

MY MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS

**THEIR FAMILY, CHILDHOOD AND
WAR TIME EXPERIENCES**

DEIDRE JORDAN

Great-grandfather – Frederick John Pearce

Great-grandmother – Hephzibah Susan Coulson

Grandfather – Henry Carter born approx. 1874

Grandmother – Edith Hephzibah Pearce born 1876 in Marylebone.

Uncles – Henry (1900-1977) & Alfred (1902-1988)

Aunt - Ethel

Mother - Lillian Hephzibah Maud

Father - Ernest Leonard Wells

Children – Identical twins, Julie & Louise (1974)

Grandchildren – Hollie (2004), Poppy (2008) & Joshua (2009)

Grandparents married on 30-7-1899 at 15 Little North Street, Marylebone. Grandfather, Henry Carter, worked as a jobbing builder and did well.

Edith Pearce came from Paddington. I do not think she was Jewish. My Mum, Lily, told me a story about a lady who left some money in Chancery to those that had the name Hephzibah. Edith Pearce's mother was called Hephzibah Susan Coulson. Edith had a sister Ethel married to Walter. They lived in Ladbrook Grove, Kensington and he was a Governor of St Georges Hospital.

They took their children on holidays to Brighton Rock. Edith was a housewife. The family moved around quite a lot. At one point lived near Sherwood Forest, Nottingham.

In 1915 Lily, my mother, was given a Bible as a prize from Moberly School for excelling in biblical knowledge. The family had an Airedale dog who did not mind people coming in, but did not like them leaving.

Alf and Harry, my brothers, went to football matches together and supported Queens Park Rangers.

In 1928 Lily lived in Dalgarno Gardens, Kensington.

My mother, Lily, said that they used to go to parties before the war and her marriage. My father would play the piano or violin as a professional musician and my mother, Lily, played the piano and harpsichord. When we lived in Wembley our next door neighbours said "I remember you being at a party a few years before".

My Mum did say that when she was on holiday before WW2 and before she was married that she got stuck in the quick sands and had to be pulled out. On another time she was on a boat not far out from the beach when the boat got into trouble and she had to be rescued.

When I was 18 months or so my parents took me to Broadstairs for a couple of weeks because Dad played in a band and a few times afterwards before WW2.

WW2

Alf and my father were in the ARP rescuing people from bomb houses. My father was gassed trying to rescue people.

We had an Anderson shelter in the garden. The sirens would go, we had to draw the curtains and dash to the shelters. Then we could hear the German Planes overhead making a terrible noise. I was scared, there would be search lights in the sky, Dad was never there only me and mum and this would happen night after night. We did sometimes go over to my Grandparents and Aunt Ethel who had a Morrison shelter.

Bombs dropped on some houses at the bottom of our garden so Dad thought it would be safer if we went down to the tube in Paddington. This was an underground station. There would be a lot of American soldiers around and I would go up to them and say "any gum chew?" At least we were safer.

Another fright that mum and I had in daylight shopping in Wembley was that a lone German aircraft came along machine gunning everything including people with no warning sirens. Mum dragged me into a shop doorway. This I will never forget.

Soon afterwards Dad thought we would be safer in Wales so he rented a cottage in mid Wales in Llandovery, Carmarthenshire. Mum and I went with a friend. I went to the village school. Sometimes they would hold a fair near the end of the garden. The mountains and scenery were lovely and we went for country walks and sometimes a dog would come with us. There were some Italian prisoners nearby and they were allowed to walk to the village shops. Two dogs were fighting out in the street so I tried to separate them and got bitten. I had to go to the doctor and have the scar to this day. The owners of the cottage said that we could take one of the cats home with us and we also brought back Bruce a sheepdog because he was being ill-treated by his owner. Bruce very often would go out for walks on his own so when we were due to leave mum whisked him away and we took him back with us. We already had another cat back home so Dad said we will give him to John Carter my cousin. Bruce had to be seen by a vet because I think he had kidney trouble because of his ill-treatment. He recovered and John entered him into a local competition. He was a lovely dog and came 1st, 2nd or 3rd. There was a photo in the paper.

Aunty Ethel married someone she met at the Conservative club, but divorced before I was born.

When I was growing up, Henry Carter & Edith Pearce with Ethel who was divorced lived at 37 St Michaels Avenue, Wembley. I do not know the year they moved there. I lived at 54 Wyld Way and John lived just round the corner from me at Oakington Manor Drive with his parents Alf and Ivy.

During the war Aunt Ethel had a spare bedroom and a sailor came to stay there on leave. He gave my aunt the ship's bell which I now have

I do remember the horse and cart delivering milk. There was electricity and running water but no washing machines. A mangle would be used and washing put on the line to dry. I never had a bike, but would sometimes visit my Grandparents on roller skates. We never had a car. We had a cat called Tiddles and she went missing for one year. Mum put up notices and then sometime afterwards we found Tiddles in Grandad's garden. She had spent a little time there as a kitten. I remember your Grandma (Honor Saunders) and her sister Jill coming round with their parents and

we had a great time and would also visit sometimes at Christmas when we had a party and we would go over to see your Grandmother for tea.

One of the days when we were round at Grandma's John and I hid in the wardrobe and trampled on all the hats.

After WW2

John did not do national service. He was exempt because he went to medical school for a year before he changed over to become a vet. People would visit him with their dogs because he was good at treating them if they had cancer. Vets would refer their dogs with cancer to John and he would get some of them better. He was often in the magazine Dogs Today and had a very good write up. Later he produced a medicine which was on trial for people with cancer, but although it did not become available on the NHS I believe that the medicine is still used in some countries for animals.

After the war we were so pleased that life was so peaceful again. I would play with my friend who lived next door and we would play with the children from across the road games like hopscotch. I had a hula hoop which I rolled along and roller skates and tennis when I was at school. For a little while I went to a Convent school and a bigger girl would take me to school and back by bus. I was scared of the Nuns at first, but after a while I got used to them.

Also after the war there was a lot of smog like thick soot and many people had breathing problems caused by coal fires. Today the air is much cleaner. There would also be a Rag & Bone Man calling out "any old iron". We did not have a TV.

My father studied at the Royal Academy of Music and was awarded a Bronze Medal. He very often played the violin or piano at home in the evening.

When I was about 13 years old my Grandparents Edith and Henry took me to the Isle of Sheppey for a holiday. We had a great time and went to the fair which was being held nearby.

After I left school I worked in a library just as my father did when he left school. Eventually I worked for the NHS in an office in Surbiton.

I married Raymond Jordan and had identical twins, Julie & Louise, born in 1974.

ALFRED CARTER

1902-1988

Grandmother was Jewish and a money lender. Alf, John and John-Webb inherited their dark brown eyes from her.

Parents were Henry Carter and Edith Pearce
Elder brother Henry(1900-1977) and two sisters Lily and Ethel

Married to Ivy Webb (1907-1996). Ivy was a tailor and later became a teacher.
Son John who married Susan and had one son John Webb Carter

Alf was a twin, but his brother died when very young. He was in the Heavy Rescue Service during WW2 and honoured in some way. The Service was made up of builders, plumbers, electricians and skilled workers who helped clear up debris created by the German attacks. They were really builders in reverse, they helped stabilize the devastated area to allow the Light Rescue Service safe access to trapped civilians. They got their name from the equipment they used, heavy winching and lifting gear; the Light Rescue Service got their name from the light gear they carried round, ropes and stretchers.

JOHN CARTER

1932-2007

John lived in Wembley and later moved to Kenton in Harrow. He was evacuated during the war, but not happy – see letter he sent to parents.

He hated school, but did well. He did National Service in the RAF. He went to university to study medicine, but after one year switched to Veterinary Science. He ran several practices very successfully. He also did a 2 year course in alternative medicine and developed a “cure for cancer”. He received government backing to do trials at UCH.

His first car was a Ford Anglia.

JOHN WEBB CARTER

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Works in theatre.

Told me by Susan Carter, John's wife

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We studied "Goodnight Mr Tom" by Michelle Magorian during Lent term. It is about a boy from London evacuated to the countryside

During the Easter holidays my Mum took me to see the play of the book at the New Theatre in Oxford. We sat next to an elderly lady to whom we chatted during the interval. I asked if the play brought back memories of when she was evacuated during the war. However she said she was born in Abingdon and had lived all her life in Abingdon and had never been evacuated.

I started to think about my Grandparents. What had happened to them during the war? My Mum suggested I ask them about their lives before it was too late!

This is why I decided to do this Summer project.

PLAN

1. Find out about the early lives of my only remaining Grandparents, Roy & Honor Saunders. Find out what they remember about other family members no longer alive.
2. Construct a Family Tree.
3. Contact other family members and collect information about family members they remember of my Grandparent's generation.

For 1.

- a. Devise a series of questions to ask them about various stages/events of their lives.
- b. I am particularly interested in asking them about World War 2.
- c. I can use an autobiographical story my Grandfather wrote for my brother Michael when he studied WW2 when he was 8 years old, (he is now 28 years old).
- d. Record an oral history of my Grandparents using a recorder transcription package - Dragon Recorder.
- e. Find old family photos. Identify who they are. Scan onto a disc. Look for photos in particular from the WW2 years. I would like to be able to see photos of the people my Grandparents are telling me about.

For 2.

I can use a family tree my Mother constructed when she was 8, before the internet was available.

I will use the Ancestry.co.uk website to confirm dates and fill in blanks.

