

David & Valerie Cross

05/06/14

Interviewer: Zara Tasawar

Interviewer: I

Respondent: R

Audio 1

00:00 R: [Muath Trust] was part, I believe, of King Edward's Grammar School. Then you go under a railway bridge and the first pub you come to is the Shakespeare and opposite the Shakespeare is a place called Profit and Westwood and they were farm merchants, agricultural merchants and if I'm correct, they'd been there since about 1700. The Shakespeare Tavern was a good Irish drinking place in the '60s. One evening, I saw a fight outside the pub between two men, the end result- hang on a minute, let's just stop this beeping.

00:53 I: Also, has anyone else noticed that-?

Audio 2

00:00 R: Go past Henley Street where my wife worked, but we'll talk about that later. You travel along the Stratford Road, you've got Erasmus Road, Auckland Road, Kyotts Lake Road. Just off Kyotts Lake Road is Grafton Road which used to be a stately home near Grafton House where some Irish republican bombers hid in the 1800s. Egan...Egan... Oh, crikey. Stop the recording a minute.

Audio 3

00:00 R: [Kyotts Lake] Road, you've got Braithwaite Road on the left and it was up there where a man threw his six-month old child down the stairs and killed it and then tried to cover it up.

00:14 R: 145A Stratford Road I will always remember because it was a brothel. We raided it once and the sights to behold were spectacular when we got in. If you switch this off, I'll tell you what happened. (Laughter) You're looking for a clue, aren't you?

Audio 4

00:00 R: You had Osborne Stationers on the right-hand side, Gorney the opticians on the left, a block of flats that appear to have been built in the '30s or modernised from the Victorian-style housing that was originally Stratford Road, which was all later converted into shops. Next door to the block of flats just by Farm Road was a coach company, very, very well-known, Smiths Imperial Coaches. Their

symbol was a butler with a tray, "Where do you want to go, Sir?" It's from there that most Brummies took their holidays going on a coach somewhere.

- 00:51 R: Opposite there was the TSB savings bank which was then the Birmingham Municipal Bank. A bit further along is Main Street and Long Street, the Angel Pub, corner of Stratford Road and Ladypool Road, mentioned in 1820, the scene of a theft of the mayor's chickens. That's the Mayor of Birmingham.
- 01:18 R: A bit further along then you've got Ladypool Road, then you've got Stratford Road, you've got Ladypool Road Primary School and until only two or three years ago, we had a wonderful clock tower which was blown down in the gales.
- 01:35 R: Carrying on along the Stratford Road you had the headquarters of the Labour Party on the Stratford Road and then just before Palmerston Road, you'd got two churches right next door to each other. One was a Church of England and one was a Baptist church. Both held services at the same time and on a Sunday it was lovely to watch the ladies going up to church, usually followed by the menfolk, dressed in their Sunday best which really didn't suit their attire.
- 02:16 R: On the right-hand side just in Stoney Lane you'd got Birmingham's only horsemeat shop, and it's not too bad.
- 02:28 R: Opposite there in Stratford Road you had a nightclub and it was outside there that PC Dave Whitehead was stabbed and he was saved by the bouncers of the club who knew first-aid. They also detained the person who did the stabbing. The bouncers stopped an emergency ambulance that was going with a woman to childbirth, so they chucked the policeman in the back of the ambulance and he went initially to the women's hospital as well. (Laughter)
- 03:04 R: Stratford Road at Walford Road, Highgate Road, traffic light controlled crossing. Before they built traffic lights there, that used to be a point for policeman directing traffic. The standard comment is the young and inexperienced officer could get the traffic flowing quite easily, the experienced officer could build up some fantastic traffic jams if he wanted to.
- 03:30 R: A bit further on you'd got the Piccadilly Cinema, minors' matinees. That was inadvertently a school crossing on a Saturday morning. The only one we ever had where the children were crossed over to get to the cinema and seen out at 12:00 when they went back.

- 03:53 R: You've got Poplar Road next. Now, Poplar Road was the Birmingham boundary until 1911. Sparkhill, the area we're about to walk into, was part of Worcestershire.
- 04:10 R: Poplar Road had got an abattoir down there and one Sunday morning, some rather mischievous children let 56 sheep out. We were all in Acocks Green Police Station, nice, quiet Sunday. The control room came through on the radio; "I don't know if this is a hoax. I've got a report of a sheep walking down the Stratford Road near Poplar Road." Then somebody else shouted, "I've got two reports," then somebody else shouted, "There's a lot of them, a whole flock." So we had to borrow some vans very quickly and get down there. As I said, 56 sheep were let out. We managed to round up 48. We never, ever found any trace of the remaining eight. They finished up in a cooking pot somewhere but we don't know where.
- 05:06 R: Then you'd got the Mermaid Pub and if I go back in history to the 1850s, that's where there was a taxi rank, and I mean a horse-drawn taxi rank, and you'd have a stagecoach that came in from Warwick. On a Wednesday morning it came in earlier and it had got two burglars on board that had burgled Charlecote House in Hampton Lucy. They got into a taxi and went to King Edward's Row where they unloaded all the loot. They were eventually found.
- 05:59 R: Further up the Stratford Road, you had on the right-hand side – and I'm just picking out the main shops – again, a complete row of Victorian high-class dwelling houses which over a period of time have become totally converted into shops with somewhat poor-quality flats above them.
- 06:27 R: On the right-hand side, there was a large place that sold safes and did quite a roaring trade. Next door to it was the Sparkhill Commercial School at Newton Road. Hang on a minute, [consult my oracle cos I'm walking up.... yeah, Newton Road. Stratford Road at Newton Road had the Sparkhill Commercial School.
- 07:03 R: Then you've got the traffic lights, Stratford Road at Durham Road, over there, Showell Green Lane, carrying on down to Stratford Road at Court Road where on the left-hand side by Evelyn Road you'd got the large Catholic church, English Martyrs, which used to do three communion services in the morning. You've still got the Catholic school there.
- 07:34 R: Now, on the opposite side of the road by Court Road, you've got a new temple, Guru Nanak Temple, and then you've got Sparkhill Police Station which was built in 1898 for Worcestershire Constabulary and that was one of the divisional headquarters. The

police station comprised, in 1898, of the police station itself, five cells, a courthouse, living accommodation on the corner for an inspector.

08:09 R: Just into Court Road was the fire station and the first houses on the right-hand side of Court Road were reserved for firemen. The houses at the top of Court Road, 27, 29 and 31, were police houses and after Val and I got married, we lived at 29 Court Road, which was opposite the park.

08:37 R: Sparkhill Police Station also houses now the West Midlands Police Museum. Next door to Sparkhill Police Station you've got the library which was in fact built as a council house for Worcestershire for the Sparkhill ward of Worcester.

08:57 R: You've got the swimming baths, which is now closed, Sparkhill Park going down Stratford Road. Again, on the left-hand side going out of the city, large, Victorian houses which have generally remained as dwelling houses. You come to Formans Road and again, right along the Stratford Road from Formans Road to College Road, you've got now a complete array of Asian shops, most of them being in what we would call Victorian Edwardian dwellings of a middle-class quality, but now converted into shops.

