

**IMPORTANT**

**This transcript is copyright Association of Jewish Refugees**

**Access to this interview and transcript is for private research only. Please refer to the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive, prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.**

**AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive**

**AJR**

**Winston House, 2 Dollis Park**

**London N3 1HF**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform**

**[ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk](mailto:ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk)**

**Interview Transcript Title Page**

<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	45

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Barnett
<b>Forename:</b>	Bessie
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	30 January 1922
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Florsheim am Main, Germany

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	8 January 2004
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	Salford
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Rosalyn Livshin
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	4 hours 30 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:  
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE****INTERVIEW: 45****NAME: BESSIE BARNETT****DATE: 8 JANUARY 2004****LOCATION: SALFORD, MANCHESTER****INTERVIEWER: ROSALYN LIVSHIN****TAPE 1**

RL: I am interviewing today Mrs Bessie Barnett and the interview is taking place on Thursday, 8 January 2004. It's taking place in Salford, Manchester, and I am Rosalyn Livshin. So you can tell me first your name?

BB: My name is Bessie Barnett.

RL: And what was your name at birth?

BB: That was my name at birth. Also I've got a Jewish name, which is Bilha.

RL: And your surname at birth?

BB: Oh, my surname at birth? This was Halberstadt.

RL: Did you have any nicknames?

BB: Not really, I didn't have any nicknames. They all called me by my name every time.

RL: Were you named after anybody?

BB: Not really, not that I remember. Both my grandmothers was still alive at the time, so I don't know about great-grandmothers, I never met them. I only met one grandmother when she was very ill, she was almost gone, I was three years old. But I still remember, that's the funny thing about it, I still remember about them.

RL: When were you born?

BB: I was born on 30 January. I was born in Flößheim (Flörsheim) am Main. That particular day the Main was frozen over and it was icy outside and the doctor broke his leg when he was coming, and they could not get hold of a midwife, so my father and a neighbour brought me into the world. But somehow or other they managed it. And they didn't have phones in those days! So I don't know how he did it, but I'm here.

**Tape 1: 2 minutes 33 seconds**

RL: What year was that?

BB: 1922. It was a very cold winter. On the continent there are cold winters, and we were skating in the streets when we were youngsters, because there wasn't much traffic. There was the occasional lorry. There was horses and carts, the delivery people with horses.

RL: What were your parents' names?

BB: My mother was called Frieda and my father was called Jonas.

RL: And your mother's maiden name?

BB: My mother's maiden name was Strauss, like the musician.

RL: And where were your parents from?

BB: My mother was born in Schmitten im Taunus, a very beautiful place. They had a business there. Later they had a hotel there as well. Before that they had a shop where they sold things. And they also had a slaughterhouse where they killed kosher animals, like cows, chickens, calves. And there was chickens all over the yard. We collected eggs when we used to visit my grandparents when we were little. And I didn't like chickens at those times; they are kind of peckish, they come and-

RL: So your grandfather owned a slaughterhouse?

BB: Yes.

RL: Was he a shochet?

BB: No, the shochet came in and they drained the blood of these animals. We see them. I was very heartbroken. I don't eat meat, and I don't eat veal because a little calf was born and I watched it being born and I fed it with a bottle because they needed the milk, naturally, for the dairy. They delivered it in big churns, the milk from the cows. And my uncle said, 'Don't get attached to it, because next week it's going to be killed.' I said, 'How can you kill a baby like that?' They said, 'But you do like-' – you called it Kalbfleisch, it's veal. From that day on, I never touched veal anymore. It was my favourite meat when I was little, but I didn't touch it anymore.

RL: So did they have like a little farm? Was it like a little farm that they had?

BB: Yes, it was a big house, which was later the hotel. I can't quite remember how it worked from the farmhouse into the hotel. I know the farmyard and I know how it was set out and I know this little chicken house where they walked down, up and down in the morning and the cockerels calling cock-a-doodle-doo. I can remember it just like it was. It was very muddy in the winter, but we never went there in the winter, we went for summer holidays.

RL: How far away was it from you?

BB: This is kind of a complicated thing. We went on a train, we went on a bus. And we did

**Tape 1: 6 minutes 15 seconds**

get there, because later, only to a certain age we went there, because afterwards we were travelling abroad and we were going to other places. When we were little we used to go to the grandparents while they were alive. Once they were gone, my uncle took over. We might have gone for a week or two there. And we stayed in the old house always because we didn't stay in a hotel, we stayed in the old house, which had that shop. I can actually remember Pesach there once, and we climbed up in the attic on steps. I mean it's a long, long time ago.

RL: So was the old house a different building to the hotel?

BB: It was near the synagogue, on the other side of the village. You had to walk right through the village, through this village street and you got there, it was on the right hand side. It was a shop, which was never used as a shop. They used the skins, they made leather out of skins, they salted them, and then they the people with the horse and cart come and collected them and they took them where they make shoes with leather.

RL: So the shop sold, what did the shop sell?

BB: Well, the shop at one time sold crockery, but not in my time. It still was crockery there, but nobody ever come. It wasn't a going shop. Once there were busy with the farmhouse and the hotel, the shop was just a shop. And they used it mainly to put the skins there, and they were smelly things, horribly they are! They took them off the cows and they salted them and they were put out there. And they had dogs there as well, and we were always frightened of the dogs. They were dangerous dogs because there they didn't keep dogs like they keep in England; they kept dogs, guard dogs. They were fed, but they were on a chain or in the shed. And of course we were strangers and we were always frightened they were going to bite us, we didn't go anywhere-. I love dogs, but we weren't allowed to go near them because they weren't safe. I don't know whether they were or whether they didn't, but we were told, 'Do not go near the dogs.'

RL: How many siblings did your mother have?

BB: I had a brother.

RL: No, your mother.

BB: My mother, there were six of them. And they lived to quite a good age, most of them. I mean not really because they were put in the camps afterwards. They all got killed in the camps, the whole lot of them.

RL: Where did they live?

BB: When Hitler came, things were diff-. Yes, the Kohlhagens, they lived in Homburg. And my uncle, he lived in Hamburg. When Hitler came, he went to Cuba and he survived. And his wife and his sister and all of them, they all were put in the camps. We don't know when. They were in Theresienstadt for a little while, and then of course from Theresienstadt one went to Auschwitz. My cousins, everybody, they all, they were lovely. Actually, the little girl called Lilli, she fell in a soup. In the hotel, they made big boxes of soup and somebody called her to do something and she fell in a soup. And she got burnt and she died. She was a very pretty girl. But then they had another baby. I don't know. They all were in the camps,

**Tape 1: 10 minutes 54 seconds**

because we were away already, we didn't really get in touch a lot during Hitler's time, after the war started.

RL: So out of your mother's, you said there were six of them in the family, how many survived of the six?

BB: My uncle in America.

RL: Just the one? He was the only one?

BB: Yes. Because he went to Cuba. He wanted to get the family over and then you couldn't anymore. They took them away, I don't know. Actually in that place called Schmitten im Taunus, they put on a thing, 'Juden sind hier unerwünscht!' – 'Jews are not wanted in this village!', when the Nazis came. Also we had, in the hotel they had a lot of people working there and they were all friendly really. You know, people were all friendly there, I don't know who did it, but you know, under Hitler everything changed.

RL: Had your grandparents died already?

BB: Yes, my grandmother died when I was very little, a little girl. And my grandfather died when I was about five or six. I remember we went for outings in the mountains. And we used to go on a little well and we put stones in it and we climbed over. We went quite dangerous things really with my grandfather, and then he died when I was about five. My father's side, the grandmother lived a lot longer because I was nearly nine when she died; she was the last one. Actually, it started, how they got to Schmitten actually, it was a health place near there. In those days he was diabetic; it's my father's father. He was diabetic. And they had no drugs or anything for diabetes in those days. They just went into the places and they drank that water, and it was supposed to cure them, which it never did really. And he died at a fairly young age. They were very sad because two of their sons got killed in the First World War.

RL: Just coming back to what's happened to your mother's family; that was your father's. What is the nearest large town to Schmitten, to that little village?

BB: It's not such a little village, it's quite a big village. Really and truly, we didn't go anywhere from there. We went there and we stayed there. My mother was kind of a housewife; she likes to do cleaning and she wanted a rest from everything. We just went walking in these mountains like, and really and truly, if you ask me to go there, I couldn't go there. I should because there is a cemetery there, and all the grandparents and great-grandparents are all buried there. And one of my relations, a cousin I think, they went there and they said it's in a quite good condition. It's in the middle of the woods somewhere. We used to walk about 40 minutes or so until we came to that place where the Jewish cemetery was. And of course when somebody died, they put him in-. The funerals, they were on a horse. There was a special horse with black things on it. The non-Jewish people use it as well. That was before Hitler's time, but after Hitler's time, I don't know, I wasn't there. They took them there, they are covered up with a black cloth like the cars. And they took them with a horse and cart there.

**Tape1: 15 minutes 45 seconds**

We never went there when there was a funeral because people were very superstitious. The children weren't allowed to go to cemeteries unless they are orphans. I don't know, it's just superstition, but in those days we weren't allowed to go in. So I've never been in it, but we went there. And of course my father, he was a Cohen, a priest, so he wasn't allowed to go anyhow. So we went for a long walk and we got there and we waited until my mother came out. She went in with her parents and her grandparents.

RL: How big was the hotel that they ran?

BB: Quite big, about 14, 15 rooms, I'd say, bedrooms. And people come for a week or two weeks or some for weekends.

RL: How religious a family was it?

BB: They weren't ultra like here. They were religious, they kept Shabbat. And of course the food was all kosher in the hotel. And the people who worked in the hotel couldn't go to synagogue because they had to serve meals. And they did prayers, and I mean on high holidays they used to go to synagogue. And in the winter, when there didn't have people in the hotel, they also used to go. We were always there in the season, we always-. School holidays, when you are having school, you got school holidays. So I've only seen it when it was full, really, that's why we didn't stay there. We stayed in the house.

RL: Now coming on to your father's family, how many brothers and sisters did your father have?

BB: My father had six brothers and sisters. Brothers – he had no sisters. They were seven boys in the family. And one died of diphtheria when he was quite young and two got killed in the First World War. There was a whole thing about it because my cousin find out where he was buried, and he was very upset because he was in a Christian cemetery with a big cross on it. And they managed to get him out and they buried him in London in a Jewish cemetery somewhere, I don't know where.

RL: Was your father in the First World War?

BB: No, he wasn't, I don't know why. There was some-. He was rejected for some reason or other. I don't know whether he had TB or something, he had some kind of illness. He wasn't very ill because he worked very hard. He had a big business and he was out in the open night and day, so-. I mean in those days, if they can, people can dodge the army, they did dodge the army.

RL: What kind of upbringing did your father have?

BB: He come from a religious family, a very religious family. And they lived in town. And my grandfather had a shop where they did decorating, curtain hanging and upholstery and things like that. My uncle carried on with that, later on. He went to Frankfurt because we went to Frankfurt on all the Jewish holidays, the big holidays, not all of them. We went for Pesach and we went for Rosh Hashanah and Sukkoth. We always were with the grandmother. When my grandmother died, we went to my uncle's place, because they had a very big apartment there. There was a lot of bedrooms there. And of course my aunt and uncle had an apartment

**Tape 1: 20 minutes 29 seconds**

as well.

RL: So your grandmother lived in Frankfurt?

BB: Ja.

RL: Right. And the shop was in Frankfurt, was it, the upholstery shop?

BB: Yes, it was downstairs. I always remember her being on the phone. You've never seen such an old-fashioned phone. You know, it was hanging on a wall and you open, you lifted it out and say hello. I don't know, they didn't dial anything, I don't know, I can't remember how it worked, I never was on that phone, because I couldn't even reach it, I was only little, it was up on a wall.

RL: How did your parents meet?

BB: My grandfather had a diabetes. And he went to Schmitten to the hotel. And my father and my uncle got friendly with the two young women there. Because my uncle married one daughter, Auntie Resha, and my father married Frieda. They both were married to two sisters, two brothers with two sisters.

RL: When did your parents marry?

BB: My parents married in 1919 I think, 1919, after the First World War they got married.

RL: And how many children?

BB: That's my brother and me.

RL: And who is older?

BB: I was the oldest one.

RL: And your brother is called?

BB: Leopold. He's in New York now; he never married.

RL: What is your earliest memory as a child?

BB: I am sitting on my grandmother's bed and she told "take the kid away". I was just under three.

RL: So can you describe your home where you lived?

BB: We lived in Flößheim am Main. We lived in an apartment on the first floor, next to a builder's. The house belonged to the builders and we had quite a big apartment there. And we made alterations, we cut rooms in half that we had enough bedrooms. We had two bedrooms, a lounge, a dining room and a kitchen. There was no bathrooms in those days. We had a big Wanne in the kitchen, which came out on Thursday and everybody have a bath. I mean we



**Tape 1: 23 minutes 43 seconds**

did wash! When we were young we had no water. We had to bring it all from the pumps in the wells and we had to empty it out. The toilet was in the back of the yard, on the other side of the yard. Of course I mean in the night there was potties because you couldn't go that way down there, especially in the winter. And we had buckets for that, bucket for that, bucket for that, everything was in the bucket and you emptied it out and that's how you lived. One bucket for the fresh water, one bucket for the milk, one bucket for the dirty washing up water and one bucket for the stuff what come out of the potties. And we had a hearth with coal fire, we you cooked in it and baked in it. There was no gas in the beginning. There was no sink. I remember when we first put the sink in, we had cold water and we were so thrilled we had water in the house; I must have been about five or six. 'Oh, we are going to have water! And the water is coming out of the tap!' you know, it was so exciting!

RL: What did your father do, what was his occupation?

BB: My father had a business together with a partner. They were making pots and pans, frying pans, all from metal. The people worked on a forge. I often went up there, it was very exciting watching. And they all had these big spectacles on. I don't know, at first it was metal, then it was a dish, then all of a sudden it had a handle and then it was a saucepan and then it was a frying pan. My father didn't do an awful lot with that, he was mainly working in the office because he was a governor. And the other man, Mr Herzheimer, was also a governor, and it belonged to them. Of course Hitler took it all away because they wanted it for ammunition because it had the forge, you know, where you made things.

RL: What kind of education had your father had?

BB: I really don't know. They went to a Jewish school, they had Jewish schools there. I don't know, we never talked about it, because my father wasn't really a youngster; they were in their forties when they were married. If you got a young father you talk about school. It never was mentioned, anything like that. I mean he was good, because I mean they counted up all the columns, they had no computers or machines or anything, it was all done. And then there was all those girls with their typewriters sitting there and they were typing letters. And they came with the horses and carts and afterwards they came with the big lorries and take the stuff away when it was sold. And they brought the other stuff in which had to be worked on. I don't know exactly how it worked, because it wasn't a place for kids to go anyhow. We used to come sometimes on holiday, but we mainly sit around in the office and played around with a spare typewriter or something. We weren't really interested in the business. I'm very sorry of course, because I mean they lost a lot of money, they had money in the banks and everything. We were told, 'Put the money in the box and it goes in the Sparkasse!' But I don't know where the Sparkasse was, I had no idea. It must have been a bank or something, that's why I could never make a claim for it. Here I took that out, I tried to make a claim, but I never got anything, because there was so little I knew about it. There was lots of money. Or wasn't there lots of money when Hitler came? Because I mean they lived on their money for nearly ten years.

RL: At what point was the business taken away? How soon after Hitler came did the business get taken?

BB: First of all they put other people in it. The offices were still run, I mean we had non-Jewish girls there who was working there, they stayed on really. It just kind of changed hands  
**Tape 1: 29 minutes 20 seconds**

somehow. And then my father didn't go and then Mr Herzheimer didn't go anymore. And then we moved to Frankfurt because the cousins of the family went to London and we took their flat, we took their apartment. We moved away from the village, because there was, once the business was gone, there was no sense living there at all.

RL: When did you move to Frankfurt? When was that that you moved?

BB: Just after I've left school. After I've left school, I was about 14 years old, because then I went to Switzerland and I worked in Switzerland. I went to the household school first, which was a waste of money. My father said it was a waste of money and then I came out of that. And then I worked for six months in Switzerland in a children's home. And then I went to Hachsharah because I wanted to go to Israel.

RL: We'll come on to that in a minute. We just stay at the earlier period for a moment. Just coming back to Flößheim and your father really, did he belong to any communal-, was he active in community at all in that place?

BB: There was a synagogue there and my father did most of the services there. Because there was an old man, I mean he did first, because he was so frail and all that, but he didn't want to take it away from him. But after he got so frail and after he died, my father took over. And they didn't have rabbis there. And I used to go every Friday night, I used to go to shul there, it was nice. Later on I took an old lady who couldn't walk. I started off with my first charity, I took her every Shabbat to shul, she was almost blind and I took her. I don't know how she walked up all those frail stairs, and it was cold in that place as well. It was a small place, it wasn't a big shul, you know. But it was quite a nice one, we used to go there.

RL: You say that your father ran most of the service?

BB: Yes, he did, and he belonged-. There wasn't a committee or anything, it was just people give donations for the electricity. There wasn't much. What was there, actually? The water, electricity, how much electricity-. There wasn't central heating. For the stove there we put coal when the coal men came and they put the coals in it on Friday night and he'd come in the morning and he put some more coals in it. The place was cold, it wasn't warm. It was very cold. The flat was cold as well. Everywhere it was cold. We had those big stoves, but they didn't make it really warm.

RL: How big was the Jewish community in Flößheim?

BB: Well, there was about 12 or 14 families before Hitler. And the thing is, the baker was working on Shabbat and this man came on a bicycle from another village. They usually had a minyan with ten men and if there wasn't ten, I used to go with the bakers and I got the two Jewish bakers, they put the jackets on and they came and they made the minyan and they stayed. In the morning we usually had the minyan, because they came from the other villages they came, they walked. They walked a long way. Then Mr Stein came on a bicycle, and the shochet came, he didn't live far. He had to come, he walked from somewhere else.

