

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Archive
Ref. no:	RV286

Interviewee Surname:	Hoare
Forename:	Edith
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	23 March 1928
Interviewee POB:	Vienna, Austria

Date of Interview:	6 November 2023
Location of Interview:	Ledbury
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	1 hour 40 minutes



REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV286
NAME: Edith Hoare
DATE: 6 November 2023
LOCATION: Ledbury
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[00:00:07]

Today's the sixth of November 2023 and we're conducting an interview with Mrs Edith Hoare. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in Ledbury.

Can you tell me your name please?

Edith Hoare.

And when and where were you born?

In Vienna.

And when?

Twenty-eight.

Mrs Hoare, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive.

I'm delighted to.

Can you please tell me something about your family background?

Well, I have one real sister and she sadly died of cancer but she emigrated to America to a place called Lexington, Virginia. And I went many times over there to stay with her and her husband owned the newspaper in that little town they lived in. And what else can I tell you? They were very generous and had my children, all three of them – have I got four children – no, I haven't [laughs] – to stay with them. And what else can I tell you?

A: Perhaps about your early life Mummy, growing up in Vienna.

Oh well, my father had a shop, a furrier shop, and my sister and I, I remember, we had lovely blue coats with fur collars and [00:02:07] – anyway, I saw the ghastly Hitler [laughs] because when I was going to school one day a cavalcade came on the main road which was – the main road that we lived near for school, Josefstädter Straße. That's where Hitler and his car came past as I was going to school, and –

What did you feel when you saw Hitler then?

Nothing 'cos I'd no idea what was going on. I was ten or something. Yeah.

And tell us something, a little bit about your grandparents. Did you ever meet them? About your grandparents [overtalking 00:03:12].

Yes. My grandparents were called Fritz and – my mother's this is – and they lived in this place in Slovakia called Myjava and as soon as we got to Myjava my sister and I used to take off our shoes and socks and run about the streets in our bare feet. And the most exciting thing I remember that we used to do was to follow the funerals. Don't ask me why that was exciting but the age of whatever I was, it was. And the men in those days wore wonderful short, white skirts [00:04:12]. And as I say, we used to follow the funerals to the church and

see all these corpses, and that was our idea of fun. And we went to Myjava every summer to stay with my grandparents and –

Was your mother born in Slovakia?

Yes, I think so.

But she had moved to Vienna?

Yeah. And she moved to Vienna and her one passion in life was opera. And I have loved opera ever since, especially *La Traviata* [laughs]. And –

Did she take you to see any operas in Vienna?

No, because I was never old enough. But my sister, she was taken to see *La Traviata*, by Verdi. And I was just sort of coming up to the age where I was about to go when it all collapsed and – what else can I tell you?

And what languages did you speak to your grandparents? What language did you speak to them?

I honestly can't remember. I think it was Slovakian.

Did you speak Slovak?

Yes. The thing was that at that age you learn a language and then I forgot it completely when I was back in Vienna. And then as soon as we got back to Myjava, I picked it up again [laughs]. [00:06:07]

And what was your grand – what did your grandfather do in Myjava [00:06:10], what was his profession?

I honestly don't – I don't remember. I remember what he looked like. He was adorable. He had a white beard [laughs], and I thought he was the sweetest person. Yeah.

And were there any other children when you spent the summers there, or was it just you and your sister?

My sister and I and there was a friend of mine from the same school from Vienna that I went to called Edith Wahl, W-a-h-l, and she also went to Myjava quite by chance, and so I always spent a very happy – we spent quite a lot of time in Myjava. And the other thing I remember about my life in England was that I got bronchitis and Aunt Topsy sent one of the maids from Wrentnall called Brenda and Elle and Ginny and me, we went – she sent us to Weymouth 'cos she thought the sea air would clear my bronchitis. And she was quite right, it did. And we had the most wonderful time with Brenda. She was the sweetest person and –

[Break in recording]

Yes.

Came from –

A: Poland. [00:08:00]

What?

A: Poland.

Poland?

Well, he didn't, you see.

A: It was Ukraine.

It was called Poland in those days but in fact it was –

A: Ukraine.

Ukraine. Exactly.

So he'd come to Vienna.

And he came to Vienna and bought this shop.

So both your parents had come from other places to Vienna.

Absolutely, yeah.

And did they – where – do you know how they met, your parents?

No. No idea [laughs].

And can I ask, your grandparents in Slovakia, were they Jewish?

Yes.

Yeah?

Yes.

Did they celebrate any festivals or do you remember anything?

No, I don't. I don't remember anything.

And were there other Jews living in that – in Myjava?

In where?

In Slovakia, in the place.

Not that – I don't remember that.

So, what about your father's family? Did you ever meet his parents?

No, but when I was eighty, or I could have been ninety I'm not quite sure, my three children took me back to Vienna and we stayed in this lovely hotel that my eldest daughter found. And I suddenly remembered that I had an aunt called Erma. And I don't know why we thought it was so funny. We all had absolute hysterics, didn't we [laughs]? *Tante Erma.*

A: *Tante Erma.*

And whose sister was she?

What?

She was the sister of –?

She was my father's sister, yeah.

And she also lived in Vienna.

Yes, yes, she did. I never met her mind you- but she did.

So, what – [00:10:00] Edith, what are your earliest memories of growing up in Vienna?

I think my mother making an *Apfelstrudel* [laughs], which – there was a great big cable and knotting out the pastry [laughs]. She was a great cook, my mother.

Was your mother a housewife or did she work as well or –?

No. No, she didn't work. She just – and I also remember in this apartment we lived in, in 8 Wien [8th district], Wien 8, that we had a long passage. And- my sister who was a miserable so-and-so, used to put me in a child's pram and take me at top speed down this long passage and tip me up and frighten the daylights out of me [laughs].

And what was the address please where you lived?

8 Wien, Wiener [pause], Tigergasse, Tigergasse Wien 8.

Which number, do you remember? Which number?

What the flat was? No.

And was it –?

It might come to me.

Okay. Was it an apartment?

Yeah, yeah.

Just describe it.

And we had one of those amazing heaters in the flat that one had in Austria. I don't know if you ever saw one.

Tell us about it.

Made out of – not stones – [00:12:03] [pause] I don't know how I can describe them.

Tiles? Tiles?

Tiles, that's right. In the sitting-room. And it heated the whole flat. And –

Did you share a room with your sister?

I can't remember that I'm afraid. I can't remember that.

So who lived in the flat? Your parents, yourself.

My parents and my sister and I. Yeah.

On which floor was it?

It was the first, yeah, the first floor. And there was no lift or anything.

And what – you said Wien 8, so what sort of neighbourhood was that Wien 8?

I think it was quite sort of prosperous. I don't know. I never thought about it quite honestly at that age. But the school I went to was in the next street which was parallel to the one that we lived in, and that's where my mother used to take me in a sleigh in the winter to school [coughs].

Your sister went there as well, to the same school?

