

Melvyn Jones_1Key:

I: Interviewer
R: Respondent

I: **So Melvyn, if I could just start by... if you just tell me when you were born.**

R: I was born in January 1944.

I: **So your parents, your family lived on...?**

R: They lived at number 12 Devonshire Street.

I: **Right. And you lived there until the mid 60s?**

R: No, we lived in Devonshire Street until the mid 50s, and then we moved around the corner into New Street, 21 New Street. But same landlord. Because I had two other brothers... Devonshire Street was quite a small two up, two down, and we moved around the corner into a bigger house which gave us three bedrooms, so my elder brother could have a bedroom of his own and I stayed with my younger brother. We had the back room until my older brother left to go in the RAF.

I: **Right. That seems quite a common thing that a lot of people had links to the military, to the army. A lot of people I'm hearing their family members served in the war.**

R: Well, yeah. So conscription was still running up until the early 50s, I think, and my brother just missed out. But he went to the grammar school.

I: **The grammar school on the High Street?**

R: On the High Street, yeah. Of course, money was fairly tight then. He took the decision on his own, from what I gather, that my parents really couldn't afford to send him to university, although he had enough qualifications. So he did a few jobs around town. He started off, I think, at the municipal offices, and then he went on and he was assistant manager at the Gaumont cinema. But then he just decided he wanted something different, so he went off and joined the RAF, went out to Cyprus, joined the troubles, which upset my mum.

I: **I bet, a lot of worry. So your parents, were they both from the area?**

R: No. My mother was from Winchcombe and my father came up from South Wales before the war, because in the recession the coal mines were suffering. He was a miner. He'd also injured his back down the mines, although he was still working down there. When the recession was on, or the depression, rather, he came up. I'm not too sure of the history of it, but he came up and his brother came up as well, his half brother, and they got jobs as labourers with... I think it was Wimpeys that were building Brooklyn Road, to start with. We were always confused when we were young because my dad's name is Jones but his brother's name was Rexworthy. But my

grandmother married four times because she lost husbands in the pits, you see. Life for a single woman wasn't very good, so she got married. Then having got married, she had different names for all the children she had, near enough. So they came up... My uncle married my mum's sister, and then my mum married my father, obviously. So as I said, we were very confused when we were... Because my mum's sister and my dad's brother...

I: I'm a bit confused now.

R: Well, as I said, his name was Bill Rexworthy, and my auntie's name was therefore Rexworthy as well, and dad's name was Jones, and as I said, they were half brothers. We also had...

I: So neither of your parents were from Cheltenham?

R: Not from Cheltenham, no, but they... My gran had a big family at the time, so I don't think there was any room, and there wasn't a lot of work in Winchcombe, anyway. I think the only place that was available was the Postlip mill, which made paper. My mother did work there when she was a teenager, but they moved into Cheltenham and the first place they lived in was in the High Street, which was over Ted Raymond's, a second hand furniture shop.

I: Right. And that was on the lower part of the High Street?

R: That was on the corner of Burton Street, yeah. There was a newsagents on one corner and then Ted Raymond's furniture shop was on the opposite corner. But I don't remember that; I only know about that from my mum.

I: The stories they said.

R: I mean, I knew Ted Raymond because he was still there many years afterwards.

I: When you were growing up.

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: So when you think about growing up in the area as a kid, what do you remember? What memories do you have of growing up in that area as a kid?

R: Well, I remember that it was like our playground, because there was hardly any traffic around. We had the milk, obviously, delivered by the horse and cart with a big churn on the back, and if you wanted a pint, the guy put a jug in and served it. No problems with hygiene in those days. Also the same with the coal; that was delivered by horse and cart. There was Mr (s.l. Nelon's 00:06:01) coal yard on the High Street, the Lower High Street, not far from where the Ritz cinema was, and there was also another one up Milsom Street, which I think was Regan's coal yard, timber yard, whatever. But apart from that, there was very little traffic. I do remember when we were kids and we lived in Devonshire Street, they used to deliver - because there was a lot of building going on in Hesters Way then - lorry loads of bricks from the London Brick Company, and three lorries at a time used to park down

Devonshire Street, and the drivers would be overnighing in the Wembley Cafe, which was also...

