touring exhibition, on the strength that they could see by coming...they bothered to come all the way from York to see my work, and they realised that the work had to vary by a particular venue. But the Arts Council never bothered to visit me. Nor has South West Arts ever bothered to visit me.

You think the wrong sort of people are recruited into these organisations?

Just look at the money they're earning, what the cost is. It's a big deal, if you get, you know, if you can get... They spend what, three months deciding if someone gets a grant for, a nominal grant or something, you know. Most of the people are rejected anyway. Their argument is, they've got no money, but it's not true.

And they often give it to the best known people.

No, they...well, it's...you know, I think it's total bureaucracy now. Anyway, that's a separate subject, we'll come to no doubt.

OK. So your next one-man exhibition, we're going, 1969, back in New York again, the Royal Marks Gallery.

Mm.

Again it was you that chose the pieces for that show?

Mm. Yes.

Do you remember what kind of thing went there?

Well it's all on record.

Yes. Was it still mainly shaped canvases at that stage?

No, it became, you know, developed into, yes, more sort of... I mean, I remember there was... I was using stainless steel a bit then, painted stainless steel. So using paint on material.

And once again, you got somebody to make the stainless steel forms, did you, which you then painted?

Yes, or using standard materials, then painting it. Because I used to paint the stuff myself, and...

Mm. You wouldn't weld things together or anything like that?

No.

You'd get them made?

No no no. No. I never welded anything.

Mm. So I don't understand what you're saying when you say 'using standard things'.

Standard things means that, if you go to a stainless steel stockist, they'll have tubes, x dimension, x specification, thickness and things like that. And obviously it's more economic to use, you know, existing material rather than ask someone to make it.

So would you go and buy a selection of tubes of different dimensions and then just decide later on which ones you're going to use for which work?

No, I couldn't possibly do that. I mean, you're talking about expensive material. You've got to make a decision, you know. And that decision is, takes some thought.

Mm. So I assume now that transport costs of getting those to New York are very high as well.

Yes, well, this is one reason they didn't come back, because I couldn't afford to bring them back.

Right. Was that show successful?

Well critically, yes, but, didn't sell anything. So, in fact at the end, because some of the things are so big they gave some of the work away.

What...

With my approval.

With your approval?

Yes, oh I had to agree to that, yes. Otherwise they'd just be chopped up I imagine.

So, what happened after that show? Did they decide they wanted to do any more?

I think Royal Marks himself was not all that well man. I think the gallery probably closed, not, not soon, much after that. So it's not a question of me saying not [inaudible], it's not like a sort of, one of the big name galleries that, if someone goes, that they sustain the.....

[End of Track 5 Side B]

[Track 6 Side A]

Yes, my work has always been not dictated by formal material, and it's always been to do with a functional application. So, although I'm not rigidly conscious of it, I suppose if you analyse it, it's rather like the catalogue of, at the Exeter Museum, which was in 1997, that the way I listed the works was by material, whether it be glass, stainless steel, Perspex, resin, whatever, could be concrete, you know. It's really the use of form to carry through a functional result, you know, a result. So the material's a platform for the aesthetic result. And, so therefore, one of the problems I had in early days was, people say, 'Are you a painter or are you a sculptor?' and, and also when I was teaching at Exeter, for a bit, and also Bath Academy of Art, is that, I never saw the disciplines separated; I saw them integrated. And in fact[??] the chair of fine art at Exeter even this year, I sort of, teased him by saying that, how they compromise is, they put sort of industrial kind of designers in to do three-dimensional, various other aspects, but still not splitting the sculpture and the painting element, which, which really should be integrated, because the disciplines are very similar. If you look at a jug, it's not just three-dimensional, it's also two-dimensional, and, and a painter working in two dimensions should see that to a formal understanding, of understanding the three dimensions before he can do something convincingly two-dimensional. This is why someone like Ben Nicholson was quite good at doing things like that, or even the Cubists. But, as far as my work, my own work is concerned, I'm just working in relation to technology, so that, I will use Perspex, resins for two-dimensional work, [inaudible] used materials like stone, sandstone, granite, marble, stainless steel, concrete, to suit the particular form or image, or even wood.

How did you decide on which material at any particular time? You started with canvas, then there was fibreglass, stainless steel.

Mm. Well it's...yes it's an evolvement. I mean, I started being a painter, and then painting became dimensional painting, and then from dimensional painting I got more interested in the form itself. I was even interested in sound at one point, and, well I still am, and, sound equivalents to form equivalents. And, something I'm working at now actually is a randomised sound equivalent of a particular form.

[end of transcriber tape 5A, start of 5B]

.....Princess Margaret and Snowdon, she asked for it to be turned off. I think, in the *Guardian* the next day, Norbert Linton said it sounded like London docks.

You agreed to turn it off?

No, I didn't, but, but the director was told, asked for it to be turned off.

Right. But did they physically do that, or did you have to do it?

No, I didn't, I wasn't bothered whether they turned it off or not really, but, it was turned off, yes. I didn't protest at the time.

Were you actually producing drawings all the way through this period, or did that start a bit later?

Well my drawing is...my drawing seemed to fall into two categories. One is working drawings for the, what I call the formal work, you know, which can be scaled up or down, you know; by that, they can relate to different scales, you know, for realised work, works for realisation. My other, other drawings which, you know, it seems to create a dilemma with people, I've been advised two or three times not to exhibit it with my formal stuff for some reason, is abstracted figuration, which usually falls into categories, such as landscape, figures, social, animals, circuses, whatever, plants, and, they're usually sort of, sort of visual activity which rationalises what I'm seeing to, not a totally minimal way but a sort of, a natural visual thing. I mean I'm not alone on doing this; other artists have done it historically I think. But people find it very difficult to interrelate the, the two elements. Mel Gooding's tried to do it a bit in his text. I've only had one show of abstract figurative drawings which was in Thailand, which is to do with Thai landscape. Otherwise, as yet, the other works have not been shown. And there's over 3,000 of them.

So were these drawings actually produced very quickly?

Physically, yes. But I will look at the subject for some considerable time, it could be weeks, could be hours. For instance, some figurative, figure drawings most recently, you know, have been talking or looking at the person for weeks, and I haven't done anything at all. I'll probably come in to it and then, the actual drawings will take very little time, but I've absorbed the form, and so I'll have confidence. And also, when I do a drawing, I will look at the form, and not, not at what I'm doing, you know. So, I want to get as close in this[???] direct kind of understanding of the form that's in front of you, whatever it is, you know, to get as pure as possible result. And also it's an energy factor. And this energy factor overflows into my formal work, so that, the formal stuff I'll carry around in my mind, you know, for a long time before developing into realisation. And, the visual energy of all this probably comes from just being visually aware about things. I'm very, I'm...I think, I've come to the conclusion I'm a very visual person, that, other things don't seem to come into my mind very much.

Are these drawings done in, shall we say one hit, or would you sometimes go back and think, 'Well I'll change that a bit'?

No, I'd never change a drawing, no.

Never?

No.

Never.

I mean, it's interesting to see drawings by certain artists. I remember having a drawing by Christopher Wood once of a figure, and I could see how he did it. He obviously was not a great draughtsman, but on the other hand, he's[???] great honesty in what he did. And what he did, he really had to work hard on doing this drawing, and you could see that he's doing, working round the subject, you know, working in his mind, working out the form, and then in the end he'd got a bit of chalk and he went round the form that he'd sort of worked around and worked at, you know, i.e. he's mentally, he's working on paper, and then actually got to the point where he

could actually do it. And also, if you see the drawings of Matisse, I mean Matisse will do, maybe fifty or sixty drawings to arrive at a particular result. It's a question of actually getting to grips with the form that one's faced with. This is why, you know, I'm living on the edge of Dartmoor, it's a very very strong landscape, I've done very little drawing of Dartmoor, by looking at it all the time. So I'll probably do a whole splurge of Dartmoor drawings no doubt at some point. And similarly, if I go to...I've done a lot of drawings in the Far East, and it's, it's looking and experiencing, and having a sort of catalytic element of, of, a formal understanding, and an environmental understanding. So... I've never been interested in [inaudible] an academic aspect of things. It's very interesting that some artists like, going back to, say, Patrick Heron, that towards the end of his life, his work became almost semi-figurative, you know.

So are a lot of these drawings done whilst you're actually looking at a particular bit of landscape or something, or are they from memory later on?

No, I couldn't do a drawing without seeing, without, without being directly involved in...

Yes. But what I'm trying to get at is, you do it then, you don't wait until later and then do it from memory.

No no.

It's then.

No no. It would be dishonest to do it I think, like that.

OK.

I mean what...what the drawings are, they're not...as I say, they're not formal, very formal things; they're sort of, energy factors, as, you know, towards me as an artist, which helps the energy towards my sort of, more formal statements.

And at the moment you're using, mainly oil pastel to do it?

Yes, that's right, yes. Mm.

Have you always stuck to that, or has [inaudible] different, diverse[????]?

No used, no used normal things like pencil and ink and things like that. But, I mean, I'm using oil pastels because I quite like the idea of the immediacy, and also, you could react to something in any colour you like, or, whilst on my formal stuff I don't use colour very much... Well, people talk about colour, I mean I, I can sort of, distillation of colour can, is reflected in the concentration of the form, so that a lot of my two-dimensional things are black, or sometimes, well mainly so, but, there are one or two exceptions. But it helps the response-cum-energy factor to use whatever colour you want. So, I do use oil pastels, yes.

OK. Just briefly going back to other one-man shows. Is there any other significant show you, that sticks in your mind, the Waddington show or...?

Well the Waddington show was, I felt good, but nothing sold, which again is not the point anyway. I think it's early for its time, possibly. And the work was fairly sort of critical in my development, because I was using resin on the two-dimensional things, and I had some three-dimensional works in of stainless steel, and also maquettes which I call art form concepts, which are miniatures for bigger projects. And very shortly after I had this...this is 1973, then I had this disaster in my studio which was in the old Baptist chapel in Chudleigh, where all my work went up in flames, you know. Where I was woken up at about three in the morning by some policeman. Being a policeman, he asked the sort of cynical question, 'Are you insured?' And of course, I was not. And, of course, I just went down there, and had to be sort of held back by the fireman who, the whole place was in blazes. The theory was, though no one ever knew how it started, that some kids got in there, you know. And I lost any... It's not just the work, finished work; it was the actual materials in progress. And it had a terrible effect on me. So, that's what's called the 'silent period', from 1973 up to 1996, or '97. But during that silent period I was continuing to do drawings. And what happened, I had to sell, because I had no money I had to sell the chapel, I sold it

for, I think it was £1,000. And what scandalised me was not the loss of everything, but the graveyard was deconsecrated, and they took all the graves out, and that's the whole, well part of the whole history of Chudleigh taken out in one go. And now, I went, in fact I went, will not go through that part of Chudleigh now, on that road, because it's now a housing estate; of course, whoever bought it made a fortune I imagine, not that that bothers me at all, but, it's just the, you know, ridiculousness of the whole situation. It's probably my fault, but, it's very saddening[???], because it was a beautiful building. My current studio, as you know, is another type of chapel, this time a Temperance hall, in Bovey Tracey.

Have you always been uninsured?

Well, I'm afraid to say that my, the Temperance hall and the contents are uninsured because I can't afford to pay the insurance, I had to cancel it. Because, I just don't have the money. I mean basically financially, you know, it's been a very difficult life for me.

So after the studio fire, what was your reaction? Your reaction was, 'That's the end, I'm not doing any more'?

No, it's shock really, and, it was grief.

Mm.

And, I don't quite know the psychological effect, but, it was definitely, definitely had a sort of, a mental factor, it wasn't... It's as though one had one's head chopped off in a way. But I lost, I lost a lot of, most of my important early middle work.

So were there any, was any saved, were there any outside pieces, or...?

No.

Pieces elsewhere?

No. I mean it's, everything in there was, went up, you know. I mean, we're talking about Waddington Gallery show, all the stuff in the Waddington was destroyed. The only thing I had left was a few photographs which luckily were at home, plus a few drawings.

So how did you earn a living after that?

Oh, I worked... Did a bit of teaching at Bath Academy of Art and at Exeter later on. But I worked for a picture framer, Dino Dibiasi[ph], who's a friend of mine, who started a factory making plastics, and that was a sort of part-time thing.

Plastics for what?