I think so. Honestly, I don't know.

Tell us about the school. What do you remember from that?

Nothing at all.

Volkschule?

Nothing at all.

What other children –?

Oh, I can tell you something about it, yes. The headmistress was a most amazing lady. She had a front, a bosom, like a pigeon. You know what I mean? [00:14:01] And she used to wear a navy blue dress with buttons. And she was in Vienna during the First World War and she – I remember her telling us that Vienna was never going to be the same again, and that she thought that it was very important that we should remember it as it was before the Second World War. And so she took us round all the famous places. One of them was Schönbrunn. And one of them was – it had an eagle over the – what was that called? I don't remember. And anyway, I remember going to Schönbrunn, and in this enormous room, which was entirely empty, at the very end there was a picture of Napoleon's son. Don't ask me why I remember it but I remember it.

And the whole class went on this trip?

Yeah.

Your whole class? [Overtalking 00:15:35].

We all went yes, yes.

What was her name, the headmistress? Do you remember?

I don't remember. But I know that she was right. Where else did she take us?

So she took you to historic places in Vienna.

Yes, exactly. Yeah. Oh, and to two museums that were opposite each other. [00:16:03] And the street, the most famous street in Vienna, was called the Ringstraße, and there was – and

she took us to look at the opera house. But not into the opera house but we looked at it from the outside. Oh, and then there was this place in Vienna called Tiefer Graben which meant the deep – I don't know what a *Graben* [ditch, moat] is in English.

It's a – not a hole but a –

Yes, exactly.

A: A ditch?

Ditch, a ditch.

A ditch, that's it, yeah.

A: A moat.

What?

Yeah, a moat, moat.

A: Moat or a ditch, yeah.

Tiefer Graben, yeah. And I remember that. Don't ask me why one remembers things, but one does.

You liked those excursions?

Oh yeah, we loved it. Meant no lessons [laughs].

Do you remember any of your friends from school?

Well, this one girl, Edith Wahl, Edith, she also went to Myjava for her holidays. I don't remember why, but anyway.

And were there Jewish children in the school or was it all mixed or what?

Mixed, yeah, completely, yeah.

Did you ever face any discrimination in the school?

No. No, nothing like that. What is the little white flower that I can't ever remember?

[00:18:07]

A: Edelweiß.

No.

A: [Inaudible] another one.

Well, you brought me one back. I've got it in my bedroom here.

Hmm-mm.

No –

A: Amonite or –

What?

A: Amonite, Anonite? No.

A flower?

A flower. Anyway, I think while I was at the second school that I came to in England, I saw the Battle of Britain being fought up in the sky. White puffs. Aeroplanes falling. And nobody told us that's what was going on. But it had these flowers, if I could only remember –

A: Primroses?

Primroses. That's it. And there were all different colours, quite beautiful. That was at Thoby Priory, yeah.

Not in Vienna. We're still sticking a little bit in Vienna.

Yes, sorry.

Don't worry, don't worry. What other things do you remember from Vienna? Tell us about your –?

Well, I can remember that there was lilacs everywhere and in the Ringstraße there were roses. They weren't roses like you get in England. They were roses – what you call them when they're on – not sticks –

Bush or – a bush?

Not bushes, no.

A: Climbing ones?

Climbing ones?

A: Rambling roses

No.

A: No.

No. Anyway, there were lots of roses and lilacs. [00:20:00] Then there was two museums facing each other and a statue of Maria Theresa in the middle. Anyway, we used to go from my house to there. And we had – she wasn't a nanny, she was – wasn't really a maid. She was a maid of all. She did everything for us. And her name was also Elsa, and she used to take us for walks and tell us endless stories. And she came from Graz. And she was very attractive but my father behaved nicely [laughs]. And she was also called Elsa. And I have got a photograph of her actually. Yeah.

And your father had a shop you said.

Yeah.

He was a furrier. And where was his shop? Was it near the flat where you lived?

Yes, quite near. And I tell you what else I can remember about Vienna, was that we lived near an ice-rink and Sonja Henie – I don't suppose anybody ever heard of her now – used to skate there. And somebody called something [Karl] Schafer, and he used to race round this ice-rink.

Did you skate? [00:22:00]

Yes, but not seriously [laughs]. Just *Schlittschuhlaufen* [ice skating], yeah.

Hmm-mm.

Loved it. Yeah. And they used to freeze the tennis courts in the winter. They used to cover them in water and then they froze and that's what we used to use as ice-rinks.

Any other hobbies you had as a child?

I can't remember anything.

A: You said you used to go to the Ferris wheel.

The Prater.

Oh yes, the Prater, yes.

Yeah? Tell us about the Prater.

Well, I used to bully my poor mother into taking me. And we used to have to – I think we went in a tram to the Prater. I can't really remember, but I did go on the Ferris wheel and the view from the top of Vienna, it was wonderful. And I can remember going to St Stephansdom, and something called Votivkirche which had two steep – two steeples, yeah. I'm going to stop now. I'm wrecked.

Shall we have a little break?

A: Yeah, let's have a little break.

[Break in recording]

Yes, we were talking about your memories of Vienna. What I wanted to ask you, so your dad came from Poland so how did your parents speak? Did they speak in German or –?

Yes.

Yeah? They spoke German together.

We spoke German together.

And what about the Jewish aspect of things? [00:24:01] Did you ever go to synagogue?

Yes.

Yeah?

Yeah. And all the ladies wore – do I mean they wore hats or was it the men? I can't remember. I think the men wore hats, yeah.

Where was that synagogue, do you remember? No.

No. No idea.

But as children you would go sometimes.

Yeah.

What about any festivals? Did you celebrate any Jewish festivals?

Yes, but don't ask me what. New Year, I think. What was that called?

Rosh Hashanah.

Yeah, that's right. Yeah. I don't know what you did at that moment. Oh, and then there was the thing with the candles. What was that?

On a Friday night?

Yeah.

Shabbat.

What?

Shabbat.

Yeah.

Did your mother light the candles?

Yes.

Every Friday night?

No, not – I don't know, I don't know.

And the grandparents? Sometimes they came to you to visit or –?

No, never.

Mostly you went there.

We went there.

Okay.

And we went in the train as far as – I'm not sure I'm telling you this right – to Bratislava. I'm not sure I've got this right. And then one changed trains and went by train to Myjava.

And how far was it?

What?

How far was it from Bratislava?

[Laughs] I know we changed trains.

Okay, okay. And Edith, when did things change in Vienna? Did you notice anything changing as a child? [00:26:01] When did things change for you?

One thing I remember is that there was an uprising in Vienna. And the prime minister was called Dollfuß and he was a goody and the Nazis were going to get rid of him. And I don't know why – well, I think one of the reasons the Austrians were so pleased to see Hitler was because there was such a shortage of food in Vienna. And Hitler promised everything. And they – my father – we had to go and buy some bread and it was from a long way away because there wasn't any near where we lived, and I don't know why but my father took me with him. And I remember going – it was all terribly dangerous 'cos they were firing at everybody in the street. I don't know who was firing but somebody was. Anyway, we got home safely with the bread [laughs]. That I remember about Vienna.

