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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET Title Page

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[F8734 Side A]

Starting the interview with Norman Adams on the 28th of February 2000.

And the first question I'm going to ask you is, when and where you were born.

I was born in London, in Walthamstow, on the 9th of February 1927. And, that was when I was born.

Right.

We didn't, I didn't hang around in Walthamstow very long, my parents, they moved quite soon, and, I'm not sure how old I was, but you know, I was...I wasn't a year old, I was just, just a baby still really.

Do you know if you were born in a nursing home or at home?

I was born at home. Yes, I was born at home, I'm pretty sure of that, yes. And, I'm an only child. And, I say, my mother's just died actually. I was almost on her twentieth...she was twenty, I know that, when I was born. But it was very near her twenty-first birthday, and I think, I can't remember whether ... Yes, no, well I was just a few days early, so just missed being on her birthday.

So she was very young.

She was, yes. But they, they had no other children. I think that...I don't know why; I think she...she had... I was rather a painful experience for her. (laughs) They did have a child I think at one time, I was still very young, or they were going to have a child, and I think she lost it. But, she never talked much about it, but you know, there was...there were always some things surrounding that, that... I'm pretty sure, well Anna's absolutely certain, she's talked to her at times about things, that that happened. And you know, she

had I think rather a depressing time. But, that, you know, it sorted out, and... Anyway, that was when I was born.

Did you ever go back to look at that house, as a child?

No. Never. No, we moved not very far away, just a bit further out of London, just across to Hendon I think is where they went first of all, you know, just off the Edgware Road there somewhere. And then they, they were near my grandmother, my father's mother, and his younger sister who lived with her mother. And, and we were moved into...actually it was, it was the same road actually, further up, York Road I think, yes York Road. And, it was very near the Welsh Harp, which really was a pond then, quite a, quite a... It's all been drained now, and it's just...no sign of any water there at all, but it was quite a, quite a large lake. And, you know, I remember that being at the bottom of the garden, bottom of the road, this wasteland at the bottom of this big lake. And it was, it was rather a frightening kind of image, because, always was warned, children were very often having accidents there, getting...one or two children got drowned on different occasions. And, you know, when one went out to play with other children, one was always warned not to go too near the Welsh Harp. I remember that as being a kind of bogie in the distance, you know, that, something dangerous, if you get too far away, you know. And I think my parents, particularly my mother, had that feeling, you know, it was all, everything in life had to be, you know, you have to shut yourself in and avoid danger, you know, which... I mean, they were working, you know, working class people. And... And then there was the... My father had been called up during, the First World War that was, towards the end, it was only within, I think, just within his age range I think for being called up. And... Because they started it in the First World War didn't they, conscription, I think they did.

Yes. No they did.

Yes, in the First War.

Mm.

And, he was in the Navy, and... This was all before I was born of course, and before, before they were married. And... But... You know, they had gone through that, and... But then there was the, the General Strike, and the slump and all that business, during the Twenties, and...

Did he talk about that when you were young?

Mm?

Did he talk about his experience?

Yes, yes well they, they did. You know, I came in 1927, and... He had actually landed himself a very secure job, boring, working for London Transport, just sort of clerical work. He was good with figures. I know he had the most, the most beautiful handwriting. He was very proud of his handwriting actually. And, and he used to make letters in a book, he copied out different illuminated things, headings of old books and things, and in...from old Bibles and things like that. And, and I don't know, I used to sit and look through these, and thought they were terrific, you know.

I think calligraphy was much more admired wasn't it.

Yes.

Because I remember it in my childhood too, people practising writing, and really admiring that kind of skill.

Yes.

Yes.

And liking the colours and the decoration, and that... But... And... But he, but he... He... You know, he never...he never did anything very original in the way of drawing or painting; I never saw an actual composition by him. He copied everything really in this book, if he liked something... He just liked the skill of copying it.

I mean did he copy things other than kind of illuminated lettering?

Yes he did, yes.

[inaudible] free things.

He had a book which he carried around, a drawing book which he carried around with him when he was in the Navy, and that, he was...and he just did drawings of things in it all the time. And he... Cartoons he used to copy too, out of magazines and the newspapers, and that sort of thing. But, nothing very interesting, but it was... Obviously he...if someone had got hold of him and taught, you know, explained a few things to him, he could have been an artist. Well in some ways he... But he had that possibility. Except that, you know, he was...everybody was desperately keen not to be unemployed, because the jobs were so scarce, and, then he landed this, which was a very safe job.

Did he ever talk about it being boring?

Yes.

Oh dear.

Yes he did. Yes, it was... And he was very angry at times, you know, he had scarcely any education at all to speak of, just an ordinary school, whatever they were like when he was young, when he was a child. And many of the members of the staff who had been to grammar school and gone up to, gone to university and this sort of thing, they were all

promoted above him, although his work was in no ways inferior to what they were doing. And he just felt the unfairness of the whole system. And he was...I was very...I became conscious of that as a child, but he nevertheless stuck to his job. He took the first, the earliest retirement that was available at that time. He was still quite, relatively, middle-aged. Well he was a middle-aged man, he wasn't very old.

Do you know what age? Because retirement ages have changed haven't they.

It couldn't have been... I think he must have been still in his fifties, or, you know... But he... And during that time he did start to draw and paint a lot, but again he always copied things, but landscapes, he copied landscapes. I know when, he came up to see us, this is years ahead I'm jumping now, when we bought our place up in North Yorkshire, which was forty, forty-five years ago now, and, and I persuaded him to...there's a mountain, Pen-y-ghent, it's part of the Pennine range, it's...the area where we are is known as the Three Peaks, there's Wharfedale, Ingleborough and Pen-y-ghent, and our house up there is fairly close to Pen-y-ghent, it's on the slopes of the hills, it's 900 feet where the house is actually. But there's a village there, it's all...and it's...but that's downhill; there's no houses anywhere near us, we're in the middle of a field. Which is also, it's actually rather nice about owning a field really. It's not a very big field, about an acre, that's all. But I, but I persuaded him once when he was up there to do a drawing from the window, he wouldn't go outside and do it, of Pen-y-ghent, and, and then he painted. But he didn't like doing that. But he would go and buy postcards, views and that of the landscape, take them home and copy them. But, I mean it was the way he had always worked in that way. Anyway, that, that was my father really, and he...

Did your parents get on well with each other?

Yes, they did relatively well, yes I...yes they did. They got on each others' nerves sometimes, you know, obviously there were...nothing serious though, occasional rows. (laughs) They...there was...which was, I always found rather grizzly and sordid and that.

Mostly they rowed about shortage of money really, you know, at times, and that sort of thing. Just practical things that didn't quite...

Do you know if your mother worked before she married?

I think she might have. I don't know really. I think she, she probably did, yes, I think so. And she worked after she was married too, she used to get jobs, and, cleaning jobs and that sort of thing, and... My father too, he quite enjoyed it, he took this very early retirement, but he took on jobs, some sort of, caretaking kind of jobs, and looking after plants. It had always been his ambition, he talked of it time and time again, of having a small corn chandler's shop, and selling small animals and birds. He actually bred canaries at one time, which [inaudible]. One of the rooms in the house when they were still at Hendon was, he turned it into an aviary actually, and he had these canaries and things were flying around the room. And...

What did you feel about that, did you like the birds?

Well, yes, didn't mind. It was...it was what had been a spare bedroom but wasn't used for anything else. And, it was... No, it was quite interesting really, as a child, I...

Did you have other animals, or...?

They always, they always had a cat, which was alarming when you've got birds. (laughs) But, the cats seemed to be all right. Yes they liked fluffy cats. I didn't like fluffy cats actually. But... And... But they never had any dogs.

Yes that would have been a very rich brew.

Yes.

Dog, cat and birds.

No, we never, we never liked dogs. But... And, and he also, he did all these things, he was...he was actually quite keen on a kind of music really, he liked... But, he... He couldn't... He liked sort of classical music, he liked arias from operas and things like that, he used to enjoy that. Singing he liked. And I know he had an old...well he had...he had a room for the gramophone. In fact he made, he built gramophones at one time, these old-fashioned wind-up gramophones, and he used to get the motors from somewhere, I know, but then used to build the cabinets, and...and you know, fit the whole thing together, and would fit speakers and things and that, and sell them. He made quite a little bit of profit through that really on the... And...

He sounds very enterprising.

Yes, he was...he was a very busy sort of chap, and he was doing things that... He enjoyed doing that sort of thing, particularly if there was the possibility of monetary reward at the end of it all. He never really cottoned on to the idea of working for the love of it, that's what really I think stopped him being an artist actually, probably. And he just, you know, he was just very much made aware in the early days of how awful it is to be short of money, very short of money.

I mean were you conscious yourself of a lack of money?

Not really, no, no. I remember a story that my grandmother, the other grandmother, my mother's mother and her husband... He was the only grandparent that I saw. My father's, grandfather rather, my father's father was dead before I was born, and he, they were quite an interesting lot really in a way, my father's parents. They had been in service, she was the chambermaid and his father had been a butler. And, when they decided to get married, she said to her husband that he had to give up being a butler if he wanted to marry, and, they were not going to remain in service, it was too much temptation she used to say, too much temptation in service.

What, with the other staff?

Yes. And so they...so they, they moved out, moved out of that, being in service, a big house.

Do you know who they were in service to?

No. I don't. I don't, no I don't.

In London though, or...?

Yes... Yes... Well, yes, on the outskirts. I'm not very... Near London anyway, well not, not central London I wouldn't have thought. But... And then he apparently went in for training in breaking in horses. He was very keen on horses. He used to get horses, wild horses, across from Ireland, and break them in, and re-sell them. So many horses were used in London at that time, all, most of the delivery things were horse, horses, pulled, and... My other grandmother used to say that he used to sit at the top of Brockley Hill and see all the hay wagons coming into central London, a continuous stream of hay wagons [inaudible] full of hay, to feed the horses in central London. And it was...that was the Great North Road, it was a continuous stream of, of these horse-drawn carts full of hay.

Did your grandmother stay in service, or did she retire at the same time?

No they...they both left. And, she had three children, my father, his younger sister and an older sister who was very frail, the older, the oldest one, Ethel. She'd had what they used to call infantile paralysis in those days, as a child. And she had, she had a sort of withered side, it left her with a withered arm and hand, and... And also, in those days they used to, you hardly ever see them now, they used to have these metal callipers, things on the leg, you know, she had these I always remember. And she was really rather

crippled. But, she had this, she had more children than anybody really, she had a huge family of boys. And they were all enormous, and she was tiny.

Well the sort of extended family, did they feed into your life?

Yes. When my mother, when they were living in Hendon... They were also living in this road, my grandparents were living in the bottom of York Road, my parents were living in, half-way up York Road, and across the other side there was the, this family, with all my cousins, all the boys. I used to like going there, and when my mother used to go up and do a bit of work at a house, cleaning jobs, she would leave me with them, and, I used...I didn't mind that, you know, I was there most of the day until she came and fetched me.

Can you sort of describe a typical day in this family house?

Actually, I just had a letter from one of the cousins. He was the, in the middle somewhere, he wasn't...he wasn't the oldest. He also, he was very keen on music. In fact he became a teacher actually in a comprehensive school, a music teacher, and... I don't know for sure but, he retired, and he started – I don't know how he got on to it, I just heard it from a distance – arranging old-time music-hall things at Hackney Empire, theatre. And, and he did...this was afterwards, this was fairly recent history. But he had a heart attack or something and he had to stop it. I think he's still...well I'm sure he's still alive, I had a letter from him the other day, when he heard that my mother had died. But, but they were a colourful lot really, and, you know, it was quite a, quite a full life for... Most of this was before I started school, I couldn't... I wasn't, you know, it was before I was five years old, which is when you started school then.

Were you allowed to play in the street when you were very young?

Yes, yes I was. Yes I used to play in the street. And, I know once, I know I got into trouble because I did actually stray... An older boy had taken me, and we'd gone down to

the Welsh Harp, which my mother told me not to do. So there was a bit of a rumpus about that.

What form did rumpuses take? Were you ever smacked as a child?

Very little. No, never really, I can't ever remember being smacked, not, not seriously. Just tapped. They didn't go... And... But, but then, they moved from there, they moved further out, they moved to Edgware, near Edgware, on the Burnt Oak, north London, on the Northern Line, and, the estate there, the Watling Estate. They weren't actually on the estate, they were in a very old cottage really. It was rather nice, with a very very large garden. It's gone now, passed through there relatively recently and the whole area's been completely changed. But... My...

Why did they move, do you know?

Yes. It was South Road. South, North and East, East...I think...the three roads that went round the thing, and it was South Road. And, there were these, just these... They're all sort of old Victorian houses, and, the two together, which was slightly different from the others, which were a kind of semi-detached pair, but the same sort of time maybe slightly older actually, two small cottages that had obviously been built together, with quite a big garden. There was a field on one side of it. And my grandparents, my mother's parents, lived in one of them, and they lived in... Yes, yes they did didn't they. Actually I'm getting confused now. No it was my grandparents that lived there. They moved near them but not into South Road. They moved on the other side of the Edgware Road. There was a new estate built, and...and I think... No it's still there, that part, but it's on the east side of the North Road was the, were the old buildings where my grandparents were, and that, and on the other side there was the newer houses. And it was into there that my parents moved.

And...

Mm?

Sorry, can I just, before we get sort of too engaged in Burnt Oak, can I just sort of go back to Hendon briefly and just...

Yes.

...ask you to describe the house that you were brought up in.

In...

In Hendon, yes.

They were terrace houses, Victorian, thereabouts, yes. They were... We... The people were crammed in quite tightly. You had half the house, there was an upstairs and a downstairs, and you just had two or three rooms upstairs and the same downstairs. They were flats, they were double flats really, but they...they were just like... Pretty much the whole of the street was the same as far as I can remember, and, just one long terrace. And, they were pretty dull, they were very dark, I didn't like...I hated our house there really, it was so dark. Of course you were shut in, when you you've only just got the downstairs, and the whole length of the house, there's no windows, there's only windows back and front of course. And, and I just remember the darkness all the time.

Did you have your own bedroom?

Yes. Yes I did, yes, I had...

What was that like?

When I was very small probably not, but... But as far as my memory goes, I always had a bedroom. And... But, anyway, not much more that I could say about Hendon really.

Well...

I went, started school, my very first schooling, was there at the Hythe School in Hendon, on the main road, you had to walk up the Edgware Road. And I used to find it rather alarming, because of the traffic and it... I don't think I actually had to cross the road, but... But it was...I know I was, I found it rather frightening.

Was it a big school?

And I hated the school, the high school was huge, well it seemed huge to me then. And a very brutal building, very, huge great assembly hall, and... A very gloomy atmosphere. I don't remember anything terrible happening. I mean I was there for less, less than a year I think; I don't think I did a year, I can't...I don't remember spending much time there. But I can remember seeing an accident on the road, and that frightened me like anything, a young child, a young man run over by a car, on the Edgware Road. And, and the crowd taking him and lying him on the pavement, and all that. And... But.... I didn't like it, I found the whole place frightening, and gloomy. I remember all that. And I liked the move, it seemed like the country, it seemed...and there were fields, and, it was.... I mean it was only suburbs really, but it was light, and the house, which was aesthetically ugly, horrible little semi, suburban house, was absolute, just like Shangri-La really, it was paradise. Because it was all so light, and... And there was, you know, where the houses were, there was no traffic, there were no cars or anything, the streets were clear. But... But then they started developing the, my parents started developing a kind of, habit of moving house. They never settled anywhere for very long, they kept on moving, and, I think it probably was my mother used to get dissatisfied with the place for some reason or other.

Did you find that upsetting?

Yes I did a bit, yes. And... But... Mm. The...

The kind of domestic environment in these various homes, was your mother in charge of the kitchen, or did your father have an interest as well?

Yes. Oh he, he enjoyed cooking, which my mother didn't. She didn't enjoy cooking at all. But she, I mean, no, she did, she did all that. You know, everything had to be very clean and spick and span, and she used to spend ages cleaning things and keeping everything tidy, and, she couldn't bear bits and pieces all over the place which, you know, my toys were scattered all over the floor and things like that. I know, I found...I found a kind of, world of my own behind the armchair. I used to settle down behind the large double, big armchair thing, and I used to have terrific adventures round there actually, I remember. I...I quickly...I didn't do an awful lot of drawing at first, but what I did do, I had...I discovered Plasticine, and I remember I used to make figures, and have adventures with them, and...and, I... And then, and one started listening to the *Children's Hour* that was on the radio in those, at that time. And I grew up on *Children's Hour*, and Uncle Mac and all the people who were on, which I thought was very good. And, and dramatisations of *Toytown* and *Worzel Gummidge* and...and the occasional adventure story, I remember there was one which came from BBC Wales called the *Mystery at the Mines*.

Sounds good. Now we're just coming to the end of the tape, so I'm going to stop.

[End of F8734 Side A]

[F8734 Side B]

Continuing the tape with Norman Adams. Tape 1 side B.

Did your parents get involved in your imaginative play, or in encouraging play at all, or were you left to your own devices?

Well, not really, no. They didn't...they didn't stop it, they didn't think it was a... They were quite proud of it in a way, I know when visitors came, their relations or something, to Sunday tea occasionally, occasionally happened, they entertained people, it was usually somebody from, you know, from the family, they didn't do much entertaining much further than that, and, all my bits and pieces that I'd been doing were always dragged out to great embarrassment, they wanted to show everybody that...the drawings, the drawings when I started drawing, and that sort of thing. I...I got going much more quickly modelling as I say with Plasticine and that sort of thing. Then, yes, probably one of the things that really got me going on it was, I was actually really quite ill. I had, I don't know what it was I had actually in fact, but it... I can remember it now, this terrific pain that I had in my back, in my shoulder in the middle of the night, in my throat at the back. And they fetched the doctor, and... And it was a kind of pleurisy or something. I'm not, never quite sure what it was, but any rate it was...it knocked me out for quite a long time, and, I spent ages off of school, and in bed most of the time. And you know, I was...I was...it was a long long period. But they didn't take me, they kept me at home, they didn't, they didn't take me to hospital. I think at first the doctor was rather dubious about that, but any rate they... I mean they wanted to keep me at home.

Your parents wanted?

Yes. And, you know, I can remember the doctor calling on me. And as I got, started to get better more, I was, you know, I started making all these Plasticine things sitting up in bed. And, the...I remember, the doctor used to make quite a fuss, and he was very impressed. I built a great Spanish galleon out of Plasticine, with all these funny little

figures on the deck and that, and, this sort of, crazy thing. And... But then, when I eventually went back to school, it was...you know, I was well on the way in a way, I mean that was the one thing that I wanted...I was beginning to feel, the one thing that I really wanted to do was to do with art. And... And then I was very fortunate in the, in the art master at the school. I mean it was generally speaking an absolutely awful school, but, there was this... And I sought every excuse to get out of doing something in order to... And he, he conspired with me and managed to get me let off of games and sports and things which I hated, and extra time for drawing, just drew and painted with him. And...

Can you describe him?

Well...

Was he young?

Yes. Yes. Not very young, but... I suppose, about thirty-five, forty maybe, that sort of age. Not young really. I can't really remember much about him. Except that, we would arrange this meeting, my parents came up I remember, I remember the occasion well, to see the headmaster with me, and would ask what I... Because I'd always said to them, I want to go to art school. There were these junior departments which don't exist now in art schools, and, they were wonderful. You'd go into a junior department of an art school when you were thirteen, and you still carried on doing the normal subjects, you know, general subjects and things, and English and all of the things, but you did an awful lot of art. And most days you did some art, you know. And, on...I seem to remember Fridays we did art all day, which was wonderful, I loved Fridays.

How marvellous.

And, and it... But... Then there was the... Where are we getting on now? We're getting on aren't we to the, when I was at... I was there in this... Yes, that's right, the... I went

into art school when I was thirteen, and I was twelve when the Second World War began, and it was just about a year after the war began, the Second War, and there was the, they called the Phoney War, when war was first declared on Germany, everybody thought, you know, that the bombing was going to start immediately, and everybody was terrified, rushing everywhere. But in fact it didn't, and not much seemed to happen almost for a year before Hitler started moving, and went into, went into France.

[break in recording]

Re-starting the interview with Norman Adams.

Now before we broke off, you were telling us about your time at the junior art school.

Yes.

And I was intrigued by this notion, because it isn't one that I've heard before.

What, the junior art schools?

Yes. Were there very many of them?

No, I don't think so. But... Yes, no I...I thought it was wonderful. I... And it was so very thorough too, actually, I...I was extremely lucky, moving in when I did, because...so that the war had only just begun, it was, had been on about a year, and immediately when things started to heat up and Hitler started his blitzkrieg, started to move, and France collapsed so quickly, you know, and there he was on our doorstep almost, it was all terrifying, and... But, it was just at that stage that I started going to art school, this junior department. And... And actually, I was doing that the whole of the war. The war actually spanned my teens exactly. It started when I was twelve, and it finished when I was nineteen, and, well eighteen really still. But...

Can you describe the physical environment there?

Yes. The building was obviously not built as an art school. They weren't proper studios, they were like classrooms really. And, some of them had skylights at the top I suppose, but mostly they were, they were just like ordinary rooms. And, as I say, we, we did all the general subjects and things as well. We had one or two rather inspired actually...there was always one tutor who was in charge of our general studies, and, and there was this rather great man, which I didn't have so much of actually, Anna had more of him than I did, Prothero, I remember his name, Mr Prothero. And... But he was very keen on theatre and acting, and he got everybody reading Shakespeare and that, and really enjoying it, you know, which was quite some achievement. There were obviously a lot of jobs in the group, a lot of people who were in the department that were not going anywhere as far as art was concerned, you know, they...and they just faded out. After you had been in, I forget how long now, but it was only about a year I think, in the junior department, when you became of age, there were the general examinations which you had to, which you could sit, if you wanted to go on to the proper art school course. And, the first one was the, the examination, the Ministry of, whatever, Education's examination in drawing, and the second one was the Ministry of Education examination in painting, and these were the two sort of, diplomas that you could pick up on the way. And if you got both of them without any great trouble, if you wanted to, if you elected to do it, if your parents and everybody were willing to let you, you'd go on to the proper art course. And I...I did all that.

And can you remember the, the pattern of lessons? Was it very structured? When you had this all day Friday session, was it broken up into different areas?

Yes. Well you had more or less half... Yes, you did really. You had half of every day art in some form or other, and Friday art all day. The art... All the, all the art teaching was not by any means fine art, you know, it was not necessarily to do with, with painting and drawing. There was...there were certain... I think you could have some choices actually. There was commercial art you could do, you know, doing posters and

advertisements, and, dreadful things really. And, I really rather hated that actually. Travel posters and things like that were sometimes quite, a bit more interesting. And, and then you had plant drawing, that was quite nice. You brought in...you were told to fetch, the teacher usually had a roll of, bundles of plants and things with her when she came, and distributed them. But you know, if you could find anything on the way that you wanted to draw, you saw anywhere, you know, anything at home that you wanted to paint and draw, you were invited to bring it along. And, that was quite a nice class. And, then you had lettering. And, I didn't even mind that too much really. And then, later on you started to...you had... Oh, and you had perspective, mechanical perspective, working out vanishing points and things, which, I quite liked. And, Friday I think it was you had more freedom to just paint and make compositions and, there was... One day it was a still life class, you just, you did still life, drawings actually. Yes I don't think we painted in the still life class.

What kind of arrangements were put on for you, do you remember?

Well, they varied, sometimes there'd be things like fruit and that sort of thing, sometimes it's just a few objects and things. But, absolutely anything really, you know.

Did you have any life drawing?

Not in...not in...no, not in...not in the junior department, they thought that was risking it too much with some of these jobs. (laughs) But you did...you did plaster cast drawing, you drew some of the Greek statues and things, they had casts. Most art schools in those days had them; they turfed them all out and smashed them all up later on though, which was absolutely awful really, should never have done that. Now they're regretting it of course. We kept them at the Royal Academy, they've got a terrific collection of casts.

I think Edinburgh College of Art has still got a fantastic collection.

Have they? Yes. Well that...that... And it was good too, I used to enjoy doing that.
And...

These less motivated students. How did they sort of get to be there? I would have thought junior art schools would be a tricky option.

I... They sort of... A lot of people... I mean I could understand why a lot of people were there. There were some really crazy, awful people that obviously wouldn't...didn't...were never going to do anything like it at all. But, I think the war must have had something to do with it, they were just strays really, weren't doing...they just sort of, something that they could get into, they didn't have an excessively brainy kind of examination to get into, you know, it was, almost anybody could get in really who...who...at that time. It was very lax, the actual entry affair. And...

Did you have a clear conception of what it was to be an artist at that time?

[pause] Not really. I didn't really bother really. I mean all I knew was, I wanted to do it, you know, that was the only thing I wanted to do. And, I... I suppose there was a certain sort of romantic look, things that had a kind of... I always thought, one of the rare occasions when I was really turned on by a work of art, the youngest occasion, I was very...I was really quite young, when my parents actually, I was amazed actually, bought me a box of oil paints, and, you know, with one of these little canvas boards in them, you know. And, I remember doing some of these little...the first little oil paintings I ever did, this was, this was... Actually, that was actually before I went to art school, come to think of it, I was very young. I get mixed up in time at the moment. And, I remember looking through a magazine, and, I remember, there were some portraits, these sort of grand portraits of someone or other, and family and that by Sir Joshua Reynolds. And I...I can remember seeing these paintings, and not liking the actual portraits at all, hating them, but, being absolutely terrible excited by the, by the backgrounds, the stormy landscapes, dramatic skies and old battlefields and things going on behind these people standing there in their rich uniforms and things. And I remember thinking the portraits were horrible,

but...and I started doing paintings based on the backgrounds. And later on I, you know, one learnt of course that the backgrounds weren't painted by him either, he didn't paint them himself, he had special background artists to fill in the backgrounds. They were beneath the great man's dignity to do that sort of thing, but... They seemed to be much the better artists.

Did you see any contemporary art as a youngster?

Not really. I mean there wasn't anything during the war, it all was scurried away, nothing...buried in great, in ex-mine shafts and things in north Wales.

You didn't see reproductions in books or anything?

Yes, occasionally. There were... The school had quite a decent library I remember, of art books, Phaidon art books. I mean not like now of course, you know, I mean a lot of...the Phaidons were not in colour of course, they were in black and white. But I...I grew up on black and white reproductions of paintings rather than colour. And the colour reproductions were real rarities. I remember there was this old man... Of course basically the private galleries had all closed, and... But there were just one or two. I think the Leicester Galleries remained functioning, and, one or two galleries were about. And... But there was this gentleman, Jack Bilbo. Have you ever come across Jack Bilbo? He was an extraordinary man. He ran a little gallery in, a sweet little building actually, it's just opposite the Haymarket, opposite the Haymarket Theatre; I don't know what the road is that leads across, cuts across from Lower Regent Street, you go across into the Haymarket, and it's just on the right-hand side before you get into the actual Haymarket itself. And it was Jack Bilbo's gallery at that time. It's not...I mean he's gone ages, died, passed on ages ago, but... It's a little travel agent now I think, I'm sure it is, I noticed it the other day. But it used to be his gallery. And, he lived there as well, I remember, it was a small house, small rooms, but with about four or five storeys, just about one room on a floor, you know. And, the top room was his bedroom. And he was a huge man actually, he was a big, fat American Jew man. He was, big black beard, and,

and he... And he used to paint, and he was, he was... And then he used to produce these books. And I know that they're...he was one of the very few people that were publishing art books at that time, and with colour, with colour reproductions. But, you go through the book and there would be a Picasso; next picture, Jack Bilbo; Chagall with Jack Bilbo; Soutine, Jack Bilbo. (laughs) And... I can... Also he had pinned up on his wall a newspaper cutting, a quote by Picasso saying that Jack Bilbo was the only man in England who understood his work. He was very proud of this, it was all kind of framed up. And, and he used to have these sort of parties and things, and all the young people used to go along. And... But... Towards the end of my time, towards the end of the, my time at the art school, I...well I'd actually... Yes, I had gone in for the entrance thing to go to the Royal College, and, I'd just got my acceptance, and told that I could go to the Royal College, and, you know, that I'd be financially supported, at the same time I got my draft papers, my call-up papers. And I remember, they almost dropped through the letterbox with the same post, you know, absolute joy of having got into the Royal College, going there next...and obviously realised I couldn't go, because I'd got this. But anyway, I went along to see them. I'd already decided actually that if it did come to me having to go into the Army, I wasn't going to go, and, I was going to be a conscientious objector. And, and I went along and saw them at the College, and they were very nice, they said, 'Well you go away and do what you have to do, but your place is secure, you know at the end of the war you can come.' And, they were very nice. And so, and you know, I had to go and... After about... The ritual was that they, they sent you papers to go and have a medical examination, and, you take no notice of it. The Peace Pledge Union advise you actually. I had become a member of the Peace Pledge Union. And, there was that marvellous man, Dick Sheppard, who was the vicar at St Martin's in the Field, Reverend Dick, he was one of the first people to start the Peace Pledge Union. You know, when...there was no conscientious objection clause before, you know, you just had to go, you know, that was it, if there was conscription. But, he arranged it so that if you felt that you didn't want to go, that they... Well he... Well he started the whole thing anyway, and... And there was the Peace Pledge Union which, you would go along and sign the pledge that you wouldn't take part in any war at any time. And, it was... And I can... And actually I shall remember that after, as I say, I think it was about, about

three times, they'd sent me the call-up papers and I had ignored them, I got a summons to attend the local court, to see the magistrate of the local court, and, because of...contempt of course really, you refused to do something that the court had told you to do. And, the day before I had this thing, I had to go...I thought, well, you know, I felt so very down and that... It gave me courage though to actually do something about, seriously about placing my work. And, I got together some of the, what I considered to be some of the better things that I'd done at that time. There wasn't... I didn't have very many paintings, lots of drawings and...and small studies and things. And then I got a whole load of stuff and went and saw Jack Bilbo in his gallery. And, I remember the great man wasn't there when I first arrived. But there was a very nice elderly Indian man who was always in the gallery, who he employed, Bilbo employed, and... And although I'd not had, didn't...I'd never conversed much with Bilbo, I had conversed with this chap, well I got to know him quite well. And you know, and, he said that...I said I'd brought a few things round to show Jack, see what he thinks of them. And then I...and I told him all my, my tail of woe, you know, that I was probably going inside tomorrow. And, but he... When Jack came in, he started going through... I remember him sort of go through my portfolio with these things in it. And he turned and he said, 'How old are you?' And I remember saying, 'Nine...nineteen.' 'Oh my God!' he said, 'fallen out of your cradle and you think you can paint?' 'Oh,' he said, 'I've been at it for years and years and years, and I still can't paint.' And, you know... And he went on like this, and then... But the Indian was sort of tugging at the back of him, you know, and he said, 'Jack, Jack, he's going inside tomorrow,' you know. (laughs) And I remember he, he said, 'What?' 'He's going inside tomorrow.' And, 'Oh.' And he started to go through my portfolio again. He said, 'Oh, it's very interesting.' (laughs) And... But... And then, then the... I remember going in, having the tribunal, and being given six months. And I went off to Wormwood Scrubs.

I mean did you have a chance to defend your own corner?

Oh yes I had, I had two appeals, yes. And then the Peace Pledge Union also supplied me with an advocate, who, before my first trial, and he, he would help young people to

prepare their case. And I remember this particular man who was my advocate, who I was put in touch with through St Martin's in the Field. And, he was manager of a shoe shop actually, and I just remember cycling around the North Circular Road to...I forget where it was, but it was, it was just off the North Circular Road somewhere around north London, and, going and sitting with him for hours whilst he, he, you know, he sort of, grounded me on my case really and helped me to make a case. And... Because you're very young and inexperienced at that age, you're desperately... And they did a wonderful job by helping people, by helping young people really.

I mean where did your political convictions sort of come from, when were they kind of set in clay?

I considered myself to be an anarchist. (laughs) I... Well the... During the war, the...there was... There was...there were various anarchist groups, there was the London Anarchist Group, and I was a...I'd... And it was...it was very informal. But they used to meet I remember every Sunday evening, there would be meetings and lectures and things in the room upstairs in the, in a pub, the Porcupine pub in Charing Cross Road. And, and it was on a Sunday evening regularly, and... Anna and I both, we were together at that, by then, we used to go along on a Sunday evening, and you'd get the most interesting lectures by the most illustrious people usually. Herbert Read used to go along quite frequently, and give lectures and things on... What he, he invented what he called anarcho-syndicalism. And, and there was...you know, one was well historically, you know, groomed in...they used to talk about the Spanish Civil War, which was still hot on their... I mean we... I can remember going and seeing the news in the cinemas, there used to be these little news cinemas in London, a cinema that was going on all the time which had just cartoons and news, continuous performances. Little theatres. They don't exist now do they, no news theatres, news film theatres. And you just, people used to just walk in and out, you know, you go in and... And there were various news things, and...

Did you have to pay to go in?

Yes. But it wasn't much. It was very, tiny fee. And there were cartoons between sometimes. And... But... And there had been an awful lot about the... Well that's what frightened everybody. You got your first glimpse of what modern warfare was going to be like with all the bombing, there was a lot of film of the, of the war in Spain. And it was all, it was going to be just like that here in London, you know. And... And as I say, we used to go along to these meetings in Charing Cross Road. And...

What age did you go to those from?

Well I was... I suppose I was about, seventeen, eighteen. The last few years really of being at the art school. And... There was a newspaper, the *Anarchist Weekly*, we used to get that. And...

How... Just to kind of, establish, because it's quite a sophisticated thing, to decide to be an anarchist when you're that young. (laughter) How did you get the idea? Was it sort of, something that was in the sort of chat at college or something?

No, no nothing to do with the College at all. But... In secret really, I mean I... One of the...I suppose one of the first persons that made me start thinking politically at all was Herbert Read actually thinking about it. I remember there was a book, which we've still got somewhere, up in Yorkshire, on Surrealism with an introduction by Herbert Read, and, and I never... Oh, then.....

[End of F8734 Side B]

[F8735 Side A]

I know, it's very interesting [inaudible].

John Berger actually.

Oh yes.

Who is still with us.

Now, continuing the interview with Norman Adams on the 28th of February 2000. Tape 2 side A.

We were just talking about Herbert Read and his book.

Well, just in passing really. I mean he, I mean he was one of the celebrities that used to turn up at the Porcupine pub from time to time on a Sunday evening, and... And there was, there was a woman too, Marie Louise Berneri I remember, who was a refugee from the Spanish Civil War, and...and I remember, she was, you know, she was as I say a Spanish lady. I remember, I just remember it as being one of the...they were always making a great fuss of her when she was there. She was a very beautiful woman. And... And it was, it was an interesting place, and some of the meetings... I can remember they had, I think it was the Conway Hall they hired, one evening there was a grand opening, grand debate between the Communist Party and the anarchists, and, you know, it was terrifically exciting actually. Because they were deadly enemies of course, you know. And, it was... And, I can remember the... The communists were sneering at Herbert Read saying... He had accepted a knighthood hadn't he, he was Sir Herbert. And they were disgusted by this, you know, the great English anarchist, Sir Herbert Read. (laughs)

Well it does sound a bit suspicious.

And you know, it was...it was a... But... Anyway, I was whipped off to prison for six months, but I didn't do six months or anything like it really. I appealed against it and my...and I took my advocate's advice, what to do. And... But I can remember it was a terrifying experience, the actual prison. It was... The war was over, just, you know, just over. And... And then there weren't so very many conchies in prison then, but there had been a lot during the war itself. But, you know, conscription went on for years after the war. And... I did...it wasn't...it was about seven weeks, it was seven weeks actually. And, my appeal came up, and I can remember going, being taken out by police officers, we were taken out in a police car with...handcuffed to the police officers, and taken to the tribunal and... There were these, there were two other conchies there who, at the same time, they were doing the three of us, and... I mean it was very, it was funny actually. There was the tribunal, including one rather sweet old lady, and the others kept asking questions, and she kept on butting in and she said... Because I was doing a... She said, 'Why is this young man doing a six months' imprisonment and the other two are only doing three?' Which is what... And, 'Oh, it's neither here nor there, just...' That... It wasn't relevant at any rate as far as they could see. And I know, it kept on going on, the debate went on, and she just kept on saying, 'Well I don't understand it, I can't understand why this young man's got twice as long to do in prison as the others. I just can't understand it.' And, she was obviously very much on one's side really. But anyway, they let all three of us off, to do other services, you know. I had to...

Community service equivalent.

I had to go and work on the land as a, as a farm labourer.

How long for?

About two years.

Gosh. But, before we move on, just tell me, when you say it was terrifying in the prison...

Mm.

...can you describe the kind of conditions and your fellow inmates and so on?

