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Sybil Canadine

Interviewed by Rebecca Abrams

C464/005

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Interview Summary Sheet

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Title Page

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Title:

Interviewee's forename: Sybil

Sex: female

Occupation: Tennis and Badminton player

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Part 1 [Tape 1 Side A]

Today is 11th February, 1991, and this is a re-recording of the interview with Sybil Canadine that was done last summer. And this is the first tape. I wondered if you could tell me where you were born?

Yes, I can. I was born in Hythe, in Kent. So I don't know whether I'm a Kentish girl or an Old Kent!

And when were you born? What's your birthday?

Oh, I was born the last century, on 17th August, 1897, so, that makes me 93.

And what was your father's name?

My father's name was Edmund Geard.

And what did he do?

Oh, he was a clerk in Holy Orders.

[Telephone interruption]

Sorry, what did your father do?

He was Chaplain to the St. Giles Hospital in Camberwell, for 29 years, and he died in hospital.

Why was he, why were you in Kent? Why were you born in Kent? Was he working in Kent then?

Yes. He was a curate at Sittingbourne.

Sittingbourne? And where did he come from? Where did his family originate from?

Oh, his family were in Cornwall. His family were ... his father was lost at sea, long before I was born.

You didn't know your great-grandfather, grandfather?

No, I didn't know my grandfather.

Did you know anything about him?

Only that he was a merchant in Australia, and plied between the two countries, and was lost in a storm.

And did he have money? Was he a successful merchant?

Yes he was, a very successful merchant.

And do you know what his wares were? What did he sell?

Oh! He sold spices, and pepper, and things like that.

And what was his name?

Geard. G E A R D. Geard.

Do you remember his Christian name?

Edmund.

And what about your mother? What was your mother called?

My mother was called Pettifer Veazey. She was the third daughter of the Veazey. The Veazey family are, are related to us through their sons, who, who married ... various people, whom I don't remember.

Where does the name Veazey ... how is that spelt?

V E S E Y [sic].

And is that a French name originally?

Yes, it is.

And where did her family come from?

Yorkshire.

They came from Yorkshire. And what did they do? Do you remember your grandparents on your mother's side?

I don't remember my grandparents on my mother's side, because he died, dragging the lifeboat from ... the result of his death was that he dragged the lifeboat from Robin Hood's Bay to Falmouth, and launched it, and rescued, oh, I don't know how many people, but that's the story. And the Town Council decided that they would pay for the whole of whatever it was that you had to pay for a seaman being thrown overboard, or whatever it was that started the pneumonia. But he died from pneumonia.

And he had been a lifeboat man, had he?

He had not been a lifeboat man. He was a merchant, also.

They were both merchants, both your grandfathers?

Yes.

Oh, I see. And, I'm sorry, you were actually born in Kent, and then when did your family move to London?

As soon as my father was made Chaplain to the Hospital.

Do you have any idea when that was?

Well, it was about 1900.

So you were a little girl, you were three or so?

Yes.

And did you have any brothers or sisters?

I had a brother who was older than I was.

What was his name?

Edmund! [Laughs]

Very confusing!

Very confusing!

How much older than you was he?

Oh, 18 months.

And is he still alive?

No, he's not.

So, when did he die?

He died in ... oh, 1980, I think, but I wouldn't be sure.

And where did you live in London, do you remember?

Yes. I lived at 206 Camberwell Grove.

And what sort of house was that?

That was a lovely big house. Fifty steps to the top storey. Fifty-one steps, I think.

Did you used to count them?

I used to count them, yes!

And how many rooms were there? How many bedrooms were there?

Six. Six, I think, maybe seven.

And do you remember, do you remember your parents when you were a child? Do you have childhood memories of them?

Oh yes. I remember my parents.

What kind of parents were they? Tell me about your father, what sort of man was he?

He was a very strict man, and he had a study behind the dining room, at the top of the area steps. I don't know whether he should ever have been a clergyman.

What do you mean?

Well, he, he wasn't my kind of clergyman.

Tell me what you mean, explain what you mean. What is your kind of clergyman?

My kind of clergyman is rather like Canon Harwood is today. A rather softly-spoken, easy, easy-going clergyman. And yet that doesn't describe him at all, because he's anything but that.

And what kind of clergyman was your father?

He, he, he, he was much more dogmatic, and very difficult to ... He was much loved in the Hospital, and he didn't let anything ever get around him that he couldn't tackle. And he had an office at the end of a long passage.

And did you used to hear him preach? Did you hear his sermons?

I can, I cannot say that I remember any of them.

And what about your mother, what was your mother like?

My mother was very tall, in contrast with my father, who was very short. She was stricter than my father. I don't remember my mother very much, because I was always off at school.

But when you were a little girl, did you have a nanny?

Yes, I did.

And what was your nanny called?

Florence.

And do you remember where Florence was from?

From, from the North of England. And she was always called "Old Nanny", because "New Nanny" was much younger.

So how long did you have Old Nanny for? Do you remember how old you were when she left?

Five years, six years.

And then who was the New Nanny?

The New Nanny, I'm still in touch with. The New Nanny, the name, when she got married, was Brown, and she lives in Southsea.

And what did you call her?

Nanny.

You just called her Nanny?

Yes.

And what was she like? How old was she, roughly? Do you have any idea how old she was when she came to you?

Difficult to, difficult to say. I think, as I remember her, she must have been younger than, younger than I was. She didn't, she didn't come to us, you know, until, of course, I'm talking of the new generation. Old Nanny came to us when my son was a few days old.

So you're talking about the Nannies for your children.

Yes.

What about when you were a child, did you have a nanny as well, or did your mother bring you up?

I think my mother brought me up.

And did you have meals with your parents when you were a child?

Yes, yes.

You all ate together?

Yes.

And were there servants in the house?

Yes.

Who would there have been?

There'd be the cook, and the chief housemaid, but that's all I can remember.

And you mentioned that both your parents were strict.

Yes.

How were they strict? In terms of times you got up and times you went to bed?

Yes.

Or what sort of things?

Very strict.

So what time did you go to bed? Do you remember?

As we grew older, I think we went to bed at the time of our age. We would be in bed by six if we were six, in bed by seven if we were seven, and bed by eight if we were eight. But that's as far as I can remember.

Did your parents read to you in bed? Or play with you, or anything like that?

No, never.

No. So what did you do for games? How did ... what did you do for play?

Oh, we played games.

What sorts of things?

Hide and seek, and all kinds of interesting things.

Was this with your brother, or with other children?

Mainly not with my brother. I think, in a way, it was rather a bleak growing-up period, but then, I was at school from eight and a half onwards.

Do you, what's your earliest memory? Do you have an early memory?

Yes, I do. And it was, suddenly there was a terrible ... noise, outside the front door, and I discovered that this was emanating from the bottom of Camberwell Grove. Camberwell Grove is still there, and the house is still there. And I rushed out, and my nanny rushed out with me, and we rushed down the hill, and there was the poster "Mafeking is Free", "Mafeking Rescued", or whatever it was. The hero, Lord Baden-

Powell, at least he was, he was only Baden-Powell then. That's my very first recollection. And I was, I think, three, if not, four.

Did you have a very religious upbringing, as a child? Did religion play a large part in your daily life?

Yes and no. Yes, because we always went to church on Sundays. We went up the hill and down the hill and ...

Which church did you go to?

St. Saviour's, Denmark Hill.

In what other ways was it a religious childhood?

Well, I was taught to say my prayers, and I still do. [Laughs] I don't know what else I can tell you about religion. It didn't figure very heavily when I was a youngster, except on holiday. And I can remember now, going to St. Peter's, Newlyn, which was just at the bottom of the garden of Shire Ponds. All these names are coming, flooding, back to me.

And what sort of girl were you? What sort of child were you?

Oh, I, I was a very obedient girl, and, from about seven to, to nine, I took my education very seriously, and by the time I was nine, I was ready to go to school, by myself, by train. And that was a long time ago.

Where did you go to school?

Clapham High School.

From the age of nine?

Yes.

And that was your first school, was it?

Yes.

So you didn't go to school before that?

Oh, well, I did, but I only went to a little school, which was just across the road.

And, my goodness, they taught me well.

And did you have a favourite subject?

Mathematics. [Laughs]

And so then when you went to Clapham High School, you went to school, on your own, on the train?

Yes. On the train.

And how did you, tell me, describe the journey to me. What did you do? You left the house ...

I left the house, and walked to the station, which wasn't very far, but it was ten minutes, ten minutes walk. And I, more or less, collected up another girl there. And we had our school, our season tickets in our hats. We had to wear a hat, you know. And at nine, I was, your size, you know. What are you?

Five foot five.

Only five foot five. And I'm five/eight and a half now. But I have been five foot ten.

So you were a very tall girl.

I was very tall.

And did you mind that?

No, I didn't mind.

Did you have a nickname?

No.

And so then you got the train, and then, did you walk at the other end?

Yes. We walked up the other end, which was, as far as I can remember, two miles.

So how long did it take you to get to the school and back?

An hour.

An hour each way. And how did you get on at school? Did you have good friends there? Did you enjoy your school?

Yes, I enjoyed school. The girl I made friends with most, was Elsie Campbell, who was German, and came from much closer to the station than I did. And I taught her mathematics. She'd never have passed if I hadn't been behind her. But she came up the school with me, and my maths were always correct and ... in fact, I think I've got one of my maths prizes in this bookcase - Maths and Religious Knowledge.

And, so your parents, although they were quite, you said they were strict, they gave you a lot of independence? You had a lot of independence?

Oh yes. A lot of independence.

And was that because your parents were very busy with church-related activities?

Yes.

What sorts of things would they be doing?

Well, they would be visiting different people, and they'd be doing all kinds of things down in this poor parish, where I had an uncle, my mother's brother, he ran this poor parish, and he was there for 50 years.

Parish of? Which Parish?

St. Mark's, Camberwell. And that's where I started Guiding.

Tell me how, how you became interested in Guiding?

Well, I can, I can tell you. And I can tell you in practically the same words as I used before. On Saturdays, there was nothing for girls to do. So I used to go down, with my mother, to a big hall, where she, bless her, was running a jumble sale, to pay the curate's salary. And she always ran this jumble sale on the Saturday. It opened in the afternoon, but we got it ready in the morning. And I noticed that there were boys who congregated in the porch, and who went off at about 2 o'clock, with the Scout. What I understood was the Scoutmaster. They were going to play games, and look at a syllabus.

You were telling me how you got interested in Guiding. You'd seen the boys gathering in the church hall. And where did they go?

They went to Peckham Rye. Now, Peckham Rye was about a mile away, and it was, it was a lovely park where the boys could race around and try their hand at knotting, and bandaging, and all that kind of thing, which they still do today. And I said to the Scoutmaster, it would have been about Easter time, "Why not the girls?" And he said, "It's only for the boys. But", he said, "if you'd like to get a group of girls together, and I will lend you the book, so that you'll see what you have to do for the

various badges" - I'm sure he used the word "badges" - "I don't see why not." So I asked around, amongst, amongst my own friends.

What did you ask them?

Whether they would like ... whether they would like to form a group. And about eight of them said, yes, they would. And they came from the Datchelor, which was at the bottom of Camberwell Grove.

How is that spelt - Datchelor?

D A T C H E L O R. Datchelor. And I have difficulty in remembering their names now, at such a distance, but some of my own friends, like Elizabeth Woodhouse ... I can't remember them at the moment, but I will remember them in the course of the interview, I'm sure.

Don't worry, it doesn't matter at all. So it was just a group of your friends, was it?

Yes.

Or were there any other of you?

Oh no. Oh no. Only a group. Only a group from school. And we, we went every, we went every Saturday, after the jumble sale was over, and played games, and did all kinds of things.

What sorts of things?

Well, we sat on the grass, and did our knots. We also sat on the grass and did bandaging. Then we did a certain amount of drawing, because we had to be able to draw the Union Jack. Then we did tracking and stalking, and firelighting. There wasn't one girl amongst all my eight, who couldn't light a fire, in drenching weather.

End of F431 Side A

Part 2 [Tape 1 Side B]

You find whatever you can, which is dry, and there's always something which is dry, and you light that, and that, that goes off.

With a match?

With a match, yes, with a match. But I can light it the other way, of course, and that is, by pulling.

Pulling what?

By putting your, your piece of wood into a hole in, in a bit of wood, which you carry with you, and you then rub it backwards and forwards, and it causes friction. And the friction will light, if you put it into your hand.

So you learnt to do all these things. How did you know what you had to learn to do?

Well, I learnt, of course, because Baden-Powell sent me to America in 1922.

But we're talking now, hang on, let's leave that for a moment. What about when you were, when you were first going, with your friends, down to Peckham Rye on Saturdays. How did you know what it was you were going to do there?

Because we had the book.

Ah! Because the Scoutmaster had given you the book, had he?

Book. And this told us what we needed to, to know for our investiture. In fact, there was so much that we needed to know, that you'd be surprised at what we had to do.

What sorts of things?

Well, for instance, the right kind of knot to tie, for any occasion - that is, a reef knot, or a granny knot, or a ... a different kind of knot, a fisherman's knot, a middleman's knot - and it gave you diagrams of how the knots were made, and we, all of us, learnt to be very quick in untying these knots. And we learnt, of course, about our flag, and how it was made up, and what was the history behind it. Mind you, it took us all the summer to learn all these things.

And why did you want to do it so much? Why did you want to do this on your Saturday afternoons?

Because it seemed that the boys were going to go ahead of the girls.

And you didn't like the idea of that?

No, we didn't like the idea of that at all! [Laughs]

And what would you have done otherwise? What else would there have been for you to do? For girls to do?