What about the Anschluss? Do you remember the Anschluss?

No [pause] [00:28:01].

Because – do you remember any change in school for you that some [overtalking 00:28:08]?

The only thing I remember was to begin with when I first arrived in England was that I didn't realise the word war meant war and I was absolutely sure that these people who were trying to be nice to me at the school I was at, at Felsted, were going to go back to Vienna and kill my mother 'cos they were the enemy and nobody explained to me, and I don't think I told anybody.

You didn't understand what was going on?

No. No idea.

But you left – because you left rather late in July '39 so from the time – it's almost a year after the Anschluss.

Yeah.

What about Kristallnacht? Any memories of Kristallnacht?

The what?

The November pogrom, Kristallnacht, do you remember that?

What's that?

When the synagogues were burning.

Oh, no. No, I don't remember that. *Crystal night.*

Yeah.

I know now because I've heard it spoken about, but I don't remember it then.

What about your father and his shop, what happened to the shop?

Oh, they put – they took it away from him and that's when he escaped, left, I don't know.

Where did he go?

He went to Belgium to begin with 'cos it was the easiest and then because he'd been in the resistance, the Nazis chased him to the south of France. [00:30:01] And I always thought how extraordinary, one little man and they chased him all over Europe.

So were you still in Vienna when your father left, when he left?

Yeah.

So you were there with your mother.

Yes.

And your sister.

And crying my eyes out 'cos my father had gone. In fact, I think we prayed all night [laughs].
Poor Papa [pause].

And Edith, do you remember did your mother – at that point, what were her – did she try to emigrate herself? She did talk about emigration? Was that ever talked about?

No, no. She wasn't going to go anywhere 'cos of my grandparents.

And did the grandparents stay in Slovakia or did they – they stayed where they were, the grand –?

In Myjava, yes, yes. And I don't think anything terrible happened there. Not as far as the Germans were concerned.

Was there a plan that – did she plan – did she want to move to Slovakia? Because I know at that point people moved from Austria to Slovakia.

I don't think so. I honestly don't know.

A: I think she did.

What?

A: She went to Slovakia.

Did she?

A: Yeah, and then they got put in camps as well.

Late.

They sold – she sold the flat, did she?

A: She got – the flat was taken away from them. Yeah. They had to move house to Strozzigasse.

Tell us later about it.

A: Yeah.

You can add it later. We can put you on.

A: Sure.

And we can add that. But while you were there you were still with your mother but –

Yes.

You have to – [coughs] excuse me – [00:32:01] did you have to move flats in Vienna?

Not that I know. I don't think so.

And Edith, when was the first time you heard about what we now know as the Kindertransport? It wasn't called Kindertransport at the time. How did you find out that you were going to be sent away?

I don't know.

[Coughs] Excuse me.

Do you know Mil?

A: No, I don't. No, no, no, but I mean, Aunt Mia went first though.

Yes.

A: So tell her that.

Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Tell me about it. So, what happened to your sister?

Well, she was put on the Kindertransport before me. And so, my poor mother, first she had to say goodbye to her husband, then to my sister, and then me. And as far as I know she never saw any of us again. I always try to imagine how she and Aunt Topsy would have done together. Didn't think they would, you know.

A: Oh, Aunt Topsy was nice to everybody Mummy.

She was, wasn't she?

A: She'd have been fine.

Yeah.

So who is Aunt Topsy?

She was the – Lady Holcroft who adopted me.

Okay. We're going to talk about it –

And she's – there's a lovely picture of her that I've got in my bedroom.

So you wonder how your mother would have got on with your –

Yeah.

Adopted –

Adopted, yeah.

And what do you think? They would have got on?

Well, I think my – that Aunt Topsy was such a saintly woman, she got on with anybody.

So, do you remember what you were feeling? So your sister, was she older your sister?

Yes, yes.

So how old was your sister?

Three years. I was eleven and she was thirteen or fourteen. [00:34:01]

And when did she leave on the Kindertransport?

A: I think in May.

She left in May, in May '39.

Don't know.

And you went a few months after that.

Hmm.

Okay, so Edith what are your memories of leaving Vienna? Do you remember anything?

I'll tell you. Seeing my mother as the train pulled out crying her eyes out, and I couldn't think why. But of course I never saw her again. And feeling terribly ill. The crossing, it was very rough. Typical. And of course, I could just swim 'cos we used to go to the swimming pools in Vienna. There were lots.

And what were you able to take? Do you remember any of the luggage you took?

[Pause] Did I have a bundle of clothes? Honestly, I don't remember that.

And did your mother take you to the station? She took you to the station.

Yes, yes, to the train. Yes, definitely.

Which station was it? Do you remember the name of the station?

Was it Liverpool Street Station?

You arrived in Liverpool Street. That's where you arrived in England.

Oh. Tell me another name of a station-

In Vienna, some went from the Westbahnhof. Many people went.

No.

Yeah. And were there any children you knew on the transport?

No. No. No, I don't think I've ever been so miserable in all my life [laughs]. [00:36:04]

You didn't want to go. You didn't want to go?

No. Well, I did in a way. I was excited about going in a train. Well, I'd been in a train. I mean, going across the sea and all that. Little did I realise I was going to be so ill [laughs].

What else do you remember from the journey?

Nothing really.

So, the train left from Vienna via Germany to Holland?

The Hook of Holland. I remember the Hook of Holland as a name. I don't know why. What was the Hook of Holland?

That was where the boat departed from. So the train would take you and then you'd had to go on the boat probably.

The train went on the boat.

No. You went on the boat.

I went on the boat.

Presumably.

Yeah, yeah.

And that's where you felt sick on that boat.

I'd say. Felt terrible [laughs].

And what – do you remember your first impressions of getting off the boat?

I think vaguely that I was cold 'cos I tell you, somehow, I don't know how we got to Aldeburgh? but there was an east wind blowing from the east. And I remember there was a long passage at this school and it was painted blue to stop it from shattering because there was a gun on the beach. A great big gun. [00:38:00] Not that I ever saw it but I was told afterwards. And they'd painted the passage down on to the beach so that the glass wouldn't shatter.

And did you know you were going to Aldeburgh?

No.

No.

I'd no idea about anything [laughs].

So when you arrived in Liverpool Street Station, did somebody pick you up? How did you get from Liverpool Street Station to Aldeburgh?

I can't remember. I think Lady Holcroft must have said, 'I'll take these children,' and just picked us out. I don't know.

But did you know you were going to join your sister?

No. I didn't join my sister. I'll tell you. She went into the British Army.

A: I think you did to begin with, Mum. You were at the same school to begin with.

We were at Felsted together.

A: Yeah, she didn't go to the Army. She was only fourteen.

Oh.

