IMPORTANT

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it.

Should you find any errors please inform the Oral History curators (oralhistory@bl.uk)

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this recording, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

BRITISH LIBRARY SOUND ARCHIVE INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET	***NATIONAL LIFE STORIES*** **Title Page**
Ref. No.: C1155/07	**Wav files Refs.:** C1155-07-0001.WAV to C1155-07-0005.WAV

Collection title: Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare

Interviewee's surname: Stacey **Title:** Reverend

Interviewee's forenames: Nicolas **Sex:** Male

Occupation: Clergyman, social worker **Date of birth:** 27.11.1927

Mother's occupation: **Father's occupation:** Banker

Date(s) of recording and tracks (from – to): 17.07.06 (track 1-2); 04.08.06 (track 3); 17.08.06 (track 4-5)

Location of interview: Interviewee's home, Faversham

Name of interviewer: Louise Brodie

Type of recorder: Marantz PMD660

Total no. of tracks: 5 **Reading Format:** Wav 16bit 48kHz

Mono or stereo: Stereo

Burned to DVD: **Duration:** 7 hours 12 minutes

Additional material: Documentation: summary on disc; 'The Reverend Nicolas Stacey's address to mark the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood' (booklet 2004)

Copyright/Clearance: Open interview. This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this recording, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

[Track 1]

This is the seventeenth of July 2006, Louise Brodie talking to the Reverend Nicolas Stacey. Could you tell me when and where you were born please?

I was born in, on November the twenty-seventh 1927 in Elizabeth Street, which is just off Eaton Square, and I am a twin and I should have been born first but my twin sister, who sadly died - wonderful person – a few months ago, pushed me aside and I came out feet first, which is not where you do want to come out, but I think the gynaecologist we had – I was born actually in the house – was the same gynaecologist the Queen had. So although I think I was nearly given up as dead, I survived and here I am today.

Good, thank you for that. What do you remember about your childhood? Did you live in Elizabeth Street?

Well very terribly little. We were brought up by nannies and a nurserymaid really, as people sort of in, my parents who were – as I said in my autobiography – they were part of that restless gay set, in the old-fashioned word of the gay, in the twenties and thirties. And my father was in the City and did very well. He was at Eton, then was at Christ Church Oxford, a sort of typical sort of upper middle class upbringing and we were really brought up by nannies, but then he lost a great deal of his money in the Crash, in the Wall Street Crash – was that 1929? In fact he was on a boat going to America and of course then they didn't, he wasn't able to sort of sell, or perhaps he wouldn't have been [laughing] able to even if he'd been in England, but he arrived in America really a comparatively poor man. And by the time I sort of knew what was going on, he'd sort of recovered his financial position, to some extent. And we lived in a house, I remember, called Bletchingly Manor until the Crash and then we moved to London, to north of the park, in a sort of slightly less fashionable part of the park, and I went to a pre-prep school which was sort of, again, people one's own sort of social background. One of them was the son of the British Canadian High Commissioner in London, Vanier, who went on to be the first Canadian Governor-General, and his son is Jean Vanier who amazingly was at Dartmouth with me and then became I think one of the most distinguished people of my generation, by founding L'Arche and…

Sorry, what is L'Arche?

Oh L'Arche is, he was the man who lived with mentally handicapped people and founded all sorts of homes for mentally – and he discovered that they were capable of doing much more than people thought and he set up these homes which would have volunteers, people sort of in their gap year coming and living with them. He's a saint and enormously significant. He's in *Rebels and Reformers*, the book we were talking about, and I think in this series you might well want to do – he's never been, he's a Roman Catholic, obviously, has never been a priest, now goes round I think looking after his L'Arche places all over the world, and taking retreats and…

How do you spell L'Arche?

L apostrophe A-R-C-H-E.

Oh right.

Anyhow, I remember that he was at that pre-prep school. Anyway, forget what it was called. Then I went to Wellesley House which was in Broadstairs, and the really posh prep school was St Peter's Court. There were a lot, about ten prep schools then, I think eight or ten, and Wellesley House was a slightly less posh one and we were evacuated in the war to Rannoch because one of the boy's fathers was a Cobbold of Cobbold's Brewery in Suffolk and he had an estate in Rannoch – Loch Rannoch, Rannoch Moor. And we were evacuated up there, at the beginning of the war. I must have been about eleven, just, probably just twelve when the war started, and instead of playing football and cricket we stalked stags and fished for trout in the loch. We may even have shot grouse as well, or tried to shoot grouse. And there was a brilliant headmaster, or he was a sort of assistant headmaster. There was one headmaster, a fellow called John Boyce, who was terribly good with the parents and he had an amazing amount of flannel. And this other one, Willie Williamson, who went on to be headmaster after Ashdown, at Ashdown Forest where Princess Margaret sent her son there. He was a genius with bright, attractive thirteen year old boys, to who I think – and absolutely never did anything that was the least

bit improper – but I mean he was really an example of people who are attracted to boys of that age, are the most brilliant teachers and we all got, or practically everybody got scholarships to Eton and the school then, then the Duke of Gloucester – this was after my time – the Duke of Gloucester sent his children there and then it overtook St Peter's Court [laughing] as the sort of posh, the poshest – there are practically no prep schools in Broadstairs now at all because it's not a good catchment area for day children, so it was all people sort of sending their children down from London. Anyway, I didn't get a scholarship but I took remove, which is as you know, the top sort of non-scholarship and I was all planned to go to Eton and I suddenly said to my parents, I want to go to Dartmouth - the Royal Naval College Dartmouth, which in those days you could go to at thirteen. That of course has all now been abolished. And various heirs to the throne, you know, went to, it was a sort of fairly normal sort of pattern for them. We had absolutely no connection with the navy at all and my parents were really rather disappointed, they'd rather have liked me to have gone to Eton. It's where my father had been and my grandfather and my great-grandfather had been and so on, long sort of tradition of going to Eton. And I now know, I'm pretty sure I know now why I wanted to do that. It was the quickest way to getting into the war, because I left Dartmouth, I was seventeen on November the twenty-seventh 1944 and I went to sea in mid December when I was seventeen and two weeks old. And I couldn't, I was so surprised when my mother at Paddington Station went to see me off to go – it wasn't my first ship because I went and did Atlantic convoys, waiting for my proper appointment as a midshipman to HMS Anson, but I was going down to pick up HMS Anson, a great King George the Fifth battleship. And my mother cried saying goodbye to me and I thought this was the most ridiculous thing I'd ever come across in my whole life. My God, my eldest grandson is practically seventeen and the thought of him going off to the war, I mean leaves me sort of breathless, I mean there was I with of course all the other Dart… I was actually the youngest in my particular term so none were – well it was a three, they had three, so we were all within four months of each other, but I was actually, happened just by chance to be by a week or so the youngest. So I then went to Dartmouth. Dartmouth, I did four terms at Dartmouth down by, in Dartmouth, you know down in Devon overlooking the sea, which I really enjoyed very much. And then it was bombed and this was a sort of miracle – there've been a number of sort of things in my life where if things had been slightly different I would now be dead. And some extraordinary reason we were given an additional week's

holiday and the, had we gone back the week we should have done, a week earlier, the bomb was dropped at eleven thirty in the morning at a time when all the cadets would have been moving from one classroom to another, and they reckon about 120 cadets would have been killed, but the place was empty except for one poor WREN who was sitting in the lavatory - and it was called 'heads' in the navy, as you may know - and she, poor darling, was killed. So we then went to Muller's Orphanage, which was a great [incomp] of a place, which makes my heart, now you know when, years later when I was running social services and did my best to close every institution for children, which we'll come on to obviously later. And there was one wing we were all in and the other wing was black American soldiers and we were there I think for a term while they got Eaton Hall ready for us cadets, which was no sea [laughing], there may have been a river there, where I spent the rest of my time at Dartmouth.

Now, before we go on, there are all sorts of – this is wonderful material, but I wanted a little more detail.

Right.

So I'm going to take you back. First of all, tell me about your parents, tell me a little more. You've just mentioned your father was privileged but then lost his money and regained some of it.

Yes.

Tell me a little more about that.

Well, a lot of people did lose their money on the Stock Exchange.

Of course, of course.

But I mean his father was a country gent and really never did anything except hunt in the winter and play golf in the summer and I think was rather a sad man, because he was a

reasonably talented and able man and it didn't stretch him, he didn't, financially he was secure and didn't need to work.

Did you know him well, your father's father?

No. We were very frightened of him, he was rather a tyrant and he had married a lovely lady, a Brassey, and her grandfather was the great railway builder of the world and they were all pretty rich, so he'd married a fairly rich woman. But the Brassey, which was a very interesting family, we just had the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of the great railway builder, and he started very modestly and he left each of his sons an enormous sum of money and instead of continuing, he didn't have much confidence in his son – my brother's written a little book about them actually – none of them went into the business, I don't think he wanted them in the business, and they all married into the aristocracy [laughs] as a result. One became the Duchess of Richmond and Gordon and you know, they did it, very clever that way, 'cos they all left an estate and a lot of money. And that's where all the fortune's now been dissipated. My mother was a Part and I think she always said she was descended from the Black Prince, which she may have been, but check with my, might check with my wife over that over lunch, and her father was really quite a distinguished lawyer, barrister and then he got, then he was running the Trust Houses and I think he got sacked from that, he was a pretty argumentative, abrasive sort of man and he started a thing called The General Trading Company, which it was an antique shop just off Park Lane and frightfully smart and all the sort of upper classes, their wedding lists all went there, then actually went to Sloane Street and it's now been bought by someone. And he ran that and he was a naval man and my mother was a very, fairly aggressive, dynamic, I think fundamentally an ambitious woman. And the emancipation of women, you know, has meant people like my mother today can go on, and she never worked, and I think was in some ways frustrated. Her half brother – because my grandfather married three times, my Part grandfather married three times – was Permanent Secretary of four great Ministries – Sir Anthony Part, and was very nearly head of the whole civil service. He was sort of number two I think and some people thought, I think, he should have been. But I mean he was an outstanding naval man. And my mother who was quite uneducated, of course like women in those days were, was uneducated and restless. And I think perhaps actually it was a pity she married my father really. She'd been much better if

she'd married somebody who was an ambassador and she had a sort of role, but in the City, a sort of merchant banker's wife doesn't sort of particularly have a role in the way that an ambassador's, say an ambassador's wife. But she lived to be ninety-seven.

But you think she was looking for a role, she was looking for…

I think, well there weren't, I mean there really weren't any roles you see. She was born in 1900 and I mean at that time, I suppose there were a few women who would have been at the bar, would there or - but I mean not, very, there were terribly little opportunities and therefore I think she wasn't altogether a fulfilled woman. And I think she was pretty ambitious for her children and when I, [laughing] later I was an athlete, she was [laughs] you know, very keen that I should win. She was a great one for winning and I mean I think I inherit that. My father didn't have the winning, didn't want it, you know, wasn't altogether an ambitious man. But my mother was an ambitious person and to some extent I think she was able to fulfil her ambition through my brother and me and perhaps slightly to a lesser extent, although my sister was a very remarkable person but in quite different ways. So that's my…

And were they happy together, your parents?

No. Not really, no. But they stuck together. [phone ringing] But that would be…

[pause in recording]

Right. So you were saying that…

They weren't really happy, no. But like a great many people of that generation, they stuck together, I think partly for the benefit of the children and of course divorce was still something… but I think they may have had friends, you know, apart from their – in fact I know they did. But they were very good, I mean they were very good parents. But my drive, if I'm a driven person – I think I am a pretty driven person – I really got from my mother.

And what about your siblings?

My children?

No, your brother and sister, twin sister.

Well my brother Tom is a distinguished man really. He was at Eton and then he went to his National Service – he's two years younger than me – in the Scots Guards. When he arrived at, in Malaya to do his thing, the Adjutant said, you know, d'you like hunting, shooting or fishing and he said, no I like playing the cello and writing poetry. And he was quite a star at Eton, he was at Pop at Eton, he edited the *Eton Chronicle* with Douglas Hurd, and he was able to say that, you know. And then he discovered on leave when he was in Malaya - you know, it was very successful, the army campaign in Malaya – he found a tribe which he claimed had never been found before and he wrote a book called *The Hostile Sun*, which won a prize for one of the outstanding books of the year. I forget what the, actually prize was called. Then he went to Oxford after doing his National Service, and fell in love and had to leave, or kind of got married in a little bit of a hurry, and had to leave Oxford and got a job on the *Daily Express*, really by virtue of his book and he became a pretty good star on the *Daily Express* and then Beaverbrook was terribly keen to hold on to him, but *The Sunday Times* eventually got him and he became the Chief Foreign Correspondent of *The Sunday Times* and is now a publisher and a writer. Yes, so Tom has done really very well. And then my twin sister married a most lovely man called Brian Blacker, whose uncle was Lord, Earl Peel, his mother was Earl Peel's daughter, famous Lady Doris Blacker who was very [laughs], rather a remarkable woman. And he was a sort of country gent and a really great man and when my sister died, aged seventy-eight last year, 400 people came to her service of thanksgiving, half of whom were young, she had absolute genius with young people. Because they lived near Bedales which was a sort of rather, a school which had a slightly way-out radical parents and a lot of them would come and – two of her daughters were there – would come and open their hearts to them when they couldn't get on with their parents or couldn't get on with their teachers, whatever it was. She had an absolute – a number of kids who actually got on to drugs, she got them off and this was early days when drugs weren't the terrible serious thing they are now.

Yes, quite. So good, well that's a description of your family as far as it goes, that's excellent. And then you have your school experience, which obviously was varied because of the war. Were friends very important to you at school?

Yes I think they were. I was, we had this wonderful nanny, I think I must say something about her.

Please do.

I mean she probably, the fact I eventually became ordained I think may well have been because of her. She was a saint, she used to read matins and evensong every day of her life and was totally – she was my mother's nanny – and totally devoted to our family. I mean those were the days when the nanny sort of almost took the name. When she took us for a walk in the park in the pram, she was Nanny Stacey and somebody else would be, you know, what have you. And she stayed the rest of her life with my parents. She used to have, they were called sick headaches. Looking back, she had migraine, poor darling. Oh, and she was devoted. A spinster, but I don't think, I never – well obviously wouldn't have understood those things in those days – but I never got the sense that she was a frustrated woman. She was of course of an age in which probably the wars, you know, would have, people she might have married were killed in the wars. But she was a very, very important part of my life. I was really much closer to and I'm bound to say I was more upset when my nanny died than when my mother died, but remember my mother was ninety-seven and she wanted to die and it was a merciful thing. But nannies were immensely significant.

When you said that she'd read the services…

Yes.

I mean d'you mean she'd read them to you or to herself or…

To herself.

To herself.

Yes. No, no we'd have been bored stiff reading you know, hunks of Genesis and Jeremiah. No, no, she read them to herself.

But she's managed to inspire you?

Yes, she was part of when the Anglican church really did mean something to people and were devoted to it and she sort of followed it and the church was tremendously important to her and I mean God was. Oh she was a wonderful example of Christian living and Christian faith. Yes, so friends were. At Wellesley House we had one or two fairly colourful – there was Bertie Bowyer who went on to be Lord Denham, who was chief – was he? No, he was Leader of the House of Lords, the Tory. There was a very colourful chap who I stayed very close to really all my life – Anthony Blond, who published my autobiography, who is a very, very colourful man. He – and all this is totally in the public domain - he married and then his, I think he got divorced, and he lived with the most beautiful boy in London, called Andrew McCall, and that split up. And then he married – oh God, terrible, terrible with names – a very upper class girl. Oh dear, I shall remember the name. And much younger than him. And I said to Anthony when he got engaged to her, what do her parents think about this and he said, 'They think I'm an elderly bisexual Jew'. And I said to Anthony, 'My dear boy, how can you criticise this description of you?'. It'll just, it may come to my memory. They were the Lancashire ones, the very one was very big in, or he lost all the money on doing motor bicycles. Hesketh! The Hesketh family. Does it matter I'm inarticulate like this?

Not at all.

No. Laura Hesketh. And now they live in France – I mean he's in himself a fascinating person. There'll be a very big – he has written an autobiography actually, which was rather name-dropping and it was rather seedy and I was very glad I was kept out of it. There was great scandal if you remember – no, you wouldn't remember – but Edward Montague who went to prison when he was at Oxford, for gay thing, it was actually triggered off the Wolfenden Report. And he sort of always mentioned, he always had

some pretty colourful friends and they all got mentioned in the autobiography [laughing] and I was really rather glad that I wasn't mentioned in it, but I was very grateful to him for publishing my autobiography. So friends, yes, Dartmouth we had some very good friends but none of them went on to be Admirals I don't think, but they were, and we have annual, about every five years we sort of get together for dinner. In fact we're going to get together, a group of us who were at Dartmouth together and then went to sea together, therefore from thirteen to twenty we were sort of never really apart.

Was, I mean you said that the naval college, you went at thirteen and you had nothing to do with the navy at that point.

Yes.

So it was just like another boarding school?

Yes it was, I mean except that we learnt to sail and tie knots and that sort of thing. And of course, because we left you see, still when we just seventeen, we were barely educated which raised questions for me when I later went to Oxford, and that sort of last year or so when you do read fairly widely, or you should have done, we were, you know, out fighting in the closing months of the war, really very young. Dartmouth suited me. I'm not an academic, I'm sort of more or less, you know, I can more or less hold my own. It was fast moving and there was a Petty Officer who said, 'Them that are keen get fell in previous'. You know what I mean when you sort of fall in to do parades and things. Them that get fell in previous… and that really rather summed up the spirit of Dartmouth and that's a spirit which I've found I could cope with but was meant to be terribly tough. You got beaten if you had a button undone or a sort of lanyard thing, if you had it too high or too low 'cos it said your status; the lower it was the more senior you were, the higher it was the more – ridiculous now. And we ran everywhere, had to run everywhere between things. And all this was looked upon as absolutely ridiculous and criminal and damaging.

But how did you feel about it then?

Totally relaxed. Never troubled me at all. I wasn't a rebel at Dartmouth. I became head boy, you know, I became Chief Cadet Captain. There were two of us and there was – I was the junior one actually – and therefore one became, you always remember the head boy so when I ever meet naval officers who were at Dart… I wouldn't have known them because, you know, there were three or 400 there, but they all knew me when I go to – there's a club called The Castaways Club for those naval officers who left the navy with nothing and most of them went because they inherited their fathers' estates and titles. In the case of the Duke of Edinburgh he left married to the Queen, and that was rather the form, and I left to be a curate and the dinner was rather expensive – I was very poor in those days – and the dinner was what I gave my wife for housekeeping for a month, so I resigned from The Castaways and actually rejoined [laughs] later. And it's rather a good club. So you can't be a member if you get any sort of pension.

[laughing] Yes I see, excellent. So, during this time of course the war was on.

Yeah.

And what were your feelings about the war as a teenager, you were a teenager at this time.

Well I mean, our life, I didn't realise it then, our life was unbelievably limited. We moved to our grandmother, my father's – 'cos my grandfather Stacey died just before the war in 1940 – we moved to their farm which is just outside Buckingham, off of, just off Stowe Avenue in fact, and my father joined the army which actually of great note because he was forty, he had no need to join the army, he was thirty-nine when the war started. But he did, so he was away really virtually the whole war. And we were holed up there and our social life was how far we could bicycle. And you know, you had quarter of a pound of, two ounces of butter or whatever it was, and we had a very, very limited life and when I think what my grandchildren, my – Mary Stacey, one of our daughters is chairman of employment tribunals – she's off to Brazil now with her husband and grandchildren. And my son took his child to the World Cup – am I rabbiting on too long?

No.

To the World Cup during half term and I mean, it was an incredibly limited life. And we spent quite a lot of time in the holidays going round the farm collecting wood for our fires. And because it was a farm we were able to get rabbits and things, so we were never sort of hungry. So that was – and I'd never seen a banana till I arrived in Cairo in a ship on the way to the Far East, or a pineapple. I mean I don't ever really remember, I may have done when I was very young. I was eager to get to the war. I mean looking back on it now it's rather pathetic, that's why I joined the navy I think, to get and join the fight. And that wasn't unusual I don't think and you know, other people pretended, lied about their age didn't they, to join up at sixteen in the ranks.

Had you had relatives who'd been killed or injured in the First World War?

No.

I mean did you know the realities of war?

No, but of course at Dartmouth one absolutely knew the realities because the cadets, when HMS Hood went down, the whole lot – it was a battleship, battle cruiser - and there were probably thirty midshipmen and ten of them would have left Dartmouth within the year, so one was absolutely conscious, and of course I think if one had been at Eton one would have been conscious of the war then. But somehow I was never, I never recall – and I don't think I'm a brave man, but I never recalled saying to myself, gosh I think, if I'd gone to Eton I wouldn't get to the war so early. I was raring to go. Death somehow never frightened me. I think yes, perhaps part of the young in a way that I'm much more conscious of, specially at my age, now of death. The prospect of death.

I mean all this is obviously very interesting because as you say it's different, different generations have different preoccupations. But, and then how much did you know about your father losing a lot of money and…

Oh that, that our standard of living, we had, he had to sell Bletchingly Manor which was a nice house in Surrey, and we lived in a very nice house, Norfolk Crescent, but I think that

there were probably two or three servants less and perhaps not a nurserymaid or not two nurserymaids. And no, we always slightly got the impression they were a bit pushed for money, but then they all sort of lived rather above their income really because they were in a fairly fast moving set in the twenties and thirties. My father was a member of White's Club and you know, that sort of lot.

Yes, yes.

Fairly rich. Because he hadn't inherited very much from his father because when his father died it went to my grandmother, to his wife, a Brassey.

Right, right.

There was some money but not a great deal.

So were there things in your childhood that you were aware of wanting to do that you couldn't do?

Well I don't think there was, because nobody else was doing them. This is what makes, you see, people now so envious. People see on television. I mean when I spent, you know, eight years in Woolwich with working class people, they then did begin to see there wasn't the sort of jealousy because they were all in the same boat together. We were all in the same boat together. What, I did feel a bit, I was never terribly keen on the hunting. People did hunt and I did once or twice, but we didn't really have a pony but I was never very mad about that, but one slightly felt out of things as a youngster if one wasn't hunting, but I didn't really crave to do that. But travelling was out of the question. Going to London to parties was out of the question. So no, I didn't feel frustrated. One holiday, my father was in that special – what were they called – not the SA… the… that's the German thing isn't it? That group of people who were, did special operations, and we spent one summer holidays up in Scotland when it rained every day for a month and I did get frustrated, it was a pretty boring place anyway, bloody boring place anyway. I was sort of pretty frustrated about that 'cos there was, I would rather happier been in our home, my grandmother's home in Buckinghamshire. Castlefields it was called.

So what did you do in your grandmother's home in Buckinghamshire when you were on holiday?

Well we went bicycling and we did have parties with people within range. And as I say, we went and collected wood. We played tennis, there was a squash court. One thing I do remember very, very vividly about when I was there, on the day war was declared, I went and played squash on the hour – it was Neville Chamberlain I think, it was about midday – when war was declared I went and spent about an hour playing squash by myself, hitting the ball against the walls, 'cos I think I did realise the awfulness of it, the futility. I mean I have very, very few vivid memories of my childhood but I do have that. Whether, what it was saying, I don't know what it meant. No, we just lived a pretty restricted – there was no television or anything, but we got on all pretty well.

You mentioned that your brother played the cello, were you musical at all?

No. Totally. My wife is very musical. I'm totally unmusical. And it's a great sadness.

And were you interested in art at that time?

No. I'm not artistic, I have very little, poor sense of taste. My wife does all that. No, I'm [laughing] really very, terribly limited human being.

What about girls before you went off to war?

Well I did have a sort of girlfriend, just, yes. But we were far less precocious. I mean girls didn't actually know – a very nice, rather grand girl, Rosemary her name was, Agnew, a distinguished family, they were the picture gallery Agnew. I mean it wasn't, was part of that sort of… But I may have written to her from Dartmouth from time to time, but I mean we didn't weep over each other when as a seventeen year old I was going off to the Far East. And then certainly in the Far East I didn't ever have any. But we, I mean I may have been odd, but I don't think we did, I don't think my generation did. Or if they did they were terribly secretive, my friends who were in Dartmouth.

But you did have parties and dances and all those things didn't you?

Well yes, I mean there were a few, but again you were literally, I mean the petrol ration was one gallon a month or something and therefore if you saved it up you might be able to go to a dance fifteen miles away and perhaps you would get taxis and things. Yes, there were dances, but that was, I have no recollection of that being an important part of my life in the age of sort of thirteen to seventeen. We actually had sort of dance, there were dances at Dartmouth and boys used to dance, it was all sort of, as far as I know it was absolutely – and I was Chief Cadet Captain at Dartmouth and everybody else tells me that the homosexual experiences they had when they were at boarding schools and I would have thought that I would have known, and I put my hand on my heart over this, that nothing ever happened to me and I never knew of anything that happened to anybody else. Now, this is totally unlike what most other people say about their experience. And I don't think I was naïve. And normally if you're – I was a House Cadet Captain before being a Chief Cadet Captain and the idea of the House Cadet Captain is that you sort of know what's going on, or you're meant to, and I'm quite, I mean I am shrewd, I'm sharp. I'm one step ahead of the game, that is one thing I probably am in life. But I never remember anything, occasion, and certainly nothing like that happened, nobody – I must have been a very unattractive boy [laughing], nobody ever fancied me and I didn't ever, you know, ever. So, but most people if they're being honest do say how they knew of, even if they weren't involved themselves, and these were all people who would go on to be, or the vast majority heterosexual.

Was politics part of your life as a teenager?

No, no.

No, no, okay.

The war was part of, well that was what dominated one's – and survival.

Good, okay, well we may come back to a couple of topics there but tell me about your first experience going to sea for the navy.

That was dramatic and that is written on my heart. I'd spent four years, just short of four years I think it was, nine, eleven terms I think it was, at Dartmouth, and so three years and two terms training to go to sea as a midshipman, and it was what one was focussed on, to fight in the war. I went down to Sheerness because HMS Anson, which I'd been appointed to, wasn't fully commissioned and there was about two or three month period when we, they had to put us somewhere. And I went down to a fourteen-eighteen war destroyer called HMS Vanquisher and there weren't even many of them [laughs] going, 'cos it was, you know, virtually the end of the war, and I, and we were going on the Atlantic convoy. I had a little cabin, it was a cell really and you had to go, a vertical ladder, you know, and it was right in the bowels of this ancient destroyer and next door to the fuel tanks and it smelt of oil. And I joined this ship and we went, sailed straight out into the Thames to go into the Channel to guard the convoy and protect these ships. And my first thing was the midnight watch and that was between midnight and four in the morning. We got, by that time we'd got into the Channel and the sea – it was December – the sea was rough. I felt desperately seasick, but I climbed up this ladder and there was a hatch which was flush with the deck and the thing was that the waves were breaking over this awful little ship and the idea was that you waited for a wave to break over and wash by and then you would open the hatch, jump out, close the hatch and grab a line so you weren't swept down. Well my oilskin got caught in the hatch, so I was swept down, and was saved by the [laughs], by you know, the sort of railings. And I arrived on deck cold, wet and desperately seasick and I thought, God. And because it was a miserable little ship, we could only escort them for about three days into the Atlantic and for three days we had a storm and for three days I was sick and for three days I crept on to the bridge to… I was, I mean absolutely totally useless really. I think I may have been able to make them a cup of cocoa. I was given the job of no, thank God, of no responsibility whatever. And I remember one of the ships in the convoy being sunk and I'm afraid I said to myself, please can we be next. I mean I really felt – if you haven't experienced seasickness and being wet and cold [laughing] all at the same time, you wouldn't… But I do actually remember lying in my bunk and you think, God there must be, whatever death holds it can't be as bad as this. But anyway, and I spent about six weeks in that ship [incomp].

But what would your little ship have done, I mean obviously you didn't save one of the vessels in your convoy, I mean what could your little…
Oh well we had, we had, what were they called? Things we'd, when we had sort of things sounding out for submarines and then we dropped – what were they called? Hedgehogs or something. Full of, we tried to drive over them and drop…

What, not sort of depth charges?

Yes, depth charges, that's right, that's right. You know more about the navy than I do.

[both laughing]

That's right. Because it was all submarines we were after. And of course I don't think we were very successful, but no doubt we put the submarines off a bit and we did sink some, or made it difficult for them to get – once we got them on the screen, the radar screen, we were able to go towards them and they would be able to, by their screens presumably know that we were around and they may have kept away from them, or we would have stopped them shooting their torpedoes.

Were you the most junior person on the Vanquisher?

Oh Lord yeah. Well I mean there may have been some boy seamen. Yes, I mean as an officer, oh well yes, you couldn't be more junior. I was seventeen and one, seventeen and one month, you know. I wasn't shaving I don't think then. [laughs] Yes, complete dogsbody. And then when I went to join HMS Anson it all became a bit different.

And what were the senior officers like towards you?

Well I mean they were very nice. I don't have any vivid memory of them because I really literally – and I don't exaggerate. I mean I have exaggerated life and I don't lie either, I'm not lying on this. I mean I literally crept from the bridge where I was meant to help the officer in charge by looking at navigation plans or handing him coffee or doing whatever

he said, which were simply chores, and down to my cabin again. I don't remember having had a meal, practically in that ship, so I have no vivid experience of the other officers at all. When I went and joined HMS Anson it was quite a different picture.

So how long did it take you to get over such extreme seasickness?

I never completely got over it, but one does get over it. And of course HMS Anson was an enormous great battleship, the sea, it doesn't roll or it rolls in a different way, it doesn't toss about like you did in this HMS Vanquisher. And then it was, I think it was about January we joined…

You joined HMS Anson. In January 1945.

1945, yeah.

And so what were your first experiences of that?

Well there we had a gunroom, which was made up of midshipmen and of course I went with six friends who were all at Dartmouth in the same term.

Oh I see, so what had they been doing, they weren't on Vanquisher with you?

No, they were sent off doing other things. I think, I don't remember what they… but I rather suspect that I drew the short straw on HMS Vanquisher, but they may have had similar experiences. Oh, and then there were about thirty of us and we were midshipmen, we slept in hammocks and we had a mess, which was very civilised and we smoked an amazing number of cigarettes 'cos they were practically given away in those days. And we had a bar and we ate, fed pretty well. And we were given various jobs. I had a gun, a pom-pom gun thing…

I don't know what that is.

No, well a sort of, it had about six sort of guns in it and we had about four sailors and the idea was we were to shoot aircraft, especially when we came to the Far East when they had these kamikazes, and we acted as sort of stooges to officers of the watch. And we also had a certain amount of instruction and we had really a very good time. We went up first to Scapa Flow and I remember vividly that we went to action stations 'cos there were some submarines when were going up the Irish Channel, and half the ship's company we had a, difficult commissioning that ship, there were 2,000 sailors and they had to actually sort of clear the glasshouses, which were the naval prisons to find sailors to man the ship, they were a tough lot.

Sorry, glasshouses is the name for a naval…

For a naval prison.

Prison?

Detention centres, yes.

Right, I see.

And when we went to action stations only half the crew ever got to their action stations. My job was to shut the watertight door of the Admiral's quarters and I was sick in his Admiral, shutting his door. That was my task I remember. You had to shut all the watertight – in case we were torpedoed. Then we went to Scapa Flow and – training, you know, we were training how to shoot guns and all that sort of stuff, working the ship up and making everything sort of work. And Scapa Flow was rather sort of interesting, because I mean it really was the end of the world, Scapa Flow. There we were, we used to go ashore and sort of walk around the moors a bit. One thing I do remember was one sailor was accused of having sex with a sheep and I remember that. When he was being questioned he said that he thought it was a WREN in a duffle coat.

[both laughing]

It's one of these sort of ridiculous things that one remembers.

He must have died in full view of witnesses.

Yes.

[both laughing]

What a wonderful story. [laughs] Oh, how he thought he'd get away with it.

And then we went out to…

Sorry, can I just ask you, I mean you say that they scoured the prisons for people to man the ship and that they didn't get to their action stations on time, I mean what would happen if you didn't get to your action stations when you were meant to?