RL: What made your parents settle there, in Flößheim?

BB: I don't know, my father was friendly with Mr Herzheimer. And they had money, they  
**Tape 1: 34 minutes 27 seconds**

got the money from somewhere. He had, Mr Herzheimer had money, and he wanted a partner. And my father went in as a partner, and as the business was there, so we moved there. I mean we always lived there, can't remember anywhere else. My mother wasn't one for changes. She was kind of old-fashioned. We used to have a woman downstairs, she used to invite us at Christmas time, and she had a big tree and all that. And also there were two elderly women, they were living together. And the people upstairs, we didn't have a lot to do with the people upstairs. They were always changing, because they were attic places and it always rained in, I don't know, I can't remember the people upstairs.

RL: Where did you go to school?

BB: Me? The first school I was with the nuns, because my parents didn't want a girl to go in a rough school where the boys are, because my father had a lot of trouble there as well. Because he went past the cross and we didn't say prayers, we didn't bend down to it and they used to hit us. And the nun school was very nice, they looked after us. The only thing, we got in the wrong religion there. Because I wanted to be confirmed and I said, 'Can't I have a white dress like they have a white dress' Because I was only little, five or six years old, I wanted a white dress. And I said, 'Bridget goes there.' And they said, 'No, Bridget won't go either.' Anyhow, we went to Bridget's house and we found out Bridget doesn't go to be confirmed either, so we-. Bridget's people, they had cows, they sold cows and sheep, they had stables. And that's-. I learned there, I liked the school. And of course that's when I started winning the scholarship, when I was ten, and I went to the Realschule in Rüsselsheim. And there I worked so hard, first of all I didn't like it because on Shabbat, I had to go to school. Whenever I had to dodge for something, I always tried not to, not well, or can't go, my legs hurt or anything, because I had to walk there as well. It was walking across the Main, across the water, across the bridge. My friend used to take my books and I was excused from writing. And we had a painting session at the time. There is a painting-, you know, I couldn't do paint, so the teacher had done a painting for me and showed me how to do it. And afterwards I was a model and I had to sit and they had to paint me, you know, faces. I wasn't very good in geography, I don't know why, and history was awful, German history. I was very good in mathematics, that's where I won everything; I was always good in mathematics, which helped me later on when I was at work as well. I'm still good in maths, I just count up anything. Columns we used to count up, I mean I worked in accountancy here.

RL: How did you get on with the other children?

BB: With the children we were fine, we used to go out on Sundays. We used to go up to the chapel, we talked to the clergyman and we used to call him 'father'. Father Klaus, you know, he was very nice. Trudi always used to say, she has to be, what do they call, I've forgotten the name of it now. Because I wasn't Catholic because I wasn't bending down for the prayers and all that.

RL: Did you ever come across any trouble or any hostility?

BB: Well, that started later. When we were young we were playing together, we went skating together. Trudi took my books to school and all that. And then all of a sudden we

were expelled. First of all we were singing these Hitler songs in school and it was horrible. They had beautiful teachers and they dismissed them all. And they put all these Nazis in. And when the Nazis came of course things changed. And the thing is, they had a big assembly and

**Tape 1: 40 minutes 5 seconds**

then there was Hitler speak, and the non-Jewish girls thought he was funny and they were all funny. And I dare not laugh because-, you know how hard it is when you are eleven years old and they all think it's funny and they are all laughing and you mustn't laugh? It was very, very hard to keep a straight face, because... I don't know, to me he wasn't funny because we know he was horrible and everything is changed. And the year after we were expelled from the school and we went to Mainz to the Jewish, the Bondi-Schule, we went to the Jewish school after that. And then my friend Trudi, I met her on her bike, and said, 'Hello Trudi, I haven't seen you a long time!', she said, 'I mustn't talk to you anymore, I belong to Bund der deutschen Mädchen now and I must not talk to Jewish people.' That was my best friend. Then soon after we actually... I mean I was in charge of all the younger ones; I was one of the oldest ones who went to the Bondi-Schule in Mainz. And I had to take the kids on a train. I had no time to play at all because we were on the go all the time. We had to get up very early in the morning to go on the train. And then we got off the train we had to walk across the bridge and we had to walk to the shul where the school was. And I was in charge of four or five little ones. And we had a good time in that Jewish school, we loved the school. And lunchtime we went to Frowein's and we got our beef sandwiches. Because I had nothing to eat, but the school finished at 2 o'clock and after that we had to take them home. In the summer we often stayed out for a little bit longer. And I remember we went on the Rhine and we sat down near the water. They have something, I don't know whether they still got it in Germany, they had, at 11 o'clock, at so many degrees, it was so hot, because they have no air condition at school, it was boiling, it was all glass on the window, they had call it 'Hitzfrei' – 'heat-free', so at 12 o'clock we could go home. And of course we have to find out when the train is and we were hanging around for the trains with the kids and showed the kids home.

RL: So you were still living in Flößheim and you were travelling each day?

BB: Yes. When I was 14 my father took my out, he said, 'You don't learn anything there. All you learn is Hebrew.' which I did! I learnt Chumash you know, I had all the Jewish subjects. They were very good. As to the German subjects, we didn't have much. We had Jewish history, which was very good. We started the history like, from the Chumash on, but we've gone through all the ages, the Middle Ages, I wish I would have that book still because what I had in the book, through Maimonides, the whole history, right up to the, not the present day, up to about 1920, 1930, all the Jewish history from various countries, which was very interesting. And of course we had geography, we had mathematics. Mathematics I learnt for two years before in, it was a bore for me because I did them. I had all the 1As and 1As and 1As because I knew all. As to the German lessons, there was no German lessons. German lessons: we learnt to write letters to, how would you write a letter to Israel, or write a letter to America or something. You know, we didn't learn the grammar or anything, I don't know, the ordinary lessons was a big laugh. The Jewish lessons were good because the teacher was excellent.

RL: Had you had any Hebrew education before that?

BB: Oh, when I was little-. At the time when I wanted to be confirmed with these girls, my father said, 'She has to have something.' And I went to the school, to the Cheder with the boys. The other girl, she didn't want to go, she said she doesn't like it, the boys don't behave

themselves. The teacher was very good, he told us Bible stories, he taught us how to read, the aleph beit, and elementary. You know, we could read and we could follow the service slowly in a Beit Hakneset and all that.

**Tape 1: 45 minutes 38 seconds.**

And when I was 12 years old, my father called me in and he said, 'You are 12 years old now, you are batmitzvah, you are gonna have a batmitzvah and after that you can't go to Cheder anymore, can't be with boys. You have to go to the rabbi's wife. I don't know why my mother said; she showed me a Tzeno Ureno, all in Yiddish, you know. And she told me how to kosher a chicken, because we didn't have, how to kosher meat, but it was a shecht, they couldn't shecht the animals. They couldn't shecht their animals because it was forbidden in Germany, so we didn't. At one time we had salt beef from somewhere; it was awful stuff, it was hanging about, there were no fridges or anything. And wurst, I don't know where it came from; somebody made wurst or something, which was awful to eat, really. But we had chickens in the garden and the shochet came and used to kill them. And I loved those chickens because I called them all by names; they were my pets, you know. Now can you imagine, to his day I can't see a chicken, I don't like, I don't eat chicken, I never touch chicken. I mean I have the soup sometimes because they have chickens soup, but as to the bodies, it just repels me. And can you imagine, you play with your birds and they come to you. I called them by names, they understand! They are lovely birds, lovely things chickens are. They are noisy, but still.

RL: Did your brother have a barmitzvah?

BB: Oh, he had a lovely barmitzvah; that's when we moved already. We were in Frankfurt already when he had a barmitzvah, because I knew it better than he did.

RL: As a girl, did you belong to any clubs or.

BB: I don't know. We used to go, no, that was in Frankfurt already. In Frankfurt, there were things going on. In the village there was nothing really, you used to read books. You used to read books. The days passed. I mean I went to school, and the school journey, you know, by the time you come home, and we had homework as well. So I mean-. And by the time I delivered all the little ones to their parents and then I came home, I did my homework, and then my mother bring me all the silver candlesticks and all the silver to polish. So I mean I never had time myself, or 'Do a bit of dusting.', or, 'Do this, do that.' So by the time it was finished it was really supertime. And after supper, I don't know, we went to bed early there, we didn't stay up late. Oh, we did have the radio. We were the first family in the village to have a radio. And every Sunday afternoon I had all the non-Jewish kids, all my friends, about five or six of them, they all came up to my place and we were all sitting around the table and listen to the children's hour on the radio. We were the first ones to have a radio because the others never had any radio. That was years and years ago, when I was very young.

RL: What else would you do on a Sunday, in spare time?

BB: On a Sunday in a summer, we went to the f..... we went to the f..... as well, not-, to the chapel. We went to the chapel. I mean it was a nice walk through the fields and up a hill. That chapel was on top. And of course that priest, he was very nice. He talked to all the Jewish people, he was not a Nazi. But then I mean I didn't go anymore. Once I go to high school, I had so much work and the homework to do. And the homework was hard, you sat for about two or three hours doing homework. And there just didn't seem time for anything.

Or we had a chair, we sat out in the sun for a little bit in the summer. And we had all these games. I mean in those days we used to play games. We played skipping and, what do you

**Tape 1: 51 minutes 0 second**

call it, with the wheels, skipping and ball games and spinning tops. It was all different games, for every season was a different game. We all played together like out in the street. Kids played out in the street. When we were little, we played out in the street. We know when a horse comes, you can see the horse coming, you went on a pavement. If a car comes – we had very few cars – but if a car comes, you went on the pavement. When we were skating in the street, in the middle of the street, you could hear the car come. And the drivers knew, because they didn't go like they went nowadays. They went very slow. And the boys used to jump on, and were always told off, used to jump on the back and had a lift on there. It was an easy life; there was nothing else, theatres, anything like that, not in the village, there was nothing.

RL: And you mentioned that when you were a little bit older, you used to go abroad for your holidays. Where would you go to?

BB: We went to Hungary. And we went to, where did we go to? We didn't go to Vienna. One year we went to Hungary, and one year we went. Of course I spent some time with my aunt and uncle, they lived in Bad Homburg, which was also a resort. It was already dangerous, the Nazis was walking about and all that. I used to spend a weekend there, weeks there when it was holiday time. But during school time we didn't have time to do anything, we didn't have time for leisure at all. I mean we had keep fit at school. We had running. I was small, I always was in the back of the. I never win the races, I wasn't. I could run just as well as them, but somebody is about six foot tall and I was only five foot, so I had smaller legs and I just couldn't. Swimming wasn't allowed because it was mixed swimming; my father wouldn't encourage it, 'Don't swim with boys!' And then we had games, I forgot about the games. Once a year there was games, so you had an egg and spoon race, and a potato race, or I don't know what, a load of rubbish. My parents didn't want to come, I said, 'Oh, you must come, all parents come, you must come!' We had a race for the parents, my parents didn't join in. There were all these old farmers. I mean, they were all farmers these people, and from the shops you know them all. I mean we went in the shoemakers and had our shoes done and he sits there with his last and banged about on the soles and had his nails in the mouth. And we went into the grocery shop, a little grocery shop up the road. There was these two old ladies and they had all these sweets on. And if you bought one article you'd get a sweet, and if you'd bought more than four you'd get a bag of sweets, so, I don't know, we always helped ourselves to a sweet, and they knew that we did, because they climbed up the step to get that down. Can you remember old-fashioned grocery shelves before supermarkets? There was no supermarket, it was old-fashioned. And everything came out of a sack: the salt came out of a sack, the sugar came out of a sack, and they made these bags out of bits of paper, they turned it round and round and then they filled it up and put it together. And we had our little baskets. And we went to the bakers and we bought the fresh bread. We were very naughty because we take bits of, it's so lovely when it's just come out of the oven, it's still got heat. And we got always told off because we was touching the bread, they said, 'You shouldn't do that!', but we did. Buying bread. What else? We bought clothes, we didn't go in shops to buy clothes. My mother bought materials and we had dresses made. We had one dress for weekend and a school uniform for the week, that's all, we didn't have many clothes. Underwear – I don't know, when they fell to bits you buy new ones, otherwise you had the same ones all the time. My mother used to do the washing in the-, there was no washing machine, there was a boiler and they put coals underneath it and it got hot and they boiled it. Otherwise, later on, when we

had gas, it was put on a gas stove in a-, and it was rubbed on a rubbing board and hanged out in the garden. And sometimes in the winter, it became all stiff with ice.

**Tape 1: 57 minutes 0 second**

RL: Did your mother have help in the house?

BB: Yes, we had a woman who'd come in with the cleaning once a week. And we had another woman who came on Shabbat. She helped with the fires. And she helped when we were children. Someone, 'Warte, bis die Else kommt!', 'Wait until Else comes!', because we wanted to get dressed, and we were little. She helped us to dress. She said, Else was the one to help you dress every morning. That was before school, when we were little. But Else didn't come afterwards anymore. We did it ourselves. I mean there wasn't a lot of work. I mean there was, but I mean my mother was busy all day long, she had nothing else to do actually. She cleaned the house and we cleaned the steps once a week and, I don't know, they did the cooking. There wasn't a lot to cook because there wasn't really-. We used to go to a place where you got fish. Once a week the fish came. I don't know where the fish come from. There were carps, they come out of the river. And what else? Vegetables you get from the farmer, you just-

RL: This film is just about to end, so I think we'll just stop here for now.

**TAPE 2**

RL: Really I want to go on now to the Nazi period and the changes that took place. And the difference that you felt once Hitler had come to power.

BB: I gave you already a little tiny bit when we left school. To tell you the truth, children don't take much notice of things. It's not grown-ups, it's later on. Once they started-, the Kristallnacht came and they broke everything up. And we were in that flat upstairs, and there was an uncle, actually he was one of the Halberstadts. I don't know, the great-grandfather, he was on crutches and he couldn't come upstairs. I mean upstairs we had a sukkah in the house and everybody went in the sukkah when the Nazis came. They smashed all the shops up and what machinery they got hold of. I don't know that personally, they didn't even hurt people, we were afraid, but they didn't. They were out or they pinch what they could pinch, tried to smash everything. And that's when it actually started. That morning was a terrible morning, really. Somebody came in, a woman, she said, 'All the synagogues are burning!' And I said, 'Oh, there are all my books and things in there.' We had our books burnt, we didn't get any-, we couldn't get out anything. And then they came round and they arrested my father. And they send him to Buchenwald. That was the first from the concentration camp actually. And I said to him, 'Take your tefillin with you.' And he said, 'It's Shabbat, I don't want to take it.' I said, 'Look, you've got to take things with you. You don't know how long you are going to be in this prison.' We thought they take him to prison or somewhere, we didn't know where they were going to taken them. And he came back very ill, my father, from Buchenwald. But we more or less, we carried on actually, with everything we were doing at that time.

RL: How long was he in Buchenwald?

BB: I think it was about six weeks or something. They just show them they had the electric wires there, and they get no food or anything. And they told us to get away. We wanted to get away but we couldn't get away! We couldn't get away. My parents was kind of stuck, I don't

know. I volunteered to go to Israel. And I started with that Hachsharah. So I went on a train every Monday morning and I came back in the evening on Thursday night, unless I got a lift.

**Tape 2: 3 minutes 30 seconds**

In those days, it was in the Nazi time, to tell you the truth. I mean now I wouldn't get a lift, you know, hitchhike, but at that time you could hitchhike. We went on the lorries. The lorry drivers gave us lifts and we got home, saved the fare money, sometimes. My parents didn't know, they would have been frantic. But they never interfered with you. Nowadays, you hear that they kill little girls and all that! We were little girls! I might have been 14, but. We went on these lorries, lorries and delivery cars, they gave us a lift and we talked to them. And they wanted to take us in to have a cup of coffee, cup of tea, 'No, we don't want anything, we just want to get home.' So they used to get out and have a drink and then they'd come back and they take us to a certain place, and when it was nearest to home, so we were at home. And I helped my mother preparing for Shabbat and we prepared for Shabbat and that was it. And Shabbat we went to shul, the Beit Haknesset. Like nowadays, you had lunch. And when you had children at home, the older ones went sleeping. And we went to the Bachad, the youngsters were meeting in the afternoon. And one day they had a melava malke in the night and I said, 'Oh, I don't know whether I can go to melava malke in the night because my parents won't like us to be out.' I had two little cousins with me. So the Rabbi's son said, 'Oh, you know what? I tell my father and my father will tell your father and you'll be alright.' And we took it for granted, we enjoyed ourselves, we went to the Rabbi's house and had something to eat. There was a big meal for melava malke; we didn't pay for it there, the kids didn't pay. And then we come to about 9 o'clock, 10 o'clock, and I say, 'Oh I must say we'll have to go home.' I say, 'How are we going to go home, you are not supposed to be out late at night!' I went to Joshi and said, 'Joshi, did you tell your father?' – 'Yeah, I told my father.' – 'Did your father tell my father?' – 'Yeah, I suppose so.' Anyhow, I said, 'Come on, honey.' Honey and Adel, we have to go home. I don't know how we are We have to go past the beer cellar. Now if you come beer cellar, can you run fast? We go very quickly past the beer cellar. And we ran past the beer cellar. And nobody started, there were all those drunks there. We were running up. And we came out. And there was Honey's mother, my mother, crying. Whatever is going on? They said, 'Where have you been?' He said, 'You are the oldest, you know you are not supposed by yourself out in the night without me.' – 'No', I said, 'I thought Daddy would come and collect us.' They said, 'How did Daddy know where you were?' I said to my father, 'Didn't the rabbi tell you?' He said no. 'You should ask for things like that. First of all I wouldn't let you go, you are not to be out that late at night.' I said, 'It's not all that late.' – 'Ah yes, it's not all that late, but you are not to be out in the street! You have to go past that beer cellar and those Nazis are in the street, you know, they can take you away.' I said, 'Nobody takes away-.' I had a big mouth. I have a mother who looks after me, an angel come and looks after us. They always look after you, after Shabbat. She didn't hit us or anything. We never done it again, but we enjoyed ourselves so much, we were singing and dancing, and it didn't realise how the time went. It was in a winter's night and it was dark when we came out. The funny thing about it, I was never afraid of these people. Only to me they were old people. I know they were singing 'Juden raus', and whatnot and they were marching and all that. And they are Hitler people and all that. Because we didn't go to the camps, you see, we didn't know anything about it. I mean we went to the keep-fit class. I know we weren't allowed here, we weren't allowed there, we couldn't go swimming, we couldn't go to the sports place, we couldn't go to a lot of places. But it didn't hit you. We were together. Because the Mizrachi people, we were all Mizrachi people, we were all ready to go to Israel, we sing 'Israel', we dancing, dancing the Hora, and we enjoyed ourselves all the time, so it really didn't hit us all that. It's later on, I don't know. I was already away



actually when the worst things happened, when my father came out of the camp and he was so ill and he told us what was going on there. Because I mean the worst thing is for the people who stayed. Because my parents could have gone off to Israel and they didn't. They sent the

**Tape 2: 10 minutes 2 seconds**

furniture, but they didn't. I was upset because I couldn't go to Israel, because they had chosen somebody else instead of me. So the next thing is the Kindertransport.