A: Yeah. Three years later she went.

Yeah.

A: Yeah, yeah, to the ATS, yeah.

So when you came you were – who sponsored you? Who was the sponsor? Your sponsor.

Was it Miss Barnes?

So, tell us a little bit about Miss Barnes.

Well, I can't tell you anything really, except she was Irish and – I know what I can tell you was that I resented her making me kneel. 'Cos up to then being a Jewish child it never happened. I just prayed. [00:40:01] And she made us kneel and I thought you miserable old so-and-so [laughs].

She made you kneel in the prayers in school?

In prayers, yeah. And the school, the first school I came to in England was called Ryton Hall, Shifnal Salop [ph] in Shropshire. And it was opposite the church and we went to church every day, yeah, yeah.

That was a bit later. But when you first arrived this lady sponsored you and your sister. She was the headmistress of the school you came to?

I suppose so [laughs].

And were there any other refugee girls apart from you and your sister?

Yes, there were some German children there but they weren't in the same – they weren't in the same lot as Mia and I. I don't know who they were.

Was it a boarding school?

Yeah.

And what was it like for you? Did you speak any English when you arrived?

No.

So how did you manage?

I – the first sentence I ever said in English was, 'There is a little breeze today,' 'cos I'd been so sick. And after that when I went to school, I read a lot. I don't know if you ever heard of a author called Georgette Heyer, but anyway, I read – the first book I ever read was – in English was called – now what was it – [00:42:00] I don't remember what it was called. I'll tell you in a minute. It'll come to me. *These Old Shades*, that's it, by Georgette Heyer. And I was sold on her until I met Barbara Cartland and then that was it. And now I've got at least, what, forty, Barbara Cartlands [laughs].

So you managed to read that book after some time I assume?

Yeah.

When you learnt. But your sister was there so did she help you at the beginning?

No, not really. She was in two forms higher than me. And what I do remember was that we wore green tunics but not with collars, with sort of this shape. And we were meant to look like lily-of-the-valley. I promise you, we didn't [laughs].

Did you like the uniform or not?

Oh, I didn't mind.

How different was the environment? How did you feel coming from Vienna to Aldeburgh, to Suffolk, to a boarding school?

Cold, cold. Actually, I went to Ryton first. Ryton Hall, Shifnal Salop [ph], and – yeah.

And what sort of people did you meet in the beginning, apart from the pupils? Were you in touch with anyone who organised the Kindertransport or anything?

No. Oh, I'll tell you what I do remember is that some Jewish society – don't ask me who they were – they sent me a postal order once every month of I think five pounds, I'm not sure [00:44:07]. So that I had some pocket money and I could buy myself some chocolate, 'cos there wasn't anything like that in Vienna when I left.

So you received that while you were at the school?

What?

While you were there you received the pocket money.

Yeah, yeah. A – what do you call those things that you had to sign [pause]?

Did you have any other contact with any Jewish organisations?

No.

No.

No.

And then the school was evacuated?

Yes.

That school.

That school was evacuated. Get this right. From Aldeburgh we were sent to Essex and in Essex I saw all those beautiful flowers. What are they called?

A: Primroses.

Primroses, yeah. And it was – they were all boarding schools and that's when I saw the Battle of Britain above my head and I'd no idea what it was. But you say it was impossible 'cos –

A: No, no, no, I think that's right. It wasn't at Ald – I think it's when you went to the priory.

Thoby Priory.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Yeah.

A: It was the following Spring. 'Cos it was '39 so it must have been '40/'41, whatever.

'40, yeah.

A: Yeah.

Yeah, and from there again because of this – things happening, then they went to – we went to Ryton, to – [00:46:07] wait a minute, where was I? What was I saying?

A: Yeah, you moved ‘cos of the Battle of Britain.

Yes. From Felsted, that’s right. And we moved to Shropshire and that’s where it was the safest.

But you said you didn’t know anything about the War, the Battle of Britain. You didn’t understand.

Didn’t understand. I didn’t know what war meant.

And did you have problems coming from Vienna? Were you regarded as sort of German/Austrian? Did you have problems with the other children?

Not in any way. Everybody couldn’t have been kinder. And the teachers, everybody, they were wonderful.

People were nice to you.

Yeah. Everybody.

And you were in a boarding school.

Yes.

And the holidays, so did you stay in the boarding school while other people went home or –?

Yes. I tell you, I went to stay with this girl I'd made friends with, and her name was Susan Harter [ph] and her father was a General, and they lived in – I think it was in Essex somewhere, I'm not sure about that. But anyway, I used to go and stay with her. And I remember he gave – the General, gave me – did he give me £10? I think so. And I bought with it a grey coat and skirt which – I mean flannel, grey coat and skirt, and a pink shirt with a bowtie. [00:48:04] And I've got a photograph of myself somewhere of that, in that coat and skirt. Where it is, don't ask me.

Hmm-mm.

[Laughs].

So that's [overtalking 00:48:17].

You think that was £10 in those days.

A: A lot of money.

And Edith, did you receive any – because you came when the War was started, you came in July, did you have any correspondence or any contact with your mother in Vienna?

I think I did to begin with through the Red Cross. And I was such a lazy, unthinking, horror. I never wrote back I don't think. Mia did, definitely, but I don't think I did. More than about once or twice.

So tell me, how did you meet then the lady who adopted you, the family who adopted you?

Well, it was through the school. She was a governor of it and she was an amazing woman, and she – what – she was altruistic. And she had a lot of money and so she adopted us. And as I say, Mia went into the British Army and Aunt Topsy's sister was a General in – the sister was high something-or-other in the British Army. Otherwise – [00:50:00] I always wonder how they took an Austrian person into the British Army without a thought, but she did, Aunt

Nowie [ph]. And I was sent to the high school in Shrewsbury and it was a very, very good education.

So what was Topsy's full name? What was her name?

Holcroft.

Lady Holcroft?

Lady Holcroft. She was called Mary Frances. And they lived in a lovely white house near Shrewsbury.

And they adopted you and your sister.

Yes, but as I say, 'cos Mia was so much older she went into the Army 'cos the War was still raging.

But I guess they fostered you, they were your foster parents first or –?

A: Well, not really, no. They just took them in. They didn't really foster them, no. I don't think it was ever official.

What –?

So legally it [overtalking 00:51:15] –

A: No, no, no. She never took their name.

Right. So it wasn't a legal adoption.

No [laughs].

But they just – they took you in.

Yeah. She did. ‘Cos he was in the RAF. As I say, I always admired him tremendously ‘cos he went off into the RAF with three children and came back with five, Uncle Rex, but he was not a very sympathetic man, I didn’t ever think. He adored Alistair [laughs].

So they had bio – they had their own children.

Four.

Four. And then she adopted – she took you in –

Yeah.

And another boy. [00:52:00]

No, no.

A: Yes, Uncle Al [ph].

What? And a boy, yes.

Yes.

His mother –

Who was not a refugee.