Well if it was a serious attack you would be pretty vulnerable. I mean that was true, it was a new ship, newly commissioned, sailing up to Scapa Flow to work out, to do the training, but it had to go through the Irish Sea to get there and it was thought there was a submarine or submarines around and we went to action. I mean it may have been a false alarm for all I know, but the answer is we would have been very vulnerable. But we had to go somewhere to train and wouldn't want to train round in the English Channel because it was obviously much more vulnerable than…

But what would happen to the – how did they discipline people while on board?

Oh, oh well they had, there were various sanctions I think. But I mean, being sick isn't a criminal offence, I mean you can't bloody well help it. I just felt sorry for them, but they got used to, like we all got used to, or pretty used to being, coping with either getting over seasickness or coping with it.

And what happened to this man who was – was he convicted of having sex with sh… [laughs]

Well I can't remember. I can't re… I mean there weren't courts, you know, he would have come before a sort of a disciplinary procedure of some sort, but I think it probably wasn't sufficiently serious for him to be sent [laughs]… I mean it's not something we actually sort of recommend sailors do, but I think that people were fairly sort of sane about those sort of things [laughing]. Stuck up in Scapa Flow, you really want to… poor fellow. [laughs]

And you said the ship was new, so were you sort of, obviously you were training the crew in...

Yes, it was being recommissioned, yes.

[both speaking together]

...how to use guns, but the ship itself, were the technical...

I don't think, I don't the ship itself was new, no.

Oh I see, okay.

I don't think it was, no. It's awful that I shouldn't remember whether it was or… no, I think it was just, had been on a commission for two years somewhere. Because it was the same lot as Prince of Wales, and of course was sunk. I mean most – there was King George the Fifth, that was, that was in the same class. They may have been built in the war, it may have been its first trip ever.

Well it doesn't matter, I really wondered if there'd been any technical problems with the actual ship.

Well not, I mean when you think with enormously complicated ship with 2,000 men and I was a seventeen year old midshipman, at that time one simply hadn't any sort of concept of, one wasn't thinking much beyond what one's little jobs were. And I don't remember

any. I remember technical problems later, which we'll come on to, when we went through the Red Sea. But then we went down to the Mediterranean and this was another memory I do have very vividly – VE Day, we were in Valletta Harbour, that's in Malta, and I then had the morning watch from four in the morning till eight, in May when – May in the Mediterranean as you know is lovely, and the sun was rising and the war was going to end that day and they had those coloured little boats that people used to go in for – what were they – dghajsas [?] were they? What were they called? People wanted to go ashore, you had a dghajsa [?] or you actually had bigger boats as well, but these colourful things and Malta had a hell of a time in the war and the war was ending that day and that was a very vivid experience.

So you were allowed to go ashore?

Oh yes, once – if you were allowed to go ashore I think before the war was… but I remember bathing in St Paul's Bay in, sort of beach, and then I'm afraid I remember being terribly sick with some revolting red wine, which [laughing] you could buy in Malta. And we used to have these white, totally white sort of tunic, you know, white trousers and white tunics, and I was sick down the front of this so it was covered in red wine. And coming back to the ship I was thinking, God, who's going to see this, how do I cover this up. And one did actually have quite interesting experiences. One of the things midshipmen did was to be the ships', the boats that you went ashore in when the sailors, you know, you had 120 in these boats to take them from the ship to the shore so they could go ashore. And they would very often be drunk, and this was skilful, especially if it was a bit rough, and cooling the sailors down. Occasionally it was a bit rough, you would then turn the boat into the wind so that the sailors got sprayed with seawater. And there was a contemporary of mine who messed it up and the boat, I think the boat capsized and a sailor or some sailors were drowned. So I mean that was pretty responsible to have 120 – are they called gunboats, I've… terrible, terrible, I've forgotten what they were called. And you had 120 fairly pickled sailors and you had to bring the boat alongside. And Malta was a, really a great experience.

And how were the people reacting to VE Day when you got ashore? Did they have parades or…

Well I think they did, yes. I mean there was a great euphoria really. Whether we, I can't remember, I think we did, there was a sort of – was it called the Garter? A sort of a road in Valletta where, full of bars and brothels and everybody was sort of walking up and down screaming and shouting. I don't, I don't have such vivid memories of the after effect as I do on dawn and till eight o'clock in the morning with the sun rising and the war ending, it totally dominated our lives, I mean all my conscious life really from eleven, twelve to seventeen. Then we went to Cairo, no then we went to – not Cairo, we went to Port Said, that was the next thing, to go out to the Far East because you see then we left pretty pronto, Malta because you had to go out to the Far East because there were very few British ships. There were some ships in the Indian Ocean but out in the Pacific. I remember going to Port Said and seeing a banana and a pineapple for the first time. And then going through the Suez Canal, we were the largest ship that had ever been through the Suez Canal. There was literally about two or three feet either side. And then I remember going to the Bitter Lakes where it's very salty, the water there and the Admiral asked me whether I'd like to go waterskiing, I mean we had a few sort of midshipmen, and I'd never done waterskiing before obviously. 'Cos he had a sort of speedboat, or sort of speed-ish boat. I remember my bathing, I had bathing trunks on which were probably pretty old-fashioned things because you know, there was clothes rationing, and they came off when I fell [laughs] waterskiing. And again, I mean those sort of things did embarrass one and I thought what's the Admiral going to say when a sort of naked midshipman appears. [laughs] And then going through the Red Sea then was colossally hot and the sailors who didn't take their – we had one sailor or two sailors who died, we were talking about technical problems, they were at the boiler, in the boiler house, and they were being sprayed with water, you know, to work there and one or two, I think it was two, who didn't take their salt tablets died in the boiler house.

How awful.

And then we went to Colombo. Now that I remember quite well, for two reasons. A group of us midshipmen went into the jungle with shotguns to – I feel rather ashamed about this – to pot at monkeys. Thank God we never found a monkey. But it was rather fun creeping around the jungle, but I think we were more pretending to shoot monkeys

than actually… And the other thing I remember well was we had two days in Colombo and the ship was divided into two watches; the port watch and the starboard watch. And the port watch went ashore one day for a day and evening and the starboard watch, and fifty per cent of the ship's company had venereal disease as a result of that experience. None of the midshipmen I think succumbed, barely old enough to that… and that I remember how it sort of really shook me, you know, about, I mean these were tough working class lads and now I think that seventeen, people would know much more about sex than at seventeen we knew about. And there they were away from their girlfriends in Glasgow and their wives and things and really, all there was was to get drunk and go to a brothel. I mean there wasn't much else they could do, poor – and the whole of the harbour area was geared up to provide that need of course. They went, you know, to nice beaches and bathe and like the Galle Face Hotel, and buy a few souvenirs. The same experience happened when we went to Japan eventually, but that's a long story later. And the chaplain, as well as midshipmen there were boy seaman who were going to be sailors, fulltime sailors, and the chaplain who was really rather a fine chaplain, Geoffrey [ph] How, who's a very good east London priest, he took a party of fifty boys to go to some temple in Japan, you know, they had these shrines and things, and fifty [laughing] per cent of them – he was rather teased for that. 'Cos they would have been much the same age as the midshipmen. They got VD. That's nothing to what happened when I was in my trawler, but we'll come on to that later. And then we sailed to Sydney and we spent VE, VJ Day in Sydney. We'd been there for some time before VJ Day happened and it so happened that a cousin of mine was lady in waiting to the Duke of Gloucester and introduced me to all the sort of really nobby people in Sydney. What I do remember well was Malcolm Sargent was visiting Sydney at the time and I was asked to dinner with him and the other sort of nobs after his concert. I remember Malcolm Sargent being extraordinarily indiscreet with his hand, he was a tremendous womaniser. It's these sort of funny things that you remember. And I remember going to a ranch and eating, they had half a pound of steak for breakfast, and to somebody who had two ounces of meat a week… And the Australians were pretty crude in those days – Australia's got very much more sophisticated – and the people I met were the most sophisticated. No it wasn't, it was Lord Gowrie, was it Lord Gowrie and the Duke of Gloucester? She was lady in waiting to, it may have been to both. I think the Gloucesters – it may have been Lord

Gowrie who was a cousin of hers and was a distant cousin of mine. But she was absolutely in the sort of, like ladies in waiting are. So I had rather a good time in Sydney.

I was going to ask you what, I mean what was it like? You'd come from this very limited background during the war, although privileged, but here you are visiting all these different places, did you…

Absolute eye-opener. 'Cos you didn't see them on television you see. Now, these places are so vivid to us. But no, it was absolutely… And Sydney was lovely weather, sunshine and Bondi Beach and endless food, an amazing variety of fruit and sunburnt, fairly macho kind of men who were very, a macho sort of society and sort of blonde women with big bosoms and… [laughs] I mean that was, you know, the world that was completely alien to us and we had really quite a good time.

Yes, I'm sure you did.

But not in the time, unless the other midshipmen hid it from me and I doubt if they did, there was no sex. Nor when we later, which we'll come on to, did a showing the flag cruise round Australia and New Zealand, this was after the war ended. So anyway, the moment the war ended, I mean even on VJ Day I think we actually sailed for Hong Kong and this was of course a fantastic experience for me because there were no soldiers in that part of the Pacific, all the soldiers were in India, there were plenty of American soldiers. And the British government really were determined that we should retake Hong Kong and not have the Americans do it. And we were in the first ship that went into Hong Kong – actually there was a trawler ahead of us to see if there were any mines been laid by the Japanese. And we had a hospital ship behind us. And I was the commander – not the captain – the commander, which is below the captain, called Kennedy was the officer in charge of retaking Hong Kong, mainly with marines. And I was – and the second in command was a man called Cameron, who was the gunnery officer and he asked me to be his PA, his 'doggy' is the expression, and we went ashore. By that time the Japanese had surrendered, I mean the war was over, but I mean the Japanese hadn't surrendered, there'd been nobody to surrender to, you know, because Hong Kong was owned by the Japanese.

Can I just interrupt and ask you, how much of this were you told as you were going along? Here you are, the young officer, were you actually given pep talks or were you told that this is what we have to do, these are our instructions and this is what's going to happen?

Well I don't think we knew. I don't think we knew what we were meant to do.

You didn't know. That was the question.

We knew roughly, first thing one would do was to rescue the prisoners of war, and they were in two camps, one was the civilian and the other was, Stanley I think was the troops, for the military and the Shamshuipo was the civilians. And my job was to commandeer what transport I could, which was sort of you know, really clapped out taxis and anything I could get hold of, and we had some sailors with us to go and rescue these people and bring them down to the ships. We made our headquarters at the police station and we had some royal marines. And my job was to, when some of the prisoners, some of the Japanese were not surrendering to go and find them and make them surrender and pick them up and so on and start to sort of re-establish some sort of coherent – well government's hardly the right word, but the police and that sort of thing. And one of my other jobs, which I found very, was a few Europeans had co-operated with the Japs and they were the people who were mainly married to Chinese, Hong Kong girls, very understandable, and they were locked up, we had to find them and lock them up and I used to have to see that they were being properly looked after. But it was a very moving experience to be part of that.

What other incidents do you remember from that time?

…I don't really have any sort of great, very vivid, vivid memories of Hong Kong. We weren't there very long. I remember it as being incredible hard, there were always sort of, I was being sent off to do this and that, collect Japanese people or see this person or other, to get the administration going in some way, talking to policemen who were, you know, were having to take charge of the island. I didn't have any sort of traumatic experience. But of course then, but I did of course a few weeks later when we went to Hiroshima.

Just before we get on to that, it must have been very traumatic I'm sure, but the Europeans who had to be locked up but at the same time you had to make sure they being looked after properly…

Yes.

…you know, it's a tricky, quite a tricky thing wasn't it? Or wasn't it?

Yes it was. A man who's a boy of seventeen and a half, yeah it was, yes. And it was quite tricky. I mean I had a deep feeling for them, poor devils. And some of the, some of the people who were in prison, the civilians, I think stayed because the prisoners weren't, not all of them I think went to the hospital ship. And some of them I think started taking, you know, getting their own, trying to get their own bits and pieces if they had been in administration or firms or what have you, you know, to try and gather things because it's amazing how quickly Hong Kong did recover. Because I went back to it later, as we'll come to probably.

So, then you left Hong Kong?

I went to Hiroshima. And I write about that in my autobiography. That did have a very profound effect on me. I think we were discouraged from going actually, to where the bomb had been dropped, but I did go.

Where were you moored? Where was the ship moored?

It was some way out, I forget exactly where the bay was, but it was some miles away. And I was determined to go and see it and it really was pretty horrific. This would have been about six weeks I would think, perhaps, would it have been six weeks or eight weeks after the bomb had been dropped, so most of the sort of corpses more or less had been… but the sheer devastation and death-ness and… of it. Well there'd been nothing like it really had there, in the history of the human race before and thank God so far – well Nagasaki came after it didn't it?

Yes.

There was, a few days after.

I mean were you just allowed to walk around?

Yes well one was, but I mean I think, I think I went, I don't think a great many others did go. It was a sort of compulsion that I had. Whether it was some sort of divine – I'm always rather cautious about sort of guidance by God, but I think that in my life in a sort of funny way I have been sort of guided to do things, rather surprising things. [laughs] One being ordained is fairly surprising.

Were there people, some civilians wandering around?

Well there were beginning to be some life. And of course we didn't know then that it was all radio, probably radioactive, I mean you see so it was really quite lucky I think that I'm still here to hear the tale. Death, destruction, hopelessness, on a scale which is almost unimaginable. It was then quite, it was then I really began to think about being ordained. That was followed by going to Tokyo.

Wait a minute, how did you make the link between this death and destruction and the need to be ordained?

Ah, that I think is clear. I mean I wanted to try and prevent the human race doing this kind of thing – okay you can say, what an absurdly conceited, stupid, pathetic boy I must have been, but I wanted to make the world a better place. I mean I'd seen the terrible squalor in Hong Kong, but this wasn't on, you know, with pregnant women – and I write about this, again in my autobiography – lumping salt sacks, sacks of salt or whatever from a junk to the jetty in the heat of the sun and I thought, you know, this is intolerable. But Hiroshima was on an utterly different and breathtaking scale and I thought God, how can mankind get in this kind of fucking awful mess, is there anything – and if people believed in God, you try and love your neighbour, you know. I mean this sounds simplistic-ness, but you know, at seventeen you aren't – and I hadn't read much history, you know, the education

[laughing] at Dartmouth was fairly basic. And I hadn't read widely, well you know, books weren't particularly easily available during the war, I mean that's a slight excuse because you could probably have gone to public libraries. But you didn't have you know, the wireless and the telly educating, you know, people are much more aware of life and what's gone on before in history than we were then, or anyway than I was.

I mean some people might have thought they'd go into politics to…

Oh yes, exactly, and I nearly did in Oxford. Very nearly. But that's, we're talking now about three or four, four or five years ahead.

So when you had a choice in these years, I mean presumably at school church was compulsory at some times…

Well again no, you see we had a…

…if you had a choice…

No, I ought to say this and thank you for reminding me. At Dartmouth – when I say Dartmouth, it was actually Eaton Hall at my cadet training period – there was a very impressive chaplain called Geoffrey Tiarks who I got to know very well, and I used to go and talk to him. I mean I did wrestle with sort of Christian issues when probably more than most young men, we were all kids, boys, and got to know him very well and he did talk to me about the Christian faith. And when I was chief cadet captain I always used to go to communion on Sunday at eight, which was voluntary, to set a good example. Which of course now, if somebody said that, they'd think I should have been put in a lunatic asylum. It's amazing how things have changed. And so had – of course I'd been confirmed and all that and I'd been brought up, you know, we went to church every Sunday during the war in Buckinghamshire, come from a sort of basic upper middle class Christian sort of upbringing. And therefore the Christian faith was part of me and it did seem to answer some of the questions and man has free will, God is a good god, man has mucked things up by the misuse of his free will and if we believe in him and try and serve him and guide, he'll guide us and strengthen us and we can try and build his kingdom.

And if you have his kingdom people are not going to do this kind of thing, or we're going to do less of it. And the other school of thought is equally valid of many of my friends, again we will come on to this, is politics, you change, can change society and – this is going a long way ahead – both people who fell for politics are about as disillusioned about politics as I am, I'm afraid, about the church. But in those days it seemed very clear to me that we must, I must give my life to God, to him to use to try and build his kingdom, which meant men did not solve their disagreements by the kind of suffering that I'd seen in Hong Kong on a pretty significant scale compared to what I'd seen up to then. And then the sort of massive, absolutely unbelievable scale. And you see after that we then did a showing the flag cruise round Australia and New Zealand. And this of course was what the midshipmen were in tremendous demand, we would arrive at Perth and all the sort of eighteen, you know, the equivalent of debutantes would be, there would be cocktail parties in HMS Anson and all the sort of daughters of the Bank [ph] family, the sort of nobbish – and Australia was then a terribly middle class, there wasn't much sort of aristocracy about Australia [laughing] in those days. And then there would be dances in there and we did that – mainly, we weren't training to kill anybody, that was our main task really of chatting up and being good ambassadors for Britain, which we – and I remember, because we happened to be at the right place the right – I had about four medals and I was then I suppose just about eighteen and in your midshipman's uniform with four medals, you're [laughs], you're quite a turn on to an eighteen year old girl. And we did Melbourne, Sydney, the whole lot. And then to Auckland. And then we were asked out, you know, for weekends, people's houses. Well then what you do as a midshipman, you do eighteen months in a big ship and then you have to go to a small ship.

Can I just ask you if, I mean here you have this huge contrast between, between Hiroshima and this showing the flag round the ports of Australia, I mean were you doing a lot of private prayer or were you completely – I mean I can see that you might be turned on, you said turned on completely by this wonderfully glamorous life that you were suddenly in.

I wasn't, it's most extraordinary. I mean I did it and I've never been immensely turned on, I mean I've come from a very privileged background and we lived very com… but I've never been a great party man, I mean I can work a room like anybody else, but it wasn't… It was very interesting, we saw Australia, we had nice barbecues, but I used to sort of read

C S Lewis books and think about things, so I was never, I've never been torn, my gosh I want to be terribly rich and have speedboats and be like a footballer's WAG, [laughs] these girls, or equivalent, you know. No, it was just an interesting experience, but my mind was then, I'd written to my parents and said look, I think I want to be ordained and they were very shocked, they were very surprised because I was chief cadet captain, I was, to put it honestly, I was a sort of star. That was why I was chosen to be PA to… I think, shall I tell Anne now we can have…

[End of Track 1]

[Track 2]

Right, you'd just decided to become ordained and written to your parents. What was their reaction exactly?

Well they were rather surprised. I don't think shocked is right, they were surprised because I'd so far had quite a successful career in the navy and they thought I'd probably end up as an admiral or something like that, but they were most wonderfully supportive. And we came back from the Far East and I then had to do sub-lieutenant's courses, that's the kind of university type – oh no, 'cos I went to a trawler. After HMS Anson I went to a trawler called Trodday in Hong Kong, which was the most amazing experience. The captain had DTs, was RNVR and there were, the crew was about twenty Hull fishermen who, you know, were trawler men. And it was a minesweeper. And I became – I don't really exaggerate – the greatest VD expert, because they would come to me and say they had VD and I would say well take your trousers – I was then eighteen – and I would roughly tell them. And then the injection was rather nasty for VD in those days. And we were based in Hong Kong and I got very involved in Hong Kong and trying to help some of the orphans, you know, I did sort of kind of social work in my part-time in Hong Kong. But I left there after, I had to do six months, then went back to England to do these sub-lieutenant's courses. The first six months or eight months was at Greenwich, the Royal Naval College Greenwich, which coincided with the coldest winter – I think it was 1947. I did all of them and all the time I was trying to get out of the navy and because I'd been chief executive and I think probably had reasonably positive reports from, you know, in the time I'd been, the admiral said no look, they said to me you'll get out of the religious phase, sort of patronised me. And eventually I said look, I really am going, if I thump one of you, you'll have to sack me. But of course, when I was doing these sub-lieutenant's courses, this whole new thing happened in my life, I was learning to fly a Tiger Moth aeroplane just across the river from Portsmouth, whatever it was called, and the sports officer came into the mess at about nine o'clock one night and said that the station's sports are tomorrow, all officers on course have to run in them, you know, to show the flag. And I said, oh, you must be, ridiculous. I was I think a bit pissed, to be honest with you. And I said, well put me down for the two shortest. And it was the hundred yards and the 220 yards. And I won them. And then he said, look what you've got to do is to go on to the

naval air stations – there were a number of air stations – and I said oh, this is ridiculous, interferes with my social life. And I said, well you know, I was quite still – I'm a slightly winner by personality so I can't go and do that… and I won them. Well then he said, well of course you've got to do the naval championships, so I then got a pair of short shorts, you know, and some spiked shoes. And dear God, I won them, I think breaking a record. And this was in forty-seven, 1947. Well then you see I started appearing in the papers and the Olympic Games were in forty-eight and I was picked up and said look, you must train for the Olympic Games. Well actually I then did do that and I eventually got out of the navy at the end of forty-seven and for the first sort of six months in forty-eight I trained for the Olympic Games and I ran a youth club, a church youth club in St Dunstan's Stepney, that's a famous church, and the running track where I was being, my coach, was at Victoria Park which is sort of in east London. And also I organised getting to Oxford, which I was due to go to in October 1948. I ended up by – I was an international in forty-eight but I wasn't, I didn't get chosen for the Olympic Games, I was a reserve.

So where did you go for your international competitions as a…

Oh I went, oh I don't know, all over the place, yes. Nothing sort of, you know, probably Paris or Rome or something, you know, on the circuit. But I actually didn't make the 200 metre, I wasn't, for the Olympic Games, so I sat in the stands I remember, feeling rather envious of those who… Then I went to Oxford and of course as I'd left school at barely seventeen and was really uneducated, I was sort of got into Oxford really – I should never have got into Oxford today I don't think – by the backs door, from a college which rather specialised in ordinands, which was St Edmund Hall, quite small, and also by then I was an international runner and St Edmund Hall, to be perfectly honest, wasn't a very distinguished college and to perhaps have an international runner – I mean being a runner's not a great thing, I realise, but it was a little bit…

What did you enjoy about running?

Well that's an extremely good question. I enjoyed, I enjoyed winning. I enjoyed the sort of prestige and status. I enjoyed going round the world, which I did. Empire Games in New Zealand in forty-nine, America in fifty – this was when travel was much more

restricted – and all over Europe. I liked it, I have to be perfectly honest, that when I entered a room, people said there's Nick Stacey, you know. It's quite alluring, I mean not on the scale of course now with these football [laughs], everybody bows down and worships you. And actually running bored me. I did it because I was very good at it. And luckily then it didn't actually involve a great deal of training. I was there with Roger Bannister and Christopher Chataway, two absolute stars, and we used to go down and we would train, we'd go down at about two or half past two and we'd change, train, have a shower, a gossip and be out by half past four and that was the end of it. We trained quite hard. We pretended of course not to train at all, that was the sort of great Oxford laid back… I smoked even when I was running in the Olympic Games. Not very much, but the sort of paper gossip was that 200 metres – which is halfway round a track, as you probably know – that Nick Stacey would hand his cigarette to some official, run the race, by which time the official would have walked across the track and handed the lighted cigarette back to him, which actually was about true because it only takes about twenty odd seconds to run, maybe twenty-one or twenty-two seconds. But I had a very, very good three years at Oxford; running all over the world, reading history, not very successfully but I did spend one term in America running and one term in New Zealand running, which was some slight excuse. And my saintly, or fairly saintly history tutor did rather wash his hands of me. But there was a very significant principle; the Reverend Doctor John Kelly who was the Principle of St Edmund Hall in the last two years, the first year he wasn't, he became Principle, and a very distinguished theologian. And it was he who kept me within the church thing, 'cos I said I met a lot of the other students, undergraduates who were churchy and I'm bound to say they did slightly put me off. They were terribly good and rather mousy and the high church ones were a bit camp and the evangelicals were a bit hearty and I didn't really feel I fitted in either of those, but anyhow. He said to me, look hang on in, and I did and although I had a most extraordinary non-career in the church, I'm terribly glad I did hang on in. And in – I left Oxford in fifty-one and I went to my seminary, which is Cuddesdon Theological College, which in a sense I think would be described as the Etonian of the theological colleges, whereas another is Westcott House at Cambridge, which would claim, that I think was probably considered the Harrow of theological colleges. And I had an interesting time there, 'cos the first year I was training for the Olympic Games and training to be a priest. And Cuddesdon Theological College is slightly Anglo-Catholic, or it's on the sort of Anglo-Catholic wing of the church and we

had to be in silence quite a lot of the time and at weekends sort of retreats and things. And one weekend I would be racing in Paris before 50,000 screaming fans, the next weekend I would be in total silence. At Cuddesdon after compline, which is the sort of service you have at the end of the day, you weren't allowed to speak, except to say will you pass the toothpaste if you met them in the washroom, and couldn't speak again till the service in the morning, first communion service.

How did you cope with that contrast?

Well that's quite interesting. Well it's quite interesting to me. I actually think I coped quite well. Some of the other students thought I didn't cope very well and I did occasionally hear sort of huddles saying, oh I don't think Nick is really coping. This was when, one of the jobs was to learn to lay out vestments, you know, the things… and I think I may have slightly exploded and saying dear God, you know [sighs], and that would have gone round the college – Nick Stacey explodes laying out vestments. But actually I really coped pretty well, or I think I did. And the – and I got special meat, you see even in 1951 the meat was so little that I got special meat from the butcher in Cuddesdon, and extra milk. And then I raced in the Olympics – having done, you know endlessly other international things, in the Olympic Games in fifty-two and shared a room with Bannister, Roger Bannister and Chris Chataway. Each of us were president, had been at Oxford, he was president and then I succeeded Roger and then Chris succeeded me. And there were we, three Oxford undergraduates, in the case of Bannister and Chataway pretty well known and me rather less well known, in the Olympic village and an Olympic village I should think is even truer now then it was then, is not a great intellectual powerhouse, it's a whole lot of neurotic, highly trained, dedicated people who have spent eight hours a day for God knows how long in order to get into the Olympic team, let alone to win a medal. And we were seen in our room, sort of humorous, relaxed, talking about theology, politics, philosophy and actually just being as neurotic as everybody else. And Roger wrote quite amusingly in his biography how I used to pretend that I had won the medal and practise by standing on a cardboard box receiving the medal, and it was in his – I quote it actually in my autobiography. I would bow my head and say I've just done this for my nation, not for myself. Total bloody lie [laughing], it would have been totally for myself. Anyway, I did quite well but I mean I wasn't expected to win a gold medal as Bannister was, and this I

did learn. We just had the World Cup and the strain on somebody like Rayne Wooney [Wayne Rooney] who the whole world and the whole of Britain were on tenterhooks that he was going to score the winning goal. And here was eighteen year old, lovely, typical working class boy, now a multimillionaire, but basically what he is with his seventeen year old shopaholic girlfriend, with the whole nation absolutely, and then he broke a bone in his foot. The strain on that boy, and I can understand why he stamped that fellow in the groin, you know, which is not a good thing to do. And Roger knew that he couldn't actually win it, because they threw in an additional event, they were going to have a semi-final and a final. They had a first round, a semi-final and a final and Roger knew, he's not a strong boy Roger, that he couldn't actually win the final if they had that other event which he had to take place in. And he lay in bed groaning the night before and we totally sympathised with him and it really taught me the terrible strain that people at the very, very top who the nation expects… and I was the last white man to be knocked out in the 200 metres and I also ran the last leg for Britain in the four by 400 metre relay. It was a very, very good event because it goes on long enough, the sprints are so short by the time you've… you have four men, each running a lap round the track. I ran the last leg for Britain, which was quite an honour 'cos that's the sort of, the toppish one to run, and we were fifth in the final which isn't bad, you know, to be – I was so bored after the Olympic Games saying, did you win a gold medal? I said, it's bloody difficult to get in the team at all. [laughs] And to be fifth and sixth, 'cos there was I think a black team faster than us. And I handed my spikes to some boy in the, in the…

In the crowd?

…audience, in the crowd and I haven't run a yard from that day to this.

And you don't mind that?

Ah! Running, you can play tennis in a second rate way, you can play golf in a second rate way, you can play cricket. In boxing you can't and in athletics you can't. To me to go running and be beaten by people who I would have laughed at, you know, it's simply you either, you do it at the top, if you've been at the top, and you stay at the top or you quit. But it's not like other sort of normal sports, I think you understand, you've got to win. Or

try to win, you've got to be in a position to win, not because you no longer got the reflexes. And then of course I went to my curacy in Portsea. D'you want to…?

Yes I do, carry on.

I was going to go to – well let me say a bit more. Cuddesdon, I was in a very believing mood, Cuddesdon was the place where you learnt how to be a traditional priest, of which I knew nothing. I mean so many of the boys there, and it was then of course only boys or only men, had been brought up, were servers in their churches, had taught in Sunday school, were friends of the vicar, you know, you can imagine the whole scene. I'd never taught in Sunday school, I didn't know any vicars, I knew one or two naval chaplains and I knew the very distinguished Principal of St Edmund Hall who was a theologian man and indeed a priest, but I hadn't been brought up in sort of closely, in the ecclesiastical and I didn't know the gossip and wasn't very interested in it either, I was more interested in it later. So I absorbed all the stuff of how to do it, you know, and how to take services and how to take confirmation classes and everything. And I was going to go to Hull because I was so determined to be dedicated and go to some terribly boring place.

Okay, just hold on.

Okay?

Yes.

I chose Hull because I really thought that sort of showed I wanted to go to the back streets of Hull, about which I knew nothing and as things had turned out – I mean this is where the sort of holy spirit has sort of come into my life I think – the vicar, 'cos when you go to your first parish it's the vicar you go with who trains you and inspires you, guides you and things. He'd left, he got promoted I think to be a bishop or something, and I then instead went to Portsmouth, Portsea, which of course has been the great cradle in the old days of bishops. I mean it was the Principle who said that's where I think you ought to go, to join a team – and it's totally impossible now – of a Wykehamist vicar, Christopher Pepys of the Pepys diary family, who has been a rower at Oriel in his time, and a really very inspiring

dedicated man. There were four other curates, all Oxbridge, all people of, not well known in the sense that I was, but you know, people who'd got reasonable degrees and so on. And we had this wonderful team spirit there, we worked colossally hard and the church in a way worked. It wasn't a totally working class parish, it was basically a lower middle class parish. We visited for about six hours a day, quite regardless of whether anybody came to church. You see in those days, when you visited those people, they almost always gave you an excuse as to why. Now, in 2006, if a vicar visits, they think their child has been run over by a car. I mean this is the unbelievable change. Anyhow, we got to know, we spent about half an hour or three-quarters of an hour and we each given an area of the parish and we covered the whole ground.

So you'd literally knock on a door…

Knock on the door and say, I'm your curate. You see, the very fact you ask that question makes you realise how things have changed. And they were almost always pleased to see one, and we were sensitive and occasionally one said, would you like to – it was the early days of television – would you like to turn the television set off, allow me to.

And so what did you find when you went into these homes?

Well one found, one learnt a lot about people, one learnt, one I hope got – I think this is true – a rapport with them, so when something went wrong in their lives, they said well that was a very nice young clergyman that came and they would, perhaps one of their daughters was having a difficult marriage or was having an illegitimate child. And then there were some, I remember some, they had a back room in which they didn't want me to go into and I never understood that and I then discovered these were mentally handicapped children, you know, and they were ashamed of that. And I was then, having learnt it I used to then find a way, you know, and get… so one built up a sort of real rapport. But it was quite high clergy density to people, but nevertheless, we did work terribly, terribly hard. And about 120 young people used to come forward every year for confirmation. We would have confirmation classes, we took very great trouble. My very first confirmation class, I was then – well it wasn't quite my first because I was there about eighteen months before I got married – but when I was married the confirmation class come to a little

terraced house that Anne and I had – and these were girls who were about, this was a girls' one, about fifteen in all, sixteen I suppose, fourteen, fifteen and they would start, they would sit round in my little study and their skirts would be about an inch above their knees and by the end of the class [laughs] their skirts were about six inches higher. And this wasn't anything to do with – I mean it was nothing of which they were conscious – and my wife noticed this. Anyhow, one of my very first class, first class candidates was a girl, a very bright girl from the Northern Grammar School in Portsmouth and her father was a dockyard worker. She went to Oxford and married a peer, or he's now a peer, who is now Lord Lieutenant of Essex, and a super, super girl but they were on the whole dockyard workers. And we started, I started a tabloid parish magazine which went very well, which practically every house in the parish took and I thought they would only have to read this to want to come to church, which didn't work out at all. But nevertheless, we had about 300 I suppose at the parish communion, nine thirty.