QUESTIONS FOR MY GRANDMOTHER, HONOR SAUNDERS

General Questions – childhood

1. What is your full name and why were you named that, were you named after someone else?

My name is on Honor Edith Saunders, born Carter, but changed my name on my marriage. I was called after my mother Honor and my grandmother on my father side, Edith.

2. When and where were you born?

I was born in 1931 in London.

3. When were you baptized and what is your religion?

I was baptised soon after birth because that was the fashion then. I am Church of England.

4. What was the religion of your parents and grandparents?

My father had no religion, my Mother was Church of England.

5. Where was your first home? What was it like? How was it heated, was there a garden?

I lived in north London in a terraced house, but for our position in life it was really rather nice. It was heated by a coal fire. In the bedrooms there were fireplaces, but we didn't put fires in them. We had a garden at the front and back. We had one outdoor toilet downstairs and there was another toilet in the bathroom upstairs.

6. Tell me about your earliest memories of your home?

Sitting by the fire with an orange which had got the top scooped out and lumps of sugar pressed in and I would sit by the fire and suck it. It was very nice.

7. Tell me about other homes where you have lived?

The only different homes were when we were evacuated and we kept being evacuated and coming back.

8. What was the full name of your sister?

Jill Patricia

9. What sort of things did your family do for fun when you were a child?

We used to sometimes get together in the evenings and in those days it was very usual for someone in the family to be able to play the piano so they played the piano and everybody sang. My mother paid the banjo well enough to be in a banjo band.

10. Was there a chore you really hated doing as a child? Why?

Dusting that big old sideboard which is in the hall. It is very fiddly and took a long time.

11. Do you remember having a favourite nursery rhyme or bedtime story? What was it and why was it your favourite?

The Three Billy Goats Gruff because I'd heard it so many times I found I could pick up a book and read it to myself.

12. Tell me about your favourite toys and childhood games?

I had a dolls house and I also had two wheeler bike which in those days when I look back on it nobody seemed to mind if you got on your two wheeler just went off anywhere.

13. Tell me about your childhood friends.

Living on a main road it was a bit difficult to have friends there, but the minute I got to secondary school I met Barbara Day. We are now both 85 and we are still very good friends.

14. How old were you when you first went to school. Can you remember the name of the school? How did you get to school? How far away was it?

Unusually I went to school at three because Dr Davies the borough education officer set up a nursery class in a school, this was very unusual and I was very lucky. My mother would take me to school. I should think it would take a good quarter of an hour to get there if not 20 minutes.

15. What other schools did you attend?

Well every time we were all evacuated usually for about three months we went as a group to another school and this went on for many years. When I was 11 I passed the 11+ and went to Brunswick and Kilburn high school.

16. What were your favourite school subjects and why?

I loved going to school it was so different from anything else I had known and I liked everything except the languages really Latin and French I found difficult. But I was so impressed by the school because it had been an entirely private school and at that time it was about half and half so everything was more luxurious than I've ever known it before like carpets in the library and so forth.

17. Who was your favourite teacher and why?

Well at primary school there was a Miss Lemon who got me coached for the 11+. At school it was the maths teacher because I like that kind of thing, I also liked science, but I've forgotten the name of the science teacher.

18. How old were you when you left school and what did you do then?

I don't wish to sound boastful but I was a very clever girl and I got lots of schools certificates of which my sister remarked to me that nobody was interested. So I left school at 16 and went to learn to be a shorthand typist then worked for a year in an office in Lon

19. Did you attend any school or training after leaving school? Tell me about it?

My headmistress, a Miss Dorna, knew I was bright and she had a relationship with the teacher and head of the teacher training college and I was accepted into the teacher training college without any A-levels because I hadn't been at school. This I think directed my whole life.

20. As a child what did you want to be when you grew up and why?

I wanted to be something professional and not working class. I think I didn't mind what it was.

QUESTIONS FOR MY GRANDMOTHER, HONOR SAUNDERS

World War Two

1. How old were you when the war started?

I was eight years old when the war started and my sister was three years old.

2. Did day to day life change at the beginning?

Yes, immediately there was no ice cream, no fancy cakes and the milkmen did not bring round hot cross buns.

3. Tell me about the first time you were evacuated? What happened to your friends?

Well the first time I was evacuated was the year before the war started when people thought that there was going to be immediate bombing and there wasn't, I cannot remember anything about it because I was only seven and after a few months I came home. I went on my own but to my grandmother's sister. I think she lived in Gloucestershire. My sister stayed in London.

4. How did you feel about the war? Were you frightened?

No I wasn't frightened because all my relations said cheering things to me. When you could hear the bombers coming near and the guns went off on the railway and in the park my father used to say "that right boys, let them have it". It was our guns going off you see.

5. Do you remember being short of food?

My mother was a very good manager so we were never hungry, but I missed food that I liked. For example no more fancy cakes from the shop and she had the bright idea of getting bones from the butcher because they weren't on ration and then she would boil up these bones until all the fat came to the top, use the fat for cooking things and then give us bone soup. She kept saying it was good for us and I expect it was, but I disliked it very much.

6. Tell me about rationing?

Well you relied on your mother being a careful buyer because you could save up points and then she would save them up and then get something that she could make a long way, such as a tin of spam. Unfortunately she saved all these points as they were called, at the back of the ration books and she kept her ration books behind the clock that you've got on your mantelpiece and one night a burglar broke in. He didn't seem interested in money or anything, but he stole the ration books which meant that we were given ration books back again, but without these carefully saved up points in the back.

Did you and your sister have the same amount of rations?

No, my sister was under five when it started and she had a green book. I had a blue book and adults had a kind of brown book. When anything like oranges came, rarely I may say, they were for green books only. And my

mother of course shared between Jill and me and I can remember thinking it's a good job we've got Jill because her green book is very useful.

My father had a duodenal ulcer. Nowadays you can have an injection to cure it. The only cure at that time was extra food and the doctor allowed him extra milk per week, I think it was three pints and also, I can't remember, one or two extra eggs on the ration.. He was kept off all roughage which meant he was constipated, so the doctor prescribed very large bottles of liquid paraffin. There was no brillcream or anything like that since the war started which annoyed my father, so he used the liquid paraffin on his hair. People started to use this to make sponge cakes which is a poor idea because it just meant that you didn't get the goodness out of the flour or sugar that you put in to make the sponge cakes. So the government put very strong peppermint in all liquid paraffin. My father was a very patriotic man and everything the government did was right except when they put strong peppermint in his liquid paraffin, he could no longer put it on his hair and this annoyed him.

The other thing was my mother was a very good wangler and you registered with a shop you see, so she registered one adult and one child looking like a family at one shop and at another shop an adult and a child, so if a shop had things in for registered customers only she had two chances which was very clever.

I was at secondary school, at Grammar school, during the war and started keeping bees. Beekeepers had a ration of sugar for their bees and so you could say bees had ration books. In the end my lovely lovely parents bought me a beehive for my own garden but we kept bees at school.

7. Did you have other ways of getting food?

Yes my father was a very very good gardener and he had an allotment across the road behind shops and so we had fresh vegetables. Once he thought that his potatoes might have a kind of beetle because there were notices around saying that if you got this kind of beetle your things must all be destroyed. You can remember the name of the beetle can't you? Colorado beetle. I don't think for one minute he had Colorado beetle, but he thought that if he had and they came to his allotment some of the other people might have their potatoes destroyed as well, so he destroyed his potatoes just on the off chance he got Colorado beetle. He also grew beetroots in the front garden and someone came and stole them. Also because it was "red, white and blue". We had a flower bed in the middle of red, white and blue and the red was the beetroot. He was very very patriotic.

8. Did you know about hoarding or black market activity in your area?

Well I am still friends with one of my school friends, Barbara, and her father worked in a biscuit factory where the people who worked there collected the broken biscuits and he once or twice gave us a bag of broken biscuits. I also had a cousin who I think you might call a bit of a spiv. A spiv was a man who did black-market dealings and once or twice he brought us black market butter. None of us thought it was wrong. I think he was called Stan, Stan and Ivy.

9. Was there any particular food you missed that wasn't available during the war?

Well I missed ice cream because there used to be a shop that sold halfpenny ice creams and though my parents weren't all that well off when we went shopping my mother would buy us a halfpenny ice cream you see, but it stopped at once.

10. What did your Father do during the war?

Before the war he was a self-employed builder and when the war started they wanted builders very much to change the local electrical factory into one for making Spitfires. So he worked at that factory very long hours and most weekends changing everything round, the walls and everything, so that they could make Spitfires. On one occasion when he was doing this, one of the wings of a nearly made Spitfire fell on him, trapping his hands and his legs it was kind of curved you see. He was brought home of course and was painfully ill for some time. However he said that financially speaking he was better off being commandeered to do this work because he got regular payments and in his private work people often owed him money and in addition to that it was a very patriotic kind of firm and they would buy savings certificates which you had to keep for five years to get the best interest. The firm bought hundreds and hundreds of them and then sold them by hire purchase as it were to its employees. These certificates were how the government were trying to raise money for the war. They were called savings certificates and you took them for five years the BTH did a lot of the keeping. What does BTH stand for? British Thompson Houston that was who he worked for. They kept a team of men with tarpaulins, that's waterproof covers, and if any of their employees houses were blasted, you know, tiles off the roof and windows and so on, the team came round and kept your house dry and everything. So really being called up to work in the factory was a great advantage to him financially and otherwise. On top of working all these long hours he was also, I don't know how he did it, he was the Fire Watch Leader for our road. Which meant he fire watched regularly, organised all the teams and sent me round to the houses to collect sixpence a week and we used that to buy a hose and a stirrup pump and sandbanks which were kept by his front door and also to put comforts for the fire watchers while they were fire watching. Roy – "We were issued with a stirrup pump, we didn't have to pay for it" Honor – "Yes, I can't understand it. But I was sent out to collect sixpence a week. Perhaps it was only for the comforts not for the actual stirrup pump. What you say sounds logical, but this is what I remember".

