

**Doreen Spiers**Key:

**I:** Interviewer  
**R:** Respondent

**I:** **Okay, so we should just start. If you can say your name and when you were born...**

**R:** Doreen Spiers, S-P-I-E-R-S, and I was born 3/4/1928.

**I:** **1928, okay. And when you were born, your family lived on King Street.**

**R:** In King Street, yeah.

**I:** **Okay. And how long did you live there, personally?**

**R:** Until I was 20, when I got married.

**I:** **And where did you move to after that, when you were married?**

**R:** Oh, it was still in Cheltenham. I was in Prestbury Road in a basement, because at the end of the war you couldn't get anywhere to live. So I was in a basement in Prestbury Road.

**I:** **That's where I live now.**

**R:** Is it?

**I:** **Yeah.**

**R:** And then, because I'd got three children - well, I had two children and I was expecting my third - the council eventually gave me a new house down in Village Road, and I was there until my daughter was 20, because she was born in '50, 1950, and then I had to move up to St Mark's because my husband was ill and we needed two downstairs rooms for him to have a bedroom downstairs. Then I moved to Evesham for two years, because I married my second husband, and then I came back to Spenser Road, and then when I was on my own because he died, I had to downsize, so I went to Springbank. Now I'm here in sheltered accommodation.

**I:** **Okay. So you've been in Cheltenham all your life then, all around it for the most.**

**R:** All around it, yeah. I worked in Marks and Spencer.

**I:** **Okay, yeah. Joan told me she worked there as well.**

**R:** Yeah, we all did.

**I:** **So when you were a child and you were growing up on King Street... So if I ask you about that period of your life before the war, what do you remember mainly from that period?**

R: We went to school at the Parish, which was just by St James' railway station - because I never concentrated because I was looking at the engines turning around, because they had the turntable. So we had to walk there. It was normal, really, until the war came. I was away at my aunt's down in Portsmouth when war was declared and my mother rang up and said, "Send her home at once." Through the war years, until I went to work at 14, at Marks and Spencer, I was at the senior school at Christ Church. They were both church schools. I went there... then I don't know whether this is relevant, but Ms King, who was headmistress of Christ Church school, was a Scottish lady, very big, and when she went down the corridor it shook. She came into... my sister Joan was in 3A, and I was in 3B, because I was a dunce. She came in and said, "Who's leaving this time?" and me and another girl put our hands up. She asked the other girl, "Where are you going to work?" and she said, "I don't know yet." So when she asked me, I said, "Marks and Spencer." She said, "Never in this world. They won't have you." But I proved her wrong.

I: **And you got a job there?**

R: Well, my aunt got me a job, because I wouldn't have been able to go there if it hadn't been for the war. Because I was a dunce.

I: **So you started working during the war?**

R: Yeah.

I: **Right, okay.**

R: And I was there until I was 20.

I: **Until you got married?**

R: Yeah. And I stayed there after I got married, and they more or less educated me. They sent me to night school and stuff. They brought me back out. I finished up as a supervisor. Ms King came into the shop one day, and I would've loved to have gone up to her and said, "This is Doreen Parker. You said I wouldn't get anywhere," but I wouldn't dare. I'd have got the sack [laughs]. But during the war, my father couldn't join the army because he'd had meningitis when he was 11. Although physically he was alright, it took all his memories away. You could teach him at night, but by the morning it was gone. But he was a good gardener, and he had an allotment down Folly Lane, and we always used to have to pick up - well, I did; they didn't - I had to go round on a Saturday morning and pick all the pigswash from the houses, put it into a big bin and take it down to Folly Lane where my father had pigs and all the rest of it. So we weren't very bad off as far as food was concerned during the war, because we had rabbits and hens, and eggs and everything. So we weren't too bad off that. But we had to go... when we first started going for air raids, we went to the brewery, and we went down into their cellar, until my mother suddenly realised that there was eight concrete floors above her. Never again.

I: **Yeah, because if that comes down...**

R: So then we went to the allotments because my dad had a boiler there that he boiled all the pigswill up, so it was nice and warm, and so he put some seats in there. So we used to go down there.

