

Voices of Hickling

Interview Transcript: Joan Greenacre

*Interviewed by Ann Louise Kinmonth
on 26th June 2014*

JG: I was born in Brumstead, it was in the middle of a marsh. There was a cottage in the middle of the marsh. I was born there, at home. After that I moved, my mother moved and I was about 2 year old when we moved, still in Brumstead, but to a bungalow and I grew up there.

ALK: So your first house, did you move before you remembered exactly what that was like?

JG: Yes, I only remember it after going back as a child having a look at the old thing.

ALK: What did you see when you went back?

JG: Not much. A small brick house.

ALK: So, where was it exactly?

JG: In Brumstead.

ALK: In the middle of Brumstead.

JG: Yes, in Brumstead. In the middle of a marsh.

ALK: That's what you said. In the middle of a marsh.

JG: Yes, you had to go across a big plot of marsh to get to it. Start at Brumstead, went across a marsh, over the railway line, across another marsh and there was the house.

ALK: Amazing, and was it on its own or with others?

JG: No, on its own.

ALK: On its own. Why was it built there then?

JG: 'Cos it had farm buildings round it and they had horses and things and they used to be kept over there and my father used to look after the horses.

ALK: OK, so your father was a farmer

JG: Farm worker

ALK: Farm worker. And your mum?

JG: She was a housewife.

ALK: She used to stay at home and look after you.

JG: She didn't do any work. My father wouldn't let her go out to work.

ALK: Is that right? When did they meet each other?

JG: I haven't a clue.

ALK: No. Never found that out.

JG: Never bothered, It didn't interest me.

ALK: No. No.

JG: It didn't interest children years ago, did it?

ALK: Who else was in the house with you, your mum and dad and you?

JG: There was my mum, my dad, my grandma and grandpa and myself. Well, my sister who's just died, and then me.

Then we moved into a bungalow.

ALK: And that had a lavatory inside?

JG: No.

ALK: That had the lavatory outside?

JG: That was outside. That had the toilet outside. When I was a little girl I had to take my mum to the toilet 'cos she was afraid to go on her own.

ALK: That's what I was remembering, from the last conversation.

JG: She used to light the candle and I used to put my little hand round to stop the wind blowing it out. Take my mum to the toilet.

ALK: Every night?

JG: Well, if she wanted to go at night, yeah.

ALK: Felt like it. Did she get you out of bed?

JG: No. I take it she got father out then. I don't know. She wanted to go in the night.

ALK: So, what do you think is your earliest... You had the Charlie pot under the bed and all didn't you?

JG: Yeah, but she wasn't using that then, she wanted to go out

ALK: Well, I suppose she did. All depends what she wanted to do, doesn't it?

JG: Exactly. The Charlie pot was under the bed to wee in, wasn't it?

ALK: It was, and did you have to put that away in the morning, or did she do that for you?

JG: No, she

ALK: She didn't look after you?

JG: No. I had to get up in the morning and empty all the Charlie pots, round everybody, and wash them out, and wipe them out and pop 'em back again. Absolutely ridiculous wasn't it?

ALK: Amazing, amazing, was there electric light in the bungalow?

JG: No

ALK: There wasn't?

JG: No I never had electric light until I moved to Hickling, and then I didn't have it until Jane was born in 1962. Down the old manor house didn't have a light on, electric light until 1962.

ALK: Really. The house down there, down Hill Common

JG: Yeah, you had to go to the toilet down there in the dark. You had to put wellies on to go to the toilet there. I was always going to the toilet in the dark. [LAUGHS]. Best place to go in the dark, the toilet.

ALK: Well, that's fair enough, isn't it? So what do you think your earliest memory is?

JG: Oh I don't know. I remember lots of things when I was young.

ALK: Yeah

JG: Can't think at the moment.

ALK: No. No need to

JG: And then my grandfather. He was a carpenter by trade. Made my sister and I a cart. We would sit in it and it had long handles and big wheels on it.

ALK: Lovely

JG: Mother used to take us, or dad. He put us both in and it was big enough for both of us. It was a beautiful cart. It was all carved and done beautiful.

ALK: Oh! Lovely

JG: Of course that went to the wall eventually, got rotten and that ----- (?) get away.

ALK: Were you proud of that, loved that?

JG: Well we had it as children but we didn't take care, banged it

ALK: Banged it about

JG: Into hedges and that sort.

ALK: Used it, used it. So you were in the first house in the marsh and then you moved into the bungalow and did you grow up there? How old..... Did you grow up there?