09:40 R: Stratford Road on the corner you've got the old Lloyds bank. Going round to the left, there's now a large Asian supermarket. That used to be a garage Carmaro depot selling Morris cars. Carrying on around going up past the College Arms- oh, yes, you've got the church on the right-hand side by Colgreave Avenue. It used to be a United Reformed Church and then it went to a Moravian Church and now it is a high quality restaurant and I'm told the meals are very good if you want to take me out.

10:31 R: Can we stop for two minutes because I'm getting thirsty?

Audio 5

00:00 R: Stratford Road goes up a slight gradient, you've got some houses on a grass bank. Used to be a BP filling station there and another car dealership on the right-hand side which is now a doctor's surgery. You come in then to Hall Green Parade. Again, houses that were built in the 1920s but have been converted into shops. One of them originally was Boots and I can remember being on duty there one Sunday walking down the Stratford Road and it was Sunday afternoon, nice, real sunny day and as I look in Boots, I can just see a small slither of flame on some crêpe paper they'd got. The sun was shining into a glass bottle reflecting out as a magnifying ray and it

just set the people on fire, so we had to call the fire brigade rather quickly and get them to put it out, but they do love breaking doors down and squirting everything with water.

- 01:15 R: On the right-hand side, you used to have the old Co-op dairy. If the force control room had run out of milk, which was quite a common occurrence on nights, they would radio a message to the traffic cars, "Can you bring the goods in, please?" meaning two or three pints of milk from the dairy.
- 01:43 R: You carry on along the Stratford Road, which hasn't changed much in the 30, 40, 50 years that I can remember it. Yes, shops have changed, garages have become tyre outlets, a few shops have been knocked down and become a new little shopping parade, but in general, the area hasn't changed at all.
- 02:07 R: You come onto Stratford Road at Cateswell Road and opposite there used to be a builders' merchants which is now a large Wickes. That originally was looked at to become a brand new, super modern police station, but somebody realised it cost more than a few bob so that idea got shelved.
- 02:38 R: Come up to Stratford Road at College Road. The College Arms public house. On the right, you've got the technical college. A bit further up on the right-hand side, you used to have a place where they made and sold snuff. That later became a Chubb Lock retail outlet which was very useful when we were pushing crime prevention. You've got the small parade of shops on the right, you've got Hall Green Library. On the left you've got some privately owned flats, I think it's called Vickers Court.
- 03:22 R: Further on up the Stratford Road, some very nice larger houses, again, 1920s, 1930s. Large front gardens, occupying quite a large footprint of land. Then you've got Hall Green Junior School at the right and the Stratford Road becomes a dual carriageway, which until recently was a 40 mile an hour limit and now for anybody else that really wants to know, this is now a 30 mile an hour limit. So don't get caught.
- 03:54 R: Stratford Road at Fox Hollies Road. A little incident there one night. I was going home from work and we used to carry our police radios with us because they were personal issue. It was about 2 o'clock in the morning and I saw a car stationary on the traffic island at Olton Boulevard at Fox Hollies Road, right in the middle of a rose bed, and there were four occupants in the car. Being quick-thinking, I suspected the driver was drunk. The driver drove over the flowerbed, managed to get back onto Fox Hollies Road and drove up

Fox Hollies Road literally clipping the curb either side of the road; couldn't keep the car in a straight line. I'm now giving a running commentary to the force control room, who are sending a marked police car to stop it because I'm not going to use my own car. He comes round to Fox Hollies Road and I broadcast, "If there are any police cars on the Stratford Road approaching Fox Hollies Road, put your brakes on because this car isn't," and he didn't and he drove straight over the central reservation and straight over the intercity carriageway and straight into a tree that was opposite. Needless to say, he was totally drunk.

05:13 R: Carrying on up the Stratford Road, on the left you've now got Waitrose, a bit further on you had a garage whose name will come to me in a minute. They used to sell initially brand new Austin cars, then it became a second-hand dealership owned by a rather large, well-known family in Birmingham. Carry on up the Stratford Road to a large traffic island and on the right-hand side of that is the police station, Robin Hood. It's now a Chinese restaurant.

05:46 R: Robin Hood Police Station was originally a little house called Rose Cottage and the front garden ran to the middle of the traffic island. When they made Stratford Road a dual carriageway, Rose Cottage lost its entire front garden. I'm told it had been a police station since 1911. I really can't confirm that, but a couple of lovely little stories there.

06:22 R: There was an office man in the front office who had to wear glasses for reading. Now, if you wore glasses in the '50s and '60s in the police, you had to resign on ill-health. You were not allowed to wear glasses. Now, everybody knew... I'm going to call him Bill because that's not his correct name. Everybody knew Bill. Everybody knew Bill wore glasses including the senior officers, but nobody had the wherewithal to want to get rid of him. He was a good bloke who had served in the North Atlantic and Russian convoys during the war and he was quite happy in Robin Hood office. He could run the office without any problems at all. There were no police cells there, it was just a police office.

07:15 R: I was in there one day and it was one of the first occasions where I was actually helping out in the office. Now, because it's a quiet office, it was the ideal place to start learning the office procedure, how to run a police station office, because every police station in Birmingham had obviously an office and they were all running on exactly the same lines. So you could go into any police station once you had got a bit of experience and you'd know how to run the office. Finding where the books were kept was another story, but you could run the office.

07:59 R:

Bill's looking out the window and he said, "Oh, there's been a little bump on the intercity carriageway just at the island." A little Morris 1000 had been hit by a van. Bill says to me, "Go out and have a look at the car driver because he hasn't got out the car yet." He said, "If you want any assistance, give us a wave." So I put my hat on and walked over the road onto the Stratford Road and the car driver in the Morris 1000 is sat in the car, but it's clearly obvious his neck has broken because his head is right back. There were no headrests in cars in those days and his head is right the way back. So I wave to Bill and he knows that I want some assistance. He gets an ambulance on the way there and a police car, comes over and by this time, I've got in the back of the car, the Morris 1000, because the front passenger seat, the back folded down and then the thing folded up, so you could get in it quite easily. I'm sat in the back with this guy's head just in my hand to make sure his neck didn't fall further back. Bill sees the situation, goes back to the police station, an ambulance comes. In those days, chummy was taken out of the car, put in an ambulance and whizzed straight to hospital. There was no dealing with the casualty at the scene in the back of a nice ambulance with all the gear in. In the ambulances were just a stretcher and that was it. You chuck the patient in and whizz them off to hospital without stabilising them first. The ambulance crew come along, they see me sitting like that and realise the only way they're going to get this guy out is to take the roof off, so the fire brigade have to come. It was not that common for fire brigades to take roofs off cars, but they decided this is what they were going to do. And they didn't have things like jaws of life as they have today, it was literally hacksaws. They had to hacksaw the roof off the car with me sat inside it holding chummy, and I'd got a smelly tarpaulin over our heads to make sure we weren't showered with broken glass. They lifted the roof off the car and then very gently lifted the driver out, put him on a stretcher and whisked him off to East Birmingham. That was the first time that not only that had been done, but a doctor had come out in a second ambulance to supervise the release of the passenger in an attempt to save his life. About 10 days later, the driver came into the Robin Hood police station with a scaffold completely on his head and resting on his shoulders, literally holding his head onto his spine. As far as I know, he made a full recovery.