Well, they were... The violence really, you know, they'd... I mean they...people...they didn't... I mean I don't know whether it's different now, maybe. But they...they didn't...didn't know how easy it was to kill a man, you know. I mean, murders were committed in prison, you know. But I'm quite convinced the people that did it, didn't really intend to. And, you know, the fighting. Very often the warders that were there, some used to encourage it really, you know, because it took their mind off of them. And... And I can remember again the, the one person that really helped me was the chaplain. And, he was one of the...one of the things that made me start to think more about religion. And... I...I can remember, I did little drawings of the service on Sunday. The service, the service on Sunday was one of the highlights, it was the highlight of the week really. Because this man, he gave very good sermons, and they were very anti-establishment you know. And, oh I thought he was wonderful. And it was... It was very interesting. And, and I started reading a lot of Blake, and Blake was one of my very first passions actually, and I... And what I was saying about the Herbert Read Surrealism book, there was a large extract from *Jerusalem* in that introduction that Herbert Read quoted, and... And I read a lot of Blake, and listened[???]. And it was, it was...as an artist and as a poet, and as a man I found him deeply inspiring, and still do.

Can you say why?

He comes across as such an interesting human being, for me, and he's... Actually the other day I was just standing in South Molton Street, I was coming back from the dentist actually, and I decided to walk down to Green Park. And, you know, South Molton Street, which runs parallel with Bond Street, just that little bit back of, just off of Oxford Street coming south. And, the very first gallery that I had a one...the very first one-man show that I had, one-man exhibition, was at Gimpels, Gimpel Fils, and at that time they had their little gallery in South Molton Street. It's now just a pedestrian way, there's no

traffic up there. It wasn't in those days, it was a narrow road and the cars used to go up it.

I'm going to stop.

[break in recording]

Re-starting the tape.

As I say, the first... My... The first time I really started thinking of the artist as a real man. I was thinking of, beyond just the work, which one could see. But, [inaudible] Gimpel Fils and... One of the things which struck me as being a wonderful omen when I had my first exhibition, I can remember standing there looking, the glass front just like a shop, and, noticing that on the house opposite there was this blue plaque, 'William Blake, poet and painter, lived here' and the dates and all the rest of it. And I thought, that's wonderful. And I just felt the other, last week actually, wandering down there, I can quite...I remember just standing there looking at it. A young man recently has been to me about that, he's bought the part of... Of course the Blakes only had one floor, they were very poor, William Blake, and Kate. And, they'd... And... But this chap had bought it, and he wants to buy the whole house, but it's very expensive of course, two or three million I think. And, but he'd like to turn it into a William Blake centre, and he's only got this one floor yet. But the Blakes lived entirely on that one floor with, and everything was there, he had his press there, and their bed and everything.

So did you find this Blake literature actually in the prison?

No.

Ah.

No, there wasn't any Blake in it. I... The only books I managed to get... There was a library, but it was terrible, just rubbish mostly. But... In fact the only book that was worth reading, and the only book that I did read, was the Bible. And, you know, and I asked... And they didn't think of including the Bible in the library, the chaplain got it for me. I asked him, I said... And... On one of his visits, asked me if there was anything I wanted, and I said, 'Well, I wouldn't mind...' I said, 'I don't want to feel an absolute creep, but I'd...but you know, could you get me a copy of the Bible, one that I can read,' I said, 'with not too small a print.' I hate those Bibles with tiny wee print.

Yes.

But... And he did. But...

Did he kind of offer to give you any sort of spiritual guidance, did he want to get involved beyond just being generally helpful?

Yes, I suppose he did. Yes I'm sure he did. But he was a very practical man, and, I...you know, I think he, he obviously... He... He didn't...he didn't strike me...didn't think I was any great problem. He had more difficult problems to deal with, you know. And, he...

Were your parents practising Christians?

Not really. No. They didn't have much... They weren't against it, I don't think my parents, at that point at any rate, gave it much thought really, they didn't really think much about it. It was not a, not an issue really, the... Just life in itself was enough to cope with.

Did you go to church at all as a child?

Sunday school, I was packed off to Sunday school, but that was only... I did go when it... I didn't enjoy it very much really, and... And I certainly didn't enjoy it when it came to

the age where I went to the proper church, you know, you were too old for Sunday school, I didn't like that at all, so I stopped, just stopped going. They didn't really care one way or the other, whether I went or whether I didn't. They didn't go to church. And... But...

I'll just.....

[break in recording]

Any rate, again, with religion too, I mean I think that was Blake, I'm sure it was, yes I remember, Blake's attitude about things. In fact, he became, he almost took me over, body and soul, for a while, you know. I'd... When the penny dropped about some of the prophetic books, first of all I couldn't really understand them, you know, but I sensed there was something there that needed understanding. And... And of course, you know, the simpler things too, which I found instantly moving, *Songs of Innocence* and *Experience*, and, and *The Book of Thel* is, was one of...still is one of my favourite things really. And I, and I love his paintings and drawings, the Dante illustrations particularly, I think they're marvellous. And, it was... The... And it was sort of, you know, it... It was obvious that religion and life generally were not separate articles at all really, but it was all, it was all one. And... And the...the connection between art and religion became absolutely inseparable for me. I can also remember [coughing] at that same time, just before the prison business when I was still at art school, there was... Yes, the...there were some short films which they played to us, which, they got them somewhere, somebody had got them, Italian films, and, they were just in black and white, movie films, but they were of paintings, but they weren't about painters or paintings, they were about story, about, they were telling a...they were about drama really. And I remember there was one which was just about the life of Christ, and it was done entirely with Giotto paintings, just sort of close-ups of the heads and hands and things, the story was told. And, and I'd never seen anything so moving in my life, you know. I still do sort of, it makes me tremble to think of it really. I thought, God! you know, that's, that's what art's all about.

I mean did that affect the content or your kind of...

It did, yes.

...feeling of expressing art?

(laughs) Silly really.

Mm. It sounds rather wonderful.

But... Well.

I'm going to stop.

[break in recording]

Restarting the tape.

Yes, yes one of the other films which I also found interesting, but not moving like the Giotto one, was *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, which was, just told the story and narrated what was...through Hieronymus Bosch, a Hieronymus Bosch painting. But the... I mean many years later I had the same sort of experience, I mean it's years and years later, when we were, the first time we went to Italy, after the war and everything, years later, I remember going and, going to the Arena Chapel in Padua and seeing the Giotto's, they had the same effect on me. And... But it was a... It...it made it clear to me that art and religion were absolutely inseparable, that it was, it was religion, and, man's struggle to survive really, that both religion and art were about. And, I suppose quite early on I realised that, you know, that, art as far as I was concerned at any rate was...there's no such thing as art for art's sake. Art had to be, had to be about something, and it had to serve humanity in some sort of way. And going back again in history, to my prison days, you know, I mean that underlined it for me, the actual lives of these people, and...you

know, that...you know, that...that through one's art, you... I mean one has to make oneself a bit like a priest in some ways as an artist, in an odd sort of way. I mean, that, one feels that, you know, that, there is a story that one's trying to tell, which one knows is absolutely true, a kind of, something which personifies truth really. And that is what one tries to context through one's work. I can remember when, going into, when we first started to live in Yorkshire some of the time when we bought the house in the Dales, the vicar there getting rather annoyed with us. I mean he was quite interested in having an artist on his doorstep at first, but then...when I was just painting landscape paintings, but once I started painting religious paintings, he got annoyed, and... I mean he, he didn't...he didn't mind me not going to church, but he didn't think... But I had to go to church in order to paint pictures about Christ, and he found them sacrilegious in some sort of way. And, and I, I can remember saying to him then, having thought it out for myself, that, I'm not painting these pictures to say, this is what I believe; I don't know what I believe. I mean, when I'm painting I don't set out to make a statement. I said, just one huge question mark up there, and I try to find some sort of answer to that question. And one hopes that at the end of, end of a painting, that one's got a little bit nearer to the answer. And... But...

Did he accept that?

Mm?

Did he accept that as an explanation?

I don't think he really understood what I... I mean... Mind you, I've met, you know, so many... Most priests accept some sort of thing like that, you know, they... Certainly the chaplain in prison did. And... And... But, the... Then just coming out of prison, you know, you...the prisoners discuss things amongst themselves inside, and, one knew that when one was released from prison, you were released terribly early in the morning, whilst, you know, when there's hardly, nothing open, hardly anything open anywhere. But opposite the front, the gates, there's a Salvation Army place, and you...and that's

always open. And you leave prison, and you go out, and you just go across to the Salvation Army and get some breakfast or toast or something. I was prepared for all of this, and [inaudible], and meeting these other two chaps also that were in the tribunal with me, and they let us all out, the three of us out at the same time. And, I can remember coming out of Wormwood Scrubs gates, and there was the Salvation Army place, as one had been told. But the whole of London seemed having some sort of party, the whole place was streaming with...there were flags out everywhere, and bunting, and...and it was a bright, gorgeous early summer, early morning, the sun was shining, dazzling. And, and the whole landscape looked golden. It looked like, a real Blakean vision, you know. London all aflame with gold and bright lights and all these flags and bunting. And it seemed as if they were put on especially for, for us, you know. But in fact they were celebrating war being over a year, it was the first anniversary of the end of the war, and the whole of London was decked out with flags and everything. And it just, it was simply a coincidence that we were let out of prison on that day. And... But just as we were going to go across to the Salvation Army, we noticed there was a great...there was also this gleaming car, a great Rolls Royce, stood there by the curb side. And, there was a man in the front sort of beckoning to us. And, [inaudible] what it was. (laughs) It seemed, am I alive or dead or what, you know, is this really happening? What's it all about? And one of the other two said, 'It's my old man. He's come to pick me up. Come and join us for breakfast.' And, it was his father. And he was very... He had been a conchie in the First World War, and, he'd...he'd become...he'd been a property speculator. And, he'd bought property in London during the war, when everything was getting bombed, for nothing almost, you couldn't...everybody was getting out. And, and at the end of the war he finished up owning most of Paddington. And you know, he... And I don't think any of his buildings had a bomb on it. And he said, 'There you are, God looks after the conchies.' (laughs) But anyway, we went back, and I can remember, it was in one of the London squares near Marble...square, behind Marble Arch there somewhere. And... But, any rate that was this rather spectacular day.

When you were coming to these very important life positions about religion and about politics...

Mm.

Did you talk to your parents about it?

Not much. I don't think it would have made much sense to them really. But, I... I met Anna when we, you know, when we were very young indeed, I can't remember what age we first started going around together. But... It was still... Well we got married when I was nineteen, and... Anna's just a tiny bit, less than a year older than me, I remember she was...she was twenty when we got married. And, we used to sit and discuss this a lot together, and with other students. And... It was... I think that... Yes, the discussions that one had, occasionally...when I went to the Royal College of course, there were the tutors, one met other painters that were... Actually my tutor, whilst I was there, was John Minton, and he...he was very, he was a very good teacher actually, in the early years. But he got, he got pretty useless towards the end because he drank so heavily. But, he was a bit of a case I suppose. But he was a brilliant man, and, his lectures and things were wonderful, he was a wonderful lecturer. And he was very kind and very helpful really, and...but he put himself out for students. And...

What did he lecture on?

Painting. He... I know one very striking lecture, it was basically about Cézanne and later Cubism, but the... He talked about, you know, Picasso and Cézanne in relationship to each other. And...and... And also, one went, there was books... I did a lot of reading in those days; I hardly read at all now. But there was a phase when, you know, I feel, when you just read. And... As I say, I... I was always reading Blake, it was like a Bible to me, I was always trying to fathom the later prophetic books which are difficult. And, you can only approach them in bits, it seems to me, you can't... You're wrong just to read it right through. And... And I think that's...you know, that's what it was, everyone's reading, and art, normal art and so on. Actually I had Francis Bacon as a tutor for one term. He was pretty useless actually. But...

You'll have to tell us in what way. (laughs)

What? But he, he... But you know, it's all experience. And... Yes, he, he in fact, Minton, Minton was, often went off on, took time off, he went off to the West Indies once and he took a term off, and Bacon, they got Bacon to come, he was supposed to come in and do Minton's tutoring for him during that term. And, he... The students' common room at that time, they were still, the Royal College hadn't got their new building at the top of the road near the Albert Hall, they were still in, the Painting School was in the, the Victoria & Albert Museum, in that, the doorway into the back of the museum in the Exhibition Road. And, and the, the common room was one of the big houses in Cromwell Road, opposite the Natural History Museum. And there were two houses there next to each other, and, the one next door also belonged to the Royal College, but they offered Bacon a studio there, and he had it...the first floor was his studio. And in exchange for having that, he was supposed to do a little bit of teaching, which he... But... But again, he was surprisingly helpful that way, and would go out of his way. I can remember having an exhibition out at the Working Men's College in Camden Town, in the common room, and I asked if he would come out there and tell me what he thought. And he did, he just came round there, he didn't mind, he just packed down and he'd do anything. You know, anything, he was, he was amazingly obliging and friendly. But... And on that occasion he was even quite helpful, you know, his criticisms I did actually find interesting.

Can you remember what he said?

Not really, not now. But... It was only little things, often little technical things, ways of achieving certain effects of things, which, which might be more effective than the way I was doing it, and that sort of thing. He, he was much more of a painter than Minton, he...he was much more of a one who depended on manipulating the medium itself, that it was less through structure and drawing and more through paint. But...

Did you ever see him work?

Mm?

Did you ever see him paint?

I don't...I don't remember actually seeing him paint. I was in his studio when he, when he went in... He had come round to my studio in... Whilst I was at the Royal College I had...we had a, a small studio in Battersea, near Clapham Common, and he came over there, and there was a big.....

[End of F8735 Side A]

[F8735 Side B]

Continuing the tape with Norman Adams on the 28th of February. Tape 2 side B.

Sorry, you were just talking about Francis Bacon.

Well, and... But... No, I was saying that, that...I mean he was a practical technician, and he believed in the artisan approach I think to being a painter. That... [pause] Any rate, I, I was very pleased to have been at the Royal College at that particular time, I think actually, I did...I think I did quite well. It was a far better place than it was... If I'd gone straight from art school, without all the business of being a conchie and all the rest of it, because I'd left art school quite, several years before I picked it up again at the Royal College, what with being a farm labourer and going to prison and all that sort of thing, and, so I was a much more mature person. And, and also there'd been this great turnout in the Royal College, and there was this new regime. And...and then they were at their best because they were new and fresh. Darwin was the Rector, Robin Darwin, at that time, and... When I first went, Rodrigo Moynihan was Professor of Painting, but then he left and Carel Weight, who was also one of my...you know, a very very helpful tutor in those days, and he became Professor, but that was after I left actually, he was...but he was pretty much a full-time tutor there whilst I was there. And he, he was...he was very mild actually, Carel, he didn't really give severe criticism, he just encouraged. He was very...he was... He was very nice, and... I had a wonderful time actually. I loved being a student, I loved the Royal College years particularly.

When you selected it, did you look at other art schools, was it...you know, it's obviously your first choice.

What, postgraduate schools?

Yes.

Not...no I didn't. I didn't...I didn't want to go anywhere else. I only wanted to go to the Royal College, I wouldn't have gone anywhere else.

Was that just on reputation?

Yes, well, what I'd seen of it, I'd been up and visited and looked around, and... It was... I didn't want to go... I mean, if I hadn't have got in at the Royal College, I might, probably have tried for the Academy, though I didn't fancy the Academy at all in those days.

Was it essential to have a postgraduate education at that time?

Probably not, but it's very enjoyable. It was... And... No, I mean, it's not...I suppose it's not really absolutely necessary to have any formal art education at all I should imagine really. I mean you could find out these things for yourself, you know, by trial and error and by experiment. It does save you an awful lot of time, and also it, it is, you know, of benefit having these people, who have, you know, thought a lot about painting and art, and, you know, and are just that much older than yourself, and have that bit more experience, that... And it is, it's...it's...it gives you a terrific spurt and encouragement. When you... Also, I mean, Minton for instance was the first, I mean, famous as he was then, for a young student, a famous artist to have as a tutor, you know, to have him tutoring in the College and then to go out afterwards up to Alex Reid and Lefevre up Bond Street and see an exhibition of his work. And it gave you a feeling that, that...no, this was real life, you know, I mean people do make livings at being an artist. And that, one didn't realise that, not everything sold as easy as Johnnie Minton's, but, you can have a one-man exhibition and not be an instant success. But...

And financial...

But it can be done.

When you were kind of, planning to be an artist, did you actually think about financial survival and, the commercial side of it as it were?

Not honestly, not particularly, no. No we didn't. But... One's parents had thought very much about that. But then when I started doing things which... When I first left college I had a terrific spurt to begin with. The Young Contemporaries had just begun I remember, the very...I was a first-year student at the Royal College when they decided to put together the Young Contemporaries exhibition, and, I was on the sort of committee of students, and I can remember being involved in...or...no, organising an exhibition, a big exhibition of students, which was an experience in itself. And, I can remember that... I was actually selected for three years running at Gimpels, Gimpel Fils, the dealers, Charles and Peter Gimpel, Gimpel [French pronunciation], would go round and, with a couple of other people, pick out several of the students to show in their gallery later on, a little group exhibition of about three artists. And I got picked out, for three years really, three years running. And, by the end one felt one knew them, I knew the Gimpel brothers, and... Also, I met at that time, there was one of the other people that they had roped in to help them with this, Howard Bliss, who was the brother of Sir Arthur Bliss, the composer, and who, who collected pictures in quite a big way, he had a huge collection of pictures. He loved Ivon Hitchens' work actually, he had a huge collection of Hitchens' paintings. In fact when Bliss died, they found he had sixty, sixty paintings by Ivon Hitchens alone. He had twenty of mine actually, which he started to buy, Bliss. But, one knew these people. And then, it happened that I had this, after I...during...during my last year at the College, Gimpels offered me, help, you know, with Bliss who was very enthusiastic and obviously had spoken a lot in my favour, to have a one-person show with them. So, having then left the Royal College, a year after I left the Royal College, that I had my first one-man exhibition at Gimpels, which did really rather well. In fact I think I had two or three exhibitions with them then, for about two or three years I showed with them fairly regularly. And...

What kind of relationship did you have with them?

With them? Oh, well I mean they were just dealers really. But... But they were nice, they liked, they liked... Well they had selected me for this, this group exhibition that they did, and... Oh, and then, yes, the first time I had an exhibition with them, there was a choreographer and dancer, André Howard, she had been...she had just done a ballet for Covent Garden, and, I mean she, she had been a student with the Ballet Rambert, but she'd grown up with Rambert business, and... She was...she was much more of a choreographer than a dancer in a way. She wasn't a classical dancer, more a sort of character dancer. And her...but her ballets were... She was obsessed with witchcraft actually, they nearly always had something to do with witches. And, she had...she had been asked to do this ballet for Covent Garden. And I think she, she was finding the space there so enormous, she had been used to producing ballets at the Ballet Rambert, which is a tiny little theatre in north London. So then to suddenly find herself on this huge stage, and, you only realise how huge it is when you stand at the side and look onto it. And, and she hadn't got a designer. And she wrote to me and asked me if I would ever consider doing theatre design, and that, you know, if I was interested in doing one, to get in touch with her, and gave me her telephone number. Which I did. And I did it. I said I was a bit nervous about the costumes, I didn't...I said, I'd never done anything like it, I'd never ever dreamt of doing anything like it, I'm totally untrained. And... But André, she said, you know, she said, 'Well you just do drawings, just paint them, and I'll make them practical.' She was brilliant at that. She couldn't draw anything at all but she knew, she could make things work, you know. Material, she was always, with scissors and a bit of material, she would work. She couldn't draw on paper at all, but she just drew with scissors and things. But... So, I...and I did that, and it was...it was very successful actually. *A Mirror for Witches* it was called. And I remember the first night, it was...it was, oh, a glamorous affair. (laughs) It was half the evening, you know, there was a different ballet on; I think our ballet came second actually, but there was the, the Manuel de Falla, *Three Cornered Hat*, with Picasso's sets, the first part. I thought, that's not a bad bit of billing is it? (laughs) And... But... I can remember my poor parents, you know, they had been...there had been all this business of me going into prison and that, and they had come along to the magistrates court and everything, and then they'd come and visited me in prison, and all that with the...with the advocate, that he got it so

that they could come in and see me. And, and all this. And now, and then, hardly any time later, here they were, sitting in this glamorous setting, with this first night of the ballet, and... They didn't know whether they were coming or going.

They sound sort of very supportive of you generally though.

Yes. Yes well I got, I got them complimentary tickets, they sat in the dress circle. I can remember looking at them from the back actually, going and seeing if they were all right, and, it was all these sort of, women with, you know, much to my mum's distress really, in evening dresses with all their backs bare and that, you know, and everybody in dress suits, and they thought, this funny little woman sitting next to...with her coat, with her... And my father, they sat there looking like poor little... Very, wildly uncomfortable.

They'd probably be much happier now, because, I...I sat in the grand circle at Covent Garden last week...

Did you?

Got free tickets. Very nice too.

In the new Covent Garden?

In the new Covent Garden. And, you know, dress code, there was everything from full evening dress to, straight from the office, casual clothes.

Yes. Well that's not so bad is it really?

No.

It's...

Yes, rather terrorising in those days wasn't it, to nowadays.

It was a bit. And I had to go on the stage, because you know, the designer has to go on and take a bow, you know, with everybody else. And I remember André grabbing me and saying, 'Come along, keep with me,' and... We went down, and stood at the side waiting, and there was just this silence, the ballet ended and the music just suddenly stopped, and it's silence. Then she...and André took me, she said, 'They're not going to clap.' Then it started, you know, she said, 'Oh, thank...' And then she rushed on, and left me entirely, you know, I said, I wasn't going to go on there by myself, you know. And it was a huge stage, and all the... And the, the...the dance, the leading dancer, I've forgotten her name now, Ann something, they've all, a lot of flowers and things were given to some of the women dancers and that. And eventually the conductor, Irving, grabbed me and he said, 'Come on out,' and he took me on. Because they thought I was the composer rather than... (laughs) And... You know, it was absolute chaos. But apparently it didn't show from the front, but it seemed chaotic.

Can you describe those sets for the tape?

Yes, they were...the back was all very dark and gloomy, it was sort of, sort of a New England setting, a sort of, witch hunt actually. Ann Heaton, that was the dancer, the name I couldn't remember, she was the, the main character. There was a prologue which is done in front of one big curtain, a great big painting really, and, which takes place in... I forget where we are there. We changed it. We moved into a... Anyway, it's the generation before, our leading dancer, it's, this woman's being burnt at the stake for being a witch. And it's, this girl, the one that becomes, the story's told about, is, is her child. She...the...she's... The child is taken from her, and she's burnt at the stake. And then, it moves to a village, a village scene, when the curtain goes up there's this village in New England. And it's very stark, very dark, very dramatic. And... But... There is an incident with two children, I forget exactly what happened. There were these two children, the... Ann Heaton just... They... I forget now the actual incident, but it makes the children behave in an irrational way and they think it's because...this girl will practise

witchcraft on them. And then there's a scene when she has...and she begins to wonder herself whether she is a witch or not, and it's because, they all know that her mother had been burnt as a witch. And I know that the next scene is a forest, there's a forest scene, which I had large cut-out, it was very abstract kind of forest with, it was big black shapes. And, and they all...the Devil turns up and, with a whole lot of demons. And... I, I forget the actual flow of the story really, but then, the...the...there was the last, the last scene was her trial for witchcraft, and... And she, and she is eventually burnt.

I mean, did you...when you were sort of planning to do it, did you look at theatre design books or anything, or did you just launch...

No.

...instinctively into it?

I just... I mean she...I mean she was...André was, was attracted by the paintings, and what she wanted from me was something like I did anyway really. You have...they have model theatres that you take away with you, and you work it out in the stage with bits, with the cloths and the drop-ins and all the rest.

I mean in terms of scale, was it very different to your normal work? What size were you working on at college?

Well I did quite large paintings, some of them. But not that size. They're absolutely huge, those backdrops. I mean, I didn't...I didn't actually paint them, I just designed them. There's...there's a big studio paint shop above the stage actually at Covent Garden, and, there was this woman who was in charge of the paint shop, I've forgotten her name now. But... She died actually. But any rate, she was a very tough woman. She was very beautiful, but she was a bit of an Amazon. And... Clement Glock, she had been married to, what's his name Glock, the music man, the director of Covent Garden. And... But... And they, they paint your design. They just paint...they'd have your design on a sheet

with, with a kind of Perspex cover with all squared-up marks on it. And there are corresponding square marks on the big canvas. And they just paint the little bits, and it all lines up in the end. They took no account of, looking at the whole or anything. And as they work their way up it, they start at the bottom level, she only had about a couple of assistants actually, she did most of it herself actually. And then it was lowered down as it got so far, and, until you got to the top. And you could go down into the theatre afterwards, see half of your thing hanging in the end of the stage, you know, you could see just what it would look like. It was wonderful actually, I mean it was terrific experience. And, and I met all sorts of people, which were very... And I met John Piper, who was on the, on the, the committee at that time, and there were the advisers, the art advisers, and Kenneth, Kenneth Clark, Sir Kenneth Clark. And... And I met what's her name, a dancer. No, she's retired now. Great dancer. I've forgotten her name. (laughs) And of course there was the terrible Ninette de Valois.

Yes, very formidable.

Yes, I didn't...she didn't like me at all really. And... But... Then, I did... But... Then I did another ballet, but it wasn't with André Howard, it was with the, with Rodriguez, who was the, who had been the dancing master at Covent Garden, and was retired, was a freelance choreographer. And I did this one, it was called *Saudades*, the second one, and it was done when they were on tour. It was supposed to be done in Dublin, it was supposed to have gone on...but it wasn't ready. And by the time it was ready, it was...they were in Liverpool. But it was, it was...it was chaos actually, it was an absolute mess. Not...it wasn't my fault, I mean I'd done my part, the thing was designed and done. But the choreography...but Rodriguez was going through one of his terrifically successful stages, and he had all sort of big important jobs. I mean he was doing a *Romeo and Juliet* for the, the amphitheatre in Verona, and it's going to be put on there, and he was all excited about it, you know, because obviously it was quite a beautiful thing to do. And, and this was just a very small fry for him, and...and he hadn't...and he'd only roughly done the choreography. A lot of the dancers didn't know what they were supposed to be doing on the night. And, and it was a complete muck-up. And...

But... I mean it should have worked very well, but it didn't. And, de Valois was getting fed up. And...and I remember, I was supposed to be doing a third ballet, which was one of the ones I would really like to have done actually, and I did actually design it, but it didn't get onto the stage, was for Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin*. And... But... But, that was, that was...I...I'd had enough by then.

Have you kept your designs?

No.

Oh that's a pity.

No I didn't. They all vanished. Parts of it, parts of the witches are still in existence. I don't know what happened, André Howard herself had one of them. And... But she's dead. They're all dead actually. I mean she, she committed suicide actually. She was a very nervous person, and, a bit manic, she used to get very depressed. And, they were pretty awful to her really, a lot of the people at the ballet, they were... And de Valois, she treated everybody very badly; she really was rather a, well is still, she's still alive isn't she.

Mm.

I couldn't bear her actually, I think she's an absolutely ghastly woman. She...she would slap your face if she disagreed with you, she would...she's just completely irrational you know. 'You can't do that!' you know. And goodness knows how they put up with her really.

Did anyone ever dare to answer back?

No, I shouldn't think so. But... Anyway, that, that... It was all, again it was all experience, and I...but I, I had had enough, I've not done anything to do with the theatre ever since.

Mm.

The, the composer is still alive, in new music, a young...as he was then, but he's not now. Denis ApIvor, Welsh, a young Welsh chap he was.

How do you spell the name?

Well it's just big A, p, big I v-o-r.

Oh, ApIvor. Yes. Yes.

Denis. Denis ApIvor.

Mm. No I haven't heard of him.

But he, he would be someone, what was it, the man who was the director of music there, before, who had died just before our ballet, just before I had anything to do with them. A good composer actually, he was director of the, director of music there. Mm. [pause]

Oh I don't know.

Anyway, he...he was one of, he was a chap that encouraged Denis's music who, who was his supporter. But, he'd died. And, and Sophie Fedorovitch, who with John Piper were also on this committee, who was very encouraging whilst I was doing it, she suddenly, she's...she was killed by her central heating in the night, some leakage or something, and she was asphyxiated in her sleep. The whole thing changed quite suddenly. But... I wasn't sorry to go, I didn't want to stick around with the theatre very long, it wasn't what

I wanted to do. I was a painter and that was what I wanted to do. You have to... This is...this... They're so complicated, those jobs, and they take so long.

I mean, in the kind of, working towards the job, did you go to meetings or...?

Yes.

Mm.

Terrible. And... Mm. And a lot of bad feeling too, you know, everybody gets all stewed up and sensitive, you know. (laughs)

Yes, [inaudible] stuff.

But it was... Anyway, I mean, it... It all helped, and it got one's name around a bit. And I had this rather sort of flying start. But... And then, and then I, I moved from Gimpels. I got to know Josef Herman, and, I...you know, I admired his painting quite a lot. And... And, he was showing with Roland, Browse and Delbanco as they were then, they're now Browse & Darby, now, in Cork Street. And, I went over to them. Roland wanted to include me in some mixed exhibition for something, and Gimpels wouldn't, didn't agree, they didn't agree on what they wanted to do, and... But I wanted to go, and so I, I just left them, and... And then shortly after that I had my first one-man exhibition with them. And then I showed regularly with them, every year or two years.

How did you meet Josef Herman?

He was...he was in...it was through the, there was a sketch club thing in those days, they often used to, they had sketch clubs, and, work that had been done outside the college during the summer vacations, during the break, he brought in, and put up an exhibition, and invited outside artists, someone who wasn't one of the staff teachers or anything, and, to come if they will, to criticise it. And, I was secretary of the sketch club at that

time, and I wrote, asked Josef if he would come and criticise at the students' thing. And he came, and I got to know him, and you know, we became friends really, and we... I think he, he quite liked my work quite a lot, that helped. (laughs) And, he... Anyway, so I said, I went and showed with Roland, Browse & Delbanco. And I showed with them right until they finished, till they actually retired, all of them.

When did they finally close?

Well, it didn't, it never closed; it became Browse & Darby, but really it's just Darby, because Lillian Browse doesn't do anything at all, you know, she's...it's nothing to do with her really, it's just, they just kept her name on it. She's ninety-six.

I was going to say, is she still alive? I'm amazed. Gosh.

Ninety-six. Incredible, you wouldn't think so. I saw her only the other day at Josef's funeral, and, you know, she's...she looks almost as if... She could pass for sixty at any rate.

What, now, still?

I think so.

Gosh.

Probably. I mean she's...she's very shaky actually, come to think of it, but... She's lovely though, I like her, I like Lillian, she's... And... Yes, Roland and Delbanco of course they're both dead, they died quite a long time ago, Roland first. And... But...

Now I'm going to stop you there.

Yes, I think that's quite enough.

We're going to stop this tape early.

End of F8735 Side B]

[F8736 Side A]

Yes, but in a minute, later. I'm going to go back a bit.

Recommencing the interview with Norman Adams on the 2nd of May 2000, at his home in London.

Now we talked about all kinds of things last time we met, and this leads to a few things that need to be gone back to.

Mm.

When you were a conscientious objector and you were released from prison, it was required that you did some work on a farm.

Mm.

And I think it would be very interesting to know more about that experience and how you felt about it.

Well it wasn't very special. It was...it was... I mean, apart from being dreadfully boring a lot of the time, some of the time it was, it was even quite interesting and enjoyable. I kept a notebook all through that time. And I found myself a job, I didn't wait for them to find me one, close to where we lived anyway, in the northern outskirts of London, in Middlesex mostly. And, the... And I was able to keep up with my work, I went back to the old art school for evening classes and things like that, and, popped in and out from time to time. And, you know, we...we knew various other students who, you know, they were our friends and associates, more than the people that one actually met on the land.

What kind of farm did you find?

It was just a normal, a general farm, that... There was... In Edgware there was...there were... He had two shops didn't he, the farmer who, so-called farmer, he wasn't much of a farmer actually, he was just a businessman, he had these two, a butcher's and a dairy, and he just sold his produce locally, and, I suppose he started off with a small farm as well with stock and that, and he had... And it just got larger and larger. He was, he became a very rich man. He was also a property manipulator, he really was a nasty man really. (laughs) Well he, he just bought cheap and sold expensive, if he could. And, he was an insensitive man, and, he was... And the animals that treated, were very very badly...couldn't, couldn't happen now, I don't think, it wouldn't be allowed I wouldn't have thought now; there wasn't the kind of inspection and that kind of thing that there is now I shouldn't think. And, and it was...we used to call it, the way...his chicken farm he had, we called it Belsen. And it was, you know, we had, you know, the... They were so tightly crammed into these places, and then he'd get in lots and lots of turkeys towards Christmas, and they'd all be shut in these tight little pens and things. And... Oh it was grizzly really, a lot of that side of it. But then the other side of it, there was long, rather reflective periods. During the winter there wasn't...we... It certainly wasn't hard work. But, I can remember also one winter there was...there were fields of cabbages which weren't being...weren't worth harvesting to sell, and he had a pig farm, the same man, you know, a lot of pigs, and, my job through the whole of one winter was to go out into these fields of cabbages with a horse and cart. A lovely old horse and cart, all on my own to be with all day long, was really, it became quite a chum. And, a great big ginger horse, heavy horse. And, I don't know anything about horses, but it was...but, he was a delightful companion. And, that went on all through one winter, and I kept a little notebook with me, and I jotted down things which occurred to me, and I made little drawings and things which I sometimes used. I used to go along to, as I say, evening classes at my old art school during most of that period, during the winter months. During the summer it was much, it was quite different, in the way, he took a lot of hired people at that time, he needed more labour for harvesting, and first of all there was just the normal round of farming, hay first of all, and then, and then on to the corn and, he grew everything really, wheat and barley and oats. And in those days harvesting, you know, you were stooping; they didn't go straight into a big machine like they do now. And, it

was, it was quite pleasant really. It was very, you know, very itchy and scratchy, you know, lots of insects everywhere, and... Building hayricks and things like that, piling, they never do it now. And, standing at the top and having this hay shot all over you all the time, very annoying a lot of the time. But... I was quite, you know, I did...I took quite a lot of pleasure really in doing, in the actual constructive things that one did, like building a hayrick, and... And then they had to be thatched afterwards, after the hayrick was, was finished, it was thatched, over the top. Rough thatching, not like, wouldn't...wouldn't do on a house. But, I think I was basically really, quite a good...I quite enjoyed thatching actually, I found it was quite interesting, learning. There was another chap, an old Geordie man who, who was, you know, quite a traditional old farmer, well a farm hand, and, he showed me how to thatch, it was very simple really. And... And, you know, and how to construct a hayrick and how it was built. But all that side of things, I found it, you know, as I say, not uninteresting. And also the way...it was rather wonderful. I mean I got, I felt, you know, I was quite healthy during that period, you know. It's quite good to feel fit sometimes, just simply physically fit. And, it was, you know, the... As I say, it was... It was...it was... And also, I knew...well you know, it's nothing that...it certainly wasn't something that one can do forever. You know, I knew, I didn't change...I knew I wanted to be an artist, and that somehow, by hook or by crook that's where I was going to go. And I...oh I had been given a, an award to go to the Royal College, when, when I'd finished. And I'd been...and the College, you know, were, you know, they were quite happy about that, they said, you know, you come when you can, we'll keep your place for you.

Were you paid to do this work?

Paid? Oh yes, yes, yes I was just an ordinary labourer. Yes I was paid to do it. But the thing is, I had to do it, and if I hadn't have found this job locally, the Ministry of whatever would have found me a job which, and ordered me to go there. Which might have been anywhere you know. But I was told, if I found a job for myself quite quickly, you know... And...

Were there any other conscientious objectors working with you?

No.

No?

No, there weren't. And, if... There were farms and things, big farms where conscientious objectors, you know, worked, in the same way as prisoners of war, a lot of young Germans and Italians and that, who had been, who were prisoners. And... We befriended several of those actually, and, shortly after the war finished we, we went and visited them back in Germany, and... But there were... And there was, there was one, I forget what his name was now, Wolfgang, something like that. We, you know, we had him round to...he came and spent Christmas with us and that sort of thing. And you know, he...and they returned it when the war finished, we went over and had Christmas with them.

When you say 'we', do you mean Anna and yourself?

Yes, just Anna and myself, yes.

So were you living together at this time, or married?

Yes we were. Yes. Yes we got married, it was... I can't remember now. '47 was when we were married, 1947. But, I can't remember what we were doing at that time. I remember it was a very bleak, it was winter, and it was terribly cold, and... Yes, '47 was famous wasn't it, it was...it was an absolutely ghastly winter, it was... Oxford Street was full of, the traffic was stopped, great snowdrifts and things, you know, you can't imagine it in the centre of London. And... But...

Can you describe your...your actual wedding?

It was a registry office. And... And, it was... My parents came. Anna's parents didn't come. And... And that's all was there really. It was a very quiet and bleak affair.

Why didn't Anna's parents come?

I can't quite remember. Anna's mother didn't, never liked me at all. I don't think...I don't know whether either of them did really. Her father was quite, you know, I got on quite well with her father, he was nice. And I got on well with her mother really, but she just didn't like me. And... But... I don't think she really thought...she didn't want us to get married I don't think. But... We got married, and, largely because we...it was...in order to get into a flat actually. We... I don't think we... Actually, there was...there was...we had, we'd had a flat which was actually next door, that's right, it was next door to my grandmother, and, my mother wanted us to get married if we were going to take on the flat. Anyway, you know, it was...what was it, it was...we had this little flat in Edgware, Burnt Oak, and it was something, I forget now, something like about, ten old-fashioned shillings a week. And...