Nothing.

Nothing at all?

Nothing at all.

So what would you have done? What had you been doing before then, on Saturday afternoons?

Well, I don't think we had been doing anything at all on Saturday afternoons, because the jumble sale was over by, by 3 o'clock, and there wasn't anything for us to do, except loll around and gossip. We were very good at gossiping!

But wasn't it something that was discouraged? I mean, with you and your friends, running round Peckham Rye, building fires and tracking ...

Ah! We were only allowed to build fires in one place. Of course, the wardens were ... the warden was very strict. And he said, "The first time that you leave anything of a fire, that is the last time that you'll be allowed to build a fire." And so we always cleared it all away, and made sure that there were no marks left at all.

And did no-one mind all you girls sort of running around? I mean, were they not worried about you? Or did anybody think it was an improper thing for young girls to be doing in 19, 1909/1910?

They probably did. But we were allowed to do it. And occasionally our mums and/or dads, came out to see what we, what we were doing, and approved, because they saw that, for instance, the second class, second class Scout, had to do history and geography, and literature, and art, and cooking and, and all that kind of thing.

And what was it that you liked about it? Was it the fact that you were learning, or was it the fact that you were doing something physical? That you were running around, and a physical activity? What was it about it that you really enjoyed?

Oh, the thing that we really enjoyed was the adventure. We were really doing something. Because you must remember that there was a war on. 1910, the 1917, there was a war on, wasn't there.

So it was just, it was just the fact of being busy, and having something to do, which was fun and exciting?

Yes.

And was there a leader of your group?

Yes, I was the leader.

You were the leader of the group. Now, did that, because Baden-Powell had set up the Scouts in 1909, hadn't he.

1909.

When was it that you met Baden-Powell?

Ah! Well, we had, we had the privilege, I think, of suddenly knowing that there was going to be this great rally at the Crystal Palace. Now, the Crystal Palace was way over, oh, and we never thought we'd reach it.

Do you remember when this was?

Yes, I do remember. This was in the July, or September, when it took place.

The rally was in September. In which year?

1909.

1909. And you found out about it in July?

Yes.

Ah! So what did you do when you heard about it?

We immediately decided we would go, in uniform. After all, we were Girl Scouts, though we had not been invested, and I suppose, really, to make a long story short, I should say that when we met Baden-Powell, he came over to us, you see.

Oh no, don't cut a long story short. Tell me how it happened. Tell me, how did you get to Crystal Palace that day?

We walked.

And how many of you were there?

Eight.

Eight of you. And it was just you girls from school?

Yes.

I thought that there were some factory girls as well?

Oh yes, there were.

How many factory girls were there?

Three or four.

And how had they become involved with your group?

Well, the Scoutmaster said, "If you're ... if you girls are going to have fun and games on Peckham Rye," and Peckham Rye is quite famous, you know, in the song.

What song is that?

Oh, it's all about Peckham Rye. Probably, probably lost! [Laughs]

I don't think I've heard it.

And I've lost my train.

Sorry, I interrupted you.

The Scoutmaster had said that if you were going to have fun and games on Peckham Rye ... you were telling me how the factory girls had become involved. Yes. "You must have, you must have some of my factory girls as well, who are as poor as church mice, and would love to join in." So we had three or four factory girls, perhaps a few more.

And how did they fit in?

They fitted in extraordinarily well.

And you all got on well together?

We all got on well together, because we were non-denominational, non-political, non ... everything non! And we would meet as regularly as the ... clockwork, on a Saturday afternoon, and go off. After all, we could only help with putting the things in the cupboards, what's left over from the jumble, and have them out again the following Saturday, in the morning. And then we would have a, a nice dinner, cooked by, I don't know. But anyway, a plate came, and we sat at a table and ate. And it was my mother and myself ... I don't know what else it was. My mother and myself ... that's gone.

So, the group of you girls, with the girls from school, and the factory girls, how many of you were there altogether?

Twelve.

Twelve of you. And, and, so tell me what happened the day you went to this rally at Crystal Palace?

Well, the thing, the thing was that we managed to get into uniform. And I said to my mother, who was very co-operative, "Isn't there anything we can do about the ... the navy blue skirts?" Because they hadn't got any skirts. And she said, "Oh, I'll write

to the schools. They surely will have some skirts." And they did. They all produced skirts.

So you hadn't had any kind of uniform up until then?

Oh no. We had no uniform.

What was the boys' uniform? What was the uniform for the Boy Scouts?

Oh, it was a khaki shirt, long trousers, any sort of shoes and socks, and a ... and a shirt of some sort.

And so what uniform were you going to have? What uniform did you want for you and your friends?

We wanted navy blue skirts and khaki, I'm sure we had khaki, khaki blouses. In fact, I can show you a picture of, of us. I don't think it's very far away.

Well, why don't you show me afterwards.

Yes, right. And in it, we all look, more or less alike. And we had these pale khaki shirts on, which we borrowed from the boys, because the boys, they could only send six of their troop to this great rally, otherwise London would have been completely overshadowed. You see, London had gone leaping ahead, and boys were able to buy the khaki shirts, and we were able to borrow them.

So how many Boys Scouts were there going to be at this Rally?

Oh, some thousands. We only dealt with a few.

So you got your uniform by borrowing from the schools, and borrowing from the local Boy Scouts.

Yes. And our hats from ... our hats were from various groups who had started up, and hadn't made it, and were selling their hats. I can remember buying hats ... at least, I think I can remember buying hats.

And so what happened on the day of the Rally?

The day of the Rally was, of course, a rotten day! Low cloud ... just like today. And we met at, oh, ... we met at ... I'll forget my own name soon! I've never forgotten ...

Was it at your house, or a station?

No, it was at the top of a hill that led down to Dulwich. I can't remember it.

Don't worry. So, then, what did you do once you'd all met?

Once we'd all met, we walked down the hill, past the Observatory. That, at least, is clear! And on through Dulwich Park.

And how long did it take you to get there?

It took us from about 10 o'clock to half past eleven. After all, we didn't delay, we did, we did know the way.

And what did you find when you got there?

We found a turnstile, you know, one of these ordinary things that go round, you've seen a turnstile, haven't you.

Mmmm.

And nobody stopped us, just nobody stopped us. And we were inside, in less time than it takes to say it.

And nobody wanted to see tickets or ...

No. Nobody wanted our tickets or anything, and we hadn't got any tickets. And, having got inside, we went with the crowd, to a turning on the left, and there we climbed up a bank, on which there weren't too many people, and settled down to watch.

And what was going on?

What was going on was ... all kinds of things. For instance, all kinds of races, and all kinds of gymnastics. There were all kinds of things going on. The whole arena was filled with, with boys. Certainly ... originally intended to make a kaleidoscope of activity, and this it really did. And then, it was lunchtime, by about half past twelve. And everyone scattered to their different homes, at least, I think they were called "homes", and we scattered up our bank, and took out our sandwiches, because we hadn't got any money, or very little, only enough to get us home on the bus. And we ... we suddenly saw that, over on the far far side of the ground, there was a group of adults. And these adults were moving towards us.

And then what happened?

Well, then they ... they moved towards us. And one figure, perhaps two figures, detached themselves and came over to where we were, by that time, standing in a row.

So you'd, you'd seen them coming and stood up?

Oh, we'd seen them coming, yes. We had seen them coming. And there wasn't much going on, on the arena, or the area, or whatever you like to call it. And he came up to us, and said to the Patrol Leader ...

Who came up to you?

Lord Baden-Powell.

Did you realise it was him?

Oh yes, we did. We realised it was him, long before he reached us, because we had seen his photograph, you know, he was, he was a dapper little man - not so little! And he asked the Patrol Leader, I wasn't the Patrol Leader, because I wasn't the eldest ... "What the Dickens are you doing, what the Dickens do you think you are doing here?" And we said, "We want to be Girl Scouts". And he said, "You can't be, it's only for the boys." Now I remember that, because it's, it's so important. And we, literally, fell on him, and said, "Oh please, please, something for the girls." And he said, "I'll think about it. I'll let you know." And we said, "We're St. Marks, Camberwell. Just so that you know who we are. Let the Scoutmaster know." And we didn't hear anything for three months after that. "But", he said, "it's going to rain. You can take part in the marchpast at the end." And I think he said something in the middle about running into the Palace, which was Crystal Palace, and it was made of all glass, except for the doors ... and we remembered that he had said "You can take part in the marchpast at the end". And we were accepted. And that was the beginning of Guiding.

So were you the only girls in the march? Or were there any other girls?

I think there were a few smattering of girls, but they were there because their brothers were there, and they were there with a collection of scarves round their shoulders, and long skirts, or not so long, but almost half way down.

But you were the only troop of girls?

We were the only troop.

That must have been a wonderful feeling?

Oh, it was! It was a wonderful feeling, that Baden-Powell had accepted us, and he said that "you can take part in the marchpast at the end."

And this is the marchpast where? Where did the march go?

Oh, the march-past took place in the Palace. We were all squashed into a corner, and we were all told where, exactly, to stand, and the marchpast took place, to a band, and we marched out of the Palace, into fine weather. And we came home on the top of a double-decker, double horse-drawn vehicle.

And how much did that cost you?

Well, that was, that was ready waiting for us.

Oh, I see. And do you think that was the best day of your life?

Yes, I think it was, up to that point! And I was then 11 or 12.

Do you remember the name of the girl who you'd nominated to be the leader that day?

Yes. Theodora Veazey, who has since died. She was nominated to be the, be the leader, and I was nominated to be the second leader, seconder, seconder. Rita Pick, Elizabeth Woodhouse, Gladys Tullidge, they're all coming back. I haven't thought of the names for ages. But if there's any room for names to go in, those are the names to put in.

And after the Rally, did you just carry on as before, meeting on Saturday afternoons?

We carried on meeting, and it got colder and colder, and we were given a little room in the house next door to the church. And we went on meeting, meeting there, and doing the syllabus, until the day, the first Saturday in 1910, when the Scoutmaster

came to us, and said, "I've got wonderful news for you. Baden-Powell is going to start a movement for girls. And you're to be called Girl Guides."

So that Scoutmaster was a very important person.

Oh, he was.

Do you remember his name?

Veazey.

Veazey? And how is that spelt?

V E A Z E Y.

Is that the same as your family Veazey.

That's the same as the family Veazey.

Was he a relative?

Yes, he was, he was my uncle.

And he allowed you to do what the Boy Scouts were doing, alongside, really, had he?

Yes.

And did he oversee what you were doing? Did he watch what you were doing, or did he just let you get on with it?

He just let us get on with it, because he was a very busy man, especially on Saturday.

[End of Part 2]

Part 3 [Tape 2 Side A]

16th March, 1990. Second interview with Sybil Canadine.

Last week we were talking about, mainly about your march to the Scouts Rally, and afterwards Baden Powell had come up to you and said, "What are you doing here?", but he had said that he would get in touch with you about what was going to, he would think about your proposition and would get back to you. Now, did he come back to you?

Well, we waited all through the rest of September, all through October, all through November, all through December, realising that, you know, this sort of thing takes time. On the first Saturday in January, 1910, a Scoutmaster came to us, in our funny little room, in which we'd squashed 12, and said, "I have wonderful news for you. Baden Powell is going to start a movement for girls, and you're to be called the Girl Guides."

And how soon did that happen?

Well, I was enrolled that day! By a Scoutmaster, with a Scout badge.

And so how did it all begin, the Girl Guides, properly? When was the first meeting of the Girl Guides?

Well, the first meeting, I don't know whether we were the first, in fact, but we were called First London, and we went on with our meetings on the Scout syllabus.

Did you have a Scout leader, as it were, for your group, though, from that point?

No, we didn't have any.

So there was still no adult involved?

No, no adults.

So nothing really changed?

Nothing really changed. And we went on like that, until July, when we had an adult leader assigned to us, and her name was Cookie Moore. I remember her so well.

Tell me about her.

She was round, all over round. She was a very outdoor person, so we were very lucky. She dealt with the Board of Education who were thrilled with our beginnings, and we moved out of the little third bedroom in what, I suppose, was the Vicarage, to a school round the corner. And that was the beginning.

How many of there were you in this group?

There were 12.

There were 12 of you.

Oh, we soon grew, of course. In fact, we had, we had grown to 16, 20, I don't remember, before that. And, of course, we grew in the Autumn, but not everyone turned up every time, you know, like girls.

And this was a mix of girls, was it? Girls from the factory, and girls from the school?

Yes, girls from the two schools, the Datchelor and Clapham High.

And you met on Saturday afternoons?

Yes.

Tell me how your involvement with the Guides has developed through your life. I mean, I know that now, you're in the position of being, going to California, and Singapore, is it? For the World Conference of Girl Guides, Girl Scouts. So obviously, you've been involved with the Guides all your life.

All my life.

Tell me what happened, how did things develop from this small group where you lived, at the very beginning.

The small group went on till 1914, when the War broke out, and we had to lose Cookie Moore, because she had to join up. And I was then almost 18, and quite capable, of course, of running the Guide Company, and I had with me, two factory girls, Lieutenants. We just went on. And I went to College.

Where?

At Dartford, Physical Training College. And I used to come back once a fortnight to run my Guide Company, but in the meantime, it was run by my two lieutenants, and that is how we went on, until 1917, when I had to give it up, but by then, of course, there were people trained to, I had trained my lieutenants, and they could carry on. I don't know whether there was another leader produced, but you wouldn't have known that we were short of leadership, because we, we turned out very smartly on Sundays.

On Sundays?

Sunday. Sunday was parade.

What was parade?