11. Did your Mother have a job?

No. She did work, but not after she got married because it wasn't usual.

12. Were any members of the family in the armed services?

Yes my mother's sister Grace Rhodes was in the WAAFS that is the women's branch of the air force. Her husband had a terrible war, he was in the army

and he was captured in Singapore and was on that awful Burma railway. A cousin of my Fathers was sent to Malaysia which wasn't so bad as he wasn't captured, but he was in fact bought up on a charge of damaging the Queen's property. It meant he got very sun burnt himself. He damaged himself. I think he was called Sid, he was on my Father's side.

13. Were any members of the family killed during the war?

No.

14. Where did you get your information about the progress of the war?

My grandfather had a big map, a lot of people had maps, which he marked you know where we were coming and going. My Father kept the radio on and of course there were newspapers. There was a bad man known as Lord Haw-Haw who broadcast faulty information. My father was very proud of the fact that he could sometimes pick him up on the radio and when this happened he thought it was funny and amusing to listen to Lord Haw-Haw. In some

countries nowadays if you listened to the opposition you would not be considered patriotic, but somehow he did and Lord Haw-Haw used to say silly things like German battleships were coming up the Thames. And apart from all that of course I listened to the conversation and the conversations when I look back on it were sometimes quite awful. My father said that if the Germans get here they'll treat us like the Poles. This is historically interesting because people keep saying that we didn't know about German atrocities and things nor about threats to Jews, but we must have done because I knew about it when I was 9 and it was talked about and that's why I said to myself, and this was foolish wishful thinking and not understanding and that I would take David and Gerald up and hide them in the bushes around the swings if the Germans came. Who were David and Gerald? They were immediate next door neighbours because we lived in a terrace of houses. Each of them was a shade younger than Jill and me. They were called Eisenberg but they changed their name to Morris just as though that would help them. When people say, people in authority, didn't know these things at the beginning of the war, I know they jolly well did because otherwise how would we all have known.

15. Did you hear any radio broadcast yourself?

Only when my father got hold of Lord Haw Haw. Oh you mean not German ones, yes the radio was on pretty much all the time and when we fortunately sank a German battleship, you know the name of the battleship Roy? I think probably the Graf Spey? No it must have been the Bismarck. Well my grandfather, who was very patriotic, put the recurring news on, which was about every 20 minutes, at most every half an hour. It drove my grandmother mad because my grandfather listened to the sinking of the Bismarck every half-hour all day and part of the following night. Do you remember hearing Churchill on the radio? Yes. He was most kind of stirring and everybody thought he was most stirring. I can remember you know "we shall fight on the beaches" and so forth and it never dawned on me that what he said was risky that we might lose the war because we were all, well I was convinced and the adults all told me that we would, win the war.

16. Did you have a bomb shelter?

Yes my poor father put an Anderson shelter in the garden. To make an Anderson shelter you dug a trench and you put corrugated iron curved round like that and the government provided that and then there were a couple of bunks in there, but it was hard work for him to make it and we didn't use it because it got flooded. Where did you go then? Under the stairs. In all houses under the stairs is the safest place and it was open under the stairs

and they put a mattress in there and I thought it was lovely. We used all to go to bed together, my sister my mother, my father and me in raids.

17. Was your street bombed?

Yes, well when I say bombed, it was blasted by a doodlebug. A lot of the damage that doodlebugs do is blast and it landed in a road behind us that curved round, but the houses a bit higher than that road which was the terrace in which I lived caught the full force of the blast which meant a lot of the rooves came off and the windows were smashed and in some places plaster came off the walls. What did you do? Were you in the house when it happened? No, I had been sent to pay the electricity bill because I could go for a child's fare on the bus. When I came back the bus was supposed to go past our house, quite near so it wasn't too far for me to walk, the bus conductor said "everybody out, we can't go any further". That would be because of the mess in the road from the rooves and the glass and I walked to my house and my mother said go to the BTH and tell them we have been bombed. It was about half an hour's walk. I wasn't frightened. I was very big headed as a child, I thought this is just like being in a film and as soon as I got there because the BTH was paternalistic I got to the gate and they immediately got my Father to come back with me and arranged for the BTH team to come. So we were in the best position really of the people in the road. When my father got to the house, my mother was standing on the steps outside, and he said to her "Look love all we've worked for gone". Thank goodness it wasn't true because when a house is blasted as opposed to being bombed if you could keep the weather out, you know windows and roof tiles then lots of things could be repaired and because my father had been a small time builder he had friends in the trade and everyone tried to help everyone so lots of things were put back. But blast is a funny thing, other people's houses were affected in different ways and we had a telephone still working and also the basic water and gas all still working in our house. I wonder if this was because it was a bit up the hill, I don't know. And so although it was terrible we got over it quite soonish. And then my mother was a good wangler and you could also get some forms from the government and go to an office for bombing and get monetary rewards to pay people to put your bomb damage right. This would take a long time, but what she did was keep sending me, so I went round with the forms quite often and this all worked.

18. Do you remember Dunkirk?

Yes I do. My Father's great friend was retreating from Dunkirk and in the end his leg was injured, he was one of the ones who was rescued by the small boats. I think we all went and prayed, everybody, my father who wasn't a

Christian really and my sister who at the time was only 3, we all went and prayed. When I was a child I always thought God was on Britain's side because you see the sea was very calm and all those little boats wouldn't have been able to do what they did. I know he was called Bill Huggins and he had worked for Heinz. Now Heinz was another good firm. If you worked for Heinz and you were injured like he was in the legs as soon as he got back and got a bit well Heinz found something for him to do. Now I'll tell you a bad thing Bill Huggins said to me, and you never hear this now, that while they were all walking through the French villages and getting to the beach, no French person even gave them a drink of water. So there you are.

19. How many time were you evacuated? Tell me about them. Where did you go and what was it like?

How the system worked was when the bombing got bad everyone evacuated and then after 3/4 months they all came back again. Well I was evacuated once before the war wasn't I. When the war started properly, but it was what was called a Phoney War there wasn't much bombing or anything, I was evacuated with my mother and my sister. Again a good reason for having a sister under 5 because your mother could go as well. Where did you go? Kettering, someone took us in. Did you go to school? We went to school, half the day and the children whose school it was went the other half. And we didn't seem to share paper or stuff. I actually wrote on slate. I don't know how I learnt anything. But we didn't stay long and we came back again. When the doodlebugs were bad, I don't know why we came back again because they kept on being bad, I went with my mother and sister to someone they knew up in North Shields. We didn't stay there long. Once I was evacuated to somewhere near Colchester by myself to a friend of somebody in the family. There I got appendicitis and the person didn't send for a doctor very quickly so I ended up in Colchester Military Hospital which was very jolly for children because soldiers would come round and they all had sweet rations. You couldn't see out of the windows although it was the ground floor because they had sandbanks all up them. Because it was really a military hospital there was a piano in the ward and someone used to come and play it. If you were really poorly and couldn't be moved you slept on the top of your bed. As soon as you were better you slept on a mattress under the bed because it was safer, which for the children was all very jolly and they moved cars around and things under their beds.

20. Did you have a gas mask?

Yes. You said to me was I frightened of anything? Well it was the boys at school who said we would have to go and crawl through a gas place with our gas masks on and I didn't like the thought of that, but it wasn't true. No we all had gas masks and we did gas mask drill at school and learnt how to use a gas mask because you have to put your chin in first. Then when you had all got your gas masks on a teacher would come round with a postcard and you had to breathe in and she would see if the postcard stuck to the bottom of your gas mask which meant it was doing its job. Boys at my school, I don't know if it was elsewhere, would kick their gas masks in their cardboard boxes like balls so they had tin gas mask holders so they couldn't play ball with them. Well I don't know if it was all the girls, but I still kept a cardboard one.

21. Do you remember VE and VJ Days?

I remember VE day tremendously, but apart from the fact that my Uncle Ken came home I can't remember much about VJ day. Immediately VE day was declared and we listened to Churchill on the radio my father took me up into London where there were people playing in bands up at the windows of the taller buildings and people dancing around in the streets. It was really really lovely. Then 2 or 3 days later there was a street party. Everybody had street parties, but it took a little while to organise them and I remember it was near enough to my birthday that I was very self-centred that I said it was like a birthday party for me. But I can't remember us celebrating VJ day, but of course we were pleased he came back.

22. How did you feel when the war ended?

Well everyone was so very happy. I think everyone was kind of elated, the children and the adults and there was no more bombing was there. There wasn't any increase in rations.

23. Can you describe the ways that the war changed your life?

I think I could have been better educated. I can't see how I got educated really because we kept going backwards and forwards. You wouldn't think that

would be very good. But I think it made me feel patriotic and I was aware of the treatment of the Jews, personally you might almost say what with David and Gerald.

I was aware of the tube disaster because my father told me about it. There were a lot of people, well hundreds, 2 or 3 hundred people sheltering in a tube station. Can you remember the name? It wasn't very far from us. I've only heard recently on the radio that it was kept quiet and nobody knew about it. But it is so silly the things people say because my father told me about it, you know how awful there were 200 or so people sheltering at this tube station and they were killed. I think partly the effect of the bomb and partly because they couldn't get out, it was all terrible.