What was it like?

It was...it was all right. It was a top floor... Well they were just cottages really, small... The whole, the whole street has been demolished now, it's not there now, and... It was South Road, it was South Road, and there was East Road and West Road. And, and... My grandfather on the other side was... No that would be my great-grandfather, my grandmother's father, had, was the first tenants in the house. And, he was...he was a sort of carrier. There was a field, quite a large, there were lots of fields around there then, it was semi country really, but there was quite a large field adjoining the house where my great-grandfather, I mean he was dead, but he had been there, and he kept a horse and had a cart, and he fetched and carried things about for anybody. That was the way he made his living, using his horse and cart. And there were quite a lot of horses on the roads at that time actually still, just, you know, not long after the war really, the few years. But a lot of things, milk, I remember milk vendors coming round with a horse and cart with

milk, in the churns, and bakery people, and... And one of the tasks that I had to do which was, which I didn't like very much again was going round to hospitals and hotels in Hampstead and round there, and picking up the pigswill, all the discarded food and scraps and bits and pieces which was put into bins, big tin cans, big bins, and these were collected once a week and it was food for the pigs, it went into the pigswill, sort of stewed up. And, the... And this awful experience, you'd have to go up, walk up these fire escapes at the back of the hotels and things, and, get...the bins would be at every level, you know, where they had a landing, and you had to pick up the bins and hold them on your back and carry them down this iron staircase. And all the slop and stuff inside it, which was quite, there was quite a lot of, it stood out there in the rain and that sort of thing, would all gush down the back of your shirt collar, you know. (laughs)

Oh horrible.

Basically it was absolutely, absolute hell really. And... And the... And also a horse and cart would be used for that, I can remember. The odd occasions when the regular man who looked after the pigs was away or couldn't manage it, they used to get me to take the horse and cart down to, it was Redhill Hospital. And, and I was totally inexperienced as far as driving a horse and cart through a, particularly through a built-up area, through a town, you know, with a lot of traffic and things. And... But... This poor wretched horse, you know, it didn't respond to the reins at all, you know. I had a vague idea that if I wanted it to slow down I held the reins a bit tight, but it made no difference to him at all, he was, he'd been worked so much, it was just thick as leather, his mouth, he didn't feel anything I don't think. But I needn't have worried, he knew the route so well actually, and I was wondering what on earth I was going to do. He must have been aware of traffic lights as well, because, without any indication from me, he always stopped at the red lights [inaudible]. (laughs) And at the end of the journey, he knew when he had got there and he had to stand on the weighbridge before going in, and he went straight without...and always stopped. And, I just sat there like an idiot on the back really, and left it all to him.

How wonderful.

But...it really...it had its funny moments. And the traffic could be quite thick in those days. But, yes, it was...it was a strange existence really, because it was sort of, semi-rural, you know, it was, it was definitely not...I mean it was, you know, there were lots of, for that time, it was a bit busy place, north London, Edgware and Hampstead and around that. And... You know, it was... And yet it had this sort of... You were still close to nature in many ways. And... And, I found it, it... I did a lot of drawings actually. Oh I was very keen on Blake as I've said, and also on Bunyan, I discovered, *Pilgrim's Progress* really, and, that's been one of the books that's I've gone back to time and time again, thinking of the imagery in *Pilgrim's Progress*. And...and I did a lot of, those sort of pseudo middle... I also...yes, I was also very excited by mediaeval reliefs and carvings and things, you know, but... We used to travel about quite a bit actually, during the summer, during the holidays and things. And, we went, went abroad a few times, as I say we went to Germany once or twice, and discovered, fairly early on I discovered Grunewald actually, and, and the power of that business, and also the German Expressionists. Nolde I discovered actually, and that was, that was a tremendous revelation for me, discovering him, Nolde. And, and Beckmann, all those people, I loved them, I thought they were... I much preferred them to French art, which struck me, always struck me...I never really liked Matisse very much actually. I got to like him better later on, but he's never been one of my great passions, Matisse. I much preferred Picasso. I can remember a terrific exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum shortly after the war. No, we hadn't... Well I was at Harrow Art School anyway, and that was a total backwater, but, I was going to see...well I had heard of Picasso of course, but, I didn't know much about him. I remember picking up a little book by Gertrude Stein in a bookshop on Harrow on the Hill, sort of second-hand bookshop, and, a little essay about Picasso. And, it was... There was one of the early ones, early paintings by Picasso [inaudible], I think they were the, they weren't...I don't think...they may have been *Absinthe Drinkers*. They were very influenced by, you know, influenced by Toulouse Lautrec, and it was the backs of two women at a bar leaning on, leaning on the bar, and between them there was just this glass of drink, whatever it was. And it was just their

backs, and these two heavy images, and I just...I was...I was completely knocked out by it for some extraordinary reason. It was wonderful colour for one thing, even though the reproduction in this book was terrible, I later found out. And, but I had this image, you know, which was to have a terrific influence on me, this particular painting. It was a sort of, Blue period painting, fairly early Picasso. And, and I'd never seen the original, until the other day actually, this exhibition we've had on, which has just finished actually at the Royal Academy of 1900s, the... And, which I, which I was really looking forward to, it sounded very promising, I thought, the exhibition, but when I saw the exhibition I was...it was a terrific exhibition, wonderful exhibition. And there it was, this early Picasso. And, and that's the first time I'd ever seen the actual painting. And it's, it's just wonderful, [inaudible], you know, one could see that, the colour that I'd been used to was totally wrong. The actual colour was absolutely out of this world I think. And... But... I was...I was very excited when I discovered that for the first time. I think it lives somewhere out in, I think it was...you know, where it normally belongs is out in, I think in Japan. But...

We've just been looking at those very early Picassos in Barcelona. Have you been to the Picasso Museum there?

I've never been to Barcelona, no.

Oh you must go. It's extraordinary. Because, what you see is not what you normally see; you see those very very early works.

Mm.

But also his work as a student.

Mm.

And a boy. So, you know, when he's fourteen for example, you see these amazing kind of, attempts at mimicking the kind of mannerisms of different people, so there's a kind of, Picasso Lovis Corinth, and, Picasso somebody else.

Really? God!

You know, when you say that Toulouse Lautrec, I mean that's there as well, and, well, a little bit later, but... There's just one year, I think about 1895 where you get this extraordinary correspondence.

Oh [inaudible] so many influences to Picasso.

Mm.

He was... I mean in fact he said somewhere, I read that, when some young artist was worried about being influenced by him and he said, 'Oh you be influenced, be influenced by absolutely everybody; I am.' And he said, 'Oh, well not quite,' he said. 'Be influenced by everybody except yourself.' (laughs) I suppose that...I'm not sure whether that came into the Gertrude Stein book or not. If it came in the Gertrude Stein book I wouldn't trust it, but... (laughs) I think she made a lot of it up. But...

What was Anna doing at this time that, when you were first married, was she still pursuing her art career, or training?

Yes, some of the time she was, yes. She was... She did... When she... We'd done an N.D.D. together at Harrow, in painting, and then she went to...I don't know where she went, she went to Hornsey; she went to what was Hornsey Art School at that time, and it's Middlesex, it's part of the, they call it a university now don't they, it's part of some larger grouping of art schools. Well she went there and did sculpture, and, so she did both. You know, she's got N.D.D. twice. And... And then she, she worked, she tried again... Well she... She had applied to go into the Painting School at the same time as I

had originally, and she didn't, she didn't get in on that occasion. And then she tried to do it again, to go to the Royal College Sculpture School, and she didn't get in either. And, so, you know, she...but she carried, you know, just carried on working as a, as an artist, and doing...she was...I forget now what the dates were now actually, she can probably help you better on this, when she actually finished at Hornsey. And, and then, when she finished there, she did, oh, all sorts of jobs. She worked as a, produced ceramic sculpture, sort of, animal people and, figures, figurative sculpture in terracotta and stoneware and that sort of thing. Anna?

ANNA: Mhm.

We're getting on to what you did whilst I was at the Royal College, and, I'm trying to do it, but I get a lot of the dates and things muddled up. I can't really...

ANNA: [inaudible].

You went to...you went... Well you then... In my last year at the College, we moved into town more, we moved from Burnt Oak, and we moved into Battersea, and, into...in Clapham really, but Turnchapel Mews. Our studio that we'd got there was something like thirty bob a week. And when we moved out of it, Euan Uglow moved into it, and he's still there.

ANNA: That was [inaudible]. Yes, when we moved out of [inaudible], we moved into this rather dilapidated [inaudible].

It was when we started, we started to have children then didn't we.

ANNA: [inaudible]. Shall I tell you what I was doing while he was at the Royal College?

You're going to have to have...

Yes.

You'll have to pin a microphone on yourself if you [inaudible].

ANNA: Oh I see.

No that's fine.

ANNA: [inaudible] mic?

Yes. If you just hold it.

ANNA: I'll just hold it.

That's fine, yes, that'll pick up nicely, hopefully.

ANNA: Oh. Well, Norman's first year and second year I was at Hornsey Art School doing sculpture, and then, after that I got a job in something called Palmers Green Girls' High School, and had a horrific year not keeping people in order properly. And that was about it really, while Norman was at college.

When did you start doing the ceramic things for...?

ANNA: Well after...oh, after the high school at Palmers Green, where Stevie Smith went, was her school, before he went to, I think she went to North London Collegiate, didn't she, eventually. But, I'd never heard of her at that time.

You were doing quite a bit of writing.

ANNA: But, after that I stumbled into this job in something called Chelsea Pottery, and I took some work in to be fired after I'd left, and this man with a beard and who came out of the film industry really was a sort of, terrible artist. I mean he wasn't an artist at all, but he made things.

Rawnsley, David Rawnsley.

ANNA: Very elaborate. I suppose it's kitsch really. And, never mind, I don't want to say nasty things about him. But, he came downstairs and said, 'That's very well, well designed, who did that? And, and I said I brought it in to be fired.' And he said, 'Would you like a job darling?' And so, I said, 'Yes I would,' because, it was better than teaching I thought. And so that's what I did for three years, and had the children. It was actually quite well paid for me.

It was, yes, and you quite enjoyed it up to a point. But you met some interesting people.

ANNA: It was fun, I like fun jobs.

Really met some quite nice people, one or two.

ANNA: Yes. And I bought dresses up and down the King's Road, and some tables and chairs.

A pleasant part of London to be in really.

ANNA: Anyway that'll do.

I'm going to stop for a moment.

[break in recording]

Restarting the tape.

Has Anna gone on producing sculpture and ceramic work?

She does, she did do quite a lot at one point, but, she's also started writing more. She's always written. And, I think she found her ideas about life and all the rest of it, you know, that, she needed to be able to express these ideas I think. And it's limited what you can do in that respect with this ceramic, semi commercial sort of work really. And, you know, so she wrote mostly verse, poetry, and has started getting noticed quite. And, she got, you know, quite a bit of it published at different times in mag...she never had a book of poems at that point, but... Well she has since. But I mean, I think that...now for quite a few years, she really does most of that at the moment, and she has done for several years now. And, it seems that's what she's doing most of, writing.

Does Anna publish under her maiden name or married name?

No, Adams. Anna Adams.

Anna Adams. Right.

When she does a watercolour or something like that, the landscape and that, which she does, or a still life or something, she does watercolour, she puts them in, submits them to the Royal Academy and they go into the summer show very often, she puts herself under her maiden name, Anna Butt. But she writes under Anna Adams.

One thing I want to ask about the time when you were being punished for being a conscientious objector, how did you...how did the end to this time come about, were you notified or did you keep requesting that you were let off the leash as it were, or...?

Yes, I can't remember now. You... [pause] When I'd done it... I don't know, I think...it's about two years. I mean you were supposed to do a similar amount of time

that you would if you had gone into the Army. And, it was...it's...I seemed to...I just decided that I'd done enough and stopped and went, went along to the College. (laughs) And, and I, I did rather well actually too, because, that first Labour Government, which was brilliant, wonderful, the Attlee Government with... And all these, these really old-fashioned socialists that were themselves conchies in the First World War and that sort of thing, and, that wonderful man, oh dear what was his name? I think he... Well there was the...I mean there was the young Michael Foot of course, and... I forget who...there was this other man now, what was his...? Was he...I don't know whether he was the Chancellor or what he was. But, I know I....

[End of F8736 Side A]

[F8736 Side B]

Continuing the tape with Norman Adams. Tape 1 side B. Sorry, Tape 3 side B.

Yes, well I'd heard that, you know, various people that had been in the Army and that, they were dishing out these wonderful grants for young chaps, quite right too, had their education interrupted, had been conscripted into the Army during the war, were getting these terrific ex-servicemen grants to go, to continue with their studies that they'd left off because of the war. And, I wrote to the, whoever the Government...said that I was a conscientious objector, I'd had my education interrupted as much as anybody going into the Army, I thought I deserved a similar grant. They wrote back agreeing with me, and I had this wonderful grant. And, never been so well off. I mean, I was much better off as a student than I had been as a farm labourer. And, it was wonderful really. I had a, had a wonderful time. I loved the cottage, I loved being there.

I mean can you describe in quite precise detail the kind of environment there and the kind of teaching practice and so on?

The... It was...it was fairly easy-going actually, it wasn't...certainly...well I mean it was, you were treated as an adult from the start really. There was no actual course as such, that I could discern. But, they're just interesting people, you know, and... Even a lot of the students, which I didn't care for much as painters, were interesting... They were mature really, all that bit older because of the war. A lot of them had been, you know... There was... Actually at one point or other during the war the Royal College was all evacuated wasn't it, well mostly through the war they moved up to premises up in the Lake District, and, and they had a wild time up there I think. But... But then, they had been called up from there into the Army, and... And by the time they fetched up back at the College that they were fairly old really. I was one of the youngest people there actually. And... I was the second youngest in my year, and, it was... As I say, they were really quite mature people. And... And there was...and you'd get someone like, Minton

was my actual tutor, John Minton was my tutor when I...you know, you were allotted a tutor when you first go. And...

You've talked about him on the other tape.

Yes. He was a very good teacher, I thought. And...and fascinating man. I didn't...can't...again say that I, I feel very deeply moved by his painting, not really, and... But... Also of course he was a tragic person really, and, always...well, first knew him, aware of the, of the misery that he must have felt quite a lot of the time. He wanted very much also to be accepted, he wanted to be respectable, and he enjoyed working with people at the College, with people like Ruskin Spear and Carel Weight and people, that were very different to himself. I mean they were very...but they were all...they seemed on the whole to be good chums, they seemed to get on together, even though they were so very different. And there was a time when Minton would tremendously loved to have been a member of the RA, and he sent work in, and he used to hang there during the summer, and everybody knew that he was aching to be made a member. But he never was. And the old guard was still there of course. By that time Munnings I think was still President. And, you know, the fact that Minton was homosexual, that, they wouldn't, they wouldn't make him an RA because of that. And, the...it was... And indeed it was, you know, it was illegal, it was against...then, it was...

I mean as students, were you conscious of the fact that he was homosexual?

Oh yes, well yes, yes you were really, mm. I mean he didn't, he didn't impose himself on you in any sort of way, but, oh everybody knew what his life was like. And, and he always, you know, even in those early days he wasn't exactly alcoholic but he became alcoholic, and hopeless, but at that time the parties and things, he used to drink quite a lot. And you know, he would go, he'd go on about things, you know, and he'd tell them, you know, what his life was like and all the rest of it. And sometimes he got very maudlin. (laughs) But he...but... No, but he... He... Yes, I mean I know, as I say, that most of the, the students were mature people anyway, and they all understood, you

know... His life was famous anyway, his painting, his life was more famous than his painting most of his... He was always getting into trouble with the law over one thing or another. And, he'd... He was... I know there was a group, he had these young sort of chaps, lovely young labourers and people like that, and, pugilists, young men that...boxers and wrestlers and things. There was Spencer...I remember this chap called Spencer Churchill, Spencer Churchill was not his real name, I don't know what his real name was, but that's what he called himself, he was a wrestler. And, he...he used to come round. There was all those sort of people. (laughs) It was like... And also, it was sheer cruelty really, there was a music-hall, there were still old-fashioned music-hall things in theatres where...in... Any rate, there were these sort of old-time music-hall things, and there was a huge fat lady, you may...you wouldn't have known anything about her, but, she was absolutely huge, she called herself Tessie O'Shea, and she sang bawdy songs on the stage. And, she called herself Two-Ton Tessie. And, they used to go along to all her shows, they all reckoned how wonderful and how beautiful she was, and how they loved her. And they'd make themselves a thorough nuisance at the theatre and that sort of thing, you know. But it was... (laughs) Silly things. But... But he was, he was a serious man underneath really, there was a serious man in there trying to get out.

You mentioned that Carel Weight was a rather, kind of interesting, rather quiet presence.

Mm.

Can you remember how he kind of, made himself...?

He was, he used to... I got on very well with him actually. He used to come out to my studio too and see what I was doing. And, in my last year I spent most of my time in my...I mean I had this studio in Battersea then, in Turnchapel Mews, which I, which was a better place to work than where I had been out in Edgware. And it was a large big studio room. And, you know, I...you know, they didn't mind me working there, and I worked there. And I didn't go into the College every day by any means; most days I worked there actually. I used to go in once a week, you know, and... And they'd come

out, Minton came there several times, and Carel came, and...and it was... That was, that was, you know, I enjoyed that, my last year at the College was wonderful really. And I... And... There was the, '51, 1951 there was the Festival of Britain too, that was...that was much more enjoyable than what this awful thing that's going on at the moment.

The Dome.

Yes, the Dome. I mean, they had a dome there of course as well, and that was a much better dome. And it was full of, you know, things, you know, it was full of art. I mean this, this is a rubbish place isn't it, really, just a tip. And... The Wheel is nice, I mean the Wheel is a success I believe, but the Dome is just a load of old rubbish, and the exhibits are a real... I mean I haven't been to see it, but I...I can't be bothered to go. But, and the... Josef, who also became a great friend, who died just recently, Josef Herman, he had done this huge mural in the, the Mining Pavilion, the pavilion devoted to mining, and you know, and Josef Herman, you know, was...had settled in this small mining village and he made his reputation on his paintings of miners. And, it's...the painting is still, it's down in Wales somewhere, they put it in, Cardiff I think, it's... Spends a lot of its time rolled up. It's a huge painting, and it's not got a permanent home anywhere. But it was there, it was done for the Mining Pavilion at the Festival, and it was a magnificent great epic composition. Minton did a large mural as well, and I acted as one of his assistants on that, which was fun.

Which section did that go into, do you recall?

It was...yes, I think it was, it's in the Dome somewhere. It wasn't...I don't know...it wasn't...it was just a Minton mural, I can't remember that it was, had anything specifically to do with industry or anything. It was just, as far as I can remember, a view of the Thames really, in central London, and...and the buildings and figures, and... It was really rather like the, the life just outside. And...

What was your role as assistant?

Oh just... He had...he had tea trolleys, I remember he had...it was just something, a good idea, he nicked a few tea trolleys from the canteen. And all his paints were laid out, and you'd just push these tea trolleys around up and down this, this thing, and, just, just filled in, you know, some of the blanks where, with the colours that he suggested, you know, that sort of thing.

*Can you remember how you and your contemporaries viewed the Festival of Britain?
Did you see it as a vision of the future?*

We saw it as just a party really. It was fun, you know, it really was fun, you know, it really was most enjoyable. The whole atmosphere down there was, was a party really, it was... Also it was... London, I mean, the country was, seemed to me, was, needed a party at that time; the war was only just nearly over, and we had bankrupted ourselves fighting the bloody stupid war. London, the country was absolutely on its uppers financially. And, and this was a wildly extravagant thing to do. (laughs) And... No, it was wonderful. It was just, you know, as I say, it was just a party. And then, and they knew that the war really was over. And it was, you know, you didn't think about... I mean the Festival Hall was the only permanent building which was, you know, was a great success.

It's still a very, very good building.

It is.

Yes, really stood the test of time.

And it's...and it still is sort of, a fun building, it's used a lot.

Mm.

And the...and there's...there's not just music there, they have the poetry centre there on, I think it's the third floor isn't it there, there's the Voice Box, the poetry readings, most evenings. And, this huge poetry library they have there. And it's... And it's always crowded, up to now, there's always masses of people milling about. And it's, it's...it's... And then the outside is very nice, the coffee area, the relaxing areas are very nice, sitting outside. And out...the bars, we used to sit on the balcony looking down on the river and that sort of thing. It's lovely.

Yes, it's very good. I'm just going back to the College.

Mm.

Robin Darwin was thought to have the most astonishing kind of energising impact on the Royal College. Were you conscious of that, or did you just, you know, [inaudible]?

Actually, I didn't like him at all really. He was a terrible bully, and quite rude. And...

Did he bully students and staff, or...?

Yes. But... But then, but the... Generally they... Well he got, he got very grumpy and rotten towards the end, he was... He... And, they'd... There were certain people, the staff, who he particularly liked, who, socially he'd like, he'd like to come round to spend an evening with, smoking cigars and drinking whisky. And they used to... And I can remember the staff used to dread it, they would get the summons, that they'd got to go round to Darwin's for the evening, and they used to all try to find excuses for not going. And... But, he...he had...you know, obviously he was a very dynamic guy, and something like him certainly seemed a good idea at that time; it was a pretty deadly place before he came. I was very pleased in a way, it did me nothing but good having that long delay working on the land. If I'd gone straight from art school to the Royal College, which would have been the normal thing, you know, I would have missed all that, I would have just had the, the old lot. And, so... No, I mean, he...he did do a good job there really. He

had the energy and he...and he... I mean, it sounds awful in a way, but, but you have to be... I mean, he could be cruel, and it was probably necessary that somebody was cruel, and... But some people would find it very difficult, whereas he didn't find it particularly difficult at all. (laughs) And, I remember, who was it? the head of painting, he wanted to get rid of, and he couldn't really just, he couldn't sack him because he had a contract.

Who was that?

I'm trying to think of his name. He was...you know, the two of them, brothers.

Oh Cohen[ph].

What?

Couldn't be the Cohen[ph] brothers.

No no no.

It's too early isn't it.

No no, not the Cohens[ph], no. No. There was... Oh... Oh you know, the...really... One is really very, is a very good artist. And this is, this is the weak one. (laughs)

We need to have a break for thought.

Yes.

[break in recording]

We've remembered. John Nash.

Hold on, hold on. No, I'm still doing it wrong. I think... It was not...it was the wrong Spencer, it was Gilbert Spencer. Gilbert Spencer, Stanley Spencer's brother. And, he was Head of Painting. And... But you know, he was... I mean, I know this is before my time, you know, but he was...he was pretty, pretty useless really. And, Darwin just sacked him, he got rid of him somehow. And Rodrigo Moynihan became Professor. And he was Professor in my time, Moynihan.

He's a rather unsung artist in many ways.

Yes.

What was your impression of him as a student?

He... He was thought well of within the Academy itself. I didn't get on with him particularly well. And... But... He was...he was all right. I think he...he didn't...he was...he didn't really... I don't think he really enjoyed being Professor at the Royal College, he... He left, ran off with a millionairess didn't he. (laughter) And he went off...yes he did. And he left his wife and all that, who was also a painter wasn't she. I've forgotten her too. But... And, left the College. And Carel was made Professor, Darwin made Carel, and he was Professor right up until... When I, when I left the Royal College, he was...Moynihan was still Professor, Moynihan was Professor during my, throughout my three years. And... But he was, he was all right. I hardly saw him actually. Carel was, as well as Minton was...they were the two that I spent...that I saw most of as a student. And...

The mature students that you were learning with, or not learning, creating with, did they ever talk about how the war had affected their art?

Not really, not much. And there was no very visible signs of it either actually, you didn't actually see it for yourself. They had...they had a sort of sense of maturity of technique, and a way of painting, you know, they had...they had obviously seen a lot of painting, a

lot of them had seen much more painting than I had seen. And, the... Because there was... And some of them had a bad, really had a bad time. There was George Fullard, George Fullard, he was, he was a sculptor of course, but he, he went, he left. He was Head of Sculpture at Chelsea Art School after he left the Royal College. But, he'd had a bad war, he'd had a sort of breakdown actually, he'd... You know, he'd been... And Eddie Middleditch too, they'd both had a bad time out in the Middle East. Eddie Middleditch had a medal actually for... He was not the sort of person that ever thought of himself as any kind of bloody hero, he didn't want to be there in the first place. And... But he... He got...he got blown up in a tank; he managed to get out himself, but, he was... No no, no that was... I'm getting mixed up again. It's Fullard, that was Fullard, George Fullard, he was, got blown up in a tank and went back into it again, when it was blazing, you know, to get somebody else out who was unconscious inside. And, he got a medal for that. And, and also Eddie Middleditch did something very brave, though he didn't...well he was, didn't want to go into... I forget now just what exactly what he did do. He... He... I know he, he was in a position with a machine-gun as they were in those days, and it was, he was left to sort of, to try to pretend there were more of them there than there were so that the Germans wouldn't attack, whilst the other people could get out, the ones that were there were able to get away. And he stayed there right to the last minute, sort of...and didn't go himself until everyone had gone. And, there were a few people like that. And then, they were... Both Eddie and George Fullard had a breakdown, you know, they both of them were rather touchy mentally. And...

Yes.

But... Yes.

I think it's probably one of the strange unexamined facts of that post-war period that I think many men did not recover but didn't discuss it either.

No. No, it was...it was...it was... Although it was fun, it was serious, you know. Serious fun. [pause] I suppose, it all built up to make one realise that, if one was going to do

anything, painting at all, it had to be, it had to have some sort of moral reality to it, it had to have something [inaudible] paint [inaudible]...it helped one to formulate...well, I say to help one to formulate the kind of artist...not that I ever had any doubts as to what kind of artist I had to be, but it made it very clear to me that, that one's work had to have some sort of message. I wasn't interested in art that had no message at all. And... And at the same time it had to be serious. All the...you know, the... A lot of work goes on these days strikes me as being frivolous, wasteful, and, you know, it's, it's...and far too idiosyncratic, too...people's funny little ways, the...

I mean do you remember the sort of, or were indeed there any such thing as philosophical discussions around art at that time with your contemporaries?

Yes. Not really deep, I wouldn't dignify it with the word philosophy really. It was... But yes, one... The artists that, I mean, that were studied more than anybody I suppose, I mean, I certainly found, I mean to say, the German Expressionists particularly, and, you know, the Die Brücke artists, one discovered them. And I say, that huge exhibition that, when, just before I, just before I went to the Royal College, there were so many very large, spectacular exhibitions in London, it was wonderful after all, so long without any, nothing during the war at all, no big exhibitions or anything. And one had no idea at that time what, you know, Picasso and Matisse who had been locked up in Europe all through the war, you didn't know what they had been doing all through those years of occupation in France, Paris, mostly with Picasso. There was this big exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum of paintings done by Picasso and Matisse during the war, you know, none of which had been seen, and it was, it was really overwhelming.

I don't think...

Particularly the Picassos.

Mm. I hadn't realised they were their works done during the war.

Mm.

Oh.

And... [pause] And then there were these... There was a bombed building... Very often in these wrecked, semi-wrecked buildings, they suddenly sort of did a bit of superficial dusting and cleaning around, and filled it up with paintings and had an exhibition there, you know, it was just... There was this huge space I remember in, it was actually in Oxford Street, it had been one of the big stores which had been gutted out, bombed, and incendiared and that, and, it was...it was just, you know, it was, been propped up and that, with girders here and there, and it was made safe. But it wasn't being used, and so, they turned it temporarily into an art gallery. And there was this, something like, I forget what they called the exhibition, it was something like Fifty Thousand Years of Modern Art, and they had some...God knows how they got...they had some really famous paintings. I remember the, particularly, they made a particular display of it, they had the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, this huge Picasso masterpiece. And, the... And it was all part of this thing. And then it was...in other words, that modern art had always existed, a lot of primitive art there as well which obviously had a great big influence on Picasso in those early ones, the Cubist paintings, the figurative Cubist paintings which were, you know, a lot of them were very strongly influenced by primitive art. And it was a fabulous exhibition. And, it was...and... Oh they made the whole place out to look a bit like a jungle, you know, with imitation grass and plants and, the whole thing was like a kind of, big natural area, and there were these paintings in amongst all this, this thing of, of nature growing. And... But... I mean it... It was [inaudible]. And as I say, I was still going from time to time. No, I...and I'd stopped going, going to the anarchist meetings and things; I felt I hadn't got time really, but.. And I was working, I did work very hard actually as a student. I got really excited. And then, one had the odd patron, this...a man who I met through Gimpel Fils actually, I mean he was one of the artists, one of the people that... Bliss, Howard Bliss, who was a musician really, he was brother to Sir Arthur Bliss, the Master of the Queen's Music, composer. And Howard himself as I say was a musician, he had been a cellist, but he...he'd done something to his, he'd got

something wrong with his, with the nerves in his hand actually, and he couldn't play. Well he could play but he played to his friends and everything but he wouldn't play professionally any more, he didn't feel he could keep the standard. But he loved art. It didn't worry him too much, I mean he used to play the cello when he felt like it. But he had always loved painting, and had dabbled a bit himself. And he went along to see old Sickert apparently originally when he was...and had a few lessons in painting. A rich, rich man's sort of kind of privilege. (laughs) And... But he, I never saw any of it, he never showed me any of it, but I don't...I've never seen, I don't think he was all...it wouldn't have been all that good anyway. But he, he collected pictures. He had a small income, reasonable, must have been a reasonable income actually. And he spent...he was quite happy just to buy pictures. He had a house chock-a-block full of paintings. He loved Ivon Hitchens. I know when Bliss died, they found he had sixty paintings by Ivon Hitchens, and... But he... He had about twenty-five of mine actually when he died. And he was one of the first people to, that I sold a picture to actually. The first person I sold. I hadn't sold a picture, you know, I was getting a bit worried if I was ever going to... I didn't really feel that I could consider myself an artist unless I could sell this stuff. (laughs)

Did you sell that through the gallery or directly?

He came, he came round to the studio, and... And I remember him, it was...it was such a nice experience really, I was terribly embarrassed. We looked through a lot of work and there were three. He said, 'What do you want for those three pictures?' And he'd sorted out and slung 'em there. And I said, oh God! I don't know. I mean I've never had to sell a picture before. And, I said something, 'Well, would £60 be a reasonable price do you think?' And then, he said, 'No, I don't, I don't think £60 would be a reasonable price at all. I couldn't possibly give you less than 100 for the three of them.' (laughs)

How wonderful. Every artist's dream. I'm going to stop you.....

[End of F8736 Side B]

[F8737 Side A]

Continuing the interview with Norman Adams. Tape 4 side A.

As I was saying, the... I didn't stay with Gimpels all that long, but, Bliss, Howard Bliss and Charles and Peter Gimpel, and...no, I think it was just, about three, three or four people, a committee of, just a small group, went round the Young Contemporaries exhibition which began during my time as a student at the Royal College, it was... And, they used to pick out several artists, several of the students from the show, to give a group show to in their gallery later on in the year. And, I was selected by them both years whilst I was still a student, and...and that was, through that connection that I met Bliss actually. He saw my work at the Young Contemporaries and got interested in it for himself as well as for the purpose of putting on an exhibition at Gimpels. And, after being involved, you know, I just drifted into being with them. And, I had this exhibition, a group exhibition, I forget who the other students were that they chose now, there were three or four of us I know together in a mixed show in their gallery. And... I had two exhibitions. Then, I seemed to...I had one or two successes. And the theatre business came along then, and I did this thing for Covent Garden, the witch, the ballets. And I think Gimpels got more and more impressed with the whole thing, and then they asked, they said they'd like to give me a full show. And about a year after I left college I had my first one-man show with them. I had two or three shows, and then... It wasn't unfriendly, but, I broke with them because... I'd always liked Roland, Browse & Delbanco, it was a gallery which I liked, I liked the gallery, and as I say, I...a long time before I ever met him, I liked Josef Herman's work, which was, which they showed. And... And, you know, and I used to get...and I could get on with them, I wasn't...though I was still a student, and I never asked them to show my work. But I wasn't shy in a way that...you know, we were slightly friendly anyway, he knew vaguely who I was, Delbanco that is mostly. And you know, and then I used to talk to him in there about the, you know, the show and things like that. And then Roland, one day they were putting an exhibition together, a group of artists, and they wondered if I would show with these two others, in their gallery. And, they weren't other artists who I knew. And I said, 'Yes, I'd

like to do that.' And I went along and saw Gimpels about it, and they, they didn't want me to do it. And... Anyway, I decided I was going to do it. I wanted to do it. So I left them really, not...you know, not...it wasn't very...wasn't very unfriendly, it was quite reasonable really. But any rate, I left them and I went, and I took part in this exhibition with Roland, Browse & Delbanco. And, about a year or so later I had my first one-man exhibition with them. And you know, and there I stayed really through most of my time until the recent phase, until I came back. One thing about, you know, I mean I... It went on for years with them, and I more or less cut myself off from London entirely for all those years, because I... We bought the place up in Yorkshire, Butts, and we both of us enjoyed it there, we liked living there, and I had this wonderful studio. And... You know, it was just sheer lethargy actually, I just left it at that, and... It wasn't an ideal arrangement, they were rather more...it went the other extreme, I felt that I was not this kind of avant-garde artist that Gimpels showed, I didn't feel, I didn't fit in with most of their people. I felt that. But on the other hand I wasn't quite so old-fashioned as Roland, Browse & Delbanco. (laughs) And, they tended to sort of, frown at the more adventurous work that I did, and in a way they kept me doing...they...they... Roland in particular didn't like...no dealers like it actually, paintings with religious subjects; they just wanted me to paint landscapes, the sort of things that I did when I was on holiday, those watercolours and things. And largely because they could sell them, they were easy, you know, that was that. And... But you know, I, I...I knew what I wanted to do. And... But... So we had this mildly rocky relationship, but... One good test is that, you know jolly...you have to have a dealer that you can have a jolly good row with, you know, or else you, the situation is impossible if you can't. And...

So would they show your religious work?

Well they did, reluctantly. And... Roland made no bones about the fact that he didn't like them. But, I... Lillian had, was much more broadminded about things. And there was Delbanco, and...

What was the relationship between the three of them?

You mean, for them?

Yes, I mean how did they work together? Because...

They were very different in many ways. Lillian is the only one that's still alive of course now. Roland was the first to die. And... But... As I said before, they were dealers. (laughs) But... It was... I was probably the only artist on their staff too who wasn't a Jew. They had this... [pause] It gave a kind of atmosphere to the place, which I liked actually. And you know, I...I enjoyed the, the... And in some ways I enjoyed being the odd one out. But, I can remember once coming back from one of my trips abroad with a lot of new watercolours which, they wanted to see what I'd been doing, and so I took them in, a group of the things that...I'd been working in France. And... There was never anywhere where you could...there was never any decent-sized table or anything where you could spread things out or anything. And the exhibition was on, people walking...a lot of people in the gallery. And, I had to sit down on the floor. Anna's smiling, she knows...this became rather a famous occasion. And, and I'd spread all these watercolours out on the floor. And Roland was, you know, was just sort of flicking them over, just like that, you know. And... Delbanco was in the little office on the telephone, and obviously he was talking about some deal or other that they were trying to pull off. And obviously Roland was much more interested in the conversation that Delbanco was having on the telephone than looking at my watercolours which were on the floor, there were people walking around, you know, and... And he said, 'Oh yes, yes, oh well that's...that's OK Norman. I don't think they're as good as your last lot though, but, we'll see what we can do.' I just blew my top, you know, I sort of went over the edge. And I said, 'What the bloody hell do you mean, you haven't looked at the fucking things.' (laughs) And, 'You've got nowhere here where someone can look at anything decently, you have to sit on the bloody floor with... You're more interested in what he's talking about on the telephone than my, the paintings that I'm showing you. All these people just walking around,' you know, I said, 'it's so undignified.' And you know, we had this...and I just picked them up and stomped off out. But... And the London Group show opened, there

was a private view that afternoon actually after lunch, and, there was...there was...there were one or two big ones of mine in the show actually, one large one, very large painting for me at that time in particular. And, I remember going along to the, into the gallery, and there was Roland standing looking at my big picture in the exhibition. (laughs) And I strode up to him and that, and he looked at me and he said, [whispering] 'It's a masterpiece Norman. It's a masterpiece.' (laughs) And I said... And... It certainly wasn't a masterpiece really. Well it wasn't [inaudible]. But he... It was...one could have these problems, you know, one could have these kind of situations arising, you could get over it with him. In many cases, you know, it would have been, that would be it, that would be the end of a relationship. But although it was stormy at times, I, I felt reasonably at home there. I should have tried to go somewhere else I suppose really, it was silly to be... I used to have exhibitions... I wasn't interested in the exhibitions really, and I had exhibitions that I never even saw. I couldn't be... I just sent the work down from up north and I didn't... Various occasions I didn't even go along to see what they, how they had hung them or anything.

What was Lillian Browse like?

She's always, I always found her quite charming really. [pause] She, she...oh she had...she was probably the one with the most brains actually, of the whole set-up. And... [pause] I didn't really have...I more or less left it to Roland and Delbanco really. I... She was always there, was always very nice and encouraging, and... Easy really, very easy person. She didn't have this great ego that the two chaps had, they were always... (laughs) They were always... I mean they were all very, they were always very kind. I mean I... I would go there...yes very often I used to stay with Delbanco, you know, when I came down to London for, for something or other, when I brought some paintings down or something, you know, they had this big house in Hampstead. And... He, you know, he used to say that I could stay there any time I wanted to.

