

**Interviewee: Frederick Salter**

**Interviewer: Malin Lundin**

**Also present: Derek Whale**

**Date: 22.11.2010**

Interviewer: Back on and it should be recording now. So this is an interview with Frederick Salter on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2010 and if we just continue with when you were called up in '39.

Frederick: Start from there?

Interviewer: Yes, if that's ok.

Frederick: Yes. Yeah, I was first called-up 1939 and that was about 5 o'clock in the morning. I got my mobilisation papers and I reported to the Tower of London by midday and also then we went to Chelsea Barracks to join our different regiments. We got sorted out and [Derek: Excuse me]. Thank you. As I say, [unclear] the war started in September 19 – 19 –

Derek: September the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Interviewer: '39.

Frederick: Before that these German parachuters which shooting down on the coast just before that and, anyhow, they got captured about, I think, it was about half a dozen of them and they was taken to the Tower of London to be interviewed on what they were up to. So we had the job take 'em up to Aldren (??) to a [unclear] we always – that turned into a German prison camp and that was that. So – so after that our regiment was getting ready to go overseas. We didn't know if it was going or not so we had to pack all our kits up at Chelsea and get ready when the orders came to move. I said to my wife, 'Goodbye' and then one day we was off up to Scotland and we settled down in up there for about a fortnight and then we boarded ship in the guard. We stayed on the ship about a week before the ship moved where it was going. So we was – one Sunday morning we heard the engines running so we said, 'We're off'. We was on the high sea for about three weeks. We run out to South Africa, right the way round, before we landed. I'm trying to think of the port. I don't know if it was Tripoli or not.

Derek: How about Alexandria?

Frederick: Eh?

Derek: Was it Alexandria?

Frederick: Anyhow, we landed in this port and they said to get off the ship as soon as possible because the Italians used to come over and bomb it. So we got off ship and got right in and then the next day we had to get on a smaller ship that took us right up to where we was going in like a – the

canals what it is. So we got off of that up on the harbour and we were deployed out into the desert. We took up our position there and<sup>1</sup> this – started the fighting, you know, and as we advanced in the desert cos it's all open – you could see one another. We could see the Germans and we – they could see us. They moved cover and then the old Stukas used come up and bomb us. So as we went on we got stopped by a – I think it was a panzer division come up but there was a spandau nest, that – spandau is machineguns. They was up there and halted us and we couldn't move cos these spandaus, that's a machinegun nest. So our commanding officer and eight men, guardsmen, and a sergeant and that, they – what they did – went forward. This man up they stormed that heights to silence these spandaus, machineguns, which they did. Because we couldn't move because they just mowed us down so the silence then up all had got killed. Our commander and that was Lord Lyell and the guardsmen and sergeant they – they did their job. They silenced down with hand grenades that they threw over to them. So they – they had us to go advance forward which was in the desert. He got the VC, Lord Lyell, out there. We advanced [unclear] and that was called Loadstock Hill (??), the name of that place where it happened. So we advanced and we pushed the Germans right back. We went back to, um, the final base where they could get no more so they got in the boats and sailed out to Italy. We finished up at Trieste in – up to – so we captured all that and air force – air bases and that was it. So we stayed there for about two or three weeks, I think, for the invasion of Italy.

Derek: Did you not go to Sicily first?

Frederick: What?

Derek: Did you not go to Sicily first?

Frederick: Yes, and that so – so right you go on these boats and that. So we went to Sicily and that was where we started the Battle of Italy and we scurried from one side to the other and, um, [unclear] u-u-u-up and we rose the Germans up – right up to Ca – Cassino cos they was in the monastery up there and we were (??) down here. They can see all – every mo – mo – movement from up there so we – these like guns down – any movement they could see it. So I was in the 24<sup>th</sup> Guards Brigade, black cat div, black cat div. And they brought us back to, um, some port it was and we got on these boats at night and we sailed up round the back<sup>2</sup> of the Germans to Anzio. Have you heard of Anzio? Have you, in Italy? It – it's a lovely b-beach and –

Derek: Killed everybody didn't it.

Frederick: Eh?

Derek: They killed everybody.

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<sup>1</sup> 5 min

<sup>2</sup> 10 min

Frederick: Yeah. About 4 o'clock in the morning the – we come in to the beach and out of the water and as we did so the – on the Adriatic side – the Adriatic side they sent the panzer division over to us and –

Derek: Fred's being a bit modest there.