JG: No we moved out of there when my younger sister was a year old and she's 7 years younger than me, so I was 8 year old when I moved up to another house further up the road.

ALK: And why did you move? Do you remember? Too young to think about it.

JG: Because the farm was sold, the farmer went broke and the farm was sold with the house we lived in.

ALK: It was tied, was it?

JG: It was a tied house, yes. Then we moved up, further up.

ALK: And was that house another tied house, to another farm?

JG: That was another house, another tied house – but on the same farm. But they were brothers and when they, they split the farm between them you see – one couldn't make a go of it so when he had to come out the other took it over. So my father was still working on the same farm.

ALK: Oh! I see, that was the house. Did they sell the other house?

JG: We moved up the other – into a bigger house and, of course, the toilet was still outside.

ALK: And no electricity

JG: And no electricity.

ALK: But bigger

JG: And no water. We had to walk up the lane to get the water.

ALK: From the same place where you got it from before?

JG: No. When we were down the other place we had a pump in the yard.

ALK: Oh

JG: But we had to walk because it was a double dweller and there was a little bungalow further up – we used to have to walk but because we were down low the well couldn't be sunk where we were....

ALK: Yes, yes

JG: because there were ditches either side of the road. So, they were up on the hill so we had to walk up onto the hill to get the water. So if we wanted a bucket of water we had to walk up the hill. Jack and Jill go up

the hill to get a pail of water. And many a time I come down, one in each hand, slipped on the snow and goes way. ----- the water, me all soaking wet. You had to go up the hill to get some more.

ALK: Yeah

JG: They were good old days, they were.

ALK: They were. That would take some time

JG: But we enjoyed it.

ALK: Yeah. Did you go, both of you, you and your sister together, or did you go on your own to get water?

JG: No I'd go and do two, especially when mother wanted it for a wash.

ALK: How old were you when you started to get the water do you think?

JG: Oh I dunno. About 9 year old. I was only a little girl.

ALK: You were at school by then?

JG: Yeah.

ALK: When did you start school.

JG: Stalham

ALK: How old were you when you went to Stalham?

JG: Five

ALK: Five. And had your mum already taught you anything?

JG: Yeah. I know several things. When I was a child my grandmother used to read to me a lot, when I was a little girl. I was brought up on Tom and the water babies. Far better book to be brought up on even than the Bible I think.

ALK: Yes. A very moral tale

JG: She always has them – The Water Babies was the first then they did Tom and the Water Babies.

ALK: Yes

JG: One is Mrs Do-as-you-would-be-done-by and the other was Mrs Done-by-as-you-did. And the times my grandmother used to knock that into me – Do as you would be done by. [LAUGHS]

ALK: Whahey And did you go to church as well?

JG: Yes, I used to walk to church.

ALK: Yes

JG: East Ruston church.

ALK: East Ruston – that's a nice church.

JG: Two mile away. We used to walk every Sunday.

ALK: Who went?

JG: Me and my sister – older sister.

ALK: Not your mum?

JG: No, we went on our own.

ALK: **Did you go to Sunday school?**

JG: Yeah, I went to church in the morning, in the choir, Sunday school in the afternoon, and church at night.

ALK: That was a lot. What sort of church was it? You know, like Methodist or Anglican

JG: Well it was just an ordinary..... Church of England, church on the hill.

And we walked there in the morning. When I got my bike, I had a bicycle when I was about 8 year old.

ALK: Lovely

JG: And I used to go on my bicycle. To church in the morning, the choir, and my sister and I used to have to walk to Sunday school and then I used to go back to choir and if we went to Sunday school I'd stay on for choir in the afternoon, it was afternoon service, and evening service. I went home and went back at night for evening service. I used to play about in there even.

ALK: Yeah, you know the other people in the choir

JG: Well, there were only 2 or 3 of us young...

ALK: Was it?

JG: But the older people were behind us and, of course, the church pews had got holes in them, they had carved holes in them.

ALK: Yes, yes

JG: Well I used to pull the fluff off my clothes, pull the fluff off my clothes, make it into a ball, put it in my hands and sit and blow it – and suddenly it would pop out and, of course, I giggled or something like that.

ALK: Did they poke you?

JG: A finger would come through the hole and poke me I could never behave, not anywhere.

ALK: Brilliant. So you were quite busy?

JG: I kept myself busy, yeah.

ALK: You were kept busy

JG: Yeah, and of course, Saturdays when we went to school, well we used to roam all across the marshes and jump the dykes and...