24. How did the war change the lives of your Father and Mother?

Well my mother worked very hard to see that we weren't hungry and also with clothes she kept altering clothes because clothes were rationed as well. And she was obviously sad with us keep being evacuated backwards and forwards. For my father I think it physically wore him out but on the other hand financially he told me he was better off by the war and he told me what a good woman my mother was because she didn't go all extravagant because he was getting a regular good weekly wage. Because I suppose he got overtime and he worked all hours.

25. Were you or others in your community treated differently because of your gender/ethnicity/race or other factors?

We've talked about my next door neighbours. I think we were all pro them. North London was such a mixed community anyway that nobody knew anything about anything.

26. What were your thoughts about the discoveries of the Holocaust? When did you first hear about the Holocaust?

The end of the war I must have seen newspapers. I knew about it through

school because Jewish children. Some children were brought to Willesden because there are many Jewish families in Willesden and we had 2 at school. One girl was 17 or 18, but came in with our form for taking GCSE's, you know 15 to 16 because she needed to catch up. She had actually been in Warsaw which although it was a town was really like a concentration camp and she was, although she got plenty of food once she got to Willesdon, wasn't the right shape. She had missed out on the natural growing so her body was more oblong. There was also a girl whose father was "all there" and he had realised which way the world was going and she was called Daisy Wischer. She was born in 1931, that is why she was in my class, and she used to say that she was the result of a practical joke. Daisy's father had asked someone when she was born what was a good English girl's name and the person had said Daisy while she would have liked to have been called Elizabeth or Margaret, but this father having made all the arrangements before things got too bad got his family out and Daisy Wischer came to school. But of course we all knew why Daisy Wischer had to be whisked out. So we did know about it and that's what I can't emphasise too much.

27. Did you know about the use of nuclear bombs to end the war?

Yes, I thought it was a jolly good thing and I still think it was a good thing because if they hadn't exploded those bombs, those men who were nearly dying on the Burma railway would have died and that caused them to be repatriated and I'm sorry to tell you, but it's the truth that the Japanese went on treating prisoners so they died even after the first atomic bomb and it was the threat of another one that did the trick. And I cannot but think it was necessary

28. What did you think about Churchill?

We thought he was, and I still think he was, out of this world. I mean apart from the fact that he managed things and rallied us all, and thought of extraordinary things to hear him speak it was like listening to Shakespearean poetry and when I became a teacher and they tried to bring in a new Pitman alphabet, they thought it would be easier for children to learn to read (in fact it wasn't in the end), but if you were a teacher you had to learn it didn't you before you could teach it? At the back of my book about it someone had translated some of Churchill's speeches into this new Pitman alphabet, but I used to get so interested in listening to Churchill and reading what he said that I missed out picking up so much about the Pitman alphabet. Now our feelings, mime and Dad's, about Churchill must have been transmitted to our children because your mother and Mary were only barely 5 when Churchill died and his funeral procession took place and these 2 little girls sat and watched the television right from the minute it started saying what a great man he was and how he was going to be interred in London and the Queen would be there and they watched his coffin, I think they call it a cortege, it was towed

by members of the armed forces through streets and things and then onto the river Thames where it went along on a boat and these 2 little girls watched, they didn't miss a bit, when the boat was on the river and it went past all the big cranes that they use for unloading boats all the cranes bowed down, it was wonderful, but what I think that the little girls must have somehow gathered our feelings.

29. Is there one thought about your wartime experience that you want to share with future generations? What is it?

How hard my father worked and how his house got bombed.

30. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your life during WW2?

Well I think children were much freer because I had a little bike and I appeared to have been able to go anywhere. Just recently I was talking to a man who had come to talk to the WI about explosives and I'd heard that a local cinema, a big building, had been obliterated by a land mine. This was some distance away and I quite gaily said I want to see what a landmine does. Now I think that children wouldn't have that freedom. I went and saw what a landmine did and I was discussing it with the explosives expert and the difference between a bomb and a landmine is that the landmine doesn't penetrate down into the soil, it goes off sideways and in the case of the cinema, the whole cinema caves in, but there is no mark of a crater in the middle. But I think if you suddenly said to your mother I'll think I'll go and see what a landmine does she might be surprised, but no one was then, a different age I suppose, you could just get on your bike and go off to places

HONOR SAUNDERS – FAMILY MEMBERS

Please can you tell me about the members of our family that you remember?

Firstly the Foreshaw side – your Mother's family

Robert Foreshaw (1871-1951) – your Grandfather

I remember a great deal about Robert Foreshaw, my Grandfather. He was a very prominent man in the family and he had pulled us all up being lower working class. He had no education and started life cleaning engines at the age of 14 in Neasden Railway Marshalling Yard. He absolutely hated it and during the war he wanted the Germans to bomb Neasden Marshalling Yard, but unfortunately they didn't. He went on from there higher up from job to job, in the way of way, going to night school to learn things and he ended up being the Station Manager of Baker Street underground station, which was a very big station and he was even asked to talk about the railway at Harrow School. So from nowhere at all he pulled himself up. And he bought two houses with several flats in poor houses and my grandmother and his children lived in the basement and he collected the rents from these two houses and bought himself a very nice house number one Aberdeen Road. And because he could get cheap travel on the railway he always took his family away on a Summer holiday and that was unusual in those days for that class of person. He also got free coal. So all in all he was successful man. He had a big moustache and he was also very nice with both my sister and me. He used to read to Jill and discuss things with me. He told me about how his mother had got the first old-age pension when she was about, oh I forgotten when it was, but it was very early on and he said to me that he made sure she had no money though he was taking care of her so that no one could stop her getting the old-age pension. He thought this was the right kind of thing to do. I can't remember if he had any brothers or sisters but he must have.

Alice Foreshaw (Balls) (1878-1968) – Your Grandmother

My grandmother was quite a bit younger than him. They married early on I don't think she had any training, but her work used to be a parasol trimmer which in those days was a good job because if a lady was going anywhere, like to the races or something, they would fetch my grandmother in a coach and she would go and change the colours of the ribbons and things on the parasol. So that was really quite an easy job at that time. I think it was before she was married and just after she got married because she married early on. Once of course she started having children she had a hard life especially when my grandfather bought these two tenements houses and she and her children lived in the basement and she used to have to boil the water up to do the washing etc and so she did have a hard time then. When in her old age she used to do big family parties and she and my unmarried aunt did the cooking for a lot of people. That was Aunty Chris. She always used to have Winkle Teas. She would buy these winkles, which you bought by the pint, and she'd saved all the pins, all the long pins she could find. Some were from the charity sales days.

They would give you a long pin to attach your poppy or your rose and then she would give us all a long pin and bread-and-butter and these winkles. When I was young I liked it very much. You can't buy winkles now. When her husband died she went on living in that house with my unmarried aunt until she died. I never saw them being religious in any way, but if you'd asked them they would have said they were Church of England.

Tell me about their children, your maternal aunts

1. Florence May (1899-1899)

I remember her first baby that died when it was about nine months old. She used to speak to me about it, but doesn't seem to have talked to the other people much. I think it died of a form of diarrhoea which babies often did and it worried my grandmother because she was only a young woman and she used to go down to the cemetery to see the grave and think that the little one must be cold. It's very sad isn't it?

2. Christina (1900-1978)

Aunty Christina never got married. I think she had a wasted life. She was very intelligent especially on the number side and could tell you which day of the week it was at a certain date some years ago which was fantastic. They seemed to think that she should take care of my grandmother and live at home. The only time she didn't, and I think she enjoyed it, was during the war when she was called up and worked at a big electrical place called Smiths doing office work. If it was anything in the number line they would have hit a gold mine wouldn't they? But I think she had an unhappy life. And then when both her parents had died the house in which she had always lived was sold off and the money shared between the daughters and she went and lived in a flat in Kilburn and worked in Woolworths. She liked working in Woolworths. She finally died of cancer. I think she was cremated at Golders Green.

3. Alice (1906-1984)

Alice, she was also intelligent and she did have a job, she was a secretary. And then all the family said she made a mistake because she married her first cousin, Wally. This kind of made them feel they couldn't have any children so they had quite a solitary life. As she had been so good-looking and so intelligent the rest of the family thought she had done the wrong thing. Uncle Wally died of throat cancer. All our family seemed to have died of cancer. My grandmother's sister died of cancer, but I don't know her name.

4. Grace (1910 -1993)

Grace, she was the most outward going of them all really and she could have gone to a Trades School to learn dressmaking, but my mother said that would be a waste of time and so she went straight into some firm to learn dressmaking which was unfortunate because that meant that she didn't count as having a secondary education and when she was called up into the WAAFS because she was very outgoing and smart she could have been put down for Officer training, but not because she had not got secondary education. She had a daughter Annette, but not until after the war when she was comparatively elderly because her husband Ken has unfortunately been on that terrible Burma railway, was a prisoner of war for four years. She lived at Palmers Green. Well he husband was again a very smart man and he had had some education and he was an office worker before the war, but then he was called up into the army and his group just about got to Singapore in time to be captured. It was a great mistake on the Generals part. It happened to a lot of them. In the army he had been trained as an electrician, but when they were made prisoners, the British troops were told to swap their badges as to what they were and he swapped his electrician's badge with a cook. This

meant that the chap with the electrician's badge couldn't help the Japanese so much and I wonder if being made a cook helped Uncle Ken to survive four years of terrible imprisonment working on the Burma railway. They had a daughter Annette and were lucky to have her because you see they were both comparatively old to be parents owing to the intervention of the war.