11:13 R:

One of the problems that we had following the Second World War is quite a few unexploded bombs and incendiary devices. Now, in the early 1960s, people were just talking about loft insulation and putting down a bit of rock wall, or fibreglass in those days, to insulate your loft. A guy's doing this in Fox Hollies Road and he finds three incendiary bombs in his roof that haven't gone off.

So what does he do like any good Brum? He gets a small, wooden box, a small tomato box, puts the three of them in there, goes downstairs, puts them in the boot of his car and drives to Robin Hood nick with his three bombs in the boot. They're only incendiary bombs. They'd still go off with a bang.

12:10 R: Bill looks at them, and he doesn't know anything about bombs. He's had a few thrown at him but he doesn't know anything about bombs. Calls his mate, yes, they're definitely unexploded. There used to be an air raid shelter there. I don't know why but every police station had a room that was called the decontamination room, the 'decon', but in fact you put just general junk in there. Most of them were all old air raid shelters and Robin Hood had one and we put the bombs in there.

12:40 R: On this occasion, I'm doing to talk 2:00 until 10:00 in Robin Hood office and Bill is the early morning officer. Now the change over time generally was 2 o'clock but Bill liked to meet his mate when he was on early turn and they'd go over to the Robin Hood pub for a quick drink, but the pubs used to shut at 2:00, so it was the unwritten rule you relieve Bill at 1 o'clock, 9 o'clock, always an hour early so he could get a drinking, you see.

13:15 R: I walk into the office. "Everything alright?" He said, "Oh, we've got three bombs in there. The army is coming out to deal with them." With that, the army man arrives and I can only describe him the most wonderful RAF winged moustache you've ever seen and apparently, they did attachments to the bomb disposal squad. He came and had a look at these. He said, "Oh, yes, we'll have to blow them up in place." He turns around to me being young. He says, "I want you to evacuate all the houses down Robin Hood Lane, all the houses down Baldwins Lane to about a hundred yards. Stop all the traffic on the island and then I'll blow them up." You can imagine that would cause absolute chaos. So Bill turns round and he says, "Okay, we have a procedure for dealing with unexploded bombs. Dave, sit him in the office in the armchair and I'll get the ball rolling." I was told to sit him in the armchair and I sat him in the armchair because I realised he couldn't see what was happening outside. I put the kettle on and Bill picked up the tomato grate with the three bombs in, walked across the road and put them down in the middle of the traffic island. Then he walked back and he said, "I've moved your bombs, they're now in the middle of the traffic island." Well, this bomb disposal bloke went mental. Bill turned round and he said, "Look, let's just get one thing straight. I did the North Atlantic runs, I did the Russian convoys, I've had everything thrown at me, but I never was ever bombed or torpedoed off a ship. If you think I'm going to be the first policeman in peacetime to lose

a police station to enemy action, you've got another thing coming and in any case, I retire in six months' time and it'll take me longer than that to get rid of the paperwork." I couldn't help but smile. The army officer went outside. We stopped all the traffic round the island and he blew them up and there was this tiny puff of smoke and that was all it was. Biggest let-down I've had for years.

- 15:45 R: You go a bit further along Stratford Road to the city boundary, which was just by where is Tesco today. I think the highest number is 1380 or something like that, and then it's the Stratford Road in Shirley in the County of Warwick.
- 16:10 I: Could you tell me more about the people that you worked with in the police station?
- 16:19 R: The people I worked with. My first night at Bradford Street was a Friday night and my shift that I was joining... The police shifts in those days were a week on nights and you finish at 6 o'clock on the Sunday morning. You start at 2 o'clock on the Monday afternoon and 6:00 o'clock on the Tuesday morning to first watch. You then did seven days of early turn and then you would do seven days of 2:00 until 10:00 and then do seven days of nights.
- 17:27 R: The way it worked was there were only three shifts and you had your days off on your unit. So you had A shift, B shift and C shift and each shift has its own little rota where you'd have one day off one week and two days off the next week. It worked round until I think four or five times a year it worked when you had a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday leave, four days.
- 18:09 R: So I paraded on the Saturday night and I should have in fact started on the Monday, but I paraded two nights early. My inspector wasn't expecting me and he came out with a wonderful comment, "I've had a very quiet fortnight on nights and you're not going to spoil it by mucking up the system. Can you cook?" I said, "No," he said, "Great, you're in the canteen cooking. Go in the office and put the kettle on and Sergeant [Unknown] will give you your duties."
- 18:51 R: So I said, "Is that tea for 15 of us on parade?" "No, it blimmin' well isn't. Just for me, the sergeant and I suppose yourself as well." So I started to make the tea. The sergeant was on the phone and because I'd been in the specials for three and half years at Stechford, I'd got an idea of office procedure. All the cups and the kettle were in an office with the words on the door 'interview room'. I looked and there were about 15 cups there, every one was dirty, the electric kettle was empty, which was par for the course, so

you took them to the first available place which was the women's toilet, because we didn't have women in the police in those days. I started to clean the cups, fill the kettle up, put that on, came back. When I came back with a tray, there was a customer at the trapdoor. The sergeant was on the phone and being full of confidence, as you are, I opened the door. "Can I help you, sir?" He said, "Yes, I want to give myself up." I said, "Oh, yes? Why?" He said, "I've just killed somebody in the cafe next door."

20:09 R: I thought, "Hang on, yes, okay." I opened the office door for him to come in, which he did, and invited him to sit down in the interview room. The man was about six-foot, well-spoken, smartly dressed, but his clothes were totally filthy. His trilby had a band of grease round it, his mac had a shiny collar with dirt, his shirt was shiny with dirt. It should have been white.

20:50 R: The sergeant was on the phone to Edward Road Police Station and I heard him say, "We've got a right one here," but he was referring to me. He walks over, he says, "You don't bring customers into the interview room." I said, "No, but he wants to give himself up because he's killed somebody in the cafe next door." The sergeant looks at me and looks at this bloke. "Is that right?" "Yes." So with that, another sergeant comes in who was a Geordie. "Go and have a look and see if there's a body next door in the cafe, will you?" says the office sergeant. He goes round to have a look, comes back, his face as white as a sheet. There's a dead body there. So the sergeant looks at me. "You've got to say something to this young man." I managed to blurt out that he was under arrest for the murder of a person at present unknown and caution him, and we sat down.

21:56 R: That was the very first dealings I'd had with a prisoner, the sergeant or anything. Suffice to say, it was a bit chaotic that night. When you had a murder in the 1960s, you had to first of all tell the control room, obviously, then the control room would always ring up the chief constable to tell him and he would designate one of the deputies or assistant chief constables to attend with the head of CID.

22:36 R: I was told that it was going to be busy, we'd have forensics teams down there, yes, we did have them, we'd have scenes of crime down there, we'd have fingerprint officers down there, CID officers that would suddenly appear from nowhere down there, and I was in the canteen and I can't cook. So we decided on baked potato with butter, bacon and sausage and if you wanted a fried egg, you did it yourself, and it was up to you to make your own tea.