No.

He was not a refugee.

No, no. He was quite independent. He had – his parents had money and his father and mother very stupidly left him. His father was an RAF officer and he was the stationmaster and he was – weren't they in Scotland? Do you know, I can't –

A: The Irish Sea, Mummy.

Yeah.

A: [Overtalking 00:52:43] yeah.

And he –

A: Yeah, they went –

And they went sailing and hit a mine, and they were both killed, the parents. So Aunt Topsy got him as well.

And what was her motivation? You said altruism, to take the three children in?

Altruistic. She was just amazing. Everybody loved her.

What was she like as a person? To you, what was she like?

Loving. Loving. Absolutely the sweetest. Yeah.

And did she have an understanding of where you came from, do you think?

Oh, I think she must have done, don't you?

And what about – you said first it was a shock that you had to kneel. What about instruction? Did you go to church with them, with the family?

Oh, yeah. Yes.

Both – your sister as well? Your sister and you? [00:54:05]

I think by then she was in the Army. Honestly, I can't tell you that. I don't remember that.

And you started in the high school.

In Shrewsbury yes, and I made friends and I stayed with them sometimes in Shrewsbury and I went on the bus from – the house was called Wrentnall House and I've got pictures of it, that we lived in with Lady Holcroft. And we went – I used to walk down to the corner where the bus went to Shrewsbury and to the high – and then walked to the high school which was not very far.

But you lived in – was it a house? What was it like where you lived?

Oh yes, in a gorgeous house.

A mansion or –?

Nearly. It wasn't quite a mansion, was it?

A: A big house.

What?

A big house.

Yeah.

A: With a farm.

Yeah.

It was a farm.

Yes. And Alistair's mother in fact, she was Australian and she was a land girl and she met this RAF officer and got married, and they had Alistair. And then they, I tell you, stupidly went sailing and hit this mine [pause].

What other memories have you got of that time? Going to school, to high school there.

[00:56:06]

Years and years later I used to play bridge a lot. I met this friend of mine and she had been at the high school but she was much older than me so she went to the high school much earlier. And there was some do going on at the high school and we decided we'd go to it, and I said I wouldn't drive that far but she said, 'I will take you.' And so off we went. And the most exciting thing for both of us, going in through the front door. Up to then being pupils we had to go down a sort of passage [laughs], and there we were marching through the front door [laughs]. That was Joan Hill.

A: [Inaudible].

Yeah.

And when the War ended were you still in school or –?

Sorry?

When the war ended were you still in school?

I don't know. I honestly can't remember that. I must –

Do you remember the end of the War?

No.

Because do you remember when were you told – when did you find out what happened to your parents?

Not – well, my son and I went to the Austrian Embassy in London and they told me about my father. And I tell you, he and I just sat there and cried. And I don't know how I landed up in the nursing home, do you Mil?

A: Here?

Yeah.

A: We brought you here, Mummy. [00:58:01] When you fell over. Remember?

Into that trough.

A: Yeah.

At Liz's.

A: Yeah.

Yeah. I fell and I hurt my legs. I hurt my leg and I couldn't walk.

I like your socks.

A: [Laughs] I don't think we need to see your legs on the camera, Mummy [overtalking 00:58:30].

Have you hoped – did you still hope that when the War was finished, that you would see your parents again?

No, I don't think so. I was completely English-fied [laughs], and I thought – no. And I thought of all my adopted brothers and sisters as sisters, and they thought of me as sisters, as a sister.

You felt that you were really taken into the family.

Absolutely.

You were treated like a child.

A child, yeah. Yeah.

What do you mean by English-fied, English-fied [laughs]?

Well –

Anglicised let's say.

Yeah. I mean, now I don't speak German any more [laughs].

A: A little bit.

A little bit, yeah, but pretty badly.

But did you feel – once you were there, did you feel English?

Yeah, completely.

When did you start feeling English?

I think when I went to the high school. The Shrewsbury high school. Such a good school. Day School Trust, yeah.

So at that point you didn't think that you would ever go back to Austria after the War.

No, never. Never. [01:00:04] The only time I've been, I went with a friend of mine. She and I went to – with Jean Beryl [ph] I went to Vienna for a holiday and Patrick arranged it all, her husband. And then I went with my children when I was eighty and discussed Tante Erma [laughs] –

And how did you feel when you first went back to Vienna?

I just thought it was all quite beautiful. Yeah, I really did. Do you remember going into the butterfly house? Yeah. And there was lilac and roses and – standard roses, that's what I was trying to say – all along the Ringstraße. And we went past the opera house but we didn't go in.

When you went back did you feel any resentment towards the Austrians?

No, no. None at all. I just thought it was all lovely. The Stephansdom.

Did you recognise places?

Yeah, yeah, 'cos of this amazing headmistress who – she could see what was going to happen and as I say, she took us round.

Round the places.

Hmm.

And Edith, once you finished high school what were your plans? What did you want to do?

Well, it was – [01:02:09] I went to a whatnot in Shrewsbury to learn to type.

A secretarial college.

Sorry?

A secretarial college.

Yeah, but as I couldn't spell my own name let alone anything else, I – one of the Holcroft's uncles was a governor of the hospital and he got me a place in the – what do you call it when you take photographs of people's insides?

Radiology?

Yes, and after I'd spelt radiographer I think five times wrong he said, 'I'm awfully sorry, you're an intelligent woman but I'm not going to tell you again how you spell radiology. Goodbye.' [Laughs] That was the end of my career as a secretary.

And then what did you do then?

And then I became a carer. And I quite enjoyed that. Not 100% but anyway, then I met my husband and I had three children, and that was that.

And how did you meet your husband?

Well, he was the adjutant of the Shropshire Yeomanry in Shrewsbury and we met at dances and things, and that was it [laughs].

And what was his background? Where was he from?

He was rather grand and he was the grandson – [01:04:03] no, what was he – of the Walker Gallery in Liverpool?

A: Well, that was his great-uncle.

Yeah.

A: Yeah, so not his relation, no. He came from round here, Gloucestershire.

He came from Gloucestershire.

A: Well, he came from Shropshire didn't he, Shropshire.

Yes.

A: [Inaudible] yeah.

And when did you get married Edith, which year?

I don't know.

A: 1954 was it? Yeah, 1954.

And the church was called St Edith's. St Edith's Pulverbatch. And I forget what the vicar said, why it was called St Edith's but the answer was so funny. I thought it was hysterical. There was nothing saintly about her [laughs].

So in the fifties. And by then were you naturalised Edith? When did you become British?

I think when I first got married. Yes. No, perhaps before that. Yeah, yeah.

And was that important to you?

What?

Was that important to you to become British?

I think in a way probably it was, hmm.

But you said by then you felt very English.

Yes. Yes, I did.

*What about – you said you married in a church so did you convert or were you baptised?
[overtalking 01:05:45]?*

Oh yes, yes, sorry. I was christened in whatnot cathedral in – north of –

A: In Coventry. **[01:06:00]**

Coventry, yes. I was – the school –

A: Confirmed.