Have you not heard of the military parading? Well, our vicar, of course, was very interested in us, and he reserved the left-hand side of the church for us, and we paraded. we met in the hall, and turned out, and paraded. Paraded, up and down.

Were you aware that you were doing something for women, for girls?

No.

Why did you want to carry on with the Girl Guides? What did it mean for you?

Well, it was such fun, to trek and stalk, and light fires, and cook our tea, and play wide games, and that kind of thing, and we felt we were doing something that the girls weren't doing. But, you know, between 1910 and 1914, Guiding took off. We weren't the only ones, by any manner of means.

Did you meet up with the other Guides elsewhere in the country?

Oh no, not elsewhere in the country, in our own area.

Tell me what happened when the War broke out, how did that affect your life?

We were on holiday when War broke out. The banks were shut for two days, all the banks. I don't think it affected us, other than that there were shortages. I know how heartily sick I got of damsons. Why I should remember damsons, I don't know.

You ate a lot of damsons! How did you have them? Did you eat them just plain, or cooked?

Oh cooked, cooked. Stewed, and in puddings, and stewed ... and stewed! And from then on, you see, wherever I went, for instance, when I went to Derby Training College, I was Head of P.E., Physical Education Course, it was called Physical Training in those days, I started cadets, which was a senior group, which, I think I started the first Guide Cadet Company.

When was that?

1914. But I was also Captain of the Tenth Derby, which was in a school, which I went to as part of, not of my training, because I was trained, but I don't know why I went to that school, probably because they hadn't got a P.E. trainer, and I took on the Guide Company.

So your actual day-to-day life wasn't terribly affected by the War?

Not, not really.

Do you remember what you thought about it? That the country was at War, what your thoughts about the War were?

Well, I wrote my last essay in 1914, before I left school, on the War, and what its effects would be, but I don't remember what I wrote! But it wasn't as devastating as this World War, the Second World War.

How did it affect your parents? Did it change your family life at all, in terms of what your parents were doing?

No, I don't think so. You see, 1909, we started meeting, 1910, we went on meeting, 1914 we kept on meeting, even though I was at college.

You were, what, 21, almost 22 when the War finished.

Oh no, I was 19.

You were 19.

I wasn't quite 20, you see, but the Board of Education had liked my innovations.

Tell me what your innovations were.

To give girls what they really wanted. For instance, it was no use giving girls breathing exercises when all they longed to do was run and jump, and so I gave them handstands, and somersaults, and leapfrog, and that kind of thing. Those were the older ones. The middle ones, they wanted something which was, a kind of a half-way stage, they wanted to be able to move their arms and legs, and so I had them sitting down, and I asked for a hall to have my classes in, not outside.

This was very unusual was it?

Mmmm, most unusual, because, of course, I wasn't going by the syllabus. I didn't destroy the syllabus, I merely took it upside-down.

I'm a bit confused, can you just explained to me, this was when? When are we talking about now? What years are we talking about?

1915.

This is during the War?

Yes, this is during the War.

When you were the Head of P.E. at Dartford College?

No, I wasn't. I wasn't.

I'm very confused! Can you just explain to me what you were when you were introducing these innovations. Where were you?

I was at college.

Where?

At Dartford.

At Dartford College.

'15-'17.

Yes, and you were training, were you? Or were you teaching?

I was training. And I got out, you see, when I was 19.

And then what did you do?

Well, then I went on training.

Where did you continue your training?

I went on, I went, I was appointed, by the Board, to Derby College of Education, and I was very young.

How old were you?

19, all but 20, you see, because my birthday, being in August, it's very awkward, you don't know whether to subtract or add!

And did you enjoy teaching?

I loved it. Oh yes.

How old were the girls that you were teaching?

Oh they were all, all my age - 20, 21. In fact, I had some who were 24, but they didn't know how old I was, and I got married.

Tell me about that. Who did you marry?

Oh, I married a parson, who was a parson in the Army, but he wanted very badly, to change to the Navy, and he did this in 1917.

What was his name?

Douglas. Or Ronald Douglas, but I couldn't stand the Ronald!

What did you call him?

Douglas.

And what was his surname, Canadine? He was Ronald, this is Ronald Douglas Canadine?

Canadine, yes.

And how did you meet?

He came to our church as curate, and that's how we met.

Do you remember what you thought of him when you first met?

No, I don't. I remember where it was. It was in our drawing room, and it was the Harvest Festival, and I had a white dress on. But we continued to meet, of course, and there was another parson, of course, also after me! I don't know what it was, but it was perhaps the vivacity, but I chose the, well, they were both tall. But my father, of course, was very much against it.

Why?

Well, he said I was much too young.

How old were you?

17.

You were 17. And how old were you when you got married?

20.

So you knew each other for three years before you got married.

Yes.

Was that, and when was it that you actually wanted to get married? Did you want to get married at 20?

We were always wanting to get married, but we had to wait until my father, anyway, you see, my husband was abroad. He was with the Armed Forces, at Ypres, and he was blown up, and came back as a casualty, then he exchanged into the Navy, and of course, we led two separate lives, you know.

You and he?

Yes. We didn't have a home. He was either in the Army or in the Navy, and I was at my Derbyshire Training College.

So when did you meet?

Well, we met in holidays, and oh, we were constantly meeting.

It must have been awful for you when he was at Ypres, though, you must have been really frightened.

It was. I remember going out to a cricket match, as Captain of the team, being bowled first ball. That was my anxiety.

So where did you get married?

St. Saviours, Denmark Hill.

And did your father marry you?

No, the Bishop of London married us. And my husband wore a white stole, which I had embroidered, unbeknownst to him. I used to keep it, of course, you know, when you embroider on a frame, you have to have an easy chair, and another chair to put your frame on, and I used to slip it behind, and hide it away, because he came from France on our wedding day.

And what happened afterwards? Did he go back to France? Did he have to go back to France, or did you have a honeymoon?

Well, we had a honeymoon of six days, and then he was recalled, and, and then he was shot. It was a horrendous time. And I went back to Derby, of course, because, after all, we hadn't a home.

Why not? You and he didn't have a home?

No, we didn't have a home. All our wedding presents were packed and put into the bank, and half of them were broken when we unpacked.

How long was it before you had a home together?

I think we had a home together, in Nottingham, where I was Divisional Commissioner, in '21, or '20, or '20, but he, he was only on leave.

So there was no settled home life?

Oh no, no sort of settled home life.

Did you ever think, "What am I doing? This isn't how it's supposed to be." Or did it suit you?

I think we were settled in Nottingham, because I'd been asked to be Divisional Commissioner there, and I'd moved on from Derby to the University, and it was a case of my husband coming to me, not me going to him. He came on leave, you see, in those days, husbands were like vagrants, they were moved, all the young ones, were moved at any minute, so the only thing to do was to have a home.

Do you mean husbands who were in the Forces?

Yes. Because one minute he was up at Richmond, and the next minute he was down in Sussex.

And all the time, you were carrying on with your own work?

Yes.

Did that make you unusual, I mean, from other women?

No, it didn't. Everyone was doing it. I mean, it was no use waiting for your husband to be settled. 1918, of course, came, and there was a whole year of settlement after that.

So where did you live then, during that year of settlement?

Well, I lived in Nottingham, and then I moved to Portsmouth.

What were you doing in Portsmouth?

Portsmouth? We had a furnished flat which was really our first home together, and I was just about to take on a district, I think it was. I'd had to give up Nottingham Commissioner. And you know, I told you, Guiding took off, well, it took off in Nottingham, because, when I took over, there were 18 units, Guides, Brownies, just starting. But by the time I gave up, which was all but two years later, we had 56! It just took off. And people used to ring me up and say, "We've got three Guiders. Can you come and start us a Guide Company, or a Brownie Pack," or what have you. And I used to fly off.

When you say you were a District Commissioner, you mean, of the Guides?

Yes.

Were you also working still with your P.E. instruction?

Yes. I was on the staff of the University, as a general P.E., I was, I think, oh dear, what's the name of the man? Head of Folk dancing, Cecil Sharpe, I knew I should remember. I was introducing Cecil Sharpe's idea of, of dancing, to the students, but also, of course, ordinary physical exercises. All students, and all students with some interest in physical education, of course, there was a lot of students, and I lived in Albert Road.

In Nottingham?

In Nottingham.

I'm quite interested in how important physical education was seen then, because now everybody's very into the importance of being healthy and taking exercise, and there's the whole fitness thing now.

Well, it was very new in those days, very new. And the students that I had at Derby, they were lost in admiration of these exercises, you know, which would really, really give health, if they were done properly, and regularly.

So you were something of a pioneer, would you say?

Yes. Certainly, pioneering in Guiding, and in physical education.

Did it stem from your own commitment to physical health, or was it more of an accident that you became so influential in that area?

I think it was my own commitment.

And where did that come from?

I don't know!

But you were young.

Yes.

You were doing all these things that were new and unexpected, and untraditional. Weren't there people higher up the system, higher up the ladder, who weren't very pleased about this? Did you have struggles with people who didn't want to change things, when you were trying to change things?

No. They were all most co-operative. Now, of course, in Derby, they would say, "She's much too young", you know, but when I got married, then I, then it was quite different, because I was only one year at the College of Education in Derby, before I was married. I was married, of course, during the holidays.

But once you were married, you were seen as an adult?

Oh yes, once I was married, I was seen as an adult. And I behaved as an adult, you know, too. I used to go and talk to groups of people in the Town Hall, where I would

say, "You know, there's absolutely nothing for your young grown-ups. Nothing at all." And then I would go on to say what there was.

Which was what?

Which was the kind of exercise.

And was this specifically aimed at women and girls? This was aimed at women and girls, was it?

Oh yes.

It must have been a great relief, though, for them, the change from having to sit and be demure and

Oh yes!

To actually be able to move around. And you never encountered any opposition?

No, I can't say that I did.

When you went to Portsmouth, when was that?

Well, that was in '20, or '21. '21 or '22.

And what were you doing in Portsmouth?

Keeping house for my husband. And starting up the Guides, of course. But then, of course, everything changed, and I was asked to go to America to become America's Camp Chief.

You'll have to explain in more detail to me what that means.

Well,

Did you start up the Guides in Portsmouth?

No, I didn't. I only took on where Guiding, where they had got to. I think we had four or five Districts already, and I was Divisional Commissioner, and I had to encompass them all, but I suddenly had a letter from the Chiefs, whom I had met, of course, at various conferences and rallies, and things like that, to say that a girl called, oh, I don't know what she was called, I can't remember now, had died, and her father who was a Senator, had read her diaries, and seen what Guiding had meant to her. Now, it was quite at the beginning of Guiding, of course. They started in 1912, and she died in 1921, or '22, and she had time to find out what Guiding meant to her. You see, Guiding is a way of life. And it has a promise of duty to God, and the Queen, or your country, and service to other people, and so it isn't an ordinary Movement, and this girl, she indicated to her father what Guiding meant to her, and he wrote to Headquarters and said he, he would like to give 100,000 dollars, it's a large sum of money, in memory of her. He could give it with no strings attached, and they decided that they wanted a National Camp, which would cover all the States. So they sent to England, they wrote to Robert Baden Powell, and said this had happened, and could they send someone, and the lot fell on me! And I was only 24. So I was very young for a very big responsibility.

But you took it?

Oh I took it, yes, because my husband came in that day, and he looked rather down, and I said to him, "What's the matter?" And he said, "Well, I've got to go East", he said, "I, I've been chosen", you know, young, gay young chaplain, "and I suppose it's a great honour, but I'll have to go, and we can't take our wives." So then I handed him my letter, and said, "Well, if you're going East, I'm going West!" And I actually left England before he did. He, he rode beside Allenby into Jerusalem, and that wasn't a thing a young man could possibly turn down because he had a wife. So I took the opportunity to go West, and I've been going west all my life, ever since!

How did you go? How did you get to America?

I went in the Berungaria.

In the what, sorry?

The Berungaria.

What was that like?

Oh, that was great. P & O. That was wonderful.

How long did it take?

Five days. Four or five days.

And do you remember what your cabin was like?

Oh, it was just a small, a small cabin, about half the size of this. I had it to myself. I travelled first class.

Did they pay for you? Did the Scouts pay for you?

Oh yes. Oh yes, they did.

What did travelling first class mean? How did that affect things? Did it mean you were in a certain part of the boat? Or

Yes, well, you could go into any part of the boat, and I took the time and the trouble to go into the steerage and find out, you know, why these folk were travelling, and what they expected, and so on.

And who did you meet there? Do you remember any of the people you met there?

No.

What sorts of things did they say?

Well, they, they said that they were going to find a new life. I don't really remember an awful lot about it, and I went into the second class, you know, the ordinary, but I don't remember, and I think I was seasick!

Do you remember arriving in America?

Oh yes. I do remember arriving in America.

Can you describe it to me? Describe to me what happened, how it was when you arrived.

Well, we passed the Statue of Liberty, and we headed straight for a dock, a long way past the Statue of Liberty, and I was met by people in uniform.

Were you in uniform yourself?

Oh yes. I was in uniform.

And what was the uniform then?

My uniform was navy blue, and their uniform was khaki, "kakki" as they called it!

But can you actually describe to me what it was like, your uniform. Was it a long skirt?

Oh no, no, it wasn't long. It was much shorter than this skirt is.

Just below the knee.

It was below the knees, yes. Navy blue, with a white shirt, because I was going as Commissioner. I had ordinary shirts with me, and I also had camp uniform with me.

What was camp uniform?

Well, it was a dress.

What kind of dress?

Just an ordinary dress. I can show you. It wasn't pale blue, it was a darker blue than that.

But a cotton overall dress.

Cotton overall dress.

And was it incredibly exciting?