RL: Before we come on to that, the Hachsharah that you went to, where was this? And can you tell me a bit more about it?

BB: It wasn't a Jewish farm, it was a goyisch farm we went to.

RL: Where was it?

BB: In the country somewhere, in Hofheim. For them, we were just helping them milking the cows and mucking out the stables and looking after the goats and learning how to milk the goats and go in the fields, how to harvest potatoes. I haven't been there very long, only three months. And I enjoyed it, it was just work. And they got work for nothing done, you see. We didn't get anything, he didn't get anything, you see. We worked for nothing, they would have to employ people to do all this work. And all these Jewish kids came and they did the work, they showed us what to do. I mean it takes time to learn how to milk a cow, and there was three cows to be milked. And then the goats have to be milked as well. And then you take them out. When they are out you take all the dirt out of the stables and they put it all somewhere what you call a misthaufen, whatever it is. We didn't learn anything, it comes to that, we just-

RL: How many children were on that Hachsharah?

BB: There was eight of us.

RL: And was there somebody in charge?

BB: No! There was supposed to be, but he disappeared. He introduced us-, like all Jewish things, you get introduced and he states us, and he said, 'The farmer tells you what to do. And careful, and you go home with that train every time, don't go on hitchhikes! Don't hitchhike!' If I had a boy with me I always hitchhiked. I didn't go by myself hitchhiking, no. If there was a boy with me, or if there was three of us. They didn't like to take three, they don't mind taking two in the cars.

BB: Was this the first Zionistic type thing that you were involved in or had you been involved before this?

RL: Not really. Everybody always wanted to go to Israel. It comes from the school already. The youngsters want to go to Israel. It wasn't Israel at that time, it was Palestine and it was illegal to go there anyhow. They took so many youngsters, the British government allowed so many youngsters to go to, well it wasn't Israel, to go to Palestine. And I was in a group, and I don't know why they took that other girl instead of me. I had all that training and then they took somebody who had no training! 'Training', whether really we should call it that.

RL: And you say that you used to go to Bachad in Frankfurt. Can you tell me a little bit about that group, what they did and how many they were?

BB: It started as quite a big group. And now the big group, the first thing is, lots of people  
**Tape 2: 14 minutes 15 seconds**

goes. That was on a Saturday afternoon, we used to meet on a Saturday afternoon at first. Then we meet in the week. But most of them were busy with other things, you didn't go in the week at all. It was a Saturday afternoon thing. We were singing songs, a Shabbat song, and we had nosh. And we always did dancing, at that time everybody was dancing. And we had somebody talking about Israel sometimes. And if there wasn't, we just amused ourselves and talked together.

RL: Was there a leader for this group?

BB: Yes, there was leaders. Yes, there was older-. But they all disappeared, you know. Because after the Kristallnacht, they all went abroad, a lot of them went abroad. Or they went away from the town in case they get arrested. They were floating around, one minute was one there, you couldn't get a regular person. The older ones, they didn't, they wanted to be with the young ones, but they just couldn't do it.

RL: How did your parents feel about Zionism?

BB: Well, it was somewhere to go. Because Ezra did nothing. Ezra, I was teaching, and at first I started of with Ezra on Oneg Shabbat, the young kids are coming together, you prepare something of the Sedra and then they were just talking. I might sing a Shabbat song and all that, and it didn't do anything to me. You done that once in four weeks on Miz Bachad and I looked after the kids, you know, I had the duty for looking after little kids, seven-year, eight-year olds. But I had so much seven and eight-year, all my relations, they all were little, you know. I always had to look after every-, I was a ruddy nurse from the beginning to the end. When I want something for myself sometimes, I was a bit selfish. So once in a while I went to Bachad because that was more exciting and had boys there. It was nice boys. I don't know, boys, my father never liked me to be with boys, because he said, 'Boys are no good.' I must have been about seventeen before I knew the facts of life! We were still not eating gooseberries because you get pregnant from the gooseberry bush! We were ignorant. When we were in the village, we were ignorant. Babies come from the gooseberry bush. How do babies come from the gooseberry bush? I don't know.

RL: So when you started to go to Bachad, were your parents alright with that?

BB: Well, they didn't know. It was run from the Rabbi from the shul and I was with the Rabbi's sons. We were friends because my parents were friends with the Rabbi. And it was an afternoon for the youngsters. I mean my parents, if you want to go to Israel, why shouldn't you go to Israel? I don't know, because I mean Ezra didn't go to Israel. It's only Bachad who went to Israel. The ordinary Zionists, I don't know whether they existed or not in Germany, I don't know. You see, we were the frum people, we didn't mix with the Liberals. The Liberals were other people. The only time we got in touch with the Liberals, because we used their gym, for the exercises, otherwise we had nothing to do with them. We came in the gym and we walked out of the gym, we didn't talk to anybody, they were not our people.

RL: Which shul did you go to in Frankfurt?

BB: The Borneplatz, big shul which was burnt, a beautiful shul.

RL: And who was the Rabbi?

**Tape 2: 19 minutes 10 seconds**

BB: Rabbi Hofmann.

RL: And what were you doing in Frankfurt once you had moved there? What were you doing there?

BB: Well, really, I went, was it three months or six months, to the Haushaltsschule. They teach you how to cook and clean floors, you know, various housework. I knew how to-, I didn't know how to do housework, really. She laughed at me because I didn't know how to wring out a cloth. I folded it together like that, 'No never do it like this!' In those days they used to scrub everything with scrubbing brushes and washed it over. And I have to go under the beds and I have to turn mattresses and all that. And cooking, we had to do those roasts, I don't know, once on the exam I burnt my roast. You see, it was a full day. I went there in the morning and came back in the afternoon. And my parents have said most of it is a waste of money after the time and then I got that job with the children, in a children's home. I don't know whether I wanted to be a children's nurse or whether I didn't want to be a children's nurse. Because personally I didn't like kids.

RL: So where was the children's home?

BB: I've forgotten the name of that place.

RL: And what did you do, what kind of work were you doing?

BB: Well, work with the children, giving help all over. And there is lots of things to do with kids, take them in prams. And there were handicapped children, so we kind of looked after them. They put them in a chair, take them for walks, some of them you help to dress and undress. You taught them a certain amount of things, you said prayers with them. And on the whole, it was nice. There was three of us who did that. And we got a bit of money for it as well, that one we got paid for. But it was only a short-term thing, I think we filled in for somebody who was away or somebody who left or anything, we didn't stay there.

RL: And after that?

BB: And after that I went to the Kindertransport, we came to England.

RL: So that was your last job?

BB: The last job, yes.

RL: You mentioned that you went to Switzerland.

BB: Yes.

RL: What was that?

BB: That was where that home was, on the Swiss border. I don't know whether it was Germany or Switzerland? My memory just doesn't go back to the name of the place. Was it Merano? It wasn't Merano, it was in the mountains, it was like Jewish handicapped children they were. Well, they weren't handicapped, you don't call them that now, you call them slow

**Tape 2: 23 minutes 30 seconds**

children or something, it's got a name for it, I can't remember. I mean they weren't mental or anything. Just their limbs didn't work, or, with all of them, something was wrong, otherwise their parents wouldn't pay a lot of money to have them in these places. I don't know what happened to them in the end; they probably also have gone in the camps.

RL: So were you at that children's home at the time of Kristallnacht or were you back in Frankfurt?

BB: No, that was after Kristallnacht.

RL: That was after Kristallnacht, aha, yes.

BB: It was only three months. Between these things, there was only a month, just to fill in things, because I mean in the village I helped my mother, then she had a big place. But she didn't need any help in Frankfurt at all. I mean I was bored at the time when we were doing-. I wanted to do something. When I was in the Haushaltsschule, there were these three girls who said they were going, was it Milano or something, it's got a funny name, they said, 'Would you like to come to Switzerland?' They said, 'All you got to do is pay your fare.' And my father said, 'What kind of a place is this?' and all that, and we went on a trip there and he talked to the matron or whatever she was. And he said, 'Oh yes, we'd like her to come. It's only for three months, you know.' And they said, 'Oh well, she's going to Israel afterwards anyhow.' So I mean I was going to Israel afterwards anyhow, so three months was fine. It was fresh air there and it was nice. We didn't do-, we worked, but it wasn't hard work or anything. It wasn't domestic work or anything. And then we bought things for Israel, which didn't come off. I was very disappointed.

RL: What was your father doing once you'd moved to Frankfurt, what did your father do?

BB: He wasn't very well, he didn't do-. He went to shiurim. He went to daven in the morning, shiurim in the day, in the night He wasn't allowed to work or anything after he'd come out of camp, he said, 'There is nothing here, we have to get away from it. We have to get away.' But then my mother took that job in the hospital and she was a nurse and she wouldn't leave the patients. Because they could have gone off to Israel, the furniture went and then they didn't. I mean not furniture, it was the sowing machine and odds and ends what they sent off to Israel. We had a load of trouble to get a bit of money for those things even. They should have left everything and went!

RL: So where was she a nurse?

BB: In a hospital.

RL: In Frankfurt?

BB: Ja.

RL: When did she start that?

BB: She had been doing that all the time, since Kristallnacht. She always went to the hospital. At first she started as a domestic, but then they got other people for domestic work

**Tape 2: 27 minutes 6 seconds**

and then she did nursing because she was a nurse at one time, when she was younger. She wasn't a qualified nurse, but you know what nurses do in hospital. I mean they had no medicines, what did they have there anymore? This was during the war. And 1941 they went on their train to nowhere, where nobody knows what happened to them afterwards. Some people have tried so hard to find out what happened to them. Whether they never got off the train, whether they killed them when they got off the train. They never been registered in any of -, because they are very good, the Germans, to register all the people who was there. They weren't in Auschwitz, they weren't in any of them. I made enquiries and I couldn't get nothing, so I don't know. Somebody said they probably got off the train and they shot them all, I don't know what they did.

RL: Who was she taken with? Was she taken with the children or the people from the hospital?

BB: No, she, they came for them-. I had a card from Cuba, which came to Cuba, it went to my uncle in Cuba, and he sent it on to us, that's the very last one: 'We are going on a train journey towards Poland.' And after that – nothing. Which really, it did break my heart at the time, but I couldn't do anything. And then I tried later. And I don't know, I didn't try in the right places. And I went to Yad Vashem and told to have the names down, but nothing happened. Somebody said you can go with the Red Cross and you can find out, and I never did. Because it won't bring them back, and then you won't find a grave from these. If they are in a camp there are graves. If they shot them, there is no grave, there is nothing, you don't know where they are.

RL: So when you discovered that you were not going to Israel, what happened at that point?

BB: Well, my father put us down for those Kindertransports because we had relations here. My grandmother had a sister who married a Jewish-English boy after the First World War. And they lived in Golders Green in London. And they helped us to come over with the Kindertransport.

RL: What was their name?

BB: Bilkus.

RL: Was this on your mother's side?

BB: No, on my father's side. Yes, my granny's sister. She looked like her as well, she was alive still when we first came to England. We were evacuated together.

RL: So first of all, tell me about the arrangements that had to be made for you to come on the Kindertransport. What do you know of that?

BB: All I know, we got luggage and it was all arranged for us and we had to meet at a certain time. I don't know who made all the arrangements; I really don't know who made all the arrangements. Whether it was made from England and they took so many children. At first they didn't want to take me because I was over fourteen. And then my mother said, 'Oh, she's got a little brother, he's handicapped.' Except he wasn't handicapped or anything, but

**Tape 2: 31 minutes 0 second**

yes, we have to go together. So we went together. And the next thing, we went on the train journey. They took us to the trains with our bits and pieces and we got to England.

RL: How old was your brother?

BB: Eleven. No, he was barmitzvahed, he was thirteen.

RL: And do you remember the day of departure, can you describe that day?

BB: That day we just went to the train and the train took us to Holland. And from the train we went on a boat and we come to Harwich. And from Harwich there was all people who took us on a train to go to London. We were very tired because-. I was very sick on that boat because in those days, the boats-, I felt sick on the boat, I felt terrible. And we came, and Aunt Gussie took us to their business. They had a gown place in London, in the West End. They were making evening gowns. And she spoke to us in Yiddish, which-, we knew German, we knew a little bit of Yiddish, but not an awful lot. And we stayed in their place for a little while. But my uncle and aunt with their whole family was there and another aunt. They had too many people there. So they put me in these domestic jobs, which were no good at all.

RL: Before I just ask you about that, on the day that you departed, what were you allowed to bring with you, what were you allowed to pack?

BB: One suitcase and a hand luggage.

RL: What kind of things had you put in the case?

BB: Mainly clothes. Mainly clothes. What can you bring, you couldn't-. My brother brought that Hanukkah menorah, that Hanukkah thing down the bottom. He had that. And I had some pictures. I don't know. We brought mainly clothes really, you couldn't put much in these cases. We didn't take any pictures or anything really, because my parents was upset we were going away and they are staying behind. And I said, 'Go on when that Israel trip comes, get on it!' because I made all those arrangements for their Israel trip and I was upset that they didn't go. So they sent that stupid sowing machine, they should have gone! It was only legal, there was nothing. My father never did anything illegal and it was against all his, you know, he'd wanted to get out, but he wanted to go in the normal way. If he would have got an aeroplane or a car or a train where he could have got somewhere, he would have gone, but to go into nowhere when you are over fifty, you know, it is. The cousins all did, the young people all got out, they all got out. Bu the elderly just stayed. My uncle and aunt they went, they were younger. But my other uncle they didn't go, they went in a camp.

RL: So how did you feel, leaving your parents?

BB: I don't know, it's one of those things we just had to, you know. I wasn't the kind to cry over things, I always liked something new. I liked something new, and I come here and I had these cousins. I mean they had four children and I got friendly with her, she took me to shul. It was very funny, the first time she took me to shul in Golders Green. And we went in the shul, and I was used to old-fashioned shul, you know, with rabbi and whats-its-name. And that rabbi, he had that gown on and the hat and they both didn't have beards. And the Chazan didn't have a beard and the rabbi. And I said, 'What shuls are you taking me to?' He said,

**Tape 2: 35 minutes 49 seconds**

'United.' I said, 'What does "united" mean? Is it a liberal shul?' – 'No, it's not a liberal shul.' 'Are the people frum?' 'Some are and some are not.' I didn't know what to make out of it. I mean the service was there, but it was strange. They looked to me like Christian ministers with their gowns on, because on the continent they don't wear gowns. They don't wear gowns, on the holidays they wore these cylinder hats; what do you call them, these shiny hats?

RL: Top hats?

BB: Are they top hats? Would you really call them that? Those shiny things.

RL: What else struck you as different when you arrived?

BB: Oh, first of all we come to these little sandwiches [sic], you know, these little sandwiches, all cut up little bits. We used to eat slices of bread. I was still using slices of bread. They made these little sandwiches like you have in a party, cut all the crusts of. And tea, of course we didn't know what tea was. Tea, we used to bring black tea. Just tea, after the Shabbat meal, we never used to drink coffee. And well, then we played cricket, and the boys together at cricket, I never heard cricket before, and they taught us how to play crickets. And what else is there? Oh, the beds, you know. We come in the beds-, we used to have little downs, like eider downs, and I didn't know whether to fold those beds back or whether it should be on the bed or I should take it off. I sat there on the bed and Agnes said to me, 'Aren't you going to bed?' And I said to her, 'What do you do with this?', and she said, 'You take it off!' Ah, you know, the bed cover. It was such an enormous bed cover, it wasn't just a spread. So we had to take it off; I didn't know we had to take it off. And then I was helping in the house, but they didn't need any help, because they had too many people there, actually. So my uncle met somebody and they got me this domestic job, which was no good.

RL: What did you have to do?