We did it through the school and nobody questioned my right to be christened or – I think I was christened at Pulverbatch and then –

A: Confirmed.

Confirmed at – in the cathedral and – yeah.

Hmm-mm.

Coventry, yeah.

And you wanted to. I mean, that was something you wanted to do.

Yes, yes. Yes, by then I was English.

And you wanted to belong I assume.

Yes.

And what were – how did your husband's family react to your – to the marriage? Were they...?

My mother-in-law was brilliant. I always wonder, do you think Granny knew that I was –?

A: Yeah, of course.

She did. And she was so sweet to me always. And she was a great gardener, my mother-in-law, and had this beautiful, beautiful border. And my eldest daughter has inherited her passion for gardening and is now – she has camellias and she had them at the Chelsea Flower Show and she won prizes.

And where did you settle with your husband?

What?

Where did you settle with your husband?

In – we lived in a farm called Marsh Court in – just Gloucestershire. [01:08:12]

A: Worcestershire.

Worcestershire. Was it Worcestershire? Yeah. And my son went to Eton like his father had, and my daughters went to Cheltenham Ladies' College.

Boarding school?

Boarding school, yeah. Yes.

And Edith, what sort of identity did you want to give to your children?

I think mostly that I wanted them to be happy and I think on the whole they were. Yeah.

And did you talk about the past at all with your husband and with your children, about your background?

No, I don't think so. Aunt Mia didn't either. They used to go to America. In fact, they were – she was much worse than me.

Both of you didn't talk.

No, we didn't. No.

Why do you think –?

And we lived in a house in Redmarley. Do you remember Redmarley? It was called Drury Lane. Do you remember it? A great big, white house on top of a hill.

Yeah.

What?

Yeah, and?

And as I say, it had eight bedrooms and now I'm in one [laughs]. Happy as anything.

Here in Ledbury.

In Ledbury, yes. [01:10:01]

And Edith, you said you never talked about your past. Why do you think – did you not talk about it?

That just sort of never arose, did it? Don't know.

Did your friends know you'd come on the Kindertransport? Did you tell anyone?

Nobody sort of talked about that sort of thing. No, I used to drive my automatic car from one house to the other playing bridge [laughs]. And I belonged to a bridge club in Ledbury which met every Friday. And I was always very interested in art and there was this wonderful man who lived in – where was the? Was it Chester? No. Do you know, in England? [Pause] Anyway, wherever. And he lectured on art and he was brilliant, and I used to go to those classes. They weren't very expensive and absolutely brilliant. With Jane Leward [ph].

Anything else you'd like to add?

I don't think so. Nothing comes to mind.

So Edith, how would you describe yourself today in terms of your identity? [01:12:02]

Oh, I think of myself entirely English and [pause] – yes.

Did nobody ever ask you where you're from, with your accent or –?

The only –

Did it come up at all?

The only thing that – it'll make you laugh. In Ledbury – do you think you could put the blanket over my toes? Thank you. In Ledbury there's – on the way up to the church there's a little museum. And as a good Ledbury citizen I used to sit in the museum and tell them about Ledbury and how lovely it was, and how lovely Herefordshire was and everything. And people who'd been abroad a lot realised I'd got an accent. And so halfway through my telling them how wonderful Ledbury is, they used to say, 'But you don't come from round here, do you?' And so, I had to confess and after that all we talked about was Vienna and – [laughs] that was the end of poor little Ledbury and its wonders [laughs].

They were more interested in Vienna.

What?

They wanted to know about Vienna.

Yeah exactly and weren't really interested in poor little Ledbury any more.

But you said you never had any negative –

No.

Experience being a refugee or –

Absolutely – no, not at school or anywhere else. And I'm sure Mia didn't either.

And what do you think about this – you know, this year is the 85th anniversary of the Kindertransport –

[01:14:01] The only thing that frightens the daylight out of me is the war that's going on everywhere, and the environment I'm terrified about. I think it's terrible.

Edith, what impact do you think did your experience have on your life, of leaving Vienna at a young age, coming on the Kindertransport? How did that affect you later?

I can only tell you one thing that I find explains it all. I was reading a book the other day and the woman in it had something called 'the loneliness of the soul' and that is what I had when I first came to England. I can't describe to you what it means or anything, but that's what I felt. A loneliness of the soul. But not any more [laughs].

What helped you do you think to overcome that? 'Cos many other children must have felt as well.

What?

Many other children must have felt that.

Yes, yes, I'm sure.

What helped you to overcome that?

I think reading. Reading.

At the time also?

Yes, yes. And now I read these romances [laughs]. Barbara Cartland [pause].

Yeah.

Have you ever read any of her books?

No, I haven't okay.

A: Don't [laughs].

I'll look into it.

[01:16:00] [Laughs] They're quite extraordinary. She wrote a hundred-and-something. Amazing [pause].

Do you sometimes wonder what would have happened to your life without Hitler, if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?

Probably, yes, I do sometimes wonder.

And what do you think would have happened?

My imagination didn't go any further. I sometimes think to myself how amazing that one absolutely useless individual could destroy nearly a whole nation and a whole people. And how people who can appreciate people like Beethoven and things, could have ever believed the rubbish that he preached. I mean, I sometimes watch films of him when he had these parades and things. It's quite extraordinary, the power he had, isn't it?

Yeah. And do you still feel any connection to Austria at all?

No. No. No. Except I'm very lucky, they send me a pension [pause].

Edith, what happened – what did you find out happened to your parents?

Well, we – I'll tell you. When Nicholas was grown up he and I went to the Embassy – and I forget which square in London [01:18:02] – and when we heard what had happened to them we just sat and cried [laughs].

So they were both murdered, your parents.

Yeah, by the Na – so I hated everything German for years and years. And then I – how did I get the cottage, Mil?

A: Well, we moved there.

What?

A: We moved there.

From where?

A: From Drury Lane.

Yes. And I had this cottage up in the wilds of the Malvern Hills, and there was one – there were two people, a husband and wife, and he'd been – they were very short of people like judges and things after the War in England and so – he was actually only a solicitor in Windsor, and he was made a judge. And his name was – I remembered. Not Ivor.

A: Vic.

Victor. Yeah. And he married this German woman and they were the – well, she was just the nicest – Ilse. And I actually went out to Germany to stay with them. And they had a granddaughter who went to an English boarding school and had a pony, and she became English [laughs], the granddaughter. [01:20:00] And anyway, I was – so I stopped hating the Germans [laughs]. I didn't see any point quite honestly. It wasn't she who was a Nazi [pause]. Her father was a captain of a – what was he a captain of? A ship. I can't remember.

So you said hating Germany. So, you didn't buy anything German or did you not or –?

Yes, just that. And the cars and things I wouldn't touch [laughs].

You did –

And then had a Volkswagen. At least I didn't but you did, didn't you?