23:10 R: There was a sack of 56 pounds of potatoes so we put them in a big oven, because I was told it's going to get hectic. There were heaven knows how many rashers of bacon in the fridge so all those got cooked, all the sausages got cooked, and we ran out of food at 4 o'clock. There was nothing left for first watch at all. And the canteen, instead of taking about £1, £1/2/6, had taken over £17, which was absolutely unknown. When the cook arrived to do the breakfast for the Monday morning, she went ballistic because there was no bacon, no eggs, no sausages, nothing for breakfast.
(Laughter)

23:54 R: I went to court with the prisoner that morning and in the old days, you literally did everything yourself but you were very closely supervised, so whilst I was giving evidence about the arrest, standing right behind me in the witness box was a detective sergeant who was in charge of the case. The prosecuting solicitor had been briefed, the magistrate had been briefed and he was the stipendiary magistrate, Mr Millward, and he came out with a comment at the end of the remand hearing, because the prisoner was remanded in custody for seven days, he said, "PC Cross, you've got yourself off to a good start." I had. You can go through 30 years of police service and not arrest anybody for murder.

24:47 R: I went to court with him the next week and the week after and the week after. Every seven-day remand, I was at court with that prisoner, plus the other people I was dealing with as well. So you learned by doing it yourself, not by being taught in a classroom, by doing it yourself.

25:07 R: After four weeks, we had then a local procedure course which was dealing with local Birmingham bylaws. We went to the police training centre at Tally Ho and they were on tenterhooks one day because the deputy chief constable was coming down to talk to the CID course which was upstairs. 2 o'clock, we knew he'd entered the building, he was having a cup of tea, etc., whatever they did. He came down and he put his head round the door, we all stood up. He walked in and he said, "You new recruits, let me talk to you, let me see what you've been doing. Who's had prisoners for what?" I decided that it was much safer to keep my hand down. My mate said, "I've had a prisoner for two drunks," or, "I had one for burglary," etc., and the conversation went on for about 10 minutes. This assistant chief constable turned round and looked at me. It was the same one who'd turned up at the police station and he obviously knew I was there. He said, "PC Cross." The sergeants look, and our tutors look. Why does he know my name? He said, "You had a prisoner the other day, didn't you?" "Yes, sir." "Would you like to tell us what it was about?"

So I went to tell the story and then the assistant chief constable who was in charge of all the CID anyway, he then stopped and he said exactly what the procedure would be and he spent half an hour with the class just talking about this one case and what would be happening in the future, much to my absolute embarrassment. He then disappeared and the sergeants turned to me and said, "You didn't say anything." "You didn't ask, did you?" He'd caught everybody on the hop. He knew I was there and that was it.

27:05 R: I had an interesting course about three, five years later which was a public speaking course. Now, these were run by the police at Tally Ho but it was supported very strongly by the BBC who were at Pebble Mill and we used to have two or three of their newsreaders come down and talk to us. We had to do our own public speaking- we had to do our own 10, 15 minute presentation and it was on a subject anything you liked. Well, I was into firearms by then and I'd got my own guns, so I knew what I was going to talk about; firearm safety, safety on the firearm range.

27:56 R: So I go to see the superintendent in charge of the police training centre because I knew they kept a .38 revolver and blanks there for firearms instruction. So I go to see him the day before and I said, "Excuse me, sir. Can I borrow your .38 revolver and two blank rounds for tomorrow?" I think he nearly had a heart attack. He wanted to know why and I said, "Well, basically, I'm going to shoot the sergeant and inspector." That was really very good. Eventually, he lent me them, especially when I said it doesn't matter because I can bring my own if necessary, and I'd arranged it with the sergeant and inspector that I was going to do my talk straight after the dinner.

28:37 R: The class came in and the sergeant and inspector were, as arranged by me, in the front left and front right-hand corner of the classroom, just doing whatever they wanted to do. On the lectern, I gently placed a revolver. Nobody knew it was there. All the class were in there just standing around talking, as they did, and I picked up this gun and I said, "Ey, this is alright, sarge, whose is this?" I turned round and fired the gun into the ceiling. The sergeant fell down as if mortally wounded. The inspector shouted, "What the- have you done?" and I swung round to him, fired the gun into the ceiling. I only went like this and it went off, and it went bang and of course he fell down to the floor as well. The classroom were absolutely dead silent. They really knew nothing about what I was going to do at all. Then the sergeant and inspector got up. Several members of the class called me an illegitimate name, one said, "I was just about to arrest you." (Laughter) Then I gave a 10, 15 minute talk on firearm safety.

- 30:04 R: Sat in the back of the class was the superintendent in charge of the training centre and the chief inspector in charge of the firearms department. Two days later, a report came through offering me a part-time post training at Tally Ho doing firearm safety and my superintendent refused it because I was too young, which was annoying.
- 30:32 R: But yes, I was into firearms. I used to shoot for the Birmingham City police, West Midlands police and when I started to do fullbore rifle, which is 7.62, we'd do that at Kingsbury, Bisley, Altcar or Blair Atholl in Scotland. Generally, without bragging too much, at 1000m I could definitely hit the centre of a mini boot lid. That's without a scope, just a blade foresight.
- 31:14 R: Great times at Bisley. I used to have a week down there and on the one occasion, the Gurkhas were in charge of the camp and that was the best week ever. That was without a doubt the best week ever. I shall only say I fell down a pothole and twisted my ankle, but that's another story.
- 31:36 R: One of the occasions, the prize-giving was by... What's his name? What's his name? Michael Bentine. That's right.
- 32:02 R: On one of the occasions on the Friday, the prize-giving was by Michael Bentine, who a lot of you if you were around in the '50s, you will remember for his little, funny, explosive skits involving little men and mini wars where you'd have a little explosion set off. He was introduced as a firearms expert and in fact, he was the Home Office adviser for firearms, firearm safety, matching of bullets to the guns that fired them which was really the limit of firearms in those days, matching the hammerhead of a pistol with the mark left on the bullet when the hammerhead hits the bullet. So you could say 'that bullet was fired by that gun' because you would match the indentations of the bullet with the striker on the hammerhead. (I've never drank so much water in my life).
- 33:26 R: Jumping to the modern there's quite a bit on Michael Bentine on Wikipedia but in fact, he is the only civilian to have ever shot and trained at the SAS base in Hereford, and he was actually born in Peru.
- 33:50 R: Firearms was a great insight, it was a totally different world. I mentioned earlier on Palmerston Road. In the late 1960s, a lady in a seaside town in North Wales witnessed two youths robbing a supermarket. As they left, one youth stumbled and put his hand out on the glass window to steady himself. The lady had obviously been watching too many television programmes because she promptly

walked to the window and stood right where the lad had put his hand on the glass. I am told that a local bobby, when he arrived, told her to move and she refused. The sergeant went to speak to her, realised the value of her evidence and left her standing there. When the fingerprint guys arrived, they dusted the window first and they lifted a palm print and some fingerprints from the window, got the Sellotape, put it on the glass mount, as they normally did. That was put in the saddle back of a police motorcyclist and he went to Liverpool to see if the fingerprints matched their records. This was when there was no computerisation, nothing at all, so you had to rely on somebody examining their files. When a person was arrested, two sets of fingerprints were taken off them, one stayed in the local what we call 'CRO area', criminal record office area, and the other one went to Scotland Yard. Liverpool had its own CRO, Manchester had its own CRO, Lancashire, Newcastle, Birmingham, London, Cardiff and Bristol, so you'd all got details of your local criminals, but every time one of them was arrested, one set of fingerprints went to Scotland Yard.