BB: First thing I came in, she said, 'You put this uniform on.', a black schmatte, it was a black dress. And it smelled! It was awful. I said, 'I'm not gonna wear that. I'm not going to wear that.' He said, 'All the girls wear that when they work here.' I said, 'I don't mind wearing an apron, but I'm not wearing this, it's horrible. I'm wearing my own clothes.' And they are supposed to be frum and on Friday-. The work I had to do there, it was terrible. You had to do all the washing at home, and you had to boil it in the boiler. And he was a solicitor, and had three shirts every day. And you had to wash them and starch and iron them. It was such a lot of work to do. Monday was all day long wash day. And there was no help. And I did all the lunches, suppers, make the meals in night. I had to wash up. And we only had half

a day once a week or once a fortnight, I think. That's all there was, free. And usually on Shabbat I used to walk all the way from Golders Green up to North London, to visit my brother and my friends. And I stayed there until she asked me on Shabbat to light a fire. I said, 'No, I'm not lighting fires on Shabbat, I'm Jewish.' She said the other girl was Jewish. I said, 'It doesn't make no difference what the other girls did.' She said, 'But you can do it because I'm ill.' I said, 'You are not ill, you are only pregnant.' So I left there. And then I talked to my uncle and my family. And I got another job; I got a job with a Hassidic family. And they had six children and I had to look after all these kids and a baby. She never looked after her baby at all, I did all the work on the baby. I changed the nappies. It was good learning, really.

**Tape 2: 40 minutes 51 seconds**

RL: So how long were you with the first family?

BB: The first family-, I came in the winter when it was ice cold. We had all these chill blains and other things. Until about March, about two months. I don't think it was two months really, because I got annoyed with her. There was too much work to do and Aunty Gussie said, 'It's not for her. Haven't they got a domestic?' I said, 'No, they haven't got a domestic.' She said, 'Ridiculous, a big house in Hampstead Garden Suburb, for one person to do all that, it's ridiculous.' So my uncle got me another job with a Hassidic family. She had a cleaner coming in at least, that's one thing already. She'd done the cleaning. And I didn't need to do washing, that's another thing. Except the baby, the baby's things. I mean there is nappies, you had to wash nappies then. You didn't have throwaway nappies. She was a gorgeous baby really. And the other two had nursery school every day and I had to cook for the baby, make food for her. I mean she's only a baby, didn't eat a lot. And I remember it was Pesach there, I've never seen so much chopped herring in my life! We made chopped herring, we were chopping forever on a board. And she said she's doing the cooking, but she never did the cooking. I had to do the potatoes, I had everything prepared for her, and she did the cooking. She came home from work. She went to work and she then came home. She came home from work and brought two of the kids back from the school. There were six kids there, it was lively. They were naughty, the boys.

RL: Did you get paid in either of these jobs?

BB: Yes, what was it, 15 shillings a week? And your board.

RL: And were you alright for Shabbat with the second family?

BB: Yes. Oh, they were frum, it was nice. But after Pesach I left there as well, because I had the whole family, and look after all these kids, there was a lot of work really. And Pesach cleaning, she had a man to come in, but she took everything to pieces. The cooker had to be cut to pieces and everything cut to pieces. I don't know, Pesach here, I never make Pesach like that, covered up with silver paper.

RL: What date did you actually come over on the Kindertransport?

BB: In 1938 in Spring.

RL: Do you remember which month?

BB: May.



RL: And your first job, that was in the winter of 1938?

BB: Yes.

RL: Are you sure it's 1938 or was it 1939, because Kristallnacht was the end of 1938.

BB: No, it was 1939.

RL: It must have been 1939.

**Tape 2: 44 minutes 42 seconds**

BB: 1939, yes.

RL: So war had broken out?

BB: Yes. Oh, I was in that hostel. When did I go to that hostel? Oh, that was the first job. No, after that I went to the hostel, that's right. I worked in a hostel for boys, boys which came from Vienna, with the Warhaftigs. That was a lovely job really, because I got really friendly with all those boys.

RL: So where was the hostel?

BB: In Rectory Road, that place was demolished, it was dangerous when we were there.

RL: Tell me about it, what was it all about?

BB: Well, these boys was brought over by Dr Schönfeld from Vienna, during war. And they lived there and we did all the cooking and looking after them. They had domestic people to do the work. And then Mrs Warhaftig had also a baby, so I helped her with the baby. And we joined in with everything. On Shabbat they had zemiros, it was so homely, it was really homely! It broke my heart when the war broke out and they went to Gateshead. All the boys went to Gateshead. So I got my travel ticket and I went to Gateshead. I went to Gateshead, but I was independent. No, I was here first, I was working here first. I was in London, I was working, I got myself a job.

RL: So first of all, keeping with the hostel, how big was the hostel, how many boys were there?

BB: I think there were about twenty. How many rooms, about six rooms, there were four in a room – about twenty, yes.

RL: And who was in charge?

BB: Mr and Mrs Warhaftig. And they had friends, which also helped. We all worked together, there was two friends. I don't know what happened to them in the end. They were also refugees.

RL: What kind of a building was it?

BB: A very old building. I told you, it was demolished soon after we left because it was dangerous when we were there, but that's what they gave us. When Dr Schönfeld got the boys over they had to live somewhere, and they couldn't put all these boys in families, so they opened this hostel and we were in that hostel.

RL: So were there proper bedrooms?

BB: There were bedrooms, yes, they had beds. They had beds and there was cookers. We had kosher cookers and everything, because I remember I was making kippers for all of them. How did we make kippers? I don't know, we had always parcels sent in from the frum people. And then came that whole box with kippers, so she said, 'What do you do with

### **Tape 2: 48 minutes 15 seconds**

kippers? How do you cook kippers?' She had no idea how to cook kippers. So I said, 'Oh, you can't put them in a saucepan, they make everything smell.' I said, 'You know what, we put them under the grill.' And it was a big grill and they didn't have foil at the time. I just took the metal things out of the grill and I managed to get eight in the baking tray. And I'd done these and I'd done another lot and another lot and everybody liked the kippers! There was a whole box of kippers, you had to finish them. So she said, 'What can you have with kippers?' I said, 'You can boil potatoes with them, they can have sandwiches with them, you can eat just bread with them, you know, you don't need anything with them.' And I said, 'A few tomatoes or something.' The boys loved them, they were nice. They had all bones in them, they had to take the bones out.

RL: So what were the boys doing during the day?

BB: They were learning. They went to Yeshiva. They were all boys which went to Yeshiva. They were about sixteen or seventeen; they were about the same age as me, really. They were nice boys. Or did they go to school? I think they went to school. Yes, they went to Avigdor School, that's right. The younger ones went to the Avigdor School, yes, I remember they went to Avigdor. And the older ones was learning.

RL: How long were you at the hostel with them?

BB: Until war broke out and everybody got this gasmask and they said we have to evacuate them. And I said, 'Can I go with evacuate?' He says, 'You can't. You don't belong, you are not one of the boys.' And I said, 'Is Mr and Mrs Warhaftig going to Gateshead?' So he said, 'No, they are not, they are going to stay with family.' - 'Can I stay with them?' - 'No, you can't stay with them.' - 'Everybody says I can't stay with them, you can't do this and you can't do that.' I got in touch with Aunty Gussie then and I said, 'Shall I go to Gateshead?' She said, 'What do you want to do in Gateshead? You don't know it, it's a strange town. Come with us, we are getting evacuated. We are going to Burnham-on-Sea.' So we went to Burnham-on-Sea, in that house. That house has history as well, because the milkman wouldn't come in that house! And I asked the first day when he came, the milkman. I know the milkman brought the milk, and it was a freezing cold day and I said, 'Would you like a nice hot drink?' - 'Oh, that'd be lovely.' And I made him a cup of tea and I said, 'Come in, sit down.' - 'Oh, I wouldn't go in that house!' I said, 'What's the matter with that house?' He said, 'It's ghosts there.' I said, 'Ghosts?' He said, 'Oh, you go upstairs and look in that side room, that's where the granny slept.' He said, 'You'll see all the blood stains. There was a young couple and they killed each other in their place.' And I don't know, it wasn't

frightening or anything. So Stanley and I, the next night, we both stayed up and waited for the ghost. And the ghost came! There was a man and a lady, and they were dressed in-, she had a pinafore on and he-, I remember how they were dressed. And we see them and they walked through the door and the door was closed! Stanley said, 'They are standing at the door!' And I said, 'Don't talk!' And then they disappeared again, they didn't do anything, they just walked about. There were ghosts there. And then we all said the next day we'd seen the ghosts. And they said, 'Yeah, you told me, they are not real, you are mad!' And Elke said, 'You went in Granny's room?' I said, 'Well, that's where the ghosts are, we couldn't go anywhere else.' – 'Didn't Granny-?' I said, 'No, Granny was asleep, we didn't disturb her, we just sat there.' She said, 'You are mad!' And what's-its-name, all the other kids wanted to see the ghost, and she said, 'You can't go up there, you are not allowed to go.' We never saw the ghost again because we didn't come anymore. And, I don't know, to this day it seems kind of a bit of a

**Tape 2: 53 minutes 33 seconds**

fantasy, wasn't it? That was the ghost in Burnham-on-Sea, and but, they starved us really. They used to bring, Aunty Gussie used to bring a kosher chicken. And it was a chicken, you know, it was all in one! I had to cut it up and take all the guts out and salt it and kosher it. Och, it was awful, I don't want to eat that at all. And as I don't eat chickens now, I had to do the chicken. And that one chicken, that was for about eight or nine kids. And all they gave us is the skin and bits and pieces what nobody wanted, the poor refugees. So we stayed there over Yomtov actually, it was Rosh Hashanah. And we said, 'We have to do something in Burnham-on-Sea. We collect people on the beach, find who is Jewish.' I said, 'We are going to find people who are Jewish to make a service on Rosh Hashanah.' And we did quite a few families. Some knew each other, there is a lot of families evacuated there. And I went to the Galach and he said to me, 'Yes, you can have a room where you can hold a service.' Of course we had no Sefer Torah or anything. And the funny thing is, one of the men came along and he had a Shofar. And we blow the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah. It was very nice. And then I said to Aunty Gussie-, we were so hungry in the evening, we took money out of the bank to buy chips, we were so hungry. We didn't have enough to eat there. She didn't give us enough- the boys were hungry always; I don't know whether I was hungry as well. But I bought the chips; they were nice when you bought the chips, portion of chips. And then I said to Aunty Gussie, 'I stay here, but I need a bit of pocket money, I can't-.' So she said, 'What do you want to stay here? It's quite quiet in London, nothing is going on. Why don't you go back to London, it's easy to get a job, you can get a job now.' So first I went back to London and I got a furnished room. And I lived with girls, it really wasn't any good. They all got pregnant! They went to dances and they brought boys home, American soldiers home. They had all those American soldiers. The three of them, all pregnant. I didn't go to the dances. Oh, I had American soldiers talk to me, 'Don't you ever go out?' I said, 'No, I don't.' So he said, 'Isn't it boring to be at home?' – 'No, it's alright really, I've got my job.' And that was that.

RL: What were you doing during the day?

BB: I worked in the City. I worked in a clothing-, we were marking out for the uniforms, they taught you what to do. And examining them when they were finished and mark them off. I worked there quite a long time.

RL: Now this film is just about to end, so we'll just stop here.

**Tape 2: 57 minutes 37 seconds**

**TAPE 3****Tape 3: 0 minute 4 seconds**

RL: Okay, so this is Tape Number Three with Mrs Bessie Barnett. I was just trying to get the sequence of events right with you. And I know you've said that you came over in May 1939 and that when you first came over, you say you went into that tailor shop to help there. Can you just tell me a little bit about that, what you were asked to do?

BB: Oh, what I have to do there? The first thing, when a new girl comes in, she makes tea. Of course I never in my life made tea. I mean I know how to make a cup of tea, but I didn't know how to do a great big pot. I don't know, and they didn't have teabags in those days, it's loose tea, you have to put it in, and I didn't know how much to put in. And there was nobody

**Tape 3: 1 minutes 4 seconds**

to ask, so how much do I put in? I put two big tablespoons full in and I filled the thing up. And of course it came out like pee water. And what's his name said, 'You don't know how to make tea?' And when the woman came, 'You don't know to make tea? You can't drink this! You don't know how to make tea!' I said, 'I know, I never made tea before.' – 'What, at your age, you don't know how to make tea?' I said, 'No, I come from abroad, I've never made tea in my life before.' He said, 'You drink the stuff.' I said, 'It comes out of a little pot where we are, it's in the little pot on the table. I don't know what -.' Anyhow, then Auntie What's-its-name, she took me in the finishing place where you finish things. And I was never good at sewing really; you had to do buttonholes and things like that. And I said to her, I said to her, 'You know, I'm not very good.' she said, 'I noticed you're not very good at that.' And then said what's-its-name, 'You better find something else to do.' And I think, no, where, did I go, it's in the book I think-

RL: We thought you went into the hostel after that?

BB: I must have gone into the hostel first.

RL: And then when war broke out?

BB: No, that winter I had those domestic jobs the first winter.

RL: And then you went into the domestic-. You were evacuated when war broke out with the family.

BB: I wasn't very long in the hostel; I think it's about a month or six weeks or something when-. I loved it in the hostel but they took the boys away and this house was condemned anyhow because all the time you had people coming in for the police, you see. 'You can't, how can you live here, you're not allowed to live here, this house has been condemned for months!' They put us in there. I mean we managed somehow. Nobody ever fell, nobody broke their neck or anything. You could walk down the steps, you could fall through, but with so much activities going on there, so you didn't. I was mainly in the kitchen and the dining room. I helped in the kitchen, I helped with the baby when she was doing something. And then when I went into the dining room the boys helped me, we put it all on trays and took it out. We had to wash up by hands, about twenty boys by the washing up. And dishing out the food, and a certain amount of cooking, we had to peel the potatoes by hand. I mean the domestic did the cleaning, but she didn't-, I think she helped with the washing, the big pots

she washed the big pots, I didn't wash the big pots. And then we did-, there was the evacuation, that's right.

RL: When you came back from being evacuated, that must have been when you went into the domestic jobs, because that was the winter of 1939, you said you went in.

BB: Oh yes, that's right.

RL: And then Pesach 1940, you were with the Hassidic family.

BB: That's right.

RL: What happened after that Hassidic family, where did you go after you left them?

**Tape 3: 4 minutes 4 seconds**

Because you mentioned going up to Gateshead.

BB: Yes, I went first from Woburn House into a hostel. I didn't stay there because I did not like it, from the very beginning. And I was invited to a Jewish family in Lordship Road, on Shabbat, and I said, 'I can't stand it, I don't think the food is kosher there, I can't stay there anymore.' And she said, 'Oh, would you like to go with my daughter to Gateshead?' That's right. I said, 'Well, I mean, it's all very well going to Gateshead, I've got very little money. I've got to have a job there.' – 'Ah, you've got jobs there galore! People like to go out, you do babysitting, you can do babysitting, you can help a bit.' And there was another Pesach coming, by that time, 'You can help them with Pesach,' she said, 'they all pay you and you find something. You can stay with us for a little while and stay with the kids for a little while.' I didn't stay with that family. I travelled up with her because I didn't know where Gateshead was.

RL: So first of all, the hostel you went into, what was that?

BB: It was in Camden Town, it was awful. That hostel was awful. I don't know how I spent three days there, really.

RL: Who ran it?

BB: I was sent there from Woburn House, from the Jewish people. Or from the government, a homeless hostel it was.

RL: How big was it, how many people were there?

BB: There was a lot of girls there. That's where I met all those girls who slept with the soldiers.

RL: And what did you do whilst you were in the hostel?

BB: Nothing, just walked about. Finding out how London lies, I had no money for fares or anything. I walked to the West End, I went to museums, I went here and once there. I didn't get no money. The money what I had from before I had saved, I had a little bit of savings, and I went to Woburn House, they wouldn't give me anything either. And they wouldn't give me

a job either, so when she told me to go to Gateshead with her, I said, 'How much is the fare to Gateshead?' It wasn't terrible, so she said I can help her with the kids. And we went to Gateshead, God knows how long it took, it took us about eight hours before we were in Gateshead.

RL: And who was it that you went with, who was this lady?

BB: They lived in Lordship Road, what was their names now, was it Cohen? I've forgotten, I'm terrible with names.

RL: Was this the family you went to visit?

BB: I only had the Shabbat lunch there, I just had lunch there. I should remember her, because I can see her in front of me, but I can't remember the name.

### **Tape 3: 8 minutes 34 seconds**

RL: And it was her daughter who was in Gateshead?

BB: Yes, she was evacuated; she was going to Gateshead because her husband was there. And I travelled with her, I just helped her with the pram and you know, when you have little kids, one person can't look for three little kids, so I travelled with her. I spent one night with her and then I went to a Jewish organisation and said, 'Where can I stay?', because I had nowhere to stay. 'Oh, that's no problem; you can stay with this family, or with that family or that family. They find you somewhere.' I don't know, we'd sleep in sleeping bags, anything, it doesn't make no difference. And there I met those boys from Guildford there. I met them in Gateshead. And after I stayed I think about three weeks in Gateshead, I mean you can't live on money for babysitting. Well, it wasn't really work what I liked you know. So I was friendly with that boy from Guildford, I thought I was going to marry him or something, I don't know. I just was friendly with him. And he said, 'Come with me to Guildford, my mum's got a beautiful place. You'll want to hand around there. You'll find a job of some kind, to sell something.' The fact is, when I got to Guildford I helped, there was a young minister and I helped. I went to a hospital with him. And we made a Seder there as well. We made a vegetarian Seder for eighty people there. Him and his sister, they were vegetarians. And I lived with them and they all said, 'Why can you eat at that boy's house?' And Reverend Clements said to me, 'That boy is not for you, you know. He's been engaged several times. They are not kosher.' I know they weren't kosher, she went in Sainsbury's and buy chickens to make them kosher. You can't make dreadful chickens kosher. I mean they ate it. I wouldn't eat anything. They said, 'What do you eat all day long?' I said, 'Bread, you can eat bread, you know.' They said, 'You can't live on bread.' And she said, 'You come here.', what's-its-name. And she'd done a lovely vegetarian diet, so I used to come in for food there. And from Gateshead I come back to London again.

RL: So you went to Guildford. How long were you in Guildford?

BB: In Guildford over the Pesach and I came back in May.