What was his collection like?

Very very conservative in a way. He had...well obviously several Josef Hermans. They were mostly people that they showed. He had quite a lot of mine, all watercolours. He had...I don't know how many he had, he had quite a lot. And, they were hung all over the house, drawings and things. He liked graphic work actually, he really, I mean they... He loved Rodin's drawings, well who doesn't? And, Constantin Guys, you know, artist, Constantin Guys, and... It was, it was...it was mostly drawings actually, and small-scale work. I don't think he really liked oil paintings very much, but... He didn't appear to have many. But they had a lot of, a lot of, a lot of small bronzes, a lot of Rodins, they were very...Rodin was one of their... He had, I remember he had a large Rodin bronze out in his back garden actually. I think it belonged to them collectively, it was just, it was just being kept there by him, it wasn't entirely his. And... But... He was...he was...must have owned quite a lot of work really.

Was he married?

Yes. Yes, he was married.

[inaudible]?

Steffi[ph]. He was married, and had a mistress as well. (laughs) He... He was a funny man. At breakfast they would go down, and, he always had coffee with half a glass of rum actually in his coffee.

Good start to the day.

Mm.

I think we're going to stop there.

Mm.

[end of session]

[break in recording]

Restarting the interview with Norman Adams on the 12th of May at his home in London.

Now, we were talking before we broke off last time about Roland, Browse & Delbanco, and I think it would be very interesting to know what sort of contractual arrangements did you have with them and how the kind of pricing policy may have changed in the time that you were with them.

Yes. Well, they weren't the very first dealers I had. My first dealer was Gimpel Fils, in South Molton Street. And, I... At that time, the Young Contemporaries began actually, and I was amongst the founder members of the Young Contemporaries.

You mentioned that actually.

Did I?

Yes. I think...

And, well, the dealers picked people out, well Gimpels used to, with help from collectors, the odd collectors and that, and Howard Bliss, he worked with them to select artists for shows. And they took, at that time they were just taking a normal percentage. One has to, one has to come gradually to terms during, if one does a postgraduate studentship, gradually come to terms with the fact that you are going to be a professional artist, which is wonderful, is what you've always wanted, and that you are going to have to earn your living. And, which is, it's a necessity obviously. And, it... As I say, they took 33⅓ per cent of everything that they sold. Other than that, a contract didn't stretch any further. I mean they had no rights on me or anything, it was a gentleman's agreement that I didn't show in other galleries, certainly in London, without, you know an arrangement with

them. And, you know, that seemed fair enough. But... It...it... The percentage has gradually gone up during my time, and... Shortly after having two exhibitions with Gimpels, I then moved to Roland, Browse & Delbanco, where, as I said before, I'd been...well I was with them right up until they, they retired and closed down the business. I was...I was... I suppose I was very lazy in, in my promotion of my work in getting, doing, you know, sort of... I didn't go to anything, you know. At that point I'd left London and we bought the house, Butts, up in Yorkshire, and we, both of us really enjoyed living there, it's a wonderful place to be. And, but professionally, it was...it was madness really, because I was, I just, you know, it's...it's out of sight, out of mind as far as the dealers and things like that are concerned. There are a lot of young artists on the market, and... And also, it was...it was a mistake professionally. Although they were very nice, they weren't...they weren't always very nice, sometimes they were absolutely horrible, but Lillian was always nice as far as I can remember, they were very conservative, and, I...as at Gimpels, I felt that the whole place was far too...far too avant-garde for me, it wasn't the sort of thing that interested me, I felt, you know, sort of, very isolationist in the company there, but Delbanco's went to the opposite extreme, they were excessively conservative with a small c. And... You know... And they tended to...to rather frustrate me in what I thought was my natural progress, to a vision of things which I always had, I always had a vision of my own work and what I wanted to do with it. And I always felt that I, that it had to have this strong message, that it wasn't all about aesthetics and that... It was, it was... You know, obviously it was possible to be a modern artist, a contemporary artist, without being an avant-garde artist, I thought the old iron guard was a bit, running around with its head under its arm anyway by that time. And it still carries on. But... And generally, for a quiet life I exhibited mostly landscapes and things that, based on Yorkshire. They... They rather liked the idea of me living in Yorkshire, they thought that that, they could sell that idea to people, that people like the idea of someone living in the wild spots and painting wild moorland, countryside. And, and they liked sort of thick oily paint, and they liked the paintings to have, although modern, a nice old-fashioned look. And, they, they would... I remember in Constable's autobiography, well not his autobiography, it's, C R Leslie wrote the biography, but he based it almost entirely on Constable's own words, taken it from his letters. And, there's

one bit where he's staying over the weekend with one of his patrons, Lord Beaumont, and Beaumont, he supported Constable, he thought he was a great artist, but he felt that he was the patron, and therefore he was the boss, and he could tell Constable how to paint, simply because he was rich. But... And obviously Constable found this very irritating a lot of the time. And they were painting a view from the window and Beaumont went up and looked at Constable's painting said, 'Oh, what's all those splashes of white and crude green doing splashing about all over the place? An oil painting shouldn't look like that. Oil paintings should be the colour of an old violin.' And, I think Delbanco rather agreed with that, they liked their paintings to have the old violin varnished look. And, and the freshness and the harshness of Constable's sort of, weather pictures, it was too much for him to take at that time.

I mean did you carry on with your own vision while you were producing these works for...

Oh yes.

...Roland and Delbanco [inaudible]?

Yes, yes I did. Yes. And it didn't serve me badly. I mean, a lot of the imagery and things that I used in these sort of religious paintings, I mean I feel now I'm painting the sort of pictures I always wanted to paint. And what is very nice too, I had one or two very nice commissions, the sort of commissions that go with it. I'm not a particularly...I'm not at all a sort of church-going religious Christian at all, but, I do feel strongly about, I have very strong religious convictions, I'm not quite sure what they are, and, it...it...I find it very stimulating, the...the...the whole story and life of Christ I find very inspiring actually. And I get...that's where, what I find is a very rich source of ideas and... You know, I...I...I do feel that I understand something myself at any rate at the end of a painting that I didn't at the beginning. And that's... You know... And it... No, well, it's...it's wonderful, wonderfully moving experience.

When you made the decision to go up to Yorkshire, I mean it's an enormous kind of leap from the outskirts of London.

Mm.

How did you ever get to make that choice?

Well we are Londoners, both of us, and... You know... [pause] You know, I grew up in London, school and then at college, and...and then, right up until my mid-twenties I suppose it was. Then wanting to leave London, felt that... Certain things that... Oh yes, seems almost sort of, so sort of, small a reason in a way, so trivial a reason, but...I fell...I fell hook line and sinker for Thomas Hardy actually. I liked the poetry, and then, and I read, started reading all the novels, I read all the novels quite, relatively quickly, and finishing up with *Jude*. And, and then, on top of that I started...on the face of it what struck me as being rather unattractive book, *The Dynasts*. And... But, I found it absolutely tremendous. It's the only book of that type certainly that, when I got to the end of it, I went straight back to the beginning and read it straight through again. In fact I didn't want to stop reading it, you know, I felt that my life was incomplete without having the volume of *The Dynasts* in my pocket. And it was a sort of, it was that kind of, the innocent rural life, not in *The Dynasts*, *The Dynasts* of course was all about the Napoleonic Wars and, and this sort of thing, but the other novels, the earlier ones, the, *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, all these very sentimental ones, you know.

Very bleak though, weren't you put off?

Not at all. No, well, and it was...it was... I found the atmosphere of the country and the...and the, the community, the village community, that, you know, I wanted to experience, I wanted to live, work in, you know, in a small area where you got to know people very, it seemed very well. And... And... First of all we...we didn't go straight to Yorkshire, we tried all sorts of things actually. We were in Ireland, and we went over,

we went right to the west, which was very very quiet and, quite different to what it's like now in Ireland, so I gather, I've not been to Ireland recently, but... It was very quiet. Dublin, I remember coming back to Dublin after being in the west, and it being so, just like a village really, one knew everybody who arrived in Dublin. I had a letter of introduction, this is before I, this is whilst I was still at Gimpels actually, and, and Charles Gimpel knew Victor Waddington who was at that time, he was the only reasonable dealer in Dublin. He had this huge gallery. And I went...you know, we went, with an introduction from Charles Gimpel, and he was nice, Waddington was nice. He wasn't interested in my work, I showed...all I had with me was a sketchbook which I had been doing, a few watercolours and things of Connemara whilst we'd been over in the west. Whilst we were over in the west, we went out to the Aran Islands, to Inishmore, well Inishmore is the only one we actually stayed on. And... And we even considered living there. We were camping, and we were camping in this... Inishmore is a long, narrow island, and it has quite a narrow waist in the middle, and depending, in very rough weather the sea crashes right across the island, the waves hit one side and drain off at the other side of the island. And right in the middle of this waist there's a little village actually, Gort na gCapall it's called, and it's... But, they were...they were charming, the islanders. They offered to build us...they wanted us to stay, they offered to build us a house for £100. (laughs)

Wow.

And... But, I mean it was really a question of, sort of cracking, breaking off stones and piling them up in another place. [inaudible] landscape, very very rocky, and tiny little fields with only little...not much grass in [inaudible] ground. It was just all rock, and...and an absolutely minute field. And two or three of these Pictish churches, tiny little, well ruins, you know, with a little, very, again you know, you could get about a congregation of three I should imagine, and it would be full. And... But... There are several...you know, and various indications that man has been here in...in more, you know, in more determined and, more numbers than there were living there then. There was a fort, the Black Fort it was called, it's right up on the cliff edge, half of it had gone

with, as the cliff had tumbled. And so it was sort of half of it left, but the whole...a good half of it had just gone into the sea. But on that side of the island it was very rocky. Well it's rocky all round, there's no... There were...and when there were beaches, they were quicksand. It was a very unhospitable sort of place. But the people were very hospitable. But we didn't take up the offer, and, we went back to Galway, you go from Galway, get a boat up to there. And then went back to Dublin on our way back to England, and, calling in on Victor Waddington and...and all that. But... We...that was an early skirmish, thinking in terms of... We had gone to Ireland thinking about the possibility of maybe... But then there was, there was the thing of working and sending work back to the dealers, and it did...if you had to get it across.....

[End of F8737 Side A]

[F8737 Side B]

Continuing the interview with Norman Adams on the 12th of May. Tape 4 side B.

At that time, we were still living in Clapham, where we'd moved during my last year at the Royal College, Turnchapel Mews. But it's sort of, it's part...it's Battersea and Clapham actually, both, it's a crossover there. And, it's...yes, it's Cedars Road isn't it, which goes down from Clapham...just goes down from the Common, and Turnchapel Mews is just the mews just off the right as you're going away from the Common. Not a, not one of these, not a very picturesque and, you know, tarted up bit of mews place at all, it's very much a working place. There was a small factory underneath us, and, opposite, on the other side of the mews was a, a chap who had a couple of Daimler cars who did funerals and weddings. And... And repair, car repairs as well, he had this garage as well as funerals and things. And, we were living there in, in Clapham. And...and we just noticed, we were looking around, where we would go for...in the summer, and, you know, with half an eye on where we might go permanently. And we noticed on the map that, here we were in Clapham, that there was also a Clapham in Yorkshire, and, which is this little village, very picturesque little village, not far over the tops from where we are. And, not only was there a Clapham village, there was also a Clapham Common. And not only that, there was also a Clapham Junction.

How extraordinary.

And so, well, you know, it's...you know, Clapham...just out of, just silliness really, we thought we'd go and see what it was like. It was lovely. And... But we, we didn't find anything that was suitable for what we were looking for. But sitting in a little caf in the village, talking to the chap, the man who ran the café at that time was also...well he also edited a little local magazine which was the *Dalesman*, and, and they have a lot of advertisements in the *Dalesman* for property for sale and that sort of thing. And we were talking, talking to him about, we were possibly looking for somewhere, we might come and live out that way. And he said, well he had seen this little cottage over at Horton

that, it wasn't... it had no notice up on it or anything, but he was told that they wanted to sell it. And, so we just, it was just a walk over the top, over the cliffs. And, so we walked over the top. And when you first approach Ribblesdale, going across over into Ribblesdale, Horton is in Ribblesdale, going that way you go through what was at that time a couple of huge quarries, and, they blasted out this very, terribly wasteful actually, this beautiful limestone, lovely stuff. And they made lime of it, they had great kilns where it's burnt and turned into lime. And, and it was, it was...Settle, Settle Lime is what the firm...the firm that...and they were a big local firm, Settle Lime. Though some while later ICI I bought them out, but... When we arrived, at that time, we thought it looked absolutely horrible, you know, we were...it looked like an industrial village, this quarry belting out smoke, and, and there was blasting going on. And there was quite a lot of lorries coming and going. There was a perfectly good railway which was quite capable of carrying everything that they required away, but they sent it by road. And... But, when we got...we walked down, climbed down the hillside, and down into the village, it seemed much nicer as one got closer to the centre of the village, and you realised that the quarry was further away than you thought, you know. Looked from where you were as if they were absolutely together. And, it was a funny looking little house, it wasn't...not a pretty cottage at all. It was very old, it was pretty stark, just a block, you know, just a cube, one simple cube with, not very spectacular windows, they were quite small windows, here and there, dotted about, in a rather Corbusier-like modern, like a modern, avant-garde house, designed house. But it was very primitive indeed really. And it had grown bit by bit. Originally it was the...it was...well there is, there's the house and the barn and the small shippenn is one block of building. Small, very small shippenn which they... It was a small farm, small farmhouse. They had about four or five, half a dozen at the most, cows in the small shippenn for stores, had been stores which had been removed. And, and then this middling-large sort of barn, and the house, all adjoined. And, it seemed that the barn was ideal, could be a wonderful studio. And, and the shippenn would make a splendid sort of study for Anna. The house itself was very small, and... But... Anyway, we thought quite seriously about it, and we...we made...we... Afterwards we made her an offer, which she didn't accept. I mean she was a strange woman. She had only recently got married and was quite elderly, married late, very late, she was...

Well she must have turned sixty I would say, just after sixty. And, her husband, he had retired from doing something, and they'd got married. And they ran, in Settle, which is the nearest town to the village, they had run an antique shop, and, the cottage was full of their ex-stock, you know, it was... Very, very nice, very antique sort of furniture. But, they moved to this wild place just to have an idyllic, lovely end to their life, they thought, you know. Found that...they'd never lived together before, found they couldn't stand each other. (laughs)

How unfortunate.

And, he had been a, he had been a solicitor, and he had...but, he had retired from it, and he...and he was just bored in the house there, and he... He used to go down to the village pub rather a lot, much to her disgust, and not only that, he got himself a job there as a barman. (laughs) And he was having a wonderful time, really quite enjoying it really. But she, she was absolutely disgusted and very angry. And, anyway, he, he took off eventually, he left and went down to live with her sister down in the West Country, down in Devon somewhere. And... But... She was there on her own, he had gone, this man, when we went up and knocked at the door. And, and she was very suspicious of us, you know, when we asked if the house was...we'd heard that the house was for sale. And, she didn't say it was, and she didn't say it wasn't, you know. But she...you know, she...you know, she started showing us around. Terrible way of trying to sell a house, I mean she was pointing out all the horrible things about the place. (laughs) And to cap it all, she said that, she said... We went up and looked, just peeked in the bedroom, and she said, 'And I always sleep with a pistol under my pillow.' And, I said, 'Oh yes? What on earth for?' you know. 'Wouldn't you, living in a place like this?' (laughter) Amazing. But, anyway, we...we got the name of a surveyor and asked if...you know, we were seriously considering buying her house, and that, we had arranged for a surveyor to look over it for us. She took offence at that, we didn't take her...the fact that we hired a surveyor, we were not taking her word for it; we, virtually, we were accusing her of dishonesty. And... But any rate, the surveyor had a look at it. And, he recommended a price. There was, there were some things that had to be done. And... But... She didn't... No, we had a lot

of very unpleasant letters backwards and forwards, and then the whole thing went cold. Then some while later we had a letter from the husband, who we had never seen before or heard anything from, he was right out of the picture. He wrote to us and said that his...that he was just...they'd divorced, they'd divorced, and...and that, you know, he had been sent this bundle of letters, my letters and her letters back. And, he apologised, he said...he said, 'If you're still interested in buying the house,' he said, 'I apologise for the acrimonious sound of my wife's correspondence.' And... But... So we bought it. But what was quite extraordinary, the day we actually moved in, he was...it was...we had never met him, but he was...he used to cycle about the place in the village where they were living down in Devon, and he had a very bad accident on his bicycle and he, a car had swerved, hit him or something, and he crashed his head against a wall, and never recovered. And that was on the day we moved into the house. It's an extraordinary thing really, sequence of events. Anyway, the studio's much bigger now, I had an extension built onto it.

You're still there, you've still got it up there?

Oh yes, yes, still up there, we still spend at least half the year there.

Mm.

All through the Seventies, we lived there all the time. And then, when I started...I was... I wasn't doing any teaching at all, I was...we were just there painting, and sending my work down to London and having...this is at Roland, Browse & Delbanco. I had been made an RA just a bit before I think. No no, no, it was... Yes, I was made an RA some time during the Sixties. And... I used to send works down to the Summer Exhibition. Very often, I never came down myself all through the...we stayed there, and I, you know, they even had exhibitions at Roland, Browse & Delbanco that I've never seen, I just sent the work and left it to them, and I didn't even go down to London, I just didn't want to go to London at all, leading I think a perfectly satisfactory life. Except that as I say, I would

have developed faster if I'd been, had a stronger footing in London before I cut off my thighs entirely.

Did you enjoy village life?

I didn't participate in it all that much. Anna bore the brunt of it. (laughs) Yes, up to a point we did. But we... Of course we had...then we had the two children, the two boys. When we first moved in, we had no children. Anna was pregnant. And Jacob was born just, just before we actually moved in. And then, then...then a year and a half or so, or two years later at the most, we had Benjamin. And...

What kind of impact did that have on your life?

Well, you know, as they sort of, they grew up there, and...and they went to the village school, to begin with, you know, that made you much, knitted you in to the community in a way. And... But... We... After, after the... Yes, first of all, when we bought the house, I'd got a job at Manchester, and I was head of the painting department at Manchester College of Art, and I did that all through the Sixties. And we used...and it's fifty-five, sixty miles to Horton from Manchester, and, we used to, we'd go back every weekend, you know, I... I only did...I did four days in Manchester, and we had...we all had these long weekends, we had Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday up there, or...and the middle of the week down in Manchester.

The whole family?

Yes, yes we all went back for the... No, no, I went up... Yes, yes we did, we used to travel, we travelled separately, but, we had...we had two cars then which was ridiculous really. And... But when I first started going into Manchester, I didn't like, I didn't... I didn't like Manchester when I first went there, I didn't like the town, and, I hated the principal of the art school, who I...I'd gone and had an interview.

Who was it?

What's his name? He's dead now anyway, but his... Holden, John Holden. And he... He wasn't a painter, he was... I don't know what he'd been at college, a designer of some sort. But he... But the...but the place had possibilities. It was...the studios were lovely, and they obviously were, you know, they were trying... It was at a time when things were being reassessed and the old art school system was being redesigned, and it meant the closing down of a lot of the very small art schools, and the expansion of one or two big centres. And eventually wrapping them up within a kind of local polytechnic thing. And it's when they started, you know... And now they're all called, they're all called universities.

This is the Summerson-Coldstream Report.

That's right.

Yes. That had come.

But, when I, when I left, I left in a great cloud of disgust really, I was...I had... But we, we had bought this little place in the Outer Hebrides, and, I... I'd been there for about nine years, at the art...at Manchester, I was running the department for that time. And... And enjoying quite a lot of it, I had a very nice... The work was very good actually, and I had some...you know, there was quite a lively staff. People that I was able to appoint myself. Well, what he had done which was quite remarkable, Holden, was that he had made it so that you didn't have to, if you took on the job, you didn't have to inherit the staff that were there.

Rather clever.

And, I don't know how he did it, but you know, I was given a completely open situation to staff it just how I wanted.

And who did you appoint?

What?

Who did you bring in to the art...?

Well, I mean there was... I actually got Hockney to come up once or twice as a kind of visitor. And... But I knew, I'd got... He was already there, not Hockney but Norman Stevens, you've heard of Norman Stevens? I mean he, he was also from Bradford, with Hockney, they'd been at art school together. And, and John Loker and... I mean, they're not people that you may...they're not very well-known people, but they're still working with... I mean John, I saw him only the other day actually, he's...he shows fairly regularly at Flowers East Gallery, and, he's a good painter. But, I got him in. Norman Stevens, who was teaching in the Foundation course, on the Foundation course, I stole him and I gave him a job in the painting school, which obviously he was very pleased to get. And... Oxtoby used to come as well, David Oxtoby. But, it was... I find, I enjoyed the actual art school part of it. One didn't have...it was sufficiently large, it was a big, huge set-up really, it grew and grew and grew, and it was sufficiently large for you to be really independent in your own department, what...all the principal was concerned about wasn't so much what he thought, he didn't know anything about it anyway, but what other people thought. You know, if he thought the place had a good reputation, that was good enough for him. And... But he was, he was not a very nice man. Anyway, after I'd been there nine years I thought I wanted...and we'd bought this place in the Hebrides and I wanted to spend a year there. And I thought I deserved the sabbatical year. And, in the end he said, 'Well, you can have a year off if you like, but it will be without pay.' Well it wasn't my idea, the sabbatical year, but, I took it anyway, I said, 'Well I'm going anyway, you know, I want a year off to, just to work.' And, and we went off to the Hebrides. But... During that time, that first year... No it wasn't the first year, it was... It was quite early on when we were up in the, on Scarp, Patrick Heron had written an article in the *Guardian* newspaper, *Manchester Guardian* it was called then, you know, it was

before it became just the *Guardian*, and [inaudible] made into offices in Manchester. And, I knew the people, one or two people at the *Guardian* anyway, and... Whilst we were up there... The old art school business of, became part of polytechnics and, and all the rest of it, and the art schools losing their independence and all the rest of it, there was a lot going on at that time. Patrick had written an article which was in the *Guardian* newspaper, which was titled 'Murder of the Art Schools', and, he... The features editor... It sparked off a lot of correspondence actually, a lot of articles came, written by different people afterwards, mostly supporting Patrick Heron's view; there were one or two against him, and, but overwhelmingly in support of the view that the art schools should be independent of polytechnics, and all that, and that it was the end of things. And, the...the *Guardian* features editor, I knew him slightly, but, he rang me whilst I was up in Yorkshire, and asked me if I'd read Patrick Heron's pieces, his article, and the other ones. And, I had...I'd only just got back from Scarp, I said I'd been in the Outer Hebrides for just over a year, and I'd not read anything, any newspapers at all, you know. And... And he gave me a rough idea what Patrick had written originally, and...and the general thing about the others, what had been written in support and against. And then he asked me, would I, would I...was I leaving the art school, and if I was, was it to do with the art school politics at the moment, the Patrick Heron's thing? And I said...I said, 'Not really, but I'll write you a piece if you like.' And he wanted it quite quickly. I sat down and did it, and read to him over the telephone the next morning. And it was published. It all happened very very quickly, and... But, in Manchester all the art school folks and...they were... Are you off love?

ANNA: Yes. Cheerio.

Bye.

What time will you be back?

ANNA: Oh, half-past three, something like that.

OK. Mm. See you. Have a nice time. And...

We were just saying, the kind of response from the Manchester Art School.

Yes, well... [telephone ringing] Oh gosh, the telephone.

I'm going to stop the tape.

[break in recording]

Restarting the tape.

And, it... So I wrote this piece, and it was published, and... A lot of the people on the staff thought it was wonderful, they all agreed with it. Holden of course didn't, and he thought I'd betrayed the art schools, betrayed all my, all my friends and colleagues, and the people that admired you and thought...and you thoroughly... But anyway, you know... 'You needn't come back, we don't want you here.'

Oh dear.

And, you know, that suits me. And, so, that... You know, that...that was that. And...

It would be interesting for the tape just to explain what the kind of feeling was about the changes, because I don't think most people realise the background to all this.

Well it was...it was that... It was... I mean all sorts of things were going you see. They'd virtually gone, the junior departments had vanished. It was becoming a very, huge and inhuman affair really. I mean, my thoughts on the subject was that, I mean, there was nothing...I mean there was no earthly reason why it should be linked with the polytechnic which was a, not a very good polytechnic, and there was no...nothing...it had nothing to offer us in exchange for our presence. I thought that... I mean I had discussed it with

him, and... One of the things that, that did happen whilst I was there, I got on very friendly with Professor White, John White, who was the Professor of Fine Art at the university in Manchester, the old university. And... But it wasn't a practical course, it was purely art history and, academic in that way. But they had a kind of paint, painting group at the sort of amateur...there was something extra to their degree, they could go along and paint, a life model and that kind of thing. And... And he had asked me on occasions if I'd go along and talk to the students, or... And I gave one or two lectures about painting to them. And we got on rather well. And I thought it would have been a much better idea if we went in with that lot, into the university, if it was going to go anywhere, and...and, you know, where the general mood of things was sympathetic, and where, you know, I felt, you know, it was... It was the atmosphere, you know, I mean, the art schools are, were at any rate, wonderful places, I think so, it's a wonderful education. And...

I mean I know that the kind of general intention was to raise the academic ante wasn't it, to kind of...

Yes.

...make students better qualified.

Yes it was, yes it was. It was... Anyway, Patrick Heron rang me. The Queen's Elm was where all great decisions in those days were taken actually, in the Fulham Road, it was a very famous arty pub at that time; it's different, that's changed too. But... He had this discussion going on there one evening apparently, and Norman Stevens was involved, he was always involved if something like that was going on. And, the result...during the debate going on, Patrick Heron... Because Norman had told him that I'd virtually got the sack in Manchester, and Patrick rang me, he said, 'Did you get the sack because you wrote that piece, is that why you got the sack?' you know. And... And I said, 'I suppose it just...I suppose it was, but it just brought things to a head really, I mean...' And he, he wanted to...he said, 'Well we don't want to leave it like that.' He wanted us to make a

great hoo-ha about it you see. And, I didn't want to really, I said, 'I'm not going back anyway, I don't want to go back.' And, you know, I didn't see the point in making a...I'm not going to take it any further. But...

When...

Yes?

When you were Head of Painting at Manchester...

Mm.

Give me an idea of how you approached sort of developing the department, what kind of expectations you had for the students, that sort of thing.

I thought the... Well one... I mean, I thought that, all the staff, but particularly those that were there for more than a couple of.....

[End of F8737 Side B]

[F8738 Side A]

Yes, in the Sixties wasn't it. Long time.

Yes.

Continuing the interview with Norman Adams on the 12th of May. Tape 5 side A.

Now, as we sort of ended the last tape, we were talking about how you chose to kind of...what you wanted to build in in your role as head of the fine art department at Manchester.

Well, I just wanted to say, it's for talented people, simply that really. And any college or any kind of, situation like that at all is...I mean is just total of the bits you've got in it. And, and I heard the students saying, 'What is it you're looking for when you interview students?' afterwards, when they come, after, when they've been in, to try to get into the place, they ask you, 'What is it you're really looking for?' And I said, I'm...I'm...you know, 'What is it you're expecting?' That, you know, I just, I've no particular idea at all, a totally open mind really, I want to see what they've got. It's... And it's the same with the young staff when they come along. And... It's so, silly a lot of things that... I had...with John Loker, when he came to me for a job, he'd just left the College, had been a student a short time, obviously he hadn't built a great reputation, but I knew his work quite well, I'd seen it and I liked it. And, I liked him, and... But he came... Amongst his references was one from his present employer which was the principal...he was doing a bit of teaching at Norwich Art School, a day and a half or something, which he wanted to leave anyway. And he had a, a reference came, quite...you know, he had not...he didn't bring it with him, it came by post, and... And it was from the principal of the art school. And it was terrible, I mean a shocking reference, you know. Nobody could possibly give anybody a reference like that. And of course, I went...I went and told Holden that I'd made up my mind, I'd interviewed which one I wanted, and it was Loker. He said, 'You can't take Loker, not with a reference like he had, you can't, you can't give it, you can't

do that.' And, I said, 'Well I want him, he's obviously the best person there.' I said, 'In any case [inaudible], if he really was as bad as that, the bloke would give him a bloody marvellous reference, because he wanted to get of him. But nobody...I mean he must know he's not going to get rid of him if he passes him on with a reference like that.' And, any rate, he let me take him, but in a different position; he wouldn't let me give him...a kind of part-time basis. Didn't matter, it was more...he got more money for it, but a little bit less security. Anyway, he was...he was good, John. I saw him only the other night actually too, he's...he's been doing quite well. And, you know, he's...he's...they've taken him on at Angela Flowers, Flowers East. And... But, it's...it's simple in a way, I mean, you just want to have the people who you think are really good people, and have something very interesting you feel that they, they need to say and what they're trying to put forward. And it's... And also, you mustn't... Gowing said, Gowing used to...Lawrence Gowing was on the, the...I forget what it was called, the committee that followed the Summerson... Summerson was the first one wasn't it, that came, and then there was something else, I forget what it was called, but Lawrence Gowing was the, the leader of the group that came to Manchester at that time. And, you know, he was...he agreed, the important thing is that you must have good artists who are seen to be good artists really, that they are going concerns as artists. And I mean, it's...it's the only way you can give the young students the confidence, and... And it's the...and it's the only way that gives you the right to be in that position. If you're a clapped-out old artist who paints one painting a term or something like that, you're no good to man or beast really. And then you've got to have facilities in the place where they can carry on working, and their teaching will relate to their practice. Anyway.

What kind of teaching happened at that time? Because, I know there was a lot of radical activity at the Royal College for example, where I suspect a lot of teaching was ignored. I mean, did you have any of that sort of thing happen at the...?

Ignored?

Well, you know, people rejecting the previous generation very firmly.

I see. Well that, yes, that had... We were past all that thought weren't we, in the Sixties, that was...

Yes.

That was going on when I was, when I first went to the Royal College, and, Darwin hadn't been taken over all that long, and he'd sacked everybody. And, he, he didn't, I mean he couldn't...of course he couldn't do it, sack people, any easier than anybody else could, but he, he made their lives such misery that they had...drove into a nervous breakdown, you know. And... And he, he was just a very ruthless sort of guy. Anyway, it... I mean it certainly made it better in its way, it was...but he did it in a very cruel sort of way, and it was... It made a horrid atmosphere at first, but it... It... It gradually sorted itself out. I mean things seem in some ways to take care of themselves, because... There, I mean it...when... They all became a rather degenerate lot really, and very boozy, they were always... I didn't agree with that side of things. I remember when Darwin...I remember Darwin giving a lecture actually when I was a student and him saying that, 'Don't confine your teaching to just walking round the studios criticising their paints and drawings. More interesting things come to light down in the pub down the road.' And that sort of thing. But, I didn't think that was necessary really. I didn't feel that, you know, that one... That the... It's easy to take advantage of the fact that... I mean you're in a very responsible position as a teacher, whatever your subject is, and...and you have to...you've got to play fair.

Yes, I agree. But, in relation to Manchester, what I'm trying to get at was, were you going for more sort of formal, traditional type of practice for your students, or...?

Oh yes.

Yes.

It was... And there was... Yes, no, entirely figurative work, and, rather bad academic work. I don't mind good academic work, whatever it is it has to be good, but... It was... And the studios had such a dreadful atmosphere. In fact when they had their first exhibitions, I wasn't appointed then, I got my... Old Williamson was still in charge, and... And then you got acceptance. I mean the reason they got acceptance was that they were in, you know, they were in a position as far as the whole place, the plan for the whole of the country's, the educational schemes over the whole country, they were in such a position at Manchester, well they were the absolutely vital, focal point really. And so everything, it would have been easier for them because they were half-way there already. And, and also, they got it on condition that he was able to tell them that everything was just about to change. That, you know, he had, he convinced them, quite truthfully, they got rid of him and, you may as well find somewhere else for him to go. And whoever was going to be in charge, would have a complete free hand. And... And Gowing told me that that was the only... Because... I've seen photographs of what, how they photographed the studios and everything, and... I mean I don't encourage terrible, messy techniques, but this was, I mean it was, as I say, it's like a funeral parlour. And everything was highly polished, there was not a spot of paint on the floor. In the studios there were great vases full of flowers. (laughs) And you know, and all the students were in their very best clothes, and... And there were these little life paintings on the easels with the model sitting in a very coy position. And... I, it was pathetic.

Well it's still going on you know, I mean all these quality assessment exercises. I can't tell you how much painting and politicking goes on at polytechnics nowadays for just the same reason, or universities as they are now.

Mm.

Yes, no it's rather sad.

Anyway, we changed, we did change it there, changed it drastically, and... And I got a young staff. I mean I was only, I was quite young myself, I'd only been...well, I began, I was quite young to have been in that position.

Mm.

I was...1960... Yes. No, what am I talking about. Yes, 1960. And I stayed for nine years.

I mean when you were, had this kind of, rupture with the Manchester organisation over your article, were you able to provide financially without what must be relatively substantial salary?

Well, yes I was. I had to...I didn't know how...how long one could have gone on. I was doing quite well really. I started off, I had this huge commission to begin with, at the beginning of the year, to paint the murals at this church in south London, St Anselm's in Kennington. And, they were huge, I know... Bigger than they had intended, you know, but it was what I wanted to do. They went right down inside of the church, down both sides from the door to the altar, and, they're seventy foot long, each one. And very very loosely based on *Pilgrim's Progress*, and... But... And they went... They were eleven foot deep, above the arches, and there was a window, there was a twelve, twelve, thirteen feet stretch of plain wall before you got to the windows, and there was this sort of clerestory window running right round the top of the church, quite high up. And there was this band of completely empty wall right from the springing of the arches through to the sill at the bottom of the windows. And that was, that was about twelve foot. And so I had... They all, my paintings were eleven foot high, and they went the whole seventy foot, in sections, I painted it all in sections. I painted it all up in Yorkshire actually, on great sheets of canvas, which I stuck onto the wall, and marouflaged onto the plaster. And, that took me a couple of years, and kept me for about five years really, you know. And, I mean we lived very economically up there. Had no base in London at that time at all. And, the overheads were very very light indeed. And, it was the only place where I

could have painted them anyway too, because, I hadn't got...the place I had in London wasn't anything like big enough to do that sort of scale of work. And then... But then...and then I had this regular arrangement with Roland, Browse & Delbanco, about every two years I had an exhibition, and... And it...we...it...it wasn't... Anna did little bits of jobs too occasionally, she...she was called in, she did the Settle High School actually, she went there, one of the... There were two painting, art teachers, and, one of them was ill and she went as an assistant to the other one, they asked her if she would do it. I mean she was, she was qualified to teach, she had done her N.D.D.s and things in painting, and then, in painting and in sculpture. And, so, you know, she did. She never got to do her teacher training thing, that sort of thing you're supposed to for teaching children, you know. It doesn't matter in art schools and that sort of thing, you could go there without anything at all. But... No, not exactly. They expect you to have been to either the Royal College or the Slade, but... Any rate, so she did that on and off, and, and that was more money. And...

How did you find young parenthood?

All right. Mm. [inaudible] two boys, they were... No, it was, it was fine really. But, that particular period, when I wasn't going anywhere, I think the...that was the Seventies; during the Sixties, right from the Sixties we'd been living mainly there. Actually towards the end of those nine years when I was at Manchester we had actually bought a small house, but, for a long time we just had, we had no house in Manchester; the first part of it Anna stayed up at Butts all the time, and I came back for the long weekends. But, she got fed up with that, and... She developed what she called village paranoia. (laughs) And, it... And then, the boys had finished their time at the village school and they were now in the higher school down in Settle, Settle High School, which was a good school, which is the one where she used to do a bit of teaching. There are two schools in Settle, Settle High School and Giggleswick, the boys' public school, which...and, to which, what's his name, who was a friend of hers, the BBC man who... He used to teach there actually. He died of some sort of awful illness.

Oh, Glyn Worsnip[ph]?

No.

No?

He was a, you know, he... Well they were sort of interviewing type shows he was on, he interviewed people and... He was a bit notorious actually. I mean he was a nice man, but... But he... Oh. [pause] No. They reckon he caught this, something, disease when he was travelling abroad. Hm. [pause]

Would you have considered sending your children to private school, or, was it a sort of political no no?

No, not really. No, I...we had...no, no we never thought of doing that. And in any case, then... Then, Jacob went off to art school, he started going to Bradford College, and...and Ben went to university. He went off to Newcastle, but he...he studied biochemistry, he wanted to be a scientist. And... [pause] And it was just, just the two of us there at that time, during the term times, and... No Jacob came with us, he was still living at home of course, he was only down the road in Settle, until he went to Bradford, it was a bit too far to...and he had digs in Bradford.

You mentioned going to live in the Outer Hebrides for a year. That's a very sort of...