- 36:02 R: So the police motorcyclist went to Liverpool, no trace. Went to Manchester, no trace. It's now about 2 o'clock in the afternoon and he's authorised to come down to Birmingham to go to our CRO office. There was a suspicion one of the youths was from Birmingham I will say because of his accent.
- 36:31 R I was in Bradford Street front office and I got a message that a police motorcyclist from North Wales was coming down and Bradford Street had 36 single men's rooms for the unmarried police officers. I was instructed to find him a room. We had several vacancies. I found him a room, made sure it was clean and tidy, he arrived about 4 o'clock. He was taken straight down to our CRO office and within 10 minutes, they'd matched the fingerprint.
- 37:07 R: So we come back to Bradford Street and the person concerned lived in Palmerston Road, which is just off Stratford Road by the two churches.
- 37:23 R: I was a firearms officer and I was working, as I say, 2:00 until 10:00. We were instructed that we were going to parade at Bradford Street at 4 o'clock and raid the house. Another team were going to search his mate's house who lived in Kings Heath. Now in the early days, firearms was not as stringent as it is today. There were six of us designated to go to the house; two at the front, two at the back and two to search the house.
- 38:01 R: We practised house-searching at an old police house that we had using bullets made of the brass casing that you put the explosive cap

in but you then fill the bullets with wax, so there are wax bullets, and you could fire the bullets quite safely in a room. Everybody wore a crash helmet and goggles, but you could fire it and it wouldn't hurt you with a jacket on or anything like that, and you'd have real hostage situations where you fired the gun and that type of thing. So we'd had some experience practising at it.

38:41 R: So we went down there. I was designated to go to the back of the house with my mate and sit and if they came out the back door, we'd got them. Unfortunately, my mate managed to oversleep. A very good friend of mine who has recently passed away was a dog handler, and he had a wonderful German Shepherd that would do anything. So I'm in the back garden hiding behind a tree, adopting a position with both hands round the barrel of the stock of the gun, pointing it towards the back door. The police dog was sat next to me. The garden was overgrown, no fence between this garden and the house next door, etc.

39:35 R: 4 o'clock in the morning, nice, sunny morning. My two mates are now behind me, the dog handler and his mates are behind me in a little ditch behind the house. I hear one of them say, "Movement at the back door of the house next door." A gentleman comes out, elderly Jamaican gentleman wearing a bowler hat, white shirt, no collar, braces, trousers, and he's carrying a pile of washing over his arm. He looks across and sees me hiding behind a tree. It wasn't a big tree. He yells across, "Morning, officer." So I look across to him, "Morning," watching the back door, and I can hear my two mates having a bit of a giggle. He carries on putting the washing out as if nothing is happening. I've got to watch him just in case. The dog's watching him as well. He's finished hanging out the sheets, he walks gently over to me. He says, "It's a nice day but I think it might rain later on," and I'm just stood there with a gun pointing it at the back door with tears in my eyes. My mates were killing themselves laughing in the ditch. Needless to say, the two lads were at the house in Kings Heath and they got caught and they were duly taken up to North Wales and sentenced.

41:14 R: So yes, it was a good job. Firearms, by the time I'm 40, 45, became much firmer, much more organised and at the age of 45, I gently dropped out of the scene anyway. Mainly, I gave up my guns because of Hungerford. There have been several high-profile incidents of people holding guns on a genuine firearms certificate shooting friends or neighbours. Hungerford, Dunblane are very good examples.

41:54 R: Can you cut it a minute?

Audio 6

- 00:01 R: I mentioned Stratford Road in Sparkbrook. It was around 1968 and I was in a local newsagents having a chat. This young lady walks in and I thought, "Hmm, that's not bad." I got some information from the newsagent about her; where she worked etc., and that she used to pop in there every morning for I think cigarettes and a newspaper.
- 00:32 R I spoke to her a few times, then left her a note saying 'would you like to come out?' We spoke and we agreed to meet at the Robin Hood cinema on Stratford Road. Of all things, she stood me up, which was gutting. I stood outside the Robin Hood cinema for nearly an hour and I was stood up, but being a sucker for punishment, I went back again and asked her.
- 01:00 R1 I never did find out. Why did you stand me up?
- 01:04 R2: I didn't stand you up.
- 01:06 R1: You didn't go to the Robin Hood cinema.
- 01:07 R2: I didn't. I left a note saying that I wouldn't be there.
- 01:11 R1: Oh, I didn't pick the note up, did I? I left her another note and we went out. The first date was down Stratford-upon-Avon walking along the river and then several months later, we got married. I mentioned that my brother was a vicar and at that time, he was the vicar of St Agatha's Church on Stratford Road. Quite obviously, my brother could turn round and say, "I married my brother," and it was quite legal. We got married – I'd better get the date right – in April 1969.
- 02:05 R1: Of course, my colleagues attended in police cars and I duly got handcuffed to the railings outside the church. A bus driving towards the city was three parts full of passengers and they saw the police at the church and it was obviously a wedding. I think everybody moved to the left-hand side of the bus, I don't know why it didn't tip over, but they parked the police car there and I was left handcuffed there for about 10 minutes.
- 02:34 R1: The wedding went okay. I'd hidden my car so nobody could get at it and doctor it. We had a one-night honeymoon in the Lion Hotel at Shrewsbury and then in a caravan in Bournemouth.
- 02:52 R1: Having Neville at the local church was quite apt because he'd been there for about two or three years and at that time, I was with the Church of England so I wanted to go to his first church service,

which was communion, at 6:30 in the morning and I was on early turn anyway. So we paraded at 5:45 at the police station and I said to the inspector, "I'm going to church." The general rule was if you wanted to go to church on a Sunday and the time was available, you could go even if you were in full uniform.

03:40 R1: So 6:20, my mate dropped me off outside the church and I went in, in full uniform. At the first communion, it's strictly a verbal communion, there are no hymns sung, and you get the stalwarts of the church and there are about five of them. They all looked and saw for the first time in their lives a uniformed policeman in the congregation. You could see they were trying to talk about me but one was sat here and one was sat over there. They were looking and I was on their lips. Then my brother walked in and it's the first time they had seen the vicar. One or two of them clocked the resemblance, because at this time I was clean-shaven and my brother had a beard, I believe.

04:41 R1: They had this service, it only lasted about 20 minutes, communion, and then the vicar came down to say hello to them and they all crowded round the vicar. I knew what was going to happen; they all started making suggestions about changing this, that and the other. My brother turned round to them and said, "Oh, by the way, let me introduce you to my brother, PC Cross, the local policeman around here." And said hello, we had a little chat. It was quite convenient, my brother then started to come to the police station on a Wednesday morning and he was in fact the first vicar to start getting involved with what is now quite a big thing called the police chaplaincy.