Jill Soal (1936-1988) – Your sister

She was five and a half years younger than me and we got on with each other very well all our lives. She was not as academic as I was so when she left school she became a hairdresser and she ended up being a hairdresser in John Lewis' in Oxford Street which was rather grand. She danced with the John Lewis ballroom dancing team because she was gifted that way and they provided all the dresses and things so it was quite a good thing to be in. She was also a very good swimmer and I couldn't swim at all. Then she married her husband who was South African and they went out to South Africa with their two children. Unfortunately, like lots of people in our family, she developed cancer of the breast which went to cancer of the bones, which was very painful and the only thing she said to me about it was "Honor I could've done without this" which is a very minor thing to say about it.

When she was five years, in those days when children were five at school, they had a medical. Auntie Grace had just been called up for a medical and gone into the WAAFS. In a job that's how it worked, the government sent you a card and said come for a medical and if you were fit enough you were called up. So my mother got this card about Jill which called for her to go for a medical. Jill had always been, before and since, a very polite and obliging child. But when they got in to have the medical with the doctor she was terrible, wouldn't let them examine her and carried on. My mother was ashamed of her and when they got out Jill said to my mother "will they let me go into the WAAFS with Auntie Grace"? At five she thought she was being called up.

I think Jill was a hairdresser with John Lewis in Oxford Street, but I think she moved up a step because she went to French of London. This was one of the leading hairdressers in London. The best known one was Raymond who was on television and known as Mr Teasy-Weasy. Now French didn't get on television, but he was in that class of hairdresser. After I had the twins I was feeling washed out. Jill said come to John Lewis and she arranged for the full make up and everything. I went home and said "what do you think dear"? And he said "I can't see any difference"!

Jill was buried in South Africa.

Now please can you tell me about the Carter side - your Father's family

Henry Carter (1874 -) – your Grandfather

I can't remember my Grandfather Henry Carter, isn't that awful?

Edith Carter (Pearce) (1876 -) – your Grandmother

I remember my Grandmother Edith Carter very well. She again was a very dominant woman and my Uncle Alf used to go and see her every night on his way home from work before he went home to his own house. She was also was more intellectual and gave me a lovely poetry book which wouldn't have occurred to anybody else. She was, I don't know if she was ill really, or it was the way she played things, because a lot of her time seemed to be sitting around being ill. I think I was suspicious of it when I was a child. But she definitely had got some brains, how she got educated I do not know

Tell me about their children, your paternal aunts and uncle.

My father was the eldest and then there was Uncle Alf who was one of twins and the other one died which often happen in those days. Then there was Auntie Lily and Auntie Ethel. Auntie Ethel was there like Auntie Chris, there to take care of my Grandparents, I'm sorry to say.

Uncle Alf, well during the war he was quite heroic. He used to rescue people from houses that were nearly falling down. And he had a certificate which said that this particular borough, where he did all this, had a private hospital in and that he could always go there to have treatment. He was a builder a small time builder like my father. The thing he did wrong during the war, which his wife was very cross about, was that in the neighbourhood where they lived, they had some pigs which were owned by all the neighbours. Everybody was given a day of the week to feed the pigs. When the pigs were killed and the pork shared out, his wife found she wasn't getting any pork and she went to see why and it was because Uncle Alf never did his pig feeding. That must've been a ruction I should think!

He had my cousin John who was very intelligent. He passed the 11+ and went to grammar school and became a vet which was a grand thing. He was always dotty about animals and in those days, this was awful and it wouldn't be allowed now, when it was Easter time, shops in their windows to attract customers would have little chicks running about and you could buy a live little chick. Well he of course did this and one of them grew up to be a Cockrell who was very fierce. This Cockrell lived in the coal bunker outside the back door and attacked anyone that went round there. I can't really remember whether it attacked me or I was warned against it. And he also had a dog, but I can't remember about the dog because the Cockrell was more different. When he did become a vet, one of the sad things that vets have to do is to put

animals to sleep. If he got a cat that was nothing wrong with it at all, this happened to several, he kept them in his back garden and fed them. This meant they went semi-wild but he seemed to think that was better than putting them to sleep.

Auntie Ivy and Uncle Alf were a great help to him. His first surgery was their garage, I don't think that would be allowed nowadays, it would be against planning. Uncle Alf being a builder used to help with the alterations and Auntie Ivy did the bookwork and took the money into Wembley and things like that, so his parents were a great help to him. I don't think my father's family got on well with my mother. Uncle Alf, John and my father supported Queens Park Rangers. My father when he was a child, an uncle had a regular ticket for Queens Park Rangers and if Alf and Harry went and stood outside he would often take them in, but I don't know who he was or anything else. Alf was very nice and John although clever was a bit strange really wasn't he?

QUESTIONS FOR MY GRANDFATHER, ROY SAUNDERS

General Questions – childhood

1. What is your full name and why were you named that, were you named after someone else?

My name is my Roy Anthony Saunders. The Anthony was named after a very handsome and well-known politician during the Second World War named Anthony Eden.

2. When and where were you born?

I was born in November 1930 in Woolwich.

3. When were you baptized and what is your religion?

I was baptised soon after I was born, I think fairly quickly and I don't have a religion.

4. What was the religion of your parents and grandparents?

My mother was Church of England and I don't think my father had a religion. My grandparents were both Church of England.

5. Where was your first home? What was it like? How was it heated, was there a garden?

I went to live with my father's parents. It was crowded and he had two younger brothers and they were living there as well. It must have been heated with a coal fire and I think there was a small garden, but I have no memory of it. Well I was very young of course, I think I was only there about three years so I was about three years old when I left to go to a house my parents bought on mortgage about 5 miles away from my grandparents.

6. What are your earliest memories of your home?

The earliest memories of my home, I can remember my two uncles that I was living with seemed to always break my toys. I expect that's exaggerated. I can't remember much else. I had a model airship and it got broken.

7. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

I had no brothers or sisters.

8. What sort of things did your family do for fun when you were a child?

*I don't remember what we did as a family for fun. We did go to the cinema. I expect I was about five or six the first time. I can remember one film called *The Hurricane* where somebody get kept being sent to jail, he would escape and then there was a hurricane and he got sent back to prison, but he kept escaping.*

9. Was there a chore you really hated doing as a child? Why?

I think the only chore I had to do was to dry up the dirty dishes from the meal.

10. Do you remember having a favourite nursery rhyme or bedtime story? What was it and why was it your favourite?

No

11. Tell me about your favourite toys and childhood games?

I had a set of model soldiers and a fort where they were housed. I also had a toy train set and a Meccano set. This is for making models of engineering items I could build bridges or ships and things like that with it.

12. Tell me about your childhood friends.

One of them was Alan, the boy next door who was just a little bit older than me and he lived next door to me for about 7 years until the war started and then we were evacuated together at the start of the war.

13. How old were you when you first went to school. Can you remember the name of the school? How did you get to school? How far away was it?

I was five when I started school. The name was Little Danson School, a primary school. I walked down my garden, through a hedge at the bottom of the garden, into the garden on the other side, across the road and directly into the school. I could go on my own because it was such a short distance although it did involve crossing the road, but I expect somebody helped me do that. It was only 250 yards.

14. What other schools did you attend?

The next school was in the opposite direction and was a little bit further away and that was called Hook Lane Infants and Jr School. Well I didn't stay at the first school more than a few months I think, so I was still five I

expect when I started and I was there until the war broke out four years later.

I went to two different grammar schools because there were periods of evacuation. So the first grammar school was in Sussex where I had been evacuated to avoid the London Blitz. But midway during the war very little wartime activity occurred in London so at one stage I returned to London and then I went to Dartford Grammar School. Then a bit later the flying bombs attacked London. The flying bombs were called Doodlebugs and with so many of these I was evacuated again back to East Grinstead. I was living in a place called Three Bridges about 12 miles away from East Grinstead. I went on the train to East Grinstead. I was at East Grinstead when the war ended and I returned to Dartford and pursued an uninterrupted few years until I left school. I had to pass the 11+ to go to these grammar schools. I took the 11+ when I was living in Three Bridges a village in Sussex and I would have had to have gone to the local village school if I hadn't passed the 11+. The village school was a secondary modern school.

15. What were your favourite school subjects and why?

It was always I think geography and there's a very peculiar reason why geography. At the beginning of the war I was evacuated to live in a village which was very isolated in Cambridgeshire. It was about 20 miles from Cambridge and 12 miles from Ely and it was on the edge of the Fens. The Fens are a very sparsely populated agricultural region near Ely. Ely is actually in the Fens. At the beginning of the war I was living with an old auntie who didn't have a newspaper or radio and the only things we were allowed to do on a Sunday was to draw maps from somebody else's newspaper and I drew maps of what was being done during the war like there was a very famous battle, the battle of Graf Spee, where three British cruisers forced the German battleship into port in South America and so I learnt all about the geography of South America and then there were other battles, when Russia attacked Finland and I learned about the geography of a Finland which not many people were aware of at that time and there were other battles or other things of interest at that time and I learnt a lot of geography from reading the newspaper.

16. Who was your favourite teacher and why?

My favourite teacher was Mrs Inkster. She was the headmistress of the primary school that I went to and she was the first teacher that persuaded me that I could get to grammar school.