Oh, it was very commercial, it was plastic bags really. He was one of the first people to do it, quite an innovator. He was a, like a lot of Italians, quite an innovator, you know. And... And then, I started a small publishing business, book publishing, which went bust. It's why I lost, lost everything, including my house, and my half-brother baled out the house bit. And, subsequently, that's the period I got married to Sarah Stott, and she, probably quite rightly, couldn't sort of cope with my depression and, is now remarried. But, I think, she had a big influence on me. I mean, by that I mean, I actually did love her quite deeply, you know. Unlike like my first marriage.

So that was the first person you really loved, was it?

I think so really, yes.

Mm.

Yes. I mean, we're, we're still amicable, but she has her own life now.

So, it's something we haven't talked about properly, but, your first wife, Anthea, how long did that marriage last?

A long time. At least twenty years.

And why did that eventually fail?

I think, she could see that I was really disinterested in the marriage I think, and... So, I think it was a sort of mutual agreement.

That's quite a long time to be married, considering you didn't think it was right in the first place.

I know. Just, just too naïve to do anything about it. Knowing these days that, some of them make up their mind with three months or three years, you know. Anyway.

So why did you stick with it for so long?

Don't ask. I don't know.

You were happy because you were having affairs in between, so...?

Well I wasn't happy, I mean, but... But by having affairs was a reflection of unhappiness really.

Mm. So the separation, sorry, the divorce itself...

Mm.

...was that a, a fairly smooth affair, or...?

Yes, it was quite, reasonably amicable. I mean her, her cousin actually happened to be judge at... I was slightly conned about it, but, anyway, the thing is that, we both agreed to do it, and it was, there was no, again, no real animosity at the time, you know. Anyway, it was done, that's it, you know.

What about the split of assets, if there were any?

No, there weren't, there wasn't. I mean basically, there was nothing. I mean I just gave her stuff she wanted. And also, I lived in France for a bit, did you know that?

No. When was that?

I bought a cottage in, in a town called Maussane... No, it's not a town, a village called Maussane les Alpilles. It was just within, almost a triangle of Arles and Saint-Rémy-de-Provence and Les-Beaux. Which was in my name, and I gave her half of the money. Although it's in my name, so...

So when did you buy that?

It must be in the, Seventies I should think. Sixties, Seventies, Sixties I think, yes. And, I sold it to my solicitor and friend of mine, Tony Groce[ph], the optician, you know? And now of course it's worth a lot more money.

How much time did you spend over there?

A lot of time, you know, it was about, three years.

What, with the family, or...?

Yes, with...

Yes?

Mm, yes. And I...you know, because... No, it had quite an influence on me really. The landscape's very strong there, and people, I got... I was actually in the village, and got to know some of the people, and, it's quite, quite a good period in my life in retrospect.

Did it help on the art side? I assume you were doing drawings over there, were you?

Yes there's...yes. Yes.

Any particular drawings?

Mainly landscape and bullfighting.

Yes. Had you drawn things like bullfights before?

No.

No?

They're difficult to do.

Can you describe that house?

Yes, it's... The story of it was, quite odd, because I got hooked on the particular area, and, there was an auction, and the place I was interested in, a Dutchman was interested in. And in Provence they have different rules for auctions, it's not a question of going up, you know, blah blah blah, you know, conventional way. And, anyway, neither the Dutchman nor I understood what was happening, because they had candles, and when the candle goes out you can do something, this that and the other. And, in Provence the whole law, if you put a, a pro...no, not a protest; if you...you can do something within a certain number of days, if they haven't...you can have a second auction.

[End of Tracke 6 Side A]

[Track 6 Side B]

So, there was a second auction, and, the Dutchman, the Dutch were quite determined to get this place, which they got. But this time, both of us had pros acting for us, because we didn't understand the system, because they're so complicated, and it turned out that my pro had, had sort of, unnerved the, the other pro, to such an extent that they over...well they paid a lot of money for it, for this place. And I was disappointed. And all the villages who had turned out for all this spectacle, you know, this spectacle. We went down to the café, and [inaudible] must buy somewhere here, you know, we spoke it all out[???]. And so, someone came up and said, 'This shop's for sale.' So I bought this... You know, it's a couturier's shop in this village square, right in the middle of the village, which is unusual for foreigners to be in the middle of a French village, because they mainly had these places outside. And impetuously, I agreed. We went back to the *notaire*'s office, because each village has one *notaire*, usually, and we all had, it's basically a party I suppose, and the contract was sort of, typed out there and then, and I bought this other place. It turned out to be a shop which changed into, you know, converted it slightly. So... But I had a really good time there. But, it's one of the many times I went broke, I had to sell it of course. And it's still owned by my solicitor and so on, who either through generosity or guilt, whenever I speak to him doesn't charge me anything.

Did you actually own a property in England at that time as well, or were you, prior to that you were just renting somewhere in Islington, were you?

I was founder of Barnsbury Housing Association, mm. That's...

Right.

Yes. That was Barnsbury Street.

OK. Was that a house that you bought?

No.

No?

I rented that.

You rented it.

Mm.

OK.

And Milner Square, where I first...which is in Islington as well. But then I did buy a place called, in Barnsbury Street, 42 Barnsbury Street, which I bought for £4,000.

Do you remember when?

No. But, it's now worth about, half a million quid I suppose.

This is, late Sixties?

Yes.

Yes.

Mm.

Can you describe that place?

Well, it's a, you know, classic end of terrace, Georgian, Edwardian, Georgian, basement and three floors. The place in France I bought when I moved down to Devon, because I made a decision to move to Devon.

OK.

And when I moved to Devon, I went to a place called Ideford, which is near Chudleigh, and that is, and the house is called Biddlecombe. It used to be the old school house for the Ugbrooke estate.

Do you remember when you bought that?

No.

Seventies?

Yes, I suppose so, yes.

Yes. Was that a house that needed a lot of work?

Yes. That, that ruined... Actually that did ruin me, because, I had this idea of making a sunken sitting area, and I hit an underground river. So the whole house became a pond. And my mother-in-law fell into it. But, anyway, that's one reason I had to sell up everything. It's now, you know, quite a posh property, you know. It's very beautiful, it's right in the valley on its own, there's nothing else near it.

Is it quite a large place?

Not all that big, but, it really was a wreck. And I bought it from the Clifford family, Lord Clifford, and they thought I was completely nuts, which I probably was, but I did convert it, or had it converted. And the...we used to have pilgrims coming down, because, there was a school, the last school lady[??] there was canonised. It's a Roman Catholic family there, you know, the Cliffords and so on. And people came all the way from Liverpool for relics, and wanted to have bits of wood and things like that. But... Even had a clairvoyant come down with a cat. And, I'm sure it's true, because I sensed it, but Anthea, my wife, you know, first wife was living there, we suddenly felt sort of, a presence, you know, sort of, from, from this. And you probably heard this on this other CD. And that's it.

But it was haunted?

Mm.

Have you received any commissions during your career?

[end of transcriber tape 5B]

[End of Track 6 Side B]

[Track 7 Side A]

[transcriber tape 6A]

Yes, I've had up to, from '69 to '72, four commissions, and the most recent one was at Teignbridge District Council in the area where I lived, which meant a lot to me, because, the material was local, from Haytor. The funding of that was from a local charity, so that was quite symbolic. But, perhaps the most significant one was the University of Southampton, in 1971, which was very important to me at that time.

You don't want to tell me the reasons for the importance?

I think the scale, and the commitment by the architects. I mean, I've... I mean, the thing about commissions I would say is that, at that time it was very much to do with perception of the individual. Today, by, I think, I think things had to be advertised in magazines and so on, and then... The usual thing is that you have to submit slides and so on, which, I don't do slides. And, then there's a process of committees and assessments and things like that, and you know... I mean, a lot of it's so political, that in fact I've given up applying for these things. Although, although as Mel Gooding said in his text that, that really, more of my work should be seen in public places, because in fact the scale and the conception of things is very much related to that.

Because I know a lot of sculptors who apply for these public commissions, and they often actually get the project, but they tend in my opinion to be terrible sculptors and therefore you get awful sculptures everywhere.

Mm.

I assume a lot of the selection committees for these things don't know very much about art and what art's there[???] for.

Well, usually... Well, I don't... You know, I don't, I haven't had much experience on it, but, often these days they do a specification, and they say who's going to be on the decision-making committee, and it's usually political mix, of local councillors plus

some nominal art person, and someone else, and often the job goes to someone who's known, you know. And, and I don't see any point in doing it. I think the thing is, that the work should be strong enough to stand up in its own right, and for people to be very committed. I mean, for instance, the only commission, apart from Teignbridge, which was important to me I suppose emotionally because it's within my area, I wanted to do something within my own environment and so on, is the Winchester Cathedral commission, where Canon Walker, who is a very perceptive man, has gone through my work quite carefully, and also as a religious man has found the work symbolic or related to an aspect of the cathedral, which never occurred to me of course, because, I don't work like that, towards definite symbolism and things like that. But, he's actually written, and it's on record his thoughts about that particular work, called *Broken Circles*.

Was that your title for the work?

His.

It was his title?

Mm.

Did you leave it untitled?

I haven't...I...I never title my work. The only, only works I've titled in my life are, a period of using tribal titles at a very early period.

What stage are we at in that commission?

It's been agreed. What's not been agreed is the funding, and that's...and that's the ironical thing is, I've done some research to find out funding organisations who are sort of listed and so on, and a lot of them say, 'Arts,' because they're selling themselves I suppose, and when it comes to the crunch, then they're just not interested, unless it's a certain sum of money. And the sum of money involved actually is too small for them to be interested in it. Although to me it's an enormous

sum of money. And, you know, and the, obviously myself and the cathedral are not interested in fundraising; we just want, you know, someone to be identified with the actual work.

Is it normal in these circumstances for the funding to be left up to the artist to, to get?

Well no, who else will do it? The so-called art establishment, you know, the South West Arts or the Southern Arts or the Arts Council, they won't do any...they won't take any initiative on, at all. I mean they... I mean, the people are there, being paid five times more than you or I will be earning, to just administrate, administrate things that are sort of churned into them. The whole thing is, boils down to the individual. So therefore one has to initiate things for oneself somehow. And that, that is, that can be quite humiliating, by having to justify what you're trying to do. Because you're talking to people who, one, are not interested in the art, and secondly, just thinking about what the benefit is to the people who might put something into it. And then the people who might put something into it are thinking about interpreting the art, when in fact they're not interested in the art anyway. So therefore, the result is either nil or, you get very compromised results on the kind of art that's being commissioned.

OK. We've talked briefly about your work in public collections, such as the Arts Council, Plymouth City Art Gallery. Are there any pieces in any collections that you were really pleased that these people bought?

Probably, probably the most minor things. For example, to me, after the big period of not exhibiting, a big break for me was from 1973 at Waddington Galleries, then I didn't exhibit until, basically 1997, which is a big gap, at Exeter, Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter, which was a major event for me. At the end of it they bought one small thing, I think, for about £90 I think, and, that's very symbolic for me. I wouldn't say it's a major example of my work, but, but the fact it's there is something for me, you know. On other works, I would say that, I'm under represented, certainly at the Tate, who bought one thing, a two-dimensional work. And, I wrote saying that they should...I felt it was imbalanced, that they should have not[??] the three-dimensional work. And one of their curators went to my exhibition at the Studio Art Glass[sic] Gallery in Connaught Street, who made a list of various

things, and he spent months to go through the system there. And he was interested in several things, and it was turned down on the strength of lack of funds, and it was the same year as millions were being pumped into the new Tate and things like that. So I just thought, it's a polite to sort of decline really. But, I sense, because, inadvertently, had the internal memorandums which I got, and I could...I think it's all down to Nick Serota really, and I don't think Nick Serota's ever seen my work properly, and he's obviously quite a dominant factor at this time.

Was he the person you wrote to?

No. I mean, the guy who came actually was very sympathetic, and very perceptive. He actually took sort of visual notes of the exhibition, was called Paul Moorhouse, he's one of the curators there, who I'd never met in my life in fact. I mean I think, people have been supportive from the Tate, from Normal Reid, Alan Bowness, David Brown, in different ways, but the contemporary curators I think have got a fixed idea about, about the history of British sort of late Twentieth century art, you know. And they sort of fix their mind, and they won't bother to see things, you know.

What piece have the Tate actually bought? Was it an early shaped canvas?

No, it's not, it's all, you know, it's on record, so...

Do you remember the name of the piece?

Yes, I mean, it's... I mean, people should refer to the acquisition catalogue, you know.

OK. We've talked briefly about your show in Exeter in 1997.

Mm.

What was shown there? What period of your work?

It was a balance of recent and some early work, plus drawing, plus a few drawings, which is the first time they've been shown.

So it was a proper retrospective, was it?