RL: And when you came back to London, where did you stay then?

BB: I got a furnished room. And I had a job; then you were allowed to work. I had a job in the City and I used to go every morning to the City. On Shabbat I used to go and eat with

people. It was nice. I was friendly with somebody, and he was friendly with me, but his mother said to me, 'My son is marrying somebody with money, you are no good for him.' So that was that.

RL: What was the job that you were doing?

BB: In a tailoring place, they were making uniforms for the soldiers and I was checking them up. See if there is any fault in it and reject some and folded them up and packed them and then they went out to the soldiers. And that's when I met my husband.

RL: How were you allowed to take a job by then?

BB: Because in the war they have such a shortage with staff, they just took anybody on. You looked outside at the vacancies and you just walked in. And I was there during the Blitz, you know.

**Tape 3: 13 minutes 35 seconds**

RL: Did you have to register with the police?

BB: Yes, but I was a friendly alien. My brother was an enemy alien and he went to Huyton near Liverpool and then to Canada. He is in America now. I was a friendly alien, I was allowed-. Oh yes, oh I forgot to say, then I got to Mrs Crannock. I stayed with her for a little while. That's where I stayed. Was it before I was working? I think it was before I was working, as a companion, somebody I met-. Oh no, when I was in a furnished place I went to the market to do some shopping and I talked to the woman with the chicken stall and she said she needs somebody to look after her little girl whilst she is working with the chickens. So I went every morning there and I looked after her little girl and gave her food to eat and took her out. And she paid me a little bit of money, she gave us all these chickens and things, so the girls were replete with the chickens. We were actually starving at that time. I lived in Finsbury Park, I paid 7 shillings a week for a room. And in the winter you had to put shillings in the gas; where do you get the shillings from if you don't earn money? I mean babysitting is okay, I mean she gave me money. And then I stayed with somebody for companion for a little while. And we slept in that shelter.

RL: So was this at the time of the Blitz?

BB: Yes, in the beginning of the Blitz, but it wasn't all that bad then, it got bad later.

RL: And what was your experience of the Blitz?

BB: Well, as I said, at the beginning, I met my husband then. No, I went out with a friend on a Saturday and we used to go to Kingsland Road and there was a music stall, they were selling records and they were playing records. And we went there, we walked there on Shabbat and listened to the records afterwards. All the modern records. We were young people, you see. And my husband's brother had a stall next door, selling straps. And when we had enough of it we walked on – and he followed us! And he said, 'Where do you live?' And we started talking to him. He said he's just come back from Ireland. He said, 'It's terrible, the Blitz, where do you go?' I said, 'I stay in my room in the night.' – 'What, upstairs?' I said, 'Yes'. I said, 'Oh! I've got God above us. I'm not worried about it'. Anyhow, then the siren went and we went into that shelter and it was horrible in that shelter, so we came out of the

shelter and I said, 'Come up to me in my room.' No, I said, 'I can't have you in my room really, but I don't know, just wait until this is finished, you know.' And I thought to myself, strange boy, I shouldn't really take him up there. Anyhow, I went into the neighbours, the goyisch neighbours, and said, 'Look, he's terrified of the Blitz. Is there somewhere you can let him stay?' He said, 'He can go in the shelter.' But he didn't want to go in the shelter by himself. I said, 'I don't want him in my room-' But anyhow, I said, 'Look, it's not really bad, you can go out.' I said, 'Would you like to come for tea? We go to Lyon's Corner House, as there are lovely pastries.' So we kind of got friendly. And then he said, 'We are going to a Yiddisher play, would you like to come to a Yiddisher play?' – 'Yes, I come to a Yiddisher play.' And I met his father. I liked his father. And he got called up in the meantime, he got called up to the army. And his father said to me, 'You can come.', as his wife was evacuated in Weston-super-Mare, but he didn't like Weston-super-Mare, so he'd come to the Yiddisher play. So we went every Saturday night, we went to a Yiddisher play.

RL: You and his father?

**Tape 3: 19 minutes 17 seconds**

BB: Yes. And he said, 'How are you getting on together?' He said, 'Well, are you interested to get married?' I don't know, somebody, was it his brother made a Shidduch or something like that, and we got married. We got married and the next Pesach you shouldn't know of it, because they were evacuated. And my mother-in-law showed me where all the Pesach things went, because I didn't have anything Pesach. I lived in his brother's flat because they were away as well. Where did they go? They lived in the country as well. She didn't want me there because of the Goyisch neighbours, because I was a German. Because you had to have a German accent. She wasn't very nice really. Yes, we got married. And the first Pesach we were together and we stayed in his father's place. And that's when I saw all these incendiary bombs, all around us, everywhere: bang! And another bang and another bang and another bang. And I said in the middle of the Seder, 'We can't stay here, I can't stand the smell of burning everywhere.' It was awful, all that smell of burning everything, it was terrible. Anyhow, it was not clear yet, I said, 'Come on, let's go.' We walked back to our flat in the middle of the night, at 1 o'clock in the morning. We slept until the next day and then we came back. There was all these incendiary bombs. And after that it went on and on with the war.

RL: When were you married, what date were you married?

BB: 1941.

RL: And the month?

BB: August.

RL: And you were living-, when you got married, was that when you moved into his brother's flat?

BB: Yes, we moved in his brother's flat.

RL: And where was that?

BB: In Highbury New Park.



RL: And where was his parents' house?

BB: My father-in-law had a shop in the East End, watchmaker's shop, in Hanbury Street. But my mother-in-law was with her sister in Weston-super-Mare. She got evacuated because her little girl got killed in a shelter when they were in London. And then they moved to Weston-super-Mare. I never went to Weston-super-Mare, we always stayed in London after that.

RL: And the house that you made Pesach in that year, where was that?

BB: That was my father-in-law's house, you know, the shop parlour, and a kitchen and a living room, we were there over Pesach, we stayed there. The second day Pesach, it was alright, there was no bombs. When I went to work in the morning, the next day I couldn't get through to work because the buses went **only gnar bridge** and then you had to walk because there was all these fires everywhere. And we came to work and there was no work there; they

### **Tape 3: 23 minutes 8 seconds**

were all standing outside with a coal fire and said we can't get into the building because it's dangerous. Well, I stayed at that work, no, I left that work after that. After I was married I left the work because then I got pregnant and then I had that little premature baby, seven months. That was a day. Oh yes, I went to evacuate. When I was nearly seven months pregnant I went to evacuate, because they evacuated all the pregnant women because it was just terrible with those bombs. And they took us to Northampton. When we came to Northampton, the woman who I was billeted with took us home. And she put food on the table. I said, 'I don't eat all that, I mustn't eat them, there is a dietary law, I can't eat meat, I can't eat this and I can't eat that.' – 'So what can you eat?' – 'I can eat the potatoes.' So she put gravy on the potatoes. I said, 'I can't eat the potatoes now because I mustn't have gravy on it.' So what's-its-name, she said, 'You're gonna starve, we haven't got nothing else.' I said, 'That's alright, I'm gonna eat nothing.' Anyhow, she took us to the bedroom. There was this woman, she was like that and I wasn't quite as big, but, you know, seven months pregnant. A single bed for the two of us! I said, 'We can't both sleep in a single bed! There is no room.' I don't know, what's-its-name, a girl called Mary, I said, 'Look Mary, you stay in the bed half the night, and I stay in the bed the other half. I sleep on the floor for a little bit. So again, I said, 'Give me one of your blankets.' And I took my coat and I sat on the floor. And then I start having pains, I was in agonising pains. So what's-its-name said, 'I don't know what to do.' I said, 'Maybe the baby is coming.' So what's-its-name said, 'You got to wake her up, we've got to send you to a hospital.' Anyhow, we got into a hospital, the thing is, the moment I was in a warm bed, the pains went! No more pains. But I said to her, going back the next day, I said to her, 'I'm sorry. I can't sleep in a single bed with another woman. I can't stay up half the night because-. I'm going back home again.' And they said, 'Can you manage?' I said, well, if they can help me, 'I can't afford a taxi.' – 'You can't carry the case.' I said, 'Look, I can't carry the case, I have to get home, I'm not gonna stay here.' – 'Go back to the billeting office.' I said, 'No, I don't want to get back to the billeting office, I don't like it here. I'm going back home. So what if it's the Blitz, I'll sleep in the shelter.' I went back home, it was on a Thursday. So it's Shabbat the next day, so I went out to Whitley Market and I bought a saucepan and I bought fish and I bought vegetables and everything. I schlepped everything home, you know. And I got my rations and I took everything home. I was exhausted by that time and I sat down. Who walks in? My husband on leave. 'Oh, that's nice!' No, he came on Shabbat. On Shabbat I went to Shul. When I came back from Shul he was there. 'Oh', I said, 'that's lovely. What are

you doing here? Initially, we spent the Shabbat together. And in the evening we went to the Empire, to a music hall. Now, on Saturday night it's full up, the music hall is very full up. So it is only gallery seats. 'Can you walk the gallery?' I said alright, we walked to the gallery. Walked up, right up to the show, we've seen the show, good show. Came back home, at 3 o'clock in the morning, I started having real pains this time, it was the real thing. I don't know what it was, whether it was all the work I'd done, I'd cleaned the flat, everything. He went-. I said, 'Look, get a doctor, there's a doctor up the road.' Goes up to the doctor up the road and they said, 'I'm sorry, the doctor's been called up. I don't know where you can go.' We didn't have no phone or anything. The doctor's called up. And then he met a policeman. He said, 'What are you doing out, what's up?' He said, 'I'm in terrible trouble, maybe you can help me.' He said, 'My wife is in labour pains and she is having a baby and we can't get any-. Can you get us an ambulance or something?' He said, 'You know what, we take you in the police car!' They took me to Whittington Hospital. And in Whittington Hospital at 4 o'clock, everybody was up there. I don't know, strange, they are all having tea everybody. And they took me to the bathroom to have an enema and God knows what. And at 6 o'clock in the morning I said, 'I need a bedpan!', and the baby came, I had the baby. She was only four pounds, that was the weight, she was four pounds. And then we had no incubator or anything,

**Tape 3: 29 minutes 45 seconds**

they just kept her warm and all that. And I stayed a fortnight in hospital with her and that was that. And we came home.

RL: So when was she born, when was her birthday?

BB: She was born the 15 February 1942. And we left to the [sic] Blitz. First of all, he had to go back to the army, he couldn't stay with the baby and me. And we had no coal, and we couldn't get coal anywhere. And I used the paraffin stove and a social worker came and said it's not healthy for the baby to have paraffin stove. I said I'll use a gas stove, it's dangerous with the gas, with the oven on. I didn't take no notice, I had a tiny baby, she had to be kept warm, I had to wash her in olive oil. So then on Monday I went to the coal office, about 40 people there, you had to stand up waiting in a queue, one after the other, shift up on the chair. And in the end they said, 'Oh, you are entitled to coal, the coal man will come.' Then the coal man came and I had a coal and I started making a fire. This place was just an enormous room, the coal fire you didn't feel it from here to there, it was freezing cold. So I used the paraffin stove again on the other side and I never had any trouble with the paraffin stove. It did smell sometimes, but-. Then I got pregnant with my son and I had another baby.

RL: When did you have the next one?

BB: 1943. In May.

RL: What's his name?

BB: Stanley.

RL: So tell me a little bit about your husband.

BB: My husband was originally a watchmaker. But in the beginning of the war he went to Ireland because he had family there and he stayed with the family and he opened a shop there. But when the Irish found out that he's English he had to come back and that's when I met

him. That Saturday was the first Saturday he came back, and he was terrified of the Blitz. And he did watches in the army, he did army watches because at this time the soldiers all had watches. He wasn't abroad or anything, he was only in Mill Hill, so he had a sleeping-out pass and he came home. And that's how I became pregnant again, so I had the next one.

RL: What part of the army was he in?

BB: The Ordnance Corps.

RL: Was he born in England?

BB: Yes, he's British. His father came from Russia and his mother came from Poland, but his mother died when he was very young. And he had a stepmother and they couldn't get on with her. I got on famous with Sally, but she also was nasty to me, because when I had Stanley I asked her to look after Dorit, so she says, 'You had them, you look after them.', so I had to put her in a home while I was in hospital with him; she wouldn't look after her. But I mean I had nothing against her really. She was evacuated with her sister and then she came back to London and then she lived the other side of London.

**Tape 3: 34 minutes 3 seconds**

RL: So did you continue to live in your husband's brother's flat?

BB: Yes, because nobody-, they would never come back, they lived in Hitchin and they opened a shop there as well. And then my brother-in-law had a heart attack, so they wouldn't come back to Highbury anyhow. It wasn't a very nice flat, it was very damp, that flat.

RL: What was your husband's first name?

BB: Isaac.

RL: Tell me a little bit about the wedding, what happened?

BB: Oh, the wedding. It was a wartime wedding, and they made it in-, I was married in the East London Synagogue because the one we wanted to get married in was bombed, so we married in the East London Synagogue. And we didn't have a proper party, we didn't have music or anything, but my mother-in-law's sister, they opened the shop and they put tables out and we had a few of the relations, we didn't have all of them. People didn't like to come out in the Blitz anyhow. They came in the chuppah and the reception, but none of the-. Only my cousin came to the dinner and a few of my husband's cousins they came. And we had a dinner and eventually everybody went home because there was a Blitz, you know.

RL: Who was your Unterführers?

BB: I had nobody. I had nobody, I couldn't get hold of my uncle. So my brother in law took me.

RL: So you say after you in 1943 you had your second child, that was Stanley; and then if you take me on from there.

BB: From there, I don't know, I just was a housewife at home. I didn't do much really. I had two little kids; it took enough to look after them really, I didn't do-.

RL: Did you mix with anybody, did you have friends?

BB: I don't think I did really. I was friendly with the woman upstairs and the woman next door and this one and that one. And we used to meet in the baby clinic, you know, where you weighed the babies every other week. And I don't know, until Stanley was three, I didn't do anything, I never went-. Then I put them in the nursery and I was working again. I was working again after that when they were in the nursery. Or did I work? I don't know. I had Jean. Jean was my best friend. Jean and I, we went everywhere. Jean died three years ago and that's my best friend. I don't know. She lived like right over the garden, the other road, but the kids used to go through the garden, used to go to the people's houses. And because their kids were the same age as my kids you know. Because her oldest son just retired, he was a doctor in a Wembley hospital. And her other son unfortunately is very ill, he's married out and he can't see and he had a stroke and all that. I don't even know whether he's alive now. And their daughter Angela I'm still in touch with. She was Judy's best friend, my youngest daughter's best friend. They always been together. Judy was very social, you know. Much more so than the other. Dorit belonged to the Zionist Society. She all of a sudden, she started with the Zionist Society when she left school. I first sent her to the ordinary school, a goyisch

**Tape 3: 38 minutes 48 seconds**

school across the road, she didn't like it there. And then Avigdor opened, it was a brand new school, they didn't learn anything there. But they both went to that school. Stanley went to nursery, he was in the nursery, I sent him to nursery because he was impossible. And he went to the nursery. I sent him to nursery every day. That's how I met Jean and all the others. I mean a lot of frum women and we all got together. I don't know. We went to visit others for tea you know. And then we moved out. We moved out from that house, we moved out from there because it was impossible. Where did we go? First we went to Seven Sisters, yes. Next door to the Shul, we got a flat there. But they were impossible, the neighbours, because we had the bombs all night. You had the bombs, and in Finsbury Park they were shooting the guns all night. A lot of people went underground. We never went in the underground. But the thing is, as soon as that noise comes, Stanley was the one who was crying; he was always crying. When I queued up to get a few bananas or bought us something, they had to get me out of the queue and said, 'That poor baby is crying, go and serve her first.' I nearly always had that, he was always crying. I don't know why. Because it was disturbed sleep: then you had bangs and guns and everything, it's not-, some kids take it like that and others don't take it like that.

RL: So did you never go in a shelter?

BB: No, I don't like shelters. I didn't like tubes with hundreds of the people together, you can't go to the toilet, horrible I'd say. No, because when we moved afterwards, we moved again. I was evacuated with the kids because it was getting really bad. And I came up here. I couldn't get to Manchester; I was in Crawshaw Booth, I don't know if you know where it is.

RL: In where?

BB: Crawshaw Booth. It's near Rochdale somewhere. They 'd never heard of a Jewish person. I asked anywhere and I said, 'Any Jewish people around here?', and they don't know,

they thought we had horns! And at first they couldn't find me accommodation. I went to that woman in Crawshaw Booth and her husband was a deserter. And she had no money and she had everything on a slate. And they wouldn't give her any food, so I got busy. I bought a saucepan and I started cooking for her. And I got in touch with the Halberstadts in Manchester. And they sent me food parcels, whatever I wanted they sent me and I sent the money. Money in envelopes, in those days you put money in envelopes and just sent in. And I had a bill and I paid it every week. At first they sent it by post and it all came bad and I said, 'Can you send it by rail because it's impossible!?' I said, 'I can get to Rochdale.' I walked to Rochdale from Crawshaw Booth, it was 2 ½ miles all uphill going. But then we had the food parcels, so this was all downhill.

RL: How long were you there?

BB: Until Pesach. I couldn't be with a goy on Pesach. So I came back to London again, with the two kids. And we slept in the cellar. No, my husband got a different place because he said he'd had enough of Seven Sisters. He met that woman. The first thing, I was so disappointed, because the place has no bathroom. I said, 'How can you go in a place-?' – 'Oh, Mrs Crannock, she never needs a bathroom, there is a public bath.' We used to go in a public bath. There is warm water, cold water. It was so primitive. We just went once a week and the rest we just washed. And then I got a big bungalow bath and I put it in. We moved downstairs and I said to Mrs Crannock, 'I can't live upstairs anymore because it's no good with the

**Tape 3: 43 minutes 59 seconds**

bombs and everything. I've got to move downstairs.' I said, 'You sleep in the shelter anyhow.' So she was quite agreeable. I even left my furniture upstairs for her. And she moved upstairs and I moved downstairs. And I bought this big bungalow bath and I used to wash the kids in there. I didn't, we still went to that public baths place. And my husband went and I went and we had a bath. He was discharged by the army at that time, it was almost the end of the war.