17. How old were you when you left school?

When I left school I was 18.

18. What did you do then?

I went to read for a degree in physics at Woolwich Polytechnic.

19. As a child what did you want to be when you grew up and why?

When I was a child I expect I wanted to be an engine driver when I was very young, but that was what most boys at that time wanted to do. But when I got to about 12 or 13 I didn't know what I wanted to do. My father was always asking what I want to do and I didn't know. I didn't know until many years later. I became a physicist with ICI.

QUESTIONS FOR MY GRANDFATHER, ROY SAUNDERS

World War Two

1. How old were you when the war started?

I was 8 years old nearly 9.

2. Did day to day life change at the beginning?

Yes because I was evacuated two days before the war started, to a place called Isleham which is a village about 20 miles from Cambridge

3. Tell me about the first time you were evacuated? What happened to your friends?

I went with my maternal grandparents and the boy next door, not my mother. We stayed with my aunt Anne who was the sister of my Grandmother. Did you go to school there? Yes. We found it very strange in the village. It seemed to be very different from the school we went to in London and for about a fortnight we were the subject of bullying by the other school boys. But after a fortnight a Jewish school was evacuated to the village and the Jewish boys were billeted on people all around and as soon as that happened we were treated like village boys and all the conflict was between the Jewish boys village boys. I was evacuated on September 1 and left and went back to London for Easter the following year. The boy next door, who I went with, he left at Christmas and went back to London.

At the beginning of the war nothing very much in England and the only action occurred overseas and then not very much happened even there. Although they anticipated extensive air raids at the beginning of the war in fact nothing happened. If there were any air raids at all it was only involving two or three aircraft. My friend Alan Simmons, well with his second evacuation he went with the school to place called Looe in Cornwall and the astonishing thing is that before we had several holidays in Looe and Alan was billeted on the landlady where we had stayed in Cornwall. I didn't go to Cornwall I went to Three Bridges instead because my Father's job was a clerk on the Southern Railway based at Victoria station and when the bombing started in London his job was switched from Victoria Station to Brighton and as a result the family

moved from our house and Welling to Three Bridges in Sussex about 20 miles from Brighton. So it was a family move rather than evacuation. Again my maternal grandparents came with us and also my auntie Rose and her daughter Sonia who was about three years old. We lived about 20 miles from Brighton because at the beginning of the war you weren't allowed to move into an area within 20 miles of the coast. It was a prohibition area because it was felt that there was the imminent danger of an invasion and they didn't want too many people too close to the sea in the southern part of the country. I don't think this applied in the North or in the West. Cornwall wasn't expected to be invaded, but Kent, Sussex and London were and possibly Essex.

4. How did you feel about the war? Were you frightened?

I was never frightened of it. I think my grandparents were. I think that boys of 10 years old are only frightened by a very close encounter with a bomb or something like that.

5. Do you remember being short of food?

No, not to the extent that I was hungry. We were aware that there were several foods that were no longer available like bananas and oranges, especially bananas.

6. Tell me about rationing?

Everybody had a ration book and my mother took care of that. I knew that some food like meat and eggs and butter and so on were rationed and they were in short supply.

7. Did you have other ways of getting food?

When I was in Isleham things were different and there was a ready supply of rabbits and things like butter. There was no shortage of butter. My Grandmother used to make butter because she just gets some milk from the farm and then and makes butter. The farm only had 4 cows so there wasn't that much but it was ample enough to make butter. We lived on the farm. My aunt was the widow of the farmer, but he had died in 1930 and a tenant farmer was present and he occupied half the building, my aunt and it was a building with eight rooms one up and one down four times over. The farmer and his family, he had three sons, two who were working on the farm and one was a boy of my age who also did his share even though he was at school.

8. Did you know about hoarding or black market activity in your area?

The only hoarding that I knew about was that my mother had hoarded quite a large amount of one or two items like sugar which would keep alright before the war but we didn't have access to any other sources of food in London during the war. One always heard of people who developed a black market in food but as far as I know I can't remember that we make any use of this, we just used the rations that were available for everybody.

9. Was there any particular food you missed that wasn't available during the war?

The principal things I remember were things that obviously came from abroad like citrus fruit and especially bananas. These were my favourite, but they weren't actually became available until the very end of the war. I do have some very vague recollection of having an orange or two while the war was still going on, but there were certainly oranges and I particularly remember some of them were sour. One looked forward to one's monthly supply of oranges only to find that sometimes they weren't worth eating.

10. What did your Father do during the war?

At the beginning of the war he worked for the Southern Railway as a clerk at Victoria station, which is one of the biggest stations in London. He worked for the Continental Department so naturally he had no work available in that department and I don't really know what he did for the first 6 to 9 months. I was in Isleham so I was out of the communication, but he couldn't have been a doing anything like that in the first 6-9 months because all Continental activity had ceased. It was when the bombing started becoming heavy in September or..., the Blitz had started, but it was in October I think when the bombing was becoming quite severe that his job was moved from London to Brighton and we all moved to Three Bridges 20 miles out of Brighton. He went around the various country stations in Sussex and Surrey and Kent examining the books of the various station accounts so it was a bit like an inspector of some kind. At the beginning of the war you weren't allowed to go to Brighton, there was an exclusion zone within 20 miles of the sea.

11. Tell me about where he was sent to work during the war?

In 1941 he went to Africa. There was a job advertised somewhere for somebody going to Nigeria and I can remember him talking to my mother about this at great length. It took several days, at first should he apply for it, and then he did apply for it and was offered the job. Before this happened people in the railway weren't called up for military service at the beginning of

the war because keeping the railways going especially in the south-east of England was of national importance so railwaymen tended not to be called up. He did however volunteer for aircrew in the RAF but he was found unfit to serve in that capacity because he had deformed toes. He was born with deformed toes, I think they are called Hammer Toes. That happened before all this happened and certainly explains why he wasn't called up and therefore he was able to apply for the job in Nigeria which he, after a good deal of thought, decided to take. I can remember going to see him off at Euston station on a train to Glasgow because he sailed from Glasgow to Nigeria. In 1941 it was a very dangerous time to spend in the Atlantic Ocean but he went out in convoy with a lot of other ships and eventually finished in Lagos which was then the capital of Nigeria. He worked on the Nigerian Railway. Now this all seems rather strange and we only discovered the reason why they were wanting jobs in the Nigerian Railway after the war because Churchill wrote in his book on the war that he wanted the army to investigate whether it would be possible to attack the German Army in North Africa from across the Sahara Desert. If they had decided to attack across the Sahara desert then the Nigerian Railway would have been essential part of the communication channel because the country around Lagos is very wet and swampy and the only way they could have got mechanised equipment onto the hard ground in the North Nigeria where the attack would have started from would be to use the railway to get all the equipment and the troops across this swampy gap. But the Army decided that it was not a feasible army exercise to do this and so it didn't come to pass but once he was in Nigeria he was really stuck there for most of the war.

12. How often did you see him?

The first time he came home, he only came home once during the war, that was in 1944.

13. Tell me about his experiences.

He was always on the commercial side of the railway, not the engineering side. He was called a Traffic Officer. He only went to Sierra Leone after the war as the General Manager. I can remember a story, he said he went around the various stations along the railway doing a job much like he was doing on the Southern Railway when he was going around the stations in Brighton checking the books of the stations. Of course the Nigerian Railway weren't run nearly as meticulously as the Southern Railway was and he had to introduce a lot of changes. He had to deal with lots of interruptions from the unions in Nigeria and they arranged their strikes in a very good way that when they went on strike they only went on strike in one station and every other station along the line. That would stop the working and they would only have to go call out half the workforce. And they also arranged it so that every other station went on strike every other day so it was chaotic and left the railways in a very chaotic state.

There was also very considerable racial effects in Nigeria. Nigeria the capital, because this had been arranged in colonial times, was in Lagos in the South at the very end of the Southern Line and the people in the South were mainly Christians, all those that had been converted anyway to Christianity. These were tribes in the South I can remember the Yoruba was the principal tribe that is the people around Lagos. In the east of the country around the Niger Delta they were mainly Ibibio and they created trouble after the war on based on racial fears. The majority of Nigerians were Muslim and lived in the North and he was on a train one day which had several carriages, he decided to walk through the train, it was a corridor train, and he found the first three carriages were absolutely packed in standing only and I think they may have had people on the roof and then he came to another carriage where there were only four or five people in the carriage, but these were Muslims from the north of Nigeria and they would have nothing whatsoever to do, the two tribes would have absolutely nothing to do with each other.

The Nigerian government ran the railway. Nigeria was still a British Colony during the war. The British ran everything such as it was, hospitals were British, schools, but perhaps not in very remote areas.

14. Did your Mother have a job? What was it?

She was the secretary to the Colonel, Col Sheppard who was the Cmdr of the second Battalion of the Southern Railway home guard and she worked in Haywards Heath.