No, it's not a proper retrospective, but it was, shall we say it was a sort of, a statement of the kind of work I was doing. Both three- and two-dimensional.

Was there any sort of private view held for that?

Yes, there was, yes.

Was that well attended?

Well, I don't see that's relevant at all, but it was. I mean, because I had a... The local people in Bovey who had never been out of Bovey Tracey in their life, hired a bus, really to give me moral support I suppose. And also there was a local band and things like that. And, obviously, I don't know the members of the museum and things like that. So, there were quite a few people there. But, to me, it didn't matter whether there was one or, one or 200 or twenty people there, it's irrelevant, you know.

But you must have been pleased that local people made the effort to go?

No, that, that made enormous, yes that was... Because they... It was an expression of holding me in respect, although they didn't understand the work of course.

Over the years, have you had any special patrons of your work?

Well, the most important person of course is Dave Thompson, and he's made a, he's held my life together in a very difficult period, without putting too much pressure on me. And, he's really the only person.

And he's bought a lot of pieces of your work, has he?

Well there's been a funny relationship, in that, Patrick Heron turned up out of the blue one day with David Thompson...

How long ago was that?

...on the way, on the way down to Cornwall. And I suppose that must be going back, four or five years ago, possibly. And, David Thompson sort of reacted positively to some of my, mainly it was art form concepts, small maquettes of, you know, three-dimensional things, plus two or three paintings, early paintings. And he was interested in buying them. And I was quite embarrassed by it, and I had to walk out of the house, and left it to him, to what is he going to do about it? But since then, he's been aware of my difficulties, both health and financial, and he's sustained the work on the basis of trust, I'd say. So he doesn't actually buy things in a straight out way, but basically, sometimes giving me money when I need it, and then, as far as I'm concerned I sort of pledge work in exchange, as a quid pro quo. So it's, he's been very important to my life.

How often do you see him?

He's been a very busy man, being a businessman, but he...I probably see him about, three times a year.

He actually comes here, does he?

Yes. Mm.

Have you ever actually seen his own collection?

No, I think his...his collections must be, well I know it's quite enormous. Also his taste is, ranges from, I mean he's a well known substantial collector from Constable drawings, which is significant, to Beuys and, I know he has a lot of Patrick's painting, Patrick Heron's paintings, and ephemera, and also extends into aboriginal and ethnic art. And, I've helped to, to get some ethnic things to him.

Do you know what he intends to do with the collection when he dies?

You'd better ask him that, I don't know.

I thought he might have already made arrangements to donate it to a public gallery.

He's a lot younger than I am. I don't know.

Going back to homes that you've lived in, which I'm finding very difficult to understand, all the different places.

Mm.

I think the last thing we talked about was Biddlecombe, and the fact that that was flooded and you eventually had to sell it.

Yes. Mm.

After that, was Provence, was it?

Yes.

Yes?

Mm.

So we've talked about that, haven't we, to some extent.

Mm.

And where did you move to after that?

Back to London.

Oh it's back to Islington was it?

Yes. To Barnsbury Housing Association.

Which you rented?

Yes, which is, which was in Barnsbury Street, you know.

And you lived there until when?

Until I moved, until I moved back here, to Devon.

When was that?

I don't know dates, you know.

No? But roughly how many years ago?

I don't know. I mean, all I know is, where we're talking now, at Dartmoor View, Mary Street, Bovey Tracey, I must be here for about twelve, fourteen years I should think. It's a classic sort of, Edwardian doll's house looking place, with a garden. I'm very interested in gardening. Well not gardening, but plants as such. And, the thing was extremely run down and, I lived in one room for about a year while it was being put together again.

You physically bought the place, did you?

Yes, my... I bought it at auction, and it was...I bought it for £50,000 it was. And, managed to raise the money, or, to do it, that was my limit, and, that's how it is. But now, as you know, it's owned by my half-brother.

And how did that come about?

Well we've talked about that.

OK. Have you done any teaching during your career?

Yes, I got a part-time visiting lectureship at Bath Academy of Art, Corsham, which was initiated by Robyn Denny and Howard Hodgkin, and I, my appointment really was one day a week teaching painting to graphic students, and in retrospect, I think I was a lousy teacher, although one or two ex-students thought they benefited. Because my ideas were fairly fixed, and my philosophy. At that time there were a lot of...I mean at that time the way of teaching was, Clifford Ellis, who was the principal there, encouraged a number of good artists to come on a limited time basis, which contrasts with today where people are sort of fixed in on a more permanent basis. And so, there were a lot of people, good people teaching at that time. And I got, I mean, some people, one conflicted with their philosophy; other people, one got on very well with. And one of my best friends, which was on the same day as me, was Henry Mundy, who I think is a very good artist. Craig-Martin was teaching then, which, I don't like his work very much, and also Tom Phillips, who, I don't like his work very much. And there were people like Malcolm Hughes who was there, whose work I don't like very much. But also there was a lot of technical facilities, and the only problem I had I think was doing some work there, which I was ticked off about. Adrian Heath was there at the time, in fact I think he owned a cottage near there, at the same time.

Did you like his work?

Adrian Heath? No, it didn't really do anything for me at all.

What about the likes of Kenneth Armitage, William Scott, John Hoskin, were they around at that time?

Hoskin lived quite near there. But, he wasn't teaching there, at that moment while I was there anyway. And William Scott, he was there earlier than me.

Henry Cliffe? He taught there for a while as well I think.

Harry Cliffe...

Henry Cliffe.

Henry Cliffe. Oh yes, he used to do printmaking.

Yes.

Mm. Yes he was there. And, the only, only printmaking I did there was with, I did some screen-printing, not with him, because he did lithography.

Did you regard him as a good printmaker or painter?

No, he didn't really do much for me, no.

Do you remember how long you actually taught there?

I imagine it probably was about, two years. I was very relieved when I was told that Clifford Ellis had burnt all the records of the people who were teaching there, on his death.

Why did he do that?

Probably because we behaved ourselves very badly.

In what way?

It's not worth saying really.

I've heard talk of some kind of, student rebellion or something at that time?

Oh yes. Well that, that of course extended from France to, I think Hackney, or...north London? You know, and then, very quickly came down to, to Corsham. And, it was to do with conditions. I mean basically, it was, Corsham at that time was a very civilised kind of... It was basically a country house owned by Lord Methuen, and, a

very beautifully sort of, controlled situation. And the teaching situation was good but reasonably restricted. And the students sort of, rebelled about certain conditions. And, there was a conflict, and I agreed with the students about it, which didn't do much good for me.

Have the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath shown any interest in your work? Because they actually collect people who taught at Corsham I think. They recently bought a Kenneth Armitage, for a vast amount of money, purely because he actually taught at Corsham.

I know nothing about that.

No?

No.

Did you enjoy your teaching there?

I dislike teaching intensely. And, the same applied to Exeter. I only did it out of necessity really. And, I squandered whatever I got, probably on just enjoying myself.

Whereabouts in Exeter were you teaching?

Well, it was then called Exeter College of Art; it's now part of the University of Plymouth.

Was that a one-day-a-week thing again?

Yes.

That was after Corsham?

Yes yes. Mm. And I did various visits to Manchester and to Winchester, occasionally.

What other tutors were teaching there at the time? Was Clifford Fishwick there at the time?

Clifford was principal of Exeter.

Mm.

And he, he's now dead of course, but, his work was shown at Exeter, and Exeter University.

What did you think of his work?

Didn't like it.

Any particular reason?

Well, it's after... You know, it's sort of, academic really, you know.

Derivative?

If that's what, if that's another word, yes. Mm. Yes.

Are you or have you ever been a member of anything like the Royal Academy or the Royal of West of England Academy, or, the RSBS, Royal Society of British Sculptors, or anything like that?

No, certainly not. On principle I wouldn't.

Were you ever invited to be?

No. And if I was invited, I would say no anyway.

For what reason?

It's academic.

Academic?

Mm.

In some ways it, it helps your career, does it? Royal Academy possibly, I don't know.

I think, you talk about career, I mean, what's the most important thing is actually the integrity of the work. And also the integrity of where you, on how you show things, you know. I mean the Royal Academy have been seducing certain artists who have made a reputation, and they go after them, after the event, you know. And some of these artists are seduced into showing with the Royal Academy, which I think is dishonest.

Why is it dishonest?

Well, it's just being... I suppose they, the just feel flattered or something that... I mean it's why I believe, you know, someone like Hockney showing things in the Royal Academy, or, certain other people, I don't want to use names particularly, but, it's a useful vehicle I suppose of exposure. I mean the history of those institutions you're talking about is quite outrageous, even just, you know, you...there's a parallel also in France as well for that.

Outrageous in what way?

Well by just, just not recognising what's relevant at that particular moment, or time.

What, just being out of date, old-fashioned?

Oh, just not, not recognising talent at the moment that they're supposed to be operating.

[end of transcriber tape 6A – Track 7B re-recorded on separate tape]

[End of Track 7 Side A]

[Track 7 Side B]

[separate transcriber tape, re-copied]

.....*Contemporary Arts Society et cetera?*

I think my experience is that, these people follow fashion a lot, and fashion's not created by them, it's... They often react after the event. And I, I felt, I feel, you know, I strongly feel that, that they are nervous about a commitment, unless they feel reassured among themselves, which often means committees and various people, not individuals. And I, I've found, for example, I had an exhibition in, about two years ago I think, where no one from the art establishment made a visit, although they knew very much about it, and said they were going to come and things like that. And that includes the British Council, Arts Council, certainly the Contemporary Arts Society, who said, you know, blah blah blah blah, they'd come and so on. They didn't even bother to look at the work. Which, I don't mind, that there's no commitment of actually buying the work, or doing anything about it, but they didn't bother even to look at it. The only exception was this curator at the Tate who actually looked at everything quite seriously. But again, that got embroiled in the money-cum-politics of, and philosophy of the Tate at that time. And I think I've suffered really from this break. Had I kept going in terms of exposure, I suppose, from 1973 from Waddington through to the Nineties, then they would have actually, in their minds, all these people would actually have registered the relevancy of what I had been doing and what I was doing, and taken me infinitely more seriously. And, I think it's... For example, today I phoned South West Arts about an application for a commission for Winchester Cathedral; I wasn't...they can't pay for the whole thing, because it's too expensive, but I was asking for some help towards the development costs of the commission. They couldn't give me an answer, and no one was there. And, similarly, I've decided not to apply for a touring exhibition to three exhibitions for 2001, because the bureaucracy and the, and the conditions are totally unrealistic. And I, I do believe that there's a different breed of people, that they're more in contact with the establishments, and they're more interested in funding through the venues, the galleries, and are not interested in the artist. And if they are interested in the artist, they want to be reassured that the artists are of repute, and relevant, which I can

understand to some extent, but I don't think there's a visual perception to recognise whether something's good or not.

They don't like taking risks, you feel?

They...they can't afford to, because they, they think they, haven't got the courage to do so.

Do you think they're staffed by the, the right sort of people?

No, I think there's a different philosophy, that... One thing I've discovered is that, they prefer dealing with their own ilk rather than artists direct; they think artists are a problem. I found this when I had the assistant curator of York City Art Gallery come down, didn't quite comprehend the elements of my work, and preferred to have someone who's been archiving my work to deal with her rather than myself. Because she's nervous about what it was about, and she wanted to know what I was going to put in, and things like that.

Were they scared of you then?

Well probably scared of the work more. Not scared of...well, I'm a quite reasonable person.

Mm. Maybe they were scared of upsetting you, or...I don't know.

Well, you know, you know, I'm not bothered about that particularly, but... I think it was just protecting her situation. I mean they're under, I suppose they're under their own pressures of having to work to schedules, and programmes, and deciding to do this and that, and... But, as an individual artist, I mean it's all...it's much safer to have an exhibition that, of known, probably dead work, you know, than to deal with live work, possibly.

So do you feel it was better earlier on, say the mid Sixties, when Bryan Robertson was bringing together a lot of new things?

Yes, because I mean, it's, it's one man's decision then, you see. I mean today, the bureaucracy's built up, all the funding for the arts has built up great sort of, pyramids and, and it, you know, one's...you're very lucky, for an individual to make a commitment to art. I mean this is why David Thompson's been so strong for me, he believes in my work. OK, someone like Mel Gooding's written about the stuff, or... You know, he wouldn't have done it had he not thought the work had some relevancy. But, if it went to, like I made this application to South West Arts, and they said they'd take six weeks before they even shortlist anyone on this... And their maximum amount of money for commissioning for this year is, I mean about £10,000 or something, and we're talking about a commission that is going to cost infinitely more, and they won't, they can't make a decision about even short-listing the things within six weeks. And then, apparently they have sort of infinite number of committee meetings about things, you know. I mean, it could be, it could be done in half a day.