RL: Where was this place that you had, where was it in London?

BB: In Newington Green. It was a big house and it had a shop. There was nobody in the shop at the time because afterwards we get furniture people coming. Now it is quite popular. And then one morning we woke up and the sirens go and that was all the flying bombs. They all of a sudden stopped – bang, they come down! And it was like this, around the corner. Around the corner, a terrific bang. And I said, 'Oh gosh, I hope the kids are alright next door.' Apparently, the ceiling in the shop fell down, but in the kids' room all the windows came out and there was my daughter, playing with bits of glass from the window! She didn't get hurt or anything. There was all this glass in her cot.

RL: So what happened after that?

BB: Well, we took her out and brought her into my bedroom and we cleared out all. The men came and put cardboard in the window, there is no more windows now, so that was that.

RL: Did you continue to stay in that place?

BB: Oh yes, we stayed in that place, there was nowhere else to go. We slept in the cellar. You know, after the war, I'd never go in that cellar, it was full of beetles. I don't know, I'd

never seen-, because that was originally, I mean before, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was a baking place, a baker's. And it still had the baker's oven stand there. And that's where these things were. But we'd never seen any during the war. I don't know why, we slept. We just slept, we were tired and we never got anything on the bedding or anything.

RL: And did you have any other close hits from bombs?

BB: No, that was the closest; it was right next to us. They still were coming, they were coming all the time. Like everything else, in Israel, everywhere, it's a matter of luck when these things come, you can't do anything about it.

RL: So was your husband working again?

BB: Oh yes, he went to the markets once he started, he'd go into the markets. Then he sold the watches and he repaired the watches in our house, he had his little workshop there. And in those days, people's watches went wrong and he was repairing them. He did that right up until a week before he died actually. Watches and jewellery he had and he went to the market. Used to sell them in the public houses as well; he used to go on a Saturday night in the public houses and sell them.

RL: What kind of religious upbringing had your husband had?

**Tape 3: 48 minutes 20 seconds**

BB: Well, his father was a Chazan in a Shul. They were religious really, kosher, English style, English-type people. I mean, he used to go to football, used to go to football sometimes. I was annoyed about that, but I couldn't do anything about it. I once asked the rabbi about it, I said, 'What can I do?' He said, 'I can't interfere in domestic troubles.' So that was that. He said, 'If the worst comes to the worst, you only could leave him.' But I can't leave him, not with three kids.

RL: When was your third child born?

BB: She was born after he was demobbed, 1946.

RL: And which one was that?

BB: Judy.

RL: That was Judy. So do you remember the end of the war?

BB: Yes! There was the Victory Parade and-. I don't know, nothing really changed all that much. It just carried on. I think I was working, I don't know what I did. Oh yes, no, I didn't start having jobs until I had Barry, actually. I was taking homework. You'd sit there for hours and nights typing all these envelopes, thousands of envelopes. The homework, they used to bring them and they used to take them away. And then, when I started having a phone, you know, just to help out and to do something. And I started writing things, writing stories, but nothing came out of it, so I left that. And then I had Barry, you know.

RL: When did you have Barry?

BB: He was born in 1954.

RL: One thing I haven't asked, just going backwards, how you managed with the language, with English, when you first came over?

BB: Well, I learnt English at school and I was quite good with languages really. Also I remember the day when I wanted to go to 'Lee-sester Square' and nobody knew where it was! I made mistakes like that, but you get through. And Yiddishe people you can speak Yiddish with them anyhow. I lived with Yiddishe people most of the time really, I didn't have an awful lot with the outside world.

RL: So you could already speak a bit of English?

BB: Yes. Well, first of all I was with the Bilkus' and they all spoke English. And I spoke with the kids English.

RL: So when did you start going out to work again?

BB: After Barry was five, was in the nursery actually. Because Joan volunteered to look after him, then I started going out to work again.

RL: And what were you doing?

**Tape 3: 55 minutes 5 seconds**

BB: What was I doing? The first job was with Isopon. I did a lot of typing actually, at this time it was all typing. Typing and accounts, it was typing and accounts. And afterwards I worked in Liverpool Vic and I worked on these big computers, new computers, you know. And you have to prepare them actually, you couldn't. There is nothing at all like a new computer, I couldn't work on a new computer. But I was for six months I was in the university and learning the computer. And when I came back six months later, he said to me - by that time I was 60 years - he said, 'You know, we have to employ young people on the computers. Would you like to go back to accounts?' I said, 'Yes, but I'm not going to work for accounts money.' So I said, 'Could I have the same money as on computer?' I said, 'I don't care what I do really. The computer gives me headaches anyhow.' I had a lot of migraines because there is so much concentration on the little screens all the time. I don't know how people work continuously on these things now. The modern ones are not quite as bad, but they are still bad, you know. But these older ones, it was very much smaller than the modern ones. The modern ones you can read really. I mean once you get that mouse and you work with it, it's different, but the old ones, it was so tiny everything.

RL: And where were you living? Can you take me through the different places that you lived?

BB: Oh yes. I told you when we lived in Newington Green in that place. And in Newington Green I met a friend who was going to America and she's got a house for sale and it was cheap as a dump. It was opposite Clissold Park and I thought it was lovely and the flat was empty. She left her rubbish, she left for me, mind you, the Victorian furniture, they would have been worth a lot of money now. But once we moved from there you can't take them. It was full of Victorian furniture, and in the bedroom she had orange boxes! It was a very big house and there was always trouble: there you have the plumber and there you have this and

there you have that, all the time. Until the Council took it over. All of sudden the Council came in, 'Would you like to sell house?' And I said, 'Where are you going to put me?' They said, 'We'll give you a nice flat.' My husband said, 'No way, I won't move to a flat.' Once they want to pull the things down you had to go, you had to go. And we went into Seven Sisters Road, we went into modern flats. At the time it was modern flats, in 1950 they were modern flats. They were lovely really when they were first-. And there were such lovely people. In that block there was 80 flats. Out of the 80 there was 74 Jewish families and the others were Irish and English, very nice English people, all of them nice people. When I moved out of this place to come here, I was the last Jewish person in that block. Eva went before, she went two years before into a home. Barry wanted me up here in Manchester, so I came to Manchester.

RL: So you were in that flat until two years ago?

BB: No, we had a big difference. When we first moved in we were on the fourth floor on the other end of the flat. And they made the motor road there, and the smell of the cars and it was near a traffic light and the noise and everything – it drove me mad. And I wanted to change. And I looked after an elderly lady and she said, 'There is a man who died on the first floor. The flat is empty. I get a doctor's certificate that I want you to live in my block because you are too far away.' And that's how I got that other flat; it was a very nice flat.

RL: Right. This film is about to end so we'll just stop here.

**Tape 3: 57 minutes 34 seconds**

**TAPE 4**

**Tape 4: 0 minute 6 seconds**

RL: This is the interview with Mrs Bessie Barnett and it's Tape 4. I was going to ask you, we have come to the point where the war has ended and we've gone through where you were living and your jobs. When did you discover what had happened to your parents and the rest of your family? Had you been in touch with your parents at all at the beginning of the war? Can you sort of take me through that?

BB: No, because none of the letters went through. I sent letters, whether they got them or whether they didn't get them I never knew because there only is that card, and you can hardly see it now; it was bad when it came. It was that card that I got from Cuba; it said that they are going on a journey to Poland. And after that, before that I never heard anything either, but because we also changed addresses so much so I don't know whether they got astray or-. I mean the Germans didn't send, they certified it what you wrote; whether they wrote something they destroyed it or cut it off, I don't know what the Germans did with the letters which went to England. Whether they got through or not, I don't know anybody else who wrote from Germany to England during the or at the beginning of the war. No, not really at the beginning; once that war was on they didn't get, there was no post I don't think.

RL: Sometimes you could get Red Cross letters, through the Red Cross.

BB: Yeah, but we didn't know about that. I mean we were a young married couple with babies. I don't know, we couldn't do very much. My brother was kind of hopeless, he missed his mum all the time, he was really Mummy's baby. He always has been because that was all our quarrels always because he was the youngest and they made a terrific fuss of him. I was



always a nursemaid, you know, for all the kids. They knew because I was good at it and then it's still the same wherever I go! When they get children they come to me, I don't know why. I love children, but I mean, not to take responsibilities for them a lot. But I had responsibilities; I had it all my school life. I mean at times when girls enjoy themselves or do something, what could I do? I had to schlep all these kids to school and bring them back, make sure they behave themselves on the train, make sure they don't fall over, they don't run into the road. It is difficult because they were young kids and I mean they were really young kids, you know. If they were older you could tell them off; I couldn't tell them off, I couldn't tell any of them off.

RL: When did you receive the letter that had been sent to Cuba? When did you get that letter?

BB: It was in 1941 when they went.

RL: When did you get the letter to tell you?

BB: Haven't got a clue. It wasn't a letter, it was a postcard which came through the door. When we lived in Green Lanes. When did we live in Green Lanes? When Dorit was six. 1948? No, it couldn't be. Yes, we did. Dorit was born in 1942. 1948? Yes it did, it came four, five years later. It did come five years later, it didn't come in 1941, it came much later. That's why I couldn't get in touch with anybody. And I couldn't write to Cuba anyhow because I don't know where my uncle stayed in Cuba. Because you remember at the time the United

#### **Tape 4: 4 minutes 42 seconds**

States didn't want to take the people from Cuba and some of them they sent back. It wasn't easy for him either, especially he had his family there. I mean my aunt did get out to the States; I don't know when she got out to the States, his wife. She did get out to the States, she was in New York and she had her family there as well, but I can't-. You see, in a war it was difficult to write and I'm not very good at writing letters. Even now, I mean to the grandchildren, I do send them, but I never get anything back from them or anything. The only one is Karen. Karen, she is in Australia and she is lonely. And she got her computer and she writes these lovely letters to me every time. And I simply have to answer them, although I have nothing to write about really. What do I do here? I go on a Melava Malka, she's not interested in it. And we had a Hanukkah party, well, she knows what that is. And ask her if she makes latkes; she's not likely to in Australia in the heat.

RL: When did you discover about the camps, about the concentration camps and what had happened to the Jews? When did you find that out?

BB: Now, we knew really, when my father went to Buchenwald we knew what was going on at these places. And we knew people were transported, first from Poland, then from Russia, then from-. You know, Hitler was a funny person; one minute he was friends with Russia and they were together, and the next minute they were fighting them and they got killed in Russia. I mean as a young person you, politics doesn't-. You want to know what happened to your own, but somehow you can't do anything for Jews in Poland. I mean we go every year to these Polish things, you know, when they get together and you hear of those people who fought in the ghettos and underground and how they got out and what a life they lived. It must have been absolutely terrible. And they had no food; what food did they have in these places? I mean you think back about it, it's terrible. I mean I was starving in London,

but you wouldn't call it starving really. Because I went babysitting, there was a fridge full of food, you just helped yourself to something. I might not have anything at home; I might have tea and no milk or I didn't get the bread, didn't have nothing at home. But we were not really starving, in London you can't starve.

RL: When you came over to England and you got married here, what was your impression of England? What did you think of it as a place?

BB: I never wanted to stay in England, from the beginning to the end, because I had a quota number to go to America. But my husband, he had his father here, he had his brother here, he had his sister here. His sister went to America actually and she died there. But he had family here, cousins and everybody here. He wasn't keen on going and I couldn't go without him. And I had the children. And he had his business, he was very involved in his business. He got very excited, he used to buy things. He said, 'Oh, look! I bought that ring, I can make £ 20 out of that!' He never did, but 'Oh, look what I bought, look what I bought!' He got so excited over these things. I mean some of the things are in the safe deposit box still because nobody uses them and nobody wants them. You don't want winding-up watches anymore. They have a bit of an antique value, but not really. I gave most of them away, practically for nothing, there was so much stuff we had. I mean when you had all this stuff you don't want to go, you know. I don't know how I got to Manchester, I mean I left most of it behind, I didn't-. What did I take? I took all these stupid pictures I did. I mean anything of value was in that safe what they pinched actually. I mean these candlesticks, they are not even silver. I had those great big beautiful ones. They were worth so much money and then the insurance didn't

#### **Tape 4: 9 minutes 56 seconds**

Pay up properly. The thing is, I had the insurance and I never changed it. I should have paid more in, then I would have got more out, but I didn't, so-.

RL: Tell me, what did you think of England?

BB: In what connection - the Jewish way?

RL: Well, yes, Jewish and non-Jewish, they are obviously different.

BB: Well, in London I just got on with everybody, I really I must say, I worked very hard. The day my husband died I said, 'I'm not wanting carers, I don't want to be looked after, I'm looking after other people.' And I've just started, I had a chat with Jewish care, 'Do you want a carer or not?' I said I can do a carer's work. And they gave me people from all over. I did such a lot of things for them: I worked in the homes, I visited people, I went shopping for people, I gave lectures, I ran a luncheon club for five years. And actually, alone in the beginning, because the girl who worked with me, she had a baby and she was always not well. I mean there was so much to do in London! I joined a league. Once I stopped working I've been on the go from mornings till night. Even on Shabbat I took a blind lady to Shul. I brought somebody else home for lunch because she had nobody. And I made a lot of friends. I belonged to Lubavitch and I heard lectures. There were things going on nearly every day: there was a rabbi speaking, there is me speaking to the other people. It was living, you know.

RL: Was this all after your husband died or were you a member of these groups, doing these things before your husband died?

BB: When my husband was working I was on the go as well, but not as much. First of all I was working myself. I mean I worked five days a week and one day you had to have for your housework and your shopping. And on Shabbat we didn't do anything. I mean when the children were small, in the summer, we used to go out over weekends. We used to take tents with us, we went tenting. All the seaside from the south, don't think I'd miss any out because I've been to all of them. Not in a hotel, not in a boarding house, in a tenting place. We had a book of the tenting, I don't know whether I still got it, a book of the tenting, we just went out one after the other, putting up our tent and taking our bits of cooking; baked beans on toast or on Shabbat cold things. We had a flask of lukewarm tea. It was just nice, you know, and you see so many places this way, much more than-. I mean we went to all the different parts of the country, where all the poets lived. I have got books really for the places. And then we went abroad. We went to the States. I visited my aunt and uncle there before they died. My daughter when she got married, the year she got married, we went to South Africa. I made a whole tour of South Africa, in a car. Oh, we broke down and we've seen gold fields, in the roughest place and the car broke down. And we had to be towed through the sand storms there, with the coloured people. You know, all this-, is so much going on. I went to Australia six years ago. I was supposed to go with my daughter. She was on Pesach with me and we phoned my granddaughter in Australia and we said we are coming in January for mum's birthday and her birthday, because she-, what was it, my 75<sup>th</sup> and her 55<sup>th</sup> birthday. And we were both looking forward to it until the doctor told her, told Dorit, 'You are too ill to travel, you can never make Australia, you can't do it.' She had cancer. And it was a shame because, and Karen said, she said, 'But you are coming, you booked a ticket, don't you let me down.' So I went to Australia!

**Tape 4: 15 minutes 13 seconds**

RL: Coming back to England, how were you received in England during the war? How were you received, both by the non-Jewish community and by the Jewish community?

BB: Non-Jewish community, I only went when I wanted something from them, like the time I wanted the coal or the time, I don't know, there is always something in the war you had to queue up for. You had to queue up for all the food, we had ration books. I mean I had a very good friend and she worked for transport drivers; she is not here anymore. And I used to give her all my margarine coupons because first of all I don't like margarine and we used oil for baking or butter. And she used to give me all her butter rations and I used to give her a lot of her meat rations. And she gave me her book for things what I wanted because she used to feed them on horsemeat, she used to cook horsemeat for them; I mean, they were transport drivers. And I used to get on famously with Helen and Helen's sister; she was one of my first friends. She is in America now, if she's still alive. Well, and the non-Jewish people, we were always in Joan's place. There was a time when Barry was small and we were in Joan's place. Joan was a north-country girl, she comes from somewhere around here. And she was very friendly. And everybody was in her place for tea: there was the lift drivers, the men who repair the lifts, the milkmen, somebody who worked in the flats, the painters – everybody was in her place. And all the women came to her: the woman from the top floor would come to her; she was from Malta; and from downstairs-. We used to go in for tea. She liked me because to me she'd come for borrowing: 'Have you got any tea? Have you got any cigarettes?' Because at that time everybody was smoking, it's a terrible thing, but everybody was smoking. And on Saturday nights in winter I had card parties, I had all the elderly coming in. And I made a great party every time, tables with food galore and we played Kalooki We played for quite big money actually. Here they play for pennies, it's stupid. But it was nice, they used to bring each other to the cards and the whole Saturday night until 2 or 3 o'clock in

the morning – you should see my place the next day! Everybody was smoking, the smell of the stuff, it was awful! And all air fresheners and God knows what, you couldn't get rid of it. And that's what I mean, Joan was a non-Jewish person; I mean I didn't eat anything in her place, but-

RL: So was she one of the card players?

BB: No, she was a goyisch girl; she lived in the block. That's the one who had everybody in, in the middle of the week, during the day. And then the people you went to the clinic with from time to time when the children were small. And afterwards school, when they went to school, we talked to the teachers. We belonged to parents' association and always complained about things, nothing was done about it.

RL: Did you ever come across any hostility?