[inaudible]... We had the place for about ten years. And, we went there most summers. And... It was, it was growing up really that stopped us going there really, the... We had...towards the end it became an almost uninhabited island, we just got people coming over from time to time. One or two people bought the crofters' places, having them just as holiday residences. Which we were at that, we were only there during the summer at that time. And, you had to keep your own boat, because there was no way of getting across after a bit, the islanders... When we first started going there, you could just get a

message across and they'd come cross and take you across. But, you know, when you're living there, you have to have a way of getting back, because there's not much you could...there are no shops on the island or anything at all. And, we used to go on shopping expeditions to Stornoway and that, and... Had to come across a day when you thought it was going to be calm. It's over a mile to get across the water. It could be ferocious actually. It wasn't the kind of sea for amateurs to muck about on, and...which is what we were, which I was anyway. And... And we did have one or two scary moments. But... Particularly with the boys, because they were so foolishly brave. (laughs) And, Jacob was always wanting to go out, and... But we... No, we... They enjoyed it, had a wonderful time really, they... They made lobster boxes, or rather the islanders made them, they made these lobster boxes, take [inaudible]. Every, almost every evening we had lobster, lobster suppers. Sitting up in the middle of the night, you know, sort of cooking lobsters, and lots of other things. Fish was good, the sea was utterly stocked to the hilt with fish. And, one absolutely magic occasion when, there was a tremendous storm, and, and it had rained for, for a couple, the best...for a day and a half, and, we put the lobster pots out. There's a small...I mean just a huge rock really, Tara...not Taransay, I forget what it's called, but, there's sort of rocky shallows round the back, and, we'd often put the lobster pots down there, because there were a lot of lobsters. And he wanted... The next morning the sea was still pretty, pretty turbulent, but obviously, you could tell the storm was dying down, it was...you know, it was getting better on the way there. And, so we...I gave way and we went. Just Jacob and me; Ben didn't want to get up, and, he was altogether not so enthusiastic about fishing as Jacob was. And going across there, going across the Sound to find the pots, this... I think, I don't know whether...being such a stormy couple of days, I think a lot of the fish and things had come into the sheltered waters, had come out...or maybe they just had been driven in by, by the movement of the sea. But, it was solid fish, and it was just, it was as if you were floating on fish, you know. And then, these great porpoises, that sort of kept whirring round. And they're very friendly actually, they come right up and nudge the side of the boat. And the seals as well, there was always seals there, there were masses of seals. But... And on that occasion, you know, they completely surrounded the boat, the seals and the porpoises. We found our lobster pots eventually; you had to go, you had to

get right into very shallow water to get them, with lots of them...they're very rocky. And... I was at one end of the boat with the engine, we had a sort of, outboard, small outboard engine on it. Jacob was leaning over the front, looking for our lobster pots, looking down into the water, and eventually he saw them, he started pulling up... He had his back to where I was, but I...I could see just this huge mountain coming up out of the sea, and it was a, he'd got...one of these great big killer whales, you know.

Oh.

With the white underneath and the black on the back. And, it...it...it was absolutely huge, and it was, it was... And I remember sort of nudging Jacob saying, 'Hey Jacob, what...what do you make of that?' He looked at very seriously. 'Mm. I think we ought to go home.' (laughs)

Sounds amazing.

I mean we were...we were in shallow water, it couldn't get in there. But to get out, we had to go out past it you see. But obviously, we had to wait for it to move on a bit. But it was a very exciting morning, it was...everything was so vigorous and, so much of it about. But I think, I think it...you know, one...[inaudible]... I think it was a great benefit from the years we spent there actually. I did a lot of work. And, I had an exhibition in the park with Eddie Middleditch and Adrian Berg, on the subject of, sort of objectivity landscape or something, at the Serpentine Gallery in the park. And, I did a set of these large watercolours which I called the... And oval, they were all in an oval shape, I called it the *Oval Marine Passion*. And... It was...it was just... We had a room each in the Serpentine. I thought, I thought they were rather good at the time. But they've been dispersed, they weren't kept together, some have been sold. There are one or two still knocking around in my studio in Yorkshire. But...

Yorkshire sounds pretty isolated. What made you think of going to this sort of even more isolated place?

It's...it's not really isolated... I mean the place itself is a very small village in sort of semi-mountainous, quite, quite...we're right in the Pennines, you know, it's just south of the Lake District. The next town on after Settle is Kendal. And, and it's...it's nearer to Settle than Kendal, and then it goes up to, it goes up to Ribblesdale, the Ribble begins just up at the...in...it comes out of [inaudible], and it goes down out into at Preston, down at Preston it's a vast river, goes straight out, and goes... It's its own independent...it doesn't flow to any other river, it just goes straight out into the sea. And, it's wild, but it's...it... There is a station there, you can go by train to London from Horton-in-Ribblesdale and be there by midday, before twelve you can be in... You just, you get the train from Horton, it comes down from Carlisle and it's the...it's the famous line actually, a very picturesque line, Settle-Carlisle line, which train enthusiasts have managed to keep open, but... Certainly it was something that Mr Beaton[ph] or whoever it was, wanted to close it, the station, but, it's still there and you can get a train. Horton Station, you don't have to go anywhere, just, from home you just go down the lane and through the village to the station, and on that you go to Leeds, direct to Leeds, and then you make a connection to London. It's very...it's very easy to get... When we're out there, and if I have to come down to London for something, we don't drive down, we always go by train. We have to drive up really and back, if we're going to London, because all the stuff we usually carry, bringing paints and canvases and, boards and things. And...

Well you work on quite a big scale don't you. Do you have sort of transportation problems, or do you have a, you roll your canvases up or something?

Well, these paintings...these are large watercolours, you know. That's one that's a cut-out too, do something on. And you... And, until you actually frame them of course, then they're a bind, you know, there you are, but until...whilst they're in that state, you can roll them. This one I've just finished, my dark...you see my dark angel?

Oh yes.

Very dark angel with bright wings. It's...it's...that's five foot high. It's quite big really. But yes, transport is a problem, and storage.

I was going to say, do you have a lot of work in store?

Only here, in the two studios. Though there are some things they kept for me for some while in the RA, but... They did store some for me, I asked them if they would, in...they have a big warehouse over near King's Cross, where they store things, it's mostly the shop, RA Enterprises, [inaudible], but, it's not suitable for leaving paintings, so I won't do it again. One, a very big one which they had there in store, they damaged. They said they'd restore it for me, but they haven't done, it's still at the framer's.

Well I'm going to stop because we're very close to the end of the tape.

[End of F8738 Side A]

[F8738 Side B]

Continuing the interview with Norman Adams on the 12th of May. Tape 5 side B.

Just kind of, going back a little bit in time. It would be interesting to know more about your involvement with the London Group, kind of, historically relatively unrecorded.

It was...I really can't remember the dates now, but it was during the time that I was with Roland, Browse & Delbanco. Quite early years I think, it was the years... I mean I was... Well, [inaudible] of course. It was during the, the few years that we carried on in London, before we bought the house in Yorkshire, and...and... But that was when I, the President asked me if I'd be a member. And, I can remember the... It began, the London Group, the London Group was supposed to be the sort of avant-garde. It developed in opposition to the Academy, which everybody was very sick of, it was awful, it had a terribly bad period, the Academy. I think old Munnings was President, who was a ghastly man. And, you know, he painted the horrible horses and things. And it was...and it was...and the Royal Academy was so, so reactionary, and all...and virtually it was impossible to become a member of it unless you were that kind of painter; they weren't interested in getting a broad idea of what was going on, they were very narrow in what they approved. And so, the London Group was formed. It was... There was a dominance of the Euston Road type people I suppose, and, there were far more people, ex-inhabitants[????] of the Slade that had been at the Royal College [inaudible], all that, the...that side of things. It was stylistically, the strongest sort of influence in its early days was the sort of Euston Road painters, Coldstream and Lawrence Gowing and all those people.

Did it sort of...

[inaudible], I've forgotten his name. Claude Rogers.

Yes.

And... And when they made me a member, Claude Rogers was the President-elect. They had a similar sort of format as the Royal Academy, they decided to have a president and vice-president and a committee and the same sort of, and the members. It was virtually the same kind of structure as the Royal Academy. Much smaller of course. And they had the disadvantage of not having a permanent venue in London, they had to hunt around and find a gallery every blinking year, you know. And it... And, I went as a member, and, I remember Alan Davie was made a member the same time as I was, and they...when they make a new member, they take you out to a, for an evening meal at Schmidt's in Charlotte Street, I remember that. And, I remember, you know, Davie and myself were entertained on that occasion. And, that was quite nice. But...

Did they kind of hold the left-wing politics that you might have associated with some of the...?

It showed...it showed more original type people. It showed no[??] artists, abstract painters and, anything really. And tended not to show the very academic people, unless they were of that particular kind, the Coldstream kind. I remember Euan Uglow also joined about the same time as I did. And, I got to know Euan quite well actually. In fact Euan moved into our studio when we moved out of there, in Battersea, and, and he's still there actually.

What kind of critical reception did the London Group artists get at, in those early days?

It was much the same really. I think the, the critics hadn't got round to being so awful to the Royal Academy at that time, when the, when the exhibitions were, deserved to be criticised heavily, the critics would... The critics were much tamer in those days, and, tended to approve more of the Royal Academy than other things. There were one or two enthusiastic people who wrote about the London Group. But it was always...it was always very insecure. I remember we had once or twice, we had shows in that gallery, was the Arts Council gallery wasn't it, in, you went up a lift, do you remember it? It's

round the corner, behind the Royal Academy there, just off Burlington Gardens, in Savile Row where the suits come from, I think just round that corner, just behind the Royal Academy. It was...it was, you know, before the Serpentine was built, before the Hayward Gallery was built, it was the main showing place for the Arts Council, there. And, we [inaudible] the London Group once or twice. And there was another gallery which is in the road that runs right beside the National Gallery, on the left-hand side of the National Gallery where the new building is now. Suffolk Street is it up there, goes up behind the Strand. No not the Strand.

Haymarket.

Yes, Haymarket.

Yes.

And, it was a nice, big spacious gallery. Actually the Young Contemporaries used it as well actually for the first two or three of their shows. But then it ceased to be a gallery, very expensive property, I suppose people...they...it was sold, and has become something quite quite different now. But that was, that was the best of the galleries that they had, and some of their best shows were shown there I think.

So who organised the exhibitions, the committee?

Yes. Yes, it was all, all volunteers.

Did you get involved at all?

I did, yes, on the selection, just a little bit. Not a lot really. I was...I wasn't a member for very long. Well, I say, I suppose I still am actually, but... They've become very irregular in their shows; I mean years, several years went by at one point without there being any

show at all, largely, you know, because, when you're working with...you need a few actual enthusiasts and people who have got more time on their hands, you know.

Who do you think was the sort of key motivator in the time you were there?

Well Gowing was very active, he did a lot. He became President too. Well no, he was President, that's right, it was...Claude Rogers became President after Gowing. And...

I mean Gowing is remembered as, in very interesting ways by artists I've interviewed. Did you have a close relationship with him, or was it just...?

Well quite close I think really.

Mm.

Quite liked each other at first, but then we, I don't know... He was... Actually, during those years when I was living at Butts all the time, he... I'd forgotten about that, I... He was, at that time he was Professor of Fine Art at Leeds University, and he wrote and asked me if I would like to come and do a day's teaching from time to time, come in to the university. And, I thought it would be quite interesting, not too bad a drive from where we were to Leeds, it's about three...a bit more than half as far as going to Manchester really, it was not a bad drive at all. And, so I, so I started going there. But then he, he left, and this... He went to the Slade, Professor to the Slade, and, I didn't get on with the chap who followed him, and I left. But, I... Tim something or other. That was odd too, because, Tim...Timothy something came, he was a Marxist, and...and he really wanted to change everything, and, he wasn't interested in easel painting, and I didn't want the students to stop easel painting. And he wanted [inaudible] fine art thing to do[??] with the city[??]. Which amount to a kind of paper chase through the City really, people leaving clues on street corners and that, you know. And, I said, 'What are they doing? They are just playing silly buggers.' And... But he...he thought it was real elitist stuff, art, he was going to take it down a peg or two. That the...you know, it's

people, it's that count. And... And anyway, I couldn't really be bothered with it really. We had one or two terrific rows. And then I left, and... But apparently he'd... It's extraordinary really, he'd... You see, he wanted a different kind of holiday for himself, you know, and his family, and he found it in one of the evening papers, he looked, he was scanning through it, looking for an interesting holiday [inaudible]. And, he read about this remote island on the west coast of Harris, and he booked it up for himself and his family. And, well then, he hadn't been there a week or so, and I knew that the cottage, the cottage he had hired was actually a friend of ours who had bought it, and it was quite near to our place, just down the, a bit further down the hill. And, as he came ashore, the first thing he saw was us, me, on the quayside. We'd just... (laughs) We'd just had this row back in Leeds.

Very conceptual. (laughs) Oh how funny.

Yes. Anyway.

What a small world. You can never get away from your enemies.

Mm.

So was that your first experience of that kind of, conceptual arts in the art college, in art colleges that you taught at?

Yes. No, well, I mean not my first knowledge of it. It's not all as banal and as stupid as that really, sometimes it's quite interesting. Mean there are interesting kind of exercises, exercise your imagination sometimes. I remember one thing which I thought was very impressive, which one of the first-year students did at Manchester. It was, you know, to actually, he had constructed completely in 3D Van Gogh's bedroom from, from, reproductions. And you can go in, and you can sit on Gauguin's chair, and, Vincent's chair, and, you can get in Vincent's bed.

Yes. Very sinister.

And then...it looked just like the painting. It was a complete room.

How extraordinary.

That was one, I thought that was one of the nicest ideas of that kind of thing, [inaudible] just keeps, keeps them off the streets doesn't it really, and...

When you were...

[inaudible] messing around I think they... A party came up once when I wasn't doing any teaching, and...but they called, because they were from Manchester, they knew I had been there before. This, I do this thing outside on the [inaudible], up the Pennine Way, and...bits of paper chains and things stuck in the trees. It's just bloody litter. [pause]

This kind of tendency towards theory...

Mm.

When you were in your sort of major teaching period, was there any kind of evidence of how strongly that was going to end up dominating art education?

Well could see it could do, it could... It was still quite...it was quite a... [inaudible] ages actually. And, it...it... Yes, mostly people pull through it and gain quite a lot from it. It's certainly seen as a kind of device to help a kind of, you know, a more imaginative kind of analysis of things. They could help, it's... It's easy isn't it really, it's easier to actually make the thing than to think about it in some ways. You can... It is physical, it becomes physical rather than kind of... It... That's what I think is bad about it actually, I think, it makes people, people's minds become sterile it seems to me. But...

Yes, well I mean, it's good you say that, because I...

[inaudible] to baby talk, it's a kind of baby talk.

But when you read the kind of, really theoretical writing by people like Terry Atkinson or something, I mean I find that absolutely terrifying, you know.

Yes it is.

But I wouldn't say it lacked thought, or, well it may lack coherent thought, but you know, it doesn't...it's very intense.

No, it's... It... I think that... There's a lot of people, people are very...the students are very confused at the moment I think, because, they...they really don't like the Sensation type thing, they don't want to do that, but they're beginning to think that's what they're going to have to do. And, I think that's terrible. The students actually came to me last term and said, 'Is that what we've got to do now?' You know, pathetic really. But... 'I don't think I really want to be an artist, if that's what I've got to do.'

Well I suppose each artist is born into a particular time aren't they, and they have to kind of work out their response, whether they're going to completely negate their predecessors or not. I think the process has already started, you know, they are being discussed as having gone, the Sensation crowd, you know. (laughs) And, who knows what's next.

Yes.

Anyway, I think, I think we'll wind up there.

[end of session]

[Break in recording]

Restarting the interview with Norman Adams on the 23rd of June 2000, at his home in London. Off tape we were just saying how important and interesting Lawrence Gowing was...

Mm.

...as much for his writing as anything else, and you were just saying that he had written a serial play. I think it would be very interesting to hear more about that.

Yes. I've only just remembered it actually. I can't call to mind what it was called actually. Oh it was the artist... Something like *The Artist and Easel*, it was something, something crazy like that. And... I don't know how good it is really, but it was...it was quite funny. Oh, yes, no it was...it was... Yes, *The Artist Painting an Apple on a Plate*[title?], and the apple is a dialogue between the apple and the artist that's painting it. That's it. And...no, it was very entertaining, and the student, the...we were...he was coming up for...it was rather a special occasion, he was coming up to criticise the sketch club, and I think it was also, there was some connection with his birthday or something I know, and...and he had, actually you probably know, he was a one-time professor of Fine Art at Newcastle University, and there was some sort of anniversary of that, I don't know how long ago he left. But, it seemed to me, you know, that it was...I was a professor there, I was the current professor, and it seemed a good idea. And... I think I'm getting very confused actually now, because, I did say earlier on that I thought it would have been doubled-up with the play, the short play that Picasso wrote called *Desire Caught by the Tail*, but maybe, maybe it was, maybe that was another occasion. It was... But it's...the works have something in common I suppose, they were rather similar sort of length, quite short, one-act plays, and, very much like the atmosphere of the time when they were written during that Surreal period, Surreal and Dada period. There was a sort of, at that time there was a sort of revival of that sort of thing, or a revival of interest, art historians and people were writing about it and that. The young artists and students weren't all that interested in it. But, but the people that wrote seemed to have discovered

it, and... And every period anyway throws up its interesting people. And, I think Gowing, I mean, I didn't always get on with him, but I got on moderately well with him most of the time. He after all did give me, did employ me. And, when I... I think he hadn't been Professor of Fine Art at Leeds University very long, and we were living in Yorkshire at that time permanently, we were up at Butts, and I was just working there, in my studio there. And, they came, they... I mean it isn't all that far from Leeds, well it's about eighty miles due north of Leeds to Settle and Skipton and Horton-in-Ribblesdale. And he and Jenny, his wife, and their two little adopted children used to come up. They had a holiday cottage, that's right, they had a weekend cottage quite near ours actually, up in the Dales, which they rented. But I think he had, he and Jenny, they had, they had thought about buying a place somewhere up there, which is lovely, the Dales. And... But... And he asked me if I would go and do a bit of, just a little bit of part-time teaching in the university. And I used to go along, doing two terms only, I went a day, something like about a day a week, I just went in to go round the painting studios and see how the students were getting on. And then I...then...then, after a fairly short time, I can't remember how many years, two or three years, he went off to... Oh he, he went...no, he didn't go straight to the Slade did he, he went to the...he went as... What he really wanted, what was his ambition I know, when he had been Head of Painting at Chelsea earlier on, at Chelsea Art School hadn't he, but you know, it was his ambition...it was his ambition to...he really wanted to be Director of the Tate, that was the job he really did covet. He didn't get it. He applied for it, he tried to get it when, what was his name, the chap who was the director for quite a long time? A family of people.

Bowness.

Who?

Wasn't it [inaudible]?

No. Rothenstein. And, no, Bowness was much later. But, Bowness went and got it. And Gowing was made Keeper of the Paintings, whatever, something like that. It's...

Moffatt[ph], a nice man, has just retired from the job, but that was the job that Gowing did, which is sort of, a sort of second-in-command, and he never really liked being second-in-command, Gowing, he wanted to be first-in-command or nothing really. I don't think he enjoyed being second-in-command at the Tate very much. And... But then, he left when Coldstream retired and became Professor of Fine Art at the Slade. And there he went till he retired didn't he. Yes. And... But, I stayed on at Leeds, not long, maybe two years after he left, and Tim, as I say, Tim Clark was appointed Professor after him. And, I didn't get on with him at all well, I mean he didn't... I think he really wanted to change the whole department, and, he didn't...he was much more... He didn't really like fine art as such. He was a communist, and he saw art as a very political sort of thing. And, he...he...I think he thought that practical art was very elitist, and all that kind of crap you know. (laughs) Which made me very angry, and... And discouraged the students from doing any practical work really. But...

I mean did he provide them with an alternative intellectual route? Was it well supported in that way?

Not really. Well I don't know, I lost track really. Actually, we were having this terrific bad relationship, didn't actually come to blows, but you know, we always, whenever we met each other we always, you know, had, were highly critical of what the others were doing. We... It was really rather amusing actually. He had only just been...I don't think he had... Well at the end of his first year, he had obviously, you know, looked through the papers, he wanted to go for an interesting holiday, to take his family somewhere during the summer vacation, and he had seen advertised holiday cottages in the Outer Hebrides. He thought, this looks interesting. And he booked him and his family in for a holiday in the Outer Hebrides. And, when they arrived, the first thing he saw on the shore was us, me Anna and the family, it was the island where, it was...it was the island where we had this cottage, you know, where we used to go every summer, we'd been going there for quite a long time. And, you know, he arrived at this desolate place, and there was his deadly enemy waiting for him on the shore. I had no idea he was going, I was amazed really, it was... But it...it was...it was... We seemed to get on slightly better

really in this sort of atmosphere, it wasn't quite so tense as it had been back in the university.

I mean, these tensions that you describe, you sound as if you're pretty secure and able to cope with that kind of tension.

What, you mean not get annoyed with people?

Or did you let it...did you let it upset you?

Not really, no. I mean I...I'd... I was doing very little there actually, and...and it was really, it was only a temporary thing in the first place. I didn't expect to stay there very much longer. And... No, I...I...I get very angry sometimes. (laughs) And, you know, one has to find it, you know... I don't think I would actually do anybody any violent harm, but I've come near to it on one or two occasions, picking up something rather heavy and hurling it at them or something. (laughter) But... It just fizzled out, the whole thing just faded really. I stopped going, and... And I've no...not really had much interest in the place. Only just occasionally an ex-student from there turns up somewhere, and...and that's always nice, they usually...

I'm just going back briefly to Gowing's influence while he was at Leeds.

Mm.

Did his rather formal method of figuration, did that filter down into the teaching, or not?

He didn't do much teaching himself. He had... He had... The main thing were his lectures, you know, which was, as I say, were brilliant, though I, I never actually heard one, but I mean I was, you know, told by the students, the students were all...it was packed out, the lecture theatre, when he was...when Gowing was talking. And... He had his own little...he... I suppose he was...maybe he needed something doing to it. It wasn't

really a very good course I don't think. Not that Tim Clark was any better. But, no, he had his favourites, Gowing, he had this...a studio next-door to his own room in the university. And there were permanently models posing in there. Oh yes, that's what...that was what, the thing, the one thing that he was hot on was drawing, drawing models. And, and he, you know, he... That was it really, that and the lectures. He was not...I mean weeks would go by and, I'd never see him. I used to go round the painting rooms, which at that time were in temporary premises in what had been dwellings, rows of Victorian houses, terraces of houses which were made into one long building, bashed holes in walls and so on. And most of the fine art, the painting was done in these little, like little rooms in these houses. And, not much... In the main building there were the main, the life studios and things, and Gowing was...and lecture theatres and things. But... I was very much on the periphery of things in Leeds, I went there so seldom, just.....

[End of F8738 Side B]

[F8739 Side A]

Continuing the interview with Norman Adams on the 23rd of June. Tape 6 side A.

And this same thing, he was very very drunk, and...

We're talking about John Bellamy here.

John Bellamy. And the, the exhibition was being opened by Roy, I think it was Roy Hattersley, Roy Hattersley's mother, who was...she was very very active on the council in Sheffield it was wasn't it, and...and I know he sort of, he broke into her speech saying, 'You know what you are, you are the Gracie Fields of Sheffield.' (laughs) And, they were both saying, 'Yes, yes. Shh, shh.' But, that was, that was quite funny, because she, I thought she was, she was rather an awful old lady really. (laughter)

How unkind.

But...

I noticed during the Seventies that, this was your sort of period out of teaching in effect wasn't it.

Yes.

When you were doing a lot of painting and so on.

Yes, yes.

That you had a large show at the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Yes.

How did that come about?

It was...it was in the upstairs gallery, and... I don't know how it came about really. Someone suggested it, and... There was a woman running it at that time. A man that had made quite a business, you know, done a great job really, but he'd almost bankrupted the place doing it.

What, Bryan Robertson?

Bryan Robertson, had just left, and there was this woman who was appointed director. And, I've forgotten her name. And... She, she suggested we had one I suppose. Yes, I remember that. And it was...I forget what it was called. We called it something. And... I had several largish shows in London. I had one at the Serpentine. Well it was a part of it, it was a three-person show, in the Serpentine Gallery, roughly about that time. It was...it was called Three Landscape painters, and mine were all paintings of the sea, they were...they were...they were... I looked upon them as a being a set of religious paintings actually, I called them *The Oval Marine Passion*. And, they were quite, probably some of the most abstract paintings I've ever done. And I know they were all in this sort of oval shape. And... There were twenty or thirty of them, quite, all watercolours actually, but quite large, but not as large as these ones they're doing now, but, pretty large.

Who were your fellow landscape artists, do you remember?

Yes, I know Middleditch was one, Edward Middleditch, and, oh, Adrian Berg. That's three of us, isn't it. No [inaudible], four, I think there were four actually, probably four artists.

Yes, I've got it listed on this as five, so...

Oh five?

Yes, I think, [inaudible].

[inaudible].

Yes.

I can't remember who they were now.

What kind of profiles did galleries like the Whitechapel and the Serpentine have at that time? Because I know that they've kind of had moments of fame before and after, but... How did artists feel about them?

Oh you go to them, they were good venues, certainly. I mean the...the Whitechapel had a good reputation under Robertson. They had all these, these huge internationally famous artists didn't they. And, still is, I mean the Whitechapel is still my favourite, I think my favourite gallery. Went just recently there, they have some fabulous shows. The Nolde exhibition was wonderful. The late Jack Yeats. They've just had... But this is, that's quite recent. At that time... Well, it was the first time I ever saw Jackson Pollocks, that was Bryan Robertson. I wasn't impressed at all, I didn't...I thought it was a load of old rubbish. I liked the early ones, but they were very influenced by Picasso, the early ones. The later ones I didn't like. But it was good seeing them, and I, you know, I'm glad they were there and that one had the opportunity to see them. But he was hardly known in England at that time, Pollock.

Do you remember what the general response from your fellow artists was at the time?

No. I think it was quite favourable. I mean, they were quite excited by it. And... And of course he put on a big show of Josef, one of the biggest shows, or the biggest show Josef's ever had. And I remember they had, they brought the big painting up from Cardiff, one that he'd done for the Festival of Britain, the coal pavilion, did this huge

mural of coal miners. And, it's all, it's all...you know, it's not...not shown anywhere now. I think they have actually got it up, just quite recently since he was, it was obvious that he was going to die. I think it's in Cardiff or somewhere like that now. But they've had it there ever since those days, just rolled up I think. It's very huge, it is a problem what to do with a painting that size. But...

Just during this period, you were showing in northern galleries. Tell us something about those, because they're inclined to sort of stay out of the limelight rather more than the London ones.

Yes. Well I found, when I went to the art school, I went as Head of the Fine Art Department at the College of Art and Design as it was when I first went there, at Newcastle. I was...you know, that... I mean I, I mean I was amazed how talented the students were, the young people. It seemed to me that the college was rubbish, it was a terrible place. And, one wondered how on earth anybody had managed to survive at all in it really, but you know, they persisted and worked as well as they did in the, in such a reactionary environment. But the, although it was very reactionary, the principal of the art school was ruthless. And...and he...he had been...he had been told, and he was given...they were looking for someone to run the department, the fine art department, and schools all over the place were trying to get, were hoping they were going to get the degree, and it was when things were changing in art schools drastically, and... And the schools were going to be, you know, be fewer but bigger and...and better, it was hoped.

I think we might be mixing Manchester Newcastle here, because...

Manchester.

Yes. But you said Newcastle.

Did I?

Yes. Now we have discussed...

Oh I meant Manchester.

...the time at Newcastle – at Manchester.

Mm.

So, we're sort of moving through the Seventies, and...

Yes.

I think...

But I was...I was there all through the Sixties.

Yes.

And all through the Seventies I was in...you know, I didn't do any teaching at all.

Yes. No. No, I think...

Except the odd little bit. The odd bit. Well like the bit at Leeds and that.

I think it would be interesting to move on to your time at Newcastle, which is in the early Eighties wasn't it.

Yes.

When you were made Professor. Did you teach there before you were made Professor?

No.

No?

No no, I went there as Professor.

How did that come about?

Rowntree had been Professor, and he had been years and years and years and years, and was retiring, Kenneth Rowntree. In fact he, I think he had taken over from Gowing, and Gowing had been Professor before Rowntree. And, the... I... I was beginning to feel at that time as if the world was somewhere else. I mean I...it's... I mean I, I loved being there, it was an incredible place really. We never stayed a whole year round there, we always came back during the winters to Yorkshire. But... I was talking about the Hebrides now.

Right.

You know, the Hebrides, I went... I'm not very good this morning actually. The Hebrides, we had all through the Seventies.

Oh right.

We went there more or less every year for the summer months, onto a little island called Scarp, which is part, a little offshore island off the west coast of Harris. And it was...it was a little crofter's cottage that we had. And I made a studio in one of the, in one of the three bedrooms, well the two bedrooms. And, it was...I made the whole of one wall a window in fact actually, so you could...I'd... The walls were corrugated steel, lined with wood planks. And you know, I had taken the steel out and put in corrugated Perspex in its place. And, and I made...and there was another little window as well. It was quite, a quite nice little studio. Most of the work when we were up there was outside anyway,

wandering around doing watercolours and things. And... But I did do one or two quite large pieces of work in that studio, large oil paintings, based on the watercolour studies that I'd been making outside. And, and you know... And, Anna kind of kept a diary all the time. And that was...that was the substance of that book that we produced, her, based on her diaries, and it's illustrated with some of my paintings, *The Island Chapter, Island Chapters*, she calls it. And, and it's a smashing little book.

That's wonderful.

And, she did another one, a follow-up for it called *Living With Limestone*, treating Yorkshire in the same sort of way. But it was...it's all...the substance of both of those books really was, she gathered during that time. And... No, it was exciting, we enjoyed it. And the, and the boys, our two sons, was just right for them at that time. We stopped going there after a bit, because of the...then in a way, they started doing other things. Ben was going to university. And, they were wanting to do different things, not wanting to come with us. And eventually we, you know, without them, we couldn't manage it really. We had to have our own boat you see, there was no... When we first started going there, there was a few islanders still left, crofters, and... But, the remote islands were becoming depopulated like nobody's business. Television was the last thing that the young folks...when...there was no television on the island of course, and no electricity, nothing like that. We had oil lamps, and, Calor gas cooker, Calor gas cooker and things. It was quite civilised, these oil lamps, very nice. And... But, there was just one occasion I stayed on by myself, Anna took the boys back, their term was beginning, and, I decided to stay on for a little while to see how... But... It was interesting at first, but, it was not an experience I'd like to repeat. (laughs) It really was rather hell actually to be honest. I can... The islanders are very nice, the islanders that were there; there were very few of them towards the end, as I say, they were all drifting away. And... But they're very pious, and...and it was Wee Free island actually, the... No no, it was a Church of Scotland island. A Wee Free island would have been much worse. But... Yes, and of course, each island is different, there's Scarp which is Church of Scotland, there's, I think North Uist and that which is Wee Free. And Benbecula is actually Catholic, and you

know, they have this sort of strange...it tends to govern the atmosphere. And... But, you know, you really do shut down on the Sabbath, nobody, nobody stirs. You're not allowed...the young folks are not allowed even to read, even less...only the Bible. And, we... We met a young American girl once on the road, over on the main island, on Scarp, who was hostelling, staying in a hostel on the island, and it was[ph] Sabbath, and she was hitchhiking, we gave her a lift, and... But, this wasn't on the Sabbath of course, because they wouldn't...she wouldn't have been allowed out on the Sabbath. And they really did lock the door on, you know... No gadding around on the moors on the Sabbath. And... She said that at the hostel, that, they'd been locked in on the Sabbath. (laughs)

So did you stick to this as a family as well?

We went down to the mission house once to a service, Hebridean service, just to see what it was like, which in its way, which was incredibly beautiful, the actual singing, which was sort of...it's not real singing, a strange sort of sound like, sounds like the wind. And you know, it sounds very raw, and, it's extraordinary. I mean very very beautiful in its way. And... But, I remember, I remember...we managed roughly to behave ourselves really. But you were warned, if you went out on the water at all, if you got into trouble, no one would go to help, not on the Sabbath. They'd let you drown.

How amazing.

And... But... I can remember when I was there by myself, we'd burnt a lot of...a lot of stuff would drift up on, we used to go over onto the Atlantic side of the island, get these great logs and things for the...and we'd burn them. We had, you know, we used to go to Stornoway from time to time, take a trip to Stornoway, over on the mainland, which is the capital of the island, you know, and buy an odd sack of coal and things like that there and bring back and... We had a Land Rover at that time. And... But... I remember when I was on my own... I didn't go out in the boat very much at all when I was on my own, and... But, it was pouring with rain, and it was, it was on the Saturday, and I suddenly realised I had nothing to put, there was nothing for the fire at all, I had to go and get

some. So, and obviously I couldn't do it on the Sunday, of course it was the Sabbath law. So I went over there, and I remember getting these logs together and tying a rope round them and...pulling that steep slope up, you go right over the island and you go over this, it's got a sort of spine of quite high land. It goes up to a mountain at one...at the northern end. Although it's only a very small, thin island, it goes up to over 1,000 at the end. And, anyway I was struggling up this hillside with a rope round these great logs, and the rain pouring down the back of my neck, you know. I was absolutely pissed through. And I suddenly [inaudible] turned round and, shaking my fist at the sky saying, 'Sod you!' (laughs)

It sounds rather like those young people that are doing this sort of survival event on one of the islands at the moment.

Mm.

Taransay is it. And...

Mm.

...it sounds pretty grim.

Taransay was very near. That's less than...you know, it's just very near to Scarp actually. A much bigger island, Taransay. But it's not, I don't think it is...very sparsely inhabited. I don't think anybody lives permanently on Scarp now. There's one or two people who have, were there who still go, keep a cottage in the summer and things like that. But it was, it was very formative, you know, I mean, from the point of view of studying nature, you couldn't do better. It was...you couldn't avoid it. And I, you know, one learnt a lot of things whilst I was there. And.... Actually, a young man came and made a bit of a film on the island, but it was not very good really, but, you know, he...he took a photograph of me working, and... It wasn't, wasn't very interesting.

Do you think it had a particular influence on your children? Because it must have been a very unusual way of living.

Yes. Jacob, the eldest boy, you know, isn't very well, you know, he's... Well, since he's been...he's greatly improved just lately, you wouldn't know anything was wrong with him, he's perfectly... But he's schizophrenic. And he's... If I had...I mean, there was no sign of it then. It was quite some time later that, after he had left home and that, that he started to develop it. And...

How did you become aware of it?

He...he started writing us the most awful letters, when we were at Butts all the time, he was in London, he was at art school, at Hornsey Art School, and he...he wrote these letters, you know, sort of, you know, crazy letters really. But, there was a lot of anger. And... But...

Did you recognise there might be some specific problem?

Well, yes. Yes, there was obviously something wrong. And... But... He had... He was doing quite well with his painting when he... He... He had applied to go... He didn't...he didn't succeed in getting into the Royal College, he wanted to go to the Royal College, when he finished at Hornsey, and, he was... He had also had this adolescent sort of sexual struggle, and he decided he was gay, and... And I think he struggled with that for a long long time, and I suppose he felt that, that we would disapprove of him.

Would you have?

Not at all. No not at all. And... But he had this friend who he was living with at that time, well, during his time at Hornsey, Martin, a nice, Irish, Northern Irish boy. And he... That all bust up, and... Martin got into college, and he didn't. And... But... But he

seemed to straighten himself, straighten...he's different now actually, he's not... [talking to Anna] Talking about Jacob Anna.

ANNA: Mhm.

Melanie was saying, you know, we've got onto his, his schizophrenia.

ANNA: Mm?

Getting onto his schizophrenia.

ANNA: Yes.

And...

ANNA: Which is about, he was about twenty-eight.

Mm. When he was about twenty-eight wasn't he, when it first began to show.

ANNA: [inaudible] and we didn't realise really what was wrong.

Mm. Until he started writing these terrible letters.

ANNA: Well he wrote us about one.

Yes.

ANNA: Weren't all that terrible, they were just telling us that he didn't want to see us.
[inaudible].

Well they were very unfriendly too, saying...nasty...

ANNA: Well, [inaudible] unfriendly [inaudible].

Horrible people we are.

ANNA: But I [inaudible].

That we... [inaudible] saying, 'I'm just a spoilt brat,' you know, I'm just...

ANNA: That he was a spoilt brat.

He was a spoilt brat, yes, he was saying that we'd made...we made him into, we'd spoilt him.

ANNA: Which sounded a bit like it[??] didn't it really.

Mm.

ANNA: I don't think we spoilt them enough actually.

Mm, maybe not.

ANNA: But we do now. (laughter)

But he... He lives quite near, just up, in Hampstead. He comes round every day now. He eats with us every evening. Occasionally we can't, we're doing something else.

ANNA: [inaudible]. [inaudible] coffee? [inaudible].

We had... Yes. But... Oh there's some in the pot I think.

ANNA: Mm?

I think there's some in the pot still. May not be too cold. And Ben is the younger one, Benjamin. And he...Ben always did very well at school, and Jacob, until he got to art school, didn't do very well really, and... But he struggled with it.