You briefly mentioned Mel Gooding. When did you first meet him?

Through a suggestion of Patrick Heron.

Patrick...

So... Yes, and I... Patrick Heron, yes, I mean he, Patrick, as you know Mel Gooding has written about Patrick Heron's work, and I spoke to Patrick Heron, and he recommended that I should speak to him. And Mel Gooding didn't know anything about my work anyway, so, it was, the physical meeting I think was probably in London, in probably Chelsea Arts Club.

And has he visited you several times since?

Certainly three or four times, yes. And he's certainly looked at stuff down here.

Do you feel he understands your work?

Yes, he's a very perceptive man, and...

Is that a rare thing, for somebody to understand your work?

Well, use the word 'understanding'; I mean, I mean he...I mean he's one of those people who can, who sees things in context of both visual behaviour and historical situation. So that, if that's what you mean by understanding.

Does he own any?

No.

No. The other person I think again we've briefly mentioned is David Brown. When did you first meet him?

Yes. Well, Dr David Brown used to be a vet, and by that I mean research vet, and, he was a big collector of contemporary art when he was...even when he was living in East Africa. And mainly strongly collecting Hilton, Roger Hilton work. He made a decision to give up his veterinary work to do art history. I believe he went to East Anglia University as a [inaudible]. And then when...then went on to get his first job at Edinburgh Museum of Modern Art, and then he got a job at the Tate as a curator. So, I'd call him a, not an academic but a sort of self-taught but natural collector-cum... Oh, no, I wouldn't say, wouldn't define him as a collector, but, extremely perceptive person on contemporary art. And he has a very fine collection of, of most things. He certainly, he has some of my work.

And when did he first become interested in your work? Was that many years ago?

He always has been, yes.

And has he written on your work?

Well yes, he wrote the introduction to the Thai catalogue, Thai drawing catalogue. And also he spent some days going through my drawings.

Were you happy with what he wrote?

Yes. Oh yes, he's very straightforward, you know.

Mm. We've briefly mentioned the Tate Gallery, but how do you feel the Tate Gallery has been run over, over the years?

Well obviously it's been erratic, mainly influenced by... I had nothing to do with it of course, but, it seems to me as an outsider that the, the trustees rely on the thoughts of the director at the time. And the director is influenced by his own curators. So that, you'll find there's a sort of pattern of taste going through the place. I mean it's...you know, I don't know the history of the Tate Gallery, but Rothenstein, it was a pretty static kind of period, and then there's what, Norman Reid and Alan Bowness, and then Serota. I mean, Nick Serota at the moment seems quite interested in performance art and so on, you know, in inverted commas, because that extends to installation of performance things as well as actual things. And I'm not sure whether they've got the finger on the real pulse of historically what's been happening.

Have you met Serota?

No, I've actually, I've met no one at all in the Tate since the departure of Richard Morphet.

Do you like the way that he now regularly re-hangs the old Tate, and presumably the new Tate?

Well I'm a great believer in work being on the walls rather than being in the basement.

But still much of it is in the basement, isn't it, seventy per cent or whatever.

Mm. In fact that's one of the things they said in my letter, the letter I had from them, saying, 'If we take this group of work,' which actually Thompson was prepared to donate, the internal note, which inadvertently was leaked, or sent to me, said that, 'No

doubt some of the drawings would be in the basement.’ Well, there’s nothing wrong with them being in the basement, providing it can come out of the basement whenever it’s relevant. It can be in the basement for x number of years, and then if it’s relevant it can then be brought out. And also I think that the Tate has a responsibility towards living British artists. So that, that, at least those artists who have spent their lives trying to commit, or contribute something, that the work, if and when it’s relevant, can be shown. And what’ll happen with this, with their existing policy is, they get mediocre work, and at the wrong time. And, I mean, they should go for it when the best stuff is there, when in fact, it doesn’t have to be shown all the time; it... You know, a lot of the stuff from the late, sort of 1990s, or twentieth century in British art may not be relevant today, because, I mean, they’re more interested in showing the trends and what’s happening at the moment, but historically, there should be responsibility to show it in its relevancy.

Do you think the Tate should be allowed to de-acquisition work?

Certainly not. The reason I say that, if you ask a doctor that, ‘I would like to commit suicide, or take my life away tomorrow,’ he’ll say, ‘No.’ And when I asked why, he said, ‘Well, probably in a week’s time you’ll probably change your mind.’ And the same thing would happen to the Tate. I mean they, they’d probably be de-acquisitioning and getting rid of stuff which the current curators are out of tune with, and they, they’d probably be making a mistake. And also, the reason they were brought in at a particular moment was some sense, sensibility from whoever decided to bring it in, or the moment that it was brought in, and that it’s only history can tell. So therefore, the best thing is for the Tate to get some big warehouse and get the thing stored properly, and then do the analysis properly. Obviously there’s bad work as well as good work, but, the arbiters of taste, you know, are variable.

What about where for a particular artist they’ve gone way over the top and they’ve bought fifty pieces or something...

Mm.

Why not stick to the ten best ones and get rid of the other forty?

Yes, I can see that argument. And, I can think, as you know, certain people are over-represented, and there's a lot of people under-represented.

Mm. Because as a collector, you know, you like to upgrade your collections, so, you know, you'll buy something and then you'll sell something that you like best.

Well, you could... If you're talking about the Tate, you just have a look at the history of it. They've sort of, missed out on a lot of things, and, because, they haven't got the courage or the funds to do anything about it. But I mean, the Tate at the moment is split into two things now. And, and so you've got Tate Britain, which has a responsibility to English art, as far as I can see, and they should have a proper responsibility to it. And the other thing, which is a great classic, great art, contemporary art I suppose, where I notice they've shunted one or two English contemporary artists over there already. And, that's, that's questionable, because, you know, I'd question the merit of some of them.

They've kept the Turner Prize at Tate Britain.

Mm.

Do you think...

Well, because it's English isn't it.

Mm. So you agree with that?

Yes, I do.

Yes. What do you think of the Turner Prize in recent years?

Well, it reflects what's happening, so, I've got nothing to say against it. I mean, you know, obviously, you know, I can react to a particular artist, but, in principle it's right.

The choice of those, of the shortlist of those artists appears to be down to a small committee of Tate patrons and Nicholas Serota.

Oh yes, well that's, that's where the Serota influence comes in again, you see. So I mean, I'm sure that the group of work that was offered via Paul Moorhouse, the curator, of mine, which was extremely generous from myself and backed up by Thompson if necessary, reflected almost nil, or very minimal kind of acquisition, but on principle, that... So the money involved on, say, the Turner situation, and the space involved, and the PR that goes on, and all the sort of stuff that goes around it, is right but also imbalanced.

OK, well, what part of the philosophy don't you like?

Pretentiousness. I mean, I'm totally in favour of the new Tate, I think that's a brilliant thing that's happened. But it's the, it's the creating of sort of art icons if you like, and making taste decisions about certain people, and the pretensions of it, and also the cost commitment to certain aspects of it. Maybe I'm sounding a bit bitter, because, I mean I got this ridiculous letter saying it's all, all cost grounds, when in fact they've been offered something for minimal sums of money. But I can see the pressure on the Serotas and the administrators and, you know, for the new Tate. And I think it's a brilliant thing that's happened.

You think people should be charged to go in?

Yes, I think they should.

What kind of level?

Well, I don't know. I mean, obviously, any funding which would be non-pressurised on people going in is... I mean no one, I don't think many people would resent it in a way. It's just been a political issue I think, mm.

So sort of like a pound would, is nothing to people, everybody would pay that I think, wouldn't they?

I'm sure, yes.

Because the attendances is so huge, even if it was £1...

But then, but then these days that museums, public museums are more sort of community, communal things, and you can go in, there's a café or restaurant and then there's a shop that sells things, and you can see current exhibitions and things like that. So people should not be blocked from going in to exhibitions; they should be encouraged. So maybe, a local museum like Exeter or so on, you can walk up and see these fantastic collections, permanent and, you know, not permanent ones, and, and people can sit down and have a cup of coffee and enjoy themselves I suppose, you know. Though maybe, maybe there shouldn't be a payment to walk in. Maybe on the actual exhibition that's going on, it could be charged, but not to actually go into the place.

Like Tate Britain, where you charge for the Turner Prize or, or a special Picasso show or whatever, but the rest of it, you can see for nothing.

Yes, something like that, yes. Maybe there's a balance, you know.

Mm. Well I think the answer's probably going to be no to this question, but I shall ask it anyway. Have you ever done any book illustration or theatre design?

No.

I thought the answer would be no. Printmaking, you've already said you did a little bit. Did you say that was at Corsham, or was it Exeter?

[inaudible] Studios.

Yes.

And they gave the, their results to the Tate actually.

Mm.

It's about four or five things I think..

That's the only prints you've ever produced?

Yes. I did a screen-print at Corsham, which is on Perspex.

Any particular reason why you haven't done any more?

No. I use... Perhaps I should, because it's, according to Gillian Ayres the other day, that's what keeps her going. But then, there again it's a lot to do with the publisher, print-maker, so that, obviously it's a money-making thing.

Mm. I think a lot of artists use it as a money-making thing, and a lot of Royal Academicians like, say Craigie Aitchison will put lots of prints in at £1,000 each, and he'll sell 300 of them in one summer exhibition.

Right. Yes, well, I mean, no, I don't, you know... If someone asked me to do it, I probably would do something, but, maybe I should, I should think about it. I don't know. I'm not really interested in it too much. I mean as far as I'm concerned, I have actually produced some editions, and experimented with something on a computer edition, which was shown in Exeter, but nothing was sold of course.

Have you ever submitted any work to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition?

Certainly not. We've talked about that.

Yes. But I didn't ask that actual question. OK. Can I move on to what you think of certain modern British artists? We've talked about, talked about a few already. Just starting sort of earlier in this century, people like Stanley Spencer?

He was talented and, had an extraordinary mind, and, some of his best work, which I think are his drawings, are brilliant.

Because there was an auction recently I think at Christie's of what you would call the sweepings from a studio floor of just little rough sketches.

Mm.

And they just went berserk.

Oh yes.

They went very very well.

Mm.

Bomberg?

Actually David Thompson bought a big Stanley Spencer.

Right. And do they deserve the price bracket they're in now, a million, two million?

I've got no idea of what the prices are. I don't know.

David Bomberg?

No, not interested.

No. Because again he was out of fashion for many many years, and is now selling for quite a lot of money. Henry Moore.

I think Henry Moore, I'm ashamed to say it, but I think he's overrated. I mean he made an enormous commitment, enormous contribution, but you can see his origins quite clearly. And, and that's from nature, and from, to some extent ethnic art to

some extent, and also, even Picasso to some extent. But, there's no doubt about it, he's very significant, but he's had no influence on me.

Mm. Because he was very strongly supported by the art establishment wasn't he, during his lifetime.

Well, you'd know more about that than me. I don't know.

Mm. Nevinson?

Interesting. I mean, [inaudible] was.....

[End of Track 7 Side B]

[Track 8 Side A]

[start transcriber tape 7A]

Well one artist who's exceptionally popular at the moment is Lowry. What do you think about somebody like that?

Ha! Well, he's obviously a one-off isn't he. And, yes, I respect him for that. But I don't think he's...well he's significant on his imagery, but, I wouldn't say it's... It's no interest to me in any way.

Francis Bacon, I think you've already said that, at one stage you owned a Francis Bacon, so I assume you like his work?

Well, he's got an extraordinary...he's on a different level from the people you've been talking about. He's significant. And, his painting is slightly mad, but there's nothing detrimental to say about that. I mean his use of paint and his imagery is exceptional.

Who would you say was your favourite, shall we say, modern British painter? Would you have a favourite?

Well you've missed out one or two people I'm quite interested in.

We're going to move on to that; I just thought at this stage, I'd see if Bacon was your favourite or somebody else was.

No. Bacon's not a favourite of mine at all. I was just saying he's very significant.

Mm. But you bought one.

Yes, I did.

So you wouldn't have bought it if you didn't like it, would you?

Well it disturbed me a lot. Disturbed me, you know, yes.

OK. Victor Pasmore?

Yes, I'd...I once had a, one of his works, a relief.

Mhm.

He's a sensitive, intelligent artist.

Do you like both stages of his work, his early, more figurative work?

That's interesting, he's very, very sort of, European or English, how he worked through into non-figuration from figuration. Which is, something that the Americans don't do.