BB: Except that rotten woman who'd come into the launderette. If I put my things in the drier, you should hear the language. It was not somebody I knew. But nobody really, no, here, in London it was perfectly alright. I belonged to the Jewish things as well. I used to go to the Bingo once a month just to cheer them up. Or we had a club going in the night, every Tuesday night, so she'd try to get entertainers. Sometimes I had a bit of a quarrel because on Tisha b'Av she booked music and I walked out. I mean it wasn't a quarrel over, I wasn't quarrelling over it, because the next week it was as right as rain. What's-its-name said, 'You can't walk out.' I said, 'You can't walk out? I can walk out! I paid my subs, I'm not going to stay!'

#### **Tape 4: 20 minutes 28 seconds**

RL: What club was that?

BB: They called it, I don't know what they were calling it, really, that club. They met every Tuesday night, Jewish club in Wolfson House. No, first we were in the Shul and then it was flooded and then there was something wrong with the ceiling because it was raining in or something. And I arranged it because I was very friendly with the coloured man in Wolfson House; he was in charge of it more or less. And I used to work every second Thursday in a tuck shop. We used to sell things to the older people; they'd come and got their bits and pieces. And then I used to visit them. We used to go on Shabbat and make Kiddush for them or on Sukkoth or something; that was a home. And Chingford Square I'd go occasionally, I didn't go so much there, also from time to time there were things. You watched out when things were going on. In London it's advertised in all the papers; you got the J.C., you got the Tribune, you got another, there was a free paper, I mean there was something interesting, and nothing on, I'd just go.

RL: Did you mix at all with other refugees?

BB: Well, I joined the refugees. And I went to, I said it's too far to go, and it came out on the day when I was on duty somewhere. And I just paid the subs and I really didn't go very often. First it was in Swiss Cottage, and so going home I had no lifts. I went to Lubavitch, I got a lift when I go home. But Swiss Cottage there are local people, they live in Hampstead, Golders Green; nobody lives in North London. I mean the same with the Vegetarian Society; for years I belonged to them. I used to like to go, but all of a sudden they said it's dangerous to go on the Tube at night, so I didn't go anymore because I mean in London you can't afford taxis. It's not like here; here you pay £2, £2.50. You pay £10 and £12 for taxis, and I didn't,

after I retired I didn't have that money. I mean I wouldn't pay it, never mind if I had it, unless something exceptional was going on.

RL: So the refugee group, how long ago did you join that?

BB: Oh, it's a long time ago. Did we go on holiday and I met them all on the same holiday? Somewhere in the south in a hotel I met them. I can't remember. To tell you the truth, some of the things stick and some of the things don't stick. I don't know when I met them. I think it was in Bournemouth, I'm not sure, somewhere. The whole crowd was on holiday and I got very friendly with them and I joined them. I turned up twice and the next thing I was on the Tube and there was this drug addict with me on the Tube and I phoned them up and said I'm not coming anymore because I thought to myself, he didn't do anything to me, but I'd rather go to a concert. I went to all the symphony concerts because I came home late from there, but it was different, because the bus practically takes me home. In the busses you are quite safe really because you've got a driver.

RL: How do you feel that you fitted into English life? Did you find it different?

BB: Oh yes, completely different, completely different. They are different here. I find it different in Manchester, because they all know each other downstairs, I don't know them, I don't know anyone. Only go to the Bingo, they know me all, but I don't know them all. It's difficult because, to tell you the truth, when you are with people for nearly 40 and 50 years, you are more family. In the beginning I phoned a lot of them; now it's only one or two, one or two will phone me.

**Tape 4: 25 minutes 33 seconds.**

I mean there is one who calls me every Friday night to wish me a good Shabbat, and there is one which is a problem. She is full of problems with all my family; I'm not telling about her family, it's nothing to do with-. Her son is not intermarried; he lives with a goyisch woman and has two kids and never even comes to see her and didn't help her with anything. I don't really want to go into that really. I used to go with her every Sunday afternoon; every Sunday afternoon I used to take her out to pictures, I used to take her out into parks in summer. And the other one, Ray, as well, she's unfortunately died. We belonged to the Rambling Club; she was rambling, and then she couldn't even move from her chair. You see, they are all my age, but they act much older.

RL: You say that you found life in England and in London very different. Can you tell me what was different? How did you find it different?

BB: Well, I mean from the beginning we didn't have much life in Germany. As to the Bachad, it was lovely and we were all close together. And of course we were a big family and we used to go to cousins, second cousins, visit them. When I come here – nobody, you know. Auntie Gus, once I was out, I've never seen her again. I've never seen any of her family again because I didn't. I moved away to north London after I was married. As to my cousins we used to visit. When my aunty was alive I used to go to Golders Green to visit them, but they never came to me, unless they had to go to the Shatnas people, she popped in for five minutes, she wouldn't even have a cup of tea. Channi phoned me last week, she wished me a happy birthday. I said, 'Channi, what's the matter with you? My birthday is not like until the end of the month! It's not the beginning of the month.' And I was waiting for Barry to come in with the phone and I said, 'I have to put the phone down, we are going out somewhere and I'm

expecting an important phone call.' You know what I mean? And as to my cousin Alex; he's got a huge family and he's got a lot of grandchildren. In a way, I haven't really got a grudge with him, but I heard from strange people, people I know here from in Manchester, that he's got a flat in Israel and he knows we are going to Israel all the time and we pay for expensive hotels, you know, he did never let me know that he's got a flat in Jerusalem because I mean, why couldn't I stay in that flat for a week or two? I never mentioned it even to him. I say if you want to keep it quiet, keep it quiet. Because he's got a grudge at my family because they are not as frum, my grandchildren are not as frum as his, they are really like all these people with the long peyot and all that. And mine aren't.

RL: We've not really discussed, we've not gone through with your children, what kind of education they had. Let's just sort of bring them up to date really. What sort of schools did they attend?

BB: They started off in Avigdor School. The older ones started off in Avigdor School and none of them got any scholarships or anything, they didn't get that far. My son went to college and he is an accountant, which they don't recognise in Israel; he's just lost his job. He was in charge of a computer section and the firm went bankrupt, so he, Stanley. Dorit, she went to the primary school and she went to Avigdor. And from Avigdor she went-. They had that new comprehensive school, they all went to the comprehensive school. It wasn't a very good school really, but it was next door and they could come home for lunches, that's why they went there actually. I mean Judy could have passed scholarship, but she didn't. She had help as well, but she didn't. My oldest daughter she went to Pitman's and she learnt shorthand and typing and she worked for the Jewish Burials Society. She had several jobs before she, and then she went off to Israel and she didn't come back. She went on a holiday and she

**Tape 4: 30 minutes 59 seconds**

didn't come back. We thought, my husband thought she was off with that boy, but he came back and she didn't come back. She was in Hazorea, that's the first time I went to Israel, that's in the book really, that was an experience as well, to go to Israel! Because nobody in, what is this, 1963, I went to Israel before she was married. Was she married? I think she was married. That was before she was married, she was just out of school really. I didn't know anything. My son Stanley, he worked in England, in London, in Peltours. And he got me a flight, that's all I've got, a flight. And I wrote to my daughter, no phone, you couldn't phone where she was. She was in a Kibbutz in Hazorea; you couldn't get through in Israel, never mind from here. 'I'm coming on that and that day, meet me on the airport.' No flight number – what did I know about flight numbers, I'd never been on an aeroplane. I come to Israel, I arrived there, get off the plane, look outside – no Dorit anywhere! What am I going to do? I had a hotel booked in Haifa, and there was a bus going to Haifa. The first bus I let go, the second bus-, I said I'm not letting another one go, I got to reach her somehow, she knows I'm coming. Well, I went on that bus, got off that bus and had to go on a local bus. Of course you get money, I had big, I gave him a note. And he talked away in Ivrit, and I talked in Yiddish, I said, 'Was will er? Ich will bezahlen.' - 'Look', she said, 'it's only a little coin, it costs about five pence or something, you can't give him like a £10 note.' I said, 'But I haven't got, I've just come off the plane.' – 'I'll pay your fare.' So she paid my fare. It was nothing in those days, now it's more. And they told me where to get off and I went round and I found the hotel. And in the hotel, it was a five star hotel and nobody was there, you get the most fabulous supper, everything. And I said Dorit, I don't know, she knew which hotel I was staying in, she'll come to the hotel. So I don't know, I had my supper and I talked to the receptionist, I said, 'How do I get to Hazorea? If she doesn't come tonight I've got to go and

see her.' And he said, 'I'm off at 10 o'clock in the night and I take you to the bus stop where you go to Hazorea.' Good. So I was sitting around there in the lounge, waiting. He was trying to phone Hazorea. She was on an Ulpan, she wasn't one of the people. 'Nobody of this name are listed here.' I said, 'But she is, she is on a Ulpan.' Oh, we don't list Ulpan people, you know.' I said, 'How do I get in touch?' – 'Does she know you are here?' Before I got through, it took him hours before he got through there; the phone was terrible at that time. While we are on the phone, in walks Dorit. I said, 'Whatever happened to you?' – 'I was in that airport and I stood there half an hour, had just come off that flight and I've seen the bus to Haifa and I got the bus.' She said, 'You didn't give no flight number. There were three flights from London. There was one which I couldn't get there because the traffic was bad, I was too late.' – That's the one I was one. 'The next one was a lot of Hasidics with peyot. You wasn't on that one. But I saw that there was another one, so maybe you go on the last one!' Because I just told her to stay; if you've never been on an aeroplane before I don't know, I didn't know there were three of them going. She said, 'I waited for the last one and it took me a long time to get here.' Anyhow, that was that.

RL: How did you feel, visiting Israel?

BB: Ach, it was strange. First of all, I was in that expensive hotel. They gave me a five-course meal there and there was nobody else there. And I don't know, anybody else eating here and nobody was there and nobody came later, anything. And I got up after the meal and the next morning, at breakfast, there were a load of Americans there. And I said, 'Excuse me, you stay here?' They said yes. 'Where do you eat?' – 'Well, in the restaurants. Who can afford to eat here?'. It was booked by Peltours, you know, Stanley did-

RL: And that was was your first visit to Israel?

**Tape 4: 36 minutes 55 seconds**

BB: Yes. And again, I asked for a single room and they gave me a single room and they charged me extra. It was a hovel, you know. I complained to Peltours the next day; they gave me a beautiful room afterwards. A double bedroom with everything.

RL: So you said that Dorit married and continued to live in Israel?

BB: No, she didn't stay in Hazorea, she came back and she had a good job and she earned money and she bought everything what she wanted. And she met Amos, not in Israel, she met him in London, at a function, and they kind of fell in love, these two. And she went out afterwards. She went out to the Kibbutz with my husband, my husband went with her afterwards. And they got married afterwards.

RL: And how many children does she have?

BB: She had seven children.

RL: And where are they, what have they done?

BB: What have they done? There is Lily, that's the one from over here, she lives in Harduf and she looks after handicapped people. They've been in Germany; her husband wanted to be a doctor, but the language wasn't good enough, they couldn't do it, so they came back. And he's in charge of that place in Harduf. And she's got three children. She's got a boy of fifteen;

we went out to his Bar Mitzvah; and a girl of eight and a baby, I think she's two now. And the next one is Karen. Karen was a problem, but she married an Australian and she lives in Australia in the bush.

RL: And does she have children?

BB: No, she's got a dog.

RL: What does Karen do?

BB: Karen does all odd jobs, you know, everything odd. She does a home help job for one thing and she does something else for the school. Oh, she makes beautiful things, I can't get up. That butterfly, can you see that butterfly? She makes big things with glass; she's very artistic and she does a lot of photography. And she works in the markets and her pictures sell very well in Australia. And her husband, he works on air conditionings and all these various things. He builds a shed in the garden.

RL: And what other children Dorit have? You mentioned Lily and Karen. Who came after Karen?

BB: Adi. Adi is the one who got married in Las Vegas and she works for television. She's not on television, she works for television. She had one time she put the English subtitles on the Israeli pictures. And the next one is Shirley. She fell in love and they've got three children, but they are separated. She married a dati person, a frum person. And he has got a handicapped brother and he lost his father and his mother is not very well, so all his money goes to the family. And Shirley was doing a full-time job with three children, and then she lost her job. And then really, a couple of months ago, she was really on the breadline, she

**Tape 4: 41 minutes 26 seconds**

didn't have no money at all because he left her and lived with his mother and his brother. And they are separated, but they are not divorced. They get on with each other, but Shirley said, 'I'm finished, I'm not having any more children.', that's how-.

RL: Where does she live?

BB: She lives in Moshav Ashrat.

RL: And the next one?

BB: Adi, I got Shirley – Honi. Honi, she works in a Kibbutz at the moment, but she is getting married next October and they are also going to move out.

RL: And after that?

BB: Afterwards it's Leran and he's in, oh, what's that place, in South America somewhere. He had a terrible time in the army; a lot of his friends got killed on the Lebanese border, and he went through a lot. And then his father died last year; he looked after him as well. In Peru he is. He likes it in Peru; the weather is nice and the people are nice and he knows the language now. You can't get in touch with him, only with email, and I have got no computer. And Nakis is the last one. She was in Australia, I think she's home now, I have to phone her



next week. She visited her friend and she went with another friend and two boyfriends, they went together to Australia. And I don't know, I think she's home now, because I tried to phone her and I get this stupid answer phone in Israel, I can't even talk to it.

RL: And was Dorit the one who wasn't well?

BB: They both died of cancer. Dorit and Judy. Judy died first, she was only 50. And then Dorit died after. It's Judy's Yartzeit next week.

RL: What did Judy do?

BB: Oh, Judy was working so many jobs. She worked on the computers really, not on the computers really, computer distribution. So it's a lot of work it was. Of course when she got ill, they still brought work to her in the garden. I remember her sitting in the garden, 'Judy, we miss you. When are you coming back?' And she just-

RL: Where did she live?

BB: They live in Hod Hasharon. Her daughter goes through a lot of trouble now.

RL: What children did she have?

BB: She had Danny and Carinne. Danny is fine, he works for the phone people, Orange, he's in charge of-. He was over here a couple of months ago. Carinne is not a problem. You see, her father had girlfriends and she was in Ashkelon. And she said, 'Why I live in Ashkelon?' And he went backwards and forwards and it was a long drive and it's not very safe. And he asked her, there is a big house and there is nobody in it, 'You come and live with us.' But Sharon, she's got a daughter and she was in one of those incidents with the bombs

#### **Tape 4: 45 minutes 42 seconds**

and she was handicapped; for nearly a year she couldn't even walk and all that. And of course Israel makes a fuss of these people: and she got a car and got this and this and got that and poor Carinne, she got nobody. She can't get on with Sharon, she can't get on with the girl, because they are snobbish and they are-. I mean she goes to work. The last thing I heard is that she's staying with a friend, she can't bear to stay in the house with them together. So what can I do from here? I can't do very much. I sent her a nice letter. She hasn't got a boyfriend, that would be a good idea if she had somebody. She had boyfriends just to go out with, but it's nothing steady.

RL: When did Judy go out to Israel?

BB: Judy went out to Israel, she went with Angela. They stayed in Tel Aviv and they were working there. Gosh, what year. She worked in London and then she worked in Israel. I didn't want her to go actually. I can't remember.

RL: Did she get married in Israel?

BB: Oh, that was funny. They were living in that flat and Paul, her husband, he was selling encyclopaedias, you know, when people come to the door, selling encyclopaedias. And of course the refugees in Israel, you know, people who are just temporary in Israel, don't buy

encyclopaedias. But they got friendly and he asked her out and somehow or other they just worked out together and then he said he bought a house in Hod Hasharon, would she have a look at it, whether she liked it. At that moment it was kind of a shack, it wasn't a good house. It was a nice little house, but they built on it, you should see what a beautiful house it now is. They said, 'You could live in a house there. Do you want to live in a silly flat here?', and all that. And they come together. They didn't live together, but she said, 'We can't live together in a house unless we are married.', so they said, 'Well then, we get married.' That's how it was.

RL: Where was he from, Paul?

BB: South Africa.

RL: And then Stanley, what did he do?

BB: Oh, Stanley went to Israel on Hachsharah. He worked, you know in that place where they pickle all the cucumbers. That's where he learnt Ivrit. He just went there and then he came back and he passed all his exams and he was a chartered accountant here and he could have had good money there. But he met an Israeli girl. No, first he met a South African girl. The funny thing, I liked the South African better than-. She was lovely, she was cuddly, but she didn't want to get married. They went on holiday together, they slept together, but she didn't want to get married. And then he met his wife, and she's a quiet one, like him, and they are very good together. They didn't have no children; they adopted one, they have nothing but trouble with him.

RL: Where does he live?

BB: In Oranit, in the West Bank.

**Tape 4: 49 minutes 50 seconds**

RL: And then Barry?

BB: Barry is here.

RL: When did he come to Manchester?

BB: He was in Yeshiva and he had a nervous breakdown. He belonged to Lubavitch and he knew in a lot of people in Manchester. So he was in hospital and he ran off to Manchester. I don't know how he managed to get to Manchester, but he did. And they are very nice to him in Manchester. I don't know, he was in a hospital here, in Crumpsall and the nurse took him home to London with a ticket. And then I went to visit him in London on a Friday afternoon and it was getting later and later, it was winter, it was nearly Shabbat. 'Oh look', I said, 'take the food. When he comes, give it to him. If he doesn't come, don't give it to him.' I come home, I got a phone call, Barry is in Manchester! The nurse bought him a return ticket.

RL: So when did he move to Manchester?

BB: He kind of stayed, you know. He went into the cultural centre. He just wanted to stay and the Manchester people helped him. He didn't want to go back to London. I had to clear his flat out where he stayed because while he was in hospital, nobody paid rent. And they

didn't want him back, they gave me all the things. They were nice people, dati people. And he stayed.

RL: So how long has he been here?

BB: I don't know. Barry, how long have you been here? 1973? 1976?

Barry B: 1985.