ANNA: [inaudible] suggested that he left, or [inaudible] back to nature.

Mm.

ANNA: I mean, didn't behave badly. And he passed. He was sort of average.

Yes he was.

ANNA: [inaudible] really. I mean, all right.

But...

Most people are average. (laughter)

But Ben was really rather brilliant in his way really I suppose.

ANNA: Well he still is.

He is brilliant. But he's...he's different from Jacob.

ANNA: He is [inaudible], and it's all right, isn't it.

Yes.

ANNA: What the...all fall down and the doors fly open and [inaudible].

[laughs] Yes.

I'm not sure it is easy to be brilliant, but... (laughter) I hear from people I know that are, it isn't.

ANNA: Ah, well, maybe Ben isn't quite brilliant enough. But...

Mm.

I mean...

But he's nice with Jacob, and he takes him off for trips. Ben's married, and they have a couple of children. And, he... And they live down in Lewes. He lectures at Sussex University, Ben. He's a scientist, so... Biochemist.

I mean did they get on well as children?

Yes. On Scarp, they got on wonderfully. Jacob was always pushing his luck with Ben. Ben would, you know, was obviously rather tiresome, sometimes he didn't want to go out in the boat in the evening, you know, and Jacob was always, very active at that time, and...and he... he really did enjoy it there. But he enjoyed it at Horton too, you see, we go back to Horton now, he comes back with us for summers, up to Yorkshire. And... I think, they remember him in the village as a boy, because they started their schooling when we were living there all the time, and they went to the village school, both, their first school. And a lot of them, you know, were, some of them at any rate were about his age and were also at school, they'd known every since they were schoolchildren. And, he gets on, he's much more integrated socially with the village than we are, or I am anyway; Anna sees a lot of them up there. But... And he, he goes down to the pub there more or less every evening, in the village.

ANNA: [inaudible]. I shouldn't interrupt you. [inaudible] self-service [inaudible]. I think the pub should take over, shouldn't they. In fact I think the National Health Service lose the plot; they should send, you know, psychiatric, not psychiatric social workers, they're useless, but, say, nurses and trainee doctors and things, to chat to iffy characters in the pubs. I mean they don't have to drink themselves. (laughs)

Mm.

ANNA: And he doesn't drink much, because he can't afford it.

No, he doesn't drink much. He just gets one pint all evening.

ANNA: [inaudible]. But, he likes to be with people, and people do talk to him.

Mm.

I mean, it does sound as if it's had quite an impact on his life.

ANNA: Well it stopped it really. He was doing all right.

Mm.

ANNA: But, now he really basically does nothing. The trouble is that, your dreams are more real than real life. I mean that's what it is, your inner kind of... He's much better now, he's over forty now, so that, you can get better over forty. And, he gets better noticeably, month by month almost, doesn't he?

Mm. He does.

Wonderful.

ANNA: Mm. Well, I mean, it isn't any great enormous things, but for instance, I mean he helped us put that fence together, and he did it very efficiently.

Mm.

ANNA: And he's been cooking himself little meals.

He wouldn't before.

ANNA: And he notices when it's too hot and he takes his jacket off. At one time, he would never notice anything like that, either that he was cold or hot. And in fact I think something goes wrong with your thermostat when you're [inaudible]. I mean it's [inaudible] isn't it.

Mm.

Yes, he may not be able to make any connection.

ANNA: Well they call it a chemical imbalance don't they. And...

He has, he has medication.

ANNA: ...[inaudible] dream awake really. And you don't understand people's facial expressions, so that every.....

[End of F8739 Side A]

[F8739 Side B]

ANNA: And, got to get on to the tape some of his maddening things[???]. He's[???] just round the corner[???].

Continuing the interview with Norman Adams. Tape 6 side B.

Sorry, you were just saying that you had to have some very alarming moments with your son Jacob.

Yes. He panics sometimes I think when he's in a crowd, things like that. He... There was one Christmas we were up at Butts, everybody... We always spend our Christmas up at Butts, in Yorkshire. And, and Ben and his...our daughter-in-law's Indian actually, an Indian girl, Ben and Mena[ph] actually, and their two children, they were all there at Butts, and we were there, and Jacob was late, you know, and we... Eventually we began to get a bit uneasy as the night wore on, and, then the, the last train... We actually have a station at Horton, there's actually a station in the village, and, and you can go, come from Leeds straight up to Horton actually, there's a train that goes up through the Lake District into Scotland, it's the Settle to Carlisle run which is a particularly beautiful stretch of railway. And, Settle is the beginning of that part, the run, and Horton comes the first stop on that line after Settle. The last train arrived, and he wasn't on it. And... At that time he was living with some elderly man, who was, all right, I mean he was nice actually, but you know, he had had his bust-up with Martin and... And I don't think there was anything in it at all with this...but this chap gave him a room, well, didn't give him a room, he charged him a rent. But he had this house, and Ben had his own space in it – Jacob, had his own space in it. And he... We rang him and asked him, we were expecting Jacob back, and he said he had left at the usual time. And, he had, he always used to get a bus, Northampton it was where he was living then, and, he'd get a bus to Leeds and then get the train to Horton. And, we phoned through to the bus station and through to Leeds Station. They were very... And we got onto the police after a while, we really got worried about him. And, they tannoyed him through the speakers in the station

and all that, you know, because they have them[??] in the station there, and so on. And, you know, and then... There's not much one could do. And then, I think it was the next day, what had happened, he had... What he had done, he had... He'd done the perfectly sensible thing. He'd gone to the bus station in Northampton, and, he hadn't sort of calculated on it being Christmas, and that there was much more traffic, much...many more people wanting to catch the bus, and he never booked a place on the bus, of course it wasn't all that necessary, there was always plenty of space. But there wasn't, and so he couldn't get on the bus. And then... But then, you know, which was really quite...he got the train into London, where, he thought he could go into London and pick up the train up to Horton. And he went back into, he went down into London, and then... And he had lots of money, in fact he had...worried us, so much money he had in his pocket, he had, I forget, several hundred pounds in his pocket, that he had got out. And, well, or maybe, I forget what it was, a couple of hundred pounds. And he had...when...when he started to queue up to buy his ticket at King's Cross, he suddenly panicked at the crowds, he couldn't, he couldn't bear the long queue and that, so he left the station, walked out of it, walked away from the station, walked out into the street. And then just wandered around London all night. And he wandered down Tottenham Court Road, and there was this space opposite Heal's, the American church, and there's a big area of pavement where a lot of destitute people without anywhere to stay, lie down, or did at that time, I don't know whether they've stopped them now. And, he went there to lie down amongst them. But he, you know, being a stranger, not one of the group, they didn't accept him, they told him to bugger off, you know, and started being really horrible to him. So he went. And just... And he began this traipse around all through the night. He fetched up down in Clapham, on...and...and... Eventually the... The police found him. They rang us, they were very good, they said, 'I think we've found your son.' And he was... 'We've got him in the police station.' So they said, 'We can't keep him there, because he hasn't done anything wrong, but, you know, we will keep him though it's against the rules.' And... Anyway, they were terribly kind to him really, they made breakfast and...and all that. Hm.

It sounds as if it's had quite an impact on your life.

Yes. And then, there was another thing. He'd... Apparently he'd...there was an elderly lady, she noticed this young man hanging, standing about outside her house, and she...and... She was very brave. And, she went up and spoke to him and that, and he... And she invited, asked him to come in, because it was terribly cold, frost. And, and she made him a cup of tea and that, and he sat there, and chatted. And then he just said, 'I think I'd better go.' He got up and wandered off and that. But we never managed to find out who she was. Tried to get in touch with her. But then...

What kind of medical support has he had?

Oh, very...very ineffective really.

Mm.

He's nothing like as bad as that now. He's quite competent really handling himself. But his... He put a painting in for the Spirit of London exhibition, which, I don't know whether it still goes on, and you know, it was an open exhibition for, and there were various prizes, on the subject of London. And there was an exhibition of them in the Festival Hall, in the foyer area there. And Frank Auerbach was one of the judges, and, he liked Jacob's painting. Didn't know who he was or anything. And, you know, they gave him a prize, so he got one...not the first prize, it was...one of the prizes anyway. And, I know Frank Auerbach slightly, not very well, and, we... What was quite interesting was, Jacob had always liked Auerbach's painting, and it was rather influenced by his work actually, and... And I told Jacob, I said that, 'Frank Auerbach said he particularly, it was interesting, your painting.' And I said to Frank, and he's very jealous about his time, you know, not wasting his time, Frank Auerbach, and I said, 'Would you mind if I suggested he dropped in on you some time, you could show him the studio and that?' Because it's an interesting studio, a terrible mess, you know. And, he said, 'No, no I wouldn't mind at all.' Fix a proper day. And I told...and I...Jacob had...he gave me his telephone number, which he very rarely does. But... And I suggested to Jacob that he went and had a chat

with Frank, that he liked his work and he would be interested to talk to him. But he never went. But Frank, but he did remember him, Frank, because, I remember a couple of years ago Jacob got something, it wasn't a new painting, it was a painting he did some while ago, he put it into a Royal Academy summer show. And, I remember going round the gallery, and I saw Frank Auerbach going round the show. And he came up to me and he said, 'Oh I've just been looking at one of your son's paintings again.' And I said, 'Yes you have.' But he, he remembers his work, he obviously thought there was some substance in it. And that indeed there is, it's... At that time at any rate, it was a very promising start. But it's all gone now you see, he's lost any desire to do it. And... But...

I mean do you think that it might be not just illness but the fact that kind of, creativity feeds on activity in a sense doesn't it.

It does. Yes. It's a great shame.

Mm.

Anyway. He seems quite, reasonably happy nowadays, he seems to be... But he's not doing anything.

I'm going to stop.

[break in recording]

Restarting the tape.

Actually, it wasn't so long of course, I was only there for five years.

Right, this is at Newcastle.

At Newcastle. And it... In some ways it's less eventful in a way, it was a very straightforward business. [pause] I... I don't think I was cut out to be a university professor anyway really.

Was being a professor very different to being a teacher?

Well it was with this... It could have been all right actually, in fact, it would have been all right if I'd stayed a bit longer, but, I... It's all these other, it's all the other departments which irritated me. You know, the...the endless battling for resources, for funds and things, you know, you... It's a matter of, that you're just there to get what you can for your department, and... I wasn't there to do that at all; I was there to talk about art, I was there to teach about, teach students, discuss painting in the twentieth century, and all...and what they were going to do, and how things were going to develop from this point onwards. And... But to go off and squabble with heads of other departments for resources, for funds, these tiny little packets of money that was spread out between the departments, I mean it just wasn't my scene at all. And...

I mean did you have to partake of the battle?

Well it partakes of you really. I mean, students of other subjects are nothing like as nice as art students. (laughs) And, particularly the... Some of them, God knows what they do to get into the place. The...the sort of economics students and ones with, that are so...well I don't know what they call their departments now.

Sociology.

Yes, sociology, that sort of thing. And they really are awfully thick, most of them. And, and they...and they're so disruptive. And... I mean, I went to do a short course with some students in Manchester after, back in Manchester after I'd left, I was asked if I'd go back and just do a two weeks' thing, one-off, two weeks' course with some of their first-year students. This after I had left the place. And I said I would, and I went in. And the

last day that I was there, we had all the work together and we were discussing it, and, suddenly there was a complete blackout, we all had to leave the building, all the heating went off, all the lights went out. Absolutely everything went off. And this was because of some project, I suppose the sociology students were doing. The actual course was showing the students exactly how to immobilise a department. And this was part of their course, they were throwing... And [inaudible] bastards in this place, you know. We were doing something quite difficult which requires the lights. And, you know, and I... I... It's maddening. It's just...it really is the most extraordinary situation. Well I thought it was.

You were at Newcastle in 1981 when Margaret Thatcher had just come in with her various ideas about kind of the markets and so on.

Yes.

Did that, did you feel that it was a real political change from your earlier time teaching?

After a year out you mean, after...?

After your...yes, [inaudible].

What after...the Seventies out.

Yes.

At first it was quite exciting in a way, because... This is back to Manchester again. It was... It was the most substantial job I'd had teaching, I mean all the teaching I'd done before that had been very casual, part-time, bits and pieces. I'd never, I had never had a department to build. And... It was interesting in that, that the principal of the school, although he wasn't a very nice man, he was, I mentioned before, very ruthless, and he had made a clean slate. I didn't have to inherit any staff at all.

You did explain this earlier on the tape.

I did, yes.

In a way I just wanted to move you into the Eighties, just to kind of confirm how the politics differed.

At the end of the Newcastle time.

In the Eighties. Yes. Yes.

[pause] It was... Well, it was a struggle with these other departments I suppose. Not really, no, it wasn't bad actually. I mean it had its ups and downs, I didn't enjoy all of it, but... And I can remember, I mean there were far too many meetings, I used to get so...I hated the meetings. And... No, I can...you know, I can remember a lovely...I mean it was quite, there were quite nice things about it actually, the actual...I liked the university campus, it was very pleasant. The fine art department in particular was extremely nice architecturally, the building, the department, and the studios were lovely. And all the facilities there were, you know, it really was, was heaven really. And, bags of space and everything. But there was all this bloody administration which had to be done. And, I remember the administration offices were a row of rather splendid houses, had been, you know, they were bought by the university, and they were all little, it was all the administrator's offices including the vice-chancellor's room and space. And I had just left one of these awful meetings in one of these... A lot of rooms where you, you booked a room when you went to the meeting, and, I can remember, it was an autumnal evening, it had been a lovely day and the sun was setting and everything was golden, but it was, you know, but it was autumn, and it had this sort of, cold, fresh feeling. Newcastle was lovely too in that you could always smell the sea, or you were aware that the sea isn't all that far away. And...and the lights had just come on. And I can remember walking past this, this row of the administration block, and, each one of the rooms as you pass them,

you saw, you could see inside all lit up, people sat at this long table discussing. One after the other. And I thought, oh my God! And I'd just left one, you know, and... I thought, this...I can't do this. And... Then just at that moment, I mean, Roger de Grey started phoning me up from the Academy, he was...he wasn't the president then, but he...I think that, you know, what's his name, the architect, was still president. But, Roger wanted me to come down to the Academy, the Academy...the Schools were in a terrible state actually. It was...you know...in fact the people were seriously thinking that we had, that we ought to abandon actually having a school at the RA. And, Peter Greenham had at last retired, after being there for about twenty-five years as Keeper of the Schools. And... I mean he'd been a, he was a good keeper in his way. But it had to be in his way, you know, he was good with students that worked just like him, but, seemed to totally ignore students that were not working just exactly like him. But he had finished, and had elected a new... You apply...if you're interested in being Keeper, just like the president, there's a general assembly, you're voted, you know, people let it be known that they're interested in doing it, as with the president, and all the members vote. And there's usually two or three people that put, that suggest that they might like having a go at running the school. And, Eddie Middleditch had been voted Keeper, but... I mean he would have been a good Keeper too, if he had survived, but he was so ill. He was...he was...you know, he was, he was dying really. And, he had...he was Keeper for about a year I think, but he didn't do anything at all, he was...God! he was in such a state he couldn't even get up to his studio upstairs, and he had to be carried up. Terrible, two or three students carrying the keeper up to his room. And, the students were getting uppity, which you could understand in a way, I mean, after all the precious three years, and they were just wasted.

Mm.

And, no, I didn't know, I didn't really feel terribly that I wanted to go at that point; I mean I was still, in spite of all this administration business, was quite enjoying being there, as I said, I'd only been there a few years, and I'd agreed to be head of department as well as professor. But I knew I didn't have to do that; I rather wanted, I couldn't see myself being professor without being head of department. But, after doing it for two or

three years, it didn't sound a bad prospect, being professor without being head of department. And, of course people, anybody who's interested in being head of department in a university can be head, but, it's always thought desirable that the professor, if there was a professor, should do it, but didn't have to but was...didn't... And I, I'd let everybody know that after I'd done my five years, which I'd signed up for, I was just going to, I just wanted to be professor without being head of department. And, that would cut out most of the meetings. And, and I'd settled down to thinking that this wasn't too bad a prospect. But then Roger started pestering me to come to the Academy. And... But, it...he... And I... But by then, Gowing had also expressed an interest in being Keeper of the school. And, Roger had this great Machiavellian plan which he was trying to fit everybody into, and he didn't want me to be Keeper, he wanted me to be professor of painting in the school, and Gowing to be Keeper. And... But... What's his name, the President... Oh dear, a nice fellow, what... Who was president before Roger.

ANNA: Casson.

Casson, Hugh Casson.

Oh right.

And, he reached the point where he had to retire, but you can't...you have to retire after you're seventy-five, you can't be president after. And, Roger was very keen, he wanted...he was... And, he got in, and he was made president. And then, he saw all his plans fitting into, everybody fitting into the slot that he had designed for them. But, as much as I quite liked Gowing in the past, I knew it was absolutely impossible to work under him, and I wasn't going to work with him as Keeper, as professor of painting, it didn't strike me as being much fun at all. And, and I...and I...I'd been acting, acting as Keeper when I went down and stayed... But I was...they made me Professor of Painting. And, so I...I was in fact Professor of Painting, but in actual fact I was being Keeper, because Eddie Middleditch wasn't able to do it, he was in hospital most of the time. And, when it came to the general assembly, eventually we managed to persuade Eddie to

resign, because he couldn't do it, and he, you know, he realised that. And, and then there was a general assembly in order to elect a new Keeper. And, I insisted on, I was going to put in for it, because, as I said, I had been doing it anyway. And... I got overwhelming results. It was almost a hundred...you know, almost everybody voted for me, and Gowing, it was the end of a friendship in some ways, he didn't get any, he got about three votes.

Oh dear.

And... But he, he...he was at the actual meeting.

What is the role of keeper exactly?

You run the school.

Right a sort of head school in fact.

Mm.

Yes.

And it... And I was...and I did that until, I did it for ten years, I was Keeper for ten years. And, I didn't have to stop, because I'm not seventy-five yet, but I've had enough really I think; ten years is long enough.

Mm.

But I was still quite enjoying it though, I mean I enjoyed being Keeper.

I mean did that have such a big weight of administration as the role in Newcastle?

No. No nothing like... It got worse, well, when I first was Keeper, very little. In fact, Peter Greenham who had been there for twenty-five years, when he retired because he was seventy-five, and, it's when they, when they actually voted Eddie Middleditch in, when they were discussing it. And he wanted me to do it, Peter Greenham, and he said, 'Why don't you do it?' And... But I, I...I felt I had to stay at Newcastle a bit longer. And... Because I'd really only just got there, or that's what it seemed like in some ways.

Who were your fellow lecturers at Newcastle?

Mm?

Who were your fellow...

Fellow lecturers?

Yes.

Mostly the staff were part-time people. The art history was...was John Milner[ph], John Milner[ph].

No I can't...we've got banging. I'm going to have to stop the tape.

[end of session]

[End of F8739 Side B]

[F9432 Side A]

Restarting the interview with Norman Adams at his home in London on the 25th of January 2001. Tape 7 side A.

Now...

Yes.

I think it would be very interesting to know for the record about Roger de Grey, who you mentioned in relation to your becoming a Keeper at the Royal Academy. He's one of those sort of rather fascinating backgroundy characters that's obviously very kind of influential. But for those that don't know him, I thought, a bit of an enigma.

Yes. I'd known Roger a long time, ever since I was a student. He... He was... He came to the Royal College as a tutor whilst I was still a student there. I didn't have a great deal to do with him, he wasn't my tutor, but you know, he was there amongst the staff, and I used to meet him on occasions and we talked. He always seemed to me a very nice man, but, not a, not a startlingly interesting artist really. Quite, quite good, tasteful and, a sort of elegance about the work. But, not to my mind, not to my mind very adventurous. But... He was...he was a man with, he seemed to have a, in his own way a mission, and... But, he was basically a very modest man, I don't think he considered himself, certainly not to be a great artist or anything, but he, he was a good organiser, and he was someone that, that somehow seemed to know how to get things done. But anyway, that was when I first encountered him, was when I was a student as I say. I didn't have, I don't remember as a student in those days really being very much aware of his work in fact, his painting, I can't remember what his painting was actually like at that time. He was not very successful as an artist in that he was, all his work was to be seen in exhibitions or anything like that. Unlike John Minton for instance who was my tutor at the Royal College, I mean everyone knew what his work was like, because you know, he was constantly having exhibitions, and... It was very inspiring, having a tutor that was, you

know, that was not only an interesting artist, but was a successful one. And... But... Years and years later, several, you know, when I was...at Manchester College of Art, when I was made head of the painting department, about that time I was made a Royal Academician, an ARA it was in those days, you started with an ARA and later became an RA. And... Actually Carel Weight it was at that time who had been one of my tutors at the Royal College, who I knew far better than Roger actually, I mean Carel I knew quite well, and it was Carel and his people, the artists that, one of his set as it were, that agitated to get me made a member, and Roger was one of that group, he was, you know, he knew Carel very well. And... But... Anyway, jumping ahead again, I left Manchester and had a decade away from art schools and the education, the art education business entirely, and just lived in Yorkshire and painted solidly all the time, and had exhibitions in London, at Roland, Browse & Delbanco's gallery, I mean that went on for about ten years really. And, and it was very good; as well as being, living in Yorkshire, in my studio and the house that we had there in the Dales, we also started going to the Outer Hebrides, we had a little crofter's cottage.

You have talked about that.

Which we bought for £200.

Yes. Do you still have it, by the way?

No.

No?

And... But... And we used to spend a lot of the summers out there in Hebrides, and... But... And the greater part of the year, well all through the winter and that, we, we didn't stay out there, it was pretty impossible really, because, for one thing the island, Scarp that we were on was a very small island, offshore island, off...

ANNA: Hello.

Hello love. Doing a recording. Melanie is doing...

I'm just going to break.

[break in recording]

Starting the interview.

Some years later anyway when I was Professor of Fine Art at Newcastle University, I received a phone call from Roger de Grey asking me if I would come down to London and... They wanted me to be... Apparently the general feeling amongst the members was that they wanted me to come and be Keeper at the... The school was in quite a bad way actually, the RA school. Peter Greenham had been Keeper for something like about twenty-five years, and, I mean, you know, he was a very good Keeper in his way. He was very conservative, and was pretty hopelessly out of date, and was not really a terribly good teacher except to students that were working almost in exactly the same way as he was himself. He couldn't really, he didn't feel that... Any student that was working a little bit sort of, abstract or something like that, he just didn't know what on earth to do with really. He had no way of approaching them. And... But, he had in fact resigned from being Keeper, he had to anyway because he was over age anyway he was...you can't be either Keeper or president when you're over seventy-five. And, he was over seventy-five, and he had to give it up. And at general assembly, Eddie Middleditch had been elected Keeper to take on the school. At that time I was really quite happy where I was at Newcastle, and, and wasn't interested in being Keeper at the school, until a year or so later, they made contact with me again because... Eddie Middleditch would have been a very very good Keeper actually, except that he was ill, and, very ill, and he... And in fact nobody was being Keeper, the place was just, you know, just floating in empty space with no guidance or, nobody in charge at all.

Why do you think he took it on if he was so ill? He must have realised that it would be difficult.

Well, why did they all vote for him? Everybody knew he was ill.

Mm.

They didn't like the alternative really. Gowing was almost voted...I mean he was the other one on the shortlist for the Keepership, and, although quite a lot of people respected Gowing as a writer, nobody thought a great deal about him as a painter. And he had made so many enemies in his career, he was...he was a very ruthless man really in the way he organised his life and, when he took charge of a place, you know, it was entirely run on his line, and, he was really quite ruthless in the way he organised things. I mean this impressed people up to a point, you know, if you wanted to get something done he'd get it done, but, you know, so many heads had toppled in his wake, there was, you know, nobody wanted... Well, he... A lot of people did actually want him, and it was really a very narrow thing apparently, when...I mean I was there actually at the general assembly at the time, and, I must say I voted for Eddie Middleditch. But it was a very close thing, and, he scraped in. And Gowing was furious actually, he didn't, he wasn't used to being beaten. And... But anyway, he was made Keeper, and... I mean he was a nice man, and a lot of people...and he was a good artist, Middleditch. And he was quite, I mean it was quite obvious that he, you know, that...that he should have... And he would have been a good Keeper actually if he hadn't, as I say, been so ill. I mean there came a time when he couldn't get up the stairs to his studio, students had to carry him up.

What would your definition of a good keeper be? You know, before you became Keeper yourself.

I mean I... It could be various things. I mean, you can do it in very different sort of ways. I mean, at the moment Brendan Neiland is doing it, is doing it in a very different sort of way to the way I used to run the school, but... I think, I think it's working, it's

working very well under Brendan at the moment. Brendan doesn't like teaching, he doesn't enjoy teaching and he doesn't, he doesn't do any teaching actually, but he's a very good organiser. And he spends most of his time trying to improve the lot of the students in the school, and getting money to support the school. I mean, of course the school, the RA school is pretty unusual at the moment, it's a completely independent school, we have no money at all from the Government; all the money has to come from private sources. And, and you know, and it is partly the Keeper's job. I mean there is a whole department raising money for the Royal Academy, everything in the Royal Academy, there's a whole department constantly making, arranging things and, and organising things abroad as well as in England, to find, you know, the money to run the Royal Academy, of which the school is a part. And... But Brendan is very good at that kind of thing. [inaudible], I like to be with the students. I actually enjoy teaching, I like talking to students about painting, and, you know, and it's... But I'm open to anything really, I mean if something seems to be working, I accept it. I remember a student asking me once what I was looking for when I interviewed a student, a student who wanted to come to the school, said, 'Well what is it you're looking for?' And I said, 'I'm looking for absolutely anything. I mean I'm looking to see what you're bringing with you.' And that's what it is I felt. I felt that, it was terribly important that the school shouldn't develop any kind of house style or anything like that amongst the students, I think it's, it's awfully important that they should be free to develop in any way that seems to be, that comes naturally to them. And, and I'm quite convinced that there's so many things that can indicate that this person is right to be an artist. I mean I think, the thing about the postgraduates, it's sort of like the Royal Academy, is that, you are not...you know, I mean... I mean I can remember showing somebody around the department at Newcastle actually, and saying...this is all...you know, and seeing the students working and what they were doing, and saying, 'Oh it's all very exciting, it's very interesting what they're doing, but what are they going to do when they leave?' And, I said, 'Well that's up to them isn't it, they're all, you know...' They said, 'What are you trying to trying to make?' And I said, 'We're enabling them to be artists.' I consider it a defeat if a student leaves here and finds himself doing something that is not being an artist, I feel that that's a dead loss. I mean they are, they should be artists when they leave here. That's what

they're doing. Everybody knows it's not an easy career, and, everybody knows that, you know, that there's a bit of a struggle, particularly in the early years, getting exhibitions, and getting people interested in your work, and getting... And also, convincing people that what you have to offer is valuable.

Do you think it's more of a struggle now than it was, or do you think it's...?

I don't think... I mean, no it's probably less of a struggle now. I think that people are more aware of art these days than they were when I was a young student. But... I mean there are more galleries and all that, but... There's a, a broader kind of thing happening which... I mean I feel very strongly against a lot of the things that are happening, I'm very, you know... But, you know, I...I thought the, this Apocalypse thing we had on at the Royal Academy was just, just total rubbish really, and...

Why did you think that? I actually thought it was a very interesting exhibition.

I...I thought it was just... It was just...well it was just so bland. It was... I mean I thought the previous one, the one...what was it...

The Sensation.

Sensation, was stupid enough. But this, I mean this was so uninteresting I thought, and, and so silly. It was... [pause] There was, you know... And in fact one of the students came up to me afterwards, I took a group of students around the exhibition, one or two groups actually, we just went up from the school downstairs and took a party of them, and we just wandered around the exhibition and talked about it. And, at the end of it, one of the students came to me and said, 'Well, I thought I wanted to be an artist, but if this is being an artist, I'm going to find some other career I think. I mean who wants to do that sort of thing?' And... And that was it, I mean, it's...it's... There was no... I mean, there was nothing being expressed in it at all, it was so muddled. And, what on earth did it

mean? And what on earth were they trying to say? They hadn't got a clue. And, I mean it was just a muddle. And it was, it was... The...

I mean, just sort of going back to the, the Schools, I do know from the kind of outside view of the college, is that it is a conservative establishment in terms of its art production. I mean do you think that's fair?

No. No I don't.

Can you explain why?

I think, because... Well I... I mean it certainly isn't the case now. It... Things have changed enormously, and they've changed, they changed a long time ago; people haven't really caught up with the terrific revolution that did take place within the Academy, which came in fact, which started under Hugh Casson, when Hugh Casson was made President, and the RA was short of money, and they had to make some money from somewhere, and...and he famously declared that he wanted to, he would...he wanted to turn the Royal Academy into a Marks & Spencer. Marks & Spencer are going through, going through a bad patch at the moment, and so, we don't want to get too close to that way. But, you know... And they had...I mean there was a time when, what's his name, that rather nice man, very nice man actually, Tom Monnington had been President before Casson, and, and he, I mean, a very, rather straight-laced one but nevertheless an abstract painter, to have an abstract painter made president was quite extraordinary. And, but that... And then following him came Hugh Casson, wanted to make it, run it like Marks & Spencer's. And then, and then following Hugh Casson came Roger. And, and that completed the revolution in a way. Roger was really, what...you know, you might find him a dull painter, and I did find, I didn't really...I did find him a dull painter actually, to be honest, he was an extremely nice man, extremely fair, and very... And he...and he turned out to be an absolutely brilliant president really, he...he really carried on and took further everything that had been started by the last couple of presidents, it happened gradually. But...

Now what exactly...

Any, absolutely any style.

I was just interested to know what the relationship between, you know, the Royal Academy, which I see as a sort of exhibiting organisation, and the Royal Academy Schools is.

What the relationship is?

Mm. I mean how ideologically connected are they?

Yes, they are really, yes. I mean the...the president is...is very much involved with the running of the school. He doesn't have to be of course, but any good president would be. It's...I think the school is the Royal Academy's greatest asset actually.

And when you say involved, what do you mean exactly?

In the... Well, I mean he should be interested in what's going on in the school. Most Academicians should be interested in what's going on in the school, and, you know, and... And they're all encouraged to, to come and talk to the students, and not many of them do, but they should do. And... And it's up to the president really who's overall boss to see that members do, to encourage them to take an interest in the school and to...and you know, and to participate really in what goes on down there. And, it's... But anyway, it had got into a bit of a pickle with Eddie being so ill. They couldn't, Roger couldn't...in fact it wasn't his plan actually, but he couldn't, you know, advise me to put my name forward as keeper because Eddie Middleditch was Keeper, even though he was only Keeper in name, and was doing very little, in fact by then he was hospitalised, he had to, he was in hospital most of the time. And, I can remember going and visiting him there. And it was terrible, I mean he was so fed up. They thought he had cancer. He

didn't have cancer actually. But he was in a cancer ward. And it was horrific really, he was...you know, they... It was so full, and there were patients on made-up beds on, down the middle of the ward, you know, and it was like a kind of wartime army hospital, there was so much... And he was saying that all the moaning and groaning that went on all night long, and patients crying out, calling out for, 'Nurse, I'm dying.' And, you know, it was really awful. And... But... Eventually... But, so, they...he wanted me to come down and be professor for painting, and actually run the school from that position, because he couldn't offer me the keepership because it was occupied, and...and they were all very...they were all very moral and gentlemen at the Royal Academy, and when the poor chap was so ill they wouldn't insist on him resigning. So they just, just put up with it. But the, but the students were not such gentlemen and they were getting really fed up. And in the end it was the nearest the Royal Academy ever came to having student trouble, riots on their hands.

What kind of form did they take?

Oh, just standing around complaining. And, writing to the president and that about the situation. And it was... But... So I...I went down and I did, I left Newcastle, and I went down to the school, and they made me Professor. And... But I was working as Keeper really, I was being Keeper. And eventually, what Roger wanted, his plan was that, Gowing, who was a great friend who he greatly admired, would very much like to have been Keeper, and Roger wanted him to be Keeper, and the election for the Keeper was called at the next general assembly, and Roger didn't want me to apply for it at all, he wanted me to stay as I was, and Gowing to be made Keeper. And it was his idea for a cosy relationship with Gowing and myself running the school. Which I didn't fancy at all. I mean I quite liked Gowing, but I knew what he was like, and I knew I couldn't, I couldn't work with him. And... But... And anyway, so, when it came to the election, I let it be known that I wanted to be Keeper. And... And they elected me with... And Gowing was livid.

So, the people that kind of vote in that election, they're all the RAs are they?

Yes.

Yes? How many are there?

Oh goodness knows. I mean, there are about, I suppose altogether must be about fifty or sixty.

Oh that's not a huge number.

Not a lot, no.

Yes, interesting.

Maybe more, but...

How many do they aim to elect every year?

They're restricted by law actually. It has to be, the number has to be kept very constant in a way. Usually they can only elect new members when somebody else has died or something, you know, there's a space for a new member. Usually, you know, that's it, you know, the numbers don't go up, but they keep the constant number of people.

I would think it would be interesting to know what the, you know, how people come to be elected, do they propose themselves or are they proposed?

They're...there's a book which, which is always out and you put in suggestions for artists who, you know, that you thought, you think ought to be elected. And, you put in the name of the artist that you want to support, and sign the thing. And somebody has to second that. And you go through the book, see all the things, the artists that have been put forward, and any one of those that you're interested in, who you think should be

introduced, you can second it. But then it has to receive...then each one of the members, I think six...when somebody's been seconded, six of the members have to put down there that they will support this artist. And, then, at the time of the summer show, there's always one of the general assemblies takes place just when the summer show, just before the summer show opens, and they are... And then, you vote at this meeting, and you vote for the, for the ones that you think should be made members. And it's voted by a kind of elimination process, you know, you...you know... First of all you're given the sheet with all the eligible artists, and you tick which one you want to vote for, and it's folded up and it's handed in, and then they're all counted, and... Until you get it down to, there's just two. And then... It's done with this, this box, it's a wonderful piece of furniture actually, it's... It has...it's a beautiful piece of furniture, this box, with little, I think it's little columns on it even, and, there's a hole. And there are two bits of thing, and the name of one is on that one, and the other one is on that one, with the two candidates. And there's a hole. And then there are all these little wooden balls. (laughs) And you pick out one ball, and you put your hand in through this hole, and then you feel there's a tunnel going one way and a tunnel going the other way, and you just drop the ball in whichever side you want.

So completely invisible.

Absolutely. Mm.

How fascinating.

And then the drawer is taken out afterwards, out of the bottom, and the balls are counted. The two drawers, which one, which drawer has the most balls.

How awful.

(laughs)

Is this also how the keeper is elected, in the same way, using the balls?

No.

No.

No that's just new members, that one is, that's where we vote for new members. No, the... Yes, the Keeper would be, yes, he would be.....

[End of F9432 Side A]

[F9432 Side B]

*Restarting the interview with Norman Adams, or continuing the interview I should say.
Tape 7 side A[sic].*

Well we... I was elected Keeper, and, you know, the...and...and you know, and then it was... And it was very exciting, I really enjoyed it. I mean the thing is, the situation was such... Yes, well I've forgotten... No, Roger first of all had to, I mean did, he did persuade Eddie to resign, Eddie Middleditch, and that made it possible for them to sort...because they had to sort the whole business out, about who was going to be keeper and who wasn't. And the general assembly was called, and I was elected Keeper. And in the final run-through, Lawrence Gowing and myself were the only people who had been in the field, and... I must say I got great support from the members. In fact, my election was overwhelming actually. Gowing I think got three votes, and all the rest was for me to do it. And, Gowing was not well pleased. Neither was Roger actually, he was I think in some ways... Because I made it quite clear to Roger beforehand that I was going to go all out to be Keeper, I didn't...I wasn't going to be professor under Gowing in any, down to any...in any way, so... Anyway, that happened. And I was Keeper for nearly ten years. And...

What happened to Gowing at that point?

He... I don't know what he was doing. He had no particular... I mean he was quite old you see.

Mm.

He had retired from, he had been Professor at the Slade, Professor...you know, he was running the Slade School, and... But he, yes he had, by then he had retired from that. And then... But he was just hanging around really; he was doing jobs, he was always, always did lots of freelance work, I don't know, I'm not quite sure what it was. A lot

of...he did a lot of writing, he wrote a lot of articles, and books. And... I mean he was a very scholarly, very learned man. And... And he was, you know, I must say he was one...he wrote extremely well about art. And... Though I thought he was, he was a really, pretty rotten artist actually, a very dull artist. But he, he was intellectual.

So describe...

He eventually died of course, and... He wasn't, he wasn't a fit man actually, he was.. He... Oh yes, that was it, he used to go to America a lot, but then he had to stop. He did a certain amount of work over there, give lectures and things. Because, he was told by...that he had to stop flying, it would kill him. He had, I don't know, something wrong with his heart. And so he had to, he had to give up flying. And... He just faded out really, he did less and less. And then, he... I can remember the morning when he died, it... Because he was a greatly respected man in his way, and... But... Although I got on well with Roger, you know, we did see eye to eye on most things really, we did have our fights. And... He never quite forgave me for not going along with his little plan of Gowing being Keeper. But... And...

I mean when you became Keeper...

Mm.

...just tell me, what, you know, what you saw your role as and how you kind of... Just, was it very different from being Professor of Painting?