Graham Sutherland?

Again I admire it very much. I mean he's obviously a highly intelligent painter, and also creates great tension on the painting he does, creates a sort of tortuous kind of result. So, I've had admiration but there's no influence to me at all.

Because during his lifetime I think he was more popular in Italy than anywhere else, which...

Well I can understand that, yes.

You can?

Mm.

Because I can't. (laughs) Why do you think?

Well, one reason is, the Italians are more perceptive about visual art than the English.

Yes, I can understand that.

Yes.

But that's the main reason is it, you think?

It's not the main reason, but they, they can react to it.

Mhm.

Definitely, yes.

Gaudier-Brzeska, who died very young?

Yes I like his sculpture, yes.

Mm.

He, he was at, he...he was at St Ives for a bit wasn't he.

He was, yes.

Mm.

The English Surrealists, people like Penrose, Banting, Agar, Maddox, Merlyn Evans?

I've got no interest whatsoever.

None at all?

No.

The same goes for the other Surrealists, like Dalí et cetera?

But Dalí I don't...

De Chirico.

Dalí I don't take seriously at all.

No.

No. The only person I quite like is Armstrong.

John Armstrong. Mm. A very underrated artist I think.

Mm.

Did you get to know Nicholson?

Not really. I've had correspondence with him, when he was in Switzerland he wrote me one or two letters. Which are very Nicholsonian kind of things. But, I met Barbara Hepworth a few times, and... But the people I was very friendly with is Patrick Heron, who's been a lifelong friend really, until he died, and we were really quite close, mainly to do with philosophy rather than anything to do with aesthetics, although in the early times, I was interested in his work, because he followed sort of, a string of influence which I was interested in. Again, very European. Bryan Wynter I was very friendly with. And Johnnie Wells of course. Other St Ives artists, I mean there's plenty of them down there, but, some I didn't rate at all.

Like who?

Well I don't want, you know, don't want...I don't want to say particularly.

OK. Peter Lanyon?

I never knew him, but I know... I mean he had, again you can see the influence of landscape and he's, he's a good painter at his best, yes, mm.

What about his constructions?

Interesting.

Did you actually like Barbara Hepworth's work?

At best it, it can be seductive, yes.

Gabo?

Yes, I admire Gabo, and I met him. And John Wells came up to stay with me to go to his Tate exhibition, and his...I like the scale of the way he works. And also his conceptual things. I think he's a quite important artist really.

There's a whole room full of them in the new Tate, which is very good.

Mm.

Denis Mitchell?

Yes I like Denis very much, but I thought... Well as you know, he worked as an assistant to Barbara Hepworth for a bit, and, I felt his work never really, was never really very innovatory, you know, he didn't really go forward very much. It's nothing against him, but... I don't think it's important.

Roger Hilton?

Yes, he's important, in English art. He had this sort of bite and edge, which a lot of artists don't have. I mean he, he'll cut through an element and activate, activate it in some way. And, even when he was doing his rather quirky drawings in the end, that, they still have an edge to them.

And you've owned some of his over the years have you?

No, I've only had one painting, which Alan Bowness bought off me actually. But, you know, I admire his work. I think he's important.

He's one of the best [inaudible].

English art, certainly.

Yes.

I think he's, he's acknowledged certainly by, you talk about this St Ives group, I think they all acknowledged that.

The Neo-Romantic group, Vaughan, Minton, Ayrton, Cecil Collins, John Craxton?

I'm certainly aware of them, but I've got no interest in them.

Did you ever meet any of them?

No.

No. Prunella Clough? She's loosely, initially loosely associated with the Neo-Romantics.

Yes, I've met Prunella a couple of times, and, I admire her work.

Alan Reynolds?

I think his work's awful.

What both, the early, the Fifties work and the, the later abstract work?

Mm, yes.

OK. Ceri Richards?

At his best he's very good. Mm.

And would you say his best work is his more figurative work, or his more abstract work?

I remember being very impressed by a triptych which was shown at the Marlborough in the Sixties I think. And I've also seen some good paintings at Mel Gooding's house.

Mm. So I assume the triptych was *Cathédral engloutie* was it, which is what his biggest series, he did [inaudible] in the late Sixties[???].

I don't...I've no idea what the title was. It was blue, I remember, it was, you know...
Yes.

The British sculptors, shall we say dominant during the 1950s, so the likes of Kenneth Armitage to start with?

Kenneth Armitage I never rated at all.

Reg Butler?

No.

No? Lynn Chadwick?

No.

No. Bernard Meadows?

No.

No? Geoffrey Clarke?

No, certainly not.

Elizabeth Frink?

No.

No? Robert Clatworthy?

Certainly not.

(laughs) Dalwood?

Even worse.

Even worse. John Hoskin, who we have mentioned?

Yes, I mean, his...I...he was actually teaching at Corsham the same time as me, and, his work actually is OK.

Mm, I agree.

Yes.

Robert Adams?

Yes, I think he's very good.

Exceptionally underrated sculptor.

Absolutely, yes. And McWilliam you should mention as well.

Yes, he's...

Right.

You like his work?

Highly intelligent man. Mm.

I think the Irish are finally realising they've got a great sculptor.

Mm.

Which has taken them a long time. Paolozzi?

Well I admire what he's done, and what he's doing, what he's done really, but, his work doesn't really mean anything to me.

Mm.

I like, I like his use of ephemeric[ph] sensibility of what's around him. And it's got a quirky kind of humour about it. So I do admire him actually. I also admire his professionalism.

Leon Underwood, who was very influenced by African art, and Mexican art?

No. I've only seen a few of his works, but, you know, made me almost ill really.

Because he taught Henry Moore I think in the early days. Ralph Brown?

No.

No? The, what you might call the English Abstract Expressionists, or Tachists, or Action painters, people like Frank Avray-Wilson, Denis Bowen, Ralph Romney. I suppose later on Gillian Ayres is tacked into that group.

Well Gillian Ayres is infinitely better than any of that lot.

Mm. Is she the best of that [inaudible]?

Well in my opinion.

Mm. Yes.

Well you could, in...you could put in that group Hoyland and Albert Irvin. I mean Hoyland at best is almost OK. Also Huxley, I mean, I think you could almost put him in that, and...but he's too sensitive, I mean, if you can be too sensitive, which you can't really, but... (laughter)

What about, I suppose you'd call them the London Group, the likes of Auerbach and Kossoff?

I find them interesting. They're infinitely better than Lucian Freud. The only thing is, I find the use of the paint, or build-up of grounding for the paint, is unnecessarily... I don't see...I don't see the point of it really. And it's my, you know, it's just my own opinion.

Michael Andrews?

No, certainly not.

No. Because he's, very popular now I think. Richard Hamilton?

Well he's of course highly intelligent, and, I'd say he's really quite important really.

Ivon Hitchens?

Yes, well, I think Ivon was, which I knew a bit, he's a natural painter, and, he came close to landscape. And, he's got a great sensibility. And at his time he was doing good stuff.

Mm.

I mean what you have missed out is people like Matthew Smith, you know, who's highly important.

Yes.

And I think is a major painter, you know, in sort of English terms.

You don't think Hitchens got a bit repetitive?

Yes, I mean that's his problem, that he...there was a formula.

Mm. Howard Hodgkins?

Well Howard of course is again highly intelligent, and very, I would say very English in being narrative in a way in his painting. He hasn't got away from... I always thought, I said, I remember saying to the head of painting at Corsham that he will eventually become to be totally non-figurative, but he hasn't, and, he's, his work is geared into some sort of identification.

Mm.

He's not, not...he hasn't become sort of pure enough for me. I admire it, and it's totally honest, it's honest painting.

And what about the painting of the frame?

Oh yes, I can understand that.

You can?

Yes. Just totally, yes.

To me that just seems like a gimmick. I don't understand it.

I can understand...no I can understand it, because, I mean, it's like coming over the edge of the canvas really, I mean, it's...if he wants to do it, that's up to him.

Is it stopping the frame interfering with the painting, is that what he's trying to do?

He's probably trying to extend the painting into the frame.

Yes.

To some extent. So the frame is not framing the painting, but he's probably trying to, integrating the two things. Mm. Possibly. I don't know. Ask him.

He won't talk to me. David Hockney.

Well, of course, he's a, a natural graphic artist really. And you can see why he's so popular, because, people can identify with his imagery. But he's highly talented. And I suppose deserves to be popular. I don't think he's important though.

William...

Same...same like Peter Blake, I mean I think Peter Blake's probably a better artist than Hockney actually.

Yes?

Mm.

William Scott, you've already mentioned, I think you...

Yes. I think, he's a real painter.

Mm.

I mean he's got...you can't help responding to his...the work of his.

The other Irish painter is Jack Butler Yeats.

He's brilliant.

Brilliant?

Yeats?

Jack Butler Yeats, yes.

Yes. Fantastic.

Really? You do surprise me.

Yes.

Why?

Well, I'm no art historian, but he, if I'm right he's painting about... You're talking about... Which Yeats are you talking about?

Jack Butler, who did brightly coloured, I don't know...

Figurative things.

Yes.

About the turn of the century.

Well, I think he was...

1920s, 1930s.

He was very figurative then.

Yes.

And fairly traditional. But later on he moved to these far more modern, thickly painted...

Well maybe we're talking about different Yeats. I mean you're talking...

Right.

It's the brother of the poet I'm talking about.

Right, yes, that's right.

No, he used to, used to do sort of Irish... He's an Irishman, yes?

Yes.

Yes. I thought his paintings were really good.

Yes?

Yes. I mean...

His early work is I think.

...in a narrative way, yes. I mean, he used to...I mean, Waddington's when they came from Ireland, used to show Yeats' pictures.

Yup.

And I was very interested in them, yes.

It's interesting.

Yes.

Louis le Brocquy, do you know his work?

Yes I do, yes. I don't like it, but I'm aware of it, you know.

Yes.

It's too mannered for me.

Yes I much prefer his work to Yeats. (laughs)

Mm.

So I'm obviously wrong. Julian Trevelyan.

No, I don't rate him at all.

No. And his wife, Mary Fedden?

No.

No. Both becoming very popular.

I'm sure, yes.

Moving to some of the Sixties artists.

Mm.

Anthony Caro?

Yes, well, obviously he's, he's important, and... He was very generous to me, because when my studio burnt down he offered me space in his studio, which I didn't take up, in London, you know. He's...he's a very civilised man, and as for the work, the interesting thing about the sculpture is, he created sort of colour and space, which was historically important.

Phillip King, now president of the Royal Academy?

Really? I didn't know that. Well his work is important at that time too. It's a very important period then.

Yes.

Mm. But I... It had no influence on me.

No. I've been asking you about various artists.

Mm.

Can you tell me more about your philosophy behind it all?

Yes, well, I think it's, it's unfair on the artists themselves, and, my own philosophy I suppose from the origins of being a self-taught person and really looking, and distilling, absorbing, rejecting and...that, that really, I'm not an art historian, but one has to be aware of things, and, I really believe that it's not relevant to talk about a particular artist in context of my philosophy or work. Because, I find if you took, if you're going through a chronological sequence of either English, Irish or even

international artists, that, it could be endless. My interests are certainly, an irrelevance to all this[??] is certainly beyond England in my opinion.

Can you go into a bit more detail about your influences? I know you're not influenced by other artists, but...

Mm.

What are you influenced by?

I'm influenced by, landscape and purity of form really, you know, sort of, abstract form. By...by...I'm talking about, the word 'abstract' is ridiculous really, you're talking about, I think it's...Heron defined the work, the difference between abstraction, which is abstracted from nature, and non-figuration which is, which is purer than abstraction. If you walk down the street, you can be excited by something visually, or you can see an industrial landscape, or a plant, or an object, or a person. And it's, one can react to it visually. So, going back to the influence of artists, my main influence I think is from the respect of the pattern of their work. So that for instance, I'm interested in the life pattern of certain committed artists, mainly, mainly outside England, you know, even going back as early as sort of Mondrian and Malevich, Matisse and, certain, certain more recent American painters, but, I think a lot of the American painters have sort of missed the point.

So, would you deliberately let's say go out for a walk in the Bovey Tracey area to, to try and find something...

No.

...to look at, to influence you, or it's just something that just happens by accident?