BB: 1985, yeah. Quite a long time. Are we getting to the end now?

RL: No, I still got a few things to ask. What does Barry do, what did he do in London for a living?

BB: Oh in London he had several jobs. He worked for the *Jewish Chronicle*. And then he worked in a jewellery place. And, I don't know, he had another job as well.

Barry B: I had three jobs.

BB: Yes, I know, another job. Also a jewellery place.

BarryB: In Manchester, after the jewellery place.

BB: Oh, I can't remember.

BarryB: I was working for a butcher for twenty hours a week.

BB: Yes, I know. And he was teaching a bit and then he went to Israel. And it didn't work out in Israel because he didn't take his tablets. And he came back and he was ill and he moved

**Tape 4: 53 minutes 7 seconds**

to Manchester.

RL: And in Manchester, what does he do?

BB: Well, not very much. He's learning and going to Shul, I don't know, he doesn't do no jobs. He is supposed to go to the computer section and learn the computer but, I don't know, you could have done, but you don't.

Barry B: I finished the first, the main course.

BB: He finished the main course, but it's awkward because he goes to daven now and that's the time he used to go to computers, no time to go to it in the winter. When the days get a bit longer, he'll probably start again.

RL: In terms of nationality, how would you describe yourself?

BB: What do you mean? Well, I'm British. I'm British because my husband was British.

RL: Do you feel different to the British at all?

BB: Which kind of British? What, the government? I don't like them. I don't like them. The Jewish people I get on better with the people who are not all that frum than the very frum ones. Although I go to their functions and everything, but really and truly, they are not, how can I say, they are friendly. But when, for instance, on Sunday night there was something on, and she just said to Barry or anybody what's on, it's at Machsikei Hadass, you know, it's quite a long walk from here. And nobody offered me a lift or anything. And I met her on Monday night and she said, 'Oh, you should have come, it was lovely. You knew we were going, you could have come with us.' I said, 'Listen, if I know exactly what is on and when it's on and what time to get there. But Machsikei Hadass, I'm not going to get a cab to go there because it costs £3.50 and another £2. It was a good speaker, but we were out Saturday, Motzei Shabbat we went to the Mishnayoth, the kids with this Mishnayoth. It was beautiful, but it lasted until after half past eleven, quarter to twelve, I was tired. So I don't know, on Sunday night-. Well, I didn't go. I might have gone if she had told me, 'Come over a certain time.' She only lives over there. Or if she would have phoned me, I mean I'm on a phone, you can lift a phone up. So I didn't go. With Wizo I know exactly, but I mean with the League-. With the League I do a little job, making the tea for the card players once every fortnight. Not, well I mean, in London there was a welfare officer who is in charge of things. Here I'm not in charge of anything.

RL: So when did you move up here?

BB: It'll be two years next month, on Purim I came.

RL: And what made you decide to move?

BB: Oh, Barry wanted me to come up here after that accident, after that robbery, you know. I made up my mind. We wanted to go for two years ago already, he is looking for a flat, nothing like that, a proper flat, you know. And they kept on saying, 'Oh, you are losing a lot of money when your mum comes up. You shouldn't move.', and this and that. And he

**Tape 4: 57 minutes 16 seconds**

couldn't find one anyhow. And somehow where I worked with the kids in London, in.....

, 'Oh', she said, her aunty lives in Gan Eden, it's a very nice place. 'Why don't you apply for it?' I've never seen Gan Eden; I came here and they promised me God knows what, which wasn't true really, but I came to Gan Eden just the same.

RL: This film is just about to end, so we'll just stop here.

**Tape 4: 57 minutes 48 seconds**

**TAPE 5**

**Tape 5: 0minute 1 second**

RL: This is the interview with Mrs Bessie Barnett and it's Tape 5. I was just asking you about identity really and if you felt different to the British. You say that you are a British citizen, but who do you identify with? Where do you think your identity lies?

BB: What do you mean? It definitely is not in Germany, definitely. There I have got no connection, I have no intention ever to go out there. And when I meet Germans on holidays I say I just detest them, if they are good or not good, because I know they were such turncoats. And British people, I mean, the North Country people are wonderful really, I mean Manchester people. London not so much. In London, people keep to themselves really, more or less. Except for once, once they want your help. If they want your help, say it's in a club, say it's in an organisation, say it's in people's houses, say whatever it is. I think it's here the same, but I don't push too much with that at the moment because I don't mean to be nasty or anything. Or would you like to help prepare for the weddings, or do this and do that. We talked about the barmitzvah and I said with Lubavitch, I said, 'Would you like to come to Tesco and help selling kosher food there and talk to people and all that?' I said, 'I'd love to, but Tesco is too far and I can't get there unless I get-.' I mean I wouldn't mind visiting Jewish people in clubs, if somebody wants to come with me, because I used to do that in London. But so far nothing's come out of it because it's just been Hanukah and it only was mentioned in the beginning of the month. I don't know if somebody asked me to come to the cards and takes me I'd go with them, otherwise no, I'm not running about.

RL: Do you feel you've got any kind of continental identity?

BB: Not really. It's all been so long ago, it-. I don't know, I don't feel like going back. Sometimes I think I wonder what it looks like, where I used to live or anything, but my cousin went out there with her daughter. They went to Uhlandstraße where they used to live and she showed the house and all that. And somebody went by and said, 'Hm, **was seh ich hier, Juden?**', so she said, 'Come on, let's go, we get away from here.' It hasn't changed.

RL: Do you feel different to the British at all?

BB: Well, Manchester people-, I feel like a Londoner, not like a German citizen. Like a London Yiddishe girl, you know.

RL: So you've never been back to Germany?

BB: No, I've no intention either.

### **Tape 5: 3 minutes 43 seconds**

RL: Do you get any kind of compensation from Germany?

BB: No, nothing. That's the last thing we had. Nothing came out of it here. It's a pity, but-. I don't know, you get in touch with these people. I never got in touch with them from Manchester at all. It's 2000, that's already two or three years ago, isn't it? They sent you all the papers and they take the money, don't they? Some people get money, I don't. I went round in London to the German-. I went round there a few years ago and they wanted so much money for insurance and God knows what. And then she just said, 'How old are you?', and I think I was 72 at the time. She just said, 'You know what, it won't even pay you. By the time you pay that out, by the time you've got to live over 100 before you really make a profit on it.' And I said to myself, no, getting, being a pensioner now. I mean when I worked on the computer job I might have done it, but being a pensioner now-. And I expected to get something from the San Francisco people, but I never did. They kept it all in America, or where is it gone? I mean they had billions, didn't they?

RL: Do you think that your experiences have affected you in any way?

BB: There has been a lot of hardship, losing the girls. My husband, he was an active person, he died at 73. It's not very old, but it's an age. But then you lose young girls, and they were so active and so full of life. And we see on those pictures, you know, they-. And then they are not there anymore, it's just terrible. I mean when, not last time, the time before, last time I went with Barry when we went to, and Paul left me on a Friday night by myself in the house. And I sit there in the lounge and I look up those stairs and I expect my daughter to walk down, it's-, you can't describe it really. 'Oh', I said, 'that was so cruel it was, it really was cruel.' Because they go out Friday night, and I don't ride, so I wouldn't go Friday night. He said, 'Do you want a television, Mum?' I said, 'No, I don't have television on Friday night.' But it was so eerie, you know. And the same at my daughter's place, in the Kibbutz, there is all these pictures, these needle works, the whole room is full of them. And you think they are walking out there, they are coming. You can't stand there in that hole, in the grave around the corner. You can't describe it really, you shouldn't think of it really, because they are with Hashem, they are with God actually, but I mean, if you look how cheerful she is with all the kids here.

RL: Did you ever use to talk to your children about your background and your experiences?

BB: Stanley did that for me. And my granddaughter Lily wanted it translated and put it into a paper in Israel. And I don't know whether she was too busy or something, nothing came out of it in the end?

RL: How long ago did you write those memories?

BB: About six or seven years ago, five years, I don't know. I had it all in a book, just in longhand; he same as the Australian holiday, the South African holiday and all that, there are all books of them. But I mean I've got here all the story of Dorit's wedding and, you know, it's-.

RL: And you say you used to give lectures in London?

**Tape 5: 8 minutes 44 seconds**

BB: In London, yes. I went into goyisch schools and they were very impressed on it. And here, Lubavitch do a bat mitzvah class for girls of ten, eleven, twelve. And a couple, about six weeks ago she invited me whether I talk to the girls about the time when I was bat mitzvahed. So I gave them quite a bit of it, I mean not, you know, just a little bit when I was twelve. And told them a little bit about the village, when we had no water and all that, and how we went into the farm. I didn't tell you about the farm and the cows, did I?

RL: You did, yes, you mentioned the farm, yes.

BB: Ah no, that was the farm where I worked then. No, when we were little we used to go to the farmer with a can and the milk was milked in a bucket called kosher. And that one is transferred to the-, they took it out and put it in our can, we used to get our milk from there, the kosher milk from there. And we used to wash all the buckets and we used to get our yeast from there and we baked our cakes, our challahs, and we used to take them to the bakers and they baked them for us.

RL: Have you kept the same level of religious observance or has it altered over the years?

BB: Yes, it has. It was different in Germany. When I came here, I mean, when I was with the old lady as a companion, she had a son-in-law, Ralph, and during the war it just lapsed somehow. You know, before I had the children actually. No, I think we had the children, because my husband used to schlep them to football matches, then we lapsed. And as the kids grew up, especially with Barry now, we are really ultra now because I wouldn't do a thing which was wrong now. But we did, we did at that time. Because when we went on camping holidays, you know, we used to ride around and all that. It was a holiday! It wasn't-. We didn't do anything terrible, but yes, we lapsed a little bit with religion for a little while. And then we all came back again because it didn't make sense. It started when I go back again to Lubavitch because Lubavitch are really-, you are in with them, there are lectures, everything. You feel like you are in a different kind of world, as when you come down here with that New Year's partying with *Auld Lang Syne* and all that, you can't compare it!

RL: When did you start with Lubavitch?

BB: Lubavitch, when Barry was young he used to go to their camps, you know. And then they had lectures there and that was run on Shabbat. And then I got friendly with the women. Then they had a Women's Group and I joined the Women's Group. And then they started to have afternoon club for the over-60s. And the old lady, she had cancer and she couldn't cope with it anymore, so I took over. And then we get less and less people, as they kind of died or put in homes or anything like that. So I said, 'We have to do something about it. I'm going to open a luncheon club.' And this works. And they are still carrying on; somebody took over from me. And she's got a car and she takes them out as well, so it's still going.

RL: And you say you sort of have linked up with Lubavitch in Manchester?

BB: Yes, I have. But they are all, I think, they are younger than you, you know what I mean? They are all very young women, most of them. You get two or three which are a bit older, but nobody is my age at all. They don't go out, at my age they don't go out.

RL: Did you have any relations in Manchester?

**Tape 5: 13 minutes 45 seconds**

BB: Well, if you call the Halberstadts who have got a butcher shop, they are second or third cousins, but I don't know. I haven't been in touch with them. I mean, I don't push myself to people and they are not forthcoming people to ask you for anything. There is Mrs Glückstadt, she comes to Shul, she always says, 'How are you?' and all that. And when Barry was in hospital they were very concerned, they got in touch with my cousin. And they said, 'Why don't I come? He misses his mum. You know, he's in hospital, he's got all strangers to visit him.' And I thought to myself, 'Why don't you go and see him?' No, they wouldn't, because it was quite hard to come from London. To do it in one day it's a long time! They go with a coach in the morning; and if you had a hold-up or anything, you get exactly two hours in that Crumpsall and then you have to go back again. And it's hard when you work the next day.

RL: We've not really mentioned your brother. You say he was taken off to Canada during the war. Did he stay there?

BB: He was interned in Canada and he went to Yeshiva there. And then we had relations in Washington Heights in New York. And he moved to New York and he's been staying in New York ever since. He came over to Barry's barmitzvah and that's the only time he's ever come to England. He went once to Herzliya in Israel. I often asked him, he said he's too old to travel, although he's younger than me. And we are on the phone. My cousin and him, they write to each other every month. So Honey said to me, if I write he writes back. Well, I wrote him a letter a fortnight ago, haven't got one yet. It's Christmas time, so maybe he writes. He hasn't got much to write about, because he also doesn't do nothing. He goes to Shul, he does the same as Barry because he's retired.

RL: Did he not marry?

BB: No, he never married. He's got a funny idea about things, about coming in his room and all that. I don't know, it goes back right up from Germany, you know. Something, he'll say, all the little things in the fridge. I say, 'There is nothing in the fridge, there is food in the fridge.' Everybody says that, but-. And I went to see the rabbi, the Lubavitch rabbi, I went to America, and he took me-. That's, my uncle was still alive, in the 90s, he was in a home at the time. And he took me out that day. 'What do you think?', he said to me, 'You know what, you make me miss my shiur.'

RL: So you are obviously living here. How safe do you feel in England?

BB: What, here? Very safe. Unless you walk about it, you don't know, you always feel somebody might jump on you or something, especially when you come from Halfway House to here at night, but boruch hashem, there has nothing ever happened. I mean, in this place it's safe because nobody can get in here. You can only get in with the phone, you can't in. and you get all these notes, 'nobody strangers'. If you wouldn't phone me, you couldn't get in here at all. Unless a warden lets you in; a warden lets you in when they know it. I don't know, it's restrictive really because you can't get in. I don't know how Barry gets back in.

RL: If you hadn't been forced to leave Germany, what do you think you might have done? Did you have any ambitions as a child of what you might want to do?

BB: What, in Germany?

### **Tape 5: 18 minutes 18 seconds**

RL: In Germany, if Hitler hadn't come and you'd lived your life there?

BB: Well, we all had dreams. You'd go to Realschule, you'd finish up there, you go to university. And after university you either get married or you have a profession. I toyed with the idea of working with a kindergarten or I don't know whether I wanted to work in a kindergarten really. I mean when I came here, somebody suggested I should help the children at school, but at my age, I don't know whether I want to, really.

RL: You mentioned once that you didn't really want to stay in England, that you had a quota number for America.

BB: America, I wanted to go to New York, yes. I always wanted to go to New York because some of my family lived, you know, they are more family than the London family.



They are not really family, the same as here, the Halberstadts. You say hello to them, I said 'gut shabbes' to them the other day. They don't ask you 'how are you'. They see a strange rabbi come, 'How are you? How are you getting on?', you know, they don't. I mean Honi phoned up on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, and my birthday is not until the end of the month, you know.

RL: So is there anything that you might want to add, that we've missed?

BB: I don't think so, no.

RL: Is there any message that you'd like to finish with?

BB: Message to whom?

RL: Your family?

BB: The family? I don't know. Well, I hope they are all keeping alright. I hope my granddaughter is going to be very happy when she gets married next October. And I hope Leran would at least send me one postcard while he is away; he's been away 18 months now.

RL: Okay. Thank you very much.

BB: Thank you very much.

**Tape 5: 20 minutes 50 seconds.**

**[Photographs]**

BB: (1) Yetta Halberstadt, approximate time is 1880 and the town is Frankfurt am Main. Grandmother.

(2) The first name is Jonas Halberstadt. It's taken about in 1930. And the place where he lived at the time is in Flößheim, but this was taken in town, in Frankfurt. It was actually a passport photo.

**Tape 5: 21 minutes 41 seconds.**

RL: And he is, in relationship to you?

BB: He was my father. He died in a-

(3) This is my mother. Her name was Frieda Halberstadt, she was geborene Strauß. This photo was taken about 1930. She lived at the time in Flößheim, the photo was taken in town. It was a passport photo because they wanted to go off to Israel at the time.

(4) This is my husband and myself. It was taken after our wedding. His name was Isaac Barnett and my name is naturally Bessie Barnett. The photo was taken in 1941, a couple of weeks after our wedding, and the place was London.

(5) This is my daughter, which is on the right-hand side, the blond one. My son-in-law is on the other side and that's most of her family. The time is in the 1980s and it was taken, I

believe on a Kibbutz in Israel. Unfortunately, my daughter and my son-in-law are not here anymore.

(6) This is Judy Roberts. She is unfortunately not here anymore. The date is about 1983. And the place where it was taken is in her garden in Hod HaSharon.

RL: And the two children?

BB: The two children, it's Carinne, and Danny is a young man now. He's been in the army; I'm sorry I didn't pick his army photo out.

(7) This one is Stanley; he's my oldest son, and his wife and Ofer. It was taken in 1984 and the place is Oranit in Israel. Of course he's grown up now.

(8) This is Karen and her husband. They live in Australia now. That's Shirley with them. And the date it was taken, it was in 1996. I think it was taken in Ein Hamikvatz, on a Kibbutz. She lives in Australia now.

RL: And their relationship to you?

BB: The girls are my granddaughters.

(9) These are Lily and Hain. Lily is my granddaughter and that is her husband. The date is about 2001 and it was taken in Hartuf in Israel.

(10) These are my great-grandchildren. The oldest one is on the left-hand side; he's Avshalom, he's fifteen. And the next one is Odelia; she's eight. And baby Anna; she's two years old. I'm sorry I can't see her because they are all in Israel, in Hartuf.

RL: And the date?

BB: The date is 2001.

**Tape 5: 26 minutes 47 seconds**

(11) That's three of my great-grandchildren. They belong to Shirley. One is Yarden and one is Shai and the little boy is called Dor. He was named after my daughter who died the year before. It was taken in 2001.

RL: And the place?

BB: And the place is Moshav Ashrat.

(12) Date is 2002. The first name is Barry; that's Barry Barnett and myself. And this picture was taken in someone's house, I can't remember exactly, somewhere in Manchester.

(13) This picture was taken in Israel, it's all our family. And it was taken on my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. And it was taken in Israel in my granddaughter's house.

**Tape 5: 28 minutes 22 seconds.**

**THE END**