Oh yes, it was. And it was incredibly exciting to have all this money to spend.

How much money did you have to spend?

100,000 dollars.

Explain to me what your responsibilities were. What were you there to do?

I was there to promote camping and to do whatever they asked me to do. To speak. To run the camp.

Where was the camp?

Forty miles from New York.

Where? Was there a name for the place?

Camp Andre, Pleasantville, New York. Pleasantville was the town that was nearest. I'm trying to think of the other town that was near, but Pleasantville ...

And how long were you to be there for?

Oh, six months. I met my husband in Malta.

What did you do during that six months? During your six months in America, what did you do? What did you achieve?

Well, I, I suppose you would say that I achieved, successfully, to run a great big camp, of which there were 100 always there, and it was a success, because they loved it.

It was obviously tremendously important to you.

Yes, but it was very important to them, because I could see that, as I sat on the hill, three days after I got to America, if I didn't have the ideas, they would. And they wouldn't be mine.

By "they", who do you mean?

I mean the Headquarters people in America.

What were your ideas?

Well, my ideas were that Baden Powell had always asked for patrol camps, and my idea was that it should be in patrols, we could have, say, patrols of 12, with a counsellor, that we should stick to the idea that they would have a very light lunch

[End of Part 3]

Part 4 [Tape 2 Side B]

Colours, we met for colours. And the Colour Guard would move on, and so did, I mean, I went, and had, say, breakfast, with Spring, of course, they all had lovely names, and then I would move on, say, have lunch with Trails End, but everything moved, and there were 10, or, I think there were 10 camps, but with delicious names, Tip Top, Spring, you know, lovely, lovely names, and they're still there of course.

They were already there when you arrived?

Oh no, no, no, they weren't.

They weren't, right. What was there when you arrived?

There was the site, but very little on it. And it was an enormous site, it was 167 acres.

So you created these different camps.

I created what there wasn't! And we had to have a Headquarters Unit, and I had to have a Unit, and there had to be these 12, it was incredible, what was accomplished.

Did they have to be built, these Headquarters?

Oh no, no, because it was a camp. Well, yes, it was the camp, under canvas.

And you lived under canvas too?

Oh, I lived under canvas, yes.

For six months?

For six months. But my Headquarters, down in the valley, was brick built, and the refrigeration plant was brick built, but everything else was under canvas.

Were these brick buildings there already, as well, or did you have to ...

No, we had to build them.

You had to build them?

Yes. And we had to build the hospital.

What was the hospital?

Well, that was for cases of illness, or accident, but we took, we took a cottage which was on the site, and extended it. It was a tremendous activity, you know. I had 20-30 masons who were there, each one doing something. It was, it was a tremendous enterprise.

By mason, do you mean mason in the traditional sense of the term, or is that a Scout term?

No, that, masons are people who deal with cement.

So, in the traditional sense.

Yes.

It's not a rank.

No, no, no!

You were going to explain to me what "Colours" is, when you said, "every morning you met for colours".

Ah yes! We would fold up the Stars and Stripes, it was a big one, in a special way, attach it at one end, and at the other end, and carry it, before attachment, we'd carry it like this.

In your hands.

Yes.

You'd carry that in front of you.

Yes. And then you had to be able to make a "clove hitch", attach it to one end, and then you had to make a "sheet bend" at the other, and then you had to raise it, and when it got to the very top of the pole, and it was a big pole which I had put up, you could brake it, and you pulled, and woe betide you, if it didn't come out!

How many people did this?

Well, 100.

All at once? No. How many people did it take to actually ...

Ah, it took three.

Three did it at once, right.

Three did it at once. And it was a great honour to be chosen to brake the flag.

So you had six months of immense activity.

Yes.

And creativity. And made this camp. Were there any particular memories you have of that time, that are special to you?

Well, I can think of I shall have to get out my albums to I'm trying to recall. The folk who came to us, representing what was then, of course, the news, and they, they took us swimming in the, in the pool, and they took us, three of us, say, diving, oh, what was the name of them? I can't remember. And that was a great occasion when they actually came and photographed all the activities in the camp. They would ...

And did it appear in the papers?

Oh yes. And I've got most of the papers.

I'd love to see them. It just sounds the most wonderful six months, it sounds incredibly exciting. Were you sorry to leave at the end of it?

Oh, very sorry, of course. But, on the other hand, I was going to my husband, in Malta. I came back to England, of course, to see the Chief Scout, and so on, and then went overland to Malta, which was ...

On your own?

On my own, oh yes, on my own.

By train?

Yes, by train. Crossing, of course, Dover to Calais, and then to Paris, and then down in the, whatever it was, to the foot of Italy, and then by the Knight of Malta, to Malta. I don't remember much about it.

And how long were you in Malta for?

Two years, or two and a half years, and I immediately took over Island Commissioner for Malta, because they knew I was going, and they, they needed an Island

Commissioner, who really knew the ropes, and had some experience of starting, and I went up to Egypt and took training, and I was in Egypt when Tutankahmen, when the last door was opened, and I met Carnarvon and,

Howard Carter? He was the other one.

Yes, I met Howard Carter. Anyway, I'll show you the books.

Did you go in, did you see any of the treasures?

No, I didn't. I was far too busy taking training.

What do you mean by "taking training"? What did that involve?

Well, that involved having the adults together, and, for instance, taking a programme on, programme building, or taking a session on how to deal with troublesome children, or a programme on camping. Any of the things which we do in Guiding, I could take a training on.

When you say, "take", you mean you would attend the course, or you would give the course.

I would give the course.

You'd give the course.

Give it.

And you were giving them to whom?

Oh, to a variety of people. Maltese, Portuguese, Spanish, Egyptian, all kinds, French, German. I had one French which I could deal with, one German which I couldn't, I mean, a patrol, you see, I took them in language groups. I had two interpreters. The

Germans had to get on, I think, as best they could. And the French I could cope with, of course.

Were you invited to take these courses, or did you arrange it?

Oh yes, I was invited.

By whom?

By the Commissioner for Egypt.

Do you remember who that was?

Yes, I do. It was Mary Carver. She became Godmother to my son.

And you met her when you were in Malta? But you went over to Egypt?

No. I met her in England at the First World Camp, which I took, oh, 11 or 12 Maltese girls to England, and she and I shared a tent.

When was that?

1924.

This must have been fairly soon after you'd arrived in Malta.

Yes, it was the next, I arrived in April, '23, and the rest of '23, and then '24, and it was the next summer.

Did you live in Egypt for a while, or did you just go over and stay in Egypt, when you were doing these courses?

I went up, because my husband's ship had gone up, so I stayed with the Head of Guiding in Malta, because, of course, she was very anxious to have me.

So had you actually left?

No, I hadn't left Malta.

No, you were still living in Malta, right. Your married life seems to have been a very independent and exciting ...

Yes, it was.

There was no dull domesticity about it! Were you considered unusual to be so independent, as a woman?

I don't really think so, because, if you marry into the Navy, you've got to be independent. I mean, you can sit down in England, but that wouldn't have suited me.

And you didn't mind the constant moving and the separations?

No. So long as he was happy.

Where did you go from Malta?

From, from Malta, where did I go? Oh, I went to, to Plymouth where I was Commissioner for St. Budeaux.

How is that spelt?

ST. B U D E A U X. That was an undeveloped part of Plymouth, to the North, of course, it's not undeveloped now, and I had a great deal to do with developing, because there was nothing there, except one Guide Company and one Brownie Pack, but there was soon something more.

What was there?

Well, just Guide Companies, and Brownie Packs.

Just to look at all the different places you'd been running Guides and Brownie groups, were they a certain type of girl who came to them? What were the girls like who came to these groups? I mean, like, for instance, in America, who were the girls who came to the camps? Were they wealthy girls? Were they working class girls? I mean, who were they?

Certainly they were, they were the wealthy ones. I would say that the working class girl, if she was very keen, she could get grants, but it would be a great deal of middle-class.

Did you have to pay, then?

Oh yes, you had to pay to go to camp.

Do you remember how much it was?

10/6d a day.

And they would come for how long?

A week. You could feed a girl on 10/6d. Now, it costs you 10/6d. a day, but we still camp.

And, in England, who were the girls in England who came to the camps?

It's about the same. About the same.

When you went to Malta and set it up they, were they English girls who were coming, or were they Maltese girls?

Ah! They were Maltese girls, and, oh, they certainly started St. Andrews pack. Now, they went, as a Brownie Pack, to China. It was the Maltese girls that I was after.

And then in Plymouth, you went to Plymouth then, presumably your husband was also in Plymouth.

Yes, he was. And I started six or seven Guide Companies and Brownie Packs, in St. Budeaux.

Was this voluntary work, or were you paid for it?

Oh no, it was all voluntary work.

How long were you in Plymouth for?

Two years. And then we moved to Portsmouth.

When did you move to Portsmouth, do you remember?

'26.

On top of all this activity that you were doing, voluntarily, presumably you also had responsibilities as a wife.

Yes.

So what did that involve?

Well, that involved my son being born in '28, and my daughter being born in '29.
This seemed to be a good moment.

Where were you then? Where was your son born?

Well, I think we must have been in Portsmouth.

And where was your daughter born?

Oh, she was born in Dorchester, but that was ...

Later on?

No, in '29.

Why was she born in Dorchester?

Because my father had died. My father died in April '29, and my mother collapsed, and the doctor said, "Now, I don't think I'm going to be responsible for you if you don't go away." So I abandoned my poor mother, she had plenty of friends, and I went down to Lulworth Cove, with my son, and my nanny, and we stayed in Lulworth Cove, until this daughter was suddenly born. I had booked, of course, a place in Portsmouth, because my husband's ship was coming into Portsmouth, and I was no stranger to furnished rooms, but that wasn't to be. And she was born, she was only four and a quarter pounds.

Was she premature?

Yes, she was premature. My husband wondered what he'd got. He came the day after she was born, expecting, of course, to find a very pregnant wife.

How dangerous was it, though, then, for a child to be premature? Was there any risk to her life?

Yes I think there was. But I had a good nanny, and I was able to rest in bed.

Did you go into hospital to have your children?

Yes.

And what was the provision like for, I mean, now, there's an enormous amount of ante-natal care, and post-natal care, and all the rest of it, I mean, what sort of preparation was there?

I don't remember. I was probably out! But I remember waking up and discovering that I had got a very small daughter, with lots of black hair.

But you were actually unconscious, were you? Do you think?

Yes. At least, I don't remember.

Well, I think we have to stop here, if you have to go out.

[End of Part 4]

Part 5 [Tape 3 Side A]

When you came back from Malta, you went to live in Plymouth, and how long did you live in Plymouth for?

About two years.

And then your first child, Peter.

Was born in 1928, in January.

In Portsmouth?

No, in London.

In London? Why was that?

Well, my husband was away, and my parents thought it would be better for me to come to London, rather than staying in Portsmouth by myself.

Is that where they lived?

They lived in London, yes.

But you were living in Portsmouth by then, not Plymouth?

No, I was living in Portsmouth by then.

Right. And what, can you tell me, what sort of provision there was for ante-natal care then?

No provision at all.

So what did one do? Did you just look after yourself?

Yes, you did.

You didn't have a midwife or anything, who would look after you beforehand?

Well, I went into hospital for the birth.

Which hospital was that, do you remember?

Kings College.

And was that in a large maternity ward? Or a room on your own?

Oh no, it was a large maternity ward.

What were conditions like then, for women, in the 20s?

I don't remember. Except that it was all very pleasant and, he had to be born with forceps, actually, and he had a huge mark on his face, but that all departed.

What do you mean, it all departed? You mean the mark went?

Well, the mark went.

And how,

And by the time my husband, you see, my husband had sailed from Portsmouth, I think, on about 28th December, and Peter was born on 8th January, and so no father, there were eight of us, we were called "the ladies in waiting"! And my son was born the very first, the first son to be born.

And did you stay in hospital for long?

Oh, about 10 days.

So much longer than one would now.

Oh yes, much longer.

Why was that?

I don't know, but it was the thing to do. And if you had a baby in, at home, you were in bed for nearly 14 days.

So none of this getting up and going back to work!

Oh no! But that was the general idea.

Did you stay in London after the birth of your first child?

Yes. I stayed in London, oh, I don't know how long, for a few weeks anyway.

With your parents?

With my parents, yes, in Camberwell.

Is that where they'd lived before?

Yes, yes, they still lived in, and my father did exactly the same thing.

Do you think it changes your relationship with your parents when you have children?

Yes, in a way, because you're all modern, and they're all old-fashioned!

You mean in practical terms?

Yes.

Can you give me some examples? What do you mean, how were you modern?

Well, for instance, if, if Peter, and I had a nanny, you know, cried, we didn't go in and pick him up, as they do today, we, we let him have his cry out, and he soon settled down, and didn't bother us again!

Can you think of other things which are different about the way you brought up your children, from the way that you'd been brought up?

Well, I don't remember how I was brought up.

But what about things like feeding? I mean, what was the fashion for feeding children then? Were babies fed at a certain time, or ...

Babies were fed absolutely on the dot, and not before, and not after. It was a routine, and the babies thrived.

So it was the Truby King, was it?

Yes.

Or was it earlier than that?

No, Truby King, more or less.

What did your parents, I mean, what did your mother think of the way you brought up your children?

I think she approved. I think it was very much the same as she had done.

But you say you had a nanny.

Yes.

What did the nanny do? What were the nanny's responsibilities, and what did you do?

The nanny's responsibilities were to take the child out, feed it and dress it and bath it. I mean, she acted as a second mother.

And did she come right away?

She came right away.

Do you mean, like the day after, or two weeks before, or, I mean, how soon after you'd had your child did your nanny come and join you?