I happen to live on the edge of Dartmoor, and, it's a very strong landscape, and, I find it a bit inhibiting, although I'm drawn to it, I was brought up with it. So, I don't deliberately, I'm not a walker. I'm quite connected with the community, and it's one aspect I wanted to refer back to. Because I did say, you know, some of the locals took

a bus in to see my exhibition, and also the local primary school did the same thing, and by chance on one of my visits to the exhibition, saw them on the floor doing a project. And I was so excited by that, I had to go out in tears really. And they wrote, wrote me a sort of letter about it all afterwards. And I'm respected within the community of helping people. Because some people, although they wouldn't admit it, in Bovey Tracey, I mean we're talking historically now, are illiterate, and I've had to help several dealing with bureaucracy, you know, like forms they can't read, or understand, or, or landlords that they can't cope with, and so on. And in fact managed to get one or two people re-housed, you know, in...and so on. And, I'm known with several of the locals, they call me Just, and some of the women call me Darling, and it's, it's really to do with trying to put an input to where I live. And I'm probably happier talking to the level of, almost struggling working people, than , sort of networking around London, you know.

That's always been your attitude is it, that, you've always tried to help people all the way through your life in that way?

I've tried to be totally honest, yes. Mm. And contributive. I mean, contributive means actually, that's why one's producing the art, to be contributive to society in a sort of, you know, bigger sense, that they, they respect what I do. The fact that there's a mural being done by an amateur artist in the local pub, I admire and encourage her. OK, I may tease her about certain things, but it's irrelevant. But, they...they admire me for what I am, and also what I've done. And will visit me when I was in hospital and so on, because they, there's an element of sort of mutual respect with a very sort of close community.

Art at the moment includes things like videos which the new Tate is absolutely full of.

Mm. Mm.

Do you regard that as art, or...? It seems more like film to me.

I can see that... I mean my philosophy is, has always been that whatever medium is relevant to the imagery, is valid. So I wouldn't dismiss that at all.

No. And the same with unmade beds and things like that?

Yes, if they want to make, if they want to make their statement in that form, that's, that's up to them. I wouldn't criticise it.

Would you like, do you like that form of art, do you find it interesting?

I've got no...I've got no... I mean, I'm not... I'm not an art commentator or a collector, and so that, if the artist wants to do that, to make their own particular statement, that's up to them. I mean, I would...I personally, I'm totally disinterested in it, but if they want to do it, that's up to them.

[End of Track 8 Side A]

[Track 8 Side B]

Obviously it veers with the statement, social statement, or, of the time, and whoever makes that decision to give them space, or, or for the artist to show it, that's entirely up to the people involved. So I've got nothing against any artist doing what they want.

You've been a collector for much of your life. Would you ever have thought of collecting that kind of thing, even if you had the space to store it?

No, the only stuff I collect is ethnic things.

That's what you collect now, yes.

Which, I mean...I mean if you're referring to art, you're talking about a very narrow period, you know, in...when I was in my twenties, and basically I've been interested, my main interest has been in ethnic life. I just don't have ethnic objects here; it's...you know, I make visits to tribes and, I'm interested in the culture, because it's to do with producing an aesthetic result and function, and that's what I'm interested in. They don't actually produce things for just aesthetic result. It comes from a sort of, evolvment of an understanding of tradition, without thought really. It's for either ritual or symbolism or something; it's not...they don't say, how beautiful it is, or what, it's, it's to do with the function of their living. And it's why I'm sort of, an animist really.

But it's mainly in Thailand is it, that you...?

Well, it's Africa of course...

[inaudible].

...initially. And then, then... It's not Thailand, it's...I've been to Burma, certainly Thailand. Laos[???], Cambodia and Vietnam. And, and reasonably close for some of the tribal people, hill tribe people mainly.

How do you approach them? Do you do it through an intermediary?

Well of course they don't speak Thai, and I can't speak Thai. So, how I do it is by doing drawings. So, if I'm speaking to you, I would have a drawing book and do a drawing of what I'm trying to say. And, as you see, I've got a collection of earrings. It's only because I can't, you know, can't afford anything else really. And they usually in the village have a, have a.....

[end of transcriber tape 7A, start 7B]

.....pair of earrings from, actually off the actual ears of a tribal person. And they'll just go back to the silversmiths and get a new set done. But I'm more interested in the aesthetics, and they're not.

Are you offering them money for this, or are you exchanging?

It varies, it's variable.

Yes.

I'm not, not going around like a trade or anything like that, it's just that, it's...the only thing these days, when I have very little money, in fact, I was very lucky to get out last time, and it's really for the benefit of myself via the generosity of Thompson, I was given an air ticket.

You ran out of money before you could get back, is that what you're saying?

No no no. I wouldn't have gone there had I not been given a ticket, you know.

You've actually run into trouble haven't you, on occasions when you've been there?

Oh yes. Well I've had odd, odd things. I've been in trouble a lot... Not... What do you mean by trouble anyway?

Well I seem to have read something about the Khmer Rouge.

Oh, yes, well that was in Cambodia, yes, when I was visiting the Angkor Wat, which everybody should see in their lifetime.

What is it?

I was on a lake. What do you mean, what is it? You must know what it is.

(laughs) I don't. I've had a very sheltered life.

Yes. You're just visually dead[??] ignorant then. (laughter)

Probably.

Yes. But, I was on a lake near there. And, out of the reeds came this canoe, and I was taken in by these people with these Russian rifles, what do you call them?

Kalashnikovs.

That's right, yes. And, it's a sort of cell of, group of about eight. Actually it was headed up by a lady. And, they were very civilised, much better than English policemen. So we sat down, and had a plate of prawns and some banana wine, and the whole thing got quite funny really. But the lady in charge of the cell eyed my ring I was wearing, which, over there they know what it is, because it's, it was a Thai sapphire, gold, which English people don't recognise, you know. And, the deal was that, if I gave the ring to the lady, that I'd be released. And then one of the other people said, 'Well, his marriage ring, it'll be bad luck.' So they kept me for a day, and then, eventually released me. With great humour.

I assume it wasn't a marriage ring, was it?

No, it certainly was not.

I still don't really understand how you get in to see these tribes. You just physically just walk into their village, is...?

Yes, I mean, one of the important things that has not been mentioned is, my friendship with someone called Narissa Chakri Bonzi[???], who is part of the royal family in Thailand, and she's been incredibly generous to me. But the history of this goes back quite a long time, in that her mother and my grandmother used to work in the Red Cross, which is quite strong over there. And, also that, at Silverstone, Prince Bira, who was her uncle, who was a racing driver then, and used to drive Maseratis, took me in, impulsively really, into their pits during a Grand Prix in England, which could never happen today of course. But then, I met Narissa[ph] by chance to do with toys, because I was interested in antique toys, several years later. And she's aware of the kind of tribulations I was going through, my marital-cum-physical problems and things like that, and has consistently given me one of her guest houses out there in Bangkok, you know, to stay as a, you know... And, it's a very peaceful place, and a lot of my drawings of gardens and things are done in, in their garden, his...or her garden, you know. And she's been very generous to the extent of actually at one point, actually hiring a Jeep for me to go around temples, to do drawings and so on. And she basically subsidised myself, you know, subsidised me, for a large period of my visits out there, which must amount to several, maybe twenty, you know. Unfortunately, my passport was stolen, so I can't actually be accurate on this, but, it's...I've been out there very many times.

Does she provide you with a driver for this Jeep, or do you drive it yourself?

No, I mean she, there is a driver, yes.

Mm. And does he help you, to introduce you to these tribes?

No. I mean he, he's...he's as bad as I am, because, I mean, as I say, the, some of these tribes, they don't have a written language, you know.

No.

It's... It varies, whatever tribe it is.

Mm.

But, it's too long to go into it. It's very... I mean, it's a subject on itself.

Mm.

Mm.

I just thought they would be very suspicious, when you come marching in.

No, you don't, you don't march in really. I mean they vary. I mean, some of these things you see around here, like, these come from North Vietnam, the Hmong tribe, you know, these neck pieces, they all... But it's, it's... I'm very interested in their philosophy you see. They're very, very different from Buddhism. Different people. Very proud.

OK, to change the subject a bit. Do you have any feelings about the role of Charles Saatchi in the art world at the moment?

Nothing except he's got lots of money.

Yes. Because he appears to be able to make or break artists by buying up all their work, and waiting till it gets more expensive and then selling it all.

Well, good for the artist, that's all I can say, you know.

Yes. So you're quite happy with what he's doing?

I mean you're talking, you went on about this bed that, apparently he bought that for 150 grand, yes? I mean that would keep me going for about, eight years I should think.

And he paid what, a million for that toy that Damien Hirst scaled up to ten feet and cast in bronze, did you see that?

No.

It was a common toy that children buy.

No. Well you keep referring back to money in relation to art, but I, I'm just not interested in that you see.

But you wish you had a bit more.

Well, I mean, basically I'm... What you haven't asked is, how I'm existing. I'm basically on incapacity benefit from being ill, and, plus a bit of help from David Thompson, and that's it. And, when I was ill, which you should know about, is, in 1998 I think, the 13th of, Friday the 13th of February, where I had a sort of, quite a major operation for cancer of the colon, and then subsequently was on chemotherapy for what, thirty weeks. And, I kept things, you know, tried to keep things going, but [inaudible] collapsed. And... Then, two hernias developed after that and I had another operation on the same...so they cut me open in the same place. So, health-wise it's been very difficult. I'm not complaining about it, because it's life, because, you know, I know other people who have been ill, but it's...it has meant that I've had to struggle with the Department of Social Security, who keep asking me things and sending me to doctors and things like that. And I won a tribunal, which I went to on principle really. And, I get what, about £50 a week, I think.

Well do they, do they think you're capable of work, is that what the problem is?

No, the reason is, the tribunal, a bloke came in, inspector, and quizzed me, and, he actually saw me sitting on the same table here, and the fact I had a, a book in front of me, he thought I was capable of doing something. And both the surgeon and my doctor protested formally that they withheld, you know, payment for... So, it went to a tribunal, and the tribunal decided that it was, you know, wrong, so, that's put right.

But it was a thing of principle really. Because the amount of money at that time, you know, that, that moment was not an enormous space of time. But since then I've been dependent on really, on that, plus, the bonus was this Teignbridge commission, where the money immediately went on new materials of course. In fact, I do have an accountant who, who stuck with me, despite failings and so on, and he wrote a reference to a charity saying that, confirming that any money I ever get goes straight into materials. So it's not easy for me at the moment. But going back to Thailand and so on, I mean I find an element of purity out there that, a philosophy and the landscape and the people, and the...is very cleansing.

Do you have any views on any commercial galleries that have been in existence?

No.

I mean do you ever feel that, 'Oh I wish I'd showed at Anthony d'Offay's Gallery' or...?

No. I've got no.... In fact actually I've got...I'm veering to the point where it would be very special if I showed in a commercial gallery.

Mm. You dislike dealers?

No. I understand what they're doing. But... I don't resent the fact they make a profit and things. I mean, ideally, it would be great if, you know, if one had a sort of, a situation which happens with some artists where they know that they're going to get so much a year, and you can just get on with the work. And they can get with making their profit, I don't...you know, it's up to them.

Do you think it would be a good idea to, to have more, shall we say artist-run galleries, like in the Fifties there was the New Vision Gallery run by Denis Bowen and Henry Wilson?

Oh yes, yes, you know, it's... Mm.

And lots of unknown artists could have shows there. Whereas they couldn't get an exhibition anywhere else. Is that a good idea?

Well...

It [inaudible].

It depends on the... The principle is right, but it's a question of the quality of their work isn't it. I think work finds its own level at some point.

*What advice would you give young artists who actually were starting out today?
Could you advise them on what the best thing for them to do is?*

Well the only advice I was given in the beginning was not to do it, but... But, any serious artist will do it anyway. So that you do it. But today, seeing... The opportunities are infinitely greater today, in all sorts of different directions. So I think there is a living, you know, for a young artist if they apply themselves in the right direction. Whether they're good artists or not, that's another factor. I mean, I go, you know, I go to...you know, I went to a degree show the other day, and, and I was quite shocked by the level of the work, it's so bad you know. But, it's not for me to say. I mean I just, you just hope that they can make a living somehow, you know.

Because the art schools are bashing out thousands and thousands of artists.

Mm.

Just in the Hackney, Whitechapel area there are apparently 10,000 artists' studios.

Yes.

How do they survive?

Well, I don't know, is the answer. And also, if you think about any generation, there's only about, mm, a handful of artists that are any good anyway.

So do you think more people should be discouraged into[???] going into it?

Well you...it's their decision isn't it.

It is, yes.

Mm.

Do you want to talk about foreign artists? We've gone through British ones. Do you want...you talked about Mondrian, who I assume you, you like. Do you want to talk about any American artists, any influence they've had?