Frederick: Eh?

Derek: You're being a bit modest there, Fred. What – the Germans were on the other side of Italy and when they landed there wasn't much there. They could have broken out but when they – the panzers come back they all got killed. I think you're being a bit modest.

Frederick: Those over on the Adriatic side, up there. But when they knew the – the landing of British troops and that. We was the 24<sup>th</sup> Guard Brigade was a spearhead for we had to run up the beaches but as we was doing that saw these panzer division come over but we what we had to do was the r-road going from Florence to Cassino we had to break that, what's the name, so the Germans couldn't – couldn't last down to Cassino. That was our job, which we did, at the loss of hundreds of men was gunned down and all the left flank – the right flank rather was the Americans but should have been went forth next but – but wouldn't move and that was Mark Clark, his troops. They stayed there, wouldn't move – move so we took the blunt of it. But, eh, that started Cassino for the troops on the other side to advance up the hills and capture Cassino cos nothing could get back to Cassino from Rome. But during the day it was stukes – stukas diving day and night and where I was all the commanders came back to have a – conflate what the troops gonna do [Derek: On the beach] and a mortar shell hit a tree and all that lot got killed, about six of them. I was over there, we got a blast over there. So, eh, the advance out where we was, out to the open land, and when we advanced – we advanced off to the Po Valley. Have you ever heard of that in Italy? The Po? River Po? So the Germans there got to the – cos they was looting. They was retreating back, it was taking horses, everything so you get them back and, anyhow, they got close to the other side of the Po and we bombard them with the air force and then we got across over there and we – right – right – right up to, eh, what's that? Tunisia – not Tunisia.

Derek: Trieste.

Frederick: Trieste, wasn't it? On the Adriatic coastline, that's right. That's when they packed in because they Italians packed in when he – we invaded, eh, Italy. They cap, you know, they gave in.

Derek: Tell<sup>3</sup> the young lady about the shoe factory?

Frederick: The what?

Derek: The shoe factory. It was a major battle, Fred.

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<sup>3</sup> 15 minaamok

Frederick: Oh, the t-tobacco factory.

Derek: The tobacco factory not shoe factory.

Frederick: Yeah. That, oh, that was terrible that was. Eh, we were all down there and, eh, well, I can't describe –

Derek: What it was was that it was – it was open ground, totally open ground, to this factory and they were all to advance across it and they got – they got amok [Frederick: Yeah] and when they got into the factory it was hand to hand fight. Fred won't say – won't say much.

Frederick: Eh?

Derek: Fred won't say much.

Frederick: No, that's dreadful, dreadful. When you see – you're life's in your own hands and I was very lucky, I was, to come through of it. But, eh, I think there was about – only about two hundred of us come out but –

Derek: Three were killed.

Frederick: We lost hundreds of me, yeah. We got slaughtered out there we did but there you go. But only Anzio beach we held that for six solid weeks because the Ger – Germans used to come over and [unclear] and say to us, 'Give yourselves up because we'll push you back into the sea', cos it was only five mile back the sea was but it was – it was so bad we – we managed to dig a hole and burry our, you know, get out of the bombing at nights. These Stukas they come down like that and that was terrible so – but we held on to that for six weeks so then the others – when the Cassino fail when the others come up then relieve us from that beachhead, yeah. So then we went to upwards through – up to, eh, north of, um, Italy, yeah.

Derek: What also happened the – the Germans made three defensive lines to the – the – if you look at the map of Rome there'd be to the right hand side of Rome.

Frederick: Where's your coffee?

Interviewer: Oh, I'm fine thank you.

Derek: But – but –

Frederick: Didn't you get one?

Derek: This General Clark, he wouldn't – he wouldn't [Frederick: No] he wouldn't come out of the town. He went to Rome as Hollywood, you know, 'I'm here', and the Americans were supposed to attack these three defensive lines because they didn't want the Germans to go back to France for D-Day, you know, like when they attacked in France and they were supp – the troops were supposed to, obviously, capture them and do whatever but a lot of them escaped and went – went back to, eh,

France to help them. But Clark, because he was Hollywood, he deviated that way where there was no Germans, went into Rome and it was like an open city and when the English got there he had his own MP, Military Police, arrest English soldiers because they didn't want them in Rome because he wanted all the glory, you know.