No, not really. Excepting that I had control over everything. The Keeper is the boss, and you know what you want to do and you just do it. I mean I wouldn't, I wouldn't go along with Gowing at all, and... After all that's what I had at Newcastle, and I didn't see I was going to have any less when I came to the Academy, I mean I was...as Professor of Fine Art at Newcastle University I had, I really had complete control of the fine art department. And... I got used to being in the sort of job really. But when, I mean you

didn't, you couldn't think too much when you got there, because it was so awful, the Academy, when I first started there, I mean you couldn't...you couldn't really do anything wrong; well if you did anything, it was bound to be an improvement on what was there, which was absolutely nothing. And there were students there that had been there three years without actually having one tutorial. I mean I was giving the first tutorials ever to students, some of the ones that [inaudible]. There was...they were packed in like sardines. They were running an undergraduate course as well as their postgraduate courses, rather, like the Slade. And, and there just wasn't room for that. There was... They were only doing it... Of course, they, although they are an independent school, took on this undergraduate course, as well as the postgraduate course, you were given money from the Government to run the course. And it was done really just to attract some money from the Government. And...but it meant... I mean there were some students that never really worked in a place, in one of the studios, there wasn't room in the studios, they were working in the corridors and... There was a kind of wash place where you wash all your brushes and things, you know, it was always filthy with paint and everything. There was two students actually working in there. And, and you know, in those spaces, which are not meant for painting students at all, there's no windows or anything, you get students, the painting students would be working for three years in a place, and had never actually worked in daylight; worked in artificial light all the time. And as I said, no wonder the school wasn't thought of much as, didn't produce any colourists, none of them...they were all working in this gloomy kind of monochrome. And... Oh it was terrible.

And how did you tackle that?

I...I shut down that undergraduate course.

Oh.

And, the... And, well I had to let the ones that were in run out. But then, when that finished, that was that, it was gone. And...

What did people feel about that?

They all thought it was a good thing. Everybody...everybody agreed it was a good thing, why hadn't it been done before? And... And, you know, I mean, what one can do is, I mean, is get in the people that you, you know from, you know... I mean, and I'd had quite a bit of experience by then, met...and had quite a group of students, people, the young people out of the past that I worked with which I thought were good teachers and good artists, and... I mean I got in... The main thing is people, and the school...there's nothing very mysterious about a school, the school is people. Nothing, there's nothing to a school except people. And, it's getting the right people in the right places, it seemed to me.

I mean were there...

There was a very good print section for instance, it was, it was well equipped, but not well maintained at all. And there was no...there was a technician in charge, there was no, there was no artist in charge at all. A couple of technicians. And, I...you know, I got Norman Stevens to come in who I greatly respected, and admired, he was very, very nice, and very, you know, a good artist. And he, he made no end, you know, he made no end of difference to the print section. And... And really just [inaudible]. I mean, the Academy, unlike most state schools, you know, you [inaudible] easy, you know, you just shovel them around a bit, and just...if there's... I just got, you know, several people in key positions who I felt were really good artists, and inspired teachers too.

And were you stuck with sort of tenured members of staff from yesteryear?

No.

No?

No I wasn't.

Why not?

I mean there were one or two. But they weren't employed on that...they were only employed on an hourly basis anyway. There's no, you know, really permanent staff. Mostly they're part-time. There's... The administrative staff of course have to, are on their own, proper...you know, contracts and things. But... No, and, I've always found that, also that, that not only must you be an enthusiastic person, and you must be...you must be a going concern as an artist, and the students should see that you are, and you know, I think it's important that the people that are teaching are actually working, and having exhibitions, and...and showing the students by their own example that it is possible to be an artist, and live by it, and be, you know, thoroughly professional.

And did you have a studio at the Schools?

Yes. Yes I did. I wouldn't go to it without, I wouldn't take on any job without a studio. And... And first of all I couldn't get into the Keeper's studio because it was...it was just...Ed had left really all his things. And... I mean they were all gradually removed, his daughter took them bit by bit. But, so I had a studio down in the school, because I couldn't... Everything was, just, he plonked...and he hadn't opened anything actually, not...these great, all these tea-chests and things all piled up with all his stuff in them, as delivered by Pickfords.

Mm, very sad.

But he died then shortly afterwards.

Mm.

Mm.

How many undergraduates... How long did the undergraduate course run?

Three years.

Oh right. So, it wasn't...

The undergraduate?

Yes, before you closed it down, how long [inaudible] something...?

How long had it been? Oh I don't know when...I'm not quite sure when it started actually. I don't remember. I mean that was a long time before my time anyway.

Mm.

One or two of them usually go on, they're accepted into, onto the postgraduate course when they... They can apply, students from anywhere, they can apply if they're...and so on, they get taken. But...

Did you employ a professor of painting, or did you keep that role yourself while you were Keeper?

There is one now, John, John Hoyland is Professor of Painting at the moment.

Oh right.

And... Yes, for a while there wasn't. But... [pause] But... As I say, now, after...
[pause]

Now going back to the kind of relationship between the school and the gallery, tell me more about the running of the gallery. Presumably you've got, you know, quite a lot of insights into that.

The running of the Royal Academy gallery?

Mm.

It's...well it's, you know, there's an exhibitions department. Norman Rosenthal is the exhibitions officer, and, he runs the exhibition department. But... He... And his department think up ideas for exhibitions, what, you know, what artists should receive, you know, what exhibitions they should try to put on. You can initiate some ideas for exhibitions, a few, but, that's very expensive. And if there's anything going around, we ought to try to get anything that's on in New York or anywhere, in Europe or anywhere, if we'd like to try and get it afterwards, that sort of thing, you know. And every time there's a council meeting, there's always a section on exhibitions, and a list of proposed exhibitions for the future, and they're discussed, and you look into the general finances of things to see how, what can we afford and what can't we afford. And, you know, and eventually if it's passed by council, passed back to the exhibitions officer, and they're either given the go-ahead to get the whole thing organised, or told, no it's, we can't fit that one in the accounts. Some of them are just rejected because they're really dull ideas, you know. And the... Again, members, not in the exhibitions department also, if any member has got an idea for an exhibition that they think would be terrific, they'd like to see if they can get enough support amongst the other members, and get them to vote for it, you can pass it on to the exhibitions officer, and he has to try and sort it out and see what the practicalities of it are. And... But Norman is, you know, is the exhibitions officer.

What's he like?

Everybody knows what Norman's like, don't they? (laughs)

I want to know what you think of him. (laughs)

He's, he's all right really, he's... He's a terrible egotist, and he likes everybody, likes people to feel that he knows that he... You know, he's... [pause] I suppose he's a bit like the Gowing sort of thing, he's very a ruthless man I suppose, in a way he is. I mean, and he can be very charming. And... I mean, you both love him and hate him actually, I think he's that sort of person. I don't really think he's... I mean I could imagine a better exhibitions officer, but... No, he's... I don't trust his judgement on paintings at all, I don't think he knows the front end of a painting by the back end of a London Transport bus as they say. But he's...you know, he sometimes hits upon something by accident, that turns out rather interesting. But he's...

His sort of commercial nous seems pretty good doesn't it.

Yes. Well he's very...he's very impressed with trendy things. And he loves successful people. He loves for instance, I mean, the awful, the awful Saatchis, and all that sort of thing, the, the trendy thing, and... He's... But... And he loves rich people, and is...

Quite a useful thing though in his role.

(laughter) He's... But it's... It's... I think it's, it's fun really, it's quite... I mean it's one...apart from the school, it's the most... I mean obviously, apart from the school it's the most interesting thing, I mean the exhibitions is, it's what it's all about really, and... But, I think the Royal Academy is rather good in its exhibitions. I mean, the Botticelli, the late Botticelli, you know, the silver point drawings for the, the, for Dante, for *The Divine Comedy*, they've got an exhibition of those coming up shortly, which will be terrific, I'm really looking forward to that. And, the, the things that he did at the end of his life when he became very religious, and... There's a lot of them, there's many more of them than I thought really, there's... He did...the silver point drawings, beautiful drawings, and terrific ideas for the various sections of *The Divine Comedy*. And...

There's about a hundred of them actually, and it's going to be quite a big exhibition. I mean they're not large pieces, but... And they're quite...like that, there are quite imaginative exhibitions we do produce. I mean just at this moment, the Tate has topped us really, I mean the best exhibition on at the moment is the, in London, is the Blake exhibition at the Tate, which is, the old Tate, which I think is terrific. It's...it's a wonderful exhibition actually.

And have you seen things that were really surprising to you, with your knowledge of Blake? Because it's an enormous exhibition.

No. It's an enormous exhibition, yes, it covers more or less everything. And it's beautifully displayed, it's... Really, I don't often feel that. But it's inspired, I thought. It was... It's that part of the Tate where they can adjust all the walls and things and put...make big rooms and small rooms, and fill it around, and... But they've made...in the centre of the exhibition it is more or less, this huge room, and there's this...it's a kind of circle, or sort of octagon or something, but it's... It's...it's a... It's light, the room, which is largely to do with the printmaking side of his work, though not entirely that, there's a lot of beautiful drawings, but it's... It's like a great wheel, and right in the middle of this wheel, like the hub, they've got this gorgeous press. It wasn't the actual press that Blake had, but it was one of the, the same kind of model, of the same sort of period. And it's such a beautiful object in itself, it's a lovely colour, and it's like... And so the whole room's like, this huge wheel with this, with these spokes going in, and in the middle of the whole room there's this beautiful piece of, sculpture really, which is this printing press. And it's almost entirely made of wood. The bed I think is steel. But it's, it's a beautiful, beautifully done. And there are a lot of...and some early photographs and things of, not as early as Blake but almost as early, of the places where he lived, you know, and... It comes home to you too that he was very much a Londoner, he lived all his life more or less in the centre of London. And it's... London of that time is, you feel that comes through the exhibition. It's beautifully done I thought.

Mm, I agree. Although I, I have a suspicion that with the split between Tate Britain and Tate Modern, that the Royal Academy is going to be the sort of, central London place that people will go to more, rather than Tate Britain, which is a pity.

I think people will... Yes, well I don't know. We are much more conveniently placed, we're a marvellous situation to be in, in the middle of the West End, in Piccadilly. And...

The role of the president, how involved does he get on the exhibitions side?

Oh very much so. He's there, all... He... I mean they get on with their work, get on with... I mean he doesn't...he doesn't interfere with it really, but he's... He...the president chairs all council meetings of course, and so he's very much involved with the Council. And, I suppose the Keeper, as Keeper you have to, you have to attend, I mean, the Council... It's a very democratic institution, the Royal Academy. All members rotate, serve on the Council, rotates through all the members. And the president has to, and the Keeper, permanent members of Council, if you're Keeper or if you're president, you are permanent member of Council, and you have to attend all Council meetings, which occur once a month. And... And you have, and also you have to attend the general assemblies, which, there's usually about three a year, possibly four; it depends what, you know, if there's anything that crops up, which you feel is necessary to have a general assembly over.

General assemblies everyone comes to, do they?

Every member comes to that.

And where do the meetings take place, is there a huge room or are there different rooms?

The general assemblies, well there's a general assembly room, but if it's an important one, it's a bit tightly packed in there, but if it's an important one it's usually in one of the galleries. The ones that we have during the, just before the summer show, they're in one

of the galleries with the, you know, with the summer show hung but not open to the public, but hung. And... There's usually two on, two assemblies on consecutive days. That's the one in the summer, which is the big one. The one...then there's one just before Christmas, before we pack off for Christmas, in which the...and it's that one where, that's where the president has to be re-elected.

Oh is he re-elected annually?

Yes.

Gosh.

And the Keeper is re-elected every three years. And... So every three years you have to be re-elected.

Mm. I mean do you...what do the Americans do? Do you have to campaign?

No, not really. I mean you...I mean, you have to...you don't want people vote for you if you're not going to, if you don't want to do it. I mean, you let it be known that you are interested. And if you definitely wouldn't, you don't want people to waste their time voting for you if you definitely don't want to do it.

What are the meetings like, do they get...are they very mixed, do they heated, or...?

Yes they do.

Yes?

They got very heated over the, the Sensation things.

Ah. Tell us all about it. (laughs)

No, it resulted in the resignation of several people. One of them...I forget... There was one of the sculptors, I've forgotten his name actually now. And... The woman, abstract, big abstract paintings.

A woman?

Yes.

Sandra Blow?

No not Sandra. The other one. She comes down from...she used to come in from the West Country somewhere, big...

Maggi Hambling? No not Maggi Hambling.

No Maggi's not...

No. Oh I know exactly who you mean. Gillian Ayres?

Gillian Ayres.

Yes.

Yes. She's... I think someone said she'd like to be re-elected now, but, she hasn't made it official yet, but I think she is just about to be re-elected. But...

What are the benefits of being a Royal Academician, apart from in reputation terms?

Well you can exhibit at the summer show. You can put in six pictures to the summer show. It's... [pause] I don't know why [inaudible]. I mean it... It may help in some

areas to sell your pictures, if you're an RA. On the other hand, in other areas it might count against it.

I was thinking that actually, and it's a kind of interesting point isn't it, that people...

It's less so these days though. I mean you know, most... There was a time when dealers all definitely recommended their artists on their books not to accept it. But they don't do that now I don't think, or far less so. It's... It's... I can remember when I was a student, I didn't...I didn't want to have anything to do with the Royal Academy at all, I thought it was a terrible place, and I never put anything into the summer show, as a non-member I... And... Well I did when I was still a student, but then afterwards I just didn't bother. And... In fact, when I was made a member, it was Carel Weight who.....

[End of F9432 Side B]

[F9433 Side A]

Continuing the interview with Norman Adams on the 25th of January 2001 at his home in London. Tape 8 side A.

We were just talking about the benefits of being a Royal Academician.

Mm.

And also talking about there having been at different times a desire not to be one, rather purposefully.

Mm. Well it was considered to be very reactionary, which it was of course, and very establishment, and absolutely unapproachable by young artists, and artists with more aggressive ideas and thoughts about art. It was a very very reactionary and establishment body at that time. But always has fiercely maintained its independence of any governments or anything. But as I said, you know, we got a few artists like Victor Pasmore and, and many of the American avant-garde artists, people made honorary members, foreign, there are foreign artists, you know, they...they can't be made an ordinary member because you have to be a British subject, but... De Kooning and...is... Most of the ones that are still alive at any rate, Liechtenstein, are honorary members these days, which, you know, and it was... I think...and as I say, Victor Pasmore told me once that Henry Moore wouldn't, he wouldn't walk on the same side of the road as the Royal Academy, when he'd get to the Royal Academy he always crossed over, walk on the other side. And, I mean it's a bit silly all that actually, because there was...I mean it's a long time ago now, it started the movement of becoming more open-minded and more progressive. The real crunch came when the dreadful Tom...not...the terrible president, very vulgar man. What's his name?

I'll stop the tape.

[break in recording]

.....*remembered.*

Munnings. The notorious speech he made at one of the RA banquet occasions. At the time too, in those days it was always broadcast, the speeches and that from the Royal Academy banquet, it was a regular item on the radio. And, and all this, this dreadful speech was broadcast all over the nation. And, which, you know, he just went off the, off his silly little rocker, and, threatening to go and punch Picasso on the nose and... (laughs) He was...he was of course, absolutely sloshed of course at the time, so...but that didn't excuse him really. And the next morning he was more or less given the black spot, he was told by the members that he had to go. And, you know, that was...which was great. They wouldn't... But, it was... But you know, as I say, they're all, they're all members now. And Victor was a member, and...and felt quite strongly, you know, about the Royal Academy, he... I mean, it was only a shame that he hadn't been a member longer, but he... And he always came, though he lived in Malta, he became very very involved, very pro the Royal Academy, and he, every summer he came back for the summer show, and put work in, he and his wife, what's...I've forgotten her name now, who was a very good artist herself.

Mary Fedden. Oh no.

No no. Mary Fedden's...

No, that's Julian Trevelyan's wife.

Pasmore's wife.

We have another memory....

[break in recording]

Right, we're back on tape.

I think it is Wendy, Wendy Pasmore. I think so. And... Yes. [pause] I can... When I was, shortly after, you know, when my career as a, as a professional artist had only just begun really, I'd left the Royal College, and, I was elected a member of the London Group. And at that time, I wouldn't have touched, I wouldn't have touched the Academy with a bargepole really. And the London Group had been set up as a kind of official opposition to the, the Royal Academy. And... But... And, at one point the president of the London Group was Gowing, and... I can remember, I exhibited fairly regularly with the London Group. I've never actually ceased to be a member of the London Group when I think of it, but I...I mean I don't exhibit...I don't have anything to do with them these days, I haven't had anything to do with them for years. In fact, for quite a lot of the time they just, they're...I think they don't...I'm not quite sure whether they really exist any more actually. But... They certainly don't exhibit very often.

When do you think the kind of, transition in your mind and other contemporary artists sort of took place? Was it because of a particular president, or, exhibiting policy, or something like that?

It was the group that... I mean a lot of ex-students from the Royal College of Art at that time... I mean there's been quite a good time at the College actually, quite a lot of the students who were there when I was there at the Royal College were out in the world at that point, we'd finished our three years at the Royal College in those days, now reduced to two years at the Royal College. And, when all, like Eddie Middleditch of course, and Derrick Greaves, Bratby, Hockney, the younger generation, and Kitaj and all those people, they were all ex-students from the Royal Academy, Hockney and Kitaj both members, and... But... And people that had been our tutors and staff at that time were made members of the Royal Academy and being in the position to elect new members and that sort of thing. And, it was just... Carel Weight and, and... Actually the Royal

Academy still hadn't got round to accepting gay art people, and, homosexuals. And, Minton...

How did they make that policy known?

Well, Minton would dearly have loved to have been a member of the Royal Academy, I mean, he was terribly fond of, you know, the people... I mean he'd worked with Roger at the Royal College, he was on the staff at the Royal College with Spear and, Ruskin Spear that is, and... Well you know, all of them, they were all, well they were all now members of the Royal Academy, and you know, a lot of the young artists coming up that were...they were trying to get to exhibit with the Royal Academy more and more, they were trying to get more, the young artists involved. We all had been, you know, we had all, all...you know, we'd all been at some point or other students of those people, and they were just making it... I mean they were more acceptable, because we knew them and they knew us. And it was... Bratby and Jack Smith and, and Eddie Middleditch was one of those actually really, the Kitchen Sink artists they call themselves isn't it, showing at the old Beaux Arts Gallery, the one that's now the Timothy Taylor Gallery. And no way at all related to the Beaux Arts where I exhibited, different firm entirely. And... But you know, it was...it was...

I mean on that question of Minton not being allowed to be a member because of his homosexuality, I mean was that a stated policy, or was it just one that was kind of, quietly understood?

Oh, they were terribly rude about them of course you know, and... I don't think it was a stated policy, but, they wouldn't vote for them to be a member, they didn't want them to be a member.

So was it just sort of, it went away as the membership changed?

Yes.

A sort of broader base.

Mm. Yes, I mean now there wouldn't be any problem. And...

Just thinking about the summer exhibition, which, you know, has a very odd reputation for being, you know, partly serious and partly less serious, is there...do you think the format that exists is a good one?

I think it... I think it's quite a good thing to try to do different things. I... I don't... You can't turn it into one of these beautifully hung chi-chi exhibitions. Inevitably it has to be a bit of a bazaar, and it's...it's... It's... I think it's...to try anything, year by year, they try to do it, hang it differently and encourage other people that are not members, but the people that are not members are very few and far between these days, the ones that you think are particularly, are very interesting. And if they are interesting artists, they nearly always at some point or other get round to being voted a member. And... I think... I don't think it's...it's necessary to make it... I mean I think, they complained about the hanging of it, that there were so many pictures on the walls all close together, but it's, it means that these people are showing their work. I mean if you, if you... And I think generally speaking you can, you can hang fairly... I'm not all that fussed about hanging actually. People go barmy about the bloody hanging of exhibitions; I really, really don't... I think it's much more, much more...I much prefer to go and see some interesting work hung badly than, than a lot of rubbish hung well, or sparsely. And... It's... I think of the Summer Exhibition as part of the, the London summer in fact, I think of the Summer Exhibition in the same sort of way as I think of the Proms, it's just a great big party, and it's wonderful, it is terrific. I mean it's so eccentric, this special service for artists in St James's across the road in the church, I think it's wonderful actually. And we march, you know, we all gather in the forecourt behind some bishop or somebody who's been invited to be the speaker for the occasion, and the president and the president's wife and the Keeper and the Keeper's wife, and... And, all members and non-members, everybody, just all gathered together in the forecourt of the Royal Academy. And led by

a steel band, Jamaican steel band, and march straight up into Piccadilly, and the police will hold the traffic up, and we march down the centre of Piccadilly and across the road into church, and we have this special service for artists. And it's lovely. And... So...

Tell me about the selection process, because I imagine a lot more works than are ever hung turn up.

A lot more work?

Than are ever hung, in the final exhibition.

Oh yes. Oh yes, yes yes yes. No, the... I think one is duty bound to hang as much as one can actually, and if it's a question of foregoing a little bit of smart hanging... I mean there aren't many people that would rather like...that would prefer to have their pictures in the exhibition than not, than not at all; they'd forego a little bit of smart hanging for that. And...

How do they pick the people who select the work?

Well it's whoever's on the council at that time, this is the current council members, which always includes the keeper and the president. So, there's about, between twelve, eighteen members or so. And...

So as each painting comes in front of the selection committee...

Mm.

...do you have time to discuss it, or do people literally say yes or no?

You don't have much time to discuss it.

No.

Sometimes it gets held up, you know, someone says, 'Let's look at that one again.'

Yes.

And, everybody starts to get impatient then. You see these great...I mean these great big piles of paintings piled up, go through all of that lot. And a lot of it is pretty bad, but, I think some... I mean, you see something quite interesting quite quickly very often. But...

So do people put up their hand or something if they want it go in?

Yes you vote, you just put your hand up.

Right. Mm. Yes, those poor artists, such pain. The other name that you've mentioned as, you know, being more in your life than Roger de Grey is Carel Weight, and I wonder if you could tell me some more about him, because, you know, getting a perspective of someone is very interesting.

Well he, he was Professor at the Royal College of Art after my time actually, he wasn't Professor in my day but he taught there, he was on the staff at the Royal College. And, Moynihan was, Rodrigo Moynihan was the Professor when I was a student at the Royal College. And... But he, I didn't really have that much to say to Moynihan, we didn't get on particularly well. I think, you know, the relationship was quite reasonable, but... You know, we were poles apart in a way. Carel was very nice; he wasn't my tutor, Minton was my tutor. But, Carel I saw quite a lot of. And he was, he was...he was quite a good teacher; he hardly taught at all really, but he was very encouraging, and he'd go out of his way to be helpful; if you had exhibitions and things, he would always go and see, go and look at it and... And he'd come round to the studio, we lived in Battersea at that time, Turnchapel Mews, and... And it wasn't all that far to come, but he used to come out to see what I had in the studio, and... Of course very often, in the last year at the College

one didn't spend a lot of time in the College, one used to stay and work at home in one's studio, if it was fairly convenient for the College, so that your teacher could go out and see what you were doing. And, Carel would go quite, a lot out of his way to help a student, and he... He'd help you with the, you know, he was...he realised that, obviously that it was a tough business, and that it was, you know, getting a reputation in the first place. And, I remember, one of the first bits of teaching I did, Carel had an evening class where he used to go and teach at the Hammersmith College of Art, and, I think, it was quite a popular class, and you know, there was the part-time students, it wasn't the daytime students, and, when the numbers got over a certain number he could have an assistant, and I remember he, he...he asked me to be his assistant. So I used to go along to Hammersmith and teach in his class. And... I know, we were going like anything, sort of yattering away all evening talking to these students; I remember Carel coming up to me and he said, 'You'll kill yourself going like that; come outside, have a cup of tea.'
(laughs)

Going back to the move back to London in the sort of, '86 when you became a keeper, did you move back immediately when you became Keeper?

Back to London?

Yes.

Yes.

How did you organise it? It must be a terrific kind of mental and financial shift at that time.

Well, we moved into the Royal Academy.

Oh right.

There was...I had nowhere else in London when we moved back from Newcastle. And...

There's a sort of keeper's flat or something is there?

Well no, it's a studio, bedroom, bathroom and kitchen.

Oh I see, mhm.

There was. Brendan's let them take it away actually, he's kept his studio but they've taken the bedroom away, which is a swindle. They reckon it wasn't entirely official that you actually slept and lived there. They were obliged by the law to give you a studio, but they were not obliged to give you living accommodation.

Mm.

And... They tried to get it away from me like anything, but I refused to go. And... That was one of the bones of contention I always had with Roger actually. But...

Was that his idea?

Well, they... I mean, it was, it was... I don't think he particularly wanted to get me out, but he was aware there were others that wanted...others, including Rosenthal, wanted my room, and, bugger that, you know. (laughs) And...

What did Rosenthal want it for?

He wanted...he wanted it as his office.

Oh I see. Right.

He was short of space. Everyone was short of space. But...

So what did it feel like coming back to, you know...

Fun, and I enjoyed it really very much actually. I've always rather liked London I must say, always used to like going down to London, liked the atmosphere of the, of... I quite enjoy even the gallery world too, I mean, all the exhibitions and the dealers and that. I also found it so much easier to live by being a painter in London than if you're living out in Newcastle, you know, and... You know, it's much easier to organise exhibitions, and...and you know, there are many more people wanting to buy paintings or looking for, looking for new talent.

What did Anna feel about the move?

Well she... Well she... We had...we did have a very nice house in Newcastle actually, huge house actually. And it was set up... It was going to be quite nice actually because... And I got fed up with all the administration. But my five years were up, I had... The chair went on forever, but the head of department didn't, and every five years one had to sign a contract to run the department for five years. But any member in the department could be head of department, it didn't have to be the professor. And... But I didn't realise that when I went into it, otherwise I might have had second thoughts about taking on the head of department. I said I'd do both, and that's what they wanted really. They liked the idea, the vice chancellor and all the people, that, when you go up for your interview and that, they rather hoped that...in fact they said, that, 'Well we rather hoped that if you do, if we do give you the chair, that you will take on the head of department.' Well I'd done my five years being head of department, and I was going to just stay as professor but not head of department. And, then I also discovered that, if you were anything but the professor, you get extra pay for being head of department.

Oh.

But if you're professor, you do it for nothing. And I thought, bugger that. (laughs)

A classic. (laughs)

I didn't realise I'd been working all that five years with nothing, with all those meetings, you know. And... So, that was what I was going to do. And it was very nice, I had a very nice...as well as my studio in the house, I had a very nice studio in the department at Newcastle. And, I was going to stay on just as professor and not be head of department. And... All that was worked out, and so it was lovely, then I suddenly...then this cropped up. And... We are both of us Londoners really, both were born and grew up in London, and... Actually it just seemed an exciting prospect, particularly living in the West End, in Piccadilly.

Can't think of anywhere nicer.

And, it was... No it was very enjoyable. And I enjoyed being the Keeper. It was... It was very good, and I enjoyed it being just the postgraduate set-up.

What kind of students are attracted to the postgraduate course there?

Absolutely anybody can do it. You don't know what's going to turn up next. And it's... They were all students that have been on an ordinary course somewhere, an undergraduate course, and have got their first degree or whatever. And... And they're older than the other students of course, a few years older. And... I'd always had a, felt quite favourably disposed towards... There is an age limit you see. But there's a certain amount of freedom with that, you can vary it a bit. And, I was always...I looked very favourably upon the older applicants, very often to get women and people that had been held up for one reason or another, and mostly they tend to be very good students.

What's the upper age limit?

Forty I think.

Oh right.

But... I think it was less than that actually. Thirty I think really. Yes, I think that was the actual age limit. But... I've...that and beyond forty I've taken people actually. And...

In terms of teaching and facilities and organisation, how much does it differ from the state-run institutions you've worked at?

Well... I mean there's less paper involved, you know, you don't get so many things coming through the post from the Government. And also, they...they'd suddenly decided that three years was too long for a postgraduate course, and the Royal College, which had always been three years, was cut back, they had to turn it into a two-year course. And all the postgraduate schools, we are the only school in this country that has a three-year course. Now that wouldn't be allowed if we were state-run.

Do you think...

I think it's terrible. I think it's, I think it's, three years is absolutely...two years is nothing like enough. And you can see it, it's in the quality of the work; I think the Royal College, I wouldn't want to be a student at the Royal College now. It's...

It's not enough time to develop properly.

No. I think three years is the minimum that's required.

How do the fees compare?

Well the fees are much the same, but... And, we get some money from the Government for that actually, we get eleven bursaries from the Government to give to students, but we take twenty students. So we have to find ways of financing at least nine students from

other sources. And, we get them from all over the place. We get... Actually Rio Tinto Zinc give us money for bursaries for, I think three students actually, and, we get something from the Gulbenkian for... There are lots of things like that. There's.. And odd little private pockets, I mean there's one, Jack Goldhill who is just a retired businessman keeps a student. And, it's...

Does that mean their fees are completely.....

[End of F9433 Side A]

[F9433 Side B]

Yes, it's interesting isn't it, because, if it had been a Conservative Government you may not have been so lucky.

No, I don't, I'm sure I wouldn't.

Yes.

No, and it was...it was a lovely atmosphere. I mean the war was over, and everybody was having a party, which seemed to go on and on and on.

Yes.

I was saying the other day how much jollier that first festival was, the Festival of Britain...

Yes.

...than this present one that we've had, which was so dull, and almost nothing happened really.

I mean this one just wasn't the right thing, if you know what I mean.

Mm.

Time's moved on.

Yes.

Not an appropriate form of celebration.

In some ways I suppose they were trying to do something too much like the '51 festival.

Yes, maybe. I don't know.

They seemed to have the artists involved much more, everybody was doing...anybody who had any kind of reputation at all was doing murals about the place.

Yes, we've got to realise though, because art has changed so much, had you let the artists loose on the Millennium Dome, the public would have been really mystified.

Well they might... You know, if... Well my suggestion would be to demolish it I think. I mean I think it's a disaster, the Dome, personally.

Well I quite like the building.

The building's all right, and the views from the window in particular.

Yes. Yes.

But the, but the art part of it doesn't come into it. It's nothing to do with art.

[break in recording]

.....corridors, which are always getting very dirty.

Yes.

And then you suddenly find little inlets with about three lonely looking paintings in it. And you feel, just feel sorry for it actually. Poor art.

Well I quite like some of the...did you see some of the sculpture outside? I thought that was more effective actually, just sort of being in the land bit.

I can't remember, it didn't really, I can't remember it really.

Yes. OK.

I've been disgusted by the whole thing actually, so.....

[break in recording]

.....the interview with Norman Adams on the 30th of January 2001 at his home in London. Now last time we were talking, we were talking about your time as Keeper at the Royal Academy. And, I know that you're keen now to kind of bring us up to date with what you've been doing since then.

Well it was, it was a coming home for both of us actually, Anna and me. We had been living out of London, both of us Londoners in a way, me particularly. And, it's...it was, it was just, you know, I think both of us felt that it would be interesting to come back, come back to live in London again for some, for a while. And... And also, it certainly, I mean it did amazing things for my work actually. I mean from the point of view, professionally, from the point of view of selling my work and, getting work actually, commissions and things like... What I really do enjoy more than almost anything is having a, working to a commission. And it's...I find the actual business of working directly for people, that you're part of, you become part of the community, and I find that all very interesting. And, I think I've mentioned that the fairly recent commissions to paint the Fourteen Stations of the Cross, or have I mentioned it? I can't remember now. For the 'Hidden Gem' in Manchester, it's a Roman Catholic church in the centre of Manchester just off of Albert Square opposite the town hall. And, the 'Hidden Gem' is St Mary's really, St Mary's, Mulberry Street. It's called, they call it the 'Hidden Gem' though because, although it's right there smack in the middle of the town, opposite the

town hall, it's down a little snicket round the corner. And it's only a question of three or four steps and there it is, in front of you. But you don't see it until you're right on top of it almost. And it's a very attractive, very charming building, and, it was...it celebrated, a few years ago now, about three or four years ago I suppose when it started, they were celebrating their bicentenary. It was one of the first churches that the Roman Catholics were allowed to build, new churches that they were allowed to build after the Reformation, and all that. And... It... And it was...and...also Manchester was growing like nobody's business at that time, it was developing, and it was a very prosperous city. It was expanding, building all over the place. And, to do all this building, Irish labourers came into Manchester to do the building, looking for the work that was plentiful there. And, they were nearly all Catholics. And this church was built at that time specially to serve them really. And... But it had the Fourteen Stations of the Cross, paintings, which were horrible. They weren't as old as the building, they were Victorian, and for some extraordinary reason they'd been painted on steel. And not only were they aesthetically absolutely hideous, they were coming off in great slabs, which I suppose is the best thing you can say for it. But, the priest, the parish priest there, Dr...Father, Father Denis Clinch, wanted some new Stations of the Cross. And he...he didn't...I don't think he knew very much about art at all really, certainly not contemporary art, he hadn't really given it a lot of thought. As a Catholic he, obviously he went to Italy quite a lot, and he knew the Italians, the quattrocento painters and all of those, I mean they were his favourites obviously. And... But what he wanted was some modern paintings, he wanted something that was, you know, different and seen in the twentieth century terms. And... But... So what he did, he wrote to, was it, Sister... Oh dear. The woman on the television programmes.

Oh Wendy Beckett.

Wendy Beckett.

Mm.

And, and asked her, got her advice. And she wrote back to him and said that, she thought that it was his church, and he ought to make the final choice, but, she said, 'I'll give you the addresses and telephone numbers of,' I think it was about four artists that she thought would, would do a good job for him. And... But he came here, and we struck it off straight away. He liked my work, he was very, very enthusiastic, and... And that was it, we struck it off straight away, and got down to it. And it was, it was just a marvellous collaboration I thought, I mean, he got me to go, I went into Manchester obviously and saw the church, and where they were to go, and... They were doing a lot of work on the church at that time, they had a, they'd raised a lot of money. And, as well as the dilapidated Stations of the Cross, the whole church was in a bad way, it was full of dry rot and woodworm and all the things that go with that. And... And so it was all being done, they'd raised the money and, and it was all very exciting. And...

And do you know who the other three artists were?

No. I didn't ask him, I have no idea who they were.

It would be intriguing to know.

Yes. But... It was... No, it was...it was...it was lovely. And of course he was, because of his enthusiasm, he came to the studio lots and lots of times, he rang up and said, 'Can I come and see how it's getting on?' sort of thing. And, he was so interested. And, I did it partly up in Yorkshire, during the summer, we were still going up there for the summer months, and I had canvases and things up there, some of them, and down here. And he came and visited us in both places actually, to see how it was going. And...

So when you say collaborated, tell me how, what the sort of balance of input was.

His balance?

Mm. I mean did he suggest...

Well he, he got me to go up there, you know, when he had any visitors or anything sort of special, like the Duchess of Kent came, and, she was, you know, she's a Catholic, or, a Catholic convert. And he wrote to me and said, you know, she's coming up, and she wants to look at the 'Gem'. She was coming up for some other purpose, she was opening some part of the university or something, something to do with science. And, but she had asked if she could see...she knew of the 'Hidden Gem' and she had never seen it, it's a church that Catholics know about, you know, and...and are fond of. It's... And, and he asked me if I could bring, if I had photographs of some of the... I'd finished about three of them, and I had bits and pieces of drawings and things. And so I took them along, and, just to show her when she came. And she was very, she was terribly excited about it right from the start, she was wonderful. And, she kept on asking how I was getting on and that, and she said she'd like to come to the actual opening, the unveiling of the things and that. And if he likes, she wouldn't mind taking part in it too. She read some passages from the Bible and that, and... It was a marvellous the opening day, it was packed solid, the church. And.... And they had to have the microphones on the outside of the building so that people in the street outside could hear the service inside. And, I mean it's a very narrow little street, you know, and...and not...and a fairly... I mean there was a big crowd actually, it was, it was really very crowded. And... And she was charming throughout the visit. Anyway, anyway, and also, as well as her enthusiasm... He's very good at publicity, the priest, he writes to everybody, and he enjoys it, he enjoys publicity actually. And... The various... There weren't many parishioners actually, because it's a centre of the city church, and it's not a residential area, so just all shops and stores and the town hall and all that sort of thing. And... But it does have an enormous amount of visitors, and he's often said to me that his least busy day is Sunday. And his... But I think he's pretty busy on Sunday too actually, it's a very busy church. And...

I mean how did you introduce your sort of conception to him, did you do preliminary sketches?

We talked about it. Not really though, no. I mean he, he got more and more interested when it was started. I do a lot of, just pencil drawings and things, preliminary sketches and things. In fact I've given him a whole set of drawings. The actual, the most significant drawings that I did whilst working on them, I gave to him, and he's got them there in the, in the church, and if you ask, you can see the murals and see the drawings as well. But... The... Really the people that helped with the church, the few enthusiastic parishioners that there were, he got them all involved, he got them to come and see what was going on, and to see the...to see them as they progressed. And... And it was, it was kind...I really felt, I never felt like it before actually, that I was part of some combined...you know, I just happened to be the hand that was doing this, and all these people were feeding things into me. And...

How wonderful.