05:40 R1: He went to Bradford Street on a Wednesday morning at 9:30. We had two shifts in the canteen; 9:00 until 10:00 and 10:00 until 11:00. So by coming in about 9:30, my brother got to see every policeman on every shift in the four weeks. Everybody knew him, he was always welcome there. He never had to pay for his full English fried breakfast. That was always paid for out the superintendents' funds and it worked very well. Everybody knew that if they wanted to talk to my brother, they could go and see him at the vicarage or in the police station, and I would never, ever know what any conversation was about. If I saw him talking to somebody, I would never go and interrupt.

06:29 R1: One of the more unusual jobs was during a funeral service at Christchurch, which was the other church my brother looked after, corner of Sampson Road and Dolobran Road, as the undertakers were taking the coffin up the aisle, the bottom started to drop out the coffin.

The undertakers quickly saw this and there was a bit of a kerfuffle as they managed to secure the bottom and change their hands over a bit. My brother realised what was happening and I don't think any of the congregation did. I wasn't there, but they put the coffin down on the bier, that's the trolley, and the service went ahead as normal. After the service, they were very careful unloading the trolley, etc. The body went away for cremation, that was the end of that.

07:38 R1: But in Camp Hill, there was another church called Holy Trinity and the vicar there had left sometime beforehand I will just say under a cloud. So for some years, the church had been unoccupied. Now, whilst the church wasn't being used for services at all, it came within my brother's parish. It was decided that the church which was now being used as a temporary night shelter was going to be deconsecrated, but it meant moving the coffins from the vaults of the church. Those in the graveyard had to stay there, but those in the vaults in the church had to be moved because the church was being deconsecrated.

08:47 R1: So with the local chief inspector and the police, my brother had to arrange for a Home Office exhumation order to re-intern all the coffins at the church, because those in the vaults were now being broken into. People thought, wrongly, that people were buried with loads of jewellery with them and in lead-lined coffins, that, I'm sorry, is not a true fact.

09:18 R1: So 4 o'clock one morning, the undertakers who were involved in the coffin falling out had 'volunteered', and I'm using quotes, to assist in the removal of these coffins, which had to be supervised by two policemen. I was one of them. All the coffins were taken out. Some were in a very bad state and some were in a reasonable state. We took one coffin out and the coffin below it, which was still sealed in brickwork, was the guy's wife. That was taken out. It was buried around 1830 and the flowers were still intact on the coffin and the brass plate was still shiny. We put the coffin on the ground and within 30 minutes, the brass plate had corroded, and the flowers had gone to dust. It was almost eerie to watch.

10:26 R1: The bodies were re-interned in the cemetery and then the undertakers, there were four of them; my brother, myself and my mates, went back to Bradford Street police station at 9:30 and we all had a full English breakfast. (Laughter) One of the more unusual jobs that I did at the church.

10:51 R1: We decided that we wanted to raise some money for the church so a jumble sale was held and because I'd got one or two contacts in Hall Green, we leafleted Hall Green to get good quality clothing and

everything down to the church at Sparkbrook. We had a fantastic response, we really did, because by this time, my brother had moved out of the vicarage at 100 Sampson Road because it was just too unwieldy to live in, and had moved up to Pembroke Avenue in Hall Green. So he leafleted round there and leafleted one or two other roads and we had loads of really good quality gear, so much so that the jumble sale was on the Saturday and we'd had some of the traders trying to come along Friday to view what we'd got and buy the good stuff in advance, and we'd said no.

- 12:02 R1: Crime prevention-wise, there was only a very grotty lock on the church hall door, so we decided that we were going to sleep overnight in the church hall. I think it was Tony may have slept with us, a friend of mine, another policeman, and we'd borrowed a spare radio from the nick anyway, just in case. We slept overnight in the church hall to thwart anybody breaking in to steal clothing, which they would have done. Needless to say, we raised I think well into three figures, which for the 1960s was a very good sum of money to raise from a jumble sale.
- 12:47 R1: There's a separate history to St Agatha's church that the preacher in the 1930s was very much a hellfire and brimstone man and it was a very high church. It's the only church in Birmingham where newspaper reporters used to occupy the back two rows to record in shorthand the sermons so they could write about it in the Monday papers. Don't ask me the vicar's name because I couldn't tell you.
- 13:25 R1: I'm not running out of stories but I'm conscious of the time.
- 13:33 R1: During most of my police service, life was pretty well mundane. I preferred walking to driving, although I did drive police vehicles, we'd obviously got involved with the miners' strike and miners' dispute. By now, I was working from Acocks Green Police Station but still covering the Stratford Road.
- 14:01 R1: We'd got then three children and one of the things I say is I was always at work, so my wife brought them up. I never really interfered because what's the use of interfering when I'm never there to supervise what's going on? So my wife brought up the three children and as I said very recently, changed the nappies when I wasn't there, usually changed the nappies when I was there as well, one or two jobs in the garden, got the spider out of the bath when I wasn't there, and got the spider out of the bath when I was there.

- 14:50 R1: It was about 1989 Neighbourhood Watch was beginning to take off, which was a crime prevention measure involved with getting residents together to work as a group to act as crime prevention. Crime prevention is very basic. In theory, in an ideal world, you should be able to leave your car unlocked on the drive with the keys in the ignition, your wallet on the dashboard stuffed full of notes and it should stay there and nobody should- it's not going to happen.
- 15:32 R1: So as long as you can get people thinking about crime prevention and acting, then you're halfway there. Lock your car up, don't leave your wallet on the dashboard stuffed full of notes, don't leave your keys on the stairs so people can go fishing through the letterbox. So as we've done in this house, you will notice there is no letterbox on the front door, it's in the porch.
- 15:59 R1: As long as you can get people thinking about crime prevention, then they will start going along that path. If you've got a back that's vulnerable, you don't want reams of barbed wire on top of the fence, but if you have a tall rose rambler, a rambling rose going over the fence, no burglar is going to put his hands on the fence when it's full of thorns.
- 16:27 R1: So crime prevention is basically very simple. Oh, talking about crime prevention, while I was courting my wife, one morning the alarm went off at her place of work which backs onto the railway track in Henley Street.
- 16:47 R1: You had police alarms in factories and offices and some were good, some were bad and some were indifferent. The one at my wife's factory was good because it never went off. So when it went off, you knew there was a very high chance that there were going to be burgers on the premises.
- 17:12 R1: There was nothing there at all. We called the keyholder out, absolutely no trace of anything. It had got sensors upstairs in the offices so if anybody broke in with a torch, the sensor would pick it up. Heat sensors were not generally available then, there were only light sensors.
- 17:39 R1: The alarm went off the next morning at virtually exactly the same time. Called the keyholder out, nothing. So on the Wednesday morning, trying to work out why, I managed to sit on the railway embankment looking over the back of the premises. Now, I've mentioned the railway line, which in fact was strictly a goods line running on the LMS tracks from Saltley through to Moseley, Kings Heath and then eventually joining up with Bromsgrove in the Bristol

track. The advantage of this line is it meant that any goods trains running didn't have to go through New Street Station which left New Street totally free for passengers.

18:39 R1: So I'm sat on the bank waiting for this alarm to go off around 2 o'clock and as good as gold, 2 o'clock it went off without any trouble at all. At exactly the same time, a passenger train went up the railway line. Because of some rail works, it had been diverted. The lights in the carriages were reflecting in the mirror in the upstairs office and that triggered the alarm. So we solved that problem. The other favourite one for false alarms was a spider in the sensor of the alarm. When you'd got heat sensors, the spider's body calling over the heat sensor would actually set the alarm off. If the spider was on the outside of the alarm, it wouldn't be hot enough, but if it actually got inside the little box, it would set the alarm off.