Oh. That's very good, mm.

And then we would have about 400, 450 in the evening service. The church really worked. We had extraordinary good vicar, we had fairly exceptional curates, let's face it, and the curate who followed me went on to be very distinguished, a Malcolm Johnson who was the openly, later the openly gay clergyman in the Church of England and a brilliant vicar of St Botolph's in the City. He said he came to hate me because – he didn't know me and I didn't know him – when he called they would say to him, the last curate we had was an Olympic runner, what are you?

[both laughing]

And I totally sympathised with him feeling, you know…

But what do you think it was that built up this rapport between the parishioners and yourself?

Well I think we, first of all the climate was much more sympathetic. We're talking now about 1952 or 1953 to fifty-seven.

So it was the austere time after…

The church was still, if the clergy were reasonably good, anyway amongst the lower middle classes there was a response. The thing is totally changed now. And as I said earlier, they used to apologise, the first thing was the reason why you don't come is the vicar because my mother-in-law's… It was possible if, I mean the seeds of decay or decline I think were coming in. But it was sort of respectable. And there wasn't the competition, there wasn't television and people were much poorer, their lifestyles were much more constricted. There wasn't a great deal to do on Sunday evening.

What sort of services did you provide?

We had parish communion at nine thirty – eight o'clock communion first thing, which was not very well attended, but much better attended than it is now, perhaps thirty or forty. Big parish communion where all the confirmation candidates came to and then even service, which was sort of traditional evensong but a pretty good sermon, I mean if you were four or five of you, you were only preaching about once a month, you can, you know take – and when you've got quite a big congregation it pulls things out of you, you know, you don't look at twenty blank faces, which is what you do now, let's face it. So I was there about five years I suppose, four or five years and then quite out of the blue Leonard Wilson who had succeeded the Bishop Barnes of Birmingham, who was the great radical Bishop of Birmingham, and the Birmingham diocese was in a pretty poor state because a lot of clergy wouldn't go and work there because of the Bishop of Birmingham. And Leonard Wilson, who was a very distinguished man in his own right, he was the Bishop of Singapore, captured by the Japanese and tortured and was terrifically brave and eventually went back after the war and confirmed his torturer, his jailer. And he'd gone from, after being released from the prisoner of war camp, went to be Dean of Manchester and then Bishop of Birmingham with a beard and the scars still on his body, from his torturing. And he took over this very rundown diocese and I became his chaplain, which is a considerable honour really. The clergy were rather suspicious, because the diocese was very poor, does the bishop really need a chaplain, you know, paid. It was called domestic chaplain in those days, which was slightly sort of, he's seen as a sort of bag carrier, can't a clergyman do a

bit more than carry the bishop's bags. Anyway, I spent two years there and then I actually learnt what the Church of England was really like and it was a pretty desperate situation then, I could see all the seeds. Those great housing estates, the post-war, 10,000 population housing estates on the outskirts of Birmingham with one priest, with probably in a sort of dual purpose building, partly church, partly hall. And I would go with the bishop to the inductions – put in these new, keen young priests who'd done a curacy somewhere. And I would say to the bishop, you know, you put these chaps here, if he's got a young wife his marriage will be in trouble in five years, if he's single he'll be importuning in public lavatories. And it wasn't altogether an exaggeration. And the strain on these people, 'cos there you are in a community which culturally, the priest has, and perhaps out of 10,000 people there will be a hundred there and they will be rather unrepresentative, sort of elderly women and so on. And the various heads of the, the bishop was at loggerheads with one of his archdeacons and the whole thing was…

Why was this so different from Portsea? Was it the people, the parishioners, the…

Well Portsmouth had a tremendous tradition for years, Portsea particularly, and Portsmouth was a small diocese and it had a rich country hinterland outside Portsmouth and they could afford to pay to subsidise town parishes, and Portsmouth didn't have these great, or very few, sprawling working class overspill council areas. And it also had, or was very good bishops, it didn't have a bishop like Barnes was, who I think in some ways was very good, in some ways very prophetic, a lot of traditional clergy said I don't want to work in that diocese under Bishop Barnes. So it was a rundown – but it was a totally different scene, the vibrant Birmingham secular, progressive, out there pushing forward in the world and the church which was left sort of gasping in the background. I mean there were a few star people like Bryan Green who was a sort of famous evangelical clergyman at the Bull Ring church. So I was there for two years when Mervyn Stockwood, who became Bishop of Southwark – can I stop now? I'm getting a little bit tired.

[break in recording?]

Yes.

The contrast between the diocese in Portsmouth and Birmingham was simply enormous. Where in Portsmouth we had four or five curates, or two or three at least to every sort of town parish. In Birmingham the clergy very often were on their own, just the vicar. And these enormous council estates, these terribly tough areas like Smethwick and Aston, really tough jobs and the clergy on their own and morale pretty low. And I realised then the Church of England had to be basically reorganised in the way that it is, deployed its services. The clergy breakdown was pretty rate, pretty high rate and these chaps were struggling on their own and therefore I formed, when I was chaplain to the bishop, a little group of people who I gathered together saying we must, the Church of England must be reformed – the Church Reform Group, it became the Keble Conference. And I mentioned all this to the bishop, who was a very dear and wonderful man and I said this is what the church should be doing, forming teams of people to support each other. And he said the clergy don't want it, they wouldn't wear it. So I said to the bishop, give me a list of the twenty clergy in the diocese whose judgement you most respect, and I wrote to each of them and outlined my plan of building up teams of clergy who would create, try and create strong centres in areas where the church was pretty limp and pretty dire and pretty limp. And we got together and they all supported what I said, which was I think quite a surprise to the bishop. Well then what happened was, the Bishop of Southwark, who was vicar of Great St Mary's, was appointed to be bishop – sorry, Mervyn Stockwood who was the vicar of Great St Mary's was offered the Bishop of Southwark. Southwark is the massive sprawling south London riverside diocese with a sort of country, Surrey area of a few rich parishes, but basically it's sort of London Bridge down to Woolwich, of massive populations, almost totally one class. He had been – he was a very interesting man – he had been vicar in Bristol. He was a bachelor and as is now totally in the public domain, and his biography shows it acutely, was a tortured homosexual. Tremendously creative and balanced in many ways, but a suppressed gay and he was there in Bristol, did incredibly well, basically working class, became Chairman of the Housing Department of the City Council and then when on to Great St Mary's, where he really did sort of create a sort of religious revival. This was about 1958 or, fifty-eight I would think, or 1960 perhaps, in which he would have an evening service at Great St Mary's and always have pretty star preachers and there would be six hundred people who would be at, I think seven thirty in the evening so that the men – and they were mainly men, 'cos there were fewer women's colleges then – would be able to go to their college chapels and they therefore

wouldn't be conflicting with the college chapel. And he was, very much honoured me by asking me to preach once or twice at these services. And they would queue outside Great St Mary's to get in. And he was then offered – he was left wing, he actually wasn't as left wing as he said he was – he was torn by head and heart; his heart was left wing and his head was absolutely pro the establishment, adored knowing Princess Margaret and all that jazz. And he was asked to be Bishop of Southwark, was very much front page news and that Harold Macmillan should have appointed a left wing man to be at Southwark. He was going to be the man to show that the diocese of Southwark could be turned round and won for Christ in a way that Cambridge had you know, created a revival in Cambridge. And he then asked three or four people to come and join him. He asked John Robinson who was then a dean of a Cambridge college, Eric James who was the chaplain of another one and Bill Skelton who was a very distinguished RAF pilot in the war who was again a college chaplain, and asked me, it was a great honour to be asked, to come and join him to take on four key posts. John Robinson would be Bishop of Woolwich, Skelton to be Rector of Bermondsey, Eric James to be Vicar of Camberwell and me to be Rector of Woolwich and we were going to be the spearheads of revival in the Church of England. I don't think I exaggerate, that was the sort of expectation, that Mervyn would do it and with this sort of team around him of get up and go boys, and I became Rector, offered Rector of Woolwich. And I went down to see this parish on the river, literally the banks of the River Thames, a totally working class – anybody who got on, got out. And it was either slums being pulled down, replaced by council flats and houses or some privately owned really crummy, crappy poverty with appalling landlords and as I say, utterly working class. And there was this fine Georgian church on the banks of the Thames, with galleries and a wonderful view across the river which was almost derelict. It was open, but there were rats in the galleries and there were Queen Victoria's drapings from her funeral [laughs] in the vestries and the lavatory didn't work, nothing worked. There were two daughter churches, which in the days when Woolwich used to have a sort of middle class element, the servants used to go to the daughter churches, it's terrible to think about it really. And there were a handful of people in there, but there was virtually nobody in the parish church. And the vicar was a very good, holy, saintly man, had been there for fourteen years I think on his own, or long time, and you know, was – I don't know how he did it, and he was a bit depressed. And I thought God, can I really sort of face this. Funnily enough, just before I went down I'd been doing a broadcast for the BBC in London and I went down to Woolwich after that

and I was sort of full of, sort of buoyant, you know, here I was on the radio and then I was…

What was the broadcast about?

I don't know, it was some religious, you know, I used to be on quite a lot of broadcasting. Anyway, I accepted.

Did Anne see it before you accepted? Oh, we haven't talked about your – you were married?

Yes I was married.

We haven't talked about that at all.

No. No, well you haven't actually asked me.

That's true. [laughs]

Yes, it's true. I'm sorry, I'm… Yes I married – yes, I must say something about this. When I'd been to, in Portsea for two years I lived in a clergy house with the other, some of the other unmarried curates, with a housekeeper who had a rent free flat at the top in exchange for cooking, but unfortunately she couldn't cook and we nearly starved. I got pneumonia the first year, I was so ill from under-nourishment and so on, and I'd met Anne ski-ing, because I did go on ski-ing holidays when I was a curate there. And after two years we got engaged. I said it was to save Anne from going to be a farm girl on her father's estate. She'd been sent to Reading University to read agriculture so as to run his estate, because she was the eldest daughter and there was no son, which she was going to inherit.

And what was her maiden name?

Anne Bridgeman. A distinguished family; her father was Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, her mother was… was a niece of Lord Halifax. They were a rather sort of upmarket family in one way and another. And the actual estate which my father-in-law had inherited had come from Clive of India, because Clive of India bought it for his younger brother who wanted enough land for, to become an MP and bought this estate outside Shrewsbury. A lovely estate, it wasn't very large, it wasn't an enormous estate, in Shropshire. And because of marriages, Clive had married a Bridgeman and I've married a Bridgeman and so on, and Anne was going to inherit this, which our son actually has now inherited. And she, so didn't go to the Shropshire country life, she came to Portsmouth town life and we were married at rather a posh, St Paul's Knightsbridge, marriage with one of her cousins who was the last aristocratic bishop, Bishop of Norwich, Herbert, who eventually became Lord Powis. We had three bishops involved in our marriage; the Bishop of Portsmouth and the Bishop of Norwich and there was one other bishop, I forget his name now. And I had Chris Chataway as my best man, who'd run with me in the Olympic Games. It was all sort of, picture in *The Times* after it the next day. And then back to the back streets of Portsmouth. No, and she of course came to Birmingham with me where we had – we had our first child when we were in Portsmouth, our second child when we were in Birmingham and our third child when we were in Woolwich. No, I must say, Anne is the most wonderful, loyal, wonderful wife. We've been married for fifty-one years, yes fifty-one years now. I mean had she said no, I would of course had to say no, but she realised this was, you know we really hoped something could be made of the church and here were this little team of us possibly being in the spearhead of creating fundamental change in the church, which I realise was absolutely critical if the church wasn't going to decline and die. So I accepted it and then went back to Anne and said look, we must make a go of this. And it was the toughest eight years of my life and Anne's life.

[End of Track 2]

[Track 3]

This is the fourth of August, second session with Nick Stacey. So here we are, 1960, Mervyn Stockwood has asked you to take over St Mary's Woolwich, will you tell us a bit about that from the beginning?

Yes, because there's some important background in that. Mervyn Stockwood had been incredibly successful at Great St Mary's, the great church at Cambridge, where he got, he specially had his service, evening service at eight thirty in the evening so as not to conflict with the six thirty evening services that there was in every college chapel. Now when I would say he had about six hundred undergraduates coming to that service and I preached myself I think twice or three times, I wasn't at that point particularly well known, but a little bit known, but nevertheless the church was absolutely packed to the galleries. And people thought, you know, could we actually be at the beginning of a slight religious revival. He was then, he was very left wing and rather charismatic, in many ways a very sad figure as we shall probably come on to later, as a sort of suppressed homosexual and there's no, I'm not disclosing anything, it's totally in the public domain, this came out again and again in every biography that's written about him. But anyway, he was appointed to be Bishop of Southwark, which was that great south London diocese, working, mainly working class with fringes of suburbia, but from Westminster to south London, from Westminster right down, Deptford, Bermondsey, Woolwich, massive million and a half I should think, working class people where the church was in a very poor state indeed. And there was a kind of feeling that he might be able to turn this round and it was a great honour really that he asked me to be Rector of Woolwich. He asked Eric James, who was a very well known priest, or is now, to be Vicar of Camberwell and another very talented man, Bill Skelton, who was a hero in the war, he got three DSOs or something by the time he was twenty-one or whatever it was, and I'll probably say a little bit more about him because that's a very interesting story, to come to sort of three key parishes along in this area. And this was really the great hope and I think that we, the three of us in our different roles, felt that we really might with God on our side and hard work and sensitive sort of ministries, might be able to turn the church round. So that was – and then I arrived, as I think I may have said in the last interview, in this forlorn, decaying building with – but a basically wonderful building, Georgian building with a wonderful

site looking over the Thames. So that's really the background. So my first task – oh, what I didn't say and I meant to say, you were talking about my marriage, you made a very good question which I felt rather ashamed, did I discuss it with my wife whether I should accept or not, and I think I said, well I'm sure I did, but I think I answered the question in slightly, in a way, no I decided and my wife could bloody well follow. But in point of fact, what there was, a terribly nice house, a modern – the old rectory which was enormous, typical, you know, rectory had been pulled down and there was a sort of four or five bedroom house with really, by Woolwich standards a very substantial garden, but I knew that my wife would actually want us to accept the challenge because she knew I was slightly bored with being chaplain to the Bishop of Birmingham and of course she would want to come where I wanted to come because… but I knew, if it had been a really impossible house I think I would have said no, I'd have waited for something else to come up in like a similar area but a better house. But the first task was to try and build up a team and here, and we did build up probably the, certainly in academic terms and other ways, the most talented team of staff in the Church of England, I mean probably since the war. And of course absolutely since then there's been nothing like it, nobody has, even as a curate in these days. I mean the first man I think we appointed was a Wykehamist and a Cambridge half blue in athletics in point of fact, but just an aside, who had been a curate somewhere else and he came and joined us. And then the next person – Paul Bibby his name was – his mother was rather a distinguished woman, she was very good looking and her husband, his father, Paul's, had been High Sheriff of Surrey and rather glamorous, he was quite a big figure in the City. And the next person I think we appointed came along, and they all volunteered to come, it was terribly exciting for me, was Bob Hughes, whose father was Richard Hughes the well known author, *High Wind in Jamaica* of course. And he was an Etonian and got a scholarship to Trinity and had been working on a Coventry council estate and had married a most marvellous girl from that estate, quite a different background to himself. A most un-Etonian Etonian, and leftish politically, and he joined us. And then the next person – I've roughly got it in order – was a boy, totally working class boy, brought up in Rainham in Kent and I think whose mother was, I mean may have done a cleaning job. He got a scholarship to Oxford, he got three firsts, which nobody had done, three first class honours degree, since Michael Ramsey who'd been Archbishop of Canterbury. And he was - and I was really scared stiff and again he wanted to come and I thought I can't really have somebody who's in a totally different league intellectually.

And he, well they were all stars but I mean he was almost a particular, he was really humble and unthreatening and wise and they were all very really good Christian, far better Christians…

And what was his name, the…

Brian Cooper. And what had been most surprising to me, after leaving Woolwich he didn't go on to be a bishop, which I'm sure he should have been. He may not have wanted to have been. They've all remained very close friends of mine. Has been a very distinguished figure but always taking very tough parishes, ending up in tough parish up in, in fact in Yorkshire. And then we had, the next man was in fact a chap who did become a bishop, Richard Garrard who was, had been not at Oxford or Cambridge, but had been at the London University and was a very good man, less obviously talented but marvellously pastorally. And he was, I think became, he didn't become a diocesan bishop, he became a suffragan bishop, but was really a brilliant parish priest, he was actually and people warmed to him. And then the next one – this is before we attracted other ministers – was Jeffrey Rowthorn who had, I think he got a first at Cambridge. He was a Welsh boy, sort of from a middle class background and was a star of Cambridge and he came. So we did have an amazing team until the next person that actually came was a boy from the east part of Manchester, working class area of Manchester who – I went to speak up there, a service, of joint service up in – God knows why – and he came up to me, he said he was at a theological college and I think he absolutely liked what I was telling him about what we were trying to do at Woolwich and he said may I come and join you, and he looked like a beatnik, he was a real working class beatnik and was, came - and we'll perhaps talk about more - and ran this incredible disco, which we created in the basement, in the crypt in the church, and was a star and tragically, he then left me, well he left after I had left actually and was left in oh, tough Elephant and Castle parish for too long and became an alcoholic. A lonely man, gay, but I mean not, you know, that was his sexual orientation, and was just a superb man. So it was an amazing team of people that we built up over the first sort of two or three years. And the next task was to do something about the church, which had incredible potential. And we sealed off the galleries of this Georgian church, which were never used except once a year when the, we had the Royal Artillery in the parish, the barracks, and on Remembrance Day these wretched soldiers were marched down to the

service and there they were in the galleries chewing gum and probably playing cards during the service [laughing] and it was always, I usually preached there, the testing was, could one hold them. And some people said you can't possibly close the galleries because once a year some soldiers are conscripted into coming down there. And I used to say to people, that assuming Marks and Spencer's was kept, half of it was only kept open for once a year for some people who were hijacked into going to shop there. So we had this amazing coffee bar looking over the Thames and then we had a sort of lounge, a kind of meeting room, nicely furnished on the opposite gallery. And then we cut off the side aisles. We still left enough space for 350 people and as the number of people in the church was never more than about forty or fifty that was – and I thought however successful we are in getting people to come to church, you know 350, we could also have extra services for that amount. And one thing we did was we got the local voluntary social services to make it their headquarters, which suited very much the borough council, because the borough council wanted to acquire the house they were in for redevelopment and to have this social service, this voluntary social services in the side aisles was, you know, it was caring work they were doing and of course they paid some rent. So that was the first step and I mean raising the money of that was hard graft, I am bound to say. And the builders – and I don't know, tremble at the thought of what I did do, came to me, or the architect came to me and said look, the builders are not prepared to do the work unless there is some guarantee that they're going to get paid. And I wasn't very well, I'm not really very well off but I did have a bit of capital and I said okay, I will set my capital against it, hoping that I would be able to raise the money, which in point of fact I did do. Not least, I may say, from the Jewish tradesmen in Woolwich who owned two of the sort of biggest – 'cos so many of them were multiples – and in my autobiography, which I detail all this in, *Who Cares* it's called, in considerable detail, was quite interesting it was the Jewish people who were simply magnificent. And then we started our strategy of house to house visiting, taking enormous trouble over every baptism, interviews and we used to have mass baptisms and luckily the curates and indeed me, we were all rather fertile at that time and we had for about the first six lot of group baptisms we had, we always had a clergy baby and that was good. And what we used to do, we used to see them individually in their homes for twice and then we'd have all the parents with their babies to come to the coffee bar one evening and have a sort of talk generally and I think we may even have shown a sort of film thing, and show them the church and sort of had a kind of rehearsal and…

And then the church was packed for these and we used to baptise the baby at the sort of chancel steps and then walk up the aisle with the baby in our arms, displaying the baby to all the other parents and this was very, very moving, you know. And so many people since who I've met in Kent who've moved down from Woolwich said you don't know, you christened my baby and I remember this. And then – I must just tell you this little story – when my own, Mary our youngest daughter was christened, we'd asked somebody to be godfather who was in fact very rich and he arrived in a yellow Rolls-Royce and coming out of the church, which I did with all the parents, one parent said, 'Who's the fucker with that car?' and I was like Peter, St Peter, and I denied any knowledge. And we hoped that doing the christenings this way, you know, a few people would as a result, feel well perhaps, you know, we might sort of join up and the answer is, I mean practically nobody did. And then what we did, when we did this transformation of the church – 'cos people when we visited used to say that of course the church is so grey and dark, that's why we don't come. So what we did, we had a series of evenings in which we asked everybody in the parish in turn, about 150 at a time, thinking that perhaps about a third would turn up, to a coffee evening, to show them the church and say you know, here we are and we love you and this is what it all looks like. And the first day about sort of five or ten per cent turned up and then we went through this with the whole – and all the staff turned up for these evenings, we had one about sort of once a week, however long it took to get through the whole, everyone, quite regardless of what their, Church of England or you know, we just asked them, invitation. And that actually again produced practically nothing. So we did actually try really very hard and we had a system by which everybody had to preach the sermon they were going to, read the sermon they were going to preach to one of the members of staff, not to me. When I was a curate I had to do it, to preach, to speak, read the sermons through to see whether he thought it was adequate, but I said I'd, not in a position to comment on all of you, we all took it in turn. Especially with people like Brian Cooper who was the three firsts man. And once, about this time there was the great *Honest to God* and people got confused between the Rector of Woolwich and the Bishop of Woolwich and it was the Bishop of Woolwich who, remember, wrote *Honest to God*. And…

John Robinson.

John Robinson, yes. And I had to preach a sermon about the book, which was quite a complicated book, and I chose Brian Cooper to read my sermon before I preached and he said he'd never heard so much tripe in his life [laughs], that's what, how he said, that I had really misunderstood the book and I must rewrite it. But actually quite funny with that book because a lot of journalists wanted to find out how the people of Woolwich reacted 'cos it was, you know, tremendous publicity at the time. It sold more books than any theological book except the Bible, *Honest to God*. And one, I think it was a *Daily Mail* journalist, came down. I said well come down and talk to our PCC, knowing perfectly well that none of them would have read it, or I think it would probably be fair to say none. They would have read extracts in the papers perhaps and they would have read all about everybody saying how wrong it was and he was an athei… you know, all the sort of rubbish that was talked. It was a difficult book. The headline was, our image of God must go, you know, you may remember. And before the meeting, I warned them that this journalist was going to come to PCC and I said look, don't knock it, what I'm going to do is to let her ask you questions and if you get a bit stuck you can say I will probably come in and help you if you sort of comment. And of course she did, came and wanted us, took passage after passage which, out of their context, you know. And we rather floored her and I said to the person who she'd asked the question of, I think you'll find the answer to another point the bishop makes on page so-and-so and if you read that, I think you'll, it'll explain what the bishop was saying. So we rather floored her, so I did, when I took her back, give her two or three large whiskies and soda [laughs] in the rectory, because it rather spoilt her story. But the long and the short of it was that we really did I think do almost everything that one could reasonably do to try and attract people to come to worship in the church and the answer was really, we about trebled the congregation from a very low base anyway. And then we opened up the crypt, which we did after the galleries, and this became run by Paul Johnson, had genius with young people. And probation officers fought to get their kids who were on probation to become members. And we did it, we had the best of everything, it was a sort of point we made that so often working class kids get the worst of everything, so that everything's sort of tatty and they're exploited by people. We had the best towels in the loo, we had the best recorder disco system. And it was apparently, it was one of the first, it was one of the best discos in London, technically I think. And then we decided to have a bar and this created absolute riot with questions being asked in Parliament as to Nick Stacey having a bar in his crypt and I went on the

radio a number of times. We had letters from Japan saying what was going on here. Oh, it sort of became like an absurd, worldwide story, it was abso… and I said, I remember saying on the wireless to some pompous peer whose son was at university, your son can drink in the junior common room and you are saying that working class kids whose taxes are paying for your son to go to the university should not be able to drink in a controlled thing run by an outstandingly good priest in a sensible way and this is, you know, you drive me mad. So, we opened the crypt and that too was a very great success and they, once they, every now and again they did a service, the kids all did their own service, which again was very moving. But what was interesting, that the one thing that really took off – well the crypt took off – but the thing, the sort of spontaneous thing that took off was when we started in the, it was a church school, the church school hall tombola, bingo – it's the same thing isn't it? We agonised whether we really ought to start tombola.

Was the church school hall, was the church school close to the church?

Yes, yes.

The buildings were side by side?

No, they were about three hundred yards apart, yes. But we thought, and we had I think it was half a crown, you know, we're talking about the sixties, and the prize was a fiver or something, you know. And we started, because we wanted to raise some money 'cos raising money from the start was an absolute nightmare. Am I rambling on too much?

No, no, no, this is perfect.

'Cos anybody who wants to know the full story can read *Who Cares*, I've tried to sort of pick out the, sort of some of the most interesting bits.

Yes, it's the stories that…

It became packed. We could not keep the people out. We asked them to come to the gallery to see what we'd done in the church and sort of ten per cent turn up, and they clung

even, they clung to the wall bars by the side of the walls. I used to, I couldn't face going to the thing because it is so mind-bogglingly boring, but I quite often used to go down when it ended just to say hi, you know, able to meet a lot of – people would occasionally, God bless, say look, can you help me with this or that. So that took off and it did actually raise, even paying only one and sixpence or two bob or whatever it was, a ticket. Of course it meant, two and six was worth much more than it is now. It really made us quite a lot of money.

Now in your book, but I just want to bring it out here, you actually got very little financial help from the diocese, is that correct?

None. Really, to all intents, none. The bishop had to agree to me to me employing staff. He I think was very pleased that some of these outstanding people wanted to come and work at Woolwich, they were excited about what we were trying to do, and he never went to committees, the bishop. He rather made a point, I don't go to… and there was committees, diocesan committees made up mainly of sort of clergy who decided which parishes should have money for curates and totally understandably they said, why should Stacey have four or five curates and his population, if you equate it, didn't justify that. The kind of work that you were trying to do, I think that Stockwood thought could be exciting because it could be repeated if it worked. So luckily I had a column in the *Daily Herald* and a column in the *London Evening News*. In the *Evening News* they would ring me and they would have their sort of editorial meeting at about half past eight in the morning and they would ring me at nine if they wanted an article, which would have to be about, I think it was usually about 1,200 words. And it was usually a comment piece on something that happened in the news, you know, a clergyman misbehaves in some way and I would then write a piece saying that the clergy are human like everybody else, whatever it was, you know. And I had to have it rung through by eleven. And I had first of all to be actually free, I mean it was so important financially, and the money I got for one article paid a curate's salary for a month. So I couldn't do it, one I had to decide absolutely at once, am I capable, have I got enough to say and secondly could I do it in two hours, because I had to ring it through to a copytaker as you had in those days, you couldn't sort of e-mail it through, dictate it through the copy… and it would then be on the street I think at, the two thirty edition. That was the *Evening News*, the *Herald* I did have

more time. But the adrenalin, I mean I look back on some of those articles, but they kept on asking me because I always got it through in time, which of course is critical because they've allocated that space for the piece. But I owe an enormous amount to the *Daily Herald* and the *London Evening News* 'cos they really paid for, they paid for the staff for the first three or four years.

That's fantastic, it's a great facility that you had to be able to do that.

I think it probably, yes.

I mean obviously you'd honed it over the years, I know that you know, you've always enjoyed writing.

Well you're probably a much greater expert as a writer. Yes, it was lucky I had that, otherwise we couldn't, I couldn't have kept the show on the road. Well then, after being there four years, we'd had a good deal of publicity because we were doing really quite exciting things and – God, what was his name? The literary agent, Curtis Brown literary, the head of it, came to me and said would you like to write a sort of, well I think was it, did he even say a book the first time, or an article or something. And I said, well look, the awful truth is, we have done a lot, we've touched a great many lives. We used to have 1,500 people coming through the church a week for coffee bar, for meetings, some to come and pray quietly, you know, when some disaster had ended, and we had all these kids in the crypt. But the number of the congregation has only gone up about three times, which most congregations during the sixties were actually going down, but nevertheless the congregation we had was perhaps 100, 150 people in relation to the population and also in relation to a much wider population could easily have got to us was absolutely miniscule. And therefore if I write an article telling the truth about this, I'll have to say that in churchgoing terms it was a failure, in churchgoing terms, and I know the way that the bishops, 'cos I know when I was chaplain to the Bishop of Birmingham he judged the sort of success of a vicar by the number of people that went and worshipped round the Lord's table on the Lord's day and that wasn't unreasonable. There is much more involved in the church than that, but that is a kind of yardstick of the chap's competence and success and in that sense, honestly we'd failed. Sorry, d'you want to stop now?

No.

I hope I'm not running out of steam.

No, no you're not at all, I was just checking the machine.

And that's the story that I'm going to tell, I'm going to say all the things we tried to do, the quality of the staff we had and they way they worked – they worked their guts out and we never, we all got, we joined together at holy communion every morning at seven o'clock in the morning and we worked through till ten o'clock at night and because we lived in the parish the only professional people in the parish we were being called on at the weekends, as you know, social workers weren't there, the doctors weren't there, there was nobody there except us. So we worked our guts out. And that's the story I'm going to tell and that is the story that I did tell in the – oh it was for *The Observer*. And the editor of the colour supplement of *The Observer* had given it a tremendous spread and they sent a photographer down – I think I must just tell you this – to take pictures and he was a very famous photographer. You would actually even probably have known him. He was the man that did the Sharpeville Massacre.

Oh.

He was the photographer who'd – and I had set aside, because we were used to people coming down and taking photographs of what we were doing – a couple of hours to be with him, I had a sort of fairly stock routine and I had put two hours aside, of showing them this and that and driving round the parish. And he said I'm staying for a week. I was, thought golly, which he did. And that was the sort of integrity, he wanted to sort of get the feel of, you know, really top class photographers, and stayed a week and did. I can't remember whether he actually stayed in the rectory or not, but he may have come down for the day. Anyway that was, so it was a very big article with photographs and it really touched – no, but then the colour supplement editor rang and said I want to call it 'A Mission's Failure' and I said can you not put a question mark. And he said look, that really would weaken the article. I was being paid for the article enough to pay a curate's

salary for a year and I thought, you know, let it be. And of course it touched a nerve, an amazing nerve in the Church of England. Oh, the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote against it. The Archbishop of York said I was rocking the boat. Hundreds wrote and what was quite interesting, they all wanted to make reasons why we'd failed in churchgoing terms. They were too upper class, our curates. Well in point of fact they were able to relate. Upper class people who care can relate very easily to all classes, it's very often working class people or lower middle class people who find it difficult to relate to upper middle class people. This was a totally working class area and of course we had working class, two or three working class curates, certainly the east Manchester boy and to, and Brian Cooper, the three firsts man, and a lower middle class, sort of middle class person in Richard Garrard. They all related, you know. And I knew that and I used to say however awful I am, and I may have been awful, they were marvellous. So they wrote and said you had too many upper class and they were too clever, and it's often clever people who actually are able to make things simpler. It's people who aren't very clever who are very verbose. Now other people, other clergy wrote and said it was a great encouragement because they were soldiering away in similar areas with of course far less support and look, they were finding it just as difficult. And in that sense it was a great encouragement. But the person who I think was most shattered by it was the Bishop of Southwark and he never spoke to me, he never asked to see me to discuss it with me, which was absolutely – here was one of his clergy who had written the piece which by any standard, every national newspaper I think had commented about it or the bishops had through the papers and so on. He had been, gone to Southwark hoping that you know, that with his people like me he could revive the church on traditional terms and what I was actually saying, that it can't be done. People wanted excuses as to why I had failed, it was the failure of me, it was the failure of my staff, it was, we hadn't been there long enough, you know. I wrote this after about four or five years, you know, if you couldn't get some response after four or five years. They wanted to find reasons. When the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote he said it's wrong to judge the success or failure of the church by the number of people who go to church. And I said we've touched the lives of thousands of people in our funerals, our marriages, but they didn't come to church but it meant a lot to them. And I got reverberations, I shall come on to this when we talk about being Director of Social Services in Kent, because a lot of people from Woolwich moved down to the Medway towns and they used to come to me when I was addressing home help meetings, who were

home helps, people would come down, would say you won't remember me but you held my father's hand when he was dying in the hospital, we were chaplain to the hospital as well. And he couldn't face that what I had said was something terribly important and I think had the church done what we had done in Woolwich and create a few strong centres, because I have yet to come on about getting the free churches involved, it would not be in its now absolutely pathetic, tragic, tragic state that it's now in. And it was about a year after this article came out, Stockwood and I did a television programme together. It was the first time we'd met and to discuss the state of the church. And he then in that programme admitted that, you know, I was right. He'd never admitted it to me, he was sort of forced, I think more by the interviewer. I'm sure that television programme is in the libraries. And I was really pretty shaken by his response. It wasn't, you know, I think you're wrong or to put an arm round me, because it was fairly shattering, it really, it took the stuffing really out of us all and it was sad. But then the other great thing we did of course, was to persuade that the – it was then called the Presbyterian Church, which had been built in the nineteenth century I think or the eighteenth century, for the Scottish members of the Royal Artillery so they could go to church. But they had a congregation about the same size as ours. Perhaps slightly smaller. And they decided to join us and that again was an absolute breakthrough. And I, they were going to come, they were going to give up their own church, we would then share the sort of running expenses, we were going to have separate morning services – we had a nine thirty parish communion and they were having eleven o'clock, their normal time service, and a joint evening service.