I don't really remember, but I got home with the baby, and the nanny was there.

Do you remember who she was? What her name was?

Oh, her name was Roberts.

Where was she from?

The North of England. She was with me, oh, through that, through that time, and through my next one, until I sailed, yes, sailed, I think is the right word, for Malta. Malta again, you see.

You went back to Malta?

Yes.

Oh, I see. And how old was Roberts? How old was she?

How old was ... she was 40 something.

So she was a kind of experienced woman, she wasn't a young girl.

Oh no, no, no, she wasn't a young girl. She was very experienced.

So that's something that's changed too, because nannies now, tend to be 18 year olds.

Yes!

But she was somebody who you could really rely on.

Oh yes. Because, well, I suppose I wanted to go on with my Guiding, and I couldn't leave a baby.

Do you remember how much you paid her? How much was she paid?

She was paid two pounds a week.

And what did that cover? What did that include?

That was everything, including her uniform.

And her food, and her accommodation. Did she have a room in the house?

Well, she had part of Peter's room, because she slept in his bedroom.

When was your second child born?

The next year.

Gosh, that was quick! And that was the daughter.

And that was the daughter.

Tell me when she was born.

She was born in Portsmouth, in Dorchester, and she was born in July, '29.

What's her name?

Wendy Anne Rosemary. Rosemary was in memory of my father who died.

Explain to me why Rosemary was in memory of your father.

Well, he, he should have lived until she was born, but he died in April, April '29, of pneumonia. He wouldn't have died today of pneumonia.

How old was he?

He was, I think, 65.

So quite a young man.

Well, in those days, quite an old man.

It seems young to me now.

I know it does, you see.

But why, why the name Rosemary, I don't understand.

Oh, Rosemary's for remembrance. Rosemary is always for remembrance.

And she was born in Dorchester. In hospital?

In the annexe to the hospital, yes, and my nanny and I, and Peter, had gone to Lulworth Cove, because the doctor said, "If you don't go away, I won't be responsible for you." Because, my father, you see, died on April 29th that year, and my mother was absolutely shattered, and she clung to me. I had everything to do - for the funeral, and for her, and the doctor said, "Now, you get away. You go away. You abandon your mother." Because she was perfectly capable of looking after herself, and she had a maid.

So you had to look after yourself.

So I had to look after myself, but it was too late.

What do you mean, it was too late?

Well, it was too late, because Wendy was supposed to be born in Portsmouth, but she was born in Dorchester. She was six weeks premature, and she weight four and a quarter pounds.

That must have been very frightening though, wasn't it? Were you frightened for her life?

No, I don't think I was. She was born with lots of dark hair, and she was very small, but absolutely perfect. And she never looked back.

So she wasn't taken into hospital, she wasn't kept in hospital or anything?

Oh yes, she was. And I was kept in hospital too.

For how long, do you remember?

A week or so.

So, I mean, tell me where your husband was at this time.

Oh, he was at sea.

He was at sea. How much did you actually see of one another, because it sounds like his work took him away enormously?

His work did take him away, but there were long periods when we were together.

How did you make the adjustment, though, was that not quite difficult? Making the adjustment between being on your own, and having to sort everything out on your own, and then having your husband there with you again, and being a partner?

No.

You didn't find that a problem?

No.

Would he come home, what sort of length of time would he be at home for?

Well, let us see. We didn't really split up until I went to America, and that was in '22, and we'd been married four years then. But, of course, he only came on leave during those four years, he wasn't officially at home. But I suppose one had to bear with that, and then we were separated, and I managed to find him in Malta in 1923, and we stayed, except when the ship was out, of course, together, until 1925, when we both were in Plymouth for two years. From '25 - '27, or, '27, yes, because he was out when Peter was born.

Was he attached to a certain ship?

Yes, he was.

What was the ship?

HMS Nelson. The great Nelson. There's a plaque of the Nelson out there. And then we were together until, you see, together, either meant complete separation, or separation. I mean, we lived on leaves! He used to have a weekend, or a midweek, or a week off, or whatever. It was very difficult, but then all naval wives were like that.

How did you manage, though? I mean, did you never, did you never wish for a husband who was just there all the time?

Well, I didn't wish for what I couldn't have. I mean, I was very used to the naval routine, which took your husband away, and sent him back on leave. But then, you see, when he, when we met in Malta in '23, he was, he was, he was there for most of the time, but occasionally his ship went out.

Where would his ship go to?

Well, it went on exercise.

What were his responsibilities on the ship?

Well, he was the Chaplain, he was responsible for the spiritual welfare of the whole lot, a thousand men. And I used to help, of course, by visiting all the wives, as many as I could, who had come out. And some of them were, were so stupid, because they, they wouldn't save, in order to pay the bills at the end, you know, when you get the electricity and the gas, and the telephone, and, of course, they couldn't go until they'd paid. And we had to have a Thrift Club. I remember the Admiral's wife coming and seeing me, and asking me whether I would take on this job of, of seeing that when they arrived, they really did understand what they were, you know, you couldn't just go into it like that.

How did he go about looking after the spiritual well-being of a thousand men?

Well, I think, first of all, he would gather round him the actual Christians, the ones who had committed themselves to Jesus, and he would have a core of completely committed men, and then he would take the services on Sunday, with them. A thousand, less the men who were on duty, and less the Muslims and people like that, but it meant, and I used to go to these services, because I hadn't any children then. When I did have children, of course, I took them. And it was because Peter was such a nice little boy, that he got invited, by the Captain, to go home with his father, in HMS Revenge, he, my husband had changed ships by then. It's a long, long time ago.

How wonderful.

Yes, it was. It was wonderful, and I took Wendy, and we got there, in advance of the Revenge.

How did you get back?

Oh, I went overland.

By train?

By train. And I bought my tickets on the way, just like an ordinary traveller, because I had enough language, Italian, very sketchy, French very good, to get me through.

What was the travelling, you travelled alone, did you, with your daughter?

Yes, yes.

Was that not scary?

No, I've never been scared of travelling, you know.

You've never had any nasty incidents?

No. Oh, there's always people to help you. And I travelled with one suitcase, and a child, you see, because all my luggage would go in the Revenge.

You must be talking now, about the second time you went to Malta?

Yes.

We ought to fill that in from the beginning. When did you go to Malta for the second time?

In '30 or '31.

Why was that? Why did you go back to Malta?

Because my husband was sent. I just followed!

What did you think about that, though? What did you think about going back to Malta?

I thought it was wonderful.

You liked Malta?

Oh yes. I, I had left lots of friends, and lots of official gaps. I went back and did the same job over again.

Which was?

Island Commissioner, for Malta.

That must have been an extraordinary job, tell me about that.

Well, it was the breakdown of the hierarchy of, of the Roman Catholics, who were very much against the beginning of Guiding in Malta, and I couldn't get the Archbishop, Bishop, although he was called an Archbishop, Bishop, to grant me permission, and it took from April '23 to the end of December '23, to get his permission, and he, he realised I wasn't trying to proselytise, you see, I was a Protestant priest's wife, and was therefore very suspect. I was entirely with him in trying to make them better Christians, and he at last, gave me permission. And I had got all the framework absolutely ready, and my Guiders on the brink of being enrolled, and it was a wonderful moment in 1923, December 23rd, 1923. It's one of the dates that I remember. And I enrolled them.

That was when it started there?

Yes, that' when it started. Oh, that wasn't when Guiding started in Malta, but when Maltese Guiding started. Not when English Guiding started.

I'm a bit confused, you'll have to explain to me, when you say that when you went back in 1931, you took on your old job of Island Commissioner for Malta. When you say "Island Commissioner", do you mean of the Girl Guides? Island Commissioner for the Girl Guides, is that the title?

Yes, yes.

So how many people were you in charge of, yourself?

Well, I wouldn't say how many, I would say what area, and it was the whole of Malta, and the whole of Gozo. To start, and get everything going.

There was Guiding already?

There was English Guiding. There was the Dockyard, and St. Andrews, or St. Georges, a Brownie Pack, which left for China, almost immediately I got there!

So what you were doing is, you were getting, actually, the local people involved in Guiding.

Oh yes.

And how many Guide groups did you set up?

Oh, about 14, 16, all over, you see, in Gozo, and Malta, the first, oh dear, no, that's not correct, the First Valetta, and the First Sliema, and the First, I can't remember, but all the major, all the major places. I mean, they just loved it, and I had to learn a few words of Maltese in order to cope with, of course, all this influx.

You must have been very determined that it was going to happen.

Oh yes, I was.

Why were you so determined it should happen?

Because it seemed quite natural that girls should join, and learn how to be better citizens.

So it was, I mean, Guiding for you, is, is to do with one's role in society?

Yes.

And is it very linked in with your religious ...

Oh yes. Because there's a first promise, and the first promise is, "Duty to God, and the Queen", or your country.

How far can you transpose Guiding to other countries, though, where the culture is different, where society is different, where people have different notions of what a good citizen is?

You can transpose it very easily, because of the First Promise, which is "Duty to God", and there may be various interpretations of Duty to God, but it is a supreme being, and it is something which you can latch on to, and it does contain all kinds of moral responsibility, and, for instance, like "You shall not steal", "You shall not bear false witness", "You shan't commit adultery", and so on, and it's a tremendous responsibility when you promise that you will do your duty to God and your country, or the Queen, it just depends whether you have a sovereign or a country.

So how, how is it different in different countries? How is Guiding different in different countries?

Well, in India, for example, you can't have Brownies, because they're all brown, you see, and it wouldn't do to have Brownies, so you have Bull Bulls, and you can have the First, the First or the Second, or the Third Bull Bull, Chicago, or, no, not Chicago, what are the great cities in India?

Goa? Bombay?

Bombay, you can have the First Bull Bull, Bombay, or you can have the First Bull Bull up in the North.

Rajasthan?

No.

Delhi?

You can have the First Bull Bull, Delhi, you see, and that is the highest, that they can imagine, and it doesn't really make a lot of difference, whether it is our God that they're talking about, or their God, which is the highest that they can know.

So you think it translates very easily into different cultures?

Oh, I think it translates very easily, because we're going for the highest, and whether you're a Sikh, or a Brahmin, or a Buddhist, it's the very highest that you can achieve in your knowledge of God.

Would the syllabus be changed, be adapted, though, to different religious

Well, of course, it would be adapted, but you don't need much adaptation to know right from wrong.

Did Guiding, did you ever take Guiding into Arab countries?

I think I must have.

This is Egypt, isn't it?

Well, I went to Egypt, and I took training there, but I find I took training, and established Guiding in Egypt, but I don't remember how! But I took training in Egypt.

Let's go on to when you went back to Malta for the second time in 1931, you think it was 1931. And you went back to your job as Commissioner. Were things different then? Did you find things had changed?

No.

So you very much took up where you left off?

Yes.

How long were you in Malta for the second time?

Two years. Well, actually, of course, four years, because we were given another two years, but a different ship.

Which ship was that, do you remember?

Renown, not Revenge, Renown, and it was a different crew, and it was altogether different, but the same objective of Thrift Club, for all these careless women who came out.

Were you yourself naturally quite thrifty? I mean, do you think you're a thrifty person?

Thrifty? Oh yes. I think I'm the best saver in the whole country, because I've always saved, and my goodness, isn't it doing me good now, because I've got enough to meet the Community Charge.

Which, of course, is something no-one really expected.

No, it isn't.

So your children were brought up in Malta, really?

Yes, they were.

Was that a nice childhood for them?

Well, I think it was a wonderful childhood. Peter was three, '31, '28, yes, he was three, and Wendy was one and a half, or something like that.

And was your nanny there too?

No. She left me, because she didn't want to go abroad, and so I hadn't a nanny with me, and I had to look after the children myself.

But you were so busy doing all these other things.

I know I was. But I somehow coped, and I was terribly seasick, in fact, I had to be put out, in the end, with morphia.

This is on the way over there?

On the way over, but it didn't last more than two or three days, and my husband coped!

How did you manage things, though, with two very small children, and all your Guiding activities? Did you take the children with you, or did you put them with other children in a group somewhere? Or in a nursery? What did you do? How did you manage?

Well, I managed because I had a, a Sergeant-Major's daughter, who would come in and take over in the evening, or in the afternoon. She was always available. And she was jolly good.

So it wouldn't really have been possible otherwise, would it?

Oh no, it wouldn't have been possible.

Tell me about your house in Malta, where did you live exactly?

Oh, I lived in, I can't remember, but I lived behind the promenade, I lived in Sliema, and I had a house with a dining room as you went in, and a drawing room, a lovely big drawing room as you went on. And then, upstairs, three bedrooms and a bathroom, and a very comic hot water system, but it did work.

Why was it comic?

Oh, it was Heath Robinson, in those days.

And was your house part of the Naval Complex?

Oh no, I had to find it myself.

And did you buy it, or did you rent it?

Oh no, I rented it. And we all had to find our own way, and we all paid our own way.

And the Navy didn't supplement your living?

No.

Why not? That seems very strange.

Because there was no general marriage allowance, and when marriage allowance came in, I don't remember when it was, it was a wonderful relief.

So your husband, so you paid for the rent out of your husband's income, salary?

Oh, my husband, of course, gave me what was called an "allotment".

Do you remember how much that was?

No.

How much would the Naval Chaplain have been paid in those days? Was it quite a meagre income, or

It was very meagre, but we managed. And I am the world's best saver!

Can you give me some idea of how much it was? What a Chaplain would be paid in those days?

I don't think I can. I've absolutely no idea of how I managed.

And was it a nice lifestyle out there?