19:39 R1: One day, Valerie, my wife, found a pen and got somebody- did you hand it in yourself or did you get somebody to do it?

19:48 R2: Somebody handed it in.

19:49 R1: Somebody handed it in and by this time, I'm courting her. She mentioned that she'd found a Parker Biro so I went into the police station and there it was. It had been there nearly nine months and nobody had claimed, so if Valerie had gone to the police station she could claim it, but she never went. So I took the pen with the sergeant's blessing, took it down to her and walked straight into her offices in uniform, up the stairs, straight into the office and there's Val, I think you were on the keyboard, switchboard. I said, "Sign here, you've got a Parker pen." And she did. She kept it for years before she lost it. We got married just after that.

20:40 R1: I think that's an ideal time to introduce my wife, Valerie.

Audio 7

00:00 R2: I also learnt how to use the switchboard which was for a company that distributed all sorts of electric tools and hand tools to the various factories and shops all around Birmingham and further afield. We used to export things to the Dunlop Rubber company in India. So having to do the export forms for the invoices was quite terrifying really, having to do 10 copies. There wasn't a computer, it was just hand-typed and you had to try very hard not to make a mistake because it was quite difficult rubbing out 10 copies of the invoice.

- 00:54 R2: I was quite happy there. Life went on as normal, to and from work. Then one day, on one morning on my way to work, there was this policeman stood in the newsagents and he just said, "Good morning," and I said, "Good morning." Terry, the owner of the newsagents, was always very friendly and chatty and he said, "Oh, that policeman was asking about you." I said, "Oh, was he?" and took no more notice. Then there was a little note written out of his... They had a little book with just little sheets of pink paper on it and he'd written on this that he would like to go out. Terry thought that I lived in Hall Green but as I say, I lived in Acocks Green.
- 02:05 R2: Of course, when I read this note, it was from David saying he'd like to go out with me and would I meet him at the Robin Hood picture house? Of course, I thought, "No, I don't want to." I did write him a note because I handed it to Terry and I said, "Will you make sure he gets it?" Because I'm not the person that would just leave somebody standing there on purpose.
- 02:35 R2: I did- No, I didn't. I wasn't that sort, says David nodding his head. I thought that was the end of it, but David has forgotten that he then asked Terry where I worked and he got the phone number. I was sat there at my typewriter typing away and the lady who was over us called Grace, she'd got a phone on her desk and the phone duly rang and she picked it up and she said, "It's for you." I said, "Me? I don't get phone calls, never had phone calls," because my parents hadn't got a phone at home and I don't think there was anybody I knew had a phone.
- 03:33 R2: Of course, I went and said, "Hello," and this voice said, "You don't know who this is," and I thought, "Oh, I do." (Laughter) He said, "I do want to take you out." I think you said something about Hall Green and I said, "I don't live in Hall Green, I live in Acocks Green." "Oh," he said. So I then thought, "Oh, well, that'll be it." He said, "Well, I'll meet you by the library in Acocks Green village." I thought, "Oh, that's quite close to home." So I said, "Well, alright. I'll see you at 7 o'clock," I believe the time was. I said, "If I'm not there by half past, don't wait any longer," you know, trying to get rid of him. He then said, "Well, if you don't turn up, I'll go round to your accounts and find out where you live and I'll pop round and see you at home." I thought my parents would have a blue fit if they saw a policeman walking down the path. So I thought, "Well, I'd better go on this date." As I say, the past is all history. It's been 45 years and three children, ups and downs, arguments, but we're still together.
- 05:12 R1: And you walked round Stratford Road when you left to have a baby.

- 05:16 R2: Yes, when we decided we were going to get married, it happened quite quickly because at that stage people were having to save up-well, possibly like today, having to save up to get a deposit. But at that time, there were police houses that you could look at these different police houses and David would then go to the inspector, I believe, and say, "I'm getting married. We've looked at this house. Can we go and live there?" So we'd got somewhere to live, we didn't have to live with parents which is what a lot of people had to do to try and get the money for a deposit.
- 06:08 R2: So we moved into Court Road and he did say, "I don't want to live in a police house for all of his service," he said. "I want to get our own house." I continued going to work and we did get enough deposit to buy this.
- 06:34 R2: At that time, I don't know whether they still do it now when girls in an office get married, but oh, they made me a big, tall hat and decorated it. You know these punch... Where you punch two holes in paper, everybody was saving that from their punches to throw over you and that sort of thing, instead of.. They made me a book with all rude suggestion, quite a large book with all rude suggestions and bits and pieces of innuendos, you know, getting married and all that, which I've still got upstairs somewhere.
- 07:19 R2: Of course, they made be walk down Stratford Road and of course, all the cars went beeping and of course, streamers hanging from your hat and everything like that. That was quite an experience.
- 07:37 R2: As I say, we got married and then we'd been married four years and lived here and we decided it was time to start a family.
- 07:50 R2: With regard to the Stratford Road, David has said most of it. I remember there was a butchers at the corner of Auckland Road and I can remember getting off the bus one morning and walking along and he'd got a pig and its two back legs were on two hooks in the doorway and there he was cutting through it. It nearly brought my breakfast back, but that was the sort of thing. It was quite... urgh. But it's changed an awful lot from what I remember. David remembers a lot more of it than me.
- 08:45 R2: When I had my son, that was it. There was no having 12 months off and then going back to work, that was it. You were having a baby, you automatically stayed at home to look after your child. I never really went back to work then because with David on his different shift work, it was not as stable enough... Well, there wasn't a job then that I could do that would mix in with his shift work.

- 09:26 R2: Now, the grandparents seem to look after the grandchildren. It seems it's expected, to a certain degree. I mean, it is a lovely thing, but I'm getting off the talking about the Stratford Road a bit.
- 09:47 I: What was it like bringing up your children?
- 09:51 R2: Well, like David said, he was always at work. It was left up to me, a lot of the things. When they had the miners' strike, I'd just got the two; my son Philip and Julia, but the policemen all rallied round because they knew they were going to be away for a week. They knew you were on your own for a week and a good friend of ours, Andy Thomas, he'd come round and he'd say, "Are you alright?" I'd say, "Yes." "Do you need to go shopping? I'll take you shopping if you need to go." They all sort of tended to look after one another and he went round to his wife when Andy was away. They do pull together, the police do. They all sort of help each other.
- 10:54 R2: I mean, I was lucky because the school is at the top of the road so taking them up to school and bringing them back, there was never any hassle. Then the other schools, they got older, they could manage to get there on their own.
- 11:10 R2: But it was a bit difficult and sometimes they could go two or three days and not see their dad. Of course, they never knew what the weekend was because the other children, their dads worked 9-to-5 on a Monday to Friday and of course, Saturday and Sunday was their family time.
- 11:31 R2: But when, we had a caravan and with his once a month, he'd have a long weekend off. We'd pick the children up from school, starting with the one at the top of the road, my eldest son's school was nearer and he'd get home and we'd have the car loaded. We'd pick the middle one up at the junior school and we'd say, "Be outside the school ready," and of course, she'd be there waiting. She'd jump in the back of the car and we'd go off to Devon to our caravan and come back on a Sunday night. As he said, there were no phone calls, nobody calling you. It was our time as a family.
- 12:15 R2: When he was at Acocks Green, I think, or was it Sparkhill? He used to say to me, "Get the dinner ready for 1 o'clock on a Sunday and I'll be home." Because it was quieter on a Sunday, he used to say to the sergeant, "I'm going home for my dinner." Because it was the one meal in the week out of the week that we all sat down as a family because if he was on 2:00 until 10:00, he'd be in bed when they went to school, they'd be in bed when he came home at night, so it was all sorts of meals at different times and different hours.