Was it your initiative, did you go to them?

Yes, yes because we had, it's almost impossible to summarise, we did so many things and somebody who was really going to do research would need to read the book, but we used to have a week of Christian unity. So I got little groups together from the other churches and in the case of both the Methodists and the Presbyterians we had a sort of, you know, house groups of people and they used to come and say after about, meeting for about – it was Lent, used to have Lent, about… we agree about everything and of course we do basically. And the Presbyterians said this is absurd, here are we crippled with – they had a large church – we joined forces. And the Methodist church also congregation, they came, we had joint things with them. But because the Methodist church was able to lend its hall

to a school for school dinners, was financially viable so there was no incentive upon the Methodist minister, who was a lovely man, to join us too, although the congregation I thin would have liked to have done. A Methodist minister of a local church did join us however, without his church, he wanted to bring his church along too but that was in a more suburban part, just on the edge of the – it was in Shooters Hill, not in Woolwich. Anyhow, the Presbyterians said we, and the Presbyterian minister was obviously, you know, sympathetic – he was a lovely man. So I then went to the Archbishop of Canterbury and said we've got this arrangement which the Presbyterians, which they were then called, now the United Reform Church, are coming to join us. He said, you can't, it's illegal. I didn't say fuck off, but I terribly nearly did. He said it's illegal because of the Act of 1549 forbids it. But to be fair to him, my initial reaction was, you know, this is simply unbelievable. But he did say look, I see the point, I will get, I will aim to get the law changed, which it took him five tortuous years in which he set up a special committee, which was so anti the idea of sharing churches that a group of us got together and got it thrown out – I wasn't in the convocation or church assembly, but I got a number of friends to say this report is such absolute crap you must – you don't mind me using this language? – we must, they chucked it out and then the new sensible report, and after five years it was, but the Presbyterians to their great credit said on the basis of the promise of the Archbishop of Canterbury they will come. So we had then the Presbyterian church in with the Presbyterian minister, a local Methodist minister joined us to be part of the staff and he was going to teach liberal studies, get paid for that, which was a great opportunity of actually talking about Christianity because liberal studies is what that sort of thing's about and that's why a lot of the lecturers in those liberal studies, to the colleges where workers were doing three days a week and whatever it was, withdrawal things. And then we had eventually a Roman Catholic priest came to join us. So we did have an ecumenical team, we were about twelve, ten or twelve in the end. And I believe then, in spite of the churchgoing response, which was the – we were very, very well known in the community, in the whole borough really – was the way ahead for the church. And we started this housing association, which I ran for my last four years of…

That's the Quadrant Housing Association.

For homeless families.

Yes. Tell me more about that.

Well the story of that's quite – I was asked to go and give a talk to a dining club which had its dining in Quaglino's, which is a sort of smart restaurant in Soho I think it is, or West End, and they were sort of Oxbridge, people who'd been at Oxbridge together who were highfliers, and I told them about the sort of problems we had and homelessness was absolutely critical. There was this old, terrible old workhouse where mothers went with their children, they didn't allow husbands there and we used to have, used to have it, at weekends they would come to the rectory and there would be a couple, mother and father, and a couple of kids and the little daughter had always seemed to just wet her knickers, perhaps the nerv… you know, and it was wet outside and the story was that he'd been in Woolwich doing his National Service and he was out of work and he'd come down and felt he'd get the job in London, but then there was nowhere to live. And for me to have to say, you know, I couldn't have them all in my own house, although at one point the clergy house we had, they did, they made a flat available which was a rather fascinating story of their own sort of sacrifice, they gave up a flat, sort of reorganised their own housing in that house we had. Look, I'm afraid your wife will have to, your mother will have to go and you'll have to go and doss down the best you can. So we started this housing and so – no, I told them about this and they said well, can we come and help, and together we started this housing association, we had nothing, we didn't, really no money. And it developed, we got the GLC, it was the LCC, the GLC was taken over way from the GLC and we persuaded the GLC to give us 100 per cent grants, which up to then we'd had to get twenty-five per cent of charitable money and we had a great breakthrough, so the thing began to expand really fast and I handed, when I left Woolwich to go to Oxfam, somebody else took it over, very fine man who'd been a GLC councillor in fact.

So what did you do, you got houses?

Yes, well what we did, yes that was, we had a very, a very significant idea. In certain parts of – not our actual parish because that was almost all council house, but just outside the parish were terraced houses with long back additions, which they had a pretty narrow frontage but they went back a long way and they were houses which the average sort of

working class, which were too big for the working class family, they would have been lived in as one unit, sort of in earlier times by one sort of, people who were sort of one rung up the ladder. And we said we can make two, enable two families to live in each of these houses, therefore we were doubling the housing, 'cos there were people sort of rattling around in these houses and by buying them they were able then afford to move out to sort of more salubrious, the sort of Eltham areas. So we did it this way which was really a great breakthrough. Eventually when we got 100 per cent funding I got Wates – and we got local builders to do these conversions to start with, but when we were able to expand at a considerable scale, we got Wates the big building firm, there was a very, very charismatic Chairman, Neil Wates at that time, who died very young, tragically. He got a small, you know, a team going to do this. So it was, that was a really very exciting development. We ran it from an office we had created in the church and when I left it left the church and I'm glad it did because it was able to no longer - as long as I was running it, it was alright. So we had that going on as well. Can I have a break now. [sighs]

What else, what other initiatives?

Yes well, there are other things, I mean I haven't sort of covered – we started the Samaritans. And Bob Hughes, he was the old Etonian Welsh son of Richard Hughes, he was running that. And then we were in touch with some sort of middle class people in Blackheath who wanted to help and I said look, how about starting a family planning clinic in this terrible workhouse with the mothers and children. Of course most of them, poor darlings, were there because they hadn't got involved in family planning. And we did it – my wife joined this team – and they had it on the premises, so even then they found it difficult to, you know, the child, to get to the little office that they had was having a cough that day or they had forgotten or some reason or other, but nevertheless it was a really great success and they got a number of people into taking the pill or condoms, whatever. But my wife had one woman who she explained, who wasn't terribly bright, bless her, went through the whole thing about exactly – and she said, oh the trouble is, I don't want to deny my husband his only hobby. And she said, dear girl, this is the great thing about this, this is the way he can exercise his only hobby as often as he likes.

[laughs]

So we did have, we had lots of, I mean this actually is a slight exaggeration, but it's only a slight exaggeration, I was three years at Oxford, I was two years at a seminary and then I end up in this working class parish in Woolwich and the three questions, or four questions that were asked me most by the, not by the churchgoers, by the people of the area, were one, do you know a safe abortionist – this was before abortion was legal. 'Cos people used to, mothers used to come a great deal to me and to the other staff and say look, my daughter's having a baby, she was raped. And I was of course told the whole story, which was… and I say yes, I'm sure from what you say she was raped, and she could then go to say to her neighbours, I mean it's amazing the transformation of attitudes now, but in those days in working class culture it was, you know, amongst the mothers anyway, it was not good to have a daughter who had a… And so abortion was a very, very key issue. Could I find a safe abortionist. Secondly, could I find a money lender that wasn't a crook. Thirdly, could I find them somewhere to live. And the fourthly, would I bless their football coupons because they thought that was a better chance of winning.

[laughs]

And… [laughs] and of course the answer is I couldn't do anything about the first two and the home women, nor could I in any significant way, you know, the homelessness was terrible in those days in London – where Shelter started and we got involved with helping Shelter and things. But the family planning clinic in that awful hostel was, eventually the hostel was closed. And the whole thing smelt of stale cabbage and pee, you know, you can… So, what else have we left out in…? Oh, perhaps one more thing. I wrote the article in *The Observer* and had this sort of massive criticism from all sides of the church. At that point the diocese of Southwark was scrapping small, what they called rural deaneries, which was a ridiculous name at the time, which was about sort of eight or ten parishes together being in a sort of little group with a rural dean. They were going to create a borough, a borough dean which was coterminous with the borough, this was the same time as the boroughs Woolwich and Greenwich were being combined to a population of about 250,000 people and there was going to be a new post of borough dean. I may say it wasn't paid, but it was you know, the idea that he was the sort of leader of what were about sixty or seventy clergy there would be in the borough of a quarter of a million. And

the bishop said that it would be elected and not appointed by him and he bitterly regretted that decision, because to his great surprise I who was, you know, the evil boy in the Church of England, the failure man was elected to be the dean.

[laughs]

And he couldn't change, having agreed that they should – which I was very pleased about. I mean actually it showed, you see amongst the people who sort of really sort of knew what the situation was, they saw what we had done I think had been sensible and they saw the difficulties and they would have been encouraged. Well after eight years we, Anne and I decided that we really had done, one was running out of steam and we'd got the team and everything, and the Bishop of Southwark at some point I think had said, or said to somebody, Stacey will never get a job for years in the church.

Can I, sorry, interrupt and say one more thing and that is that you encouraged at one point all the clergy to have paid…

Yes, yes almost all, yes. We knew we couldn't – thank you so much – that we couldn't sustain. This is why it's so helpful you've read the book because… That after the four, after the failure of the [incomp] we couldn't sustain all of us being paid by the church, so we agreed that Richard Garrard would stay as the pastoral parish priest, because he was actually brilliant at, and I would run the housing association, do my journalism, be the dean of the borough and so on, therefore, which through combinations I could, wouldn't be a – 'cos I got also, I did get paid, I was the one that did get paid. But this is quite interesting, the Rector of Woolwich got paid nineteen, a thousand pounds a year in 1900 and a thousand pounds in 1960.

Oh my goodness.

Anyway, this actually too was – thank you so much for bringing me back to this – the Methodist minister was already actually doing liberal studies, the Roman Catholic priest was teaching girls RI at a comprehensive, one comprehensive, Jeremy Hurst, the Wykehamist, he was teaching at one of the first, Crown Woods, the first comprehensive

school, Crown Woods, and he was teaching RI, I think for a thousand children, probably you know, through… and who, what else did we have? Was anybody…? Oh, the Presbyterian minister was paid by them. So anyhow, we had three or four people – oh no, Richard Christian who came was another who came at the end, he was teaching at another comprehensive school. And when I thought with Sunday school we used to have perhaps about twenty-five kids in the Sunday school and they were sent to Sunday school so their parents could have sex on Sunday morning, you know, it was a perfectly reasonable thing. And then these priests were able to teach RI through the whole school and be paid for it and being paid far better for it than they would be paid as, you know, they were paid as a curate. So we were really financially really pretty viable by going out to work and I think had more clergy, you know, if the whole pattern of what we had done, which could only be done by closing of a lot of churches, which have no architectural value and creating strong teams, multi-purpose, multi-denominational, with a number of the staff going out and working in key secular roles, the church would still be in difficulties but it wouldn't be in a totally tragic – and its image, its image would be so much better, because I think people did feel that although they weren't mad to come to church, that the church was doing something really worthwhile because indeed it was, with Samaritans, housing the homeless, family planning clinics, crypt for discos for teenagers on probation and so on. So now we're back to after eight years Anne and I decided our three children were, to say they were, they all went to the nursery school, and this is important. The nursery school was terribly over-subscribed and the nursery school head, who was a marvellous woman, would only take the children of publicans and prisoners and the clergy and for three, for very good reasons, because the children whose fathers were prisoners weren't around, the children whose fathers were publicans were at work in the evening, and the children of the clergy were… So all our children had their first education in the nursery school.

What are your children's names?

The children – Caroline's the eldest, David is the second and Mary is the third. And they've all actually grown up to be – shall I talk, say something?

Yes, yes.

Incredibly, we're marvellously lucky. Caroline, our eldest, is a journalist, you know, just having given up being on *The Independent*. Twice the restaurant critic of the year, but is a now freelance journalist. David, our son, was a film producer and won an Emmy in New York for a film, which is a sort of prize you get for films. But he was very fortunate and he inherited his grandfather's estate in Shropshire and really couldn't combine the two, so he gave – and it meant him being in London during the week and his wife was up in Shropshire and so on and he never, although he was a really good film producer, he never actually personally produced a major film himself. He cast Hugh Grant in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and I think he thought that he was going to be asked to produce that. It's a tough, bitchy world. And as David said to me, that in a way he wasn't hungry enough to want to go on in that tough, competitive world, so he's, went back to Shropshire and is running his estate and he also started an organic milk business, 'cos he's very keen on organic, his own farm, which he then sold to an American company who wanted to get a foot in the organic milk and yogurt scene in England at a time when organic milk sales were going up exponentially. And having sold it to him at quite a lucky amount of money, 'cos he had no money, 'cos the estate was in trust, he couldn't put his money and these days if Sainsbury's or Tesco sort of say we don't want your thing any more, you're pretty well doomed, as you know. But they hadn't done, but had they done he would have had to have wound the thing up, and they bought it and they then asked him if he would be marketing director of the firm that they set up – they bought a number of small organic things. So he combines that with running his estate. And then Mary, our youngest, she is chairman of employment tribunals and handled the biggest case there's yet been of the Merrill Lynch employee, sued Merrill Lynch the bankers for seven point five million for sex discrimination. And that was an enormous responsibility. She became first a part-time chairman of employment tribunals at thirty-five, it's the youngest you can be. Then when she was I think forty-two or forty-three she became a fulltime one and she was chosen to handle this case. And of course Merrill Lynch, and indeed the whole City was really to some extent on tenterhooks because had Mary said Merrill Lynch must pay, let us say, half or even a third, a quarter of what this woman was asking, this would have had – so our merchant bank friends said – repercussions, and people will say they really will be very, very unwilling to employ women if they can possibly avoid it. And furthermore, Merrill Lynch spent, had the very, very best QCs in the country to defend their case and pulled in employees from all over the world, you know, who'd had some relationship with

this, dealings professional with this woman. And luckily, she hadn't got a case, so I mean Mary's task was fairly easy although the head of all the tribunal chairmen wrote to Mary and said how well the case had been handled, but what Mary was frightened that she would be terrorised by these, because she was only about forty – it was about two years ago – forty-three or forty-four and looks about twenty-seven. But it all went really very well. But she before that was a partner in Anderson's, which is the solicitors firm that does the big, all the big union business.

Isn't it Thompsons?

Thompsons, the solicitors, yes. It's a famous, it's a famous firm. And she made, she's been employed by, she was the taxi drivers' solicitor, you know, Thompsons had there and a lot of the unions, and she did a lot of work for the unions, when unfair sackings and that sort of thing went, so – and that is a fascinating job being chairman, it's a very responsible, a very responsible job. So anyhow, that's just what has happened to our children.

Yes, but back, back.

But after, we didn't send them to the local primary school. I think we were right in doing that, I think it would have been difficult for them. They did get attacked, not really sort of attacked, they got tea… you know, round the streets. There was, is one quite pleasant story. We had a problem, the house next door to the rectory was a house with a problem family and there were about eight children and the house really was absolutely chaotic and the children used to lean over the fence and call our children and they used to say, 'Your dad's a silly old fucker', which is perfectly sort of normal language. Anne says, it isn't true, but I'm pretty well sure that Mary when she was quite young, about five or six, when I was taking the service in church up at the altar, she sort of shouted out, 'That's my dad, he's an old fucker'. It may be apocryphal that, but I don't think it is because I'm sure somebody in the congregation said they heard, but Anne who had the child by her side might have felt that if she'd said it, she'd failed. But we were fortunate to be able to pay for them to go to school in Blackheath, but this actually raises quite an important point for the situation in church today, particularly for secondary, that married clergy with children, specially with teenage or children that are going to become teenager, are extremely

unwilling to go and work in places like Woolwich and Bermondsey, because in the old days their children when they became eleven would have gone to a local grammar school. There is no way, they know that and they have to go to the local, what is almost inevitably a sink comprehensive. And that's why – it's probably not an exaggeration - the majority of clergy now in east London and south east London, the riverside areas, are gay because they don't have that problem. And but for the gay clergy, the church would collapse and therefore the present attitude about the Nigerian bishops putting poor old Rowan across a barrel is absolutely unbelievable. So we decided that we ought to go. And as no job – I wasn't, to be fair, terribly keen on taking another job in the church. I think that had I been offered St Martin's-in-the-Field, I mean St Martin's-in-the-Field wasn't vacant, but there might have been sort of three or four jobs in the church that had I been offered – but I mean nobody showed absolutely the least bit interest in me [laughs], in employing me in the church. And just by chance – and I had decided in fact I was going if something didn't turn up in the next sort of six months or so, I was going to buy a house in Blackheath where our children were at school, [incomp] house, and aim to do freelance journalism, or perhaps continue with the housing association, or a bit of both. And then literally, putting away *The Observer*, this is, I don't know whether it is this hand of God or the spirit of God, but two or three things have happened to me which have been sort of amazing. *The Observer* in the dustbin, sort of late, sort of on Wednesday, it just, an ad caught my eye about a Deputy Director for Oxfam. I saw – and I knew about Oxfam, we'd raised money for it and you know, everybody knew about Oxfam. And I thought now this could be – and I was obviously concerned about the Third World, I'd been out to Africa a couple of times when I was at Woolwich to do, give talks and things just for short period and very sort of wound up about.

What, just sort of a talking assignment or…

Yes, the Bishop, for instance the Bishop of Ghana's brother was the chief probationer officer in Woolwich and he died of cancer and I'd tried to look after him and the Bishop was a very distinguished – Reeves I think his name was – a very distinguished, he was a monk and Bishop of Ghana. He said would I, and he wanted a little thank you thing so he asked me out for a fortnight. And then I went out to South Africa. I can't think, oh yes that was – no it wasn't, that was the Bishop Johannesburg whose brother was the

probationer officer and who asked me out to Johannesburg, but the Bishop of Ghana asked me for some reason, I can't remember. Anyway, I'd been to those two places so I knew about Africa. But I saw that the closing dates had gone past but I, nevertheless I wrote in and said I'm terribly sorry, I'm late but I've only just seen your ad. And I think I got an acknowledgement and sort of no more, but I suddenly discovered that 330 other people had applied. Anyway, I was going, I'd agreed to go out and speak to prisoners doing – there are five penitentiaries, Canadian, not state penitentiaries but national penitentiaries, all round a place called Kingston, in Canada. And I somehow got to know, I think the chaplain of one of these peniten… the biggest one had come to Woolwich to see what we were doing, we had quite a lot of people come to Woolwich. Now he asked me to go and come and conduct a mission to these, there were four men's ones and one woman's one and the Canadian government had sponsored this because they were worried about morale in these prisons. Almost all the prisoners were doing life sentences and he said that they, he asked me to come to give them hope. I'm a much humbler man now than I was then. I thought, why I ever accepted I don't know, but I did accept. And I think I let Oxfam, I was going to be away. I think they did, Oxfam gave me some indication they could be interested in me anyway and I said look, I'm going to be away, I've committed to this thing but you know, I will come back even in the middle if needs be, but I was only away for ten days I think. And this actually, this experience in those penitentiaries was a really most ama… I did write about it in *Who Cares*, a most amazing experience. It was voluntary and this, as they had a lousy life - they were really rough these penitentiaries, tough by even sort of Wormwood Scrubs kind of standards. Normally if they had sort of speakers to come, quite a lot of people would come for the first time to see what it was like, merely to get out of their cell and the main penitentiary, which I started in, one of the guards had been murdered the week before and everybody was rather on tenterhooks, you know, all the prisoners getting together, 'cos that's always a difficult kind of situation, potentially difficult. And to have an Englishman with a sort of slightly upper class accent, age what, I don't know, thirty-nine or so, forty, to come, who was a clergyman, God's sake, to give them hope was really a pretty sort of odd assignment. Anyhow I, God I did sweat and agonise and when they – and the first talk was going to be absolutely key, 'cos if I got that wrong nobody would turn up, or very few. And I prepared something and I realised when I saw there were about three or four hundred faces looking at me, that what I'd prepared was… it wasn't… so I extemporised. And luckily, oh dear God, it worked.

What did you tell them?

I can't remember, I mean I told them, I may have told them perhaps about Hiroshima, you know, perhaps a simply, slightly story of my life and identify why the suffering which they were having, you know, and seen. I forget, but hopefully it was – I'm not at all a holy man but sort of God kind of spoke through to me and quite a lot. I then actually prepared the others, I got the feel of them during the night after I'd done my first one in the evening. And I then did the same, I extemporised in the same way for the other three and I did these four prisons a day, which was quite a tough, quite enough. And the women's prison was in some way, though much the smallest, the most difficult and tragic. I was allocated a woman prisoner who'd put her last three babies in the deep freeze, you know, and you sort of… And there was one particular prisoner who was a brilliant man and he'd been the organist at some cathedral and he'd abused boys and he did, they would come and see me or the chaplain I think asked me to see one or two, and he came to each and said, look, try to persuade him to start playing the organ again in the prison, you know, he was totally destroyed and the culture to a sort of sensitive, educated, musical man. And I didn't succeed. Anyhow, the last one was going to be questions, the theory, and I was told they don't ask questions because they're terrified of making fools of themselves and having the mickey taken out of them when they go back on to the wings. And I said well look, I announced there were going to, you know, I said I've talked to you, now you can bloody well talk to me, you know, tell me things. And the chaplain, the governor, the governor you know, the chaplain were all sort of sitting there. The chaplain had got some questions written down which he had created in case nobody did. And I did I think say, look, I do beg you to because I've been told that you may not and if I've been any bloody use you'll ask. Anyhow, somebody got up and asked and I nearly went and put my arms round him, but that would have been unseemly. [laughs] In every possible way. And then it started, them getting up and said, you know, really intimate things like, I am gay and I can't help being gay. They really… and it was… and then they gave me a thing in the – I'll read it to you at lunch – a poem which they had written on a screen. Anyhow, but anyhow, I'm sort of sidestepping there. And Oxfam, I finished these talks and I was going down for five days to stay with my godfather who had rented Goldeneye, which is that place where James Bond, where Fleming had written his Bond stories. But on my way, it was catching

an aeroplane from Montreal I think, and a great friend of mine at Oxford, called John Worsley, sister was a great friend of mine, we were all at Oxford together, had married the Duke of Kent, Katharine Worsley she was. And I called in on him on the way because I'd had, I'd picked up a cable from Oxfam saying there's no need for you to return, just in fact before my last, the question which I thought meant that I had not been shortlisted. I showed that to John Worsley who was a banker in Montreal, and he said I think it means that you have been shortlisted, they don't want to see you, they want to see you when you get back. So I then rang, or I got him to ring Oxfam saying, Nick Stacey's rather confused. It did mean that I had in fact been shortlisted. I think I was down to the last two. And I then went to Gold – it was called Goldeneye, and amazing contrast from being in the morning in the penitentiary with 500 of these chaps, most of them doing life sentences, and then in the evening swimming in Montego Bay, knowing that I'd been shortlisted for Oxfam. And then – I was appointed to Oxfam. That's a good time to stop, it's one o'clock.

[break in recording]

So, Oxfam, 1968. Tell me what you found when you got there.

Well first of all, I was absolutely thrilled to be offered the job. I didn't realise actually at the time just how many other people had applied. And I knew like every sort of thoughtful person, knew about Oxfam. It had just being going about twenty-five years when I went and it was a very thriving, exciting, dynamic and in terms of spending the money responsibly, it was absolutely on the ball. But I did sense that after I had been there for quite a short time it actually did need a slightly new look. It had sort of risen on a tide of optimism about the Third World, of what could be done. And of course the trouble with all voluntary bodies, they do have to slightly exaggerate what they are doing to bring in the money. The truth was that the problem of the Third World was enormous and of course it's been made even greater by the competence of the people, the governments, the elected governments or whatever governments they have. And the thing that sort of brought home to me that when Harold Wilson cut the overseas aid budget by ten per cent for one year only, that represented more money than Oxfam had raised in its previous twenty-five years. And you see, that put the whole thing in perspective. The thrust of Oxfam's very

clever advertising had been, you give us your money and we will eliminate starvation. I mean it wasn't quite as crude as that, but anybody who was alive, thoughtful people who were alive at that time, that was the general impression. And the middle classes really felt that, you know, if they gave their bit and – I got the Oxfam shops going really, I mean I gave it enormous impetus – by dumping their old clothes, relieve their conscience about buying a new frock, you know. And what I felt, although at the time I was very fortunate in that I coincided with Biafra. Now, and also Biafra raised part of another problem. Biafra was by present day standards a very small problem. A duke [?] who had had, separate with the Ibos of – it is the Ibos isn't it – of Nigeria, who were the clever people, they were slightly the Jews of – he broke away I think because of the corruption, no doubt of the sort of [incomp] and there was this war, this civil war. And we by flying in, and I flew in with them, food from these two offshore islands; Fernando Po and the other one, Santa something? Anyhow, in clapped out aeroplanes which we hired, which were driven by – this is all quite fun really – by pilots who had been sacked in most cases or not suitable for the proper airlines, who probably had a bit of a drink problem, with the food. But we landed in cuttings in the bush which were lit. In those days you could buy tins of fifty cigarettes, sort of Players fifty cigarettes in little tins. They were the lights of the runway.

[laughs]

And we, the Roman Catholic church was extremely well organised in Biafra and in fact they had, they were very, very bright – they were mainly white, the leaders – and they got sort of bright black boys sent to Balliol, you know, we're talking about a handful of people, but we dealt through them and they arrived with their wagons and we landed the food on to them and it went straight to the people. I mean the sort of corruption thing there was not at all, didn't happen, it actually got there. Course the constant cry is, you know, it never gets to the people. And the kind of – and this is a story which sort of illustrates the difficulty of the voluntary bodies, we wrapped the stuff in sacks to take it to whatever the food was. And then they would, people would put vegetables – the sacks were emptied – and local, the farmers, whatever would put sort of vegetables in the empty sacks to take them to market and some journalists would see Oxfam sacks, food in them, saying Oxfam food is being sold in the market, you see. This was a real sort of problem

for Oxfam, that it got an image which was quite unfair, because in fact the Biafran scheme, which was a small operation which could be really handled almost by the food we were flying in. And Harold Wilson said to the High Commissioner in Lagos that Oxfam is keeping the war going, and I saw the point. He became a friend of mine, he was the brain – great friend, what was his name? The Brain of Britain he was when he retired. And we used to argue about it when we were both, much later. And we were, because the food went to the children, the starving children, or hungry children that were night after night on television. And that kept the soldiers fighting because their families were, to put it sort of in simple terms, were being looked after by us. But had Oxfam not done – people were seeing these starving people, but on a scale miniscule compared to what we are faced with now. People said well what is Oxfam, what is Save the Children Fund, what is War on Want actually doing, and if you would say well, we're keeping the war going if we send them food, people would think… So we were absolutely right to do it in one sense, but it was in a sense keeping the war going. They were two very exciting years for me and because – although I say this reasonably humbly – I was a far better communicator than the Director of Oxfam who was a much better and a wiser man, he'd been in Oxfam ever since it really started.

Who was the…

Leslie Kirkley. Extremely good man and a very tolerant and wise and in every sense a lovely man. But I was the person who was constantly on the television and radio sort of speaking out, saying this is what we're doing, give your money, you know. And then there was a great drama because there was a thing called the Disasters Emergency Fund, which is when all the voluntary agencies get together and have a joint appeal and they have somebody who is asked to do the appeal. It was people like Richard Dimbleby. And they asked me to do it. And by those standards it was I think sort of reasonably successful, but all the other agencies were absolutely furious that because I did it and my name was associated with Oxfam, that Oxfam therefore, although I was appealing for the Disasters Emergency Committee, people would think oh well, Nick Stacey's Oxfam. That showed the awful sort of tension between these various agencies. Although there was in fact a kind of justification for the different agencies. Save the Children was the very establishment-y one and of course Princess Anne, probably then or certainly after was very

much involved. Christian Aid was the churchy one… thank you darling. War on Want was the left wing, which at that time, or just before Galloway, you know, who's simply become a, who was the head of it and I think had to leave because of – well, we needn't go into that. And so, and Oxfam catered for more sort of, more secular middle class, I mean I think, sort of put it. So there was a, they did appeal to slightly different segments but there was a kind of war sort of going on for them. But what worried me was the exaggeration in relation to the size of the problem. It wasn't dishonest, but it was fairly misleading. And I said I thought Oxfam ought to change its whole strategy, it ought to, its main, particularly the money that it raised from its shops should go to educating public opinion and in schools to the complexity and enormity and seriousness of the Third World problem. If Oxfam had advertised, as it did quite properly, for eye hospital in wherever or whatever, it was incredibly important that the money went to that eye hospital or to making those wells or new types of seed or tractors or whatever. But over the overall problem I wanted Oxfam to try and lead a national campaign in saying that what was really important was terms of trade – and I can give you an example of this, that Ghana I think was very good at doing coffee and they'd doubled the coffee production and the farmers probably had to borrow money for tractors and mortgages, and the price of coffee halved the next year. So all their efforts – and we've still got today, this unfairness in trade. And I said that if only we could get the public to understand that it was terms of trade and government aid widely used was infinitely more important than what was actually almost sort of scratching the surface in the totally of the problem. Although Biafra, what we did do with Biafra was actually exceptionally really quite good. And I pushed for this. And I think I nearly won the battle, but I didn't. I mean this was, the staff of Oxfam I think they were, I was a bit, I think a bit dynamic, a bit strong, I was a slight breath of – I think that's really why they probably employed me, but I may have been too breath of a fresh wind or perhaps I should have kept quieter for longer. But anyway I decided that Oxfam didn't, the council eventually voted against my various proposals.

Who, what did the council consist of at Oxfam at that time?

Well the council was very, there was, I think it was Professor Coulson, who was a very distinguished man, was chairman and Michael Rowntree who was big in the Rowntree family, and then they had a lot of retired colonial, big people in the colonial services who

were paternalistic and, and they were all good. I mean the integrity of Oxfam really was total, there was nobody – and our expense ratio I think was kept to sort of ten, twelve per cent, which was really pretty good. But anyhow, I decided to resign.

I mean two years is a very short time really.

Well I know. I think, you're perfectly right. I suspected though, there was also a groundswell against me. I think, if I felt that had I sort of stayed I might have won the battle, but I think they thought sort of Stacey is not really for us. I think I was out of sort of *sympathique* with the ethos of the… and I thought, I'm terribly glad I did it. After I left it, I was airbrushed out. It was most interesting. Since then various books have been written in which people have said I was right, you know, in saying the emphasis should have been – particularly the Oxfam shop which I encouraged. Because I was in charge of the whole of the home front, the money raising side which was the shops, the advertising for the money, the money raising, the local groups – we had Oxfam groups and so on. I used to trail round the country like nobody you've ever seen in your life.