I: A hotel? Right.

R: No, it was a cafe come guesthouse... bed and breakfast, basically.

I: It's mentioned in the poem, isn't it? The Wembley.

R: That's right. So we used to play on the lorries, on the backs of the lorries, and Mum used to go crazy because invariably you'd go home with cuts and whatever because the bricks would chip, and you'd be rolling around in the dust. The cinema was obviously a good place to send us kids because you could get in for thruppence, or 3p. Well, not 3p, it's thruppence, which is 1.5p now. We used to go with a family that lived in New Street at that time, and they'd take enough food to last them for two full showings. So we'd go in at 2 o'clock and probably didn't come back out till nearly 7 o'clock then.

I: It was keeping you out of trouble.

R: We'd see it round twice, yeah. The big times, of course, were Christmas and bonfire night, for us. We'd go up and down the High Street into all the shops clearing out the rubbish for them. Ted Raymond, again, we'd get rid of old stuff that he couldn't get rid of, like old settees. Hamlin's, the bike shop, we'd have tyres from there. Both the vegetable places, (s.l. Dimry's 00:08:41) and (s.l. Sapotella's 00:08:42) over the road, wooden boxes, things like that. It was a competition between ourselves... We had our bonfire in Grove Street. There was what we called a bomb site - whether it was a bomb site or not... it was an area where we used to build this bonfire. The people at the back of the Ritz...

I: There was another one, right?

R: There was another one there. There was a rivalry between the two. I don't think we did stay up all night, but I think we used to guard it till late at night to make sure they didn't set fire to it.

I: Well, you mentioned Grove Street, and I've heard from a few of the others that Grove Street was a street to be feared, a bit.

R: In what way?

I: As in it would be regarded as a bit dangerous for people from other streets to wander down.

R: Well, we had a sort of gang, but we weren't that... We only went... well, not only went down there bonfire week or bonfire fortnight, but...

I: I got the impression that it was also perhaps one of the poorer streets.

R: Well, it was, but there were only two or three houses down there. But there was (s.l. Routner 00:09:54) house where... We used to call them the down-and-outs and the tramps, but they could possibly be people with drink problems. So there, and I can't remember... Well, I can remember it, but there were only about half a dozen guys down there. They never caused us any

problems, or me and my friends any problems. As I said, our bonfire was always the biggest. That was our claim. Even to the extent that sometimes it would be still burning three days later. That's how big and well-built it was. Bonfire night was a good night.

I: So if I ask you about the other kids you grew up around, and all the families that lived on the same streets as you, how would you describe the way they lived or who they were, what they did? How do you remember them?

R: Well, mostly working class. Yeah, everybody that we knew were working class. I mean, particularly as regards to the High Street... My best friend was a chap called Eric Cook. We went to infant school, junior school and senior school together, although we sort of parted halfway through senior school. I remember we went to the mission hall, St Mary's mission hall, for Sunday school on Sunday afternoons, and quite often his mum used to invite me in for Sunday tea. I can remember I sort of made a fool of myself because one day she gave us butter for tea, and we had no... I'd never had butter. It had always been margarine.

I: Right, yeah. First time.

R: And I remember I made a point about that. It used to be fascinating being there because - you'll find it in the street directory, Fred Cook it was - it was a shop and it had some photography stuff in there. I always remember that was Gayvert films and cameras, and the window was dressed with pictures of holidays and things like that. There was a shop counter inside, but there was no stock in there as such. He ran an under the counter bookies, because he wasn't allowed. You could be a turf accountant, I think, but you couldn't run a betting shop as they are now, anyway. On a Sunday, it used to be his reckoning day. Behind the shop was a sitting room where... The other thing, I remember, was they were the first ones to have television with what's now ITV on it, and ITV used to get all the decent programmes then, Superman for the kids and... But then there was the back room, which was like a little dining room I suppose, and he used to sit in there on a Sunday, and all the betting slips... Because chaps used to put their bets in on a piece of paper and fold up with the money inside, and he used to keep it in a gramophone, an old radiogram. Do you know what a radiogram is?