- But he did say this Sunday lunchtime, and there was only one time that we'd just started eating our Sunday lunch that his phone- he used to have his radio on so that if anything important did crop up- but there was only once, I think, that he actually had to go and leave his dinner.
- 13:29 R2: But they've all turned out well.
- 13:31 R1: Recruits
- 13:32 R2: Pardon?
- 13:32 R1: And showing the recruit around.
- 13:34 R2: Oh. He used to...
- 13:39 R1: Tutor the constable.
- 13:40 R2: Tutor the constables, the pro-cons as they called them in. Very often, he'd ring up and say, "Could you make sure there's extra dinner? I'm bringing..." Of course, they used to come home with him, have their dinner and then go off back, which they were always grateful for living in single men's quarters.
- 14:06 R2: When we were in Court Road, there was a young policeman who we have met up with recently. He was in the single men's quarters and he was walking past Court Road and I don't know whether he'd said to you, but we'd just bought a brand new washing machine. He said to this Ian, "Val will do your shirts for you," and he'd got 21 shirts. I said, "Well, I'll wash them. But I'm not ironing them." I said, "You'll have to sort that out yourself." He'd got a hanger for each of these shirts, so I just hung them all around the kitchen, trying to hang them up so that they'd drip dry so they wouldn't be so creased up. We recently met up with him and he still talks about all those shirts that he washed, because being in single men's quarters there were no washing facilities.
- 15:18 R1: He got other women to iron the shirts, other women to wash his underwear.
- 15:25 R2: Well, I don't know about him getting others to iron his shirts.
- 15:31 R1: Turn the mic to me when you've got a minute.
- 15:36 R1: One thing about Ian, he was good-looking and he used to play the ladies. My wife was washing the shirts, another lady on Stratford Road was ironing the shirts, another lady was washing his vests and underwear. He'd got it turned up totally.

- 15:58 R2: As I say, with regard to the children-
- 16:03 R1: The mouse in the house in Court Road.
- 16:06 R2: Do you want to know about the mouse in the house? Oh...
- 16:09 R1: And the flour.
- 16:14 R2: These houses in Court Road were very old and as I say, there was a park across the road. How, why, I don't know, but we'd come from work and been shopping and we were emptying the bags onto the worktop in the kitchen and I was aware of a little something which I thought was a leaf blowing across the kitchen floor, because the back door was open. It was to my horror- I don't mind spiders, I can deal with spiders, but mice and rats, absolutely... urgh. I shouted out, "There's a mouse," and of course, David... Where it was I said it was as I'm nearly climbing up on top of the worktop. It had nipped into this pantry which went... As the pantry was off the kitchen like that going into the back, the stairs from the front was going up, so it was a triangular shape.
- 17:27 R2: We'd got some pop bottles or something in the pantry on the floor and of course, he said, "You go on, I'll sort it," being a hero and I just went out and left it. He said, "There's nothing in there," and I said, "I did see it, David. I did." So what he did, he put his thinking cap on and he sprinkled the floor with flour and we came out, left it. The next morning, he could see footprints, these mouse footprints. Halfway up, which would be the first step right at the back, there was a tiny little hole, like a knothole that you get in wood, and it was sort of from there. So we covered the hole up, so I don't think they had a very nice ending. But at least we got rid of the mouse.
- 18:24 R2: They were happy days. Bringing up the children, I mean, if they were here, I think they'd probably say they had a bit of a strict upbringing. I didn't stand for no nonsense. Sometimes, they'd say one look from me and they knew to behave themselves, but then if their dad's not about so much, it's up to you to do the right thing. They've never been in any trouble and always had jobs. Our one daughter died 11 years ago, which was a bit of a shock, but even she'd always had a job.
- 19:15 R2: I said them when they left school, "You don't think you're going to lie in bed all day. You're going to get up. You're not stopping up there. You get up and you find something to do," which I think is what a lot of the children don't do these days. I don't think they've got the old-fashioned families to keep them in order. The lives

they've got now, it's a lot different to... Whether it's better or worse, I don't know. But I think they'd probably say I was a bit strict as well. But there you go.

- 20:05 I: What sorts of things do you like to do in your spare time?
- 20:08 R2: Do I like to do? Well, I like a bit of gardening, I like doing crosswords.
- 20:18 R1: Brownies.
- 20:19 R2: I was a Rainbow leader. I was guider in the Rainbows for a while. I go to church. We used to have jumble sales at the church and Christmas fairs and summer fairs to raise funds for the church. It's been about 36, 37 years I've been going to the church at the top of the road. I do junior chu- well, I always did junior church for the last... A good 15 or more years, but the children don't go to church anymore and they'd got less and less. My friend and I that used to do it, we were retiring. I mean, at 70, there wasn't the children there, so one or two others said, "Oh, well, we'll do it if they're there."
- 21:38 R2: We used to do the full Christmas Nativity with all Mary and Joseph, the angels, the shepherds, the kings, trying to find something for all of them to do, but it gradually lessened and there were less children to do the things. The last two years, we've just had readings when we said enough is enough.
- 22:07 R2: I like doing the gardening. What else do I like doing? Nothing really interesting. It's just doing the day to day life. We like going away for a few days at a time, always backwards and forwards to the caravan and meeting the friends there.
- 22:35 R2: I couldn't say I've got a real hobby. Would you, David?
- 22:39 R1: I suppose crosswords keep your brain involved
- 22:42 R2: Well, it's trying to keep my brain active.
- 22:46 R1: Your hobbies are crosswords, the church and gardening.
- 22:52 R2: I've never been into the gym.
- 22:54 R1: And looking after old men.
- 22:56 R2: And looking after old men. And grandchildren. We looked after our granddaughter when her mum went back to work for two days a week. She's starting school in September now so it's gone down to

one day a fortnight, because her dad gets a day off in the week so that's his day with her.

23:25 R1: I think the one thing probably that's most recognisable is I never saw any of our three children take their first steps because obviously, I was at work. You come home and it was a case of, "Oh, Philip's walking. Julia's walking, Heather's walking."

23:52 R1: But we were on holiday with our granddaughter and she was walking round the edges of the settees of the caravan and suddenly, she saw her dad and took three or four paces across the floor. The next three or four paces are on video, as are most of her walking now, which is something we didn't have. It was just photographs, now it's videos, videos usually on your phone, videos usually on your camera. The world in technology-wise has changed drastically over 20 years, 30 years. So suddenly, you've got a lot more memories that you can put down on photograph than you could have had years ago.

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