A: Yeah.

What?

A: [Laughs] I've got a Volkswagen.

Yeah, you –

A: They're good cars.

Yeah.

And how do you feel about Germany today, Edith?

Well, it just annoys me that they're so successful at everything they do. But anyway, it's a long time ago and none of these people were involved in what went on [pause].

And were you ever connected to anything Jewish afterwards, after the War?

No, no [pause].

And did you find out what happened to your mother's parents in Slovakia?

No.

They presumably were murdered as well.

They must be a thousand by now [laughs]. They were pretty ancient.

A: I think they all ended up in camps.

They were killed.

A: Yeah.

Poor things.

A: The whole lot, yeah. Sadly.

Do you have any message for anyone who might watch this interview later or in the future?

[01:22:01]

Sorry?

Do you have any message for anyone who might watch this interview in the future?

No, I haven't really. I don't see that I'm qualified to. I just feel that we're lucky to be alive. And I tell you what I like doing now is watching videos. I mean, *Billy Elliot* is my favourite 'cos I love it. Dancing [laughs].

I mean, there is a lot now being written about the Kindertransport, you know –

Yes. And David Cameron, I don't know why he got so interested but he did.

About the memorial?

Yes.

Yes. What do you think? Should there be a Holocaust Memorial?

Yes, I do.

Near Parliament?

Yeah. I think people shouldn't forget these awful things. Anyway, who am I to say? I want my lunch.

A: Okay [laughs].

Okay. Anything else that we haven't covered? We talked about many things.

Can you think of anything?

No, I think we've covered almost everything.

Mostly.

I mean, it's very interesting that this family took you in and –

I know.

You and your sister.

Yeah.

A: They were amazing.

Yeah.

And that's well worth documenting, I think. And in fact, there is research – you know, if some of the family members want to talk to somebody, there's a researcher now looking at families.

A: Oh, really?

Who took children in. So, if there's still anyone around –

A: Yeah, Aunt Ginny might.

Oh, yes, she'd love that.

A: Yeah, she might.

*Maybe one thing I was going to ask you, the other children, were they aware – [01:24:01]
what was their attitude about the mother taking in the children? Your sisters – your siblings,
what did they think about the parents bringing in more children?*

I don't really know. They accepted me completely.

And did you stay in touch with them all your lives or –?

Yeah.

Yeah, so your children know them.

Yes, and call them cousins and –

A: I think – yeah, I mean, 'cos Mum didn't really talk about any of this until we were much older.

Just one second –

A: Yeah, okay.

'Cos I want you to come on.

A: Yeah.

So I will say thank you, first of all thank you so much –

Delighted.

For sharing your story Edith. I'm sorry.

Delighted.

It takes a long time and you want to have your lunch.

Yes [all laugh].

So thank you in the meantime.

A: [Inaudible].

I'd like a sandwich Mil.

A: Okay.

[Break in recording].

Just one second.

What?

Just one moment [pause].

Come and do my nails.

A: Yeah.

‘Cos look.

Edith?

Yes?

Can you please introduce the person sitting on your right?

This is Camilla Nelson, my middle daughter. I’ve got three children. [01:26:00] I’ve got Caroline who’s the eldest, and I’ve got darling Mil, and I’ve got my son Nicholas, and he’s working his socks off to keep me in this very expensive place [all laugh]. And so far we’re all right.

A: We’re all right.

Okay.

Yeah.

Camilla, you heard your mother’s interview so far. Is there anything you’d like to add?

Yeah.

A: Well, I think what’s interesting for me hearing some of this, ‘cos Mum hasn’t talked about it a lot over the years and actually we’ve talked about it much more as she’s got older. And some of what she said today I haven’t heard. So I think that when we were growing up we didn’t really know anything about her history, and the Kindertransport, and Vienna, or anything, ‘cos she just didn’t talk about it. And my Aunt, her sister, her real sister, certainly never talked about it even to Mum, did she Mum?

No, never.

A: No, she wouldn't talk about it to her. I mean, so we never talked about Vienna in the past so it's been fascinating for us to find out more about Mum's –

Beginning.

A: Beginning and real family and, you know. Yeah, and I think the adopted family who are amazing and I've always called my cousins and my aunts and uncles and everything, were the most amazing family as well.

Yeah.

A: But it's interesting to find out where Mum came from.

So when did your Mum – when did you first find out that there was –

A: Probably when I was like a teenager because, you know, your mother – I know she's got an accent but your mother's voice is your mother's voice so you don't really think it's anything different.

Do you think I've got an accent?

A: You have a bit, Mummy [all laugh]. But yes, so it's been – **[01:28:01]** yeah, really when we were teenagers, I think we began to understand about where she'd come from, yeah. And then when we got older we've done our own research.

You did also tell the children you were teaching.

A: I do, I do. I do a thing.

Was there a point when you started – when you got older that you started talking a bit? Was there anything you remember – was there anything which –

Started me off, no. Nothing.

A: Probably us asking questions. Yeah?

Yeah, probably.

A: But when we went and met my aunt who lived in America, Mum's real sister, and my sister – I remember my sister went over first when she was about eighteen and she said to my aunt something about Vienna and my aunt said, 'We're not talking about that.' Wouldn't talk about it at all. I think the trauma of – and she was that much older so I think –

More traumatic.

A: She was more aware about the War and the Holocaust than Mum, 'cos she was fourteen when she came.

And Edith, do you think it helped you not to talk about it? Did it help you?

No. It's made no difference as far as I'm concerned.

'Cos I think, you know, [overtalking 01:29:19].

I've pottered on [both laugh] to be ninety-five and sometimes I think to myself, how the hell did I get to be ninety-five? And that's about it.

But you told me also you recently discovered more relatives.

A: Yes, yes, yes.

That was very exciting.

A: That's very exciting, yes. We've done, you know, the DNA tests and websites and everything, so we've done a lot of research. And it all sort of started really because we've now got Austrian citizenship, my brother and I, and an Austrian passport so that's very exciting for us. And we've done this research into the family and we found some – [01:30:01] Mum's – a first cousin of my Mother who lives in Israel and her children, and we've had Zoom conversations with them which has been very exciting, wasn't it? I mean, Mum – she was – this cousin, Lottie, left when she was tiny so they don't remember each other but she's actually a real cousin of my Mother. So, we've got some real second cousins, so that's very exciting.

What was it like for you to suddenly find that family?

Well, the most exciting thing was Paul.

A: Yes, yes, but that's different. Yeah, we found a nephew as well, which – but not the sort of – from my aunt. Which is – yeah – that we didn't know about [laughs], in America though, yeah. So that's been exciting as well.

Wasn't that incredible, that she had a child and never told us?

A: Yeah.

Who was that?

My sister.

A: Mum's sister had a child and – we never knew about.

And now Nicholas has discovered him because he's got exactly the same – what?

A: DNA.

DNA.

A: Yeah, yeah. He's a first cousin, yeah.