15. Tell me about members of the family in the armed services?

Yes I had two uncles. They were younger brothers of my father. The elder of the two was in the RAF and he was an air gunner in the Normandy campaign. He flew in two engine bombers and straffers. A straffer just went round the countryside firing off guns at anything that looked German. That was Uncle Les. He was married at this time, I think he married in 1938. I can vaguely remember being there. Uncle Len was in the regular army in Egypt before the war and he got married to Auntie Rose and brought her home to England just before the war in 1938 I think. Sonia was born in Egypt and she came of course, she came back with her mother and lived with my grandparents in Bexley Heath. When we moved from Welling to Three Bridges they came with us, so in Three Bridges were my parents, Auntie Rose, Sonia and my maternal grandparents. We rented a house in Three Bridges on the High Street. Len was an army sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps so he was involved in servicing all the kinds of vehicles that they had in the army in Egypt. He was involved in the maintenance of tanks as well as lorries and cars. He stayed in Egypt all through the beginning of the war when the Italians attacked Egypt and started to invade. He did come back once during the war I remember which would have been I would guess in 1942 or 43 because he created a great, my mother was frightened of him I think, and I can remember him coming to Three Bridges on a motorcycle. I don't really know why she

was frightened of him, but she was and she certainly reacted to his coming with some trepidation.

16. Were any members of the family killed during the war? Tell me about them.

No member of my family was killed during the war, I don't think they even got a scratch.

17. Where did you get your information about the progress of the war? Did you hear any radio broadcasts?

I got my information on the progress of the war through the radio and newspapers.

18. Did you have a bomb shelter?

In Welling we had a bomb shelter. It was an Anderson shelter. My father built it. He dug a hole and we were provided with corrugated iron sheets and you covered it with earth.

19. Was your street bombed?

I don't think so, but nearby streets were. At the beginning of the war it was high explosive bombs and a boy in my class was killed and he only lived about 100 yards away and was in the next-door street. They were very fearful of incendiary bombs and that's why we were all given stirrup pumps to put out an incendiary bomb. And I remember we had to practice this at home and at school. Blackouts started immediately the war started. The war was no surprise to anyone and they were expecting this for about a year and lots of precautions, ARP, or air raid precautions, were set going before the war started. Well the stirrup pumps were ready before the war. If a bomb was dropped on the first day of the war we had been given the necessary.

20. Do you remember Dunkirk?

I do remember Dunkirk, only I suppose through the radio and conversations of adults. It was a terrible shock to everybody I think. I can't think of anybody who was old enough could not remember it well.

21. How many time were you evacuated? Tell me about them. Where did you go and what was it like?

Well when I went to Isleham, that was the first time. But when we went to Three Bridges my father's job had been transferred to Brighton and so we moved as a family rather than as an evacuation. It was a family evacuation. Everything calmed down towards the end of 1941, my father went to Nigeria in 1941 and we stayed up in Three Bridges. I can't really remember exactly, but it was either in 1943 or the beginning of 1944 when we moved back to London because nothing seemed to be happening to the war as far as we were concerned. In 1944 when the doodlebugs started we went back to Isleham, but again I was with my mother and my Grandparents, to Aunt Anne. I can remember the first doodlebugs attack. It was a very peculiar sensation. All these, what I thought were aircraft flying over and I thought they had got their cabin lights on, but it wasn't cabin lights it was flames shooting out of the back because they were rocket propelled. Well it was at night and I wouldn't be mistaken about the cabin lights and the rockets if it had been in daylight. Because it was at night I thought that they were shooting them all down because there's a difference between hearing anti-aircraft shells going off and planes crashing, they make a different noise and it sounded as though all these planes were crashing, but that was what they were intended to do, as they were flying bombs. It wasn't a really extensive air raid and it only went on for about two hours unlike a lot of the all-night bombing raids. Then a few days later they started coming over in the daytime and it got to the extent where there was an air raid warning all the time because every time they sent one of these off and I can't remember whether the air raid warning system was abandoned but one had to go out during the day to keep life going, so people had to go shopping when these bombs were flying overhead. I can remember on one occasion being out in the street and hearing a doodlebug going off. All the time you could hear it there was no danger, but when the engine cut out you had to take cover and I can remember having to lie flat on my face in the street. Only on one occasion, I wouldn't want to exaggerate and say it was happening all time, but some people it was happening to quite a lot. Women they would just go out shopping may well finish up on the floor waiting for the bomb to go off and that's why we were evacuated back to Isleham, but again the flying bombs lasted only two or three months so it wasn't a long evacuation. When they stopped we went back to London. In the meantime I missed a whole term of school because this evacuation was quite unplanned and I didn't have time to make arrangements to go to school.

We came back to London when the doodlebugs stopped coming, but then within just a few weeks after the doodlebugs had stopped, the V2 Rockets started arriving. These were quite different experience, whereas with doodlebugs you could hear them coming, with the V2s you couldn't hear them coming because they travelled faster than sound. What happened was that suddenly there was an explosion and no air raid warning. There would be explosions from time to time, but after the explosion you heard a whoosh noise they made in travelling through the air. When they travelled faster than

sound, they arrived before the sound of them coming. This time we went back to Three Bridges, just my mother and I this time and we lodged with the newsagent who we already knew because we've been in Three Bridges before. Mr and Mrs Dack and they had two children, Anne who was my age and Timothy a younger brother. Anne and I used to deliver newspapers whenever the delivery boy didn't turn up in the morning we had to substitute his round and deliver newspapers. And I can remember it was the winter of 1944 to 45 which was very very cold and I can remember getting as cold as I have ever been delivering the newspapers.

22. Did you have a gas mask?

I did have a gas mask.

23. Do you remember VE and VJ Days?

Yes. On VE day I was living in Three Bridges and I was a Boy Scout and we were asked to carry a large number of bundles of kindling wood about a half mile to put them in the recreation ground so that we would be building a bonfire that would be lit during the evening when a lot of the villagers would come and celebrate. There was so much kindling wood that it took us nearly all day to transport it and I think most of us did it riding a bicycle with the kindling wood somehow arranged on the handlebar. There was a huge bonfire in the evening. There weren't any fireworks but the home guard had thunder flashes. They are a safe hand grenade, they were thrown like a hand grenade, but hand grenade explodes after about five seconds and a thunder flash was merely a safe version of a hand grenade. It would have injured somebody I think if it actually hit a person, but it didn't cause an explosion, but it made a loud bang. I don't remember any street parties in Three Bridges. It was a small enough place for almost everybody in the village to go to the recreation ground and see our bonfire, it was a huge bonfire.

For VE day by pure coincidence, I was on a Scout camp in Lancing which is a small town on the coast of Sussex near Worthing and we all went into Worthing for the evening to celebrate on the Esplanade at Worthing where a lot of other people had congregated

24. How did you feel when the war ended?

Elated, we were all very happy about it. I think we heard both General Montgomery accepting the surrender of the German army and I think I can remember Churchill talking about it on the radio. One of the important things about the war was that Churchill might have had a great deal of difficulty getting the Generals and so on to do things his way, but he made an immense difference to the morale of the country and everybody wanted to listen to all his broadcasts. I think if the Germans invaded while he was broadcasting everybody would be listening to the radio and not paying attention to anything else.

25. Can you describe the ways that the war changed your life?

Oh yes it upset my education quite considerably. It didn't occur to me at the time because other children were in the same kind of position or at least other people in the south of England and especially the south-east were greatly affected. This was true also of the industrial areas of the North. One of the problems was that when the Germans stopped bombing London, they still flew over London to get to the other cities so there were constant air raids going on for many months. Then they moved from one city to another and a lot of the time when they were attacking Glasgow or parts of Newcastle or Hull and those areas the planes would fly over the sea. When they were attacking Birmingham and Bristol and Southampton and all the towns in the south they tended to cause London to be having air raid warnings going off, but it was other cities that were being attacked.

26. How did the war change the lives of your Father and Mother?

The war changed my mother's life very considerably and immediately because she left her home to go to Nigeria before the war had ended. The war in Europe had ended but the war against Japan was still going on. I was still in Three Bridges and from the newsagents I moved to a friend, a school friend's house, until the end of the school term. I only stayed in Three Bridges to avoid having to change school again. I was still going to East Grinstead School, but the war ended in May in Europe, that was in the middle of school term so I think that the arrangement was that I would stay with this school friend until the end of term. Then I lived with my maternal grandparents. My father's parents stayed in London throughout the war. I lived with my maternal grandparents until my grandmother died and then I went to live with the other grandmother and I went to Woolwich polytechnic. At the end of that I got a job and went to live in Welling Garden City.

27. Were you or others in your community treated differently because of your gender/ethnicity/race or other factors?

This just didn't come into it. When I was first evacuated to Isleham, for a fortnight, I was with the boy next door and we were bullied quite extensively for about 10 days because we were very different from the country children. This was a very great experience to be evacuated from London to a country school. Isleham is quite an isolated village right on the edge of the Fens. There was a road that went through the Fens to Ely, but nobody had to go through Isleham if they didn't live there. People in other villages never went to Isleham because there was no reason to and so it was a very isolated place. There was certainly no electricity, gas was just being installed when we arrived. There was no running mains water or mains drainage and living conditions were very primitive. It was a farming community and the farms and especially the one that I was staying on was rather a poor farm. It was a mixed farm in that it had four cows and the rest was arable farming but not very extensive so it was rather poor farm. There were lots of people in Isleham who never been further than Cambridge or Ely. Hardly anyone had been to London.

28. What were your thoughts about the discoveries of the Holocaust? When did you first hear about the Holocaust?

I don't think we heard anything about it until the war ended. We certainly learnt about the resistance in Europe by the people who had been invited and we heard about the atrocities against French people in particular who had done being in the resistance. It was called the Maquis and lots of atrocities committed against them, but I don't think the Holocaust which particularly affected the Jewish people, I don't think I knew about this until after the war had ended.