What was the situation with the shops when you went in sixty-eight?

Well they expanded, they were just beginning and I got them to expand. And there were local groups who were very important for the fundraising because they had jumble sales and every sort of thing and they were typical middle class well meaning ladies and it was they who were not sympathetic and they liked to think the money going straight to wells, and I can understand, or starving children or whatever. They found, I think, the concept of it being more political, difficult. And I can understand that because you have your neighbours in and friends in for a coffee morning, you like to think the money's going direct to helping a starving child. You don't see necessarily the bigger picture of real pressure to do something about terms of trade, which is still – Mandelson the other day you see, failed. Well it could be greater political effort. And I then got this marvellous group, the Third World First it was called. Rob Murdoch, the top Murdoch…

Rupert.

What?

Rupert.

Murdoch, one of Murdoch's sons who was absolutely brilliant and lovely boy who never got involved with his father, he and two or three other people came to me and said they wanted to run a campaign in universities, which they were going to call Third World First. Again, trying to get this educational. And it all happened round our kitchen table at our house in Begbroke, just outside Oxford. And would I fund it to get it going and I, you know, obviously was able to do that and it was the most incredible success. At one point I think they were getting almost ten per cent of students to donate, you know, to sign up in some sort of way, the Third World First. I felt this was the kind of thing that Oxfam should be trying to do. But it was a great two years. We had this amazing walk to Wembley Stadium in which I think there were about forty or fifty different points around London, all the same distance from Wembley and they were all going to walk to Wembley and 100,000 people – these were the sort of things I organised. Therefore it was exciting times and I thought then, my God if a child is – 'cos these walks, you know, if somebody was killed by a car, that the whole thing… And we had great drama. We had, Archer did something for us. The Beatles and Archer – well it's all been in the papers since, fiddled his expenses then and is… 'Cos I got to know Archer quite well in those days. Very remarkable. Very remarkable man. So anyway, I was there what, two or three years and I felt I'm not going to win and perhaps I was young and impatient. And I think I was also rather conceited in that I felt that I would get another job very easily. And I wrote the main editorial article in *The Sunday Times*, which was a smaller paper than it is now I may say, as to why I resigned. And it was extremely gracious to Oxfam, commending Oxfam, was very good, is very good but saying that I really needed it to change its emphasis. And therefore most of the educated people in Britain probably read that and I think I may have done two or three broadcasts about it. And I thought, I just waited for people to offer me jobs. And I was offered quite a lot of lectures, quite a lot of television appearances and broadcasts and bits and pieces, and nobody asked me about a job. And that was quite a dispiriting… but I then wrote my autobiography, *Who Cares*, which I suppose took about three or four months. But I was one… and the church during that time, and it was quite well known that I was out of work, I mean amongst sort of ecclesia... nobody in the church

came to me and said, you know, might you be interested in being vicar of Little Puddlewick or…

I was going to ask you what church activities you had?

It was really quite…

None at all?

… extraordinary. Perhaps it wasn't, I mean perhaps the church was absolutely right. But nobody, and nobody even came to me and said would you be interested. And then you see, *Who Cares* came out, quite quickly, which was fairly well reviewed, I mean it wasn't, it came out in a hardback and then in a paperback by Hodders and Stoughton so it wasn't, you know, a complete flop. And quite a lot of people must have – nobody in the church at any level… In fact, living quite close was the lay, the archbishop's ecclesiastical patronage man, the Prime Minister has a patronage man and also the Archbishop of Canterbury does. He actually read, I got him to read *Who Cares* in proof, which would have been just, you know, just about after it had been written, before it had been published, thinking that he might think it was quite an impressive book, which some other people have subsequently thought that it was, perhaps quite wrongly. And I would have thought he might have said to the Archbishop or somebody, gosh I'm sure that Nick Stacey must have something to offer the church, you know. Not a squeak, not a sausage.

[laughs] Where were you living at this time?

Begbroke. We had this very, very nice house which we bought amazingly cheaply, amazing to think of it, when we left Woolwich, because we obviously had no home of our own. And I remember my father saying to me, he was a banker, we weren't rich but I mean he wasn't… don't spend more than 20,000 pounds on a house. And we bought this, it wasn't really a manor house, a sort of upmarket farmhouse. It's just been on the market for one point five million, just this last week we were sent the advertisement. And we sold, we spent 24,000 which was more than my father said we should, and we sold a bit of the garden, a minute bit of the garden for a bungalow to be put and that enabled us to put

in a swimming pool and do the central heating and the whole thing. So it was a terribly nice house and we had a very good time with, I think I may have resigned in about March I think and had the whole of the summer and I wrote the book, which I didn't find easy, I mean it was quite a thing. And waiting for somebody to say and absolutely nothing happened. Well then they were starting social service departments. There was the Seebohm Report.

Yes.

Which was to bring together the three aspects of local authority social care, which had been children, which had been the elderly and been the mentally ill. And these were three fairly small, of which children was the biggest and the most influential and had the ablest heads, like sort of the famous Lucy Faithfull who was head of Oxford who went on to be a life peer. And Seebohm brought the three together and I believe that was absolutely right because so many of the problems were between children and old and mentally ill and handicapped, were connected, that somebody had a handicapped child affected the parents, one of them had a nervous breakdown. Or, you know, the family were concentrating on looking after an elderly granny and the children suffered, or you had a mentally handicapped son and the other children suffered. And they started these social service departments. And they were advertising for them and I thought that this could be something that I really, I could do although I was neither a social worker nor local government officer. So I put in for a couple. One I put in for Greenwich, funnily enough – well not funnily enough, sensibly enough - and they didn't shortlist me. I think they felt, you know, perhaps you know, they'd had me, they'd probably had enough of Stacey. And then I put in for Ealing, it was a London borough, a very interesting London borough. And it's a long, it's quite a – and this again may have been the holy spirit – there was a very strong Chief Executive of Ealing and he was very close to the Medical Officer of Health of Ealing and a lot of the Medical Officers of Health were very interested in becoming Directors of Social Service because it enlarged their empires and increased their salaries and so on. And the government under Keith Joseph at the time was extremely keen that Medical Officers of Health were not appointed and he was quite right, because they tend to patronise social workers and the whole emphasis on the thing would have been medical rather than social care, which was what this whole Seebohm thing was about. And this

strong Chief Executive put in the Medical Officer of Health, he persuaded the council they wanted the Ealing Medical Officer of Health to be the Director of Services and Keith Joseph turned him down. By that time most authorities – the field wasn't very strong, to be perfectly honest, because they had to really choose from either children's officers or the person who was in charge of old people and you know, local government officers and fairly small departments weren't sort of what you might call Oxbridge highfliers. But by those who were a bit highfliers, like Bill Utting who went on to… had become Director of Kensington and Chelsea and so on, and there were about four or five rather really sort of pretty bright people; one at Newcastle, one at Coventry. And they were all, they'd all been scooped up, so when I applied, I think the Chief Executive thought look, I'm going to upstage Keith Joseph by putting up somebody, persuading the council to put up somebody who would be turned down again, because I was not, simply not qual… 'cos the general, almost all the people that were appointed had some social worker training. What of course they didn't know was that when I was out of work, Keith Joseph, just before, he was head of the Bovis housing. He wanted to set up a charitable foundation, Bovis to set up a charitable… and he'd come to me to ask my advice on how to do this, because you know, I was in that sort of world. And of course when my name was put forward by Keith Joseph, he knew me and he thought God, how incredibly imaginative it was and [laughs] was enthusiastic. And the Chief Executive was sort of rather gobsmacked because he thought he was going to be one up on Keith Joseph and turn down twice and make a great big scene, you know. Shall we have some coffee. Can you turn it off for a second?

[break in recording]

…it on. So before we talk about what you discovered when you started out at Ealing, what do you think about Oxfam today?

Well I, everybody tells me that Oxfam has moved very much in the direction that I wanted it to and almost every sort of big issue, Oxfam is now making its noise, with the trade talks over the great schemes of you know, increasing government aid, I mean it's right in the forefront now I think of political pressure and I hope having some influence. It's still raising money, but I don't think, I mean when I took over it was raising money – you give us the money, we're going to eliminate starvation. I mean that was, I'm exaggerating and

over-simplifying, but that was the theme it was getting across and that of course was a complete – it wasn't meant to be a confidence trick, it was discovered how absolutely far more complicated the whole thing is. So for – and people now tell me that actually I did at the end have a sort of, I was ahead of my time and at that particular time I don't think Oxfam was ready for my message and that was where I should probably have been – if I would have been more committed to Oxfam, I saw quite quickly actually that Oxfam was a fringe organisation, it wasn't where the thing is really happening and I'll come on to this, and where of course for me the social services were the happiest years of my life, they were actually at the heart and there was the power and there was the money, there was the resources and that's what completely changed and I knew that I couldn't go on sort of being the front man of Oxfam, pleading for money for an organisation, which was doing good, but wasn't actually really being able to meet the need that it was talking about in any significant way. And that is still true today. But if it can influence governments to increase by miniscule, under then whoever, under Overseas Aid Development or more important, terms of trade which is fundamental.

Yes, absolutely.

Yeah.

The other thing I wanted to ask you was about your faith during this time in the wilderness, what connections at a personal level did you have with the church?

I think I've been, always been a terribly unchurchy Christian. I found much of what I learnt at theological college not only totally useless for the whole of my fifty year ministry and irrelevant to it, I actually felt that most of it was irrelevant at the time and it bored me stiff. What I believed then and what I really still believe now is that the Christian faith does seem to explain – the Christian faith, not 'churchianity', more of the paradox and, of our human existence that there is a God who loves us, is a creator God who manifested himself in Jesus, who showed that he actually does love us, but gave us free will which I would sort of qualify now on the question of genes, environment, upbringing, all sorts of things that affect, you know, the way one looks at life and makes decisions, and the different, unfair opportunities, you know, various opportunities, that we have messed

God's world up by our greed and selfishness and what have you and God will, those of us who try to tune in and follow, try and follow him that he does, you know, strengthen us, help us, guide us in our prayers and something. And all that I've actually sort of experienced in my own life and at the end of this life, which is terribly unfair, hopeless, tragic, for the vast majority there is something beyond this. And that's actually about been what my faith has been and I was ordained as I thought to try and help people see that there is a creator God who loves us and that there's something beyond this so we shouldn't despair and try and see if I can't make this world a bit better. All the arguments about the trinity and exactly what happens at the communion service and what Job said and what Jeremiah said, I mean I find I didn't care then and I don't care now, but I do care still that there is a loving God and the church I'm afraid I, the institution I despair of and I must make that really – but I don't despair of Christianity and I think the present institution has got to die in order that something else can rise again, and it will rise again. I think that the human spirit need God, man without a woman is like a ship without a sail, I think a man without God, about a belief in some real meaning to our human existence is an empty life and I think a lot in our society shows that now. I mean the incredible increase in standard of living only for our very privileged people in Europe, America, hasn't brought in the happiness. There's more drug taking, mental illness, sadness, depression, suicide, divorce, crime, you know, it hasn't brought in the kingdom of God and I still think we need our belief and faith, but about the church I increasingly feel is – and I feel pretty sorry for my friends who are bishops and most of my friends who I sort of knew well, contemporaries were bishops, trying to prop up this institution and I'm just eternally grateful that I have been spared that.

Well, thank you for that. Okay, well shall we turn to Ealing?

Yes.

You were appointed…

Yes, Ealing. So I was appointed to Ealing and to my surprise the Chief Executive – it was a Labour, it was a Labour council and I am leftish myself, my background isn't left. When I was interviewed by the borough council, Ealing, who were charming, I wasn't the type of

person that they would normally see as a potential local government officer in their thing. Well as I say, I was neither in local government nor was I a social worker, but of course I did actually know a pretty good deal about the kind of problems, because I'd been at a grass level. And I remember, and I used to say to people, people used to say well how does he know about our problems. I said if you knew, you'd been Rector of Woolwich and I used to take communion to old people in their homes, sort of normal kind of thing, and every so often the old person would say I don't want you to come with communion tomorrow, I've got a social worker coming. In other words, social worker, I've got a home help coming. More had a home help coming. You know, if it was a choice between the vicar and the home help, the home help won every time. So God, don't I know. [laughs] Anyhow, I remember when I went into the office for the first time the desk was polished, it shined with furniture polish and I pressed my button and the secretary, terribly nice secretary came in and said to me, I said to her, what the hell do I do? She said I hoped you were going to tell me that. [laughs] And we laughed. But what I did do was a priest, called Andrew Henderson, who went on to be Director of Social Services at Kensington and Chelsea and then the founder of The Lighthouse, a very distinguished man. He's about ten years younger than me. And he was at the same theological college as me, but ten years – and I knew the family very well. His father had been Bishop of Bath and Wells and before that he'd been actually a Bishop of Tewkesbury, he'd been also a vicar of St Paul's Knightsbridge, which was a posh church where my wife and I were married, where my mother and father had been married in. So there was a connection between us. He was gay, I knew he was gay and had a partner, and knew that he couldn't be in the mainstream of the church. He was ordained and then he became a social worker. He was in Wandsworth at the time at a fairly junior level. You see I was then just early forties and he would then have been about thirty-two, he was probably sort of about a team leader. And I said to him, look I want you to come and join me to tell me what to do. I mean he was outstanding, he was Radley and Cambridge, you know, he was unusual type of social worker. So I said to the Chief Executive, look I want to recruit this chap 'cos he's a star. And the Chief Executive said, well he's three layers down from being – or four layer – you know, team leader, area manager, assistant director, you know. He said, well I don't we can do that and I said well I think we can. So I [laughs], I had this man, Andrew Henderson who was charming, and the Chief Executive came to lunch and he was persuaded that I could, you know – 'cos I think I may have had to get the committee to

approve, but at least he would back, you know, so that… Anyway, he came and we had three years, new department.

So this is 1970 to seventy-three?

Yes, it was 1975 or seventy-four is it? Seventy-one, yes… And I got a tremendous amount of – I wanted to launch the thing to make it very well known in the borough. And that was one thing I knew from my Woolwich days how to manipulate, well perhaps not the word, impress the local paper. So I got sort of press releases out every week about the things we were doing. There was a time when Alf Morris brought in his bill about the handicapped and I ran a campaign to search out everybody in the borough who was handicapped so that we could help them, you know, 'cos there'd been inadequate support and facilities for them. And we had – and then I got Keith, and I opened a divisional office especially purpose built divisional – because we had Southall. We had a very interesting borough, Southall was Asian, very largely Asian, amazing, and when – God, that chap who kicked out, in Uganda, who kicked out all the…

Idi Amin?

Yeah. I was on the committee with Lord Sainsbury as to how we could absorb, because we were terrified that most of them were going to gravitate to Southall because it was **the** sort of key Asian community. In fact it was amazing how they were absorbed, those that came, and no trouble whatever. So we had Southall. And then we had middle class BBC Ealing and we had Acton which was largely West Indian. So it was very interesting, sort of mixed community. Anyhow I remember I got a specially built divisional office to sort of, you know, for the Southall area and I got Keith Joseph to open it and made sure we had a lot of sort of publicity. And I generally, if I have any skills, I'm quite good at managing people and I was very good whenever we had – I got rid of one or two hopeless people – and I brought in some pretty bright people who made the whole thing sparkle. And the – I think I can say this because all this will be, if, everybody writes about it - but the Chief Executive was a bully and he didn't get on at all well with the Treasurer. Or was it the deputy? Maybe the Deputy Chief Executive. And the Deputy Chief Executive couldn't stand him and I, the Deputy Chief Executive and I became very good friends and I, he told

me whenever the Chief Executive was going to try and beat me at anything. You know, anything I wanted to do, if he wanted to stop it, because he was, you know, long established and powerful. So I made sure that I won almost all the battles, tipped off by the Deputy Chief Executive. And the committee were, were very, I think they were rather excited because they saw the good things that social services had done in the papers, and we were doing good things and we were making the whole thing hum, and they went along with my suggestions of this – they weren't any sort of big radical… the radical things came in Kent.

So what good things were you doing?

Well, we were bringing the three parts together and unifying, and that was, 'cos they were three quite separate operations. And I think we were setting up these divisional offices which, from there they had social workers caring for all three, because the whole philosophy of Seebohm was that they were interconnected, the problems. Therefore instead of having just mentally handicapped social workers looking after mentally handicapped and children social workers and elderly, I had social workers doing the whole thing. We didn't do any radical revolutionary – as we'll come on, which were in I think pretty… in Kent – social policy changing nationally, but we made the thing, we made the new thing work and we gave, we were enthusiastic and had key people, I got some key people into being divisional, we split the thing up in about five different – it was about 250,000 or 300,000 I think, Ealing was, and we had about 50,000 in each thing. So it was more, I think what I did provide was, I hope it isn't… inspired leadership, which isn't what you, it isn't the image of local government officers, is it? [laughs] I was an unusual animal in the field. And I loved it, and I commuted from, I had a little flat, bedsitter in Ealing for two nights a week, 'cos as the meetings in the evening, I would have to spend four nights at home in Begbroke, which was about an hour and a quarter's drive away. Well then Kent came up after and of course that was the biggest in the country. D'you want more on Ealing?

Well I think I do really, yes. I mean you know, it's just so interesting at this time, which is a development from Seebohm as you say and you know, it must have been a very exciting time, not just for you but for all over the country. Were you talking to other social services

around the place and working with them or were you little islands unto yourself or – I'd like to know about your relationship with the rest of the Labour council and you know, all those things.

If I'm honest, if you were going to be doing this thing for publication in a paper tomorrow I wouldn't say this, but I wouldn't equally embargo it. I actually thought, to be perfectly – I went to various Director of Social Services meetings and I honestly thought they were, I had more to teach them than they had to teach me. I mean they all knew about sort of local government procedures but I was able to pick them up and override them an manipulate them, you know, but they didn't really have the vision I don't think. Because I came in fresh I did see how this was a one package deal. These were men and women, mainly men, who had grown up in local government, gone up step by step, sort of layer by layer over a twenty year period. Through no fault of their own they weren't people with great – I mean I may have learnt a little bit from them. But Bill Utting, who went on to be Chief Inspector of Social Services, who's a very great friend of mine, kept on saying that the other social workers, social directors were dead scared of you, which I think they were, but also having been a clergyman too and having been at Oxbridge, which none of them would have been at, you know, this whole background would have been different.

How did you, what happened if you wanted to get rid of somebody, somebody who had come up through the ranks?

Well, I mean this is where, I mean you've got to be smart about it. If they're nearly retirement, you can give them additional years, so that if somebody's fifty and retirement age was sixty, you can with permission from the Treasurer say look, you can go, you'll then have a pension as though you were sixty, which is pretty attractive. One can do that, one can move people around. It's not like once a vicar has a freehold, short of going to bed with a choirboy, you can't move him or her. Here you can say you have to keep them at the same status with the same salary, but you can give them a different job which could actually be a lower status, which might well encourage them actually to find another job. You have, if you're reasonably skilful you can organise things and you only need about, to bring in, I suppose I brought in about half a dozen people. So Andrew Henderson was absolutely key, 'cos he's a professional, I mean he knew, as opposed to being a local

government officer, he was the professional, really professional social worker and I could seek his advice on sort of really difficult cases where I was brought in, you know, as to what the best thing – mark, I had a certain amount of experience from my parish priest's… So it all went pretty well.

What, you've mentioned that there were sort of three strands really, you've got the Southall Asians and the West Indians and the others who were there – were there sort of racial tensions among these people?

Well there were a bit amongst the whites in Southall because the schools were sort of eighty-five per cent Asian. But the three communities were on the whole fairly separate. I mean Ealing was a fairly compact middle class area with sort of BBC and Acton, Acton was more mixed. But I don't recall sort of serious racial dramas.

Did you find that one group had more of one sort of problem than another group?

Yeah, Southall controlled their family problems brilliantly, except when it came to marriages and that was when one was faced with a number of cases in which a boy had been arranged to marry and he was gay, and he would come to the social worker and some of these things came to me because I was really sort of on to this kind of thing. I tried to establish that when social workers had problems, especially ones that could hit the newspapers, you know, come to me, come to me and they knew I think that I really cared about – and we made these, we enabled these boys to disappear, they had to go.

Where did they go?

Well we found somewhere. We, you know, moved them out of the, out of – can you imagine? This sort of thing isn't sort of well known. It has actually appeared a certain amount in papers.

It has now I think, but I suppose then…

Black…

But I can't see, where would you send them though?

Well we'd enable, help them find another job, you know, because they'd all be grown-up people. And give them encouragement. I mean they wouldn't have contacts much outside their family or outside the community and we would fix them up somewhere else and perhaps find them a job or see they found a social worker in the area, which we – well, d'you have any links at all, where would you like to go, where are the job opportunities for the particular skills, if any, that you have. And give them confidence to make them feel that they weren't alone.

Did you have the problem of forced marriages at that time or not?

Oh yes I think there were, but we wouldn't know that. Unless they came to us in desperation. But I think – but they were quite skilful in these arranged marriages and I think on the breakdown rate of arranged marriages as opposed to forced marriages, is no greater than people who choose their own…

No, that can be so with arranged marriages. I mean we hear so much more today about forced marriages don't we?

Yes.

But you, that really didn't come out then?

No, well I mean I don't remember it as being one of the – I remember Ealing as me trying to bring in half a dozen good people, try to inspire the staff, make them feel sort of really important, make the image of the department in the community important by getting it lots of good publicity and saying, you know, here we are, these new things, we're doing a great job. Which they were, you know, which the staff were and making them sort of feel proud of their new show. I think that was my – and also making sure the committee did what I recommended them to do and to make sure the Chief Executive didn't kibosh me.

Did you want to say anything about the West Indian community?

Well not, I mean nothing sort of – I mean they're much less good with their children of course, I mean there was the, you know, the delinquency and the family breakdown. And they came from Jamaica, this is when they were very new and they'd come and they would find it difficult to settle and the children find it difficult to settle and they left their wives, or the husband came before the family came, by that time he'd got another girl, you know. I mean you can, the sort of kind of problems that, you know, is totally sort of commonplace. I don't, nothing else – well the very fact that I got Kent, which I was still not really local government or a social worker, which was the biggest and it wasn't got for me by the Chairman and the man who became Sir William Utting, the Chief Inspector of Social Services, and on every sort of committee since, you know, you've read about him and he and I were the two, last two candidates and I got it and he didn't, I think must have meant that the vibes that I had created, you know, the sort of *on dit*, 'cos Keith Joseph, I'm pretty sure this is right, that Keith Joseph told Robin Leigh-Pemberton as he then was, who was then Chairman of Kent County Council, before he was Governor of the Bank of England and I think before he was Lord, yes and before he was Lord Lieutenant, said this is the worst social services department in the country and my God he was right.

Oh dear.

And I think it was generally agreed eleven years later it was the best. And of course this was what – and I think that's all come out in the book that is now being written. And of course this is what made the whole job so absolutely fantastic, that here – there was no way that I could have had any significant influence in the Church of England, I mean nobody has had. I mean the bishops, they're powerless, bishops. And I was able – though I'm not comparing a social services department with a church, although sometimes social services departments have been described as the secular church, you know, 'cos they're the caring body. That you can, you actually can turn the thing round. And this isn't a marginal thing, you're not turning a charity round, you're turning round a key organisation. I mean in the local authorities the police are critical, the Chief Constable critical, the Chief of Education is critical and the Director of Social Services is critical and then you have a whole lot of back-up – this is excluding the health service – and here you can take over a department with five or 6,000 people looking after 50,000 people and turn it round to

make it really, giving value for money to the taxpayers and value to the vulnerable in the service you provide. And that is by any standards a wonderful opportunity. And what I'm sad about is that so few people of ability go into this kind of work.

Well, that's right, I mean why is that?

Well, well you see the money was, I was always, when I was at Kent I was paid the same as a Deputy Permanent Secretary, so that was good money by those days, but civil servants and local government officers are now by any standards pretty well paid. Not by City standards, but by professional standards, I think the Director in Kent's now getting about a hundred and thirty or forty thousand a year. It's gone enormously since I – but I was paid the same as Deputy Secretaries. And civil servants are getting again, they have a range of, the Permanent Secretary sort of range of salaries. But it's also status and public image of the service, and that's why I'm very keen on this book that's now being, about to be published I hope, by Don Brand which just shows how important social services is. I think that it employs more people than the whole of the health service. But certainly when I was at Oxford, the idea of – it was thought a bit odd being a clergyman, but there were a number of people going to be priests, whereas before the war it'd have been quite normal for a lot of people, considerable number of people were priests – but the idea of going to local government, simply not on the agenda. And where one or two, of which Bill Utting was one, went into the probation service, just the same as practically nobody went into, nobody would have gone into the prison service, nobody would have gone into the police. You see the present Met Commissioner was actually at Christ Church, but I mean he was one of the very first Ox… people to go into – and he's of course twenty years or so younger than I am. So social services, for me, I was immensely grateful to get it.

How did you, I mean this position was advertised because the previous person had left or was he sacked or…

Yes, they have to be advertised. No, he was, I mean I think again this, we're talking about history now, the chap who was appointed to be the Director of Social Services had failed to become Chief Executive of the county and they gave him this really very naughtily as a kind of sop. He was a lawyer. He was a good and worthy man but he was totally

unsuitable and I think he was able to take early retirement or he may even have reached – no, I don't think he could have been actually sixty when he, I think he realised the whole job was not… but they gave him it as a, saying we'll make you Chief Executive, a terribly inadequate Chief Executive. So… I, by the time I got there of course I did know what the job was about. And I looked, about the first task was to try and raise the morale of the department. I think we were then in fifteen divisions, each roughly coterminous with a parliamentary constituency. So I toured everyone, talked to all the staff. I then had a meeting, I asked the local Divisional Director to arrange a meeting for the heads of all the voluntary bodies in the community, of which there are always quite a lot [incomp] on the statutory social services. And we would have a great meeting at the town hall, or wherever, and said now you are our partners, you know, this is our, we're going to make this, something really hum. Secondly, and I did this in all fifteen – oh then I visited, in the division I visited every old people's home, every mentally handicapped hostel, and this was complete, nobody had ever sort of thought, they'd never seen the Director, he may have been a name on a bit of paper. Everybody knew me by the time I'd finished with them, I told them they were important, I said this is what we've got to try and do, make this the best and caring and you're all free, you have layers of management but I want you to feel, you come to me at the end, if you need, to me and so on. And talked to the staff of all the old people's homes and I – this sounds rather corny – I always used to kiss the cook.

[laughs]

Because I said to them you are the most important person in this home, because I said most of the people here really aren't into sex and they are into food. And then they used to say, oh I'm not going to wash my cheek tonight. But I mean a lot of – bullshit is an important thing in leadership and this is what the sort of average local government officer isn't into. He sees himself as a sort of manager looking, you know, looking after the one ranked below, you know, he has sort of layers of people below. He's not out there in front leading the troops into battle. And it doesn't attract that type of human being, but these jobs are, the size of the thing, are the thing in which you have to – and of course a good Chief Constable pushes himself around, you know, and goes and talks to the Constables in the various areas. So I did, I really did split my guts out going round to every… so that almost everybody in the department would have – oh you see when I went to home helps, this is

where we come back to Woolwich, I used to go to the home helps, have all the home helps together, and they are terribly important people. And there would be perhaps a 150 in the organ… we had sort of several thousand of these home helps and they went and looked after all the sad, lonely people and were the sort of bottom of the pile in the sort of pecking order and I said, you are the angels of this department, which they were, you know, you're the saints. And I said I know, I also told them how I was pushed out of taking communion to old people because of you! And it's true and they suddenly think, oh my God, we matter, you know, we're not the bottom. And it was then almost every time I did it, especially in the Medway towns, you know, that's Gillingham and Dartford and Rochester and Chatham and so on, a home help would come up and say, I was in Woolwich when you were there and you won't remember me and of course I always lied and said of course I did, and they would say you christened my granddaughter and it was a lovely day, we always remember it and you walked up the aisle holding my granddaughter, you held her up, you know, those sort of things. And that's what made me realise, you know, that in fact they didn't come to church every Sunday after that or at all, but they actually had sort of felt uplifted, they felt something had happened to their baby. And I don't actually think that churchgoing is the beginning and the end, I mean I think to sort of try and live a life in which you tried vaguely to be true with God is the most important thing, not necessarily coming to church. Although I think that can be a help. But sometimes the service is so boring it's a positive drawback, as you know. So then, well then I think we got, there was quite a lot of publicity for what I did in a thing called *Community Care*, which was the sort of social workers' paper, you know, the sort of weekly and I think that began to attract people to the department because there were terribly few trained social workers and it was key to try and recruit. So that was the sort of next important thing that we tried to do. And then came the two really critical things, in which – or perhaps – well there were two critical things within one thing. One was the children in care. I think there were 2,500 children in care when I went to Kent. That mean that I was sort of legally in loco parentis, that the state had control over those children, you know, that the court had said you are to look after this child. Now the first thing is that by putting a child in care becomes a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, in other words the child says I'm in care, my parents don't look after me, I'm just a ship, you know, a waif in the local authority sort of system. And of course the number of children in care that go on to prison was terrifyingly high. And the first thing that I, the question that I asked, I put around to all the sort of key staff is, are

social workers going to magistrates too quickly to ask for care orders, is there no way that we can support the parents so that they can cope, so that they don't have to be taken – do we snatch children away the moment sort of trouble… And then the second question was, where do we put them when they are in our care. And of course the tradition was that pre-puberty children went to foster parents, who were given an amount of money which virtually the same as that child's keep, so it was a real act of love. And all the post-puberty ones were put into institutions. Now let it be said that most of the institutions were fairly small, most, but not all were sort of perhaps about twenty children, but it's still an institution, you know, even if it's eight it's still an institution. So we had this, this was a woman who – Nancy Hazell her name was – who was a lecturer at the University of Kent and she came to me and said look, I think that the whole system is wrong and that we ought to have professional foster parents who would be paid to look after children in care, most of whom were delinquent or disturbed in some way. And she was a very awkward, tiresome woman and I got the first annual lecture in her memory, this was when I had… that's the other day. I said you are right and I took this up in a really big way and I raised the money from the Sainsbury Trust, a chap who helped me get the Quadrant Housing Association called Hugh de Quetteville, who was an advertising agent who was at the age of about thirty-one, he ran the Tory party campaign in sixty-three or something, fifty-nine or sixty-three for Coleman Prentice and Varley, he handled it and he was very, very bright. And he'd got the job, he got fed up with advertising, and rather the same reason that I got fed up with Oxfam that advertising was, you know, making claims which it couldn't fulfil in the way that Oxfam couldn't. And he became head of the Sainsbury family trust, and a very great friend of mine. And I said look, I think this is a really great idea, I must, can you give me, get the money so I can buy this woman out, you know, pay her what's she earning at the moment, University of Kent, to run this on our behalf as a pilot scheme. And he did, he produced 100,000 I think, for three, 100,000 a year for three years, it was actually more than I said, I think with a couple of social workers to help her. I then went to the Kent social services who were absolutely marvellous, all eleven years, and I said look, I think this is the much better way of looking after children, to put them in, foster them and let's start a professional fostering scheme and I've got 100,000 out of Sainsbury, you must double it, match it, or more. And they did. And then we got going on doing the launching and of course all the people, inevitable, said one, that they're only going to do it for the money. And I said how many of you are doing your work not only, but partly or

primarily for the money, you know, which of course everybody does, so that's ridiculous. Secondly, you won't get enough people, they won't realise how, the demands they make. And I said, well they may not, but let's try. And thirdly, there's going to be teenagers, they'll want to do it because they want to have sex with the children, they'll want to seduce the children. That was the sort of typical reaction. Anyway, we started a pilot, we started a pilot, we recruited some foster parents and what we got was a group of them, Nancy got a group of them together and said look, these are the kind of problems that you're going to have. They want to be rejected, they feel they've been rejected by their parents and now they want the sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, we want to be rejected – they're going to do every fucking thing they can to make you reject them. And this is absolutely what to hold on, the kind of examples they were given was, there was a girl who in her bedroom, there was a crack in the floorboards and she could pee through the crack so it fell on their record player in the, you know, I mean absolutely… So they were then really trained to understand and said, are you really prepared to go through with this. And of course once we got a few going, we then, anybody else who volunteered was brought into this group so the parents, the foster parents that were doing it already said well this is the name of the game, you know, and they could withdraw if they thought it wasn't…

Did they have any more sort of organised training than what you've just described?

No, well we chose people, we often chose people who were teach… perhaps the mother was a teacher, therefore she was involved, or a nurse or was in some kind of caring – it appealed to people obviously with that sort of, that sort of interest and we paid them so that if they took two children – let me say a teacher and her husband and the teacher had had two or three children, a couple of children and needed the money and thought she wanted to go back to work as a fulltime teacher, but on the other hand she didn't want to leave the children, she would earn the same by taking two children as if she'd gone back to teaching. And this was a big and serious incentive, but of course she'd have the children 365 days in the year and not have sort of the holidays. And it worked, we had it monitored from the word go by Goldsmiths College, which is… And it, after a year it was really beginning to take off and it was after I think a year or eighteen months I got Tony Snowdon to do a documentary on it, take, I think he took the lives of the first four children, all of whom it had worked. And this was shown at a *Panorama* time and from

that day we never had any problem in recruiting foster parents. Well we then closed the approved school, we had an approved school which had highly delinquent teenagers and this had a committee – I must take my, this hearing aid is… [pause]

Yes, the approved school?

Approved school. And this had a voluntary committee of well meaning middle class people. You can imagine, sort of middle aged, middle class people who genuinely and understandably thought they were running the very best thing for delinquent kids, because the idea was this was like a sort of small public school in that it was residential and dormitories and they had playing fields and a gym and a swimming pool and this was exactly what they had struggled to save money for to send their own children to a small public school where you all mix with other children of your own age and they got to know, make friends with these children, these middle class children with their public school, little, small public schools. What they totally failed was, you got a whole delinquent, disturbed, unhappy, insecure children all lumped together with no loving home to which the public, you know, went back to, none of them conceited like no doubt spoilt middle class children who needed a bit of, you know, mother's love rubbed off them. Therefore the whole concept was fatally flawed, yet this was how all the children, delinquent, before they went to borstal. And these places, they were terribly expensive because you had to have teachers and carers, in a public school you don't have carers, you have teachers and you have prefects who do a bit of the – and you have a house master or a house mistress. It was about double to keep a child there than it was to keep a child at Eton. And they were **disastrous** and they were just springboards to borstal and then borstals were springboards to prison. And these had been, these were the front line of dealing with delinquent children and nobody had sort of spotted that it was well meant, but fundamentally flawed. So I said – and this was, oh Roy Jenkins was then Permanent Secretary and he used to send people who came to look at the work of the Home Office down to this, 'cos it was meant to be one of the prize approved schools in the country, and it was also quite handy to London being at Dartford. And I said, I'm going to close it. The principal of it, who didn't have sex with the children, but did have sex with most of his staff, was pretty awful. He said, he let it be known, he said Stacey'll never get away with it. He won't dare do it and if he tries he won't get away with it. And of course it meant

making a hell of a lot of staff redundant. I got the, first of all I got the governors to – and they were so committed, it was quite a prestigious thing to say I'm the governor of Dartford Approved School, it was quite good at supper parties, you know. I tackled them, then I – I won. And of course that released an incredible amount of money. I got all of the – we didn't get it going till we had enough foster parents to absorb these kids. Anyhow, the research showed that where seventy-five per cent of the children who were put into care, went to institutions, committed a crime within two years, twenty-five per cent of the ones that were fostered. And fostering cost about half, paying the parents serious money, half of what it cost so it saved an incredible amount, which enabled us to expand. And so we then expanded it throughout the county of course, and then, then of course the buzz got round and then every approved school in the country was closed within four or five years.

What happened to the children who really couldn't be…

Oh we fostered them.

You fostered them, but I mean some of them presumably it didn't actually work. You said twenty-five per cent committed a crime. I mean how did you deal with the very, very…

Well I mean twenty-five per cent – well we kept a bit, we kept a handful of institutions. There were some who were actually virtually unfosterable.

Exactly, exactly. There must be some.

So we didn't do away completely, but where – I think I'm right in saying – that when I went to Kent seventy-five per cent of the children – there were too many children in care to start with and seventy-five of that, two per cent were in institutions of one sort or another. I think by the end, by the time I left I think it was about ten per cent.

Fantastic.

So it did, and it did – but I mean now it is national policy and now what has happened is that a whole lot of independent foster parent agencies have been set up. So what the local

authority does, as long as I was there I kept it under my control, but I don't think I would have continued to be able to do it because it became so big, it was probably right that foster parents got together and set up an agency. And I think in some cases they actually got paid really rather too much, but that is subsequent. But this was an enormous, an enormous breakthrough and as I say has changed the whole social care policy and all started really by Nancy – perhaps somebody else would have come to… it couldn't have been done, to be honest, without me. I would probably say humbly, I perhaps wouldn't have done it unless she had come to me with the idea. She was **so** difficult to work with, I protected her like a mother protects her child because she wanted it absolutely perfect, the social workers she had, 'cos we gave them a tremendous support, each family had a social worker and we had about twelve families to a social worker, so they could call on the social worker any time of the day or night so they really felt they had support, they weren't – and all this was terribly important, the back-up. But she irritated other people on the staff by saying, you know, this is my thing, it's going to be on my way, I'm not going to be pushed around anyway. Anyway, we had this great memorial lecture for the first of it earlier this year which David Blunkett gave the inaugural speech. So that was an exciting breakthrough. But then, I mean I'll just tell you the other – the raising morale, and then I'll stop and then I'll take you to whatever train is, the earliest to go.

Fine, yes, thank you.

I may have told you about this at lunch when you were last here. There was this house, Lees Court, which is a very large house which has been converted into flats and it has marvellous grounds, it's about two miles from here. And I said we're going to have a ball for social workers, which was quite sort of unusual, nobody ever sort of thought… and we're going to call it 'The Tramp of the Year', social workers on the whole are into the underprivileged and sort of like identifying, you wouldn't want The Queen of the Year, you'd want The Tramp of the Year, you know, because we're in with the tough. And I got, oh… er… Christopher Gibbs. I said look, I want a star, I must have a star who's going to come and judge this. And he said it's an amazing, I've got Marianne Faithfull… you know, the Mars bar girl, you remember, yes, Mick Jagger – you know that story?

Yes.

Yeah. She said, he said she's coming to open my church fete – anybody more un… 'cos he has a church, he had a church in his house, this is Davington Priory – and I'll get her to come and judge The Tramp of the Year, Kent Social Services Tramp of the Year ball at this great Lees Court. Was going to have it floodlit and everything, you see. And I announced that and of course they were a bit surprised having a clergyman anyway, who was not only going to have a Tramp of the Year ball, but he's got Marianne Faithfull to come and judge it. God almighty, this is, you know, this chaps got wings! [laughs] Well, we didn't, they arrived, they came to supper here. I had Andrew Henderson, also a guest, who was the chap who'd been my deputy in Ealing who'd by then come on to be Director of Social Services at Kensington and Chelsea, I think he took over from Bill Utting. And his boyfriend, Chris Spence who helped to start The Lighthouse, who's a very, successful career himself, and Marianne Faithfull, Christopher Gibbs and then that chap who went to prison for drugs, he was the son of the Chief Executive of Harrods, was quite well known, there was a big case that he was… it was one of the sort of first. And they were all stoned out of their minds, except Andrew Henderson and Christopher Spence. Oh, and Nicholas Faithfull, the twelve year old, ten year old boy came to supper as well. We had the most amazing supper party with only Anne and me and the other two people, Spence and… talking, the rest were stoned. They ate quite well – stoned. At the end of supper I said to Marianne, now you're coming to judge the… the purpose of the dinner for, this lovely party you're coming to. She said oh no I'm not, I'm going to put Nicholas to bed. I said, darling I promise you, you're not going to put Nicholas to bed yet. Oh no, I'm definitely, definitely going to put Nicholas to bed. And had I not brought Marianne Faithfull to that ball, I would have had to resign. So I said to Andrew and Christopher, Christopher, we've got to get Marianne Faithfull – and Christopher Spence, he's a sort of star in this way. He started playing with Nicholas and getting Nicholas, you know, things and said now Nicholas, you're going to come to this lovely thing with your mum and he was very keen to do that. So I got, I put Marianne Faithfull in the car, I drove her there with Christopher Spence I think and the wretched bloody boy, who was a spoilt little brat, doing things with Chris… and we arrived at the ball and we then stood on the cart, it was all out of door, you know, agricultural whatever, farm cart. And I said look, darling I'll do the choosing, I'll just nudge you to… so they all marched by and I said kiss them, you know, blow kisses, just sort of… which of course she was pretty bloody good at, even stoned. And then she

picked one and I said now you've got to kiss him and then I got her to mix for about half an hour and I said you can, Nicholas can go home. But I mean that kind of thing sort of raised, it sort of… morale…

Of course.

... and people in local government don't do that kind of thing. They don't have balls, they don't have Marianne Faithfull, it's sort of…

That's a great story, very successful.

What?

Great story and very successful.

Well it was fun, yeah. Is this all very boring for this?

No, not at all.

But in a way it tries to sort of show what I think local gov… Because the work is so critically important, it's, it's you know, we're not talking about beekeeping or anything, we're talking about 50,000 vulnerable people out of a population of a million and a half.

Quite, absolutely, absolutely.

It's now half past three.

Shall we stop for today?

D'you mind?

[End of Track 3]

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

[Track 4]

This is the seventeenth of August 2006, third session with Nick Stacey. So Nick, you're Director of Social Services for Kent and last time we talked about your initiative with professional foster children. What else did you bring into being while you were in position?

That was the first thing, as you say was professional fostering, which was a major breakthrough and social policy in this country was changed. And the second thing that we were able to pioneer was care in the community, which again became government policy. And this was really, I gave a lecture, an open lecture at the University of Kent in which I launched the idea in this lecture of at the moment you had a situation in which there were old people's homes and then if people were to stay in their home they could get a home help for perhaps an hour a day and then meals on wheels for about two or three days a week. Well if the poor dears couldn't cook, three meals a week really was ridiculous. And it was totally inflexible. I knew that most people wanted to stay in their own homes, that is the experience from everybody, their own families and is anyway common sense. So we, I put up the idea, let's assess everybody that social workers are saying will have to go into an old people's home and see what additional services they would need to be able to stay in their own homes. And this would be totally flexible, so that a widower who probably couldn't cook would need a different range of services to a mother, you know a mother and grandmother who'd been housekeeping and cooking all her married life. And the head of the, what was it called, the University department, a fellow called Dr Bleddyn Davies, he was fascinated by what I was saying in this lecture and he said if you can get this off the ground, we will monitor it very, very carefully because its potential, if it worked, was enormous. And I went to Sainsbury's, like I did before, and said look, would you give me a grant to run a pilot scheme in Thanet. I then got the committee to back that, you know, 'cos Tory committees, they love, if I get some money, you know, they'll double it. And I think they actually saw the sort of potential. And we then – just in Thanet – and

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

we took 100 people, all of whom social workers were saying needed to go into old people's care, residential care. Fifty went into residential care and fifty we provided a package of care to stay in their own homes, which was flexible and it could be sort of neighbours coming in. One of the great untapped resources in our society is middle aged women whose children have grown up who like to earn a bit on the side and then you know, makes them a bit independent of their husband or enables them to, over a year to buy a, help buy a package holiday in Majorca or somewhere. So we mobilised all sorts of different sort of people and produced this flexible care. And it, absolutely incredible, the people who went into old people's homes died earlier, the happiness of the people who were kept out of the homes by this flexible care were much happier, higher morale and everything. And I think it was cheaper, because it's pretty expensive, residential – you see the great problem with residential care is that you have to give the same level of service to everybody. You know, you can't say well some can cook their own meals, you have to have, you know, every kind of service is the same. So this was an enormous local success.

Can you remember what date you were doing this, the first pilot scheme?

I'm not sure that I can. Let me just… Let's see if I can. Yes, this was in seventy-six, 1976. So I'd been there about two, couple of years. So I did, the first year was the family placement, that was the professional fostering. So it went, the pilot scheme went on for three years. Well then we made it all over the county and at the same time the government appointed the Managing Director of Sainsbury, Sir Roy Griffiths, to – 'cos the government was desperately concerned about the additional costs of old people, you know, 'cos people were living on government… And he produced a report and he asked me to meet him and he said I have based my report on what you have done in Kent. And I said to him, what you don't know is that I was able to do that because of the Sainsbury charitable trust. He, not being a member of the Sainsbury family, didn't, you know, had no control over what the Sainsbury family were doing and of course he was rather sort of chuffed by that. So it then became national policy and it is now. So that was really the second sort of major

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

thing that we did which had a very considerable effect for literally thousands, hundreds of thousands of people's lives.

Can I just ask you what you think now of care in the community and who it's developed over the last, well thirty years?

Well I mean I'm a bit out of touch but I think it is absolutely **the** focal point. Now, a lot of the services have now been contracted out, which I think is probably a very good thing. So that you have quite small organisations that have got perhaps forty or fifty carers, some come and cook the person's meal and then leave something for them to have in the evening, other people come and clean, other people come and get them up in the morning and put them to bed in the evening. Oh yes, I think it's working, as far as I know, it's absolutely fundamental policy. My God, there'd have to be endless more old people's homes, which are expensive to build and expensive to run, if this thing wasn't running. But I would try and like to say something about what was in a sense, and it's quite difficult for me to say this without appearing rather conceited. It's going to be written – Don Brand, who was on my staff for ten years and went on to be Deputy Chief Inspector of Social Services, is writing a book and I think what, he's majoring it on the seven people who he thinks were sort of key figures in social care in the last quarter of the last century, in which Bill Utting was one, who I may have said before, became Chief Inspector and he and I were the two shortlisted for being Director of Kent and I got it and I'd have been a lousy civil servant and he was a brilliant civil servant and got knighted for what he did. But if I may just read only a paragraph of the synopsis of what he says in the book; 'Stacey illustrates vital importance of strong leadership qualities in Directors of Social Services, particularly in big local authorities, very different in style from management directors running most social service departments then and now'. You see I came in as neither a social worker nor a local government officer, but a high profile, radical priest which – and actually from a quite different background, sort of social background. I was probably – there may have been another director who'd been at Oxbridge, there were, well Utting was

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

a scholar at Oxford and I was at Oxford, but I think there were probably no other Oxbridge directors. I'm not saying that in a snobbish way, merely I was a different kind of animal. 'Stacey, impatient with organisational constraints, concentrating on a strategic view of what the service was about, supporting can do culture which encouraged excellence and invitation. Areas, teams and units given a lot of delegated authority to try things out. Value based, which was about putting people first, treating children, adults and families as worthy of respect and consideration. Little time for managers or members who were unintelligent or obstructive or who put their own interests before those of people social services departments are there to serve. Genuinely pained by suffering of individuals, baffled that not everyone had the same urge to relieve their suffering. Also put store by community roots, didn't want people shut away in remote institutions or stigmatised in poor services. Wanted social work and social services to be high status and valued in order to attract bright people into the profession.' Well now, that's terribly kind, at least it's what he's saying and it is what I actually sort of tried to do. And one stresses, the first key thing of course was to get the support of the social services committee, because the constraints are on resources, legislation and what the committee would wear, what they would support. And they had ultimate control and I always used to say to them, with my tongue in the cheek, 'I am your servant, there to do what you ask'. And we had really terribly chairmen. One chairman who was very, sort of very nice. I used – if I've said this before you must forgive me - I used to say to him, how about doing this, some quite radical thing. And then about two days, two or three days later if I saw him, I said I've been thinking about that idea you mentioned to me and I must say the more I think about it, the more I think it's… These were sort of, in a way quite small but terribly radical things. We were responsible for all the centres where mentally handicapped people, grown up… went for day care and when I went there eighty per cent of them were taken by taxi to the training centre, which was of course very expensive and parents of mentally handicapped children - you know, they aren't children, they're grown up, what they're called – are understandably terribly protective and don't like taking risks with them. But I said look, wouldn't we be able to get some of these people to go on their, by bus to the

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

local adult training centre, as they were then called. Because that would transform their lives because if they could go by bus to the training centre, they could go by bus to the fish and chip shop or the movies or something, you see. And this was, you know, a small idea in a way. Well anyhow, we did that and we ended up by having about seventy per cent going by bus, but then we had one person who got lost and got on to the railway and was killed. And immediately there was uproar; the local papers saying how incredibly irresponsible. And I said, this is nonsense, a lot of kids totally reliable, intelligent, physically fit kids go by bicycle and every now and again tragically, one is killed. Do you stop every child? And the committee you see backed me totally. I said we simply must not change this policy. And of course they backed me. And in fact in the eleven years I was there the only time they ever turned anything down was, how it got on to the committee papers was that we should give, I think 10,000 or some ridiculously small sum of money to the Medway Gay Switchboard. Have I told that story?

No you haven't.

Medway Gay Switchboard. Now normally I would have decided that without, you know, going to the committee, but some committee clerk may have thought oh well, this is a bit controversial, perhaps it would save Stacey if he got it through the committee in case it was picked up by the press, social services committee goes gay, you know. Anyhow, on the agenda in that particular occasion, we had got through our budget for the whole year, which I mean I forget how many hundred million it was, but I mean it's an enormous budget, it was the same budget as the police actually. And then we got on to this – was it 10,000 let us say, it was something around that – it went on for forty-five minutes, which a number of the male members of the committee saying, of course I don't know anything about this sort of thing, [laughs] but I don't think I really agree with it. But anyhow, I was very well supported by the chairman – it was a different chairman, but anyway it was turned down. And it was the only thing in my whole career that I was turned down. And Radio Kent always attended our meetings and they asked whether I would like to do a

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

broadcast about this and I said, I bloody would. And I did a broadcast straight after and it raised more money than the committee had turned down. Which brings me on to another sort of aspect of what I felt was important in my role as director, was the media. I wanted social services to be high profile. And when you think that we had 50,000 clients. Now if you say that each client has close relationships of about four people, you know, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, close friends, what have you, that brings another 200,000 people linked with, through the client which even in Kent, a population of a million and a half, was still a significant number of people who were concerned. And I did a lot, I got myself unashamedly on television when I could to again, to explain things. We had a very good public relations chap for the whole of County Hall and he knew that I was quite good on telly and the chairmen were very good. I was actually, to be honest, better than them, the chairmen, so I went on, unlike of course in government where it's the Cabinet Minister goes on and the Permanent Secretary is never in the media, but thank God in Kent we didn't have this kind of – or I think they do now, but we didn't in my day. And I used to do phone-ins on local radio and this meant that social services had a high profile and as a result, the management team of the county who were a key body, the Chief Executive, the Chief Constable, the Chief Education Officer and myself, who were the sort of providers of services, oh and then the roads, planning, the finance people, the personnel people, so there were a team of about eight of us, of which social services, I was probably equal with the Chief Constable, the two sort of most public profile people. And I think this was good, this helped sort of raise the morale of the social workers, they felt their chap was out there in front shouting, which indeed I was, on their side. Where looking back I don't think I did well in, particularly with my fellow Directors of Social Services. Bill Utting says that I frightened them, because I was a different sort of animal. And as a result they never sort of asked me - there was an Association of Directors of Social Services, you know, like there was an association of Chief Constables and, you know. They never asked me to sit on their sort of, the management committee of that and I never sort of pushed my way forward or never chatted people up in a kind of way, fellow Directors that they might have… I never showed, you know, an enormous amount of interest. I did find some of

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

them, to be perfectly frank – perhaps this ought to be embargoed for twenty years [laughs] – as rather, slightly boring. And as a result I never became part of the social services media… oh God, mafia, social mafia. 'Cos I thought I could do much more by actually showing how it should be done on the ground rather than talking to other people what they might be doing, and that I was proved quite right. And that I regret, I would liked to have been, I think, President of the Association of Directors. The second group that I was, didn't really handle very well, looking back on it and I blame myself, I was arrogant I think, that they have civil servants in the Department of Health and Social Services who are sort of given quite senior sort of Assistant Secretary level responsibility for children and others for adults and mentally handicapped and so on, the various sort of groupings. And we would meet with them occasionally and I found them absolutely amazing, the way that the man or woman, was very often a sort of high-powered women, was saying, talked about being responsible to the government for children. I said, my God, you're not, I'm running Kent Social Services children. And I really did, you know, I got impatient, therefore I think that I had a reputation amongst civil servants of being pretty bloody. And I slightly regret that. And the other one, in one way I don't regret it, in another way I do, it's with doctors. Doctors patronise social workers. In terribly crude terms, doctors are more likely to have been at public schools and social workers more likely to have been in state schools. I mean there are a great many doctors actually were at state schools. But nevertheless they patronise and they were extremely reluctant ever to come to child care cases where there was a meeting to discuss whether a child or a baby was being abused. They said they were too busy. Now of course they are busy, but you know, all of us in this field were busy. I believe the reason why – and they were critical decisions – because if, I mean it's very often sort of inadequate sort of mothers, said I was holding my baby and I fell down the stairs and it was bruised, and the decision is that that baby's been battered, you take away a baby from an inadequate mother who, the one thing that mother has got is a baby of her own, is absolutely devastating experience. And on the other hand, if you get it wrong and it's being abused, you're front page in the *Daily Mirror*. And therefore these were really tricky, case conferences, they were called. And I think the reason why the

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

doctors didn't is because if the wrong decision was made, their head was not on the block and that really did upset me a pretty great deal. And I think that I was probably too arrogant with doctors. But I did care and I, it did come out in that thing that I read, I used to go round prisons because I was desperately concerned about kids that were put in prison, not for a sentence, but to be secure. And I have been in prison where fifteen year olds were locked up for twenty-three hours a day, crying. And I had one or two rules. I said no social worker is allowed to recommend to magistrates that a child should be – because we had no adequate secure thing – should go to prison. And I gave that approval, you know, it was an absolute rule.

Just let me get this clear. What do you mean, there was no secure unit?

Well a child has been, adolescent is running riot, did we have anywhere secure enough to contain that child and magistrates do get very cross, understandably, when they put children in care and then they are rampaging. But I used to say to magistrates, short of chaining, either putting them in a prison type situation, short of chaining them to their beds, how do you prevent them? And one of my major – became pretty well known – we go to cocktail parties and we go to cocktail parties where a lot of magistrates are around and they used to turn on me and say, we put a child in care and within weeks they're stealing at Marks and Spencer's. And I would say, I'm fed up with you fucking magistrates, you've got no idea what these kids are like and you know, d'you want me to chain them to their beds, because they have to go to school, they have to live and breathe and so on. And it did go round, the Director of Social Services [laughs] said, the fucking magistrates. Now the other rule – am I rabbiting on?

No, no, no, this is very interesting. So what did you do when the fifteen year olds were sent…

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

Well I set up, I did set up – but it was semi-secure. But what the – and there were other secure places, more out of the county, but the point was that I was determined that we did every single thing, whether it was finding something out of the county, I put up a great fence round a house in the suburbs of Tunbridge Wells. The trouble was, it wasn't quite secure enough. But anyway. And the other thing that I had was that nobody was to go to the police about accusations against staff without my approval. And it is what is incredible, the way times have changed. I could never begin to do that now, but children, especially children in care are incredibly manipulative. When Esther Rantzen founded Childline, children knew, a kid, the sanctions – I haven't said this before?

No.

The sanctions that people who are looking after children in institutions and I tried to, we reduced of course massively, we may come on to it – well, we have come on to that, the special fostering – are terribly few. They say to the child, you must come back from school, straight after school. They come back at six or seven o'clock, probably either having sex in the churchyard with somebody or stolen [laughs] at Marks and Spencer's or both. And they would say, you're to go to bed without supper. The kids would go into supper, the child would creep down and telephone Childline saying I'm being abused. I mean this is not an exagg… and in a way I don't, you know, these child they've, they're agin the world and they have reasons for being agin the world, they've had the most terrible upbringing. And I never once went to the police. This was because I never felt that we had a serious case and we never in the eleven years I was there, no scandal happened. I mean no scandal that I know of, or none got out in the public, you know, they endlessly were as you know.

No scandal about your staff?

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

About my staff. Now what I did do, I said look, I'm afraid I'm going to ask you to resign, I am going to have you put on the register of 'at risk'.

Was there a register, at risk register at that time?

Oh yes I think there was, yes there was. Yes there was. And I don't think that you know, I would try and get them to go to counselling. Had I had a sort of – had it emerged, you know, that somebody had been having rampant abuse of kids that emerged, you know, particularly in Catholic priests and so on in the Catholic run children's homes – we didn't have any of those – of course I would have gone to the police, but I actually fundamentally think that to put these people, terribly sad if you're sexually orientated towards children, you know, and it is a… So that was one thing and then I did, when it was out of my hands, a member of staff hit a child very hard and we had to go to the police, but I went into the dock. I got one of the best QCs, in fact he was a son, he's now a High Court Judge, he was a son of Canon John Collins, you know, you would know from your South African experience. And I went to court and spoke and I got the, I said you've got no idea how these child wind care staff up, you know, we sit comfortably at our home, we expect care staff with small pay to look after some of the most, admittedly tragically deprived, it's not their fault that they wind people up and they're aggressive and once somebody loses their cool and they do hit somebody once and then, you know, you say they should be locked up, and I got the child off. But I mean things like that, I tried to show that sort of concern, which I hope permeated the child. But then, there was the strike.

Sorry, before we get on to the strike. We've only talked in passing about the mentally ill group, the vulnerable group that are mentally ill. You talked about them going on the bus.

Well, what we did, we tried to… What we discovered and has been discovered generally is that mentally handicapped people can do much more than was thought, but parents are understandably very protective and the man of course who's pioneered this was Jean

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

Vanier who – and you ought to do something on him – extraordinary, he, his father – I hope I haven't mentioned – his father was the Canadian High Commissioner in London and he and I were at the same pre-prep school in London. He then went to Dartmouth, like I did, he then became a monk, I became a priest and he started L'Arche, which he lived with mentally handicapped people and got sort of gap year students to do the same. He is, now he is a really serious, I mean he's a saint and an incredible pioneer. But we tried to sort of do the same kind of things, but above all we were determined to try and get the long stay mental hospitals closed. We had two very big ones; one just outside Dartford. And I had every patient researched. What we discovered was that most of them should never have been there. They were simple people who had got little jobs of tweeny maids to lower middle class families who couldn't afford very much because, you know, they weren't paid very much, they got pregnant – we're talking about, you know, I'm talking about my career thirty years ago, we're talking about these people, fifty years, you know. Their parents didn't – such was this thing of illegitimacy that the parents didn't want to know, the people who were terribly, who had this little help in the house didn't want, you know, they couldn't afford to keep a pregnant sixteen year old girl. They were put away in these places and they became totally institutionalised. Shuffling around, they wore their nightdresses during the day so they couldn't easily sort of walk into the town by mistake, or be found if they did. And we got, we then started these group homes in which – and we weren't alone in doing this, but I think we were to some extent pioneers in this – and we stopped those who would have gone into them when their parents could no feel they could look after them, into group homes of sort of half a dozen. And every single time that we tried to get planning permission for a group home in the community, there would be a protest meeting. And I attended these protest meeting on every occasion and I used to say – and they tended to be mainly sort of middle class women in camelhair coats – 'cos they were in the, you know, the sort of middle aged typicals – and I would say, look my darlings, you have nothing to worry about. The mentally handicapped people in this group are extremely selective as to who they rape.

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

[laughs]

And that is a conversation stopper. And anyway, what was interesting – and we won some, we lost some, but we won a great many. And you know, within – and I used to go to them being much more positive. I think you'll find, once they've been part of your community you will find you will become part of them and you'll be coming in and having coffee mornings with them or you'll be raising sort of money in your own homes to take them on a treat, you know, or something. And that was the case. But such is the image – and actually of course it isn't the mentally handicapped, which we now call learning difficulties, it's the mentally ill, the high grade mentally ill who are, that's a quite different. People get completely confused about the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. It's two different categories of people.

So what did you do about the more serious cases?

Well I mean… I remember a case – I hope I'm not repeating, as we've had a series. Did I tell you the story when we had a hostel in which the mentally, various mentally ill people were and they said they would go on strike unless I found somewhere for this chap to go?

No, I haven't heard that.

Yes. Well I mean this illustrates – and I remember ringing up… God, what was that marvellous, that Labour Secretary of State? Who was in social services. Anyhow, I forget her name. She was a very caring woman. And actually I said look – I knew her slightly and I rang her up and said this is the situation we're in, there is a hostel for about twenty-five, because it raised a really, really important issue, that the staff of this place are saying this person is going to kill someone and you must find somewhere for this person. They have not been found, accused of anything yet and therefore they can't be put away in a long stay. And I said this is a grotesque situation we have in our society, because we've

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

had another care chap who was a child in care, who was putting kittens down the lavatory – he was in one of our institutions – and drowning them. He went on to murder, he was that famous murderer who ended up by being caught in Dartford, he slit a priest's throat in his bath, who I think had tried to befriend him. And he used to follow old ladies who were shopping in [incomp], would go back to their flats, he would follow them, when they turned the key he would push themselves in, would kill them and then turn on the telly and have a gin and tonic. And he was one of our people and he was another example of where until you are actually accused of something and found guilty, you're absolutely powerless to do anything. In that particular case I had to go, buy in somewhere in Northampton, it was a private home, sort of secure private home. But it is a real problem, you know, these people who, the staff who do see these people day and night who say something awful is going to happen. And they say we can't be responsible, he's going to kill one of his fellows. But anyhow, in the mentally handicapped we, you know, and now every long stay mental hospital has been closed. But we weren't alone in this, this was – but we did play a very prominent and leading part.

Good, well thank you for that. Yes tell me now about the strike.

Well then I've tried to say what we – I hope this hasn't been terribly…

No, it's fascinating.

... it's almost bound to be egotistical really. We did really try and perhaps I ought to make one more thing – a lot of people became quite excited outside our department, we therefore were able to recruit a group of very, very bright people, of which Brand was one and Mike Lauerman was another, we had this development group.

Mike who?

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

Mike Lauerman, who went on to be a Director of Social Services. He went on to be the Director of Cleveland to unscramble the absolute chaos of the Director who was under the thumb of the paediatrician or gynaecologist, whatever, who was saying all these children were abused, you know, and they were, appalling, disastrous situation. I mean he's absolutely outstanding. So we have a lot of very exciting people doing, you know, it wasn't me, it was them really, doing the things. And you know, we fought so hard for more resources and then we set up these family centres which is very close to professional fostering. We said we want people, parents to help to keep their children in their own homes if they possibly can, if they can't they want to be fostered – and these were difficult children. And therefore we'd have in each area a family centre, which would have a few beds so that a foster child was really creating and the foster parents were going mad, and they could go there for a sort of cooling off period for two or three days, or literally parents if the child was being very difficult. And they could always sort of bring them for the day, but it was also residential. But because we'd closed a large number of institutions it'd mean we'd made a lot of staff redundant, but you know, the children had to come first and not the jobs of the staff. And we'd employed, how they had got in, two or three people who were socialist, workers, members of the Socialist Workers' Revolutionary Party I think it's called, it's quite small, and I later discovered that where at every social services department they'd been in there'd been a strike. And we were having all, the unions and the county council were having big problems about the grading of the staff of these family support centres. And one of these social workers who was a member of the Socialist Workers' Revolutionary Party – I'm sure it is a proper, I may not have it exact, description – refused to take a child to, you know, that he'd been ordered by his manager, who was creating and the foster parents were saying look, you must do something, or the parents were saying. And the local manager sacked him. And – it was actually a female manager – and we didn't go through the exact processes. I think you have to say I want you to do this once and they say no, and you have to give them a second or even a third, and eventually if they say no three times, you're in a position to sack them, and we did wrong. I think, I don't think at that stage I was involved, but I'm never quite sure whether I was

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

rung, but anyway, we didn't… And large number of social workers came out on strike and most of them went back after a few days, but about a hundred or so hung on in. for six months. We went to the employment tribunal and we were told that the sacking was unfair, that we had not followed the proper procedures. We then, the county appealed against that decision and the county, the employment committee was rejected, you know, the appeal committee, the higher committee…

Yes.

…supported the county.

Oh, I see.

I'm being so inarticulate. And the strike was eventually broken. But that actually was really traumatic to me. I mean I did stay on for another couple of years after it, I think it was about a couple of years, maybe a year and a half, by which time I'd done eleven in Kent and three, I'd done fourteen years. But I felt, you know, that we had tried so hard and that some social workers – they were cleverly led, that's a sort of technique. Once you get people on a picket line, half a dozen people, it's very difficult for them to break away unless they all agree to, you know, I mean you probably know much more about this, I didn't know much about it. The county council held solid, you know, they didn't and they were quite right not to cave in, but it was a very, very unhappy time and because it was mainly the staff in the family centres who were on strike, because they were complaining about their grading, that we were then faced having no family centres. So by an absolute miracle I was able to rent a prep school. Now my memory's – whether it was a prep school that was just closing down, I suspect it was, or 'cos the strike went on longer than the summer holidays, so I think it was a prep school, it was prep school in Thanet and prep schools in Thanet were closing down, you know. And this took a hundred or so kids and therefore that completely undermined, you know, because the family centres were a critical

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

part of the strategy scattered around, but I actually then had a prep school which had 120 places and we recruited staff specially, you know, for manning this so this was a great… [laughing] and I think sort of annoyed the strikers all the more. But anyway, it was a sad, it was a very sad time and a very sad experience for me.

What did you feel yourself about this regrading business that had caused the unrest to begin with? I mean obviously there was a trigger and you say they were well led, but there must have been some underlying unhappiness about this regrading business.

Well I'm sure I was involved. There was a personnel committee which was quite apart from social services committee which, across all the however many thousands of people, Kent County Council handled them all and of course you have to sort of balance between. I don't remember ever saying to them, look I will resign unless you upgrade, you know, not that I would ever have said anything as crude as that, but I never really, I never said I think that we're going to have a strike if you don't upgrade them. I mean my whole thing, I've spent my life fighting for better deals for social workers, but I don't think I made before the strike a great stand, but I didn't make a stand that we shouldn't give in to the strikers. I think even if I had, I think the county council would rightly have, the management team would have overridden me. There's just one other aspect which I haven't mentioned. It's bound to be rather sort of lacking in cohesion this, but if somebody's wanting to write a book about social care, they'd have to pick up, you know, they can pick up the bits they want. One of the great things about the creation of social service departments in the Seebohm Report was to create one big department bringing in the children, adults and mentally handicapped and so on, so that they would have, and the director of that would have clout in the total local authority scene. They would be on a par with the Chief Education Officer, with the Chief Constable who, the police were the same as the, there was a county police, and the other chief officers. And that was terribly important because one had one's say in the whole strategy of the county council. And I think this is where some of the directors of social services didn't play a very prominent

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

part in that management committee, and that I think was a great pity. And I did, I made a point of, that I was a voice, as powerful as the Chief Constable and the other, the County Personnel Officer and the Finance Director and I used to, the Treasurer used to get so, of Kent, used to cross me. 'Cos the Treasurer was always thought of as the most powerful person. I said, you are but our servant, your job is to provide the funding, of course we're providing the services for the people in education, in police and social care, which are the three things which concern – well roads too of course and planning to a lesser extent, although in the long term planning decisions are critical. But it is the education of people's kids, the security of people in their homes are the police, and care of the vulnerable. I mean these were the three fundamental services, much more important than central government things like the Foreign Office. I mean in the long run the Foreign Office is much more important, but to the people in their day-to-day lives, it is police and education and housing too, but we didn't have housing, that was done by the districts. [sighs]

[laughs] No, that's excellent.

Are there any sort of aspects that you want me to draw…

No, no we've – well if you'd like to give an overview of your eleven years there now, that would be fine.

Erm…

But I don't have any more specific questions, now we've covered…

Well, one overview, they were the happiest years of my life. I was terribly grateful to have those three years at Ealing which I was sort of, you know, getting to learn the ropes a bit, and the eleven years in Kent. I was terribly lucky. The Chief Executive and I were very

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

great friends and he was a tremendous support and help. The committee were always a marvellous support as I've explained. I was able to recruit probably half a dozen really outstanding people and we formed the management team of the social service department. And together we did change, I mean it's not for me to say really, but I think that other people would say, Kent was not highly thought of when I took over. It had only just started and they'd appointed a lawyer because he'd failed to become Chief Executive of the county and I think they gave him the job, was not a clever appointment. It wasn't his fault, he was a very nice man. He only lasted about eighteen months or two years. And I think that it wasn't highly thought of nationally and I think it was, to be honest, highly – it wasn't really due to, well it's partly due to me of course, but it was having a very good team, a very good social services committee. I mean to me it was where the power was. I don't mean I'm obsessed by power, but I'm obsessed by being in a position where one can exercise real change and we did, which the voluntary bodies, which on the whole I'd been, certainly on the edge of, Oxfam and so on, can be influential and they do do things, but the heart of social care in this country, where the money was, the resources were, the legislation was, and there was I in the largest social service department in the country, hundred - no, not Wales, not Scotland, Glasgow or Strathclyde was bigger, but otherwise in the country - in a position of enormous power and responsibility, far better than if I'd been a bishop, who has no power. You know, at every point he's… And I mean I tried to change the Church of England when I was in Woolwich, with absolutely no… I was extremely relieved not to have been spending the rest of my life trying to prop up something over which I was sure was declining, if not dying and I think I've been proved right on that. The institution's – I don't think the gospel's dying, but I think the institution is dying. And here I was able to exercise something that I felt was really worthwhile and I thank God to my dying day. And it was a Labour council that appointed me in Ealing and a Tory council that appointed me in Kent. And the policies the Tories supported, well I mean, breathtaking really. I mean totally out of sort of synch with, you know, Tories are, tend to be conventional, they don't tend to think radically and I hope this is what James Cameron is going to try and encourage them to do.

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

David. Yes.

Well now, we've got a half an hour or so. So shall we come on what happened next?

Yes.

I had, after fourteen years and I think, I don't know exact numbers, but I suspect there were very, very few directors who were directors for fourteen years. I was then fifty-six or fifty-seven. I had persuaded the county council to bring in that chief officers resign at sixty on the grounds that if you were appointed when you were, like I was, about forty-five, which was youngish but not all that young, to be a chief officer for twenty years was, very few people can actually do, can be fresh and I was fifty-seven and I thought if I'm going – and if, at sixty you're probably not going to get another sort of major job. I thought I must leave and I actually was in a way running out of steam. I think the strike, which had been eighteen months or so earlier, probably did sort of take sort of stuffing, really stuffing out of me which I may not have fully accepted at the time. And as I was thinking about going, I was, a headhunting firm who, one of the partners whom I'd married him to his wife, you know, he was a very good friend of mine, he was a very distinguished man, I won't mention his name, came to me and said there's an arena – this was at the time of the Isle of Dogs just developing – there's an arena being built in the Isle of Dogs, which is going to be the great new, as indeed it's turned out to be, in which the idea was there'll be pop concerts and that will sort of make it financially viable. It'll also be a centre – and pop concerts are, for sort of three hours, you know, every now and again – but this would be an arena designed enabled to do all sorts of things for the young, unemployed young people in east London; sporting activities, you know, of one kind or another. And as – and this of course is something I've been sort of totally committed about – if you find young people can actually do something well, this gives them enormous confidence because so many of them feel failures. And would I be its Chief Executive? I'd appear as a Chairman of the

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

committee and quite a powerful committee. Bob Melhuish who was a big figure in Labour politics and so on. And it was three-quarters built, and they said we want you in there right from the beginning to sort of get all the plans going and my job was going to be to try and book all sorts of concerts and there could be professional ten… you know, every sort of thing, but the thing that particularly appealed to me was free in the day for… And after I'd been there for – and I said yes, and I was really very excited. It rather jiggered my pension, because as I moved to another job they did give me additional years, but they would have given me many more additional years if I'd gone saying I'd run out of steam. Because you know, the last thing they want is a director who resigned… to sack me. I mean then of course salaries went up enormously for social services directors and top officers in local government after I left – that's just an aside. And I realised they never had the money and they couldn't, they couldn't raise it. I went round with a very bright chap from a merchant bank trying to raise the money and interestingly enough, the person who understood most what we were trying to do was Rupert Murdoch.

How interesting.

But he made all sorts of promises which of course didn't come… It was fascinating. Whether it was all a complete con, I don't know. I was with him about, for about an hour I suppose and he took, he said he was taking a call from was it, I forget who was the head of Russia at the time, somebody else who was Secretary of State in Washing… I mean I simply cannot describe… interrupted by about five people, all of whom were sort of… it was most absurd. But he, I mean he twigged the point. And so it all…

But if he twigged the point, why didn't he give you any money?

No, because that was typical of Murdoch. Yes, he promises things, you know. He then owned, he then owned *The Mirror* didn't he? They were going to do something and you know, whether his editor… So I was then out of work and I think because, as I said

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

earlier, on the whole I wasn't terribly popular with the civil service, I think they thought I was an arrogant, that I was an arrogant shit. I wasn't offered to sort of chair any committees of enquiry and this slightly saddened me and I think on the whole the doctors felt I… I wasn't asked – though I was asked to chair things for a mentally handicapped hospital which didn't actually end up, a primary trust for… There was nothing – I was asked to be on endless voluntary committees and I quickly discovered that really, if you have run a big show and were really the sort of commanding person in it, just to sit on a voluntary, I just couldn't cope with it. But, something did then quite quickly turn up and that was the Sainsbury Trust, it was a time when the Aids thing was just beginning to take off and they said would I do a report on what Britain should be doing about its response to Aids. This was when it was just going sort of in America and had barely started here.

Sort of eighty-eight, eighty-nine I've got here, is that right?

Yes, yes. No, it was eighty-nine, that was when I became Director of the Policy Unit. No, this was a couple of years, this was about eighty-seven I should think.

I see, okay, thank you.

Or probably eighty-seven or eight when Sainsbury asked me. That wasn't the sort of thing one would put in *Who's Who*, it was merely they asked me to. And it was an extraordinary thing that my godson, and this is totally in the open, in – it's not secret – Chris Chataway, who's a great friend of mine, we share an Olympic Games, I'm his godson, to his son Mark Chataway, who has been openly gay for a long time and I'm going to bless his civil partnership, which I'm thrilled about, in January. He was working for the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York so I got in touch with him and he introduced me to all the key figures; there are three centres really. There was New York, the Gay Men's Health Crisis was absolutely the sort of – this was a time when undertakers wouldn't handle the bodies. It so happened that an Episcopalian priest, a great friend of mine, Leslie Laughlin, was

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

vicar of, priest, the Episcopal priest in Greenwich Village, which as you know was the centre. And the other place of course was San Francisco and to a slightly less, Los Angeles. And Mark got me to meet the key figures in the country and I then wrote a report saying what I think the government, which the government handled the Aids pandemic terribly well in my judgement, but I said I think there's one thing we want to try and set up is the National Aids Trust and that would be an organisation which would co-ordinate all the voluntary bodies that were, local voluntary bodies of usually gay people. There was the Terrence Higgins Trust, you remember, which I'm a patron of, and then Crusaid and then there were all sorts of groups of gay people who were getting together in centres where there was a reasonable gay community to set up hostels, care, support and that the National Aids Trust should be set up to co-ordinate that and feed them with ideas of things that could be done at the local level. I mean the government, of course the thing was that pamphlet through every door which people said was an overkill, but it wasn't, we had fewer Aids than any other country in Europe I think. So then the government did support the National… and that was set up. I rather wish I didn't, that I would have applied to be its director, but in a way I didn't want to be another, do another director job, I really wanted to do I think a sort of more chairman job. And Margaret Jay became the director, which I was very supportive of her because I thought it was extremely important that it had a high profile and she was a very high profile figure being the daughter as you know, of Jim, the Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan. She later on became a Labour peer and became Leader of the House of Lords. But then Des Wilson came to me – I was actually a bit desperate about what I was going to do - and Des Wilson was then being sponsored by a very, very rich property man who actually went bust, was a very, very high property - what was his name, I simply can't… awful. And Des Wilson wanted me to set up something on the Aids front which, sort of citizens action Aids, and I took to be its director which sort of contradicts what I was saying, but by that time I didn't just want to sit on committees and I wanted something which I thought, you know, the Aids thing was terribly important, there's no question about that. But that never really had a role and after eighteen months or so I advised them to sort of wind it up. It was a kind of second eleven

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

National Aids Trust and the last thing one wanted to do was to rival the National Aids Trust. And that was a rather disappointing eighteen months and I think Des shouldn't have started it and I should have advised him not to have started it and Des Wilson was a great friend of mine because when we were doing the homeless, when I was at Woolwich Des had started, Des Wilson had started Shelter. And then next thing that really was – oh I did various things, I was made [incomp], I was made a Six Preacher of Canterbury Cathedral and in the, and the other man – oh let me tell you about Six Preachers. It was set up by Cranmer after the Reformation, because apparently the performance of the clergy round in the diocese was pretty dismal, particularly their preaching, so he set up six sort of figures, preachers, men of some sort of calibre, three or four hundred years ago, who were to go round – am I boring you?

No, not at all.

Who was to go round the parishes preaching and trying to make the vicars preach better. It had developed into the, Canterbury having Six Preachers who were meant to be fairly well known figures in the church who would preach once a year, have a legal right to preach once a year in the Cathedral. It was in the gift of the Archbishop of Canterbury and he didn't always I think consult the Dean and Chapter who ran the Cathedral as to who should be, as to who he should choose as Six Preacher. Well he chose Edwin Norman and me together. Edwin Norman was, had been the Reith Lecturer and was a well known figure, fairly controversial figure in the church, and then I was a fairly controversial figure in the church, but I mean totally really out of it because, you know, I'd gone on taking, but I wasn't part of the ecclesiastical system really. And I read a piece in *The Times* on the Court Circular page, half a page how Edwin Norman and I had been appointed to this post of Six Preacher – there were already four in existence – and it rabbited on about the Reformation and how we were, preached at Canterbury Cathedral. It actually emerged that because the Dean and Chapter really had no say in this, but they were forced to have us to preach one sermon a year. They put us on at three fifteen on a Sunday afternoon in

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

August, in which the only people in the congregation were those who were Japanese tourists who didn't hear the announcement that visitors must now leave the church, there was going to be a church… I mean I exaggerate a bit, but not much. I think one or two people had heard, and I was at least in the sort of calendar of services, Reverend Nicholas Stacey at three fifteen, you have a sort of thing of the whole services. And I thought well I'm really not going to be defeated by this so I got in touch with *The Times* and said look, I'm going to preach a sermon and I'll send you a copy, because at that time, *The Times* had on Monday morning a sermon in full on its sort of Circular, the Court Circular page, and I would like you to consider publishing it. And the appointment was for five years and my appointment was never renewed, because I thought the whole thing was such bloody stupidity. But in the five years I did five sermons, I had four of them reprinted in *The Times* on the Monday morning. Of course that infuriated the Dean and Chapter because I mean they never had anything that they'd ever – I'm exaggerating slightly, there's a very good Dean now, but the Dean then was appalling – they'd never had anything printed in a parish magazine, let alone *The Times*.

[laughs] What were your sermons about?

Oh they were, I forget, I mean they were ones that I thought, they were prepared totally for *Times* readers. I even forget what they were about, but they were, I think they were how the change and you know, this move and so on and so forth. Anyway, they printed and I think Ruth Gledhill was *The Times*, still *The Times* ecclesiastical correspondent who was responsible for that. But then anyway – but I did various things. But then I was asked to be on the committee – it's now called the East Thames Housing Group – with a view to being Chairman.

It's called the what, sorry? The East what?

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

East Thames Housing Group. That was a housing association, not as big as the one I'd started, you know, which was now enormous, but that was not due to me but I founded it, the Quadrant. And then I became Chairman after a year and that, so I was back as Chairman, I was back in a key position. And that I was delighted to do because the person who retired had been there too long and had allowed a, she'd, much against her will she'd been forced to appoint a Chief Executive, who was absolutely outstanding. The female Chairman had been a big figure in LCC and GLC, was Jewish, and it was much against her will that another powerful Jewish woman, called Helen Cope, had been appointed as Chief Executive. And she was… and there was a team of – it was quite a big operation – her team of four or five were all turned against her and they were, because she was very good and they were not at all good and I came in as Chairman just as they wrote in and said that she should be made to resign and I got all but one of them sacked and you know, but that was just, but I was just the right person to be Chairman of that at that time.

Yes, great upheaval again.

Yes. But I mean that was, because she was brilliant and eventually had to resign because she got breast cancer, but by that time she and I had appointed some outstanding people and I left that when I was seventy, I did five years and I left because I became deaf and I couldn't hear even with hearing aids in what people, committee members… I'm alright on a one-to-one. But I did five years and I think on the whole five years is long enough. The way people hang on, specially at my age, you know, they hang on till they're seventy-five and people don't like to ease them out and this woman ought to have been eased out long before she was. So I did retire, but that was a very – and I was then seventy.

So what were the biggest issues for the East Thames housing area at that time?

Well, I mean there were a lot of very exciting issues because it's an area of great development and we were very smart of bidding, working for the local authorities, the Isle

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

of Dogs, there was a fascinating situation there because enormous – we took our nominations from Tower Hamlets and the greatest pressures on Tower Hamlets were Bangladeshi families with large numbers of children all living in one room, and we developed a lot of housing with the biggest landlords in the Isle of Dogs apart from the local authority. And the people left in the Isle of Dogs after development were working class people who hadn't, had a wave of, you know, development and the bright ones had sold their houses for quite a lot of money, the dockers, and bought out in Essex and the ones were the old who, you know, felt overwhelmed by the whole thing. And then all these, we put in a lot of Bangla… nominated the – by the local authority – to house Bangladeshis and that's when – what's that fascist movement called, the…

BNP.

BNP.

British National Party.

Elected several people because they put around and we had a lot, it was, you know, a rea dilemma. A lot of sympathy for the rather depressed white families with their children at school there and then the Bangladeshi families, you know, with six children, so it got overwhelmed. So there were a lot of very interesting and good issues and then we started foyers, which has been a tremendous success and where East Thames has gone – I found a very good man to succeed me as Chairman – has gone from strength to strength. Foyers are a sort of hostel, the largest hostel type places where kids who might be kicked out of their homes or living rough or homeless in way or another, come to big hostel where they, on the condition that they train for work and have a lot of pastoral care and are helped to sort themselves out. They were actually developed from France.

What's it called?

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

Foyer.

How d'you spell it?

F-O-Y-E-R.

Oh yes, yes, yes. Okay.

And then I got one of my, the person who became Director of Social Services at Ealing, Robin Fleming, who'd been on my staff when we were at Ealing, I got her on the committee and you see we were able to develop group homes for the mentally handicapped, mentally ill specialist homes, and it was a pioneering – God we weren't the only housing association that was doing great things. I mean it has become the alternative to local authority housing and it had, you know, real money pumped in, enormous sums of government money. And we used to, we got our residents on to the committee and – I didn't do, I mean the key thing I did was supporting the Chief Executive and getting rid of a whole raft of very, very inadequate people and replacing them with a raft of very successful people. I then at the very end became Chairman of Selling, the parish council, not the first council, but the sort of you know, the parish, the secular body.

How, tell me more.

Well, that arose, yes this… people aren't likely to come to this tape for – probably nobody will come to it ever.

Well wait a minute, you know [laughs], I don't know what you're going to say but it's up to you whether you sign a clearance form or not so maybe be a bit careful because it…

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

Yes, well all this is in the public domain. Selling Council, which was a typical parish council where the members had been there, many of them served loyally, faithfully and extremely well for about thirty years.

And this is where you lived, just to be clear for the tape.

Selling, yes.

Selling, yes exactly.

Not the church, no, it's the… every community, village has its parish council, like every town has its urban council. A woman came to live in the parish who they'd appointed as a very bright and very able woman as parish clerk, which is a part-time, very part-time, but paid job and she really rather tried to take over being the council and really tried to be the role of Chairman. And this group of parish councillors sacked her, which was totally appropriate thing for them to do and she then carried out a vendetta against the parish, the Chairman of the parish council and indeed the parish councillors. She was a very clever and powerful woman and took a libel action out against the Chairman, which cost a great deal of money, luckily we were insured, and created a really upsetting – and she would attend council meetings and attack the councillors at every point and if they did anything slightly wrong in the procedures, she immediately pounced. And the whole, all but one of them resigned. So we could have had a situation that she might then have – there were then five vacancies, she could have got four or five of her friends if she – I don't think she did actually have very many friends, but she could have recruited them and all stood for the council and, you know, done what she liked. And so I rallied the great and the good in the village, where we had lived by then for twenty odd years, and said look, you must stand for the council. And I got Lady Swire, who's the husband of Sir John Swire who's amongst the top twenty richest men in the – you know, the Swire – in the country. And a few other very good people to put up and she put up to be council and thank God she got

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

no votes, she got very, she didn't get any. We just put up the number that were required and then she added so that, you know, but we chose our – I persuaded this lot to come in. And then they said I must be Chairman so I became Chairman. And then she tried to persecute me and came and stood on the doorstep and after meetings she said, I hope you rot in hell. I mean it was really quite tough stuff, but I'm quite, I'm sort of used to that and I didn't stand any nonsense. Eventually, you know, after a couple of years she cooled down, I mean she realised that she was on a loser. But so we, then I then did some parish council… But it would be fair to say I did actually save the council and then this would I think be accepted.

So what does your parish council have to decide?

Oh well it decides nothing. I mean anybody who wants to have planning permission has to, their view is asked by the District Council and the view is taken notice of but it doesn't have the final… but that is quite important and everybody does want to extend their cottage these days as you know. And they look after the potholes and lighting and *phew*, give away [incomp] of the village hall. But I mean it's small beer stuff. But nevertheless it is a – oh, and if there's a plan to cut the number of trains that go through Selling, stop at Selling station, they make their protest. And get people to cut their hedges and put up signs of speed and get people, you know the highway authority to put up the zigzags for… No, I mean it's [incomp] but no significance whatever.

Well it's very important where you live isn't it, to have friendliness among neighbours?

Yes. Well she, I mean she's a sad, I mean she's a very sad lady. She then went to work for the big Kent Messenger group and they fired her and she took them to the employment tribunal and I saw, you can get the Chairman's report of a case and I got the full report that the, and the Chairman totally upheld Kent Messenger. And she created exactly the same problems with Kent Messenger, staff of Kent Messenger as she did with the councillors.

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

And one feels sorry for her. But it was interesting that just as I became Chairman, because I took over a tricky situation, you know, a non-situation, a situation of everybody having resigned and then when I took over East Thames again, a situation where it did actually need somebody quite strong and experienced to come in and get a grip.

Sort it out.

Or else a very important housing association could have been in, you know, it would have probably been taken over by another housing association.

Was East Thames just the Isle of Dogs or was it a much bigger area?

Oh God no, oh no, no. Oh no, it's Tower Hamlets, it's Newham. It's the most deprived borough in the county, in London, of the London boroughs. Oh no, I merely tried to illustrate the point that the kind of issues, you know, quite sophisticated issues that these are the people in greatest need and Tower Hamlets rightly put them where there is housing that has been developed, then they overwhelm the schools and the whites protest. You know, I mean they are sort of complicated issues which need… Oh no, Newham is **the** most deprived borough, that's where its headquarters is and us coming up with good development schemes and working closely with them, you know, it's… and it gives another critical area because they are now the main providers of what local authority housing was before, housing associations now are because on the whole they're better managed. They are smaller, they're not very big, I mean Quadrant is 33,000 but it's spread over quite a wide area, but they can manage them I think more carefully than the massive local authority housing departments.

Yes, quite, quite.

Well actually we've done it all…

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

Well, what I'd like to ask you about, I mean what in tandem with all this work that you were doing through these later years, what apart from your one sermon a year at Canterbury Cathedral, what actually were you doing in local churches or…?

Well I have, I do not, I take services here.

At Selling.

Across the church, and I do, I preached, one of the things I did a lot of after I retired from Kent Social, you know, when I was not fulltime, when I mainly wasn't fulltime after that, was preach at public schools. I take, I do quite a lot of memorial services, preach you know, people, friends. I do quite a lot of – well not quite a lot – I marry the friends that, the children of my friends, I bury my friends. I do quite a lot in the sort of Terrence Higgins, I did I was on the committee of Crusaid, which was fundraising for people with Aids who were dying and they needed, you know, help in their homes and that sort of thing. But I mean I don't do, I'm seventy-eight now. But I do, but I don't go round taking services in every village church, I mean I've had an absolute strict rule about that from the moment I came. But I take services regularly here, particularly now since there's no vicar at the moment in this group of parishes, but we've got two other non-stipendiary priests who… I mean the last, I mean I suppose I… in some ways I think the last sort of, from the age of fifty, I think I was fifty-six or fifty-seven, till I was sort of sixty-five plus, I think ideally I would have hoped that I would have had a sort of major chairmanship as one or two other of – I don't think many directors have, but one or two have had major chairmanships in the health service and I think I would have liked that and I think that I, and I probably sort of got, I think I got the reputation that I'm a bit of a maverick. And listening to me for the last however many hours you may think, and that probably is true. As non-conformist. Certainly a non-conformist, I'm not in the sort of traditional word non-conformist, I'm a non-conformist in the church in its present pathetic state of…

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

Well obviously I wanted you to give an overview of the church today.

Well I think it's, I think it's absolutely pathetic. I spent an hour with Rowan Williams, unexpectedly, unplanned, between the time he'd been offered the Archbishop of Canterbury's job and before he'd accepted it. Now I'm not saying that he took a blind bit of notice of what I said…

Well how did you come to meet him then?

Well because I went down to do a, chair a session – oh actually it is quite interesting – chair a session of a priest called Martin Reynolds in Newport in Wales and he is gay, totally openly gay and has a partner who is the leading hairdresser in Cardiff. That goes rather well, 'cos they're two… And he was then doing, he was running a seminar for clergy in the area and he asked me to go down and chair it and Rowan was then Bishop of, Archbishop of Wales and Bishop of Newport and he, this friend of mine lived next door and his children swam in Martin Reynolds's swimming pool and Martin had told Rowan Williams that I was going to be down for the weekend and it was a Sunday night. Rowan and I, I mean he obviously knew of me and I obviously knew of him, but we weren't friends and Martin said, oh do come over if you sort of feel you'd like to meet Nick Stacey, and it was a Sunday night and he could easily have said you know, I've preached three sermons, the last thing I want to do is to meet Nick Stacey, but he did come over and we just had an hour together. And that's how I met him. And I've since become sort of quite – 'cos then I must tell you about being given the Cross of St Augustine, I should have said that shouldn't I? The last fifteen years don't sort of dominate, I mean there are all sorts of things that happened which I don't feel sort of strongly about till I think about – but I must tell you about the Cross of St Augustine. And I begged him to take it. And then I saw him the other day and I put my arm around him and I said, God, had I known what you were in for I would have – I said to him, I'm not surprised you don't want to

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

shoot people like me who – I don't think I did say it, but I… You see, the absurd thing, the church is absolutely incapable of actually catching up where society is today. There are two allegedly big, well there are, not allegedly, there are two big issues. One is women archbishops. Well now, women didn't get the vote till 1920 and the place of women was subservient. Now they have taken over brilliantly, where there is Prime Minister, in every high court judges doing it just as well and better than men and really all people like me are saying is, just allow women to be what society, where they are in society and the ridiculous argument, because Jesus only had male disciples, well that was the role, it would have been quite, I mean the women did play a very, of course you know, prominent part in his ministry, but they weren't his, he had a team of men because that's the whole… So I mean that is utterly pathetic that… and what people don't realise is that in England we were where the Nigerian bishops are now fifty years ago. I mean I've told you the story, yes I told you the story about when I was a curate in Portsmouth. My wife knew John Wolfenden who produced this report, 'cos he was Vice-Chancellor of Reading University where my, where Anne read agriculture, and when he produced the report I got him down to speak at a meeting, just to say what his report said for God's sake, not what he was recommending. That gay sex between consenting adults should not be a criminal offence in public, which it was before. And I'm sure Edward Montague, Lord Edward Montague was at Oxford with me and he was arrested and imprisoned. Anyway, so it was an imprisonable offence in, this was in, well it was up to about 1960 I think it was.

Yes, it was.

And you know, I learnt from when I saw about Aids, the love that gay men can show, and to me it's utterly, utterly pathetic that – and the Catholic church over women bishops is absurd and over the gay situation is absolutely… and the Catholic church is riddled with homosexuality, totally understandably a lot of the orientation of Roman Catholic priests is that they are homosexual. Now I'm not saying, it would be totally inappropriate for me to say what percentage of those are practising homosexuals, but one does know from human

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

experience that the number of people that are able to keep celibate in such a highly sex charged society as we're now in, in which sex dominates everything, the number of the people with such pressures upon them, with their own libido working on the, you know, an encouraging way to remain chaste is – but it is actually a fact that it's far easier to have a gay relationship if you're a Roman Catholic priest than it is to have a heterosexual one. Because you go on holiday with another priest, a fellow priest and nobody's asking any questions. You go off on holiday with a lady parishioner or your housekeeper and you're doomed. So I see, I still believe in the heart of the gospel. I believe there is a God, I believe he did manifest himself in Jesus Christ and that therefore he does love us and he does when he, in some ways appeared to rise from the dead that there is something beyond this life. And all my instincts make me feel this as well, you know, that this life simply cannot be the end and therefore the heart of the gospel I still cling to. The church, the institution is merely the vehicle through which this is conveyed and the vehicle is now in its present form, in my view, is doomed. The Catholic church in some ways is in a bigger mess. It's got virtually no priests coming forward for – because it's much more priest orientated, that a large number of its followers actually don't believe what it says about family planning, which is to me totally ludicrous and its attitude about homosexuality, which is ludicrous. You see, to my children's generation, who are in their forties, it's not an issue, it doesn't occur to them. You know, they think if the church makes this the big issue, what sort of church is it, it's got nothing to say to me.

Do your children go to church?

No. I don't blame them. But they are, they are very concerned people indeed. Our daughter who left a, the leading solicitors firm in the country, because she didn't like doing nothing but takeover bids and you know, where the partners are all earning over a million, and I think she is the calibre would, and certainly her subsequent career has shown that she would have been a partner, not necessarily by now, but jolly nearly – well, she probably would by now, and earning a million a year. Because of her – she joined a firm,

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

it's a firm that works for the unions because she's on the side of the underdog. Our son, who has an estate in Shropshire and a lot of tenants and things, whenever any of his tenants get problems he rings me up and says if, you know, if there's any way that, how can I if I think a child has been abused or something, how best to handle – you know what I mean, I mean he's very concerned about his staff and his tenants. And my other daughter's a journalist who is again, they're all fairly concerned. But I'm afraid they aren't churchgoers. But I cling, I cling to the…

Do they believe as you do?

No, they don't believe. I think it would be fair to say. They don't believe – they may, well I have faith, I mean I have faith that the heart of the gospel is true, you know, there is a loving God, there is something beyond this and the spirit does guide us and I mean in my own experience in life God has been terribly good to me in that it seems things have happened to me when I've been, you know, fairly desperate, rejected by the church was, I think it was pretty painful actually. And everything you see I tried to do has now become sort of more or less done, you know, sharing church, denominations, sharing churches. Trying to change the building into community centre, clergy sort of working in key, trying to work in secular things, trying to reach out to the community. And this is why it was so extraordinary. We've been married fifty years, was it, it was last year and I took all my children and grandchildren, Anne and I did, to Greece for a holiday. When I got back I found a letter that was waiting for me from Lambeth Palace; 'Dear Nick, I'd like to… I am able to award the highest honour I can offer in my role as Archbishop of Canterbury is the Cross of St Augustine to people who have made an outstanding contribution [mobile phone interruption] to the church…

Ah.

[break in recording]

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

Cross of St Augustine again. Okay.

The letter said, 'This is the highest honour that I can give for those who have made outstanding contributions to the life of the church' and I think the community, or society. There was another word as well as to the church – 'and I very much hope you'll accept and the installation is at Lambeth Palace on…' whenever it was. And he gives…

And this is Rowan Williams?

Rowan Williams, yes. The Archbishop of Canterbury. And I think he actually does give about ten away a year and I'd never heard of it, to be perfectly honest, so I don't think it can be very much. But I mean here am I who, was totally sort of rejected by – nobody has ever asked me to do anything except the Six Preacher, which is a total non-event. I have never been asked to be on a committee which is responsible for choosing people for the priesthood and no other priest or bishop in the Church of England has employed 6,000 staff. I mean the one thing about being a top manager is being clever choosing people, I mean everybody will tell you about that. That's why you can go from one job to another which have no, you know, you can be Permanent Secretary in housing and go to be Permanent Secretary in social services, you know. And a top manager's thing is knowing how to appoint and how to use top people. But I've never been offered or asked anything whatever and nor has anybody ever asked me whether I would like to. Because the story I told you with you know, about the others was I think off the record, the Dean of Canterbury thing.

Oh yes, no that wasn't on the tape so I think we'll leave that.

So that's neither here nor there. So I, well to be honest first of all I thought he'd sent it to the wrong person.

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

No, you didn't.

No I did, I perfectly reasonably did. And then I, I then rang up one or two people and said look, have you heard of it and they said they had heard of it, because we'd recently been with a bishop, staying with a bishop had been staying with us in Ibiza, the Bishop of Lincoln who was a terribly nice fellow who had this awful problem with Lincoln Cathedral, which you may remember about.

Oh yes.

And he said yes, I do know about it. And then I discovered that Sir Michael Colman who was the man who took over the Church Commissioners after the previous lot had lost them vast sums of money, d'you remember, investing in property. And he'd been given it, so I then did write and say yes, I would like, very much like to… So I, but I will tell you the sort of horror, that you have a blue ribbon and nice cross thing with the Cross of St Augustine in a sort of medal, medal thing. And of course the only time you really wear it, could wear it is sort of in a church service or after a church service and you have a surplice as you know, a white thing, so it goes underneath that so it isn't seen, but I do from time to time when I take a wedding or baptism, or indeed funeral, that I go into the reception still wearing my cassock and I wear my blue ribbon. And the first time I went, I was slightly sort of, I thought oh my God, everybody's going to ask me what's that for. Nobody [laughing] asked me at all. And I've since been, I should think worn it about half a dozen times and I think only once has anybody – I'll tell you, whether it's people completely disinterested or whether it's because a choirboy, if a choirboy is made a senior choirboy he quite often has a blue ribbon with a little sort of medal. So that…

Did Rowan Williams say any more about – you said he wrote the letter saying it was your contribution to the church, but I mean did he…

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

Oh yes, he then made a great speech…

What was the, exactly, the citation?

…which had been written, which really was rather nice, by my curates.

Oh very nice.

About you know, they had got together and written – and he read that, or I think he'd edited it a bit, yes he did, yes, yes. In which it did say, you know, what I did actually achieve in Woolwich. But perhaps I can say this. I was having lunch with the, Bishop Hugh Montefiore a week before he died and he was a suffragan bishop – that's an assistant bishop – to Southwark where Mervyn Stockwood was the Bishop who was this sort of fairly charismatic, in many ways rather tragic bishop, not least because he was you know, obviously, very obviously suppressed homosexual. And he, it was he who told me, he was the one who told me the story which I didn't, which I told you about before, but he also told me the reason I – I think I said I was, I may have said I was rather surprised I never, nobody's every asked me to do anything in the church. He said that Mervyn Stockwood was, I don't understand it, you were a threat to him and he was jealous of you and he made it sure you were never – he must have said something about me, which made, that nobody ever offered me a job. And I'm so glad, because had I been offered a job, I might have accepted it, I mean I was pretty fed up with the church actually. And I'm sure the people who know me think that I'm terribly disappointed I was not a bishop. And I can absolutely across my heart, I am terribly grateful. This is thanks to being Director of Social Services where I could actually do things. But for me to have sat on a pile of a church that is declining with very few clergy of much competence, of no power to move anybody, to close churches, to redeploy resources, to be able to do it on a massive scale – and I totally understand the problem of redeploying resources when you have lovely historic mediaeval

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

churches all over the place. Emotionally, Anne says that I would have taken to the bottle. I just could not have coped with being the nominal head of something with a good deal of status, much more status than being Director of Social Services, but of course far less power. I mean think of being in loco parentis with 2,500 children in care. I mean that's twice the number of kids at Eton, and Eton has 1,000 parents, lots of parents breathing down your neck. I had 2,500 children with nobody caring a bugger about them, that's why they were there. And so, so I'm just so relieved and this is why, you know, this is one of the reasons that makes me think there must be a God, you know, that has realised. And what I must finish by saying, that but for Anne, who has been absolutely brilliant. She comes from a very Anglo-Catholic family and her great-grandfather was the Lord Halifax who tried to merge the Church of England, you know, what was it, Malines conversations, in the thirties. And her mother was an absolutely devout Roman Catholic, as was her mother who was a Halifax, was a Wood, that's the family name. They chose their nannies on how Anglo, how their governesses – this is true, and Anne will tell you this story really, much better than me - her mother's governesses on the devotion of their Anglo-Catholic faith. And the governess was awful, my mother-in-law was an extremely unhappy woman, er, child, tried to drink hound puppies – you know, they had a great estate, Bramham Yorkshire, they were terribly upper, you know, about as upper class as you can be, family and Anne was brought up in that tradition. Her father wasn't, he was a good, devout, middle of the road Anglican but her mother was the dominant influence. And then her mother took against me because of my radicalism. Her Anglo-Catholic friends, priest friends who she had a great many, you know, you can sort of imagine the scene, would send her copies of articles about me or things that I had written or bits that I had done on television, you know, and thought I was destroying the Church of England. And I got Anne to say to her, well if the Church of England can be destroyed by me, it must be a pretty feeble thing. And she's been, I mean the Woolwich years were incredibly tough, when we had three children, we were very pushed for money, lodgers, curates to feed, working - I was working, you know, seven in the morning till ten, eleven at night practically the whole – I was a bad father I'm afraid. And she stuck it all through and I,

This is a five-part interview with Revd Nick Stacey, which ranges across his long career in sport, the clergy and social services. As with all oral history recordings, the views expressed in the interview are solely those of the interviewee. In this track, there are some descriptions of the culture of social services in the 1970s and 1980s which people may find disturbing, and which the Library in no way condones. However, as first-hand testimony of a period in our recent past we believe that it is important for the interview to continue to be available to researchers.

and I'm sure her family, you know, when I got married they assumed I was going to go up the ecclesiastical ladder. If I'm boring you, do stop…

Not at all.

Ecclesiastical ladder. And I think my parents were a bit disappointed. You see I have been head of everything that I really touched except anything to do with the church. I was head of Dartmouth, fastest white runner in the world, head of social services. My life has [laughing] really been, I suppose in some ways a bit of a success, except in the one area which I thought God was calling me to. [laughs] So that means that I'm not the least bit embittered. And of course had I stayed on in the church and just been sort of neglected, you know, in some bum parish, well I wouldn't have, I would have become an alcoholic if I'd stayed… No, but one did take a big risk by getting out aged forty without any skill. But looking back, so Anne through, has done, we are terribly blessed with our children and that's I think entirely due to Anne. At dinner parties one, I almost daren't ask the mother on my left, you know, or my right, you know, do tell me about your family because you know, we all know there's so many snakes and pitfalls in the lives of all, but particularly with sort of growing up children.

[End of Track 4]

[Track 5]

So, we're going to talk about your involvement with the media over the years.

Well, I think probably the media's played quite an important part in my life. First of all 'cos when I was an international runner I was obviously, although television was to some extent in infancy, there was still a certain amount of television and of course an enormous amount of radio and people obviously talked about me, but I was often interviewed on the radio and on television and so on. But that was about my running. But then one of the first sort of big television slots on a Sunday was started by Malcolm Muggeridge and one of his first – and it was on a Sunday evening – I was just about been ordained and I was a curate in Portsmouth and he asked David Sheppard who of course was the test cricketer, Simon Phipps who was the friend of Princess, who went on to be Bishop of… oh, Sheppard went on to be Bishop of Liverpool, Simon Phipps who was a friend of Princess Margaret was always in the papers as being Princess Margaret's friend, who went on to be Bishop of Lincoln and then me, who was the Olympic runner, who went on to be [laughs] nowhere in that kind of glamorous status, scene. And it was a half hour programme and I remember the three of us got together for it and we thought we'd better get God's guidance before so we tried to find an open church. It was in I think well, the television studio, I forget where it was but we thought we would try and find a church where we could just go and pray quietly for a few minutes in the hope that God would guide us from making the most terrible cock-up of the whole thing. And then of course in Woolwich, oh we really had a lot of publicity. I think I was the only priest to be on the David Frost, is it *This is the Week that Was* and they behaved disgracefully as far as I was concerned and I actually came out trumps because they behaved so badly. And then, but there were a number of programmes on what we were doing in Woolwich and then one very important one when Bishop Stockwood who never ever talked to me about my article, about anything I'd done in Woolwich, had to admit, pushed into a corner that he agreed very largely what I was saying, but having never told me that and never admitting it anyway, but he was pushed into that. And then of course Oxfam, I was on a great deal 'cos of Biafra, both radio and telly. When I say a great deal I mean not by Paxman standards going on every night. And then in, probably less when I was at Ealing actually, a lot with the media though, I mean local papers, that was very important. And then again in Kent. I actually made a point, I

mean probably boosting my own ego but also generally because I felt the work needed good positive presentation and publicising to show that these were genuinely important things we were trying to do. Since then – oh then with the Aids, bit on Aids, not much. But since then, no. I mean and once you've ceased being a figure in whatever you're doing, you totally understandably, nobody's interested. But over the years I mean I, it's been a significant part of my professional life is the answer.

I see that you were the Vice Chairman of the TV South charitable trust, what did that involve?

That is the nicest thing that anybody can have. The television trust got the commission by saying it gives fifteen per cent of its profits to charity. They set up a charitable trust and they had about five people who were sort of experts, or reasonably experts in sort of various fields where people might be applying to money, you know, for a charity and you decided how to give it away. And I spent a lot of my life begging for money for one good cause or another, this was the nicest thing that I've ever done. And I was about five years on that I think.

And what sort of things did you personally wish to promote?

Well, I mean obviously in my concern to some extent church things and also of course social service things, you know, voluntary bodies in every kind of social service need. One which was actually key which I was on was the Canterbury Festival which had just started, was in dire financial straits and we were asked for really quite a substantial donation, rather more than we normally would give in one thing and we did give it, with a little bit of encouragement I think from me, and then actually saved the Canterbury Festival and Peter Williams, who is a big television figure, who's been Chairman of the Canterbury Festival Trust for a long time, did say it actually saved the Trust. And I've done interviews, Peter Williams did one of the sort of *Face to Face* interviews with, typical of *Face to Face*. And then there was another one, the radio, not *Desert Island Discs* but rather like *Desert Island Discs* on the radio. I forget what it was called, it was a half hour, forty-five minute programme, an interview with your famous, your most, the tunes you liked, which I did get a certain amount from my wife. But there was perhaps

one thing I just might add, which I've never spelled out in public. When I was coming to the end at Woolwich, there was an approach by the B – John Freeman was just giving up *Face to Face*, d'you remember, those very important interviews, and I was asked whether I would like to be considered as a replacement and I never pursued it. I took advice, one of the people I remember taking advice from was Chris Chataway and another, and this is slightly name dropping, was Ogilvy, Maria, the Kents – what's the Duchess of Kent…?

Yes, Alexandra. Alexandra's husband.

Alexandra's husband.

Angus Ogilvy.

They were happening to have dinner with us and I talked to him, and I think Chris was at the same dinner party, and I said you know, what d'you think about this. And I said the thing that would worry me, one is I would hate to be a failure, I would find that perfectly frightful, and the other is that I would hate to make good television by almost destroying people. 'Cos you may remember that he did, there were one or two people who were sort of closet this or that and they came out in tears having admitted something they never really wished to have admitted before. So I never put in – that's just an aside – I never in fact would have been considered. I mean they probably would never have chosen me anyway, but it was quite interesting to be actually asked. I think they did it because of the television I'd done a certain amount before, you know, I was perhaps reasonably articulate on television.

Now apart from the book, your autobiography Who Cares *and the articles we've mentioned already, what other writing have you done?*

Well I did a series of articles, I did the famous piece on Woolwich in *The Observer*, 'Failure of a Mission', which I wanted a question mark put after it and I was persuaded not to, not that I think it would have made a great deal of difference, I think the impact would have been the same whether there was a question mark or not. I haven't written – oh yes, I did used to write for the *Social Work Press* when I was Director in Kent, again because I

wanted to sort of boost the department and show the staff that their Director was out there in front, you know, banging the drum. But I haven't, I've done practically… though I've occasionally written an obituary. I remember I wrote an obituary for Michael De-la-Noy who was the Archbishop's press secretary, was sacked and he was a lovely man and rather a good author and he'd written about something in that magazine *Forum* which is a sort of sexual, slightly deviant magazine and the Archbishop's advisers all got round to – Ramsey was then Archbishop – saying he must sack, establishment-y type figures, for writing about an article in this… he was writing about a bisexual colonel who lived in Kensington or something. I'm sympathetic to the media and I'm an obsessive newspaper reader.

Which newspapers do you read then?

I read *The Times* and *The Tablet*, which is the thinking man's Catholic paper, and I read *The Spectator* and *The Sunday Times*.

And so you never read any other – what about local material?

Oh well, I read the, we have the local paper, yes, yeah.

[laughs] Right. And so tell me about The Tablet*, I'm not so familiar with that.*

Well *The Tablet*, there are two, there's the *Catholic Herald* isn't it, is the sort of – it hasn't a very big circulation but it's the sort of man in the pew, Catholic pew, but it's surprising how small it is. And *The Tablet* is really the, is a sort of *Spectator* type weekly and it's pretty radical and critical of the Catholic church. I'm very impressed by it and a great many Anglicans read it, you know, sort of thoughtful Anglicans read it.

That's very interesting.

Yeah.

Now talking about church matters, what do you think about the relationship between the Christians and say the Muslims, particularly in the light of the current extremism?

Well I mean the present situation is absolutely tragic because you've got the fundamentalist Muslims on one hand and you've got the fundamentalist Christians who are very strong in America and I think have considerable pressure on Bush, who are the causes of the appalling world situation. Christianity and Muslim have a great deal in common, far more in common than separates them, and these two wings, numerically very small, are now wagging so that faith, I became a priest because I thought that, I tried to use my life to build a kingdom of God, you know, a kingdom of peace and love and charity to each other, of getting on. And now faith, far from being a solution to the world's problems, is being seen as actually part of the cause of the problems between totally unrepresentative people. I mean in the case of Muslims who sort of feel you can die and go to heaven where there are fifty virgins, I mean God knows what a man does with fifty virgins seems to me a question that might reasonably be asked, and then the sort of fundamentalism of some of the Christians who say that every gay should be in prison, you know, it's not on a par with, quite with the fundamentalist suicidal, but it is a kind of absurdity, fanaticism, which is scary. And I think they're partly behind, I mean I feel desperately sorry for people in Israel but it seems to me they should give the Palestinians more opportunity of having a role, but the faithful following that they get from the Americans is partly I think from fundamentalist Christians. So I mean there are now real forces trying to call for moderation in both, but it's a hell of gloomy outlook. We've never had a situation in the world which is potentially as dangerous as this because the means of terrorism, I mean the IRA never, their worst moments, they'd kill themselves by mistake sometimes but they never actually openly were prepared to die for killing God knows how many people including their own lot if they blow up an aeroplane.

They usually phoned to tell you where the bomb was, d'you remember?

What?

They usually telephoned and left a message.

Yes they did, yes they did. Absolutely.

It seems totally gentlemanly now. [laughs] Anyway. What other comments do you have on you personally and your religion?

Well, in spite of everything, I am terribly glad I was ordained, as things have worked out. It was totally unlikely that I should be ordained, I was a successful and ambitious naval officer, there was no priest – actually I think my great-grandfather was an Anglican vicar, but in those days, you know, when the sort of people of our class were – my father was a banker, and so on. And I think, I genuinely think it was the call of God. But I didn't have and still don't have the sort of characteristics of a vicar, of a priest, you know. I am a fairly driven, fairly ambitious man. You can't be an Olympic runner unless you are a fairly driven, ambitious person. It's no good pretending that I'm the 'after you' kind of person. You don't win a race by looking at the other five people kneeling down to run a 200 yards or 400 yards and say, 'After you Claude'. You say, 'Over my dead body are you going to pass me'. So, and I am fairly well… well I'm very well really. I've been terribly lucky that – never been rich – but we haven't been impoverished, like we've always had some money outside what I earnt as a priest. But in those days I didn't know necessarily that I would have it and I think I was prepared to make the sacrifice. I've obviously made some sacrifice, I haven't earnt anything like I would have earnt had I gone into any other job. But as things turned out, when the door slammed, ecclesiastical door slammed in my face or I slammed it in my face – and there was a bit of both, it's true – I just have been so blessed in doing things which in a way I think I was made to do. The alternative would have been to be a politician, which everybody at Oxford said to me, you're mad to be ordained, go into politics. And Chris Chataway who's one of my closest friends and I shared a room with him at the Olympic Games, he was my best man and I buried his mother, anointed his nephew and going to bless his son's civil partnership, so really a very intimate and close friend, he said you know, went into politics and really became fairly disillusioned with that and I think I would have been even more disillusioned because I would have been just on the Labour, I'd have been a sort of New Labour man before New Labour came in. And therefore the time, rather like sort of Roy Hattersley, who I have a very considerable admiration for, he was in opposition almost all his – in Parliament but not in government – almost, and I with my timing would have been very much the same actually. I think to be a backbench MP would have been very frustrating. I just tell this story, when Michael Howard became, eventually got adopted for Folkestone, having been I

believe turned down by about fifteen, I think it really is, it's totally in the public domain this, constituencies, which I admire – here he was a successful QC and to be turned down fifteen times and still go on. You know, I was asked – I was then Director in Kent – and I was asked to go and meet him, there was a sort of cocktail party given for him so he should know, get to know the local sort of nobby kind of people. And I said to him, I really am amazed that you should want to be an MP because all I, every day I get letters from MPs complaining about how social services department had behaved and my Chief Education Officer gets the same and all you can do is write letters to me and I always make sure that they're seriously answered and if we've made a cock-up we say we've made a cock-up and so on and aim to put the thing right. But I just think that being a backbench MP would be absolutely devastating. And that would have been my lot, probably. I think I'd have probably got a seat. Although for somebody with my background and my accent, getting a seat in the Labour… was not that easy in those days. It's easier, bit easier now. So the alternative – I'm not able enough ever to have got in the Cabinet I don't think and therefore I think the most I'd have achieved if the Labour party was ever in power when I was around would have been a sort of Junior Minister. And I think on the whole I've been able to be a bit more useful than a Junior Minister.

[laughs]

And a civil servant I couldn't be. A lawyer, a barrister I might have been, but my motivation actually has been to try to make things better and barristers are terribly important and they are ensuring justice is done by arguing for or against, but they aren't trying to make things better in quite the way that I have been trying to make things better. I mean one's success is absolutely minimal. And making money has never appealed to me.

Good, well thank you for that, those comments. Let's turn to your private life in these later years.

Yeah.

Ibiza's very important to you isn't it?

Ibiza has just meant so much to me. When I left Kent Social Services I got a bit of a lump sum, it wasn't very much, and of course considering, quite a reasonable pension because I'd only been at it for quite a short time, I hadn't been in it for forty years 'cos I came in right at the top of it when I was forty-four or forty-five. And I said to Anne, I'm determined to try and buy something in the sun, because I adore the sun, and I'd been to Ibiza before, not actually with Anne but with another party and Ibiza somehow appealed to me. It was a smallish place, easy to fly to and sort of manageable, about the size of the Isle of Wight, about the size of something you can put your arms around, you can sort of embrace it. And I got in touch with travel agents before I went and I said – I think it was about 40,000 pounds, it may have been less, it was some years ago but, 40,000 pounds was worth more then than it is now – and I was shown round the various properties and they were all, Anne said you'll never find anything that isn't crap. So I'd rented the car for the weekend to go and I went up to a place in north west of Ibiza which was a sort of ghost development when I was last there and it was still a ghost development, they'd started a whole lot of flats and properties with the most fantastic site over the sea, and a few of the villas had been completed, very few. There were only sort of thirty villas in the whole development and there was the foundations of a hotel just behind one of the villas, but there was one villa that was, been completed and it had an English car, or a car with English nameplates, so I got out and stopped and saw that they were in and I said, what are you doing here and he said, well this is the most fabulous site – and it was, it was a three bedroom, quite a modest, well sort of three and a half bedrooms. And he said I'm really taken by this place and there's another foundation of a villa further down the road towards the sea which is going to be bigger, I want to buy that and I'm dying to sell mine. And he then said a price which was within what I had and I rang Anne up and said look, I'm terribly sorry, I think I've found somewhere, but darling of course I won't dream of buying it until you've seen it. It was in November when I went. And he was really keen, I mean he really, of course he knew he couldn't continue to pay for the thing until he sold it to me, so I then got Anne to come out in January with my two daughters who I thought would be on my side, because I didn't think Anne really would be too much on my side. It was the most fantastically sunny January, absolutely miraculous. And in fact it was so warm that our two daughters swam in the harbour at Santa Eulalia, which is the sort of Bournemouth of Ibiza, when everybody was parading around after lunch on Sunday, which the, sort of

lot of expatriates and nobody swam, but it was so warm for somebody who was used to swimming in the sort of east Kent area, and they said Dad, you must buy it. And we did. We discovered we'd bought it from a man who was, escaped from Britain because he'd done a mortgage fraud and we had great difficulty – and was wanted by the police in England. Anyhow, cut a long story short, we paid him and we then got the *escritura*, that's the sort of freehold thing. And we go there, we have our friends there, we lend it to friends at sort of reduced money, so an enormous amount of people go, it's occupied the whole time from beginning of May to the end of October. And we've just had the most happy times. And now it's, I go about three or four times a year and it's just meant – so looking over the Mediterranean on a sunny day with the ships passing by and the boats sailing, with a gin and tonic in the sun is… [laughs] I think next best to heaven. And now one's retired, you know, it means, but you know, our children go and we've actually given it to our son now, but he allows us to go when we want to.

And what d'you do while you're there, I mean are you…?

Well we read. We love having house parties, we've had some marvellous, a lot of – all my ex-curates have been as our guests and you know, we reminisce and we read a lot, there are lovely bays where we go, we've now got a swimming pool by the villa and restaurants in gardens, beautifully lit. And Ibiza's a very, a sort of tolerant attitude about Ibiza, Ibiza Town is magical and a lot of people who actually live there, expatriates, are those people sort of running away from something. It had that great hippie colony in the sixties when the aeroplanes started flying there. A lot of very interesting people. We don't actually know very many of them because we take our own house parties, therefore we don't need to. But the great thing about knowing it, going to the same place, you said d'you really like to go to the same place all the time, we said yes, because the tradesmen, the shop people know one and one Mediterranean place, the sun and the blue sea is the same whether you're in Greece or – and lovely trees around you and olives and oranges and everything.

What about the sort of lager lout image that Ibiza has now?

Well of course that is the tragic image that Ibiza has and there is a small section of, down in the south west of San Antonio in which it is lager louts and the young, the sort of adolescent Englishman feels the same about going to San Antonio as the young Muslim feels about going to Mecca and it is actually pretty amazing. They have these fantastic discos which are – I mean it costs you about fifteen to get in, unless you get a lot of freebies given, or is maybe more, and about five euro for every drink you have. But I don't think many drink because I think most of them are on, probably drugs a bit, you know. And they are pretty incredible, but they don't influence one at all. But the image is that it's all sun, sea and sex in which sex probably comes first and sun next and they barely get down to the beach because they don't go to bed till five in the morning.

[laughs] So when you're here, how do you spend your days? Do you see the grandchildren a lot?

Yes well, they come down for weekends and my wife is a brilliant grandmother. I'm a less, I don't find it awfully easy to know what to talk to sort of six and seven year olds. When they – we've got two older ones, adolescents, and I find it easier to talk to them. But they come down, I take the dog for a walk twice a day, I read *The Times*, I do my correspondence, I've learnt to use my computer. I'm very inadequate at it but I can book an Easy Jet flight on it, it's about as far as I can do. And I'm very compulsive about the news, which I think a lot of old people are and if only just to sort of worry about dealing with the world situation, about which they have absolutely no influence at all in any way. And I think about Christian faith quite a lot. Think about death a bit. And hope there is…

You've said that you believe in something after this life, but when you talk about death, are you talking about dying here or about after death?

I don't worry, which a lot of people do, about the pain of death, but my very greatly loved twin sister died last September with cancer and did have a very rough last six weeks of pain. I'm more concerned that there is something beyond this. It's totally outside my comprehension, but if there is a God, if Jesus is in some way his manifestation and there is a life beyond, he will have prepared for something which is going to be good. And this life is so unfair and I have been, as my wife has, so incredibly lucky, we are the luckiest

people, sort of middle class whites living in England at this particular period of no major war since 1945, what for fifty-five years. When you think, there was only twenty years between the fourteen eighteen war and the thirty-nine, forty-five. And the carnage in the fourteen eight… was unbe… but I mean worldwide probably it would have been worse with Russian and German fronts and all that, but I mean they suffered another fantastic blow in the thirty… we've had no major war. The standard of living of everybody in this country has gone up unbelievably. We are, if in terms of opportunity of travel, health, lifestyle, there is no group that has been more fortunate, and yet the unfairness, life happens to us, things people hit… through no fault of their own, quite a lot of times it is their own fault, but the suffering of we the fortunate, let alone the millions who are unfortunate is still enormous. There must be something, and the unfairness, these things hit you, hit you and not me or me and, you know, or one person not another. I think there must be a loving God who is going to sweep us all up and that means all the Muslims and everybody who's never heard the name Christ. I actually think that animals, the love that dogs give to people and what people have. We had a Labrador who was a rescue Labrador who died, we had to have it put down, I mean the fondness that Anne and I had with that dog and it had with us and when we held it in our arms with the vet giving it an injection, the vet said the relationship between a dog and a man is spiritual. It **is** spiritual. But then I say, then cats and then I think, and I think, I mean Wesley I think felt and Wesley had [laughs] some credibility, that animals are swept up. I think in some way the whole of creation. And when I think when I send an e-mail and I press my 'send/receive' and then somebody in Australia presses their 'send/receive' and my God they have exactly what I've written comes up on a screen. I mean that's totally – and if you said that to somebody sort of fifty years, even knowing… they would say this man ought to be locked up. It may not be a totally fair analogy, but there are a lot in this life which I know to be true which are totally beyond my comprehension.

No, I agree entirely. But thinking of your sister, what do you think about people wanting to end their own lives at a moment chosen by them?

I am totally aware of the dangers of this. My sister in the last – I was with her quite a lot when she was dying – she had a very simple, typical Anglican faith, you know, middle of the road and she said I believe there's something, I'm not afraid of dying. But she was

when she was in such pain said oh please, please can I not die. And I was holding her hand as her husband was, she had a marvellous husband, a very great friend of ours, who knew my wife before my sister knew him. And he did say to the GP, look can't you hurry it along. And they said no, we really can't. Now I think they always say that. I think – and I think it's a moment of, they don't do it quite when a lot of loving relations hope they would because of, they're seeing the pain and suffering. But the danger I see totally is that if I am a son and I'm just about, I can't pay my mortgage and I'm going to be made homeless and my father really has got cancer and he's pretty depressed and the doctor says well, of course you can never be sure, but really he's pretty certain he's going to die, and if only he could just die within the next month it's going to save me being homeless – you know, I'm putting it in terribly simple terms. So on the whole I accept I think that you shouldn't be able to anyhow, except just a few days which…

And did seeing your sister suffering make any difference to your faith?

Question my – no, no. If anything it enhanced my faith, her saying, you know, I'm ready to die and I mean I, almost frightened of saying this because I might be proved absolutely wrong, I said I've had one or two cancer scares which have all been luckily you know, clear, but I've been saying to myself that I want to die before my wife but I'm going to be told I was to die, I would be quite relaxed and I would not say I'm going to put up a brave fight against cancer. I say I put up no fight against cancer at all if it's going to get me. 'Cos I've had a very good life, I will be a bad old… I wouldn't do well in an old people's homes. I've looked after all the old people's homes in Kent for eleven years, or all the ones that weren't in the private sector and however hard you try to sort of motivate people, you know, it's… I pray that doesn't happen to me. But I doubt if I would have the guts to commit suicide. I remember so well that when I went to New York to look at the Aids scene, I went round one or two of the Aids hospitals with the doctors where there were these boys whose, at that point, I mean many partners were simply wonderful, holding hands with their boyfriend. The others had been deserted, you know, perhaps they'd got Aids through a one night stand and they'd been rejected by their parents and there they were, knowing they were going to die, and I said to the doctor, for Christ's sake – and I mean for Christ's sake – why don't you just leave them some pills by their side so they can take them. And she said it is amazing, none of them ask or want… the instinct to hold on

to life is terribly deep and therefore I might find when, if it comes to me this way, that I'm told I've got cancer, that I will say who's the best surgeon in the world to – well I wouldn't say anything so stupid as that, but you know, but I mean how can I be kept alive. Because I believe there's something beyond this. In some ways I've had enough of this too. I'm not going to achieve anything more, I've got lovely grandchildren, they're happy, my children are all, got good relationships.

Yes, but you say you're not going to achieve anything more, but what makes you happy to get up in the morning?

Well I've always got something to do. I mean the dog needs to be taken for a walk. I might be doing something for my wife, not probably very likely because I don't go shopping, but there may be, or I mow the lawn. I'd quite like to see the morning newspaper to see how it's handling various things and there's the odd book one is reading. And I like alcohol and alcohol means a tremendous amount to me and I do feel much better. When I was, you know, Kent Social Services, or any Social Services is a very stressful job, I mean the shit is hitting the fan fifty – as I said at point that we had 50,000 clients, if you have one in a thousand going wrong you have fifty sort of potential disasters. And I used to come back and have a large whiskey and soda and a bath and half a bottle of wine and one sort of put aside – because there was no point carrying, in fact it would kill you if you were carrying the burden and the sadnesses and the tragedies and inequalities and unfairnesses of 50,000 people all the time you would… One of the things that admires me about Blair, his fantastic resilience to stress and strain, I mean it's simply unbelievable.

Yes, that's true enough.

Anyway we're terribly - we've got a lovely house, we've got Ibiza, got a nice club in London, we can afford a glass of wine or above all a wonderful wife and three children that are very successful with all six grandchildren all healthy. I mean, you know, one couldn't ask more. But the stimulus to change things, you know, I'm not going to do that any more.

I think you've done enough changing things probably. [laughs]

I've tried, but I haven't really been…

Oh you have.

I mean in a ludicrously modest field, but it satisfied me. My ambitions were – I mean I never had ambition to be Prime Minister I mean, then we're on to change, or General Secretary of the United Nations. I mean it's quite outside my capacity.

Well I've come to the end of my questions, is there anything else you'd like to add?

Except you have been the most charming, if I may say so – don't switch it off – and I tell you the secret, you actually look as though you are listening, although it's all going on there, and that you are interested and you have, if I may say so, a heavenly smile.

[laughs] Thank you.

And the people who employ you are incredibly lucky and very wise and I hope they pay you a – which I'm sure they don't – because almost all the most worthwhile things that are done in this life are badly paid and it's been a great pleasure to have you and I hope we shall meet again and if you're going off to dinner tonight, that you have a nice dinner party.

Thank you very much.

We've missed the train but then we can…

[End of Track 5]

[End of interview]