I don't understand any of that. That's beyond me.

But that's in America.

A: That's in America, yeah.

Yeah. Washington.

A: And then we've got the ones in Israel. One went to Australia and then the other ones are in Israel, yeah.

And I have these two friends that live in Washington as well who are American who are very rich, and they own a pharmaceutical empire, rather like Boots – I ask you – in America. And they're always wanting to go from one place to the other, so I am the other. So I've just had them. They don't stay with me thank goodness – well, I can't, but anyway. [01:32:01] So that's been really lovely. And – yes, Nancy and Evelyn.

And Edith, how do you feel about your children taking Austrian citizenship?

Well, I'm delighted but only two of them have. My third – my eldest daughter won't. I don't know why but she won't, will she?

But you don't object to it.

What?

You don't object to it.

Oh no, I'm delighted. They should do what they want. They're all grown up. I think it's a jolly good idea. Then you can go travelling.

A: Exactly, because of Brexit.

What?

A: Because of Brexit.

Exactly.

A: Yes, leaving the EU.

So did you find out lots of things about the family in the process of acquiring –?

A: Yes, yes. That's really where we started to do the research and found this – and my brother employed a researcher in Vienna to do a family tree. So we sent this to these relations that we found so that they could see where we all fitted in. This is my Mother's father's side of the family, Elias, the one who –

Elias Schwarz.

A: Yes, who ended up in Auschwitz, that one.

[Inaudible].

A: And his – this is his sister's children. So, we found a lot more and they've told us a lot more about his side of the family. So it's been amazing. It's been amazing.

Did his sister survive?

A: No, his sister – this is his sister's daughter who survived, yeah. His sister's dead.

So where was he from in Poland, did you find out?

A: I can't remember where he came from. We do know where he came from?

Ukraine.

A: It's now Ukraine. It's now Ukraine but it was –

It was Poland.

A: Then.

Yeah.

A: And he fought in the First World War, didn't he, Elias?

Yeah, because I remember him telling us they ate rats because they were so hungry. I remember that because I was so horrified.

A: Yeah.

[01:34:00] *And Camilla, doing all this research was there something more surprising you found, not knowing anything while you were growing up about this history?*

A: Yeah, I think finding out that they weren't – they hadn't actually originally come from Vienna in the first place, anywhere –

Anyway.

A: Anyway.

No.

A: So that's been quite interesting that they met in Vienna, my grandparents, but they didn't actually come from Vienna. But then obviously Mum was born in Vienna. So that's been interesting. And I'd like to go to where they came from, you know, Slovakia. It would be lovely to go there and it would be lovely – well, we can't go to Ukraine at the moment sadly but it would be lovely to go there. And I'd love to go and meet my new cousins in Israel.

You have not met them?

A: No, no. We just spoke on Zoom, literally, well, a couple of months ago. It was the first time we'd talked to them.

And how was it for you then?

A: Well, that was – and they were so nice, really nice, and friendly and want to – you know, we're family, we're all related. So that would be really nice to meet them, yeah, but obviously not at the moment poor things.

Poor things.

A: I know, I know.

So while you were growing up did you ever wonder about the grandparents, because you must have had lots of family from your father's side as you –

A: Yes.

But none from your mother's side.

A: I always thought my adopted family were my grandparents.

Right, so you didn't know they were not.

A: No, no. I called them Granny and Grandpa, and all Mum's adopted siblings, her sisters, and brothers, are my aunts and uncles.

So it's a very big family.

A: It's a big family.

You've got a very big family.

A: Yeah, a huge family, huge family.

So at Christmases and things they would get together?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And we still see each other a lot now. I mean, my cousins – I'm very close to my cousins. You know, I went travelling with one of my cousins who's not really my cousin at all. But yeah, so it's been very interesting. Yeah.

I'm sorry you don't know the house, Drury Lane. [01:36:01]

A: [Laughs] Well, he only was there when he was young [laughs].

What?

A: He was there when he was young and [inaud].

He was.

A: Yes, yes.

Okay, I have one last question for you Edith –

A: Okay.

And then we'll finish. Have you in your life, were you ever in touch with any other refugees actually? Did you have any friends who came as refugees?

No, no, not in the least. I was too busy being busy [laughs].

A: We –

Did you know for example, you know, since the first there was a Kindertransport reunion and all these things? Were you ever interested to go or to join or –?

A: We did ask Mum.

Yes.

A: When they had that first one in London. And I went to it actually.

You did?

A: Yes, I did, and it was very moving I must admit. And, you know, they did that thing where they say if anybody's – you know, that they did with Esther Rantzen. That famous TV programme where they get everybody to stand up and, you know, half the audience stood up, if they were a descendant of someone who'd come over.

So you –

A: On the Kindertransport. Yes, I did go. I think that was the 75th one.

To the reunion.

A: Yeah. Well, it was a conference and it was run by Safe Passage. They were very involved, and Alf Dubs, Lord Dubs, yeah.

So ten years ago.

A: Yes, ten years ago.

But you've never wanted to go?

A: I wanted Mum to go and meet some other – but she didn't want to, no.

You didn't look for that.

I've finished with that [laughs].

A: Yeah, she didn't want to.

Anyway, my poor legs.

Okay. Thank you again, thank you for sharing your story with us.

Delighted.

We're going to look at –

Nice to have met you.

Just a few photographs.

A: Okay.

But thank you so much.

[Break in recording]

Can you please tell us who's on that photo?

Sorry?

Who is on that photo? Who is it?

My mother [laughs].

[01:38:02] *What was her name?*

Elsa.

Elsa, born? Her maiden name?

Fritz.

Fritz. But there she was probably married already?

I should imagine so, yeah.

So she was Schwarz? Elsa Schwarz.

Yeah.

Lovely photo. And did you bring that photo with you when you came?

Yes, yes.

And you kept it ever since.

Yes.

And you have it here with you.

In my bedroom here. Yeah [pause].

Thank you. Yes Edith, who do we see here on this picture?

Sorry?

Who do we see on your photograph, on the photograph you're holding? I can tell you. You are in the middle with your –?

Eldest adopted sister Cherida.

Yes.

And Michael and Alistair and Sarah Warrington.

A: No, not Sarah.

No?

A: Aunt Ginny.

Oh, Aunt Ginny.

So the little boy in front was the other adopted?

Yeah.

What was his name?

Alistair Warrington.

Okay, and the other girl in the picture?

The big one?

Yeah, the big one.

That's Virginia and she is a Holcroft, was, and is now married and got four children.

And the little one? The little girl?

That's Virginia.

Okay. And the boy behind her?

That's her real brother, Michael.

Michael. And where was this, in London? It looks like –?

I don't know where it was or what it was. I think we were going to a wedding or something.

I don't honestly know. [01:40:04]

And when do you think was it taken?

I've no idea. Don't remember anything about it.

Okay, thank you [pause]. Perfect, perfect.

[01:40:38]

[End of transcript]