No. The only reason I mentioned Mondrian is because it's quite interesting how, his European sort of thing of developing through from figuration to non-figuration you see. It's really a technical comment. And also I talked about Matisse earlier, about how he approached his drawing to some extent, and... I mean, this is not art history, I mean I can...we can spend hours on talking about different artists.

You'd rather not?

Well, I'm not, as I say, I said earlier, I'm not an art historian, and...

But we're just interested in your views.

I believe the common denominator is commitment and innovation, and genuine kind of, creativity. Not innovation for the sake of doing it, but the fact that it's something strong and extending, extending a tradition really, you know. So...so, you know, you know, it's no point talking about individual artists I think, you know.

Do you think that actually being a British artist doesn't help, in other words, if you're American or you're French or you're German...

Well I know, I know very well, if I was French, German or American, I'd have infinitely stronger support.

Exactly.

Mm. There's no doubt about that.

Have you ever been tempted to move over there?

I investigated, when I was living in France a bit, and certainly, it would be much better. I was offered a job, Trevor Bell took on an artist-in-residence job in the States, and I was offered one actually, which I didn't want to do. I think I'm too European. But it's interesting that, I feel slightly resentful in a way that Trevor was given an installation in Tate St Ives when he'd been in the States all that time, you know, and came back, and I had a letter from the Tate St Ives saying, 'Dear Mr Knowles, for the next four years our schedule's completely booked' or something, you know. I thought, well, you know, fine.

Why do you think artists are more highly regarded abroad, is it because the public there like art more than the British people?

I think they're more...I think they're more...well, it must be to do with resources, but also it's to do with sensibility.

What do you think of the state of art education in this country, what, since the war?

Well I think it's declined to some extent, particularly in art schools. I don't know how it is in ordinary schools, you know, like primary schools or other schools. I mean it seems that art education is churning out teachers, you know, which I suppose hopefully are[??] giving a better influence than other places. And maybe kids today are more aware of... I mean they're not so inhibited about doing a painting or something, or doing an art project, or, you know, doing a communal project together.

Do you think there was a sudden decline in art schools? Some people say the mid-Sixties, everything changed.

No there's a different philosophy. At that time they used to deliberately take in working artists, you know, on a small time basis, and, because of cuts and so on, they're now taking full-time pros, which not necessarily have the sort of sensibility of having a multiple of different views coming in for the students. It's only opinion, you know, I may be wrong or right, I don't know.

Some people believe that artists produce their best work before the age of forty.

Mm.

Would you agree with that?

No. Well, the reason for that is, it probably takes a lifetime to develop the full direction. And, it depends on the individual obviously, so you can't generalise on something like that. Certainly I believe that, my best work is probably the last few years. All the earlier stuff was working towards a later point.

I've spoken to some artists who feel that when they're older, they're technically a lot better.

Mm.

But they feel they've lost some kind of spontaneity that they had when they were young.

Well it depends on what kind of art they're doing. I mean, I can understand, you know, sort of, abstract expressionists and people like that, which are a lot to do with energy and things, you know, that, anything like that. But, if, if the art is thought through a bit more, and develops...

Some art critics, in fact quite a lot of art critics, have written that painting and sculpture was finished by 1940, and it was pointless actually even attempting to do anything after that date. What do you think about that kind of...?

Well, obviously it's nonsense isn't it.

Yes, well a lot of critics say it don't they really.

Well, I mean...

Amazes me.

I mean, critics are critics.

Mm. You feel they're just trying to justify the fact that people are now doing videos and...?

They're probably just, trying to justify themselves, I'd have thought.

Mm. As an artist, how destructive have you been over the years?

Very.

And has that got worse over the years?

There's no doubt that I'm a self-destructive person, and, you know, I could... I don't want to go into it, but, it's...it's been consistent I'd say rather than worse.

What, would you do something like, you'd get up one morning and you walk into the studio and say, 'This is all rubbish' and just throw it into the nearest bin, would you do things like that?

I certainly do destroy some work, but I... I don't do it subconsciously like that, you know. It's... I think, if you're talking about self-destruction, I think it's to do with

one's life really, more than one's work. I mean, I feel quite protective towards my work, but less protective towards my life.

Do you tend to work better if you're in a, if you wake up in a happy mood, or, or do you think you produce better work if you're depressed, or, or don't you think like that?

No, I don't, you know... No. I work... I brood a lot, and probably do nothing for some time, and then, then come into something. So, it's...there's no pattern to it really. I'm not, I'm not the kind of person, as some writers have the discipline to do, to get up and do x thousand words, you know, on a novel or something like that. I, I probably...there'll be gaps.

Mm. Because a lot of artists do, do it in a very disciplined way. Francis Bacon, he'd get up at what, six or seven in the morning, work through till half-past twelve, every day.

Right. Yes.

And then he'd hit the, Colony Club or wherever.

Mm. No, I don't work like that at all.

No. What conditions ideally do you need to, to produce work, do you need lots of natural light, absolute quiet, radio on, classical music playing, anything?

No. If I'm working, although I love music, there's no music. Light doesn't bother me, because I'm not painting in a pure sense, you know. I think, you know, what's needed is space. By that I don't mean literal space, but also just being on my own.

Mm. So you wouldn't want, or you wouldn't like sharing a studio where you had another artist chattering on in one corner?

No. No I couldn't do that. In fact actually, to try and halve my rent I let a student come in for a bit, but [inaudible] really...I came to the conclusion... Mind you, I don't do all that much work in my studios.

[End of Track 8 Side B]

[end of transcriber tape 7B]

[Track 9 Side A]

[transcriber tape 8A]

The old Temperance hall in Bovey Tracey, which is a very austere, simple, ex, in inverted commas, 'chapel'. And, there...the light is from the, from the ceiling, no lights around the edges. And, I usually install things when they're made. And then, there's also a room adjoining which I can store things. But I don't usually do my drawings or conceptions of three-dimensional things there; I usually do that at home. And then the work is usually taken down there as and when it's done. But it is, it is a very pure space.

How much time do you spend there at the moment?

Only when it's functionally necessary, you know.

Who do you rent that from?

Next door is an accountant who owns the total premises.

And do you struggle with the rent?

I certainly do.

Silly question.

Yes. I certainly do.

Are you behind with the rent?

No, I'd be chucked out otherwise, I should think, yes.

So the accountant wouldn't take sort of work in exchange?

Well he's certainly not interested in that, no.

So, was that a, a space that you spent a lot of time looking for?

No, it happened naturally. I mean, I... Previously I had some space at Ashburton, but, it could handle my drawings but couldn't handle the bigger stuff. But drawings are no problem, because you can put them in a cabinet, and, or books, you know. But it's bigger physical things, that's, that's, that's where the space is needed.

Have you found over the years that you've been quite lucky finding the right studio space?

I don't think luck comes into it. I think it's circumstance or fate, you know. It's... You can't do anything unless you need something, you know, unless you look for it.

Now this is going to be a bit of a tricky question, but, what type of person in general buys your art? You're probably doing say, 'Absolutely nobody,' but...

No, it's right. I mean... Because, if...if the sales of my work are analysed, it's minimal.

Is there any type of person you would prefer to buy it, like, would you...

I prefer, I prefer the work to be in public galleries.

Right.

Rather than shunted around, you know. Unless I respected people, or...that, if they did sell it, it would go back to a, go into a public gallery or something like that.

Mm.

I mean, this is being stupid saying this, because one has to exist, but, the answer is that, whilst my work has always been respected in various exhibitions and so on, but

it's never really sold. And it's to do with fashion or identity I think, you know.
Possibly, I don't, don't know.

Would you be at your happiest if, let's say some of the locals in this town bought your work, would that be your ideal? Apart from public galleries.

Well, there's a, there's...there's an exhibition opening today I think, or, for the carnival, of Bovey Society of Artists, which mainly consists of amateur artists, painting Dartmoor and things like that, in quite a proficient way. They're not interested in my stuff. And also, the people are aware of what I do, accept that I do it, but they've got no real conviction or commitment to it. I mean, the nearest I've got to it is this commission at Teignbridge District Council, which is part of Bovey Tracey area.

Right.

And there is an arts officer there who has a sense of awareness.

Mm. Just to change the subject. We've, we've talked very briefly about the publishing companies that you set up.

Mm.

But I think we should talk about that a bit more. I think it, was it 1981 that, a firm called Denys Ingram you set up?

Oh yes, mm.

Can you tell me about that?

Yes, I did that to try and earn a living. It failed very rapidly. And the books I put together were to do with antique, tin toys and so on.

It's something you've always been interested in?

Yes. Mm.

So, would you regard...you were quite an expert on that kind of thing?

Yes I was, yes.

Yes. Did you actually write much of these books yourself?

No, I was never interested in writing.

No.

No.

So how did they come about, did you commission other people to write them?

Yes, the whole structure of book publishing is, as you may know is quite complex, in that people do different things, you know, whether it be production or editing, and writing and so on. I mean basically it's just a conception of mine.

Mm.

And later I got interested in Disney stuff. In fact, published a book, it's a definitive book on Disney history.

How did that come about?

I did it on my own initiative, and then, it was packaged out.

Mm.

Yes.

Who wrote it?

Oh, I've forgotten his name now, but... It wasn't...wasn't totally to do with the writing, it was also to do with, visually, you know, some...

And were there more Disney books, or was it just that one?

I did the history of Donald Duck. I mean it was a serious book, not a jokey book.

Yes.

It wasn't a kids' book at all. I actually went out to Burbank and they had a high respect for me. In fact when the business went bust, Disney bought the rights back, for nothing of course, but, it's neither here nor there. Protecting their property I suppose.

Did you get involved with the animation cells, which are now a big collector thing aren't they?

No, obviously we illustrated some of them.

Mm.

And in fact I was in their Disney archive for some time, going through. You know, I was... You know, I was the first person to do any sort of serious books on Disney I think.

Did you actually have a strong personal interest in, in Disney?

Yes, I was interested in the subject, yes.

You've seen all the films?

Not all, but, I was more interested in the toy aspect I think.

Mm. So what happened to the firm, why did you go bust?

Well because we had no money, it went...we ran out of money.

Right.

And the bank, the bank just pulled the rug. And within one day I was sort of, not bankrupt, because they, you know, being quite ethical about it, everything, but, they said, 'That's it,' and, they took my personal guarantee and the house and things like that. And, it just finished.

Mm. What, did they just suddenly say, 'We want the overdraft paid back now,' you couldn't, and that was it?

No, no they said, 'You must go into liquidation,' you know, or, [inaudible], I'd...you know.

It was a limited company was it?

It was, yes.

Yes.

But the trouble is, I'd given myself some guarantees you see. Yes.

Yes. And later on you started another publishing company.

Yes. This was to do with fishing books, yes.

Mm. That was, was that in Exeter?

No, it was in Ashburton really.

Yes.

And, the same thing happened, we had very little capital. And I was ill and in hospital having my operations and things. And it's a very small outfit, and, again, it became an impossible situation. And, I went into sort of voluntary liquidation on that, and, I think everyone understood what the situation was, and they got x amount in the pound. Which has worked against me, because I can't borrow any money now.

And what kind of books were produced there, was that...?

Classic angling books.

What, newly written, or...?

No. They're usually classic books, re-printed to a fairly high specification, with probably new introductions by people. And very small editions, you know, talking about 500 or, something like that, you know, 250 maybe. And not, not selling, not selling to the book trade.

No.

But it's still going, it's bought, it's been bought and it's still going on. And the two girls, I mean, the people I sold it to, I made a condition that the two girls who were working with me, who both worked with me for many years, were kept on, so they still have a job. But the only person out of a job was me.

Do you miss that kind of work?

Certainly not, no. It's a relief.

Very early on in the tape we talked about you missing your private view in Milan because you were, partly because you were buying a shirt.

Mm.

Do you have much fashion sense, or have you had over the years?

No.

No?

No, most of my, my best clothing I consider is to be ethnic clothing, you know, which I bought from tribal people.

Mm.

Which I don't wear very much here.

Why not? Because, you think people would find it odd, or...?

No. I'm not aware... I mean, I'm not bothered, I'm not bothered about things like that at all. I mean, I think it's a waste of time buying clothes really. I mean, I feel much happier going to a charity shop down the road and buying something if I need to. I mean you can see the pair of shoes I'm wearing now are falling to bits, you know. So I'm not bothered about that.

Have people...

In fact actually the...it's not... You're wrong about saying, just because I bought a shirt I missed my private view. It's because I took three Mogadons or, or tranquillisers, that's the reason.

OK. So have people sort of criticised your clothes sense over the years, your wives or friends?