Frederick: Yeah, he – they – he was the first one in a Jeep to go on the main road into Rome. He take all the glory off it.

Derek: It was Hollywood, it was pure Hollywood.

Frederick: Yeah.

Derek: It really was pure Hollywood, you know.

Frederick: We – we'd – what we'd done the 24<sup>th</sup> Guards Brigade, we're the ones – we opened it up, the road up but no not them. But they got all the glory of it and then we went through Rome and that and so that was that. When we got to, eh –

Derek: Trieste.

Frederick: No. What's it? Trieste is in Italy, isn't it? What's the one in North Africa?

Derek: Eh, Alexandria?

Frederick: No, when we got up to the – that was Trieste, wasn't it?

Derek: Trieste is in Italy.

Frederick: Is it, oh. What was the other one<sup>4</sup>?

Interviewer: Did you return to North Africa?

Frederick: Eh?

Interviewer: Did you return to North Africa after Italy?

Derek: No.

Frederick: I – I, yes, in later days but, eh, we go right up to Tunisia, innit?

Derek: Tunisia?

Frederick: Tunisia. That's it, it's Tunisia. The other was the other one wasn't it. So we was fighting Yugoslavia when we got up there.

Derek: Up to Trieste.

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<sup>4</sup> 20 min

Frederick: When the war was over and then the next problem we had was Tito, the, eh, what's – he wanted to come down and take over, eh, Tunisia, eh –

Derek: Trieste. He wanted Trieste.

Frederick: So we had to stop him from coming down. He said it always belonged to him, um, so we had to stop him from taking it over.

Derek: Tito was, where you got Bosnia and Serbia – do you know of that?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Derek: Sorry, beg your pardon. Sorry.

Frederick: That was it so, no, you can't come no further. So we made him go back and that was the finish and – and that was my – finish of my army career. Eh, my commander said to me, 'Fred, you're gonna sign on', and, 'No, I'm going home', I said, 'I had enough'. So he said, 'Yeah, you've done a good job', he said. 'We'd like to sign on if you – but go home and think about it and if you do', you know, so. Anyhow, that was it. We had a good night over the – and the bass (??) and all that other food coupons (??). We come home by train through Italy down to the coast and the canal crosser there to, eh, Dover. When I come home, I knocked on my door. My son said, 'Mum, mum!', 'What?', he says, 'There's a black man at the door'. She says, 'Black man? That's your father!'. See, cos he hadn't seen me, he's only a little tot – toto. She says, 'That's your father!', so he went up to – big house up there, I don't know what it called. But he had flags or something like that over my shed, he – he went right through the roof of it cos it was an asbestos roof.

Derek: Roof, yeah, that's right.

Frederick: So –

Derek: So you had to pick him out of that.

Frederick: Eh?

Derek: You had to pick him out of that.

Frederick: Yeah. So that was that and, eh, then we had parties and all that after I come home and, eh, settled down in civvy life and my wife said to me, 'But you're going back aren't you?', I said, 'What?!', she said, 'You're signing up on aren't you?'. I said, 'No, I'm not. I shall live here now', I said, my [unclear] what's the name, what's me to sign on. She said, 'Will you throw all the service away that you got? Why don't you go back?' but I said no. I said, 'Don't you realise what I've gone through?', she said, 'Yes, and so have we here'. [Unclear] running all round there, she said, 'That's haven't been very nice at all'. So I went back to my job and that's it and, eh, eh, in 1990 – 19 – 1996 I went back out there as – as [unclear] to look all the – my mates' graves and all that and Africa and all that.

Interviewer: Did you go back to North Africa<sup>5</sup> and Italy?

Frederick: Yeah. So –

Interviewer: How was that? How was it returning to where – where you fought all –

Frederick: Pardon?

Interviewer: How was it returning to where you had fought all those years.

Frederick: Not very nice, not ne nice. When I think, eh, as I say on the Anzio beach we had no, eh, eh, officers. They all got killed and that. So I was a corporal, I was co – co – commander of my lot and that's what we do and we – we hanged on for six solid weeks. Night and day [unclear], you know. So there you are. All we have today, no one's alive to tell the story, anyway.

Interviewer: So when – did you return in '45?

Frederick: Well, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Frederick: And I returned on my son's birthday, the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, that was, when I knocked on my door.

Interviewer: When was son born?

Frederick: Eh, late – 20 – 31. I mean, 1932, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And how was it getting back to England? Was it difficult to – to settle into –?

Frederick: Well, my wife used to say to me, 'It's a nightmare', she'd make me go to sleep in another room, she said, 'Because I can't stand it'. She says, 'See, you – you used to do – you'd jump up and scream'. I said, 'I'm sorry but that was – going through your mind and when you gets up and you goes, 'Aaaaaargh!', I said, 'All the neighbours', I said, 'Blow the neighbours', I said, 'they should have been out there with us'. But I was like that for – my nerves shattered, you know, I went to my doctors and all that and they – got tablets and all to calm me down. That was – but she had a rough time with – of me when I come home.

Interviewer: How long were you feeling like that? When did you go to the doctors? Was that – was –?

Frederick: Pardon?

Interviewer: When did you go to the doctors to –?

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<sup>5</sup> 25 min

Frederick: Well, about a month or so afterwards, she said, 'cos I can't stand it'. I said, 'I'm sorry' but, 'you should go in another room'. So shut the door and – what happens to – your nerves are shattered. You – you can't explain, when you see dead people all around you and in the field, yeah. Yes, anyhow, I survived it and my – my mate, Jim, eh, we come back together. He's a [unclear] out there, Jim [unclear] and he's wife's still alive today and he died but we, eh, a matter of fact, we phone one another and she said '[unclear] aren't you?', cos I [unclear] to her and me and my wife stayed with her when he was alive and –. I don't want to see another war like that but this that's going on is what they call as guerrilla warfare. Tip for tap, that's all of these but you get them in the mountains but our boys are on – in the – they were in kind of a desert part, Afghanistan, and they [unclear] anytime. It's when they're going along on patrol and sniper come out of a cave and you're gone. That should never<sup>6</sup> be on that war out there, never. No.

Interviewer: So what year was it that you left England to go to North Africa, was it in 1942?

Frederick: Yes, yeah.

Interviewer: So you spent the first three years of the war –

Frederick: That's – yeah.

Interviewer: In England. What did you do when you was serving at home?

Frederick: It – it was beginning of 1942 when we went out there and that was 92, 93 and 94, nearly three years I was out there when I came back after 1945. Yeah, You got to say? Did – what did I do?

Interviewer: Yeah. What did you do when you were still in Britain before you went out to North Africa? When – when you were – cos you – you were called up in 1939.

Frederick: That's right.

Interviewer: And then you went out in 1942 so you spent –

Frederick: No.

Interviewer: No? Which year did you go out?

Frederick: Yeah, sure that's right. I did – the beginning of, eh, I went about the 30<sup>th</sup> of Mar – of January. [Unclear] when we got out because, eh, Alamein was going on that – when they deported the big guns. I think it was General Wavell, who was commander out there at the time but Monty took over and I was under Monty and also his under-staff was Field Marshall Alexander. There's a story to that too [laughs]. So when we was on that beach in Anzio Field Marshall Alexander was there with us [unclear] cos he was ex-officer in the Guards, of the Corsarine (??) Guards, he was. But he was the understudy for Mont – Monty was a hundred miles back in a caravan [laughs]. That – he wouldn't

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<sup>6</sup> 30 min

come up the front, no, no, no. So as I say that is when we went off on the boats up to [unclear] 1942. That's right.

Interviewer: How were the provisions?

Frederick: Pardon?

Interviewer: How were the provisions when you were fighting? Food and water?

Frederick: Well, you had a water-can. We used to call it a Billy can that I – you had filled with water when you were in the desert. Right, you weren't allowed to touch that but you had a water bottle about that size, that. So that was that. But it was so hot out there that you was in short, you had nothing on here. You had [unclear] and all on your back – backs and [unclear] you only had a drip of water when officer in command say, 'Yeah, have a little drink now', that's all because that's your life canister. If you drink all that you – you got no more because you can't get these water tanks coming up when the, eh, firing, eh, the big guns at you. So the only is, you know the cactus, don't you? There's some out there – big ones there. You can get water out of them. A lot of them drank out of there, eh, you know that, Derek?

Derek: No, I didn't, no.

Frederick: Yeah. Oh, it's like that look [unclear].

Derek: How – how would you do that then, Fred?

Frederick: Eh?

Derek: How would you do that, get water out of the cactus?

Frederick: Well, pierce a hole in it. It runs out then.

Derek: Really?

Frederick: Yeah.

Derek: Is that – it just sort of literally runs out of it?

Frederick: Yeah, that's what – that's how the Arabs live out there.

Derek: Yeah.

Frederick: They – when they go through the desert. That's [unclear], you can see them do that, get water out of them<sup>7</sup>, you know. Suck it out. And [unclear] but there you are.

Interviewer: How was the food?

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<sup>7</sup> 35 min

Frederick: Eh?

Interviewer: H-how was the food?

Frederick: [laughs] you – you had jock (??) boxes. You had, um, like, toilet paper, cigarettes, chocolates and what knows and also you had, um, bacon and then beans and all that. So you used to and then used to light a candle to warm 'em up, you know. The light was a tap candle and put the beans over the top of them. It used to warm them through a lot.

Derek: Was it enough? Was it ever enough, the food?

Frederick: No, no.

Derek: There's quite –

Frederick: That's Army rations, eh, you had to spread it out the whole day for what you want. There's no saying, 'Oh, I'm hungry', and eat the bloody lot. No way. No. Yeah.

Derek: What happened if you ate it?

Frederick: Eh?

Derek: Did they supply you next day or did you have to wait or something?

Frederick: [laughs] No, no, no. But that's what we used to call a jock box that was. It was a lot of [unclear] I used to carry in a haversack on you so you can't feed, eh, eh, eh, eh, eh, all that. You can't come up with a [unclear] our own food.

Interviewer: Did you feel that the training that you were given when you joined the army and when they sent you out to fight, that that was – that that prepared you for what you later experienced in the war?

Frederick: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, you had to all [unclear] training. Get you ready for battle and all that, yeah. You had to go through the whole lot before you go overseas. You got subject to – you can't qualify because some [unclear], 'I can't do that', and, 'I can't do that', of course, I can't see – I could see from their point of view, they don't want to go so [unclear] it was. They used to go sick, let someone down for the medal [unclear], yeah. All these, a lot of them didn't want to go, you know. Well, we're – we're all down to go so people like that are not worth alive, are they? Eh?

Derek: Well, that's right.

Frederick: It's not fair to the others and, of course, the medical officer used to say you were malingering. You know me, malingering? 'Get back to your unit', no. He used to give M and T (??) [laughs]. Yes, yeah, and some of them used to get jankers, you know that? You know what jankers are? Jankers? Oh, well, if you've been a naughty boy or like that you get punished and you get punished for the [unclear]. But [unclear] in bed in peace time these have to have a punishment made

on the afternoon, full pack, about a hundred – a hundred and ninety odd pounds on your back and you're running around [unclear] quite big innit? Run around there for an hour, yeah, yeah. I've seen a bloke<sup>8</sup> about six foot six cry to get out, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Did you experience any of the – the bombing on the home front? Any of the German air raids?

Frederick: Pardon?

Interviewer: Did you experience any air raids when you were still in Britain?

Frederick: Yes, yes. Well, cos we – I'll tell you where we were stationed, before we went to Scotland, Chislehurst. You know Chislehurst?

Interviewer: Mm.

Frederick: Up there, yeah. I was stationed up there, I don't know, for about a month I think, up there. Because me being home I was allowed come home at night a while in the army and, of course, they told me she come home bombing [unclear] one day when all the German planes come up was like bees, you know. It was masses of them. When our Air Force went up shot about hundred down, I think. Oh, that was a terrible day that is, bombs dropping all over the place here. And I – I wasn't living here, I was up near home my – cos they gave me an air raid shelter and I put it in for my wife cos when I see the air raid. [Unclear] up and down the garden into the, eh, what's the name? Air raid shelter and just up your side of the heath went up used to go through when we used to go down, you know, [unclear] going to Bexleyheath but the doctor had a mine land – rested on his tree. But if that had went off –

Derek: A mine had landed on his tree?

Frederick: Yeah. On – on a parachute this mine was and lucky it didn't go off because it would be goodbye to my – my home cos I wasn't far away from that. But it didn't come off so – the bombers people go up and they made it safe.

Derek: They were like delayed action, weren't they?

Frederick: Yeah. But my neighbours and my wife told me, eh, they go – got – were blown out by the bombing up there, yeah. Yeah, you know, the [unclear] and the blast up there.

Interviewer: Was there ever any talk about your son being evacuated? Or did he stay with your wife throughout the war?

Frederick: Pardon?

Interviewer: Was your son ever evacuated?

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<sup>8</sup> 40 min

Frederick: He'd, um, went down to Devon. Not to my Gran's but her aunt (??) lived in Wiltshire there. That's half way down and he went down with his granddad and, eh, her mum said to granddad, 'Take Peter with you', and he went down and he was there all through the war, yeah. It's [unclear] when the other people, he's private, you know, family. He – he said he had a great time down there and his right (??) because, eh, they didn't get many, eh, aircraft down there. That put him up (??) there's all round, all round the park (??) and also up the north, weren't it. Scotland and all these – where all the, eh, industrious places and they couldn't do cos nothing down there.

Interviewer: What – what did your wife do during the war?

Frederick: Eh?

Interviewer: What did your wife do during the war?

Frederick: Oh, she never went to work, she never in my civvy time but the – she had a letter from the Ministry to say, 'You got no child at home, you got to go out to work', because I'm away and, well, her son's away. They offered her a job down the Crayford, is it Cray – Crayford ammunition works there. So if you've seen them girls coming out the ammunition you – they all – ye – yellow. What were they used to be but that's the powder that when they put in the butters and that. So she wrote back to them, 'You got my husband. I'm not making bullets ready to fire', she said, 'If I got to go to work I'll get my own job', which she did. Yeah.

Interviewer: What did she do then?

Frederick: She – Vido – there's a factory down in Erith called Vido that used to make batteries for the – for the army forces all that and she was – got down as a secretary there and she worked there for a time till that factory got blown up so was out of work for then and then, eh, my brother in law. That's Henley's sister Gwenny, eh, he's a carpenter joiner but he worked down Erith when a factory and they're making all these – they sent us to send out abroad for the troops so he said how would you like to come and do some [unclear]. She said, 'Oh, I can't do that', she said – he said, 'All the girls down here, eh, have cured it (??). Try your hand', he said, 'I will pay up you'. She went down there and she, um, started off with him, he showed her what to do there and she stayed there right till the end of the war. She loved it was a different thing to office work. It was like – like – like [unclear], yeah, so.

Interviewer: So how – how was it to – to re-connect with your son cos I guess you had – you didn't see him most of the war and being away from your young son for such a long time, was it difficult to – to kind of establish that father-son bond again?

Frederick: Oh, he – when he come back, you know, he hardly knew his father so but when he came back after the war – came back, eh, we got out together and lovely-dovey but I made [unclear] up for what, eh, my past life in the army so me and my wife, we all got back together. We were a family again and, eh, big passing (??) and – and that. It was great to get back in civvy again and I went back on me, eh, eh, down there working and then what happen? Eh, before we got this [unclear], eh, that

was – this was being built, eh, 1930 odd – '50 odd and when it was all finished we moved in here in 1959 in the end and that was that and then after a year the whole shipyard got redundant on Christmas Eve.

Interviewer: What year was that? 50 –?

Frederick: 19 – that would have been 1960. Cos we come in here 1959 and so, eh, all the docks in London were all made redundant at that time. They were strapping all the docks down and they here (??) and that's why the – the – this, what's the name, started. I – I was sitting out – sitting out<sup>9</sup> on the drive in my car my wife came home. She said, 'What's the matter?', she said, 'You don't look very happy'. I went, 'No', [unclear] tell you. I said, 'Well, it's Christmas', I said, 'I'm redundant on Christmas Eve'. 'Well', she said, 'what you're worrying for?'. 'Well, well, I ain't have a job, have I?', 'Well', she said, 'you get a job somewhere else', she said, 'That's the best news I've had'. I said, 'Why?', she said, 'I never wanted you to go down there – that place down there. I wish you weren't with all the colds, you know'. In the winter just [unclear] out there but so that was that. But so she was working then in pharmaceutical over at Old Bexley. You know Bexley? In the village? And that was Pharmax, I don't know if you know about it? It's – so she got up to her manager type and said about my husband [unclear] what he do? She said, 'He's an engineer', oh, 'Well', she said, we only [unclear] but send him over and we'll have a look at him'. So I went over to see him and have a chat. He said, 'If you're prepared to do anything at the moment, you've got a job?'. So I said, 'I'll do what you like', 'Get in, Fred', and I got in and first you had the gardening, painting and all that. Because they used to, eh, [unclear] would come in bulk, they used – [unclear] used to count that out and put them in pots but they – Forest Lands America (??) bought us out and then, eh, they wanted to get all their own machines that came from America in. So I'd done all that, I put all that lot in and I never looked back from that day to this. I worked till eighty-four.

Interviewer: You worked till you were eighty-four?

Frederick: I was eighty-four when I retired and I could still be there now because, eh, my boss, eh, Amy said to me, 'When are you gonna retire?', I said, 'You ask your boss', because on the engineering side you was only allowed to work to you were sixty-five. You had to retire at sixty-five so that was it so but my boss said, 'No, you're not retiring, Fred', I said, 'Why?', I said, 'You're agreement here is sixty-five'. 'No, you're not gonna retire', he said, 'I've got a job for you'. 'What?', so when I come home – cos Amy's a secretary over there, when I come, I said, 'You're has said I'm not going to retire'. She said, 'What? You're sixty-five?', I said, 'Yeah, he said no. He's got another job for me'. 'Well', she said, 'It's up to you', she said, 'If you do that you never got any retirement, are you?', I said, 'I know then', she said, 'What's it?', I said, 'I don't know yet so I'll go in and see what it is'. So, anyhow, went into him, 'Right', he said, 'you're off the engineer section now, right', 'Right', 'I want you to take over all the security. You've got twelve women, cleaners that comes in the morning, which you supervise them and put in what they got to do', eh, what's the name? He said, 'That be – you'll be in

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<sup>9</sup> 50 min

charge, Fred, you'll have another band which will come in one week you'll come in early morning, you'll come in late after the shift'. So I said, 'That's a bit [unclear] innit'. He said, 'You're not retiring', he said, 'You're doing that job'. I said, 'Well, what's Amy gonna say?', 'You go and I will talk to her', when I come home and had a talk with her, I said, 'I'm to take over security', she, 'What?!'. She said, 'That place [grumbles] you go with me', there's iron gates there, you know, the side. You go in there and it goes right the way back to the river. It's a hell of a big one. She said, 'Round there?', 'No', she said. I said, 'He's not gonna let me go, you know'. I said, 'you have a word with him'. 'No, I won't have a word with him', she said, 'Right' and she types this thing. 'Right, when you go in give him that'. When I went, I said, here Amy sent this to you'. 'Ain't you gonna open that?', I said, [unclear]. 'No', he said, 'you just got to do the job'. And that was that, that was it. I said to her when I come home, I said, 'Your letter was torn up and put in the bin', so she said, 'You get on with it I'll say no more', and that [unclear] I did and I stayed there till eighty-four and I had a hell of a job with getting away then. So Amy wrote another letter when I was getting on and yet [unclear] she'd –

Derek: Getting on? Getting on? [laughs] You were eighty-four, getting on? What were you –? Bloody hell man, like – it's lovely.

Frederick: She said, 'I think he's had enough – eighty-four –

Derek: That's right.

Frederick: at your factory' as she wrote another one. He did open it and said, 'I suppose I've gotta let you go', he said, 'You're a lovely man, you've been good at your new job. You're always here on time'. [unclear] because I'm always half an hour early.

Interviewer: Are you now?

Derek: He always wants to be two days before the event. He got [Frederick: No, no] he got up at eleven o'clock last night for you today.

Frederick: No, I don't. Shut up. And then but that was it. I come home and cos I had some friends down the coast and my Amy and her friend, they used to say, 'What, you're working weekends. We're off'. They used to go, they said, 'You look after yourself', yeah, yeah [laughs]. Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy what you did?

Frederick: Yes, it's a – it's a very nerving rattin' shopn (??) at when you're in that freekin' hall at home, no, at night. Sometimes I used to get called out two o'clock in the morning by the police. The alarm would go out, eh, '80 was it? What was that big storm we had? Was it 80 what?

Derek: What was that sorry?

Frederick: That big storm we had here?

Derek: Eh, '87.

Frederick: '87, you remember that?

Derek: All the trees, Sevenoaks – you had seven oaks at – it was actually Sevenoaks – seven oak trees at Sevenoaks. It was only one left, it knocked all – it knocked everything down. Houses – you used to have these really beautiful canapé (??) trees, you know the big enormous trees when they all – a lot of them were knocked down and into houses, into cars.

Frederick: I got called out that morning about, eh, a quarter to three that morning. When I went up and looked over big trees had [unclear].

Derek: Couldn't get out on the way, could you?

Frederick: And when I got down to my place at Old Bexley, eh, all the alarms were ringing because I<sup>10</sup> – all on computer.

Derek: Yeah.

Frederick: Shut off all those alarms but the police say that I will meet you at the gate. No police there that time in the morning. Nothing.

Derek: No.

Frederick: I went in all on my own, yeah.

Derek: That's right.

Frederick: They couldn't care monkey (??) them police – they couldn't – none of them.

Derek: Probably had so much to do, Fred.

Frederick: What?

Derek: They probably had so much to do with people getting killed and things like that, you know.

Frederick: Sitting around at home and having a coffee or something like that. Yeah. No, they were never there, yeah. But there are – that – and then I as I – later on lost my – lost my wife, you know, 19 – what was it? 1999, August the 16<sup>th</sup> she died, in my arms, in the hospital. Yeah, and that was that and then, as I said to you, I lived here six years when John and what's her name come over and, eh, they said, 'You mustn't stay in here' and they said we – we'll all go out that night and I finished up in a dance room. Oh, it was great though. The achievement I got today, ain't it?

Derek: It's lovely, yeah.

Frederick: I'm one of the world's – what's the name?

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<sup>10</sup> 60 min

Derek: Amy's looking down at you, she's as pleased as punch, mate. Pleased as punch.

Frederick: She would say, 'I never thought you got it in you', because she was a great dancer and she was taught ballet dance, she was age eleven years of age and she was the who started me, eh, dancing but after all the years I'd forgot it all, you know.

Derek: She said you had three left feet didn't she?

Frederick: What?

Derek: She said you used to have three left feet.

Frederick: No, no, no.

Interviewer: So did you go dancing a lot when you were young then?

Frederick: Eh, what happened was – was, um, in my days there was only two things in your life, going to pictures or going to dancing. No television, no wireless, nothing. So her and her friend used to go down to West Street to the Dance Hall and I used to say [unclear] I say that I come back later, 10 o'clock. That went on for quite a while. So one particular Saturday night, eh, her friend got behind me and then I was in a trap, I said, 'What's happening here', so she said, 'Well, we're going in there, Fred. I said, 'Yeah', so we opened the door and Hilda behind she gave me one big push and I was in there with them all. All dancing. 'I'm going out', 'You can't get out now, Fred', she said. You go out [unclear] get out now', 'Ooh', I said, 'I can't dance'. 'Now's the time to learn', she said. 'Every Saturday night, what do you do, say 'ta-ta' you go home, don't you?', 'Yes, that's right', 'No', she said, 'here, now you're gonna learn to dance'. That's when I shuffled along, got to learn and start putting it up and that was it. So we used to go then and then sometime we used to go to the Regal in London where the Asda is, you know, Asda's? That was the Regal and it was a lovely picture house and organ used to come up and that used to play. That's fantastic used to. I miss all that, you know. There's nothing now, well, is there – it is [unclear] in Deptford, ain't it? Down by the [unclear], ain't it?

Interviewer: Where? In Deptford?

Frederick: Picture place at Bexleyheath is all run down, ain't it (??)?

Interviewer: I'm not sure.

Derek: It is. It's not a great –

Frederick: Yeah, an American restaurant there?

Derek: By Sainsbury's, it's nearly opposite the Town Hall.

Interviewer: Ok.

Derek: The Town Hall, yeah, there's a cinema there but it's – it's a complex. It's not one big cinema. It's got – it's – it's [unclear] and it's dark, you know.

Frederick: It's not very nice in there.

Derek: No.

Frederick: Not the way that – but there were at Asda it was. It was a fantastic one. Big one, it was, yeah, and the organ used to come up.

Derek: That's right.

Frederick: Eh?

Derek: I remember as a kid. The Plaza down at Catford, that used to be like that.

Frederick: What was its name?

Derek: What?

[Recorded paused]

Frederick: Any – any – any more questions?

Interviewer: Ah, I don't have any more questions now. Is there anything that you want to add that you –

Frederick: Eh?

Interviewer: Is there anything that you want to add that you feel like you haven't had the chance to talk about?

Frederick: No, you know all on me war, it's gone all about the war, ain't it?

Interviewer: Yes, no, it's been very helpful.

Frederick: That's wartime –

**End of Interview.**