I: I think so.

R: It's a big piece of furniture, and you'd have a radio on one side and a record player on the other side. But it was 3ft long, about so high with a lift up lid, so he used to just chuck the betting slips in there, and then on a Sunday he'd be out the back and he'd be working out all the winnings or the losings. Not only did I see that on a Sunday, but Sunday I used to see it in the week, because my dad used to have a little flutter, sixpence each way or something, because he did like the horses. Eric Cook was my best friend, and then we had... Next door to Dimrey's was Mudway's butcher's shop. There were the two twins in there, the two Mudway boys.

I: It sounds like you had... It almost sounds like a little self-contained village, that part of town, because on the High Street you had everything you needed.

R: Oh, god yeah. Nobody went much further up than... I mean, my dad used to do most of the shopping but quite often we were sent out for things that you might have forgotten, as such. There were five butcher's shops from the bowling green down to the bottom, at the end. So you had plenty of choice if you wanted meat.

I: **Almost as if each street had its own butcher's.**

R: Besides the butcher's shops you had Whiting's, which sold pork meats as well, and just past the bowling green was also Hillier's, that did cooked meats. You had Martin's the wine store, so you could go and get a bottle of beer or a bottle of wine, Scotch or whatever. There were also three major places... there was Gregg's, Lipton's and International Stores, which were all general grocers. They were the national grocers in those days. We also had... on the corner of Devonshire Street there was a chap called Mr (s.l. Gerton 00:15:54), he used to do groceries, and in those early days he had a shop back which was all drawers, and he used to have scoops of stuff. So if you wanted a pound of sugar or two pound of sugar, he would make a bag for you. He didn't have bags that you could... He'd make it out of a blue paper, and you'd have his sugar in a blue bag like that.

I: **Yeah. So you'd get what you need.**

R: Exactly, yeah. Besides Mr Gerton there was one just further down from him, Mrs Bayliss, although she did mostly sweets. There were one, two, three, four... I think there were five vegetable shops as well, greengrocers.

I: **Then you have your fish and chip shops, the fishmongers.**

R: Two fish and chip shops, yeah, the fresh fish shop.

I: **That was Hiddles, wasn't it?**

R: Hiddles was the fresh fish. There were two newsagents, a ladies' hairdressers and a gents' hairdressers. And the gents' hairdressers, I can't remember his name, but you used to have to go up an alleyway to his shop. It was at the back of the lower end. But he trained the hairdresser that I eventually ended up with, and I was still going to him up until five years ago. He had a shop up Coronation Square eventually.

I: **When you were growing up in the area... So people didn't use to refer to it as Lower Dockham?**

R: No, we knew of Lower Dockham and we thought of Lower Dockham as farther on down in actually fact.

I: **See, I've heard different stories about this. Some of the older people I've spoken to think that Lower Dockham includes from the bowling green all the way down to the gas works and further on, whereas yourself and a few others have said it actually starts after the bridge.**

R: Yeah, that's what we were told, that Lower Dockham is most of the Tewkesbury Road all the way down to where Princess Elizabeth Way starts, although it wasn't very built up perhaps that way. So yeah, there were... I would imagine it was more of a village type of thing because you didn't do a

lot of travelling around. You only went... The Promenade was a bit of - how can I put it? - you weren't disbarred from going up the Promenade, but it was the posh area. The only reason for us to go up to the Promenade in those days would be at Christmas, I would imagine, when Cavendish House had their toy display up.

I: Okay. This is one of the interesting things. A few people have said that you rarely ventured down the Prom, or if you did, you needed to be dressed up.

R: Well yeah, you weren't... I don't know if it's so much about being dressed up, but I think it was that sort of impression that it was more for the gentry than it was for the people that lived down this end of town.

I: Did your parents ever talk to you about going there, or other parts of the town?