29. Did you know about the use of nuclear bombs to end the war?

Yes it came as a great surprise and I think almost at once we realised that that would finish the war. The first one was a huge surprise, the next one was a surprise as well. The Japanese didn't wait to see if any more would fall. There has been great controversy since the war about whether the Americans had a third bomb or not because the Japanese would have been fearful that they would receive more and obviously the threat was there, but there is some doubt as to whether they had another one

30. What did you think about Churchill?

Well Churchill played an immense part in preserving the morale of the country. He gave a series of radio broadcasts throughout the war. The ones near the beginning of the war, when he could see no way of winning it without American assistance, he kept the morale up and everybody made a point of listening to his broadcasts. They must have been broadcasts with the largest audience that this country has ever known. It was announced in advance that he was going to speak say at 9 o'clock in the evening on such and such a day and everybody would know this and make preparations to hear him. There's been a lot of criticism about some of his hare-brained ideas during the war and how the army had to hold some of his ideas in check and I think that is certainly true he did have some hare-brained ideas which they managed to hold off. In the first two years of the war it really looked as though we had no way to win it until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour and Hitler made the biggest mistake of his life by declaring war on America. Although things were going very badly during the war, very badly indeed by 1941, Churchill is recorded as saying "the moment Hitler declared war on America he knew we were going to win" and that was the first time he was able to admit this.

31. Is there one thought about your wartime experience that you want to share with future generations. What is it?

The biggest effect it had on me and I didn't realise this until many years later was the interruption to my education. I went to 6 different schools three of them twice and there were parts of say in history, I did no history between the Romans and the political career of the Duke of Wellington. So I knew practically no history.

And chemistry was another subject that I missed large parts of.

32. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your life during WW2?

I think on the whole I had a good time. I did experience some air raids and some V1 and V2 raids and they could be scary at the time, but I was only a 10 or 12 year old boy at the time and 10 or 12 don't see things the way that adults do. V1 is the Doodlebug and V2 is the rocket. But the Blitz at the beginning of the war, I remember the barrage that's the noise made by all the guns going off during an air raid and it was an immense noise. I don't think I've ever heard since such great noise. We had an anti-aircraft battery of guns no more than about a quarter of a mile away from our house and they made a huge noise when they were set off. And they were going regularly and if they weren't going off other guns around were going.

ROY SAUNDERS – FAMILY MEMBERS

Please can you tell me about the members of our family that you remember?

Firstly the Thorpe side – your Mother's family

Herbert Thorpe (1881-1956) – your Grandfather

He was born in Berkshire, a part of Berkshire which is now in Oxfordshire. He was born in Wantage. I think he left school when he was 12 and went to London to get employment and he was employed as a salesman in a shoe shop for many years. It was a shop called Dubois in Lewisham and he always called it Duboy which I thought was Jew Boy. It was some years before I realised that it was Dubois and towards the end of his working life he ran corner shop selling tobacco, sweets, soft drinks and toffee apples in Plumstead which is a part of Woolwich. Plumstead is where the Woolwich Arsenal football club was founded. He retired just before the war and went to live in Welling and you've heard part of his story with regard to my evacuation. I never knew much, oh he was born near Wantage, but he grew up in Letcombe Regis and this is horseracing country. All his family were interested in horseracing and even he to my surprise at times looked up the results of certain horseraces. He was very strict about things like betting which he regarded as evil. He married a woman called Isabella Fortescue, who was the daughter of a James Fortescue and James Fortescue had two daughters one of which was Isabella. My grandfather's father, Albert Thorpe was a drunkard and gave his wife a very hard life and this all reflected on my grandfather who was very critical of his father so he was a lifelong teetotaler. He tried to get me to sign the pledge on one occasion, but I assured him that as I played rugby there was no possibility of me signing the pledge, that is the pledge not to drink alcohol.

Clara Thorpe (Diver) (1878 – 1951) – your Grandmother

She was born in Isleham in Cambridgeshire. I find it difficult to imagine how she, she must have applied for the job in Berkshire, she worked as a maid in a large house owned by an American. She thought well of this American, he must have been a good employer. She must have met my Grandfather in Berkshire. They got married and so she accompanied him to London, of course, when he became a shoe salesman. She was always very good to me when I was evacuated at the beginning of the war with my grandparents and I can remember her kindness. In fact I have very fond memories of my grandmother Clara. I think she had to leave her job when she got married and I don't think she ever had another job. My grandfather had lots of brothers and sisters, but I don't have much knowledge about that side of the family. I only ever once went to Letcombe Regis and I remember visiting Aunty Margaret who was my grandfather's sister and she was sitting up in bed reading the Racing newspaper and that is pretty well everything that I can remember about that side of the family. She had one brother Norman, and one sister Anne, there were just the three of them. He made a living as carter, he had a horse and cart and I guess

he did odd job farming work. I remember once seeing him scythe through grass and he was an absolutely superb scyther. I don't think I've ever seen anyone else scythe like that. Anne married Fuller Cornwall.

Percy Thorpe

He was my cousin on the Thorpe side.

He was the managing director of Geographica Limited, the map makers. He was at our wedding. He lived in Brentford. His son Trevor was the major of Kingston on Thames.

Now please can you tell me about the Saunders side – your Father's family.

Archibald Saunders (1882 – 1965) – your Grandfather

He was always known as Archie, he was never known as Archibald except in a humorous way. He said the name came from Scotland, but we discovered recently we don't think there is any connection with Scotland. He was a newspaper printer. He worked in the machine room of the newspaper and as I remember he was the person in charge of the print run. Once the machine was running he was in charge. The newspaper was the Kentish Independent, published once a week in Woolwich. So it was never a full-time job. He made up by working as a freelance often in Fleet Street. In fact I think it was almost entirely in Fleet Street on one of the main newspapers. He was always very upset about the trade union practices and thought they were actually illegal. He said that a newspaper would have somebody called Mickey Mouse on the on the books and things like that. I think as far as I know he benefitted from these practices. I suppose it's like most industrial workers there are craft unions and there are general unions and there was always a lot of tension between them. He would have been a member of a craft union and that would have been compulsory. It was the practices of the general unions that I think he objected to. As far as I could see that was true in my job in engineering unions. There was always more trouble between the unions than the management and the unions.

He lost the five fingers of his left hand and that was the machine, the machine took them. I think it was before the First World War because it immediately exempted him from military service. So although it may have been extraordinarily traumatic for him it prevented him from taking any part in the First World War, so it may have saved his life. I think he got compensation which he used many years later to help buy a house. It must have been traumatic at the time. I think he put his hand into machine to adjust it. I actually went to see the machine running on the odd occasion and there would nearly always be an interruption when the paper didn't go through the machine evenly and I think he must have put his hand in to try and jerk it. He was always on very good terms with his boss and I think his boss probably felt responsible for the accident and I never heard him say a bad word about its boss. He finished up by giving him a car and quite a good car, a Wolsey, and that's not the normal behaviour of an employer.

Ethel Saunders (Reader) (1883 – 1955) – your Grandmother

I went to live with my paternal grandparents in the last two years before I left home. When my maternal grandmother died I switched to living with the other one and she always treated me very well. Sonia and Rose lived with her when they weren't living with us during the war. When Len was demobilised after the war they went to live as a family then. She always had a lodger whose name was Giddings who was always known as Mr G and I called him Uncle G and again like Auntie Lil he treated me like an uncle and always bought me birthday presents and Christmas presents, so he was really part of the family. Auntie Lil was a friend of my grandmother whose fiancé had been killed in the First World War and she always lived alone, but she spent as much time with the family as possible, always at weekends and she was certainly like an auntie to me.

The thing about Ethel was that she played a lot of whist. She would go every week to a house where there was a whist drive. I think it was a guesthouse, but a large guesthouse set in its own grounds. She went there at least once a week to play whist and she would run a whist drive at home at least once a week. So the main thing I remember about her was playing whist and of course she taught me how to play whist.

Leslie Saunders (1911 –1989)

He also was a printer. I'm not really sure about the business arrangements, but he did printing I think more in terms of printing magazines. I can't remember any of the titles that he did. I know at one stage when I was living with my grandparents that he set up a company, a small company, with two or three other people to run a printing firm between them. Their trouble was that they were always short of capital. My recollection is that this printing business was always struggling, I don't think it was ever a great success. He didn't become poverty stricken, but it never really came to very much. His son Michael took it over when he retired and I'm afraid much the same thing happened again. It was always a difficulty of keeping up-to-date technologically which the son was better able to do, but printing on a small scale was always a struggle.

His wife was Aunty Mick. I don't know why she was called Mick. She was called Lillian Veronica. I didn't even know her middle name was Veronica and until her funeral. I have no idea and I have asked Michael her son if he knew, but he didn't know. My Uncle Les was inclined to make up, give people names and I think maybe he got into the habit of doing it and so the rest of the family did.

Anne, his daughter, used to work for Shell in the large building in London near Hungerford Bridge. She met her husband at work because he was a project engineer working for Shell. She had three children, Lindsay, Matthew and Eloise. Matthew works as a stage electrician in the West End.

Leonard (1915 -1975)

Len after the war did a number of jobs including a bus driver, a parking warden and I think he had a brief spell as a prison officer who accompanied prisoners to court. He had some children with other women which was why his wife was always so short of money. I never knew anything about this at the time. It was all kept hushed up.

Sonia was born in Egypt just before the war and during the war she came with Aunty Rose to live with us in Three Bridges. I suppose she lived with us for about two years while the London Blitz was going on, but the air raids calmed down and she eventually went back just the two of them to live in London and I think they remained in London until the end of all the war. Sonia died of multiple sclerosis.