I: **So what about before the war, when you were a child growing up? What memories have you got of being a child in King Street?**

R: Oh, we played in the street, and it was quite normal. But the area, as you say, has changed, because at the end of King Street there was what was called Lusty's, which was a hardware store. But he had one of these big vans. If you see them on the television in America, where they go round the country with all the things on, pots, pans, kettles, everything, and he used to go round the country like that, and he was on the corner of King Street. So we knew him, and we used to go in there as well. And then there was Davis's, the fruiterers, and we used to go there and say, "Any specks?" Anything with a little bit of mould on or anything they couldn't sell. They'd give it to us, so we could cut that out and then we could eat it. But that was the only way we could get any fruit. There was a faggots and peas shop, which... your mother always used to give you a jug, and you'd go down and you'd get faggots and peas and come back and have your tea. My mother always had hens to clean and pluck for Christmas to make hen's meat. My grandmother lived two streets down, so when I was born, my mother went to work at the laundry down where St Paul's hospital is now. That was the workhouse. Have you heard that?

I: **Yeah. I've heard some people used to call it the Spike.**

R: Probably. And then there was the laundry with that. And then next to that there was a great big building that was an orphanage. Have you heard that?

I: **Yeah.**

R: One of my aunts worked there, because it was just opposite. So my mother just used to pick me up, take me to my gran's, go to work, come back, pick me up, take me home. But when she'd got my other two sisters, she couldn't do that. So when we were at school, she went back to work. But we just used to play in the street. There was two pubs in the... You know there was two pubs?

I: **On King Street?**

R: Yeah. There was one on the corner where St Paul's College is, and there was one in the middle of the street, and then there was another one down in the High Street, so there was three pubs.

I: **A lot of pubs.**

R: A lot of pubs, yeah. And during the war... before the war my mother worked at St Paul's college as a chambermaid, because that was easy while we were at school. But all of us used to just play... We used to go down to Agg Gardner's rec. Have you heard of Agg Gardner's rec? Down by Pittville. The children's part was Agg Gardner's rec, and we used to go down there and play on the swings and everything. I used to always take the babies. I always took the babies out for a walk. So we'd take them down...

I: **Was that because you were the eldest?**

R: Yeah. And when they were in pushchairs, we'd take them down, put them on the swings and bring them back. We also... my grandfather had a market garden at Prestbury, and when we were in school or on school holidays, we walked from King Street to Prestbury. Do you know the... [pause] Prestbury day centre?

I: **Yeah.**

R: Well, part of that... that was the whole of his market garden there. So he had pigs and everything there, and horses. We used to have to go up and pick the fruit, and get it all ready for the market next day. So you're there all day, and then you walk back home again. Then on holiday times we used to go up to Cleeve Hill. We'd catch the bus up to Prestbury and then you walked up to Cleeve Hill. We used to go up there on Good Friday and have a picnic and everything. My great-grandfather was jockey to Fred Archer who rode the Golden Miller. And he lived up Mill Lane, which was part of Cleeve Hill, and he lived up there, and there was just three cottages up there. It was a two up and two down, and 11 children [laughs].

I: **In four rooms, yeah?**

R: And we used to go up there haymaking, and I can remember... I think I was probably about 7, and dad was up there, and they were haymaking, and I was in the haywain, just sitting, and the horse got bit by a horsefly and just went. I was going boom, boom, boom, boom [laughs], and screaming the place down, and my dad was running up by the side, and said, "Shut up, you silly so-and-so, you're making him worse." No sympathy, you know. But we always did that, every year.

I: **So would you say that where you grew up, the people...? Do you remember the neighbours you had and everything?**

R: Oh yes, absolutely.

I: **Would you say that the area was poor?**

R: Yes, we were... I know the pubs did well. But we weren't too bad, because dad kept us in food. But he never bought us a present. Money you did not get off him. You could have fruit or whatever. We used to walk down to Folly Lane and help him do stuff. All the allotments were open as you came up, and you'd walk up, and there was a lovely row of redcurrants, so you'd pick some as you went by, and rhubarb. My dad had four big dustbins, and he did every one every year. So he forced rhubarb. You take a piece of rhubarb and he knew exactly what you'd done, because he knew everything about it. But you could take a piece of rhubarb and just eat it as it was, as you came home, and you walked all the way up. But that was... We enjoyed ourselves, to a certain extent, but we certainly didn't have anything. We didn't have anything to play with or anything. You were your own... you had to make your own things.

I: **And I suppose, therefore, in the 1930s, the war wasn't that different either then, really, in that sense.**

R: No, not in that sense, because... But there were... We were in a little house and there were two great big houses in King Street, so we were in the middle of them. A Mrs Cox lived in the big one, and they were very posh.

I: **Yeah?**

R: Yeah. They had come down, you know. They were very posh. And they taught me to speak properly.

I: **So that's interesting... So there was a kind of well-to-do family...**

R: In our street. But you didn't know anything about them.

I: **Did they keep apart?**

R: A little bit. I went in there because when the daughter was working, I went in and took the dog for a walk. I was allowed in but not in.

I: **Okay. Just a little bit.**

R: Yeah, just... I could go into the old lady and talk to her. But when the daughter came home, you didn't go in.

I: **So why didn't they let you in?**

R: I don't know. I don't know whether they were ashamed that they'd come down in life.

I: **They had to move into the area because...?**

R: I think so. I wasn't old enough to know anything about that.

I: **Were they still there after the war when you were a bit older?**

R: Yeah... No... Well, the old lady died, and I think after the war she moved out because she went somewhere else. But I couldn't tell you exactly what, because they never told you anything.

I: **Yeah, because from what I understand, most of the people living in that area were very much like your family. You know, they lived on very little.**

R: Yeah. Because my uncle... My mother's brother was in Devonshire Street and my grandparents were down in St Margaret's Road, by Crabtree Place. My aunt lived in Haverford Place. We were all together, because my aunt lived next door, my mother's sister. And again, they pretended they were well off, because they only had one child whereas my mum had three, so we were very poor.

I: **Yeah, you had to make it go a lot further, didn't you, the food and stuff.**

R: Yeah, especially clothes. I don't think my sister Joan has ever forgiven me, because I always had the new clothes, and then it was handed down.

I: **Because that way you'd only need one size.**

R: That's right. They bought me the new coat, and then when I wore it for 18 months, Joan was then the same size as me, so she went to it. By the time it got to Mary I think Mary was spoiled, because she managed to get another one, I think. But we were always turned out well for Whitsun. We had little hats, new dresses, white shoes and white socks, and you went to chapel. We were always turned out like that. But then on a Sunday afternoon after we'd come home from Sunday school in the morning, had our dinner... in the afternoon, we'd come home, have our tea, and then we'd walk to Prestbury, the three of us at the front and my mum and dad at the back, and all we got was, "Pick your feet up. Don't slouch!" By the time you got to Prestbury you were walking like a soldier. That was my dad. But my mum was a bit softer. It was very difficult. There was three of us in a very small room, and three of us in a three quarter bed, but no room for clothes or anything, and no hot water, and the loo was outside.

I: **So all the water had to be heated up?**

R: Yeah, on the kettle or... And we would come home from Sunday school on a Sunday afternoon and we would have to wash either celery or watercress in cold water for their tea. And it was always me, because they disappeared. We had bread and butter and cress, or whatever, for tea. I suppose you didn't realise any difference, not then. It wasn't until I started going out to work that I realised other people were different. Because we were all the same there. But have you been told about the bomb in the street?

I: **Well, a few people have told me different stories about...**

R: Bombs.

I: **Yeah. So the one near the cinema, behind the Ritz, which was closer to you.**

R: Yeah, well it was our street. It was right in the middle of our street. The all clear had gone. It wasn't a very bad raid, so we hadn't gone anywhere. It was daylight, and we were all out in the street, because everybody came out in the street to make sure everybody was okay. Dad had his tin hat on, because he was in the territorials. We were all out there talking, and he looked up and said, "Oh, there's a plane up there. Must be one of ours." Then we went on talking, and then he said, "Crikey me, it's a Jerry and he's coming at us," and he dive bombed us. We all dived into our houses, and we had a big table in the sitting room. He said, "Under the table," and so I got under the table that side, he came in last, shut the door and put his head underneath the table with his tin hat on and knocked me out.

I: **Really?**

R: Yeah. He...

I: **Bashed heads?**

R: Yeah, we clashed. It was only for a second or two. And that landed right in Swindon Road or St Paul's Road. Because of St Paul's college being there it was all open, so it only made a... It didn't even break the windows of the pub and the house on the corner; it just went straight up. In the Echo you will get a picture of that. I used to have a book with it in, but moving twice, I've lost it.

But they've got the archives of it. If that had gone into our street, we would've all been killed, because it's such a narrow street as you know. But that was that.

**I: So you said that it was only when you started working that you started to realise how different perhaps the way you lived to other people in Cheltenham... So you didn't leave the Lower High Street area very much apart from when you came to see your grandfather in Prestbury.**

R: Yeah.

**I: So you didn't go to other parts of the town like the Promenade, or...?**

R: You couldn't go to the Promenade because there was a gate.

**I: So this is when you were a child?**

R: Yeah.

**I: You couldn't go?**

R: You couldn't go up there. Until they took the gates down for the war.

**I: Okay, and that... Right.**

R: Then my dad took me up to the Queen's hotel because they always had the fox hunt there, where they all met, and he took me up there one day. So then we could walk up the Prom. But you weren't allowed up the Prom.

**I: So what would happen if you tried to go to the Prom and the gate was there?**

R: The gate was locked.

**I: So who was allowed in?**

R: Well, people who lived up there, because they were mostly houses... Cavendish House and that, they were all houses originally. The bowling green was there, then, and I play on the bowling green now. I used to walk past that as I went up to work every day. There were big shops at the bottom.

**I: Did your mum and dad ever talk to you about the people in that part of the town?**

R: Well, yeah, because we were all relatives, so we all talked together. Part of... My grandmother, apparently, was part of a gypsy family, my mother's mother, so they all used to come in. When it was hop picking time, my dad took us out on a horse and cart to see them when they were doing hop picking. My grandmother's sister lived in Moors Avenue, and when I was at school at Christ Church we used to have to come down to... It's built on now, but there was a playing field there, and that was our... Because Christ Church school didn't have any playing fields, so we used to walk down to there to play hockey and stuff. During the war, before I started work, I used to have to go down to the coal yard to get coal. Have you heard that?

**I: Yeah, yeah.**

R: And the coal yard went from where (s.l. Range 00:25:08) is right the way through by the side of the railway lines to our road. You could get in either way.

**I: Did they start delivering it with a horse and cart as well?**

R: Yeah, they did that originally, but if you ran out...

**I: You had to go and get it.**

R: You had to go and get some more, and you could get it free down there.

**I: So when you started working at Marks and Spencer, what was your impression of what other people from Cheltenham felt about people in your area? Did you tell them, "Oh, I live in the Lower High Street"?**

R: Well, we were all more or less part of... Because the people from Lower High Street, apart from a few from Rowanfield or somewhere, they all lived in the same area. But I learned that some people have bedrooms of their own.

**I: And that was new to you?**

R: Oh, that was new to me. And they had a proper dining room and a piano, and... you know, all sorts of things like that, that you never knew before, because nobody in our street had a piano.

**I: And you didn't mix much with people from other areas?**

R: No, no.

**I: You wouldn't see somebody who lived on the Prom come into...?**

R: Oh no, no. Because they were all too posh. They were retired colonels and things. I expect you've been told that. I suppose we were happy, although I was a dunce. We had spinning tops and things like that. We never had any roller skates; we had to borrow roller skates if we wanted them. But some of the children had roller skates. Some of them had scooters. But I never had a doll's pram. I was the only one in our family that had a doll. And I had it until I was about 16, and then it got broken and I cried my eyes out.

**I: Well, you'd had it all your life.**

R: Yeah, I had, yeah. Because any presents that we had came from relatives, and the Prestbury lot were very posh, because they were all in service at the De La Bere hotel, or any of the vicarages that were really posh vicarages. Because of being in Prestbury, they were all in service there, so they thought they were a little bit above us.

**I: So there was a big class divide in Cheltenham, wasn't there?**

R: Yeah, there was. My mother said that my father's family never accepted her.

**I: Because they thought she was...?**



- R: Yeah, because she came from Lower Dockham.
- I: **Yeah, so you called it Lower Dockham as well.**
- R: Yeah, yeah.
- I: **Now, some of the people of a slightly younger generation - so I've spoken to a few people that were born during the war - they say that for them Lower Dockham was further down, it wasn't where you lived. They thought it started after the bridge and it was going towards the gasworks.**
- R: Well, we just accepted that that's who we were. We didn't have any diving line. As far as we were concerned, it started from where the bowling green was.
- I: **Yeah, and it carried on...**
- R: It carried on right the way down to Moors Avenue, down into Tewkesbury Road.
- I: **Right, so it was all Lower Dockham.**
- R: It was all Lower Dockham then, yeah. But I suppose it just depends what your parents told you.
- I: **But you didn't really have to go outside of the area very much. You had everything you needed there, all the shops there and everything you needed?**
- R: Oh yeah. Fish shops and others, yeah. And as I said, there was a ladies' hairdresser on the corner of Devonshire Street, and then a gentlemen's hairdresser where the pub is in High Street, the Irish pub. There was also a... There were shops everywhere, and you didn't need to go... A shoe shop, Adcock's shoe shop, we all got our shoes from there.
- I: **I've heard there were loads of butchers all along...**
- R: Oh yeah, there were butchers, right from the bottom. Because it was Manner's... Manner's was down the bottom by the ice cream place, and I've forgotten the name... his wife was a little tiny lady, and oh boy... Because it was at the bottom of Hereford Place that came out onto the High Street. There's two alleyways - you know those two, do you? By where the cinema is.
- I: **Yeah.**
- R: The one alleyway was part of the butcher's shop, and we always used to watch the man making sausages in there, and wanting... you know, saying, "Can I have some sausage meat?" But she was very strict. I've forgotten what their name was now. But there was Manner's.
- I: **But you had your bakeries, your...**

- R: Oh yeah, your fish shop. The Mac Fisheries was on the corner there where the pub is now, and he was on the corner there. We had mostly everything you needed there.
- I: **And how did things change in the area after the war? Your sister told me something about the street parties when the war ended.**
- R: Oh yes, the street parties when the war ended, yes.
- I: **Every street had its own one.**
- R: Yeah, yeah. That's why you didn't mix, because the next street up, that had another pub on the corner. St Paul's Street had haberdasheries on the corner, and she was a Sunday school teacher. I got most of my stuff from there when I got married, because she had stuff that I could... But that was after the war. It was still on coupons. You know, we just took it as normal, which people do, if you don't do anything else. I mean, I knew my grandfather was in a great big house up in Prestbury, but all the others... my father's brothers were gone into the army, and his sisters were all in service, so the only one I got to know was the youngest one who stayed at home and looked after Grampy. But when the war was on, she had to have lodgers, because it was a big house. But my brother... I suppose Joan told you, my brother was born when I was 14. We had to go to live with them because we had a two up and two down, and there were no hospitals or maternity wards. So we had to go up there and live up there while Albert was born. So I had to... I was working in Marks and Spencer then, and I had to ride a bike from Windsor Street down to the allotment, feed the pigs and all of them, then go to work, work all day, go down to the allotments, feed them all again and come back up to Prestbury. Because dad went to work straight up to the cemetery, so he didn't have to go down there. At night he went down and did all what should've been done, but I had to do that every day I went to school.
- I: **Wow. So you were busy.**
- R: Oh, was I. That's what I said. I think Mary got out of all that because it wasn't happening by the time she got to that age. But as I said, I was a dunce, so I was a bit backward. I think in those days I didn't bother, because I can remember once in school, we had a Miss Mullins the headmistress, and I was in the top class of the Parish school, and she said, "What is a female peacock called?" And they all put their hands up, and none of them knew. And she never embarrassed me by asking me a question, but I didn't know that I was sat there with my hand up. And so she said, "Well, alright then, Doreen. What is a female peacock called?" I said, "A hen." And they all looked at me... Well, we kept hens. To me, that was stupid, because it was a stupid answer. I put my hand up, so I thought I got one over on them that time. But I never did anything else.
- I: **So after the war... So you'd been working at Marks and Spencer a few years. After the war ended... I've heard from a few other people that gradually people started to earn more money, get more work, so there was more money around. Did you notice the area change in any way, when you lived there after the war?**
- R: Not really, I don't think. Probably there was more money around and people were better dressed. Because I got married in 1948, which was just after the

war. So I was more interested in my family, because my mother still lived there. Then when I had my first child in the 1950s, I was living in Prestbury Road, so I just used to walk down there every day.

**I: So you used to go back there a lot after you moved out?**

R: Oh, yeah. But it's difficult to know. I did write some of it down, just in case I forgot. Did you hear about the attack on the gasworks?

**I: No.**

R: The bombs.

**I: Not the bombs on the gasworks, no.**

R: You didn't?

**I: No.**

R: Well, there was two streets opposite the gasworks. They had a bomb in each, and they were completely devastated. But one bomb dropped on the gasometer and it was a ball of flame. We were in the allotment and we could see them, everything going on, and then this ball of flame came towards us. My dad said, "Whoops, we've had it." But it had got onto the railway line and it came right the way down the railway line at the end of the allotment, and it passed us, and it went straight through. We were just, "Ahh..."

**I: A narrow escape.**

R: Yeah. But that was a bad one. Mostly all we got was bombs that they wanted to get rid of before they went home, after they went to Coventry.

**I: They were just emptying them.**

R: They had to empty them so they didn't have to take them home, or land with them. So that was the only times that we got any bombs, really. And we were coming back up after the all clear, and we're coming up from the allotment, and we'd go through Crabtree Place. There's a little alleyway from Folly Lane, and we got there, and my dad said, "There's nobody about. They went back to bed quick." Then we got further forward and he said, "There's something crunching underneath my boots." We got to the end before it goes into Margrett Road, and there was a policeman there, and he said, "Where the hell did you come from?" He said, "The allotments." He said, "There's an unexploded bomb down there!" And we'd walked through it. But then we came on home. It was... You just lived it. I can't think of anything else, really.

**I: So in the years after you left the area... part of the reason we're doing this project is because that part of the town, it seems, has always been regarded as the poorer end of town, the shabbier end of Cheltenham. So when you left the area and you lived... I think you moved to Prestbury and then you moved to...**

R: Well, Prestbury Road.

**I: So did you really...? Did you understand what other people from Cheltenham thought about that area? Because many people still think now that that is...**

R: Well, it's better than it was by a long way. Because with the coal yards and everything there, there was no houses that end. But we just... I was always in the area. But having moved into a brand new house was absolutely fantastic. First time... I had not furniture and I had no carpets, but I had a house, and that was the main thing. My one aunt... I had a pitch floor in the sitting room, which the council put in. My aunt was changing her carpet in her sitting room and my mum said, "Why don't you ask her if you can have it?" I said, "Alright, Auntie Dolly. What are you going to do with it?" "Oh," she said, "You can have it if you like." No wonder, it was almost threadbare. But my husband turned it over and painted it with carpet paint, and we had a green carpet, and that was the first time we had a carpet. But we just took it as normal. We just didn't bother about it. I certainly didn't get into debt for anything. That was the one thing my mother always told us, "What you can't afford today, you can't afford tomorrow. If you want something, you save up for it." Because if you have it on hire purchase, by the time you've finished you've paid twice as much for it and you're still no better off.

**I: So in the years after you left, did you noticed that the Lower High Street area changed?**

R: Oh yeah, it changed.

**I: How did it change?**

R: Well, I mean the shops closed, and other things came in. Mr Nelson, the hairdresser, he died, and so therefore... And Lusty's changed hands, and there was a big... when Davis's closed, there was a big fruiter's shop on the corner of Devonshire Street there, and that was a huge one. It did just sort of alternate, and when it happens you don't really take no notice.

**I: Yeah, it just kind of happens.**

R: "Oh yes, that's gone." You know. I went back every day, practically, because of taking my children into town. Then two of my children went to... because there was another school out at Arle, two of my children had to come into town to St Paul's for school. So I was still... But that area of St Paul's was really bad, that area of St Paul's was really bad.

**I: In what way?**

R: Well, it was Hudson Street, Manser Street, and they were really like Johnsons... You know the Johnsons?

**I: I think I've heard somebody mention them.**

R: The Johnson family were real bad ones, and they were thieves. The whole family... it spread out, Manser Street and what'sname Street... That was down by Agg Gardner's rec, so you had to be very careful. They would take your shoes off you if they could. So that was... I think probably what was happening at the bottom end came up to there into new houses. Because they took them out before they built more in, and so they built them there, and

so they were transferred to there. It's like Whaddon, Whaddon was the same. It was wherever they went, they made it bad. But we just didn't take no notice of it. I suppose we just... it didn't affect us because they didn't actually attack us, but we knew it was there, and you didn't...

**I: So was the area safe?**

R: Reasonably, yes. You had to walk over drunks.

**I: [Laughs]. A lot?**

R: Oh yes. Yeah, before the war. With the three pubs.

**I: Yeah, it was surrounded by pubs.**

R: Especially when I was 14, and I was going out, and my mum... they were quite strict. I couldn't go out very much in the evenings. But if I did, you walked over them as you were coming home at 10 o'clock. I would grumble like mad, "All these people..." And my dad said, "You're alright love. While they're like that they're not going to hurt you, are they? [Laughs]. They haven't got the energy to hurt you." But it was just normal. We had some people... I don't know where it was in town, but they had a factory, a munitions factory, and some of the people from the Forest, their girls came up to Cheltenham to work in college and in service, and then when the war came they had to go into munitions, and Mum knew them, so they used to come for tea and everything because they didn't live here. And they all had red hair because of the (p.h. munitions 00:45:19), you know, the stuff. So then we started going to the Forest because they invited us back out there. On a Sunday afternoon we'd go on the but out to the Forest. That's the first time we ever left Cheltenham.

**I: The image I get of the Lower Dockham area is that it was almost like a village, because everybody...**

R: Everybody knew everybody.

**I: And not many people needed to leave the area for very much.**

R: No, we didn't. Unless... Because I mean, if you worked, you just worked in Cheltenham, or you worked on the railway, or you worked in the coal yard, or you worked on the gas works. And everybody in the allotments all knew each other, and they helped each other.

**I: So you say you still go to the bowling green.**

R: Yeah, I'm a member of the bowling green.

**I: So how do you feel when you see the street now, when you walk down it now? I mean you've seen it every day, but...**

R: Well, it doesn't effect me, really, because I don't actually live there, but I can see the changes, some of them for good and some of them aren't. So it's a mixture. My sister Mary rang me up one day and she said, "King Street is up for sale," our house. She said, "Would we like to go and have a look?" She

always used to do that. I said, "Oh, alright." I walked in there and I just could not believe that five of us lived in that room. It was about this big.

**I: Yeah, really small.**

R: You had the table in the middle, so you just had two armchairs there, and stools round it, and that was your lot. When you played, you played underneath the table. My mother did get a piano once, and she sent me for lessons, and I was supposed to practise every day, but my sisters were playing under the table, my mother was reading the Echo to my father and I was supposed to be practising. You'd just listen. You don't take any notice of what you're doing; you listen to what they're doing. And I never did have a very good concentration - I still haven't got very good concentration because of what I was like.

**I: Well, you've got a very good memory, Doreen.**

R: It's because it's part of my life now. And I worked in a fish and chip shop after work, saving money to get married, because my husband was sent from Lowestoft as an evacuee. Well, he wasn't an evacuee really; he was old enough to go to work. So he was sent up to (unclear 00:48:30) to work, and so I met him then. Then he went into the army for four years, and then when he came out we got married. But it was quite nice actually, once the war was over, because we had all the soldiers coming back. Lovely. And the Americans used to have dances out at (unclear 00:48:57) and they'd send in a bus for us girls to go out to do the dancing. And all the soldiers were coming back from Italy and everything, and they had all these badges and everything that they'd give you, and you had a good time, even though my husband was abroad [laughs]. Well, my boyfriend was abroad. But you know, you just enjoyed yourself and there was no harm in it. I used to go to town for the old-time dances. I did that after I was married, because he worked as a service engineer, and so he was away all week. So once a month when he came back at the weekend, he looked after the kids while I went dancing.

**I: Do you remember the first time that you went on to the Promenade?**

R: When my dad took me, when I went up to see the horses.

**I: Right. And how old were you then, do you think?**

R: About 8, 9.

**I: Okay. So you'd never seen it before.**

R: No. I'd never seen those gardens.

**I: It must've felt like a very different place.**

R: Oh it was, yeah, and we'd never been up far enough to be in the Montpellier gardens, because you just didn't do that. Again, it was all... there were things up there...

**I: It was gated up?**

R: Yeah. But gradually it opened up, and fortunately our doctors was on the Promenade, so we went up there regularly. But it was just normal. You just did it. But I don't think I...

I: **Did you ever...? Last thing I'm going to ask you. When you started and you were a bit older, were you ever ashamed to tell somebody that you were from Lower Dockham?**

R: No.

I: **Did you know of other people that were?**

R: Yes.

I: **Why do you think they were ashamed?**

R: Well, they thought that they were a bit better. I never did. I am me. I was always me, and I knew I was no good, so it didn't really matter to me what they thought. Because some of the girls did then come into Marks and Spencer from there, and as soon as they started earning money, they were up and they were in high heels, and I never, ever wore high heels. They dressed up and they moved out as soon as they possibly could. But most of us were quite happy down there. Even when the new houses started going up, I met quite a few people. Because when I had the three children small, I used to walk from village road into town with the three of them on the pram. So I was walking up there all the time. I suppose, really, you don't... the change doesn't hit you, because it's so normal, gradual. Whereas Joan probably noticed it different because she was away.

I: **Yeah. She went away and then came back.**

R: Yeah, she was down at Catterick, and then she was in Singapore. So she came back. So whether she did see any big difference... We did have a little bit a problem inasmuch as we did used to look alike, and she came on leave and she came... I called in at Mum's and she said, "I've got a bone to pick with you." I said, "Why's that?" She said, "My friends have said they've spoken to me and I didn't answer them." So we made a pact that whoever spoke to us, we answered, whether we knew them or not. Because her friends I wouldn't know and my friends she wouldn't know, but we had to make a pact that... And we were in Marks and Spencer, and she was on the provisions and I was on the biscuit counter by the door. Some of the customers would come and say, "You got there quick!" We were that much alike. We don't now... We are a little bit, but not much, from that point of view.

I: **Is there a name that you called the people from your area? Did you call yourselves Lower Enders or...?**

R: Oh no, no.

I: **Right.**

R: We were St Paul's, but really and truly, King Street wasn't really St Paul's. It was very difficult to... Because St Paul's people didn't really play with us.

I: **Is that on the other side of the college, they didn't...?**

R: No, level with the college, the one that goes up.

I: **Oh right, yeah.**

R: The two roads that go down there.

I: **That goes up to the church.**

R: Yeah. They didn't actually mix with us at all.

I: **So that was like a border, Swindon Road.**

R: Yeah. And with the... You were told about the Black & White bus station. You never went out at 2 o'clock because the buses were coming in and going out. We didn't have cars then anyway. But it was always busy at that time when they were changing buses and going in and out. But yeah...

I: **Alright. Well...**

R: Is that enough?

I: **Yeah, it's perfect. Thank you very much.**

(End of recording)