R: My mum and dad were very good ballroom dancers, so they frequented the town hall quite a lot, but that was during the war when everybody was the same anyway; you just mucked in, in those days as far as that was concerned. If there was a dance on, it didn't matter who you were; you were out to have a good time because you didn't know whether tomorrow was coming, sort of thing.

I: That's true, yeah.

R: But as far as Cheltenham was concerned, there was a brief time when it was under threat, but I don't think we suffered during the war by any means. Not that I would know because I wasn't there.

I: Well, you were born but you were unaware.

R: Unaware... Well, the story's told that my mother was pregnant with me when the bombs were dropping down that end of town.

I: That's got to be a bit of a scary thought, isn't it? You can't imagine it these days. So the thing is, a few of the others I've spoken to have mentioned the fact that when they met other people from Cheltenham that were not from the area, they would sometimes be wary of telling them that they were from the Lower High Street area or not, because of this difference in class, or...

R: Well, yeah. I can't ever think that there was a stigma from being from that area at all. People realised that perhaps it was a slightly working class area, but then when we moved into New Street we thought we'd moved up the ladder a bit, but then all the people around us were still basically the same people that we'd known anyway, so we hadn't changed status to that degree. It wasn't until... I suppose when we moved up to Ashchurch, then, but... Things like that didn't seem to sort of... You knew there were two different sort of classes in the town. There were the... I wouldn't say wealthy people, because some of the so-called posh people were as poor as we were. They were living on old time, sort of thing. Because we used to... I'm trying to think when we used to do bob-a-job with the scouts and the cubs, because the mission hall not only ran church services on the Sunday, but it was a local community centre. The scout troop that I belonged to... Well not the scout

troop. The cubs used to go there, and the brownies used to meet in the hall, and Miss Chote, who was the lay preacher I suppose, but she also was the Akela or the cub leader, brownie leader, and then when you became a scout you moved up to... I can't remember the name of the lane now. It was in Clarence Square; we had a scout hut up there.

I: Right, just up the road here.

R: Yeah, not far, not far to walk. But as I say, when we were doing bob-a-job, we used to do the odd job like gardening for people in the so-called better off areas, but they'd never give you more than a bob or a shilling.

I: So when you were growing up, and as you were getting older, did you feel like there was a perception from people outside the area that maybe you guys were different, shall we say?

R: Not that I ever noticed, no, not that I ever noticed. But then I think the class thing was sort of breaking down, then, during our time.

I: So are you talking here during the 50s?

R: Yeah, 50s, 60s, when the teenage revolution began, as it were. It was... No, I can't ever think that class ever was a problem in those days.

I: Right. But you didn't get many of the better-off people coming down to your area?

R: No, that didn't happen. They obviously stuck to their own end of town, pretty much like we did. We didn't venture out, as I said, into the Promenade very often, only at Christmas time when places like Cavendish House had their toy thing. The best one was Wards, which was in the High Street. They had a basement and they had an interconnecting tunnel between two parts of the basement, so they used to build a grotto in there, and when you were a kid, that was quite exciting, going down there. Christmas time... well, you've probably heard it before. Christmas time in those days, although you didn't have a lot, it was a bit more magical than, I think, what it is now. Although as you get older, of course, it's not quite as magical.

I: No, but I know what you mean. It's excessive, now, isn't it?

R: I mean, we didn't get the sixpence and the orange in the bottom. We got a little bit more than that. But it wasn't over the top by any means. You know, you had one present off your mum and dad. You probably had a little bit of money off your aunts or your uncles, things like that, but it was pretty... not mean, but you didn't get a lot.

I: But people got by on a lot less, didn't they?

R: They did. Oh yeah, crikey, yeah. I mean, we used to... as I said, there were five butchers down there. Dad used to mainly do the shopping, and I think because of his upbringing - he came from a very poor family in South Wales - we'd have a joint on the Sunday, beef or whatever, and then whatever was left over was minced up on a Monday, so it was mincemeat or shepherd's pie on a Monday.

I: That doesn't sound bad at all.

R: Well, no. It was always good stuff. Dad could make a mean steamed pudding, puddings like roly-poly and spotted dick. Funny enough, we were talking about this the other weekend. We went up to see my daughter in London and they took us out to dinner, and there was roly-poly on the... no, spotted dick was on the menu.

I: I bet it was a bit pricey.

R: Well, it wasn't that so much. They said, "Aren't you going to have some spotted dick?" and I said, "No, I doubt it's going to taste the same." And then when it came, I could see it wasn't anything like the stuff that I remembered. But yeah, it was... It wasn't overly priced, but it was...

I: So one of the other things I wanted to ask you about... as you were growing up there, and obviously we... it's fairly established now from everyone I've spoken to that people didn't mix from different areas very much. But there was also, like there is now, the perception that that end of town is the poorer or shabbier, or perhaps more dangerous end of town. Growing up there, did you think the area was safe?

R: Yeah, crikey, yeah. We never had any problem with... I'm trying to think whether there were any characters down there, what you called a villain type thing. The nearest we ever came to it was when we lived in Devonshire Street, we had a family next door which were - so we were told - which were ex-gypsies, and they were quite a large family. But having said that, I always got the impression from... particularly the daughter, she was quite well-spoken. But the only thing was, when they left, they took all the copper pipe out the house.

I: Took everything.

R: Took everything. The people that moved in didn't have any plumbing when they moved in, because it had all disappeared. So that was the... Even petty crime wasn't... anything like that, where you might hear that the vegetable shops were having trouble with people pinching the fruit off the thing on the front.

I: But that happened everywhere, right?

R: Well, I would imagine so. But you never heard of anybody really bad that I can think of.

I: So a bit of false perception of people from the outside, then. Just because the area was a bit poorer, people thought, "Obviously you don't go there because you don't know what..."

R: Yeah, well they had... I've never ventured into the pub there, the Shakespeare. That had a bit of a reputation. But that was...

I: Did your dad use to like a drink?

R: He didn't go out very often for a drink, no. He didn't drink an awful lot. I used to go down to the pub in New Street, which was the Railway, and I'd get a

bottle of stout for my mother, but Dad never bothered with the drink. The only time we had any drink in the house was at Christmas time. We'd go up to Martin's, and I think my mum was partial to a drink called Green Goddess, which was a green liqueur of some sort. But Dad didn't have bottles of Scotch or rum, or anything like that.

I: But yeah, I've heard that the Shakespeare had a bit of a reputation. It was a working class pub and people used to have a few.

R: Yeah. And also the guys from round the house used to frequent it, because I think the guy in there used to give a bit of credit, until they got whatever they got. Because they didn't get... there weren't so many benefits around in those days. I suppose they got unemployment.

I: So as you were going up and you moved to New Street, did you find that the area began to change in any way as the years went by?

R: No, it didn't change. I'm trying to think when the changes, if anything...

I: Before you left the area and you went to live in Ashchurch...

R: No, it was pretty much the same, pretty much the same. A lot of the older people had moved out or died, or whatever, but no, my old school was still functioning there. All the schools, like the infant school, they were all still functioning.

I: People did eventually begin to move out to some of the new estates they were building.

R: Well they did, yeah.

I: Hesters Way, Benhall...

R: Yeah. But even so, I know that some of the families that we knew, they still lived there, up until, well, the parents died, basically. It was only the children, the children of the people I knew moved out.

I: Because some of the others have mentioned that in the 1960s when these new estates started being built elsewhere and people could afford a bigger house with a drive or a garden... and some of the big supermarkets started to open, some of the family business started to close down, and it started to empty out a bit or get a bit more run down.

R: Well, yeah, there was that. I think the first... I'm trying to think when the first supermarket came to town.

I: Would Tesco have been one of the first?

R: Tesco was one of the first, yeah. It was in the Lower High Street where they've just knocked it all down. But that was...

I: Because they knocked down the old grammar school to make way for that, didn't they?

R: That's right, yeah. So when was that? Do you know the date?

I: I can't... I know it was in the 60s. I don't know which date...

R: So in the 60s we were probably in Ashchurch anyway, or in Tewkesbury.

I: When that was happening.

R: When that was happening. I do... I sort of semi-remember it.

I: So when you left and your family moved to Ashchurch, did you come back very often?

R: Oh crikey, yeah. Oh, every week.

I: Because you must have had all your old mates...

R: All my friends, yeah. And then I'd started drinking myself, because I was old enough by then, and a friend of mine's father that was the landlord of the Horse and Groom, which is the pub at the back of the library... It's not a little printing duplication shop.

I: Oh right, so there was a pub back there, was there?

R: There was a pub there, the horse and groom. And it was frequented by the Americans...

I: Oh yeah?

R: Yeah. Because... Well, they had bases at Brize Norton and Fairford, and they used to come into town.

I: And that's where they'd have a drink?

R: That's where they'd have a drink. Well, that's where the girls used to go, so...

I: So that's why you were there? [Laughs].

R: Well, not really, but that was... one fed the other, if you know what I mean; if the Americans had been there, it attracted the girls. Jack Diggs, my mate's father, he was pretty shrewd inasmuch that he'd stock the sort of things that they liked. They enjoyed whisky, but they liked American whiskey and not Scotch whisky. So he used to cater for that, sort of thing. So we had a lot of contact with Americans. Not so much when we were kids... I expect you've heard... If we did bump into an American, we always used to say to them, "You got any gum, chum?" Quite rarely they'd give you a packet of chewing gum or even a bar of chocolate.

I: Yeah. I've heard of stories of that during the war.

R: Yeah, even a bar of... but no, it was a carry on. We'd heard it ourselves and we thought, "There's no harm in trying." And sometimes they let you do that. But no, there wasn't an awful lot of change during my time, anyway, that I can remember. The biggest change was when they... and I can't even remember when that was. You probably know that where the bowling green is, there used to be a gentlemen's... there used to be toilets which were underground,

and it formed a roundabout, and there was a garden on top of it, or loads of hedges anyway. Anyway, they filled that in. Why, I don't know, but they filled that in. So that must have been in the 60s. But that was one of the bigger changes. As you said, the shops then... Wards closed down on the corner of... not Wards. Dicks' closed down on the corner of (unclear 00:35:30) Street. But a shop like Foster Brothers, they were there for ages on the end.

I: I suppose these were a lot of family-run businesses, and when the owners got older or they died...

R: Well, Foster Brothers wasn't. They were a chain of stores. I think they recently still had stores. But that was the last major store before the High Street started, when every shop then was family owned or family run.

I: So in the years after you left - obviously we can think about it from then till now - the area has changed quite a lot, probably.

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: How do you feel about it when you see it now?

R: A little bit of nostalgia, but I still used to use a barber shop - not the same one - up until recently when the guy retired. And the trouble is, of course, there's nobody there left that I know. So it's not a question of popping in and saying, "How are you getting on?" etc, etc, because as far as I'm aware, everybody that I might have known or knew of has either passed away or moved on. None of the... Oh, there's one connection. There's a little shop which - I don't know if it's still there even, now - the guitar shop, which is run by a chap called Minett. Well, his father used to have an old... not second hand shop, but he used to sell cheap tools.

I: Yeah, there still is... He's got two sons, hasn't he? And one of them has the guitar shop and one has the tool shop.

R: Does he? Oh right, I didn't know the other one was a relation of Ken's. Ken Minett.

I: I've been told I should speak to Ken.

R: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, he's had a shop there for... he's been connected with the... If he's still around, crikey. I think ever since I was a kid. He wasn't there when I was very young, but he opened up the shop... I presume it was at the beginning of the do-it-yourself sort of thing. Because normally if you wanted anything similar to the stuff he sold, you went to Harvey's. You know where that is? That's where the pub is now, what they call the...

I: The Frog and Fiddle.

R: Frog and Fiddle. And that was a real old-fashioned hardware store, which is very similar... have you ever seen the sketch with the Two Ronnies, four candles?

I: Oh yeah.

- R: That's the sort of place it was. Once again, everything was in drawers, and the guys always wore grey overalls. They were always dressed in their grey overalls, and you'd go in there for... well, if you wanted six nails, you could go in there and get six nails. You didn't have to buy a packet of 200 from the do-it-yourself shop.
- I: **So that's interesting. So going back, obviously now a lot has changed. There's not many people you know there any more. But how do you think other people from Cheltenham feel about the area now?**
- R: I think they don't... I don't think they think about it very much, because it's not a place that's attractive for shopping, for one thing. I think it does what it's always done, to serve the local people down there. There's nothing to draw anybody down there now. Is the bingo hall still operating?
- I: **I don't think it's open, no.**
- R: No. So that would be the only reason for anybody from outside the area to go down there, these days. All the shops that are left are fairly common sort of shops. The only one that was there, that's gone now, was the gun shop - that's gone.
- I: **It seems to be full of different barber shops now, for different kind of ethnic groups.**
- R: Oh crikey, it's overrun with barber shops now.
- I: **But it still has this reputation for being the shabby end of town, doesn't it?**
- R: Well, it has because it is. I presume all the places are privately owned, and nobody seems to sort of worry or care, really. Most of the shop fronts are still the same as they were when I was a toddler. There's been no development down there apart from the road that cuts through to... Not St Paul's Road. Is it Swindon Road? Swindon Road, I think. That's the only major work that's been done down there.
- I: **Yeah. So you said when you go back there, you get a little bit of nostalgia.**
- R: Well, there's a bit of nostalgia there, yeah. Because my old school's still there, although it's houses now.
- I: **So that was the school on Devonshire Street?**
- R: Yeah. Very fond memories of that school, because I always came either first or second in exams. I've still got books at home with 'Melvyn Jones, first prize' in there. And Mr Whiteman the headmaster, I remember him very well, and the teachers that we had in there. But there isn't anybody, as I said before, that I could knock on the door and say, "How are you doing?" They've all gone. Possibly doing what you said. You know, they've moved away, but not necessarily to the new estates. Very good friends of mine when I was a kid, they moved up to Selkirk Street.
- I: **Fairview?**

R: Yeah. That was regarded as... It's not posh, but that was the middle class end of town. Eric Cook, my best friend, god knows what happened to him. The last I'd heard, he'd gone to Tibet to be a monk.

I: **Wow. That's quite a... That's moving a bit further afield, yeah [laughs].**

R: Well, he was... not strange, but he went a bit sort of weird.

I: **Spiritual, obviously.**

R: Well, yeah. He got a job at the Foreign Office, at GCHQ. I'm trying to think... the last time I saw him, he was walking down the Promenade and he had an umbrella and a bowler hat on, and I couldn't figure out why. He wasn't a banker or anything like that. But yeah, that's the last I heard of him. He disappeared off to Tibet. And there was a girl I was very fond of; her dad used to own a newsagents. I haven't seen her for 40-odd years. But you do... You sort of lose touch with... Funny enough, this site now, Days Gone By in Cheltenham, there are quite a lot of people on there that I went to school with.

I: **It's a good way for people...**

R: And you're able to get back in touch with some. And one of the lads on there... As I said, we had twins that lived next door to us, Peter and Paul Trinder. I'd not kept in touch, but I'd seen Peter quite often because he was in partnership with a friend of mine in an engineering business. But his brother Paul had gone off down to Devon, I think. Peter died and I didn't have any contact with anybody until Paul Trinder turned up on that site. He's moved back up to Bishop's Cleeve.

I: **Well, it's a great way for people to reconnect, isn't it?**

R: Oh yeah, yeah it is. And there is also a site on there for Parish Church Boys' School. I know one or two people on there, but I don't know all of them. You're only there for four years, so you only know the people who you were with.

I: **Yeah, that you went through with.**

R: Well, basically the year you were there, really. You don't even know the people that were necessarily...

I: **Above or below, yeah.**

R: Unless they were neighbours, close neighbours.

I: **Alright.**

R: Okay?

I: **Okay. Well, that's great. Thanks very much, Melvyn. So I'll stop it there.**

(End of recording)