It was lovely. No, it really was one of the nicest experiences of my professional life I think, doing those. I had previously, way back in 1970, done those murals for a church in south London at Kennington, and that was a similar experience actually, it was an Anglican church there, and... The... The vicar was also interested, and got me to do these murals. They're not...they're actually on the wall though. The Stations of the Cross are hanging, they're in frames, and, and can be lifted down.

What sort of scale are they?

They're all quite big, six foot high each one of them, by four foot four inches wide.

Mm.

And... Actually before they went, it was the president's...when I finished them, it was president's idea, we showed them, but nobody, I don't think many people came or knew about it, in the Sackler Galleries.

Oh.

In the RA. And... And it... But... They looked terrific in there actually, I had the whole of the Sackler Galleries to myself and these fourteen paintings.

How gorgeous.

We were able to spread them out.

Yes.

But in the church they're rather close, but... It was... I mean, I mean I... I mean I think... Well [inaudible], the ones in St Anselm's, at Kennington it is, near the City & Guilds Art School, I mean it's a very pleasant church, and the Edward Abbey Trust paid for it, the vicar had heard about them and wrote to them and asked if they'd sponsor an artist to do this. And he again didn't know anything about art really, but he... He was really very nice. He's gone now, you know, he's a few vicars back.

I'm interested that both of these huge commissions have been sort of more High Church than Low Church. Is that where you would choose to sort of, identify personally, or...?

I don't...I don't know that I could do... I've always said I would quite like to be a failed Catholic, you know, someone like, like what's his name, you know, the novelist. He writes novels about...

ANNA: Graham Greene.

Graham Greene. That sort of thing. Like him, I'm fed up with the whole bloody issue but nevertheless has this biting him all the time, gnawing him. But, I...I could...I mean... I mean I really do think that, you know, that Father Denis Clinch at Manchester is a really, a very very holy man, you know, he really is a good man, and he's very, you

know, it's hard to, to think of ever being in that sort of, be that kind of person oneself. I mean I could never keep up with...for one thing I couldn't cope with the ritual, I could never do that, I mean I would never go to Mass, and I would always... I mean I... I'd like to be a Catholic if I could...it was understood that I never went to Mass and I never went to anything like that. But...but... And... But it... I'm just as I am I think really, just...just jogging along. [telephone ringing]

I'm going to stop the tape.

Mm.

[break in recording]

.....*interview.*

And Denis... He's also become a bit of... He feels at any rate, and quite right he is too, that he's become a bit of an art expert, and he actually said to me once, he said, he said, 'Do you know Norman...' He loves going and talking about the paintings, when he has visitors, and... He likes talking about them to the, to people in the church. And he said, 'Do you know Norman, I think I'm better at talking about religious painting than Sister Wendy.' (laughs)

Competition arising here. Well he might be, you never know, he might have a totally different perspective. Well you'll have to tell him to set up a rival corner.

Mm. And anyway, that was...that was...that was...that was fairly recent. And, you know, I...the only commission, the ones in Kennington were very very loosely based on *Pilgrim's Progress*, and...and the idea of the soul's journey from death to Paradise. It's also a bit like *The Dream of Gerontius*, the dying man at the beginning and then his journey that he has to pass through to finally find himself in the presence of God. And, that was the idea, and it starts off with the wilderness of this world, and passes through

the House of the Interpreter or something like the House of the Interpreter, I didn't...it's not actually much like *Pilgrim's Progress*, I've just taken the headings from the book. And in the middle of that wall it becomes a kind of great...it's the, it's where the...where he sees this, you know, the burning cross, and, which... And then he loses his burden at that point and...and then, the whole of that one wall, they're down both sides of the church, they go from the altar down to the door, right down, they're seventy foot long, both of them, and about twelve feet high. And they, the arches, and then there's the clear storey lighting, windows, there's a great place of empty wall between the top lights and the top of the arches, and they run right the way along the church between those two. They're quite high up. And, and then, that first, the first wall finishes with the Christians' fight with Apollyon, and...which I interpreted as Christians fighting with the unknown quantity of death, what death was all about, and trying to come to terms with it. And, this fight with this great monster. And it is a...it's...everybody likes that one, you know, it's...it's.. On the whole it's fairly abstract, it's much more abstract than the later works. And it's... In fact it's very abstract in places, it's just a question of symbols and marks and gestures. And... But then, on the opposite wall it starts going down... First of all it's death itself, which is like a grey big smudge, and it's all black, and violet, and it's like, grey images passing through this great splodge of black. And the grey images look a kind of, a kind of, a bit like a, a peony or a rose or something, that kind of, over-ripe, sort of rather ugly shape really, but just grey. And also they look a bit like brains, they had this kind of feel, and these round images. And the whole, that sort of section is just in black and greys and...and more or less monochrome, and, with this slight violet colour going through it. And then, it gradually builds up in the centre of the wall, opposite...there's a flaming cross on the first wall, and the opposite side there's the, the transfiguration section where it gradually gets more colourful, and similar images, the big images instead of being grey are bright red, they become red. And, and then they become all the colours, you get the... And that moves into, into the vast, the largest section of the whole mural which is the vision of Paradise. And, it's in the centre of a great rainbow actually, all these colours become a kind of rainbow, all these big things. And, it starts off, they're red and then they gradually move through all the colours, all the colours of the spectrum. And then it moves into...Paradise itself is like a great...is a very spiralling

sort of design, and it's...and... I wanted to get it so that it was rather spinning, like a top. I wanted to...it was one of the early experiences trying to make a kind of feeling, a kind of visual sound. It's... I thought I'd... I...I have a feeling that one could write a melody, I could paint a melody in colours that the deaf could hear, and... And that's what I wanted to do with this top sequence, I wanted to make a sound that I thought a deaf man looking at it could hear, what sound it was making, more clearly than someone with good hearing I think. And, it whirls round. And then it becomes, in the very centre it's just pure white. So it's...and the idea was that that wall, it sort of started with black, built up to all the colours, and finishes up with white. And that was the, the sequence of things on that wall, that was the impression I wanted to give. And I think it's moderately successful really, I think it... People seem to understand it, you know, if you talk to people in the church, they, they seem to see that it makes sense. And it's...

When you go back to a work like that after some time, do you ever sort of think, oh I wish I'd done this, or do you...?

Not really. I mean...I mean, because it's...it's almost another person that did it really. And it was quite a long time really, 1970 to about '73 when it was...well '72, when it was finished. And...

Can you describe what you think attracts you more to working for, on a commission basis, than sort of freestyle as it were?

Well it...it's just, as I say, I mean I...I like the... Well apart from anything else, it's nice to know it's got somewhere to go when you've finished the blinking thing. The way they're stacking up in the studio. And it's... And the whole business of the... I mean I've used it because one's got no alternative, but, I mean the whole business of the art galleries and art dealers, and that whole...I mean it's all nasty I find really, sordid racket, and it's... It's, you know, it's...it is...it's just money isn't it really. And, I mean this is... I mean, I mean most...I mean mostly one gets paid for these things, they're, you know, one takes far less money than you would selling individual paintings, I mean that kind of,

paintings that kind of size, and... Anna's indicating she wants a cup of coffee. (laughs)
But, no.....

[break in recording]

I mean, how do you agree a price on a huge commission like the Stations of the Cross?

Well, I mean, the Edward Abbey Trust, I did those murals for £2,000.

What, the whole lot?

The whole lot of them.

Wow.

This is back in 1970 of course, it was...it seemed to me quite a lot of money at the time. But it was all the money that the Edward Abbey had to pay for it. They weren't...they wanted me to do it. They...they had in mind something very very much less than I was... I got quite excited by the wall and the, and the building, and, and all that. And... But... They were expecting something much less... In fact they had some horrible idea about having little medallion things, little round, little, separate little paintings running along the side of the wall. And you know, I said, oh sod that, you know, I can do something quite different, I mean... And, and I did these other things. I'll show you, I'll show you, I've got some photographs of them, taken just recently by this man who was putting together, putting together a book on art in the churches since the war. I'll show you some after. And...

Do you charge for the materials separately?

Yes, they paid for all the materials on that one. And... But I mean they...everybody was most enthusiastic about it, but they thought that I'd done much more, everybody thought

I'd done much more than I was paid for. But really, that's not it, is it, really. I mean I saw this was an exciting thing to do, I mean... And... And with these... It didn't occur, I don't know how, not only is Denis Clinch good at getting publicity, he's also good at getting things, getting money. And I didn't ask him about who was paying for it, but I was getting a much more reasonable fee for them than I did for the St Anselm one. But... It was, you know, he got the money, and the church was going to...you know, and he didn't cringe or [inaudible]. And...

I mean how did you evaluate it, did you think, well it's going to take me this amount of time?

Well it's fourteen paintings, fourteen large paintings, six foot by four foot and a half. The last one I decided would be slightly bigger, the resurrection one, it's just seven foot high by four foot wide, and... But, you know, it was, you know, I gave him the price and it was accepted, and... But what... The *Manchester Evening News*, he told them about it, and they came along to the church and... And the Duchess helped too actually, the fact that she, she had just been there, they got interested in that, and... And they did a whole...got an enormous amount of publicity in all the local press, which just went on and on and on, and it's still going on from time to time. But... They did a complete page about it actually with big photographs of Denis and the ones of the...and the Stations and that, and... The next morning, after there'd been all this publicity in the *Evening News*, a local businessman, who was a Catholic, phoned up the church and asked him how much it was costing the church, this, these paintings by Norman Adams. And Denis told him. And he said, well, just there and then he said, 'Well I think I could help you with that.' And he paid for them in fact, as a...to.....

[End of F9433 Side B]

[F9434 Side A]

Do you want me to.....

[break in recording]

*Continuing the interview with Norman Adams on the 25th ...on the 30th of January 2001.
Tape 9 side A.*

Actually, a shame, you mentioned the Government [inaudible], which... I've got an exhibition just coming up fairly shortly, and, it's...I'm afraid it's, a lot of it is about the passing away of my friends, I suppose it's the age I am now that most of our friends are dying. And... But, I...I remember, extraordinary, well I found it was an extraordinary happening, which, it occurred during the time we were living in Yorkshire all the time, I was in my studio. It's very remote where we are there in a way, in Ribblesdale, Horton-in-Ribblesdale is the name of the village, and we're not exactly in the heart to he village, we're up the Pennine Way, half-way up to the moors. And, my studio is huge up there, it was...part of it was a barn originally, adjoined, a small, very small farmhouse, a little cottage. And the barn is, continues on in the same building, the same structure, the same group of buildings. And I had the studio extended even further, just before I had the commission to paint the St Anselm murals, and, so that I in fact, could in fact paint them there, because they were huge sections of canvas, which were to be marouflayed onto the walls in the church eventually, but I, you know, I needed a huge amount of space to paint them because they were all vast. And, one night it was...it was a very wild night I remember actually, and, we were there, you know, right, as I say, all the year round at that time. And, we spent...and the winters could be very... I mean they were very nice, you'd get blocked in with snow and all the rest of it, and you didn't...it was lovely if you didn't have to go anywhere, which we didn't. And... But I was doing this set of drawings, and, there was this one drawing in particular which...which I...you know, I got fascinated by, I was really enjoying it, I thought it was coming, came very well. Only a small piece, but I found it really quite moving. And, it was a drawing, it was the *Death of*

Adam, this, just a sort of, monochrome drawing, watercolour, just a sepia watercolour and pencil. And... And I sat up quite late doing it in the evening, in the night. And, the studio, which as I say was very large, was very dimly lit really, I was working on this, it was only a small thing, I wasn't using the whole studio, I had a bench right up in a corner directly under one light, and I only had that one light on. So the vastness of the studio went back into utter darkness. And... And it was all a bit strange and a bit unnerving in some ways, but nevertheless I pressed on, and got the drawing finished, and I was quite pleased with it. And... But... Went off to bed. Anna had been gone ages, ages before. And, I hadn't been in bed two or three hours when the telephone rang, and it was Lister Hospital in Stevenage, my father had just died in the night, and they thought that I'd be, you know, I'd be coming down. Well I said I would go down in the morning. And... Then, you know, that... Then shortly after that, Roland, Browse & Delbanco, the people who had been my dealers for years and years, in Cork Street, it's now Browse & Darby Gallery, but it was Roland, Browse & Delbanco, and, you know, I'd...they'd had my work and I'd had exhibitions with them, say, for many years. When I originally started exhibiting, the first people that I had a one-man show with were Gimpels, Gimpel Fils, but I shifted to Roland, Browse & Delbanco quite early on because I just felt that, it suited my work better. I mean Gimpel Fils, nice people that they are, were a bit avant-garde for me, and... But... I remember when they retired, Roland, Browse & Delbanco, they had an exhibition of work by, just as their last farewell to the business as it were, by the, there were one or two pieces by each one of the artists whose work they dealt with. And it included this, with others, this drawing of the *Death of Adam*. And, you know, it looked...I thought it looked very well there, I was quite pleased with it really, I thought that it did...you see it there in an exhibition with other things, you see it in a way that, it's, sometimes it's very difficult to when you're still working on it in the studio. Anyway, the exhibition went on, and it all finished, and, they'd sold two or three things of mine, and, everything was settled up, and they went off. And... But... And I didn't, at first I didn't...but some while later I was going through the things, works that had sold at different times and that, and I couldn't find any trace of this particular drawing anywhere at all. It hadn't been sold in that exhibition, and, as far as I could tell it hadn't been sold anywhere, and I hadn't got it. And, anyway, years went by and I just forgot about it. I

thought it was a shame, because, I was rather fond of it, I thought it was rather a good drawing, an interesting composition and idea. Though it was quite a figurative little drawing. And, I mean not, nothing very special, it was a pretty ordinary little drawing really I suppose. But, it seemed to have totally vanished, I couldn't trace it. I hadn't got it in my studio in Yorkshire, and I hadn't got it in London, and... And, they hadn't got it at the gallery. Browse & Darby had taken over the gallery, there were quite a few things of mine there still in store which he said he'd like to keep, and, in fact to put on an exhibition of my watercolours. It was the only one exhibition that I had with them. The little *Death of Adam* wasn't there, wasn't amongst them. And, so there, you know, I thought, well it's gone, it's gone, it's only one drawing, it probably wasn't as good as I remember it anyway, you know. And it was, you know, my work had changed quite a lot since then too I suppose. Well not, not really changed, but it...was a bit different. Anyway life went on, and, and I totally forgot about it. And then, a few weeks ago in fact, or a month or so ago maybe, I had this letter from, from the Houses of Parliament it was, you know, I thought, golly, what's... I didn't know how to open it really. And, looked inside, and they said, they were putting photographs of, going through the works in their collection, and putting some of them on Internet or whatever it is. And, and they were asking my permission, there were three that they had scattered over periods of time. And, you know, would I mind if they did it? And I wrote back and said, 'No, of course not, no, it sounds a good idea.' And amongst the three drawings was this *Death of Adam*. And... So they sent me photocopies of the...I asked them to, I said, 'Would you send me photocopies.' And... And they said that, you know, [inaudible]. I didn't know there was, I said I didn't know there was a government collection, or anything about it really. But at any rate... I mean, I felt that was quite nice, but I don't know how they got it, or where they... I mean I didn't...

Well they must have bought it from a gallery you know.

Somebody must have bought it from somebody.

Yes.

But... Anyway.

Mm.

You know, there it is, and I'm quite pleased to know it exists.

So is that going to be one of the ones going on the Internet?

Mm.

Oh, that's interesting. You'll be able to log on and see your own work.

Mm. Anyway, long boring story, and that's how things go. But... Where were we?

Do you know how the other works got into the collection?

No. I mean I...

It's quite intriguing.

Yes it is, yes. I must... I suppose I could find, I mean easy enough to find out.

Well they must know what their sources are.

Yes.

It would be worth asking.

Mm. Yes, I'll go... I said I'd like to see particularly the *Death of Adam*.

Mm.

And, you know, he said that, well... And there was a flower piece they've got, that was somewhere in the West Indies somewhere at the moment. They go to embassies and places, all over, they just, things they have on in their various places abroad. But whilst they're in this country, between being out and coming back in again, they're kept in this place in Tottenham Court Road. But, you know, it's as well to make an appointment before you go, because, it might be somewhere out the other side of the world somewhere; you've got to check that it's, it's there. And, which I'll do sometime.

I know that recently you've been working on sort of ideas that have come to you after the death of your mother.

Yes.

And I think it would be interesting to talk about those works and your feelings about her quite recent death.

Yes. As I say, there's the...this exhibition that's cropping up, it's going to have some rather elegiac sort of flavour to it, because it is... Really it's quite a lot to do with death in a way.

Where is the exhibition going to be held?

At Browse & Darby. No, at the Beaux Arts.

Oh right.

In Cork Street. And it'll be in November this year. And, and it's... It's... Thinking about the, the bit... I mean I'm still thinking about what I've always thought about, going through that story of the murals in St Anselm's in south London made me think how like

these present sequence of paintings are to that in a way. And they're... I've thought of, thinking of my mother's journey from the graveyard in Horton, and also a church, she's buried in the village up there where our house is, in the church graveyard. And, you know, thinking about her journey from that, that spot, which she would never have chosen for herself. I mean I don't think she minded where, where she was buried really. But, she didn't particularly like Yorkshire actually, she only went there because we had gone there, and, she...she didn't go in the village. I mean she didn't mind... She lived actually down in Settle, which is the nearest market town, six miles from the village where we are in Horton, but you know, that's no distance. But, she didn't like it up at Horton at all, it was much too cold, and...and... And she didn't like high places, she didn't like... She liked fairly flat landscape, she didn't like mountains. And... But... Anyway, from time to time one thinks, I wonder where she is now, how far she's...you wonder how far she's got on her way. And... There's one of the paintings which...in fact two of them really, have got the same title, I must change that a bit. Two paintings which I called *Between Worlds*. It's this, it's this passage that, that we traverse from the actual physical death to the sort of spiritual absorption into Paradise, into... Of course, I... I did a painting last year which I called *And We Shall Become Thy Music*. Because it always seemed to me that, one becomes a kind of music, that the...the sort of music of the spheres is a sort of god music, and it's just a music that all these dead souls make, and we're all part of this absolutely wonderful sound. And, in the between worlds, these little people are making their way across a great plain, and...and a lot of them are... And, it's a kind of Purgatory. It is Purgatory really I suppose. And...but there's all this heat coming up from down below. It's quite interesting going round the *Divine Comedy* exhibition, the Dante piece in the Royal Academy at the moment, because, you know, that's...that's what these paintings that I'm doing are all, are thinking about really. It's that subject matter. And, and in one of my paintings there's this [inaudible], it's got...it's a very hot glow coming up from below, and it's got a sort of sooty, smoky feel about it with all the sort of, all this black fumes coming up from below, they're waiting in queues. As I said to somebody the other day, they're all waiting to get their passport stamped. And... But they're, you know, they're carrying... And at the same time there's a lot of building going on, constant building and things. But... Got these sort of angels constructing a

temple. But, it's only...it's not really a solid building at all, it's built of air and colour. And it's...it's...it's a spiritual temple. And it's...everyone's queuing up to get in. But...

Did you ever talk about this journey with your mother?

No. No no, she'd think I was barmy, she wouldn't think anything about it at all, she was a very down-to-earth lady. And, not an intellectual. No, she wouldn't make much of it really. I do her a bit of an injustice there. I mean she was quite an imaginative woman really, and she... And she, she... Largely because, I mean, I mean both of my parents were amazed the way I went, I mean nobody, nobody ever thought that it was possible for anybody to be an artist, you know. And, you know, one wanted to be an artist when one was a child, one was a young child and that, 'Yes dear, yes dear, yes dear,' bash you on the head. And... But... And in fact if it wasn't for the war, actually the war, [inaudible] for me to be an artist, because they were so worried about that, that... I mean I was twelve when the war began, and, they were so distressed, as everybody was, by what was happening, you know, they didn't seem to care what I did, you know. And I went into a junior department of an art school at that time, and I more or less stayed there throughout the war, I was nineteen, eighteen, eighteen or nineteen at the end of the war, and just get to the call-up age. And... And of course it went on a long time after the war had finished, and... But I'd already decided I was going to be a conscientious objector, I wasn't going in the Army. And, I just wanted to get on with my painting.

I mean when, when you had become a sort of, very established artist...

Mm.

...did your mother or father ever sort of discuss or think about what it was to be an artist and the kind of way it had taken you?

They were very...they were...I think they were just amazed. (laughs) I don't...I was an only child too, which made it a bit more possible, made it more possible, you know, there

was no... And, I suppose I was rather spoilt in a way. I mean they...I mean they all, they always thought I was good at drawing, and...and they always used to show my drawings to visitors and relations and people, because you know, they... And, you know, it was...it was... I can... Oh yes, I can...they were...they were a very funny pair. There was... I mean they were terribly like, what's his name, the...Raymond Briggs, you know, his thing, his book about his parents, with his drawings, you know, drawing... And... But my parents were just like that actually. And, you know... I got this extraordinary commission, actually, I've probably mentioned this somewhere else on the tape, I can't recall whether I have or not, but... Almost immediately I left college, as I say I had this, pretty soon after I left, anyway within a year, I had...I went to the Royal College after, after the, just after the war, after the break, and I was in prison for a short while, with the call-up business, and then eventually went to the Royal College, after a break, I was in prison, in Wormwood Scrubs and all that. And, but eventually I got to the Royal College, and went through all that. And almost, very shortly after, I can't remember the exact dating of it all, but it certainly wasn't, not much more than a year, I had my first one-man exhibition which was with Gimpels. And, and I think it was at that time when I had that first exhibition that André Howard, who was a dancer and choreographer, who had grown up and trained with the Ballet Rambert, and she had her first...she was a dancer and choreographer, and she had her first commissioned ballet for the Royal Ballet company at Covent Garden. And she hadn't got a designer, and she just, she just happened to walk into my exhibition at Gimpels, and she liked it and she thought it was interesting from her point of view of this ballet she was working on. And, she wrote to me and asked me if I'd ever thought of doing theatre design, which I hadn't. And, but I said I'll do anything at the moment, I've just left college and you know, I mean it sounds interesting. So, well that went off very well, and, I did that. In fact I did several designs for the theatre before I... But that wasn't what I wanted to do, but it was all right at that time, but I just wanted to get on with my painting really. And... But, I can remember the first night of that, getting back to one...telling, this is about my parents really. I can remember...I mean they're very glamorous, those first nights at Covent Garden, and, I remember my ballet, it was called *A Mirror for Witches*. André was absolutely possessed by witchcraft, it absolutely fascinated her. And all her ballets had something to do with witches and that.

And, this one as I say was called *A Mirror for Witches*. And, it was...it was a very spooky ballet. And, I did some very dramatic sets for it. They did look good actually. Actually John Piper who was one of the advisers to Covent Garden at that time, he was thrilled with them, he thought... And, and he thought I was a real discovery. (laughs) But... I can remember, yes, the first night, and I got my parents tickets to go to it, posh seats in the grand circle, a good view of everything. And I can remember going round the back just before the ballet began, just to see if they were in all right, if they were comfortable. And, and I looked at the backs of them, you know. There were these women with these very low-backed evening dresses and lots of jewellery and all these things, and these two funny little creatures sitting there with their, you know, with their coats and things right up to their neck. (laughs) But it was... Anyway, anyway.

What kind of a relationship did you have with your parents as an adult? I don't think we've discussed that actually.

[inaudible], this happened only...a couple of years earlier they were visiting me in Wormwood Scrubs. (laughs)

At least you've given them a very exciting life. (laughs) Mm.

Yes. What relationship did I have with them?

Have you had a close relationship while you've been bringing up your children and so on?

Well, they've always been there. I suppose one has in a way, they've all... It, I mean... My father died, what, about, twenty-five, twenty-six years ago now, I can't...longer than that probably, I can't... But he... They...they were...they... I didn't see them really...I can't really say that I had any very positive relationship with them really. I mean they were... They left me alone to do what I wanted to do. They certainly didn't, they didn't interfere with anything. And... And, I mean they were...I think they were bemused

rather, puzzled by the whole business. And they didn't... I don't think my father thought that what I was doing was anything very real, more like a fantasy really. But, I seemed to be getting away with it. (laughs) And it was... But...

Were they active grandparents?

I suppose they were, in a way, yes, it was quite... They didn't do much, well they didn't have to do much, I mean we were... It wasn't... It was terribly difficult, you couldn't...one couldn't have a...you couldn't discuss art with them, not really, or anything that really interested one, you couldn't discuss that with them at all. And... But... I think, I think my father was very... I mean he had more to him than one realised I think, and... He really had a, really rather unfulfilled life actually. I mean he was, he was a nice, ord... Well he wasn't all that ordinary really; he gave the impression of being an ordinary man. I mean he, he had...I mean he had a very dull life really, I mean he... I mean his job, he... He was...he was in, a spell in the Navy during the First World War, and, just after that... I mean he was really quite young really at that time, and I don't know how much time... It was... He was I think in the, in the Mediterranean area where he spent most of the war. I mean he saw abroad, which he wouldn't have seen if it hadn't have been for that. And... But... And then he came back, and there was all this, the slump, unemployment and all that. And they lived in north London, Hendon, to begin with, and then moved to Edgware, and, in the northern suburbs. He got a job, considered himself very fortunate when so many of his friends had no work, working for London Transport as a clerk. And he went to their offices just above St James's Park Station, behind the Epsteins.

This is just going to stop, I'm just going to turn it over.

[End of F9434 Side A]

[F9434 Side B]

Continuing the interview with Norman Adams on the 30th of January. Tape 9 side B.

But, anyway, as I say, that he had this, this terribly dull job, working on figures, working on payrolls I think, working out the wages for the, for London Transport drivers and conductors and whatever.

I mean when the slump ended, did he ever think of moving job, or did he just stay in it?

No, he stayed there. And... But he took early retirement. He hated it, he got terribly bored, and took early retirement. And then, spent a lot of his life just tinkering about really. I mean they, they did actually know how to... I mean they did enjoy themselves I think. He actually managed to buy a car, and, he had several cars in fact, they were all old, second-hand cars, and, most unreliable. (laughs) And I can remember on various occasions being taken somewhere by them and, and his driving wasn't all that wonderful, it was a bit of a hairy experience. But...

You survived.

But they, they didn't go abroad at all. But they travelled about this country quite a lot, they went in for quite ambitious holidays which they never did before, they used to...going up into Scotland and down to Cornwall and places. And... And into Wales, south Wales, they went to Solva and St David's, along there, quite a lot which they enjoyed.

Lovely area.

I mean they, they just... He, he managed to get a decent pension. He was quite clever at that sort of thing, he'd worked out all sorts of things, and, he made sure that when he retired he was, he had enough to live on, and comfortably. And...and also they got fed up

with the various houses and things they were living in. They went...for quite a period they lived in different caravans, and... He was, he was...he really enjoyed gardening and that sort of thing, and everywhere he went, he made a little garden around him, in the caravans. And, and he made ponds and had goldfish in the ponds, and tinkered around with... He was...I suppose in that way he was quite creative, his gardens. And... They were very independent, they never bothered us at all. We used to go and see them fairly regularly though, to see how the children were getting on and that sort of thing. I mean they were very interested... They were very fond of the children and the children were fond of them. And... I think they...

How did your mother cope after your father died?

Amazingly well really. I never...we thought she was going to... I mean she never...she'd not done a thing whilst he was alive, as far as organising things go, she left everything to him, that sort of thing. She had never written a cheque or... You know, he'd done all the bills and things. And... But... She, you know, she took to it amazingly well really. I mean she didn't do it actually before because he did it all, he did it all, why should she bother? It was pretty boring stuff to do anyway.

That's a more common story of that earlier generation I think than now isn't it.

Yes.

Sadly.

Mm.

Coming back to these paintings of your mother.

Mm.

Is it going to be a series?

Not a very big one. I mean I think I've done most of them really. The... Well the... I mean the things...I mean as far as that period, between worlds, the Purgatory thing has always, always fascinated me actually, and it'll be all about that. Probably a bit more overtly than it has been in the past, the ones that...the... And... I... I found... Well I've always liked those particular drawings of Botticelli's actually, I remember picking up a book, second-hand, during the war actually, in Zwemmer's second-hand book department in Charing Cross Road, and, at the end of the book, it was all Botticelli, there was a group of these, these drawings for Dante that he'd done, and which, being wonderful drawings. And...and it led me on to...well, partly, a lot of things led me on to discovering Blake. I mean Blake has always been a terrific passion of mine, I love William Blake's work. And, and it was very interesting just recently having that, just Botticelli drawings sort of just after this big Blake exhibition we've just had at the Tate, which was I thought a magnificent, wonderful exhibition actually, terribly well put together. I thought it was one of the best exhibitions I've ever seen in the Tate, certainly for a long long time. And... I mean I found it very inspiring having seen that, and [inaudible] onto the Botticellis. And it... No, it... I think that's what these pictures are going to be all about in a way, is that kind of, period, that kind of time in a person's life or experience. And it's... As I say, it'll probably be a little bit elegiac, and sombre colour-wise, much less... But at the same time it's a kind of celebration, the... What I...what I also...I wanted to get somewhere near the kind of thing... Another one of my favourite artists of course is James Ensor, is another one of my passions, I love Ensor. And, his big painting of Christ entering the streets of Brussels, the...is...that idea has haunted me for years, and I've done various individual paintings inspired by... There's one large watercolour which I put in...which is in the show at Beaux Arts again, two or three shows back a few years ago now, called *Christ Entering the Great City*, it was... I haven't got...that I don't think I've got a photograph of anywhere actually, and it was sold... It was taken off to France, I remember that much. I don't know, someone in Paris has it. But it's...

And there's about to be, a kind of religious painter that everyone has very strong views about, Stanley Spencer...

Oh yes.

...on at the Tate. How do you feel about his work?

I quite like Stanley Spencer. I like the early ones. I hate the late ones, I think they're awful. And, you know, the... That second, the late Resurrection I think is an absolutely awful picture. I mean, little comic figures, little, funny little gnomes and things, I mean they were...I didn't... But the early ones I think are magnificent, the large Resurrection, the first one. And probably my favourite amongst his pictures is that one of the...it's very delicate in colour, it's sort of pink and white and, very high in key. Very mysterious [inaudible]. It's just two workmen with pots of paint in one hand and a ladder on their shoulder, and little people looking out of the windows like little angels with lace curtains looking like wings, you know, and fluttering in the wind. And, and you know, you see these... It's just like Christ walking along carrying his cross. But you can see it's just two workmen with ladders on their shoulders and a pot of paint. And... But I think it's wonderful. I mean I think that sums up the best of Stanley Spencer. The later ones I think are disgusting really, I loathe them. I loathe those nude scenes which I really do think are horrible. And the suburban front gardens and things with their horrible flowers and things. That sort of stuff, I can't think what on earth he thought he was doing really.

I think he was earning money with the suburban front gardens.

Well maybe he was, but...

To be fair.

But as I say, one or two of those early ones, one of the very early ones when he was still a student, there was one which I've always liked actually, I remember, as a student, of the

apple gatherers, the apple... A bit Gauguin-ish almost, strangely. But I suppose he, you know, but he's always held up as an English phenomenon, and... But... I always feel I ought to be there actually. (laughs)

Now looking back over your career...

Mhm.

...what would you identify as, you know, your richest period, or activity or whatever?

I...I think from the... I think now in some ways, in a way, I feel... But everybody says that though don't they. But...

No. (laughs)

I think that... No, I think... No I... I feel things... I mean I don't mean to say that everything one does works, it often doesn't, but, it...it... It... There's something... I feel I know what I'm doing in a way, I feel that the...that I...that... One understands the language, I can... Sometimes I, you know, I mean, we... There's always...there's always a problem I find. I think most people find the same actually, of, often...you know, of knowing when something is finished, when you feel that you...you know, anything from this point onwards will be downhill, that sometimes you reach a kind of pinnacle of, everything coming together and the...and the energy of inspiration, the actual thing being driven in a way, there comes a moment when this slackens off, that's the time to stop. And... And I think I have more confidence now too, I think the... I've always found it, I've always been able to rise to an occasion. I think I am capable of doing really quite...well I've done it actually, doing quite epic-like things, you know. I mean to take on... I mean I...I've never been frightened of any kind of, of commission of any sort whatsoever, I'd take on anything, you know, that comes my way, even as I say as I did with that thing with the theatre, which had never been in my mind before. But, that was a long time ago though too, so, it's hardly relevant, but...

I mean I know that, when we've talked about that period earlier in the tapes, you said that, you know, some of your insights into that world rather put you off it, but, were you ever offered theatre work again?

Not after that period. It... I don't think anybody knows I was doing it. Actually, it's very odd really, it's almost, the period ended, and all the participants seemed to end too. I remember the...I've mentioned that John Piper was one of the advisers that they had at Covent Garden at that time, and, Sophie Fedorovitch was another one, she was a designer for the theatre, and... But... There was new music too, it was...the composer is Welsh, a young Welsh composer, Denis ApIvor, who was...who was a pupil of, what's his name, Rawsthorne, what's his first name? Something Rawsthorne wasn't it. He was a friend of Constant Lambert. Constant Lambert was, had, he had just recently died actually, because he had been the director of the ballet there, musically, he'd conducted most of the performances and things, and, and he... But... At the end of that period, when... I remember the last ballet that I designed for the Royal Ballet was, it was for the Royal Ballet but it was, it was part of the Edinburgh Festival, it was going to have its first performance in Edinburgh. And, it was the Bartók, *The Miraculous Mandarin*, and... Actually there's never really been a satisfactory setting of it as a ballet, they say. But... The second...that was the last one. I completely designed it, I was doing it...the choreographer wasn't André, it was a chap, Rodriguez, who had been the dancing master for the ballet, for the Royal Ballet, but had left and was now freelancing, doing things all over the place, and being very successful. And this was a very small thing in his cap, he wasn't particularly interested in it, and... And, it was called *Saudades*, and it was sort of, quite a colourful little, very minor little piece really. But, it was, a sort of fairy tale, Moor-ish fairy tale, set in a kind of Spanish setting, and it was...it was an opportunity to do...it was totally different from the witches. It was full of colour, I used more the sort of colours that I use these days. The witches was very sombre, I mean just sort of, almost...a lot of black and red really, you know, it was very dark, and I had great big structures in it. Huge... I remember seeing these things in, you know in the Brueghel paintings, a wheel on top of a great pole, with a figure nailed out on the wheel, you know,

apparently it was crucified on the wheel, on a long pole up in the air. In Brueghel paintings you see quite a lot of them. And, that kind of atmosphere of witch... These people are condemned for witchcraft and that sort of thing. And, it was a grim affair really, you know, it...it fetched up with the girl being burnt, and... It was set in New England and that. And... But... And, she...I think I also mentioned that she was obsessed by the whole business of witches and things. Most of her ballets had something to do with witchcraft. She had, in her flat these shelves of books all about witchcraft.

Did you ever ask her if she was a witch?

Well she...yes, well she thought she was. And... But... Actually, I found her fun actually, I enjoyed her company really, going round to her flat in the, talking about, you know, we would have meetings round the flat, back, in the evenings, and, discussing what, how things were going. But, shortly after the second ballet that I did... No, that ballet, the Bartók didn't happen, because, the *Saudades* ballet had been a flop, the Spanish frivolity. And, the great lady herself, who I didn't get on with at all actually, Ninette de Valois, I hated her actually... (laughs)

I think you weren't the only one.

And... But... She didn't like, she didn't...she didn't think that I was the sort of person she wanted about the place. And... But... But then... And then, also, not only that, I mean, as the... Everything... All my sort of people, the people that I got on with, vanished. I mean Piper left, but, André actually committed suicide, André Howard, she took a load of pills. And she was a very nervous, emotional person. And Sophie Fedorovitch who has been a great supporter, and enthusiast for all that one did, she was just, she just died in the night actually. There was nothing wrong with her really, but something apparently went wrong with her central heating or something, and she was asphyxiated in the night. And... And it was... And... Anyway, I mean, all the people that really wanted me to stay and do more, seemed to go, one way or the other. It was very sad really. But I, I had enough, I wanted... I didn't like the life of a designer. I didn't really... I mean maybe...

I didn't really enjoy ballet very much really, it wasn't one of my favourite things. I much preferred opera actually, but, nothing came my way in that respect. But...

Now looking forward...

Mm.

It sounds as if you're very kind of, contented at the moment and just very happy where you are. Do you have any particular project in mind that you would like to achieve, or you're just sort of happy to let things go with the flow?

I... I want... I don't want... Well anything that cropped up in the way of a mural or paintings for a particular purpose or something of that sort, I'd take on. I'm...I've got this Parkinson's disease now, which has crept up in recent years, and it does take it out of you a bit, and I find I don't seem to have quite the energy that I used to have tackling these big jobs. But you know, I mean if one takes one's time, one can do anything actually. What I really want is a decent exhibition with big... I feel I need a big exhibition, a retrospective exhibition which could see that things do fit together and make sense as a whole. But... Absolutely anything, I just want to see what turns up. But... But...

Now I think we're going to wind up soon. Is there anything you would like to add?

I can't think of anything at the moment. I feel a bit...

Tired.

A bit tired, yes.

Yes. Well thank you very much.

No, you're welcome.

Sounds like a very good life.

[End of F9434 Side B]

[End of Interview]