ALK: You never went to school on a Saturday?

JG: No. On Saturdays we used to roam the marshes.

ALK: Oh yes. Sorry. Yeah.

JG: We used to roam the marshes on a Saturday.

ALK: Yeah. Yeah.

JG: We used to jump.

ALK: Jump?

JG: Jump over the water dykes.

ALK: And fall into them?

JG: Yeah, fall into them.

ALK: And you'd go with your sister or with friends

JG: No. Me and my sister and friends would go and all. But she was one year older than me so everywhere she went, I went.

ALK: Exactly. That way round.

JG: We used to go down to the river at East Ruston. We used to cycle down there. That's where I learnt to swim, in there.

ALK: Did you? Yeah, yeah.

JG: Yeah, we used to swim in the river. Occasionally we'd go to the beach. That wasn't very often – it was quite a way away, 4 or 5 mile away.

ALK: For the bike, yeah.

JG: Yeah, Dad used to ride his bike and I used to ride mine, my sister used to ride hers and my younger sister used to be on the back of mother's bike.

ALK: Yeah.

JG: And they'd go up Happisburgh or somewhere, and go ... on the beach.

ALK: Yeah. There was a bit more of Happisburgh in those days

JG: There was a lot more of Happisburgh in those days.

Everything's changed. Everything's changed hasn't it.

ALK: In what way do you think things have changed?

JG: They've got worse.

Yeah Well, everybody. When I lived at Brumstead everybody spoke to you. Even the farmer's wife would stop and chat with you, the farmer would, and I'd go down and play with the farm children sometimes and everybody was equal then. But now somebody got their nose stuck up in the air 'cos they've got a penny more than the next one and that makes me so angry.

ALK: Yeah, yeah.

JG: I can't. I dunno, I don't like anything like that.

ALK: No, No.

JG: We're all born equal, we all die equal. We all come into the world with nothing on, we all go out of the world with nothing on, don't we?

ALK: Do you remember when you started to become aware of politics?

JG: I aren't interested in politics. Never was

ALK: You must have been interested in the war?

JG: No

ALK: Not at all?

JG: No. I was just a child weren't I?

ALK: How old were you?

JG: I was 11

ALK: You were 11. And did anybody say anything to you about it? It must have changed your life a bit? Maybe it didn't.

JG: Well, it saved my life 'cos several bombs were dropped in Brumstead during the war.

ALK: Yes

JG: And, of course, my mum was terrified of her own shadow.

ALK: Yes

**JG: Soon as they dropped. If she heard a bomb come down she'd shout
Will you get up**

[VISITOR ENTERS THE HOUSE - RECORDING STOPPED]

ALK: I'm on. But I wish I hadn't stopped it actually. I love the way you say My woman [LAUGHS]

JG: Anyway, as I say. What was I saying?

ALK: You were saying that...

JG: When they dropped the bombs in the war.

ALK: Yes, yes, the bombs

JG: Brumstead was only a tiny place then and about 24 bombs in Brumstead during the war.

They used to drop them on their way home.

They used to get rid of their loads. The spitfires used to come up from Coltishall.

ALK: Yes

JG: And as soon as they started coming up.

ALK: Yes

JG: If there was a bomber anywhere they'd turn around and go back and, of course, they'd drop their load so they could go quicker.

ALK: So. What did you think about that?

JG: Not much. My mum used to shout upstairs They're dropping bombs, will you get up? I said No. I aren't going to get up. I'd rather go on sleeping.

ALK: Really?

JG: It didn't bother me one little bit.

ALK: And then at the end of the war, the National Health Service came in. Do you remember that at all, you'd have been about 12, 11-12?

JG: The end of the war. No. I was 17 then.

ALK: 17 at the end of the war. Aah

JG: No, 16.

ALK: 16. Well, you would remember.

JG: 16-17, yeah.

ALK: Do you remember what was said about it?

JG: I remember saying it was a good thing.

ALK: Yeah.

JG: It was a very good thing when it was brought in. Mr Bevan brought it in. I can't remember now. I think he did.

ALK: No, no. I'm interested in what you thought.

JG: Everybody said what a good thing it was. People couldn't afford to go to the doctors, my parents couldn't afford to go to the doctors.

When I was a little girl we never had no ... you paid for all the medicines you had.

ALK: Did you. Yeah.

JG: My father, he worked on a farm and he used to have 30 shillings a week, old money. There was him, mum, