

Interviewee: **Ivy Durnford**

Interviews conducted by Nicky Leap and Billie Hunter during research for the publication '*The Midwife's Tale: an Oral History from Handywoman to Professional Midwife*' (1993; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2013)

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**Description:**

Transcript of an interview with Ivy Durnford covering her experiences as a mother in south London during the 1920s and 1930s, including the doctors, handywomen and midwives who assisted at her deliveries, illegal abortion, illegitimacy, and knowledge regarding sex.

**Topics include:** Midwifery; Maternity Services; Childbirth; Maternal Mortality; Contraception; Abortion

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**[START OF INTERVIEW AND FIRST AUDIO FILE]**

Interviewer: I'm talking to Ivy, is it Durnford, your surname...?

Ivy: Yeah.

Interviewer: Durnford, who was born in 1904.

Ivy: Yes, that's right.

Interviewer: Okay Ivy, let's start off by you telling me about how many children you had, how many pregnancies you had.

Ivy: Um, eh, five including the abortion. Yes.

Interviewer: So do you want to tell me about those pregnancies starting with the first?

Ivy: Well it was a long, long time, and I had a lady doctor.

Interviewer: Did you?

Ivy: Yes, I had nobody else with me. You know, in those days you didn't have anything – a friend or someone. And it was a long birth – ten hours.

Interviewer: Yes. Where were you living then?

Ivy: At New Cross.

Interviewer: Right. So you actually had a doctor come to you?

Ivy: Lady doctor.

Interviewer: Yeah? Where did you find her? Was she just local?

Ivy: Well she was...yes, she lived in eh, Deptford. She's well-known as a doctor. Very young she was, very good.

Interviewer: Was she? A doctor, right. Not a midwife?

Ivy: No.

Interviewer: You didn't have a midwife or a handywoman or anyone?



Ivy: Eh, well I had someone come and bath the baby, you know, a local woman, that's right, yes.

Interviewer: Was she a friend?

Ivy: Eh, no I didn't know her.

Interviewer: Right. Did you hire her though? You pay for her at all?

Ivy: Well I think the council recommended her.

Interviewer: Right. What year would that be, 19...?

Ivy: 1927.

Interviewer: Right yeah. And so the next baby, did you have the same doctor?

Ivy: Eh, for Elaine, no I didn't have a doctor. Well, I can't remember really. A man. But I had an easy time with her.

Interviewer: Did you have a midwife for that birth?

Ivy: I had a woman come in who knew all about births and she said I must get assistance so don't bear down. So I was told not to bear down until she arrived with somebody else!  
((laughs))

Interviewer: It's interesting. So she went to get the doctor?

Ivy: No, she went to get eh, assistant, you know, just a woman assistant.

Interviewer: Oh right. Was she a qualified midwife in a uniform?

Ivy: Well she was recommended, I don't really know. Wasn't very well off in those days, you know.

Interviewer: So you had to pay for them to come in?

Ivy: Yes, yeah.

Interviewer: And pay for the doctor as well?

Ivy: Eh, don't really know what happened that year. Was it free?

Interviewer: I'm not sure.



Ivy: In 1927.

Interviewer: I think you paid.

Ivy: Yeah. And it weren't a big sum was it?

Interviewer: No. So did you have a midwife for the third one?

Ivy: Who is the third one now? Eh, Jennifer. No. I had um, a doctor at first and then it was left to a woman that he recommended, who would look after the baby and bath it each day and see to me for ten days. It was ten days you had to be in.

Interviewer: Yeah. Was she a qualified midwife?

Ivy: Yeah she seemed to be very good with eh...

Interviewer: In a uniform and that?

Ivy: Yes. Um, yes.

Interviewer: Right. So did you have a doctor at each of your births then?

Ivy: Eh, um, yes. Yes. And the abortion I never and that was four and a half months, abortion.

Interviewer: Was it? Can you tell me about that because the impression I get from talking to women is that a lot of women had abortions. That it was the only way really wasn't it when there wasn't contraception around?

Ivy: No, no.

Interviewer: And I'm quite interested in finding out where women went, you know, who they went to.

Ivy: Well yeah, this one, it was a...really a secret. She said, "don't tell anybody what you had done and who did it." So I promised that. I never let her down. And I was taken to hospital – I nearly died because she did it with needles and I was in agony all one day. I had a doctor after I had the...and she didn't know what had happened. She thought it was natural.

Interviewer: She thought it was a miscarriage. She put...what, she put needles up into the womb did she?



Ivy: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Put something in?

Ivy: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: And did you nearly die because you were bleeding so heavily?

Ivy: No, it was incomplete abortion. That's why they took me in hospital.

Interviewer: So you were haemorrhaging quite a lot?

Ivy: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: That must have been really frightening.

Ivy: Yes it was really. Yeah. And I paid the woman. She didn't ask for any fee but I used to save the rent, you know, in those days, you know, cup beside my bed and I just tipped it out into her hand. I was really frightened, you know...

Interviewer: Were you?

Ivy: ...what was going to happen. And it was a little girl.

Interviewer: Was it?

Ivy: Yes. It was um, you know, it's little eyes were blue and it was cold and you could see, you know...

Interviewer: Was it very upsetting for you?

Ivy: Well really, yes, yes. But eh, my husband, he wanted...he didn't want to be confined to the house much because we still had a lot to do.

Interviewer: Did you, yeah?

Ivy: And he said, "Oh I'd better go out for a pint, here's another crying baby."

Interviewer: Awh, he didn't want that tie.

Ivy: No, but he was a kind man you know, but he just didn't want a...but he didn't know what I was doing. I did everything... gin, everything.

Interviewer: And it didn't work?



Ivy: No.

Interviewer: So you were four and a half months pregnant by the time you...

Ivy: Yes, it was too long really wasn't it, too late?

Interviewer: It was quite late wasn't it?

Ivy: Yeah.

Interviewer: So was she a local woman that everybody knew about?

Ivy: But I didn't know where she lived and I kept her secret. I went in hospital and he said to me, the doctor in the hospital said, "you've been interfered with, and it's not a...an ordinary abortion! I said Beecham pills, that's all I said. ((laughs)) I never let her down, no, I promised her.

Interviewer: Because she would have been prosecuted wouldn't she? She would have...

Ivy: If anything happened to me. So I never let her down. I didn't know who she was.

Interviewer: Didn't you?

Ivy: No, a friend told me about her.

Interviewer: Right, so it was sort of word of mouth really, this woman?

Ivy: Mm, yeah.

Interviewer: But it was all kept very secret.

Ivy: Yes, very secret.

Interviewer: I suppose to protect her really, wasn't it?

Ivy: Well really, I suppose she knew that she would get in trouble.

Interviewer: Mind you, that sort of thing was still going on when I was a young woman, you know...

Ivy: You're still young, aren't you!

Interviewer: In the sixties, there were still some people you went to.



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Ivy: Yes I see, yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Before it became legal.

Ivy: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: You know before you could get it on the NHS. So it was going on for years really wasn't it?

Ivy: Yes, yes, yeah.

Interviewer: So she was just a local woman who helped women out really basically.

Ivy: Yes. Well no, in the area.

Interviewer: Right, so everybody kind of knew.

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Did she do anything else do you know? She wasn't...?

Ivy: Well I didn't know her business, I didn't know where she lived.

Interviewer: She was just a local woman?

Ivy: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. Because, you know, one of the things that some people say about the old handywomen, you know, the midwives in the old days was that they did abortions too but we haven't been able to prove that. I don't think they were the same people probably.

Ivy: No I don't think so, I never heard of it. No, they were more qualified, more honourable or something I think.

Interviewer: Yeah, or even before they got to being like qualified, they were still...they were the woman you called for really.

Ivy: Oh I know.

Interviewer: You know the woman you called?

Ivy: Yeah, yes, yeah

Interviewer: And she'd come and lay out the dead as well.



Ivy: Oh! ((sounds surprised))

Interviewer: Do you have any memory of that woman?

Ivy: No I don't know. I know my husband's mother used to lay out the dead but she didn't have anything to do with abortions.

Interviewer: No, you see, I think it was a different person used to do the abortions really. So she didn't actually ask you for payment, you just gave her what you could?

Ivy: No, she didn't ask. I don't know what it was I gave her. It might have been £10. Well, I don't know, in those days £10 was a lot then wasn't it?

Interviewer: It was an enormous amount. Probably a couple of quid.

Ivy: Well whatever was there, mm. I was so anxious to get her out of the house really.

Interviewer: She came to you did she?

Ivy: Yes, one afternoon.

Interviewer: Right. You must have been frightened.

Ivy: Yes, so eh, afterwards a friend of mine phoned my husband and of course he had a...his father was still living, so they both come running home to a different home. He...his father went to his mother, thought it was her in trouble. My husband didn't know what was going to happen, he didn't know.

Interviewer: Right. Did he know...he didn't know you'd been to somebody?

Ivy: No.

Interviewer: No, you didn't tell him?

Ivy: I don't think I did tell him, mm.

Interviewer: No. Poor Ivy, it must have been awful.

Ivy: Yes it was really, yeah.

Interviewer: So did you lose the baby at home or in hospital?





Ivy: No, in, in, in a chamber at home. Yes, I saw it, you know. They wouldn't show it to me at hospital, no.

Interviewer: No, they wouldn't.

Ivy: I can see it now, yeah. Eyes wasn't open, they were shut but all bluey. I always remember that. And its little eyes seemed to be like this, you know, really.

Interviewer: Awh, did it really upset you?

Ivy: I didn't want to have an abortion but my husband kept saying, "Oh well we better go away", you know, and when you're pregnant, everything's enlarged, everything's worse than it is, isn't it?

Interviewer: Yes, that's right.

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: So did you have to bury the body or could you put...?

Ivy: No, no, they took it away.

Interviewer: Who took it away?

Ivy: Ooh, I don't know, I never had anything to do with it. Perhaps my husband arranged...I never did ask.

Interviewer: What, so friends were there who saw to the baby's body, did they?

Ivy: Well, the eh, doctor was there, you know, yes, the woman doctor. Because she... I was a long, long time...well, in labour, and I know that she kept on looking at the mirror she was very glamorous, kept on looking in my long mirror at the end of the bedroom. Always remember that bit, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah. So they attended you as if it was a labour really but then you actually dropped the baby into the chamber.

Ivy: Yes, yes and after that I was free of pain. And then the doctor came and eh examined me and said, eh, ((inaudible)) incomplete.

Interviewer: The afterbirth didn't come away properly?



Ivy: No. They were very good in hospital.

Interviewer: Yeah. So did you call somebody when the baby was actually born?

Ivy: No.

Interviewer: Just left it there in the chamber?

Ivy: Yes, just left it and eh called the doctor. Someone...I don't know who it was – probably my husband called the doctor in when he came home, and she'd gone, the woman who did it of course was gone some hours. I was in agony for hours. Yeah, terrible. Wicked really. It's cruel isn't it? I think it is.

Interviewer: It's just hard, you know, it's women's lives, isn't it?

Ivy: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: You know, it happens to so many women.

Ivy: Yes, and we wasn't very well off in those days, you know.

Interviewer: How old were your other children then? They were all a bit older were they?

Ivy: Well eh, um, Ted was born eh 27; Elaine was born um, it was '31...1931; Jennifer was born '46, mm.

Interviewer: So the abortion was before '46 was it?

Ivy: It was between Ted and eh, Elaine.

Interviewer: So that would be what, late 30s, 1930s?

Ivy: Yes because I had two children after that, didn't I? Well, you don't know – I did because I wanted them, yeah.

Interviewer: So when you had the abortion, your...the youngest child that you had then was Elaine. She'd have been what, five or six or something like that?

Ivy: Um, no, she was a bit younger than that. She was about...would she be 18 months because I remember my mother writing to me and saying, "Oh yes, she was at the top of the stairs",

and I thought oh dear, she'll break her neck – she can't come down the stairs. So she couldn't have been very old, could she, you see?

Interviewer: Another baby was intolerable.

Ivy: Yes, yeah, had to go away. Because the eldest one, he wasn't a good baby, he was underfed. I just went by everybody that told me not to feed him after 6 o'clock. He was always hungry. But he was big and he kept the fat, you know, but I wonder why he cried so much during the night.

Interviewer: It's awful isn't it? It was like that with my first baby, they told me I couldn't feed them more than every four hours.

Ivy: Awh, well some of it...

Interviewer: It's not good, is it?

Ivy: One of the midwives, I don't know if it was the late one or one of the early ones, she said feed the baby like the little lambs every two hours or when they want it. Lovely little baby isn't it?

Interviewer: Wonderful, yeah. The other thing that Tony said you might be able to tell me about is women getting pregnant who weren't married.

Ivy: Yes. It was wasn't much was it, those days? They were all hidden up, the women – all covered up wasn't it? You know, people were ashamed. The parents were ashamed.

Interviewer: Were they?

Ivy: Ooh yes, mm.

Interviewer: Did tony say that a couple of your daughters got pregnant before they were married?

Ivy: Oh, and that was terrible for me! I had to hide that.

Interviewer: What happened?

Ivy: Well um, Elaine got pregnant and eh, my husband knew and then Jennifer, she was...I was having her educated, I thought I'll have one child educated, we were a bit better off then.

And I never, never thought that she'd ever get pregnant. She'd get...you know, being a bit queer in the morning, I never thought of it then. And she said to me, "Mum, I'm pregnant." I can see myself now, all the blood went from my face and I thought to myself, well I can't tell my husband. I never did. I never did tell him and he didn't know until after the baby was about a month old – she was in a nursing home.

Interviewer: Oh, she went to a mother and baby home did she?

Ivy: Well eh, yes. I had to pay, you know, I think it was only...it seemed a lot to me, I paid £7 a week you know.

Interviewer: Did she actually go and stay in this home?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: From when?

Ivy: Eh, before it was born.

Interviewer: And then she stayed there afterwards did she?

Ivy: Yes well because my husband didn't know. And I said to Jennifer, I said, "Jennifer", I said, "I'm telling dad today when I come home from shopping. So tell Tony (that was her husband – well, he wasn't then), tell him to make himself scarce because I'm sure he's going to shoot him!" ((laughs)) So that's what happened, you see.

Interviewer: So what happened to the baby?

Ivy: Oh, she had it there and looked after it, yes.

Interviewer: She kept the baby?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Oh right.

Ivy: I said to her you have to have it adopted, so she wrote to me and eh, she said, "They have to be perfect mum and he's got crooked toes", but he hadn't! ((laughter))

Interviewer: Oh bless, she really wanted to keep the baby! ((laughter))



Ivy: Yes she did and I did too but...he was alright – well, he would have been, he didn't know! So I said, "I'm telling dad", and I told her to tell Tony to be scarce because he'd shoot him. And so he closed up in the shop ((laughing)) and I said to him, "Jennifer's got a baby." He said, "I know", but he didn't know because he could never have kept it secret. He said, "I know." He didn't know, because he thought she was staying with Jen-- with Elaine, my eldest one. He said, "She's away a long time mum." He said, "Get her home, I don't like her being...staying at Elaine's all this time", but she's in a nursing home.

Interviewer: How old was she?

Ivy: She was only 16.

Interviewer: Oh bless her. So that was...what year would that be roughly?

Ivy: I don't know really. Eh, she was born eh, 1931 would she be?

Interviewer: She was born in '31?

Ivy: '36 – '36 she was born. No! '46.

Interviewer: She was born in '46?

Ivy: Yeah, would that make her – what age would that make her, 16?

Interviewer: Yeah, that would have been '56 – it would be a bit later on, yeah. And Elaine, she was born in the 30s, yeah?

Ivy: '31.

Interviewer: '31 she was born. So how old was she when she got pregnant?

Ivy: About 16.

Interviewer: Sixteen again, oh bless her. That would have been about '47, yeah.

Ivy: Of course he knew about that, my husband.

Interviewer: He knew?

Ivy: Yeah but he didn't know about Jennifer. I was too scared! I lost a stone in weight worrying! And I had to cover everything. I couldn't tell anyone, I couldn't confide in anyone. And they



said to me, "You do look ill", and I said, "All these worries, so much work and cooking!"  
((laughing))

Interviewer: With Elaine, she was 16. But what happened with her? Did she have the baby at home?

Ivy: No, she went in hospital, yeah, she went in hospital. First of all, I put her in a nursing home at Blackheath and then they phoned up and said she's runaway. Oh dear! And I thought there was only two people she'd go to – she's not a person that likes everybody but she had these...so I went to both. Well, my husband went to the main one and she was there. And so I had to get her in a... No, what happened? Don't know.

Interviewer: When you say you put her in a nursing home in Blackheath, what sort of a place was that?

Ivy: For eh, mothers and babies.

Interviewer: An unmarried mothers' home, was it?

Ivy: Yes, up there.

Interviewer: Why did she runaway? Weren't they very nice to her?

Ivy: She didn't like it.

Interviewer: Because some of those places were terrible, you know.

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Used to make them work all the time, scrubbing...

Ivy: Oh dear. Bad isn't it? ((chuckling)) I don't really know, and I was so confused, I didn't have no one to turn to, you know...

Interviewer: So when he found out about that, your husband, was he very cross with Elaine?

Ivy: Oh yes because he wasn't a nice man according to everybody. I'd never seen him.

Interviewer: What?



Ivy: The one she got pregnant with. My daughter-in-law recently said he was ever such a nice man, so it was the first I've heard of it. I didn't think he was – only what I heard. But she's my husband's favourite granddaughter now. Yeah, she's a wonderful girl. Wonderful she is.

Interviewer: So what exactly happened? You told your husband that Elaine was pregnant?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: And was he very, very cross.

Ivy: Oh yes he was! Really!

Interviewer: With her?

Ivy: With me really.

Interviewer: Why was he cross with you?

Ivy: For letting them go out so much.

Interviewer: Oh I see. Thought you should have put more strings on to her?

Ivy: Yes. Well, while she was pregnant, see, um I had to tell him that she was. I don't know, it come out suddenly and eh, so he said, "Well I shall lock her bedroom, she's not going to go out of a night." She climbed out the window and I was in the shop then. I had a shop. I had two shops, you know. She climbed right over the roofs, flat ones, and went out. So he'd already done her room all in green to please her, so he tore the curtains down and threw them out the window; never saw the curtains again. So someone must have taken them... very much! ((laughter))

Interviewer: Because he was so cross?

Ivy: He was so angry. So I was afraid when Jennifer...

Interviewer: So she kept her...he kept locking her up did he?

Ivy: Well, he didn't do it unkindly. Eh, when it got a bit late, you know-

Interviewer: To stop her going out at night.



Ivy: Yeah, she was more...we were afraid for her really. And then when the baby was born, um, eh, yes, my husband says to me, "Now don't make a fuss of it because she's going to get pregnant again." And because I did what I was told and ignored the baby nearly you know, I thought I better not, you know, in case she does! ((laughing)). So you get confused.

Interviewer: You do, don't you? Difficult.

Ivy: Might get more attempts now really. No need to now. No one else getting pregnant that I know...well, only those that... I don't know how excited they can all get when they know their daughter's pregnant and not married, now. They, they don't mind. Because marriage is so hard and it's so expensive to buy a house.

Interviewer: Yeah. So did she come home with the baby then and live with you?

Ivy: Oh, we had to make out you see, the aunt came for the Christmas and she said, "Oh we've got a different baby!" I said, "Yes I'm minding it." So she said, "But it knows your lot doesn't it Ivy?" ((laughingly))

Interviewer: This was your aunt was it?

Ivy: Yes ((chuckling)) yeah, yeah. Oh, no she really liked us, you know, kept...kept going to me. And then I don't know what happened. They all get to know afterwards.

Interviewer: Did they?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: What, the family and everybody in the...?

Ivy: Yes, everybody, yeah – all looked down on Elaine.

Interviewer: Did they?

Ivy: Yeah, they did in those days.

Interviewer: Oh, isn't that hard.

Ivy: Yes! ((laughing))

Interviewer: Does she remember it as being a very hard time?





Ivy: Well, I don't know, she doesn't talk about it. You know, I was worried to death of course.

Interviewer: But she was able to tell you in the first place when she was pregnant.

Ivy: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: She must have been quite close to you, to tell you.

Ivy: Well, I went to buy her a coat opposite, you know, in the...what they call the 'In and Out' shops. I lived in New Cross, and I said to her, "You are getting big Elaine." And she didn't know at first of all, see. I said, "You are getting big. You're putting a lot of weight on." Oh dear, you know, I never thought anything of it then.

Interviewer: When did she tell you then, at the end?

Ivy: It must have been, after that, yeah, she must have been five months I suppose.

Interviewer: Didn't you have any friends you could talk to about it?

Ivy: No. No. Not really. I had the club running too.

Interviewer: The club?

Ivy: Mm.

Interviewer: What was the club?

Ivy: Well down here in New Cross.

Interviewer: What was it?

Ivy: Um, oh I'm getting the dates wrong. I'm getting the dates wrong. No, it wasn't then. No. We were still at New Cross, that's where I had Jennifer when I had the club.

Interviewer: What, you ran a club?

Ivy: Yes, country club.

Interviewer: Did you?

Ivy: Mm. Well he bought it for my golden wedding present, and eh...he's...and the taxman said, "You'll have to offset some of it, you'll have to open something." So he said open a club. I think I had 23 rooms and 35 and a half acres there. It's still there.



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Interviewer: Good grief!" How extraordinary!

Ivy: Yeah, and...but I used to do all the cooking.

Interviewer: Did you really? This was much later on though wasn't it? This was...

Ivy: Pardon?

Interviewer: This would have been much later on in the 70s?

Ivy: Oh yes, yes, yeah. This is when Jennifer...yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. But back then with Elaine, that would have been in the late 40s, wouldn't it, 1940s?

Ivy: Yes I suppose so.

Interviewer: And you had a shop then, did you?

Ivy: Yes I had shops at New Cross, yes.

Interviewer: What sort of shops were they?

Ivy: Well, I had a florist and then I had a pet shop. Oh dear. But the most profitable was the um...I opened a pet shop, that was profitable. Yes.

Interviewer: How did you manage to run a shop when you had all those children to look after?

Ivy: Oh I had to yeah! Oh I did. I had to run up and come down, run up and come down, you know.

Interviewer: So you lived above the shop?

Ivy: Yes, yeah.

Interviewer: Because Tony would have been born during that time, wouldn't he?

Ivy: Hang on a minute.

Interviewer: Tony would have been born late 30s wouldn't he?

Ivy: Yes he was born '31 I think wasn't he? '31? Yes. I had a terrible time with him! Terrible. Really, had to have forceps.



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Interviewer: Did you? Why's that then?

Ivy: It... ((pause)) Is she in or out? Do shut that door. ((talking about dog))

Interviewer: I did shut the door, yes.

Ivy: Oh I see. Terrible time with him, really terrible, mm.

Interviewer: And Elaine came and lived with you with the baby?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: And did she get married later on?

Ivy: Not to that man, no. No. Yeah, she got married eh...I don't know when she got married but she married, um, she married the man that she's with now, I think.

Interviewer: Did she?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: And he took the child on as if it was his at that stage?

Ivy: Yes, I suppose he did, yes.

Interviewer: Because sometimes what used to happen was the grandmother, the mother used to look after the baby and pretend it was hers. That happened a lot didn't it?

Ivy: Oh yes, yes. ((laughs)) Of course it's out of the question.

Interviewer: Yeah, you couldn't do that because you were too busy with the business.

Ivy: Oh yes, and too old I suppose.

Interviewer: Were you?

Ivy: Mm. I don't know. Might not have been. ((laughing)) Yeah, yeah, because I had Tony, didn't I? And I had Jennifer after.

Interviewer: So were all the babies born at home Ivy?

Ivy: Um, let me see. Jennifer was born in a nursing home. Elaine eh, was born in hospital. Tony was born at home of course, mm, in my home.



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Interviewer: So he was born at home but it was difficult.

Ivy: Oh, terrible birth. That was punishment for having the abortion because it was after the abortion wasn't it? See then I had Jennifer, she's the youngest of mine. She was easy. I went in hospital for her. Quite easy it was.

Interviewer: Why did you go into hospital for her?

Ivy: Well it was well known, it was getting better wasn't it, everything was getting better and you should go in hospital really.

Interviewer: It was made easier for you to go in?

Ivy: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Did you like it in hospital?

Ivy: Yes, very good. Nice, it was just brilliant.

Interviewer: Oh yeah and was that better than at home for you?

Ivy: Eh yeah. I don't know how I really got to go in there really, because...I forget. I suppose he thought it was better and I went away. It wasn't very easy at home, you know, couldn't cook or anything – my husband – never had to.

Interviewer: So you were better looked after in hospital really?

Ivy: Yes. Elaine could cook, she was very good. So she was older wasn't she, and she was alright, mm.

Interviewer: Can you remember what the midwives were like? Can you remember any of the midwives that attended you?

Ivy: Eh, I know...what do you mean, in disposition or...?

Interviewer: Yeah, what...

Ivy: Used to have eh...kept on telling my husband, go and get hot water and all that business. You know, births had loads of hot water didn't they?

Interviewer: Yeah.



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Ivy: You had to bathe the mother.

Interviewer: Is that what it's for?

Ivy: Mm.

Interviewer: And the baby I suppose.

Ivy: I don't know.

Interviewer: But were they friendly to you or a bit...kind of a bit severe?

Ivy: Oh yeah I think so. No, I thought they were all nice, you know.

Interviewer: But were they like your friends?

Ivy: No, no, no I didn't know them before anything happened, you know.

Interviewer: No. Was that like the council midwife that came in sort of thing?

Ivy: Well I don't think the council had much to do with it all, do you?

Interviewer: I don't know.

Ivy: Just someone told me somebody there's some...a midwife and then I used to help.

Interviewer: Do you ever come across Nurse Walker-Dyne?

Ivy: Oh no, I don't know her.

Interviewer: She was Deptford midwife, Nurse Walker-Dyne.

Ivy: Was she?

Interviewer: Yeah, she did 4000 babies in Deptford.

Ivy: Oh!

Interviewer: Yeah. She's dead now but...

Ivy: Is she?

Interviewer: Lots of people remember her.

Ivy: Yeah she was good I suppose.

Interviewer: She was a character, you know.



Ivy: Oh nice. Most of them were plump – happy people! ((laughs))

Interviewer: But you didn't kind of get to know them really?

Ivy: Not really, not afterwards, you know. The nurse continued.

Interviewer: Did they wear uniforms?

Ivy: One did, I remember. Had navy blue and white apron. You know, navy blue coat and some...it was a hat.

Interviewer: And you also...you say with your first birth that you had a woman that came in and kind of looked after you a bit.

Ivy: Oh yes, that one, yes, because you had to stop in bed ten days didn't you, and you had a tight belt on all the time. Very tight belt. Everybody used to have...

Interviewer: They used to bind you up didn't they?

Ivy: Yes. Don't do that now do they?

Interviewer: No. They used to bind the babies up and all, didn't they?

Ivy: Eh, I don't remember. Did they?

Interviewer: Yeah, they used to put a bind around the baby and a bind around the mother.

Ivy: Oh they don't do that now, do they?

Interviewer: Don't do very much these days do we?

Ivy: No.

Interviewer: By comparison.

Ivy: No, not really.

Interviewer: Because they used to come in and do all your nurse things, didn't they?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Every day they'd come and give you a bed bath, wouldn't they?



Ivy: We didn't have any of that. Not then, no. Well, you didn't have a bathroom did you? You didn't have any running hot water.

Interviewer: Did they come and give you a bath, like the bed and that?

Ivy: No. They just see to, you know, asked your husband to give you a bowl and that, yeah. See to yourself.

Interviewer: So you didn't get much good looking after?

Ivy: No, not really. No.

Interviewer: Do you think people pulled together more in those days? Do you think there was more neighbourliness?

Ivy: Well, I had a neighbour who used to come in and cook, yes. ((dog barking)) Oh stop it! I hope I've got the dates right now.

Interviewer: It doesn't matter too much about the dates. I've got a feel that most of your babies were born in the 30s, weren't they?

Ivy: Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer: I think I've got that straight, yeah. And were you always working in-between the babies?

Ivy: Well, you see, I always remember because I know they have them quite easy now, don't they? They go away to recover like Megan did but because there wasn't in those days... I remember the midwife or what I used to call her as a midwife, I don't think she was qualified, she used to come in and bath the baby and then she'd say, "This is the tenth day, so cheerio!" And I had to get his dinner ready, come down and get his dinner ready. I always remember that. Because if he would say, "Oh you've got to have help", and...so we had to get on with it. In those days it was hard really, wasn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Ivy: You didn't have the sympathy but then you was in bed ten days and of course the mother now is not in bed ten days – see, so it cuts both ways, doesn't it? You've rested.



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Interviewer: Yeah I suppose so. But I think women used to get up during those ten days didn't they? They didn't obey the rules! I don't know.

Ivy: I was too frightened to just in case my inside fell out!

Interviewer: I see. You were frightened that it would all fall out?

Ivy: ((laughter))

Interviewer: I've often wondered why women did stay in bed.

Ivy: Yeah, yeah, mm.

Interviewer: They told you that that's what would happen did they?

Ivy: Well I suppose someone did, I don't know!

Interviewer: That's what you thought the point of it all was?

Ivy: Yes, yes, yes. So...and that was that.

Interviewer: Did anybody ever give you any advice about family planning?

Ivy: Oh no, no.

Interviewer: Did you know anything about like that?

Ivy: No. Didn't know how to stop it.

Interviewer: You didn't?

Ivy: No.

Interviewer: Did women tell each other little ideas about how to stop it?

Ivy: No. No one ever.

Interviewer: So how do you think people controlled their family size?

Ivy: Well, their husband controlled it, didn't he?

Interviewer: What, by withdrawing?

Ivy: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think a lot of that went on?





Ivy: Mm yes. Yes, they rely on the husband don't they, if you haven't got anything – well you didn't have anything in those days. I don't believe that...well, I never asked. I was a bit refined, I didn't come into that conversation.

Interviewer: Did you talk to your husband about it?

Ivy: Not really, no, no.

Interviewer: Just hoped that he'd...

Ivy: ...knew! ((laughs))

Interviewer: So where do you think they learnt about...?

Ivy: Yeah it's a wonder. I think the men read books on the quiet, don't you? Well I don't know about you, but...

Interviewer: I don't know.

Ivy: ...I think they do, yeah. Get books now from the library, can't they?

Interviewer: Yeah you can. But you never actually talked to him about him withdrawing so that you wouldn't have any more babies?

Ivy: No, you know, I don't want anymore... Well, he didn't either, see, but he did... The last one, you know, oh crikey, abortion! Then I had two after that, you know.

Interviewer: Yeah. So do you think women didn't have sex with their husbands because they were worried about getting pregnant?

Ivy: I don't know, people used to boast about it. "Alright tonight", I've heard them say. You know, I never spoke that way at all. No, I'm a bit refined I think, you know. They said, "It's all right tonight ey!" Oh dear! ((laughs)) When the husband's away and they come home, you know...yes.

Interviewer: Did you know much about sex before you were married?

Ivy: No. Not a thing.

Interviewer: That was very common in those days, wasn't it?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Nobody told you.

Ivy: And I never thought that you had to be really in love to marry anyone. I wasn't...I just liked him, that's about all. I didn't know anything at all. Not even my mother, had six...eh, five girls and one boy, she never told any of us how to put a garter on, you know. Because when I came on, I put it round one leg but my mother...my eldest sister must have known – she must have told the eldest one because my mother called up the road, "Ivy, they'll all laugh at you at school, you've got it on the wrong way." I was at school so...

Interviewer: Yeah. Isn't it hard, ey?

Ivy: Mm, it is hard, yeah.

Interviewer: People didn't talk though in those days, did they, about things like that?

Ivy: No, no, no, never.

Interviewer: I wonder why.

Ivy: Never used to get pregnant did they, these young girls. It's a terrible thing to get pregnant isn't it, without marriage?

Interviewer: It's hard in that sort of time, wasn't it?

Ivy: Yeah, I mean most people were virgins. I was when I got married.

Interviewer: So were you very shocked when you found out what sex was about?

Ivy: In a way, yes.

Interviewer: Did you have no idea at all?

Ivy: No.

Interviewer: So your husband had to tell you?

Ivy: Well I don't suppose he put it in words, no. No.

Interviewer: Must have been quite frightening.

Ivy: Yes really. ((laughs))



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Interviewer: Do you think women enjoyed sex?

Ivy: Well I never did, so I don't know . They say they do, don't they? Ey?

Interviewer: I don't know. You see, I don't know at all. A lot of women...older women tell me they didn't enjoy sex.

Ivy: They didn't?

Interviewer: No.

Ivy: No.

Interviewer: You know, it wasn't expected that women enjoyed it.

Ivy: Well I think mothers were so busy in those days, weren't they, it's different to what it is now.

Interviewer: Sex meant another baby.

Ivy: Yeah.

Interviewer: Another mouth to feed.

Ivy: Yeah. ((laughs)) yeah.

Interviewer: Sad really, wasn't it?

Ivy: It was really. It's better now I think, things, you know, they teach them at school don't they?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Ivy: Everything.

Interviewer: Well I think nowadays they think that sex is pleasurable for women as well as men. In those days it was just a man's thing wasn't it?

Ivy: Yes, yes I suppose. Don't really know.

Interviewer: So when you had your first baby, were you...did you know where it was going to come out and all that?

Ivy: Oh yes, I knew that. I think a friend of mine told me I think. Yeah.



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Interviewer: Yeah. Do you think women used to try and avoid having sex with their husbands?

Ivy: I don't think they had any option, did they? They'd leave them if they didn't want sex, didn't they, in those days?

Interviewer: What, the men did?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Did they?

Ivy: I think so.

Interviewer: I don't know. It's a man's world ey! ((laughs)) Wasn't it?

Ivy: Yes really. My husband was a good man in everything.

Interviewer: Was he?

Ivy: He never flirted or anything, you know. That photo up there was taken on my golden wedding...my diamond wedding!

Interviewer: This one here?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Oh, isn't that nice?

Ivy: Yes. ((smiling))

Interviewer: Awh. Beautiful photograph isn't it!

Ivy: It is really, yes. He had all his own teeth.

Interviewer: Did he?

Ivy: I had some false ones but the front ones were all mine.

Interviewer: Awh, he looks very nice.

Ivy: He was a jolly man he was. Yes, good man.

Interviewer: What did he do for a job?

Ivy: He was a builder.



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Interviewer: Was he?

Ivy: Yeah.

Interviewer: Like Tony was a builder at one stage, wasn't he?

Ivy: Well partly, you know, not very good really. ((laughter)) No I don't think he...you know, he didn't do much really. He's better now isn't he? ((laughs)) I never knew Tony was clever you know. I knew the eldest one, he was really clever, the eldest one was always top boy in everything in school, but used to love school. But Tony didn't like school. He was always playing truant. ((laughter)) But eh he's quite clever, Tony.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Ivy: Yeah. He's done well for himself hasn't he?

Interviewer: Yes he has really! ((chuckling))

Ivy: And eh, I don't know. Ted's very well off now, you know.

Interviewer: Is he?

Ivy: Well, he retired with £6m.

Interviewer: What!

Ivy: The eldest one.

Interviewer: No! What did he do then?

Ivy: Same as Tony really, something like Tony. I never could get to the bottom of it.

Interviewer: Something to do with plant, you know, equipment.

Ivy: Yeah something to do with eh, computers is it? I don't know. Tony tells me different things but it don't sink in, you know.

Interviewer: Did any of the girls go in to...you had two girls, yeah?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Two girls and three boys?

Ivy: Two boys.

Interviewer: Two boys. Two girls and two boys. Did the girls go in to work?

Ivy: Well, they all seemed to be clever. I don't know where they get their brains from but all the children have turned out clever. Even the youngest one, she's clever. She does all the tax – her husband doesn't do it. Elaine does all the taxing and you know, and everything. They're clever. Their husbands are clever I suppose but they just...I don't know really, I suppose they are, yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. Somewhere along the line you gave them a good upbringing, didn't you?

Ivy: Well, I don't know, I tried to but I was sometimes too busy to see to them, you know, all the time with the shops.

Interviewer: Yeah but sometimes that's a good thing isn't it?

Ivy: Yeah I had to help my husband see, he was hardworking. So I had to help with the money, and I did help a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah, there wasn't a lot of money around was there?

Ivy: No. The pet shop was the best shop. And Elaine used to help me because she was old enough to take over if I'm not in the shop, she would have taken over. She'd say, "I suppose you're going to give that to dad." So I said, "Yes, just what I am going to do, give it to dad. It'll help him."

Interviewer: Did he have his own business as a builder?

Ivy: Yes, mm. Then he bought the four shops you see, in New Cross.

Interviewer: Are they still there, the shops?

Ivy: No, they're demolished.

Interviewer: Are they?

Ivy: Mm.

Interviewer: Whereabouts in New Cross was it?

Ivy: New Cross Road, um, near the fire station.



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Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Ivy: New Cross Road, do you know that?

Interviewer: Yes.

Ivy: We was on the ground there but it's a children's playground I think now.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's interesting, isn't it?

Ivy: Yeah. So that was that.

Interviewer: But it must have been hard running the shops and bringing children up at the same time.

Ivy: Well yes, yeah, really. But they wasn't really neglected, you know, they... In one way I expect you could call it neglect when you can't be with them all the time.

Interviewer: But did they just look after each other?

Ivy: Well, neighbour come in.

Interviewer: Did you?

Ivy: Yes. She used to get their tea and that.

Interviewer: And you paid her?

Ivy: No I didn't pay her. She was a friend, she didn't ask for payment. Her husband was a friend of my husband, so that was alright.

Interviewer: So it was an informal sort of arrangement.

Ivy: Yeah, so that was alright really.

Interviewer: You must have worked so hard.

Ivy: Well I did, yes.

Interviewer: Because then you had all the housework and stuff to do, didn't you?

Ivy: And then I opened a, a pet shop... I opened a florist and I had to go to Covent Garden half past four in the morning while they were all in bed.

Interviewer: Uh, did you?

Ivy: My husband was always in bed you know. No, he stopped there with the children...with them. And...

Interviewer: How did you get up to Covent Garden, on the train?

Ivy: Yes, well I lived right near there. I had a shop in Springbank Road, right near the station. It was a nicest shop along there. My husband done it all up, you know, black and white lino – it was really nice. And eh, I used to go to Covent Garden.

Interviewer: On the train?

Ivy: On the train. Bring back what flowers I could and then send the other by you know, it used to come but it was well cheap.

Interviewer: Carriage?

Ivy: Yeah, on the next train.

Interviewer: Oh, on the next train.

Ivy: To the shop.

Interviewer: Every morning?

Ivy: No, not every morning. Every other morning I think, yeah. And then I had to make wreaths and I didn't know how to make one. So I went and bought one and ((laughing)) a man came in and he said, because they used to....

**[END OF FIRST AUDIO FILE]**

**[START OF SECOND AUDIO FILE]**

Ivy: I didn't know...I didn't have any transport. My husband was at work with his lorry, building, and I thought well I had a man at the back used to rent my stable and he had a pony and track. So I had to ask him and to tell him, "Sorry that the car has broken down, ((and had to come with a track. 00:00:44?))" And tell him...

Interviewer: And you actually made those wreaths?





Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: You taught yourself how to do it by taking one apart?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: When would that have been? What sort of time? Would that be the 1930s when the kids were...?

Ivy: Well Tony wasn't very old. I don't really remember.

Interviewer: So early 30s wouldn't it...?

Ivy: Yeah something like that, yeah, mm.

Interviewer: Yeah. Embarrassing.

Ivy: Mm.

Interviewer: So you used to get up and go... You were very resourceful weren't you?

Ivy: I had to be, yeah. ((laughs))

Interviewer: Yeah, and work long hours.

Ivy: Long hours, yeah, because sometimes I used to have the breakfast things on the table at night.

Interviewer: So that you could go out to Covent Garden?

Ivy: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's incredible Ivy isn't it, how you used to work?

Ivy: Everybody else did though, didn't they?

Interviewer: Then you'd shut up the shop in the evening and have to cook for everybody.

Ivy: Yes, but he was a good man. You know...but he wasn't domesticated. He was spoilt when...?

Interviewer: So you did everything?

Ivy: Mm?



Interviewer: So did you do all the washing and everything?

Ivy: Oh yeah, but... I...you know, I didn't ask him to do anything, because he worked hard.

Interviewer: Yeah but so did you.

Ivy: Ey?

Interviewer: So did you! You were doing two jobs weren't you?

Ivy: Yeah. I don't do now but Elaine says to me, "Mum, if you never do another day's work, you've done your share", yeah, because people come in and sometimes I haven't washed up and I think oh, you know ((chuckling)) and she says, "Well don't take notice of what other people say."

Interviewer: You've worked hard all your life.

Ivy: Yes really, to help him because he was a good man.

Interviewer: Yeah. So these holidays you say you used to go on, where did you used to go on holiday then?

Ivy: Oh, that's in-between the shops. So yeah I didn't...and when I had the shop I couldn't go. So no.

Interviewer: But you liked an annual holiday did you?

Ivy: Well I had no one to run the shop, see, so I had to have it before...in-between the shops, sort of – a lot happened between the shops because we moved you know. And eh...

Interviewer: So you had the florist shop.

Ivy: And then I had the...the other shops. I had a wallpaper shop first of all, you know, four shops my husband bought.

Interviewer: What, one after the other?

Ivy: No, four in a row.

Interviewer: Altogether?

Ivy: Yeah, altogether. Yeah, so yes, one of office, and then... Eh, one was an office and I think the other three...I had two of the other three. Yeah, yes.

Interviewer: All at once!

Ivy: Yes. That was alright really, mm. And I...the corn one was the best one – it used to have queues of people. Queues! Well, the people...eh, there was another run of shops along and she had a pet shop. She started corn but because she didn't know where I bought mine, so she couldn't buy so good as what I bought mine. Well my husband done it all really. He was good with books and everything.

Interviewer: And meanwhile he had a building business. He used to go out and build houses and that?

Ivy: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: It's interesting.

Ivy: And that was alright.

Interviewer: But before the bought the shops, you were just at home with the babies?

Ivy: Yes, and I...um, and I had one...I had one at Springbank, that florist.

Interviewer: Oh, that was the florist shop first?

Ivy: Yeah, mm. And then my husband heard of these empty ones.

Interviewer: And bought them.

Ivy: Mm, cheap. Well, we didn't have a lot of money then.

Interviewer: Did you work before you were married?

Ivy: No. Oh, eh, before I was married, yes I worked.

Interviewer: What did you do then?

Ivy: Well, I was in eh, the silk...eh, they used to make all the um, bullions for the navy, you know that was real gold, it was real gold. I worked upstairs in the silk room at the silk mills in Connington Street, New...eh, New Cross.



Interviewer: Really?

Ivy: Yes. And they...you had to be chosen to do that and I was a lucky one. There was three girls chosen, I was one of them. You had to be very honest, see, with the gold... Although no one thought of stealing it in those days – they would now, wouldn't they? They'd be taking a lump home. No, it used to come in... People were always like that, downstairs where all the men worked and they used to put it through a big machine and it come out like um, a piece of silk, you know...

Interviewer: Really? Actual gold?

Ivy: Actual gold. You know, the big things sewed on the um, the admiralty, you know, yeah. There was a woman about 90, she'd been there years. And eh, she used to tell me, you know, different little things.

Interviewer: Amazing!

Ivy: Yeah.

Interviewer: So were you 14 when you left school?

Ivy: Eh, 14 and a half.

Interviewer: And you went straight there to do the work in the silk...?

Ivy: Yes, mm.

Interviewer: How long were you there then?

Ivy: About three years.

Interviewer: Did you like it?

Ivy: Well I did. It used to be 8 o'clock in the morning, till six at night – those were the hours in those days.

Interviewer: Hard work wasn't it? So you were actually sewing the braid and stuff?

Ivy: No, no, we had a spinning wheel.

Interviewer: Were you actually spinning the silk?



Ivy: Yes. Yeah. ((chuckling)) Really it was eh, quite complicated really.

Interviewer: So they trained you up to do it.

Ivy: Yeah, and they taught me those spinning wheels as being very, very old, don't they?  
They're not old because I...I was working one at the silk mill.

Interviewer: Isn't that incredible! So you're spinning the silk up.

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Did they make... What, they made the silk. Were there silkworms there then?

Ivy: Pardon?

Interviewer: Did they have silk worms?

Ivy: No, no, it was gold, metal!

Interviewer: Oh, you were spinning the gold!

Ivy: It's called silk mill but it wasn't actually silk – it was gold.

Interviewer: Only gold! I thought you meant they sewed the gold onto silk.

Ivy: No, I don't know what they sew it on. The uniforms, the big ones, you know.

Interviewer: So they put the gold bars through a machine and it would come out...

Ivy: Yeah, come out ever so fine.

Interviewer: And you had to spin that up into thread?

Ivy: Well, eh, we had the main woman there, she knew everything. I can't really recall, but I know it was sent out for the men's uniform.

Interviewer: Right, so that somewhere else they made that?

Ivy: Yeah because people don't believe that was gold, and it was gold.

Interviewer: Did it come out in a long thread?

Ivy: Might have done from downstairs.

Interviewer: From what you spun?



Ivy: Yeah, because I had to do it on the wheel. Can't recall what I did now. Just do it on a wheel.

Interviewer: How amazing. You did that for three or four years.

Ivy: Yeah and then I suppose um, that went to another factory to be assembled.

Interviewer: Yeah, amazing.

Ivy: Isn't it, when you think of those days really.

Interviewer: So did you carry on doing that after you were married?

Ivy: Oh no. No. No. Hardly ever worked after I got married.

Interviewer: You didn't, no.

Ivy: No. We bought a house in Croydon.

Interviewer: Did you?

Ivy: Yes, 1927...1926.

Interviewer: Oh so you got married and then you moved to Croydon?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: And then you went back to New Cross?

Ivy: Yes. We kept on moving! ((laughing)) Yes.

Interviewer: But you settled in New Cross for quite some time.

Ivy: Yes really, mm. But our house was very cheap, £675 I think.

Interviewer: That was in New Cross?

Ivy: No, eh Croydon.

Interviewer: In Croydon.

Ivy: I know the mortgage was £4 6s 5d.

Interviewer: Amazing isn't it!

Ivy: Yes really.



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Interviewer: So where did you live when you moved back to New Cross?

Ivy: Eh, oh, Wisteria.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Ivy: You know Wisteria?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Ivy: Yes. Nice house that was.

Interviewer: Was it?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: Is that Lewisham, Wisteria Road?

Ivy: It is, it is Lewisham. More Lewisham isn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah, I know Wisteria Road. It's nice houses there.

Ivy: Yes. Old fashioned ones. Very nice and bright.

Interviewer: Yeah, lovely houses. So were your first babies born in Wisteria Road?

Ivy: Eh let me see ((pause)) might have been, yeah, yes, mm.

Interviewer: Your eldest son?

Ivy: Can't recall – you know, forget! Yeah.

Interviewer: What would you say looking back was the happiest time of your life?

Ivy: Eh, looking after the shops, I think.

Interviewer: You enjoyed that?

Ivy: Yes really.

Interviewer: Even though it was such hard work.

Ivy: Sooner have that life than this life, now.

Interviewer: Than what life?

Ivy: Living here alone.



Interviewer: Yeah, you get bored do you?

Ivy: Yes I get bored, yeah. I'm used to a lot of people around me. Never been alone, see, no. I go to Tony's, you know, every...nearly every weekend. I didn't go last weekend because...well, I just had a lot to do. ((laughs)) I couldn't cope with it all. So I was going to put some new curtains up. You know, for this piece here I gave eh, £25 deposit and I paid another £25 - £50 that piece just for one window.

Interviewer: It's incredible isn't it?

Ivy: Yeah because I've already got some that match this, but it happens to be a bit creamy with age. So I'll probably go and order another piece, so that's £100 for two windows. Because the trouble with these, you can't see out.

Interviewer: No, that's right.

Ivy: And I don't like lifting curtains up, you know, to look.

Interviewer: So you're going to put them in there.

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: It's a nice window isn't it, nice and big.

Ivy: Big windows, yeah, mm. But I'm not house-proud.

Interviewer: That's good isn't it?

Ivy: I'm not house-proud. I get very untidy.

Interviewer: That's lovely isn't it, to...?

Ivy: Yeah I, I, I am untidy by nature. My twin sister was very tidy. I'm the... And my other... Lesley was the oldest one. She was untidy. Two in the family - I happen to be done, untidy. My husband was terribly untidy. Now...in the latter part of our marriage, he got tidier because I'm not really terribly untidy, you know ((laughs)) I don't...

Interviewer: ((laughing)) You like a little bit of order.

Ivy: Yes, yes. And he was terrible. Awful. And Tony said he takes after him. ((chuckling)) Yeah, they're happy, aren't they?





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Interviewer: They are, yeah.

Ivy: Yeah they are. Baby's beautiful, wasn't he?

Interviewer: Beautiful baby, yeah.

Ivy: Lovely baby. And little Frederick. I call him Frederick. They call him Freddie don't they?

Interviewer: They do, yes!

Ivy: Yes. They was going to call him Frederick, so I stuck to it. I'm the only one.

Interviewer: It's funny isn't it? Dear little boy.

Ivy: Yeah, oh yes.

Interviewer: I think that's all I need to pick your brains over really Ivy, unless there's anything you can think of that you want to tell me?

Ivy: No, I don't think so, no. My friend had a terrible pregnancy down the road. She had a 12lb baby, she was only seven stone, and eh, she never had another.

Interviewer: Didn't she?

Ivy: No. She was frightened. Well, she was in hospital and they said you must sit up. Couldn't sit up, she was all torn to bits. They never discovered it.

Interviewer: So how did she stop having another one, just didn't do it?

Ivy: No. Her husband said to her, "I'm never...I'm never going to have another", so...and was careful I suppose.

Interviewer: Is that how you stopped having babies eventually, just by being careful?

Ivy: I suppose so, yes. Yes. Must have done really, because I had too much to do. No one to look after anything. ((laughs)) Yeah.

Interviewer: So it was just avoiding it really.

Ivy: Well, I had the count-- then I had the country club here. I was overworked there, terribly hard there. Used to go to bed 4 o'clock and then get up at 8 o'clock.

Interviewer: Oh Ivy, it's terrible!



Ivy: Or seven when she was at...well, Jennifer was at school.

Interviewer: Really tough life really, haven't you?

Ivy: Yeah. Our drive at the club is equivalent of my drive to the gate, and then I've got another nearly eh, quarter of a mile to walk to the bus. I used to take her down to the bus every morning and sometimes I'd go with her.

Interviewer: Amazing.

Ivy: She said to me, eh, "Don't meet me", because it was a private school. I thought I'll have one that talks nicely and I paid for her. So I put her into a private school in Westhill and eh ((smiling)) I...she said, "Mum, don't meet me at the gate, meet me down by the shop." I said, "Why?" She said, "Mum, well you are old aren't you?" See!

Interviewer: ((laughs))

Ivy: And everybody's so young, and I was ((chuckling)) yeah she did. I said, "Oh, all right then." ((laughing)) Old! I think I was...how old was I? How old would I have been? I was...I was the eldest one in the ward with Jennifer. Would I have been 42 or 40, 41, 42? So she was going to school so, yeah. Did make me a bit old. I actually felt... felt that age now! Still, can't say I had a bad life really. You now, had a good husband really.

Interviewer: When did he die Ivy?

Ivy: About...it's four years ago now.

Interviewer: Oh, it's quite recent.

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: You must miss him.

Ivy: Well I do really.

Interviewer: It's the company.

Ivy: Yeah I do, mm.

Interviewer: Are there any like, clubs for older people around here?



Ivy: I don't go to them, no. There's a meeting point you know, and they go and have lunch there but I never go. No, I don't like all that chat. ((laughs))

Interviewer: No.

Ivy: I like people. I like meeting people yeah. I'm not a...

Interviewer: You're not a recluse.

Ivy: No, I'm not really. And I like the church. I don't...I do sometimes go, not very often. And I think that if you do any good, you know, you get helped, mm.

Interviewer: How long have you lived here Ivy?

Ivy: Eh, two years, mm, yeah. Because it's up hill isn't it? I find it with the trolley, you know, but more or less Elaine, she lives in...lives in the halls I had as a club. Well I sat indoors and I thought to myself oh well, you know, I will let her have a bit of it. So I gave her a house that was on our premises. So she's got a beautiful garden.

Interviewer: That's nice, isn't it?

Ivy: I think it's the best one in Swanley. She doesn't like me telling anyone. She said, "Mum, it looks as if I'm showing off when people come to look at it."

Interviewer: So did you sell that business, the country club?

Ivy: Eh yes, yes. And eh now it's the Cedar Tree, isn't it?

Interviewer: I don't know, is it?

Ivy: Yeah, the Cedar Tree.

Interviewer: What is it, a hotel or something?

Ivy: No, it's a...they turned into a pub now.

Interviewer: Have they?

Ivy: Oh they've ruined it. Do you know, I've got beautiful photos of it with the big staircase? They pulled all that down and put up a council one in.

Interviewer: Oh no, what a shame!



Ivy: All the parquet flooring for that – put eh, carpet down. And all the lovely polished...anyone who knew it would tell you, all polished oak beam all round. All come off, put wallpaper. I'd sit and cry.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's a shame.

Ivy: Ruined.

Interviewer: What used to happen when it was a club there then?

Ivy: Well, used to dance and that, you know. And because we had a bar, and my husband is teetotal and so am I – I'm still...he turned different...

Interviewer: Did he?

Ivy: Yes, he got to...because everyone said, "We'll give you six month, or six weeks I think they said, before you both start drinking", but I never did. I never drank. But he did, he used to drink lagers – too much sometimes. ((chuckling)) But he was a good man really. And he was alright. Yes. And we had a film star come and open it. It was nice.

Interviewer: Oh! Was that a good time in your life?

Ivy: Yes, it was really nice. It was really... And of course, we had a lovely floor, all parquet flooring, and all polished, you know. He used to do that, my husband, he used to do it, polish that hall. But um...

Interviewer: That was quite an enterprise wasn't it, getting that place?

Ivy: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: And running a club.

Ivy: Because I was busy indoors and he said to me, eh, "Do you fancy living at Swanley?" he said to me, so I said, "Um, well I don't know. I don't know Swanley." He said, "Well, come and look at it. It's going under the hammer." So he means at the auctions. He said, "Come and look at it." I said, "I like it here." I'd only just moved in this other house. Anyway, we went there and eh, then we're busy, you know, ((inaudible)) this big house, 23 rooms and 35.5 acres, lovely. The biggest house in Swanley. It still is. And eh, it kept on going up and up, you know, and eh, we suddenly come into it and neither of us was overdressed, you

know as if we had any money. ((chuckling)) So we come into the bidding, see, and of course, we got it.

Interviewer: Amazing! That must have felt terribly exciting.

Ivy: Yes. ((smiling)) And eh, so we had that.

Interviewer: Would that have been in the 1950s?

Ivy: Eh, 1951 we moved there. And then my husband said, "Oh Ivy, it's getting too much for me." He said, "Let's sell it", so we did. We sold it. And eh, then I...he bought a house in Margate...well, Cliftonville Westbrook after that, and then we moved to um, Westbrook and then my Tony said, "Mum, that's too much those stairs", but there wasn't too much. I can manage stairs. So there was a little bungalow, so he saw this one. This one is £100,000 – it wasn't worth it. £100,000 it was! It was up from £112,000. ((dog barking)) There was lot of faults. There's not a fitted kitchen. There's no gas stove, there wasn't. No fridge.

Interviewer: Amazing isn't it, what things cost these days.

Ivy: Yeah, it was a lot of money wasn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Ivy: Tony done it all, you know, didn't say he'd pay for it. He paid since I sold mine up there, say for £80,000 and he loaned me the difference between the two and then I paid him back. I don't owe anybody anything.

Interviewer: It's nice that isn't it?

Ivy: Yes.

Interviewer: It's lovely not to have to owe people.

Ivy: Yes, yes. Oh, I don't owe. I'm financially alright. I don't have to ask anybody.

Interviewer: It's good isn't it, all those years that you've worked isn't it, it's paying off I suppose.

Ivy: Yes, yes, yes. Yeah, it's helped you know. My husband wasn't a spendthrift. He never bought a new car, he always bought a second-hand car. They was always big ones, you



know, but second-hand ones. And um, so I'm all right really. I don't have to ask for anything.

Interviewer: Did you come from a big family? Did you have lots of brothers and sisters?

Ivy: Um, my mother had six children, yes, yeah. Good mother and a good father I had, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. What did they do? Did they live in southeast London?

Ivy: They lived in Greenwich first of all. Then they come to New Cross. Then they come to Lewisham.

Interviewer: Did she work, your mum?

Ivy: Only in the house, yes, in the house, yes. They didn't really...they used to just work in the house, didn't they?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Ivy: Cook the meals. A lot of people have to go out to work now don't they?

Interviewer: They do, yeah. So where did you meet your husband? In New Cross?

Ivy: He lived opposite but I didn't know him, really. You know, in the street I didn't... I knew his name, I knew his mother and that. I didn't know him though. But we went to a skating rink see, and I met him there really. He told me I'd make a skater but he already told his mate that I wouldn't, so his mate told me. ((laughs)) I was too frightened. I kept falling down! He was a wonderful skater. He really was, but he couldn't dance, see. And I used to dance but he was... The only fault with him, he was so jealous. He didn't like anybody coming up to me for a dance, so I had to give all that up. He was jealous of everything I did. He liked me just to be standing on him. He fed the dogs and I think he was jealous of the dogs! ((laughs)) Because he never...he used to like me to be standing on him. It's terrible, it's like a disease isn't it?

Interviewer: Yeah. It's hard.

Ivy: Hard!

Interviewer: Hard to be on the receiving end of that.



Ivy: It's just appalling! If I was out late, you know, if I went... When I didn't have any shops and that, if I was out late, he'd say, he thought I was meeting somebody else. But um, no...still, we were together a long time, wasn't we?

Interviewer: You were, yes. It was a long time to be with somebody.

Ivy: Yes, yes it is a long time. I'd like to see Tony get a small house.

Interviewer: Would you?

Ivy: Yes, a small house, you know, not so much ground. He's always working. It's too much, all those... I've never been over the house, I've never seen the rooms.

Interviewer: Haven't you?

Ivy: No. I've seen the room I was in ((dog barking)), I was in the bedroom upstairs and I'd seen that room of course, and Megan showed me where she was. I'd not wander over people's houses, so I only saw those two and the bathroom. And eh Tony said, "I must take you over the house", but he never did" ((laughs)) I've never seen it.

Interviewer: Haven't you?

Ivy: No, never.

Interviewer: Oh you must get to have a look.

Ivy: Oh yes but next time, you know.

Interviewer: It's a big house!

Ivy: The mother goes to work now, doesn't she?

Interviewer: Does she?

Ivy: She's not living there.

Interviewer: Ah, she's got her own little place has she?

Ivy: Eh no...I don't know what it is. Where she worked, they've offered her accommodation.

Interviewer: Have they?

Ivy: Yes and she's staying there. I expect she sees Megan...I don't know when she sees Megan.



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Interviewer: What is she doing, cooking for them or something?

Ivy: Something...I never did know.

Interviewer: Is it that Christian centre?

Ivy: Oh, is it?

Interviewer: Is it? I don't know.

Ivy: She is religious, isn't she?

Interviewer: Yeah she is.

Ivy: Yes, mm. I said to Megan yesterday, she was on the phone...

**[END OF SECOND AUDIO FILE, INTERVIEW AND TRANSCRIPT]**