No.

They certainly criticise mine.

Not more than my family. I mean, here I'm accepted for what I am, so that, no one, no one's worried about what you...things like that. I mean it's quite a natural environment here, you know.

Mm.

I mean if not, it's...people are very supportive, and, if anyone gets out of line, I can hold my end, you know.

Mm.

I mean, certainly people have criticised my work, one or two, and, I can hold my own about, about that, if they want to be funny about it. But then I just keep my mouth shut, you know.

Would you regard yourself as an eccentric?

No.

Do other people regard you as an eccentric?

Some do apparently, but, there's no reason why they should.

No. And it doesn't worry you if they do anyway?

No. I mean they're being eccentric themselves if they're, almost normal really.

Mm.

So...

Who wants to be normal? I suppose a lot of people do, but...

Mm.

Again, we have talked about this briefly, inheriting money.

Mm.

You inherited more or less nothing from your parents.

Mm.

Have you ever inherited any money from anybody else?

No.

No. Is that a source of regret?

Well there's no one else who would have done.

Do you believe in inheriting money?

No, I don't actually. I believe that, that if people are close to you enough to wish to support you, that's their decision, you know, and, that's up to them. If they... I mean the dilemma I've got at the moment is what to do... The only... I've got nothing other than my work, and, I've got the dilemma what to do with it. It's nothing to do with inheritance, it's to do with where it goes. Like not to do with money.

Your second wife was Sarah Stott. Can you tell me how you met her?

Bologna Book Fair.

Do you remember when?

No.

No?

Well you keep asking me dates, and, and dates are not in my mind obviously.

OK. What was she like as a person?

Highly intelligent. And, that's, that's, that's my attraction to her I think. I mean, our minds were very compatible, although different. She's a very practical person, and had great ability, and, I respected her enormously. I mean, how she looked was, had long red hair. She's now married, remarried to some aristocratic baroness in Oxford, and has a child.

Was she younger than you?

A lot, yes. She was, probably about, at least twenty years younger than me.

Did that cause any problems?

Probably did, because she wanted a child and so on, which I really didn't want to go through again. Also, she sustained all the stresses of things collapsing around me, but was totally supportive during that period. And also during a period of deep depression, which is on record, you know, with various medical people and so on. So she suffered on that.

Was she working in the book business at the time you met her?

She was, yes. Not with me but... Subsequently she was commuting to London, and staying in London and things like that, and, then got involved in computing and things like that, you know. But I, you know, I really don't know what she's doing now. I mean apart from being a dedicated mother to her daughter Eleanor.

Have you ever taken part in, shall we say public life, like being a local JP or...

No.

...involved in local councils?

No, certainly not, no.

Well have you ever...

I certainly have opinions which I've communicated to people in public life.

Mm.

Such as... Various things, on principle, you know. But not, not actually sought to be on committees or, whatever, you know.

You've also partly answered this question in the past, but, have you ever been a member of any clubs, whether that be sports clubs or gyms or gentlemen's clubs or arts clubs?

Anthropological Society, and Chelsea Arts Club.

Do you ever visit it these days?

Not much.

No? Because you can still...you can stay there overnight relatively cheaply, can't you?

Well, if you can get in. It's very small number of bedrooms they've got now. And, I actually showed some work there.

Did you?

Mm.

Recently?

In 1998.

Why did you join that in the first place?

It was a suggestion of a friend of mine, who probably thought I was, needed somewhere in London to be able to go to.

Mm. Have you ever been a political person?

No. I've never voted in my life.

Never?

I've had, obviously strong opinions.

Yes.

But, I don't have much respect for any politician.

No. Do your opinions tend to be left-wing, right-wing?

I would say, definitely left, mm.

Yes. Do you want to expand on that?

No, because I, because I'm not...I'm not interested in politics at all, other than what I believe is right and wrong. And, what nauseates me about politicians is, they veer with the wind on what they think is politically correct and incorrect and so on, without... There's very... I suppose in history there are committed politicians, but, I find it very confusing, and, and also, a lot of it's very dishonest.

Can we talk about your current social life. When you're not working...

Mm.

...apart from fishing, what do you do?

I usually do things in a functional way, like, if I had the resources, I would go to... I've been going to the Far East, you know, and normally stay as long as I can afford it. Where I live, I'll go to the local pub and speak to some of the local people. But my life is pretty, fairly monastic. I mean a lot of my friends say, 'What do you expect Justin, if you're living in a place like Bovey Tracey?' But, but if I go to London it's usually for functional reasons, you know, a particular reason, because, as much as anything, today I can't afford to go out anyway.

When it comes down to food, do you generally cook food yourself?

Yes, I never go out really. I'm quite interested in cooking, as I am in plants and so on.

Mm. Are you quite a good cook?

Yes, I'm, I'm knowledgeable about cooking.

Mm.

I'm known to be a good cook.

Mm. And do you specialise in certain things?

Well mainly, mainly sort of ethnic food I suppose. Yes.

I don't know if there's a cinema terribly close to here, but do you ever go to the cinema these days?

No, I tend to watch... [pause] I'm very interested in the cinema, I'm interested in film direction. You know, you know, I like sort of, some of the classic people like

Fellini and Pasolini and, even some of the early comedy things, like Buster Keaton and Laurel and Hardy and so on. But, you know, good cinema, I, I do have a great respect for. But usually it's about, you know, when I wake up for...if I can't sleep about two or three o'clock in the morning. I like seeing, I like seeing early westerns sometimes, because of the landscape, not because of the narrative.

Can you be specific about some of your favourite films over the years?

No, I've just given you two film directors, and you know what they made. But I, I'm interested in the cinema as a, as a medium, yes. In fact there's a film being done on my work at the moment, by Graham Strong who I respect. His footage apparently is about, a few minutes after a few days' work, but that's what film-making's about.

Do we know when that will be completed?

Probably never will be.

What about the theatre, have you been in recent years?

No, I've been...I haven't been to the theatre, or ballet or... I don't like opera very much, because it's...I think singing should be purer than the theatre. So, I'm not all that interested in that. Also the theatre I think is slightly artificial.

What kind of music do you listen to at the moment?

Well it's my original interest, which is early jazz, and classical, and classical veers[??] from obvious things like quartets, Mozart through to Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and Dayburn[ph] particularly, and, even John Cage and so on. I'm interested in, I'm interested in music, and composers.

Do you listen to the radio much, Radio 3?

Yes I do, every day, yes.

Every day?

Mm.

What about television, apart from watching videos and old westerns and things like that, what kind of things do you watch on television?

I watch it as a sort of therapy, therapeutic junk thing, usually to help me get to sleep.

[End of Track 9 Side A]

[Track 9 Side B]

Can you tell me about the, the garden you have here?

Yes, when I first came here it was, it had fir trees and brambles mainly, which I cleared out. And I've always, I suppose inherited from my mother a deep interest in gardening, although we're very different on the sectors of gardening. I'm very interested in Himalayan plants, and, and lucky the soil here is acid so that, plants such as rhododendrons and camellias and azaleas can grow reasonably happily. And, what I've created is, a fairly wild garden but, it's got some quite rare things in it.

You've got a vineyard here.

Yes, I wouldn't call that gardening. I mean that, I mean the reason the vineyard is here, because, I was threatened by a neighbour of a building sort of thing, and, at the time I was able to buy the field off her. And I didn't know what to do with it. I took advice, and I was going to grow plants, and I was told that would be mad to do that, so... There's another vineyard on the same contour where I live. And, so, I made the decision to do a small vineyard, which, I bought the vines from Germany, and it's done, disaster over the last three years, three or four years, but did well before that, and looks as though it'll be OK this year. And in fact I got second in England silver medal for wine about three years ago, four years ago. But I've not... I mean, what happened on that is, I can't afford to sustain or maintain it, it's been seconded for £1 a year to Seale-Hayne College, which is part of the University of Plymouth, and they, and they've taken it on as a research project for their students.

Do you own a computer?

Yes I do.

What do you use that for?

Well I won't touch it.

Why did you buy it?

Well, because, I did have an old one which, a lady who comes in doing the bookkeeping does the letters for me for about two or three hours a week, so really it's being used as a...for that. But the actual facilities of this computer are not being used properly as yet. I've got to come to grips with that, or be taught how to use it I suppose. But I'm not... I mean, to me it's a bit of machinery, and I feel sort of alien to it really.

You've already said that you're not a particularly practical person.

Mm.

So, what happens with the.....

[end of transcriber tape 8A, start 8B]

Now what kind of things are you talking about?

Well if you want to redecorate, or put a shelf up, or...?

No, I'm...

If a roof tile comes off, or...

No, I usually get someone to do that, yes.

You've already said that you've got this lady coming in who does the books and things like that.

Mm.

Have you always done it that way, or did you used to do the books yourself?

No. Because I'm absolutely useless when it comes to administration and money. And I need...I need... In fact it's, you can see how chaotic everything is, but, I need someone to be working alongside me really.

Do you use an accountant?

I've had to, yes. Mm.

Yes. You've had the same one for many years?

A few years, yes.

Yes. Have you ever had any problems with the VAT people or the tax people?

I've certainly had visits. I wouldn't say problems, because they realise I'm, my situation is pretty hopeless anyway.

Yes. So there's been no formal investigations or anything like that?

No no. No.

That's lucky. You've already answered this question, you don't consider yourself a good businessman. Have you ever sort of, been involved with, I don't know, stocks and shares?

Never, never bought a share in my life.

No...ISAs or TESSAs or anything silly like that?

Never, no.

No. Do you have any major regrets about your life? I'm sure you've already mentioned a few.

I think the main regret is not being confident enough to stuck through the period when I was not exhibiting and so on. I can...I can see contemporaries of mine being successful who I know are not as good as me. So I've regretted, and, they've done well in terms of exposure and, and communication and records and, I suppose, being able to live and so on. And I think I made the decision to try and be totally independent and not be dependent on the art situation, which has worked against me. Because I suddenly find that people I'm having to deal with now are two generations beyond the level that I was at.

How would you like to be remembered, if you would like to be remembered?

Well only through my work obviously.

Yes.

Mm. But also, as a, as a, a reasonable person.

Mm. You were involved some years ago with the Peter Stuyvesant collection. Can you tell me something about that?

Yes, I was...I was made a director of that, and I actually initiated the Peter Stuyvesant collection via suggesting that three people should be appointed as choosers of art, contemporary art works at that time. And it had quite a heavy influence at that time. They bought some, some of the best work by the people at that period. And it's unfortunate that that collection apparently, you know, though I was not involved in this, it's, it's long after I sort of left it, but, it was dissipated by auction I think.

A lot of it sold for next to nothing, didn't they, which was very sad I thought.

Yes. It's...yes, it's, a bit of a tragedy really, because the collection should have been housed together I think. It was quite significant at that period, yes.

I've read somewhere that you had a, a love of horses. Have you actually ever owned a horse?

When I was living with my father and stepmother that, I used to ride a bit. And in...and it extended into, even in National Service when I used to ride out of a racing[??] [inaudible] stable, I was good enough to do that, and win various prizes and things. And, later on with Sarah my second marriage, we jointly owned a horse, which was locally trained. It was quite modest. The best thing it did, it came third at Windsor at one point. But it was complete madness of course, because of the, the costs involved and things like that. But I, I think they are very beautiful animals.

Cars, have you been terribly keen on cars?

I've always liked the delicacy of Italian cars. I've usually had Lancias and Alfa Romeos and, and an early Maserati at one point. But I've also been quite self-destructive with them as well.

What does that mean, driving too fast?

Probably.

Yes. Many accidents?

A few.

We haven't talked about future exhibitions. Is there anything in the pipeline?

Yes, I'm showing some work in Phoenix, Exeter, this October; Bath, Hot Bath Gallery in January; and York City Art Gallery in October. And, the major thing is Winchester Cathedral, if I can get the money together to do that, because we're talking about big scale, heavy cost materials.

OK. Is there anything else you want to say about your work?

No, I think, this sound is, is very much to do with other things, and, I think Mel Gooding's text and various references, and also the work by the University of

Plymouth on the archive covers this. So that, I would not expect this to be an in-depth discussion about either technique or philosophy or result or context of my work. And so, this must be understood.

OK. And can our archives include things that Mel's written et cetera et cetera?

Yes, I would expect to pass over to you anything that's been done, such as the, Canon Walker's texts, and Mel's text, and other biography by Mary Fullingen[???]. And it all should be seen in a collective context. So this, whatever this is, it should not be seen in isolation.

[end of transcriber tape 8B]

[End of Track 9 Side B]

[End of Interview]