Oh, it was a wonderful lifestyle. But we had to say to ourselves, "Now, are we going to go to all these cocktail parties, which will welcome us, and put us in the swing, or are we going only to say goodbye?" And we came to the conclusion that we must cut our coat according to our cloth, and that we would go to any goodbye parties, but not to any welcoming parties, and that is how we managed, because we hadn't got the money to pay for all the drinks, and if we had, say it was a, we would go to all the welcoming parties, we would have been terribly out of pocket, and I did my own marketing, I didn't have a boy for marketing.

You mean shopping?

Oh yes. I used to go to the market every day with the two little ones.

What about cleaning the house, did you have a maid?

I think I did. I'm not sure. Nina, yes. I think I did.

When did you come back to England?

Well, we didn't come back, you see, till '35. And in '34, we had the wonderful privilege of having 400 Guiders and Scouters, from the British Isles, with the two Chiefs, in Malta, and that was a piece of organisation which was a wonderful feat of co-operation between the Guides and Scouts.

Tell me about that. Who organised it?

I did.

Tell me how you did that. Where did the idea come from?

Well, I think the idea came from the need to organise 400 and when we knew, in the Autumn, that they were coming in April, we set up a committee of Scouters and Guiders, with the Scout Commissioner and myself.

Who was the Scout Commissioner at that time, do you remember?

I don't remember, no. And we said that we would send people round the island in buses, and each bus would contain, what, 36 or something like that. But anyone who wished to send these Guiders and Scouters who were coming, round the island must (a) pass an exam in history of Malta, and (b) speak Maltese. And do you know, it was wonderful. I took the course myself and passed! And dozens of others did, until we had a core of, I don't know how many buses we sent round, but 12, or 14, and they all set off from different places, in Malta, and all moved on at the same rate, so we didn't ever have any overlapping. It was a feat of organisation.

And how long did this go on for?

All the morning. They arrived at 7.30, and I was on board at 7.30.

Sorry, they arrived where?

Oh, in the Grand Harbour.

And then, so all these 400 people did you say?

Yes.

They went off on their buses round Malta, and then what happened after that? Did they all gather together?

No. They all had their lunch wherever they stopped, then they proceeded to the Greyhound Stadium, which was the central place for everything to happen, and then we proceeded to have a rally.

What happened at the rally?

Oh, all sorts of things. Camping, country dancing, Maltese dancing, singing, you name it, and we had it! And then we had a tea. It was, I think it was just buns, maybe there was a cake, I don't remember, and then they went back to their ship, and only those invited to the dinner party, in the Palace, were, well, I mean, everyone could do what they liked, but we had, I don't remember how many ...

[End of Part 5]

Part 6 [Tape 3 Side B]

Which Palace was this?

It was the, it was San Antonio. There were three palaces. There was the big palace, the General Palace, but it wasn't that, and there was San Antonio, which was the summer palace, and there was, the name defeats me, in the North, which was the sort of overflow palace, and it was in San Antonio, that we had this wonderful dinner party.

Who was the host of the dinner party?

We were. The Guiders and the Scouts.

Of Malta?

Of Malta. And we had tables like this.

Arranged in a square?

Arranged in a square, and everyone who sat down, took up their, we had ten courses, because we all were so tired, we wanted to sit down. You had your table napkin and your drink, and you moved on two, so that you sat by the Chiefs, by the time you'd moved round.

So each course, you moved two places up?

Yes. You moved, and there were ten courses. There was pre-, pre-, pre-drinks, and then there was drinks and dips, and then there was the fish course, or there was soup, and fish, and entree, and main course. And a sorbet, and so on, and coffee at the end. And by the time you had moved round, you had sat beside everyone of importance, including Mrs. Mark Carr, who, you don't know Mrs. Mark Carr. Mrs. Mark Carr

was a great person in the Guide World, and a representative of the Pope, and the Chief Guide, and the Chief Scout.

There were 200 people at this dinner, you think?

More like 150, I think.

And they represented, they were from where?

Oh, they were from the ship. The ship that had gone round calling in every place, and we could only have that number.

You'll have to explain to me again, because I've got a bit confused, was, were the 400 people who came on the ship, were they from England, or were they from ...

Well, they were from England, but from the British Isles, from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales - Great Britain.

And they were girls and boys?

Oh, they weren't girls and boys, they were Guiders. They were all adults.

They were grown ups?

And I recognised them by the hats they wore. I learnt exactly what cockade each one would have, and so I was able to call them all by name, and it was a feat of memory.

Can you give me an example of what a cockade would be?

Well, they all wore different cockades. Some were gold, some were silver, the gold ones were all County Commissioners, the silver ones were Division Commissioners, and the blue ones were District Commissioners, and the dark blue ones were ordinary Guiders. And I learnt all those so that I would know them. I went down to the

Baracca, which was where the boats were to come in with the 400 on, and I could recognise them by the cockades they wore.

What was your cockade?

It was a gold one.

So you, you were a very senior figure in all this?

I was a very senior figure, yes, but I wasn't very old.

How old were you then?

31. Oh, '30, '34, I was 37, but you know, I've always looked young. I don't think I look sort of 93, not today. I might occasionally, of course!

Were you proud of your position?

Very proud. Oh yes, very proud to be in at the beginning of Guiding in Malta, and Egypt.

What sort of difficulties did you encounter? What sort of problems were there?

Well, the problem was, the Archbishop Bishop didn't want Guiding for Malta because he thought that I was proselytising. When I could convince him that I wasn't proselytising and that all his girls were being led to being better Christians, he then gave in. But I had to go and get the Pope's blessing.

From where?

From Rome.

You went to Rome, did you?

Yes.

When was that?

Do you know, I can't remember whether it was, it must have been, I can remember all of it, but I can't remember the date.

Don't worry, don't worry about the date. Tell me what happened, it sounds amazing.

Oh, I went in the Knight of Malta, to Syracuse, and from Syracuse by train to Rome, and in Rome, it must have been before I had children, I think it must have been in '23, or something like that, and I was taken up to the Sistine Chapel, and told to wait, and I waited with two other ladies, all in white, and I was all in white.

Had you been told that you had to wear white?

No, it was my summer uniform. We all wore white in Malta in the summer, because it was too hot to wear anything else. I think they now wear a pale blue, I mean, it doesn't matter, the colour, but not a dark blue, because that would attract the sun. And eventually, we were shown into the Sistine Chapel, where the Pope sat, in a corner, under a canopy that looked like a throne, and we all knelt and kissed his ring, and then he spoke to the other ladies, and in my very poor Italian, I realised he'd done his homework, and he moved on to me, and spoke about the Guide Movement, and how he completely accepted it, with this wonderful promise of Duty to God. He wouldn't have accepted it without, but when this was pointed out that this was the kingpin, and no matter what you believed, so long as you strived for the highest that you could, this was acceptable to him, because you were striving to reach God, and to follow his commandments, and then he said, "We will now say the Lord's Prayer in Latin". That was all right by me. I had learnt Latin at school. From the depths of my memory I dragged up Latin, in the Lord's Prayer. And, of course, he led it, so one only had to follow it really, but it was wonderful to feel that you could communicate with a man as high up as the Pope.

Do you remember which Pope it was? Who was the Pope then?

It was either Pope Louis XII, or Pope Paul, Pope Louis XII, I think. I could look it up in the library.

And did you know, when you set off from Malta, that you were going to get his blessing?

Oh yes, oh yes. It was all, all arranged.

So you didn't actually have to say anything, you didn't have to put your case or anything?

Oh no, no. I didn't have to.

That would have been very alarming!

Oh yes, that would have been very alarming!

Who were the other two women in white? I don't understand who the other two women were?

Well, I think they were nurses, but they were, and they were representing great hospitals.

So, we've got to about 1935, and at that point, you and your husband and your children came back to England. But before we just go on to what happened then, what did your husband think of all your Guiding activities?

Well, he was very glad to have me suitably employed, because I hadn't got any children by then, while he was out.

But what about when you went back to Malta for those four years in the thirties, and you were very very taken up with Guiding then as well?

Well, and then I had enough help to pursue my Guiding, and my tennis, and my swimming!

What other things did you do?

Well, I swam, and they sent someone out to see me swimming, and they elected me to swim in the Berlin Olympics, in '36, but alas, I couldn't accept, because they would have paid my fare from Malta, but by that time, I would, of course, have been in England, but they would have paid my fare, but not the childrens' fare. And I would have had to have had an English nanny, I couldn't accept.

So you didn't want to go without your children?

Well, I couldn't go without my children. I'd no one to leave them with. My father had died, my mother was very busy, and I wouldn't have left them in London.

Were you elected to swim for Malta?

I was elected to swim for Great Britain.

For Great Britain! How amazing. So you were a very keen swimmer, obviously.

Very keen swimmer, and I still am.

Is that long distance, or sprinting?

Oh, sprinting.

What, crawl, or, what was your stroke?

Well, my stroke for which I was selected, was breast stroke, but I'm just as good at crawl, only I wasn't in the top class of swiftness in the crawl, but I was selected to swim for the breast stroke, but I couldn't accept.

Because of your children?

Because of my children.

There wasn't any question of getting somebody else to look after them for that period of time?

Well, it didn't seem to me to be important, I thought I would have other chances.

What about your tennis? Was that an important hobby as well?

Well, I won the, the singles, the mixed, the ladies doubles, that's all, isn't it, the singles, the mixed, and the ladies doubles, in Malta, nineteen hundred, and, oh dear ... I didn't win the singles, I was runner up in the singles. Runner up in the singles, and I won the mixed, and I won the ladies doubles.

In Malta, that was?

In Malta.

So you were a very good tennis player too?

Yes. Yes.

And when you came back to England in 1935, what did you do then? What was your situation then? Where were you living?

Oh, I was living in Portsmouth, and I took on the Division, and organised a great County Rally for 37.

1937?

1937. And that, that took all my time, but I did have, of course, a daily, a daily help with the children, and they were at school part of the time, so all I needed was a part-time nanny.

How did you balance your commitments to your children, and your commitments to your Scouting, your Guiding? Did the children come first in your mind, or did they just have to be kind of weighed up together?

Well, I think I just took it in my stride. I would ... it would depend, of course, what was on. I could always take the children with me.

Has your experience of trying to balance the two things, you know, be very active in the outside world, as well as have your children, has that given you any particular feelings about child care provision, and working mothers? I mean, what do you feel about these issues, which are very much discussed at the moment, aren't they, that whether women should go out to work, and whether the children should be sent to childminders, or go with them, or ...

Well, I think I could always rely on the fact that I could get the required help.

And do you think that's something that all women ought to have available to them?

Yes. And, of course, there were not the people going out to work, and I can remember an elderly aunt, who would always come, and a red-haired girl who would wear pink!

Who came to look after the children?

And her name was Nellie, and I still keep in touch with her.

Does she still wear pink?

Oh, I don't know!

So were you in Portsmouth for the rest of the thirties?

Well, yes, for three years, '35-'38.

And then what happened?

Then we were told that War was imminent, and if we could move from the front line, we were to go into the country, and so we took an old house in Alvescot.

In where, sorry?

Alvescot.

How do you spell that?

A L V E S C O T.

Where is that?

Gloucestershire.

So you moved there in '38, did you?

Yes. And I promptly won the East Gloucestershire tennis!

What was your house like there?

It was a lovely house. It was an old, old house and I had lots of room, so that in '39, I took on five evacuated children, who were the poorest of the poor.

Do you remember their names?

Mmm. Of course I do. George, Doris, Philip, Peggy, and Betty.

Can you tell me a little bit about them? How old were they, for instance?

They were from five to 12.

Were they brothers and sisters?

Oh yes. They arrived with one patched pillowcase between them, with a comb, a pair of shoes, and a pair of shorts, in holes. And that's all they had.

Where were they from?

London. From Hoy Street, West Ham. And they were with me through the War, and after the War.

When you say after the War, how long did they stay for?

Well, '52.

So they stayed a long time.

Yes, they did.

Why did they stay so much longer?

Well, they hadn't anywhere to go.

They were orphans, were they?

Well, no, they weren't. But they had a very impossible father.

Why?

I wouldn't have trusted those girls to that father. They would have been abused.

But were you aware of that, in that way, then?

No.

Because sexual abuse is something we think of as a kind of relatively modern phenomenon, and something which has recently, you know, been accepted, but you actually felt that then, did you?

I **knew** that they wouldn't be safe, and that I must wait until they got, they were the last of 17, you know.

17 children?

Yes. So, you can imagine what kind of a father they'd got. What was I going to say?

About them waiting until the last possible moment.

Ah yes, until some of the others had grown up enough to get married, and have a home to offer them.

So what were these children like? How did they fit into your home?

They didn't! But three weeks later, you would not have known those kids. They had learned that you ate what was put in front of you, whether you liked it or not, because that was all there was. You know, it wasn't forced upon them, you could leave it, but you went hungry if you left it. And they had running heads, except George.

They had what, sorry?

They had running heads.

Running heads? Yes. Oh right, I've never heard that expression, running heads.

Nits in the heads. And I had to open a clinic and wash their heads in carbolic every day, to get rid of these wretched nits, and I organised the fact that they could all wear tam o'shanters, to cover up the bandages.

I don't understand.

No, I'm sure you don't. But, if you got nits in the heads, you'd got, somehow or other, to cover all the nits with bandages, and you must cover that with something which doesn't show them off.

Why?

Because they would be laughed at with all the other kids in the country. You don't have nits in the country! And it was a horrible shock, but it was one of those things that had to be coped with.

Was this carbolic acid painful?

No. Oh no, it wasn't painful at all, but it was disfiguring.

Why?

Because it was bandages.

Right. So you bandaged up their heads, basically.

Yes.

And then they wore tam o'shanters

On top of that.

Did you like these children?

Well, it took me a whole year to grow from liking to loving them. And, surprisingly, at the end of a year, I found I loved them, as if they were my own. And I'm still in touch with them.

How did they feel about suddenly being in this country house?

Oh, they loved it. They liked the discipline of it, and it wasn't harsh in any way at all, and they liked the good food, you see, many of them, had been given a penny to buy eel pie. In those days you could buy a pennorth of eel pie, and that would be all they would have in the day. It was terrible then.

So when they came to you, they were having, perhaps, three meals a day, for the first time?

Yes, they would, indeed. Four meals a day, in fact, because they all came home from school absolutely starving, and I had to provide tea and buns, or tea and bread and butter, or tea and something. And it took me from 6 o'clock to 9 o'clock, to get them all to bed, because I had two of my own by that time, you see, 10 and 11.

So you were suddenly bringing up seven children.

Yes. Eight.

Did you have any help? Sorry, eight? Why eight? There were five of them, two of your own.

Yes. Why did we have eight? Oh, I had, I had another one from the evacuation, we had another one, but I know I had eight children, and I have not mentioned Geraldine. She was in the middle.

Geraldine, right.

Geraldine. [laughs] I know I had eight. And what did you ask me?

I asked you whether you had any help with these children, or whether you were doing this single-handed.

Well, when War broke out, I had a gardener, and he left the next day, to join up. I had a cook, and she left in two days, to join up, and I was left with eight, eight, nine, ten, because by that time, I'd got my mother, I think. She was a great help, and she used to darn all the socks, but she wasn't much help otherwise, because she was quite elderly by that time, you know, and elderly, of course, meant 70 in those days! It doesn't mean that now! And all I had was help from the village. I had a daily help, who had been evacuated from Jersey, and whose husband turned up, and asked where his wife was, and I didn't know his name, or his wife's name, but I knew we had put someone in an empty cottage, and I risked putting them together, and they were husband and wife! It was one of those things.

Did you have any financial support, extra help, for having all these children.

Oh yes, I had so much, I had 10/6d. for Betty and Peggy, and I think a little more, per week, not per day, per week, for the others, and I wasn't in financial straits, because we had a gorgeous garden, and the garden provided everything.

But you must have been run off your feet!

I was!

So what did you do about your Guiding during the War?

I kept my Guiding on. I was Division Commissioner, so that I wasn't due for the day-to-day running, and I visited in the afternoon, or evening, and always arranged to have somebody in. But I was the only person in that area, who had a Red Cross Certificate, and I gained the Red Cross Award of the medal of Merit, plus a bar, in the War.

Why?

Because I had dealt with so many emergencies.

Can you tell me about some of those emergencies?

Yes. The first emergency that I remember was a call from the Post Office, to say that they had had a call to say that there was a plane down, mind you, we were within three, we were surrounded by airfields, and would I come at once, as there was no doctor available. And I came at once, I picked up my bag, which was always in readiness, and always had sterile dressings and things like that, and dashed to the Post Office, and there I found a pilot, I mean, covered in blood, who had to be cleaned up, and put in an ambulance. And another one, oh yes, I think I received this call, because I was known to be on call, from a woman who couldn't urinate, and was absolutely dying from pressure, and would I find the nurse to come and relieve her. Well, I phoned around, because I knew the nurse would be on her, and I found her, with her bicycle, in a hedge, and she was in the cottage, but I got her in time.

Did you have a car?

Yes, I did, and I had a petrol allowance.

What was the petrol allowance? Do you remember what that was? What kind of car did you have?

An A40. I remember!

And, could you just give me an idea of what a typical day would be like during those War years?

Well, a typical day would be 7 o'clock rise, and be ready with breakfast at 8 o'clock.

What did you have for breakfast?

I think we only had toast and bread and butter, with jam on the second slice, butter on the first slice. Milk, and tea. But it was a simple breakfast. And then the children would go off to school, except, of course, the 10-month old. Oh this is where, of course, the extra came in. I was suddenly asked to take over a complete family - Michael, Ann and Susan. Michael, Ann and Susan.

When was that?

Oh this would be in the first year of the War.

So did you still have George, Doris, Philip, Peggy and Betty then?

Oh yes, and I had three more.

Right. And where were they from?

From London. But the mother was down with them. She had chicken pox, and chicken pox turned into some kind of pneumonia, and I was asked to have the kids. And I had plenty of room for another three. This is why I was so confused when it was, of course, it was three, not one.

So you had ten children altogether, plus your own two?

Yes.

So you were actually running a kind of children's' home.

Well, I had five children, plus my two, plus, I had ten children, not 12.

Were Michael, Ann and Susan also from a very poor family?

No. They were from a policeman's family.

How did all these children muddle along together? It must have been quite difficult for them?

Well, I suppose the real miracle was that my son, who, with his Oxford accent, and George, with his Cockney accent, hit it off. They were 11 and 12, and they didn't fight, and they were very responsible. And my son was at boarding school, of course.

Where was he?

He was at St. Edwards in Oxford. And I used to take him in on Red Cross petrol! With something to buy at the other end, you see. And I used to take my daughter to Cirencester.

Was she also at boarding school?

She was at boarding school, too. But boarding school, of course, in those days, was pretty elastic, and Wendy used to come home for the weekends, and Peter, for every other weekend. I think the boarding schools were jolly glad not to feed them.

What did your children, though, make of the fact that when they came home, suddenly there were all these other children there?

Well, I think they had been brought up to realise that everyone was a child of God, and that they were all equal. You asked me what the routine was, and after breakfast, of course, they all went off, except the little ones, and after a while, when the mother

got rid of her bronchitis, or whatever it was, bronchial pneumonia, that's what it was she had got, I had her, and I gave her the, the back bedroom, which was enormous, two other bedrooms on the same floor, and the downstairs kitchen, staff dining room, so that I had three taken off my hands. But it wasn't straight away, it was a great struggle, that first year, because any, any help I had was minimal, and I can't think what happened to the house, but it went on!

What kept you going?

Well, I suppose my Christian faith, that it would all work out, and we had to, of course, get blackout up, and that's how we coped with the War.

And as you rightly reminded me, I asked you what your routine was for the day. So after the children went to school, then what happened?

Well, I had, of course, one child, two children, from my London, and one, I had two children to look after, and so I would take the children out in the afternoon, and they could run wild in the gorgeous garden, and, of course, the road was absolutely forbidden, but it was such a long drive, that I didn't think they'd ever get out, and I would prepare the evening meal, and it was a preparation, you know, for 10.

The children walked to and from school?

The children walked to school until they became senior, and then they would walk up to the school, to get the bus to Pilkins.

And then, what was the house called? Did the house have a name or an address?

Yes, it was called The Rectory. The Rectory.

And where was your husband living then?

My husband was in the War.

Was he away for the whole of the War?

Except on leave. He would come home, and he would be astonished at the, at the routine that was carried out, you know, and it was a very happy routine. They all say it was the happiest time of their lives.

In a way, you had to be disciplined, otherwise it would have been impossible, with all...

It would have been absolutely impossible. And when I gave over the, after about a year, to Mrs. Shelley, who I have heard from the other day, I think it's under there, she sent me a cutting about the boys joining the girls in the Scout Movement. I've always kept in touch with her because she lived with me until '52, and she undertook her own children, but even so, that left me with seven people to organise.

It didn't leave you a lot of time for yourself, did it?

Oh no. It didn't leave me any time for myself. But I was very happy to make that my contribution.

Do you remember how you felt when the War ended? Was that an event for you?

Was that '49? I suppose I felt relieved, but that didn't mean to say that I was relieved of my, of the work.

So it didn't actually change things very much for you?

No, it didn't. I did keep one room, my husband's study, which I could bolt to if I felt ... but I never felt completely overwhelmed, because the kids, you know, were awfully nice. They were like ordinary children, and my two were very disciplined anyway, and they were 10 and 11, or something like that.

They carried on boarding throughout the War, did they?

Yes, they did.

Do you think it changed you, suddenly having all these people, having the responsibility for all these people?

No, it didn't, because I was used to responsibility. I'd had responsibility from the time I was 19, and I took on the job of physical training expert at the Derby College of Education.

[End of Part 6]

Part 7 [Tape 4 Side A]

You were just saying that you'd always had a lot of responsibility, so to have responsibility for all these children, didn't actually have a terribly great impact on you.

No, it didn't.

How did life change after the War?

We went to Bognor, where my husband now retired.

This was in 19 ...?

'52. Where the doctor said it would be nice and flat, and warm.

Why did you need to go somewhere nice and flat, and warm?

Because he had a heart, a dicky heart, and he died of a dicky heart. It was flat, but it wasn't warm! We had a, a flat, in Victoria Street, or Victoria Road, I think it was.

How old was your husband then?

Well, he must have been 62.

62?

62. And you, you have to retire, I think he'd been retired a couple of years.

And how old were you?

I was 52.

So you were 10 years younger than him?

I was, he was 60, he was 65, and I was 55, because I'm three years older than the year.

So all the children had gone back then?

All the children had gone back, and my very good friend, Peggy, Shirley, had collected her husband, and he had, he had been out to Germany, and he had got used to having a servant, he got used to having the German language, and he had become the trainer of all the Air Cadets in the country. He had become the Chief Trainer, and they were able to move, in '52 from, from where we were, we were not then in Alvescot, we were already in Whitchurch.

When did you move to Whitchurch?

In '49.

Taking the children with you?

Yes, and taking the family with me, to another big house, where we had 28 rooms, or something like that, and plenty of room for them to have a place of their own, and for us to have a place. Even when I had divided the house, we still had seven bedrooms.

Did your husband leave the Navy immediately after the War ended?

Yes, I think so.

So when you went to Whitchurch, he was with you then?

Yes, he was with us then. Yes, I'm sure he did that.

And had he retired for health reasons?

Yes, he did. Well, he should have retired, of course, I think he did retire, for our last two years at Whitchurch. He retired in '49, I think.

That must have been very strange, though, wasn't it? Suddenly to have him there all the time.

Oh yes, he was under my feet! That I do remember. But, on the other hand, he had plenty to do with two Parishes, you see.

And so then you moved to Bognor, and it was when you went to Bognor that you shed all these other people?

Yes.

Was that very sad?

No, because I had collected him, and he was my main responsibility, but I also, of course, collected a job from Headquarters.

What was that?

That was to do a project for young wives.

Young wives?

Young Leaders, sorry, Young Leaders.

Explain to me more what that was.

We had got a senior branch called Rangers, but there were some Rangers who were obviously leaders, and it was felt that we should get these leaders out, and have an on-growing group of people who would become Guiders, and the Guide and the Guider,

the difference between a child and an adult, and I was given the responsibility of organising this group, and arranging a syllabus for them to follow.

Did this also involve selecting the Rangers that were going to be part of the group?

Yes.

Well, I asked, of course, the Guiders of these Rangers, to select, and not all of them were suitable.

How old were the Rangers then?

Oh, 16.

When you say this was a job, was this something that you were paid for?

Oh no, I was never paid for any Guiding. All completely voluntary.

And where did that take place? Where was that based?

Well, it was based in Bognor, but I also was Chairman of all the Young Wives in the Mothers' Union, by that time.

What did that involve doing?

Well, that involved speaking and gathering up evening groups of young wives, who couldn't meet in an afternoon. I mean, every Mothers' Union, practically speaking, met in the afternoon, but there were thousands of young wives, and I started 400 groups, all over the country, and by that time, we hadn't got any children, you know, who were at home. They'd all moved on.

So your life really had changed quite dramatically, because you'd gone from living in a very large house, with 10 children and no husband, to living in a small flat, with no children and a husband!

Yes. Three bedrooms, and a drawing room, and a dining room, and a kitchen, it wasn't all that small. So it wasn't a small flat, but a flat, nevertheless, rather than a huge, rambling house. I always took on extra responsibilities as a matter of course.

Why was that? Was that because you liked to be busy, or what? Why was that?

Because I felt called to, to, I realised there wasn't anyone at the end of the War, to take up this responsibility of organising young wives around the country.

Why did you feel they needed organising?

Because I felt sure that the Mothers' Union would fade and die, because it was getting so elderly. When I took over in Bognor, my, my group of Mothers' Union, was all over 60. And something had got to be done.

Why was it so important to you that it survived?

Because I felt it was a very good thing. It had marriage, education, training of mothers and so on, as it's focus.

What kind of things did it offer then?

It offered prayers for children, Sunday routine for children, training of the mothers for children, the actual, it has five responsibilities. The actual, spiritual training of the mothers, their own prayers, and their own routine.

Is the Mothers' Union, a specifically Christian organisation?

Yes, it is. But it does extend to people from the Methodist Church, and any other church, that subscribes to the principles.

And how young do you have to be to be a young mother, a young wife?

So long as you're married, you can be a young wife. You can be a young wife at 19.

And how old?

Oh well, you can be 93 like me!

So Young Wives, doesn't actually mean young, in that sense, literally.

Well, young, literally means that you must have children at school.

And was it something, when you say you set up 400 groups, was this something you did from Bognor?

Yes.

Across the country?

Yes.

Reaching as far away as where?

Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Britain.

How did you go about doing that?

By train, or by car.

So what would you do? Explain to me what you'd do.

Well, you would write ahead to the Mothers' Union, and explain to them what this group meant, and ask them whether they could gather up a group of young wives, or whether they could invite me to address their elderly Mothers' Union, I didn't talk to

them about being elderly, and I would have more than I could manage. And still do. I still go to speak to Young Wives, but the group movement is well-established and the Young Wives meet in the evening, because you don't have to go off and meet them from school, not everyone, of course, has children, but they subscribe to the idea that you can't be more than 35 or 40 in a Young Wives group.

The position of a wife has changed very much, though, hasn't it, since the fifties.

Oh yes.

What sort of changes have you seen?

I've seen, of course, practically all the married ones go out to work. What they do in the holidays, I don't know, now, but they made arrangements either for an aunt, or a grandma, grandmas are very useful! But I'm a great-grandmother.

How many great-grandchildren have you got?

Six.

Six great-grandchildren?

And the eldest one is 18, so if he gets married in the next four years, I guess I'm going to be a great, great-grandmother.

When you talk to these Young Wives now, you must be very aware of how things have changed for them, I mean, how position for women who are married now, is very different from the situation in the fifties, and I wonder in what ways you think things have changed, apart from working, whether, do you think the women's roles are any different within marriage?

No.

What do you see women's role in marriage as being?

To run the house, look after the husband, generally, of course, look after the children, and if you, if you're at work, to provide suitable arrangements for the children, or have them provided for you. Very often, of course, the stores will run a crèche, and that is wonderful.

How important do you think it is for women to be able to work?

It's very important. It gets them out of the house, otherwise you can stick in the house and not speak to anyone all day.

And do you think that the husband's role has changed?

Oh yes, it has! My husband didn't know how to boil an egg! Though he was a very kind and very supportive husband, but he looked upon me as a provider of all meals. Occasionally he would have a meal left in the fridge, but not very often. And I had to fit my programme to his.

So many of the things that you achieved in your early marriage, that you personally achieved, were done because of his work, because his work took him away such a lot.

Yes.

Do you think you would have done those things if he'd had a different kind of job, the kind of job where he'd been around all day, and he'd expected meals three times a day, or twice a day, or, I mean, do you think you would still have been involved in Guides in the same way?

I think I would have been, but in a different way. I could never have gone about as much as I did.

For someone who strikes me as a very independent person, very independently minded, and very self-sufficient, did you never find it a burden to have to fit in with somebody else's pattern, and to provide for someone else's needs in this way?

No, never.

So, what do you feel about, about feminism, for instance? Does that have any relevance to you?

No it doesn't. It doesn't really, because I still feel the husband is the head of the house, and when you've lost your husband, of course, that makes a difference.

When did your husband die?

In 1960, thirty years ago.

So quite soon after he retired?

Yes.

That must have been very sad.

Yes. He died of a heart attack. But I was there. I was actually privileged to be there. He was in bed, he'd been in bed for a day, not very well, and we were moving in ten days.

To where?

To Cheltenham, because we felt that his retirement and my retirement had to be total, and I had taken a flat in Cheltenham, with a lovely big sitting room, and an escape to the garden, but he never made it. But I had to make it, because people were coming into our house. We'd sold our flat.

You were retiring from what?

Well, from, from the project, and not necessarily from Young Wives groups, because that was an on-going ...

You weren't retiring from your involvement with Guiding though, were you?

Well, by that time, they had, what had they done with me? Oh, I think they'd made me a, an Associate Member of the Girl Guides and the Girl Scouts.

And what did that mean?

That means that I can wear uniform, whereas after 65, in England, you're supposed to be so elderly that you can't wear uniform, but it's an awful nuisance of you're speaking.

I think perhaps you ought to explain to me the difference between Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

There is no difference. Absolutely none. It is just the name.

Girl Guides is the name in this country.

Yes.

Girl Scouts is what they're known as internationally?

No. Because there are Girl Guides in Norway, and Girl Guides in France, but they're eclairseuses in France, they're Girl Guides in Australia, and it's very patchy this Girl Guide/Girl Scout business, and at one point, the Chief Scout asked me on my next visit to America, would I see that the Executive changed the name to Girl Guides. Well, I wasn't born yesterday, and I thought, "I'm jolly well going to have a good look at those." And I discovered that a Guide in America, meant a museum guide, and

mostly half-cast at that, that you could be a Girl Scout, and you could be a good Girl Scout. I didn't do anything. I don't think they would have altered, but it would have created a dreadful furore if the official visitor from the Chief Scout changed the name. I don't think they would have acceded to my request, but it would have ruined the Movement there, because there are three million out there, who are keen to be good Girl Scouts. It's a much sharper name than Girl Guide, isn't it. And I think that the Girl Guides have forgotten their origins, which were of a multi-, of which were a regiment in India, who were frightfully good at looking after other people, and of looking after themselves, so that the word "Guide", really meant a guide, to service to others, and didn't mean what it meant in America. And I had to stand up in front of the Chief Scout and say all this.

When was this?

This was in '23 or '24, '23 I think.

When you went out to America?

Yes, but I went in '22, and came back in '23, and went out to Malta in '23, and in between that, I had to have interviews with this Chief Scout.

You're going to America again, though, very soon, aren't you?

Oh yes. Oh yes, I've always kept up my role in America, and now they look upon me as American!

When are you going? You're going in July, aren't you? What's that for. You're going to America in July?

Yes.

For what?

To raise money for our new hostel in London.

And is there an event, isn't there some conference?

Well, there was to have been the opening of our new hostel on April 27th, but at last it's been postponed because of a conflict on the site.

So when will it be opened?

Probably not till September.

But I think perhaps I've got it wrong. I thought you were going to California and Singapore, for the World Conference of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

Yes. I'm going for a World Conference in Singapore, then I'm flying out to my god-daughter, who is a Girl Scout, and to have a holiday with her, but she always arranges for me to speak at meetings, in order to raise the money.

But the Conference is in Singapore?

The Conference is in Singapore.

In July, is that?

In June, June 11th, for 11 nights.

And will you be speaking at that?

Well, I expect so. And I shall be dropping a bomb!

Why? What will you be saying?

Well, I feel that the fact that the boys have decided to open their doors to the girls, that it would be far better if we opened our doors to the boys, and I can then see how we might, over the next ten years, come together as one Movement. Take away the girls from Girl Guides, take away the boys from Boy Scouts, in fact, that has been done, practically speaking, already. And what have you got left? You've got Scouts, on both sides. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have one Movement for boys and for girls.

How will that be received?

Well, I think where it's necessary, and where you've got a lot of giddy Girl Guides, you know, really on the spot Girl Guides, who long to do all the adventurous things that the boys do, and which we do too, that you, you would have a Movement which would only be where it was really needed, and where the parents had agreed.

What differences are there between the Boy Scouts and the girls?

Well, there is very little difference, that's the whole point. The same promise, the same law, slightly differently worded, but, I mean, it's the same thing.

And do they do the same activities?

Yes, they do.

So there's nothing that the boys do that the girls don't?

No. Nothing at all.

Is that important, I mean, that has always been important to you, hasn't it.

Yes.

Right from the very beginning.

Right from the very beginning, yes.

When you started out, and thought, "Why can't we do this?" Is that because, I mean, is that tied in with a notion of equality, or not, in your mind?

No, it isn't.

Where does it come from?

It comes from my feeling that there is a need, there is a deep-seated need for the sexes to work together.

How?

By coming together.

But do you believe there are things that boys, and then men, can do which women can't? And that women and girls can do, that men can't?

Yes. I do.

What sorts of things?

Well, it will all depend on the arrangement between the girls and the boys, if you got capable girls, and incapable boys, or the reverse, you will have girls taking the responsible positions, and the boys not. But, on the other hand, if you've got incapable girls, and capable boys, you'll have the boys taking the lead, but mostly, I would have thought that it would be balanced.

So you think that as children, girls and boys are pretty similar, really?

Yes.

And they should be able to do the same things?

Yes.

And have access to the same things?

Yes.

So what would you, I mean, I'm interested, really, in how this, I mean, you say you wouldn't use the word "equality", but opportunity for girls and boys alike, in Scouts or Guides, how that then works in adult life, whether women should be able to do the same things as men, and men should be able to do the same things as women in their adult life? Do you think that should be so?

I don't think it is so.

No. Do you think it should be so?

I think it would be a great deal better if it was so.

So, I mean, would I be right in saying that the principle that has guided you throughout your life, is this notion of service to others?

Through my Christian faith, yes. There's always the background of my Christian faith.

And is that something which you think everybody ought to have? Do you feel that that's not something which women particularly have,

No, no.

To have this notion of service.

You're asking me two different things, at the moment.

Tell me what I'm asking you.

You're asking me whether everyone should have this Christian notion. I don't think it's possible for everyone, at the present time, because there are so many million Buddhists and Muslims, but I think, in the Western world, it's very necessary that we have some ideal to live up to.

You said earlier, though, that within the Girl Guides, it can be adapted to suit other religions, or to encompass other religions, so to that extent, the notion of service can be brought to people in different cultures.

Oh yes. Yes, indeed.

What was the other question I was asking you? You said there were two different questions. I've got lost in my own questioning! When you came to Cheltenham, we will stop very soon, what would you like to do? When you came to Cheltenham, what sort of life did you have here?

Well, within six days I was called upon and asked to be the County Commissioner! My fame had gone ahead of me!

So that meant you weren't lonely here.

No, I was never lonely, and I had, of course, the Gilbert-Smiths. The Gilbert-Smiths are from Surrey, always on my track, for the Young Wives, so my, my two prongs ...

Who are the Gilbert-Smiths?

The Gilberts, by then she was a Vice-President of the Mothers' Union. She's not now, because she's served her time. And I served my time as Chairman.

It must have been quite difficult, though, to come to Cheltenham, to live in a new place, a new home, new church, Church of England, so soon after your husband had died.

It was, but I had to face it. And I've always known that having to face things, you face them by stepping into them, and by not retreating.

Do you have regrets that so much of your married life was spent apart from your husband? That you weren't able to spend more time together?

No. I think we were both satisfied. He with his work amongst men, which was excellent, and me with my work amongst young women.

What about your children, tell me what your children have done.

Oh, my children, Peter, what did he do first?

Did he go to university?

No, he didn't. He joined up. He was in the last batch, and he went on to becoming a Major in the Royal Engineers, was it the Royal Engineers? No, it doesn't sound right. Royal Artillery, Royal Artillery.

And then what did he do after the War? What does he do now? What is his work?

His work now is, he's on the Executive of the Metropolitan Association for the Blind. And he has 96 blind people to look after, quite apart from being on the Executive, and he has a flat in London, and he's not married, but he's a very good son. He was down here this last weekend, and he's very good in looking after me.

And what about Wendy?

Wendy got married, and had three children, and then her husband was made manager of a factory, run by Nestles, just outside Belfast, and my daughter wouldn't go. She said she wasn't going to go to Belfast, where she'd have her legs blown off, or her arms blown off, or she'd be killed.

So what happened?

She got divorced. Which was very sad. And has had to earn her living ever since.

What does she do?

She works for the hospital, on computers. She's very high up in computers.

That must have been quite difficult, though, wasn't it? For you to accept.

Oh yes, it was. Well, she came to me for a time, when I was in Cheltenham, she was, she came with her youngest one.

What did you advise her to do? Did she not ask your advice?

She didn't ask my advice. She decided that she couldn't go, and though he, though he came over every, she took a flat in Cheltenham, and though he came over every weekend, or every other weekend, in the end, you know, it didn't work. They grew apart.

In a way, you see, it surprises me, that, I don't have very much personal understanding of Service life, because my family weren't in the Services, and it seems to me that it must put a lot of strain on a relationship if your husband is always working away, and he comes back, and he goes away again, in the same way that it did in your daughter's marriage. Is it quite difficult to keep things going between two people, when you spend so much time apart? What do you think sustained your own marriage?

Well, we had a sustained relationship, because we both belonged to the Anglican Communion, and we were very committed to it, and we always felt that we were doing the work that Christ would have called us to, whereas my daughter didn't have the same commitment, though she always took her children to church on Sundays, but this couldn't have come at a worse time, this appointment, because they, they lived together perfectly happily when he was assistant manager at, oh, a place beginning with C, right in the middle, anyway, they had a house in, I can't remember where.

And, but you have great-grandchildren?

Oh yes, I have great-grandchildren.

So some of her, your daughter's children have children?

Well, they do. And my son hasn't any children, you see.

What are your grandchildren called, first of all?

My grandchildren are called Charles, David and Caroline.

And which of them have the children? Or do they all have children.

David, Charles hasn't, he's not married. David has one son, and Caroline has five children.

I just wanted to ask you whether, if you look back over your whole life, whether there are any things you're especially proud of? Any moments, or any achievements?

The first, I think, is my visit to the Pope. My second is my silver fish from the Guide Movement, which is the highest award they can give me.

When were you awarded that?

In 1964. Was it '64? Yes, I think it was, when I'd been here four years. And I'm trying to think of a family occasion. Anyway, those two.

Are there any moments, or decisions that you regret? Are there any things you regret?

I don't think so. I think there are things which are doubtful, but I don't think there are any things which I would call disasters, but maybe I've forgotten.

What do you think about the future? What do you see happening in the future? Are there any things you want to do particularly?

Well, I think I've come to the end of my useful life. We've just finished, oh, that's, this is all, the getting out to the whole Parish of 3000, Easter Cards, and I've organised that! I don't find that quite as easy as I used to, because my memory isn't as good, but, what did you ask me?

Whether you have any particular aspirations for the future. Do you have any things you particularly want to do in the coming years?

Oh yes, I particularly want to go to Singapore and California! I don't think I look too far ahead, because I've realised that I must go out within the next seven years. I hate to see Hong Kong go. I think it's awful. We should have accepted it in perpetuity and not otherwise, but maybe the pressures are too big. But it's frightful to have to hand it over to, and if there's any way I can prevent that, I will.

[End of Part 7]

[End of Interview]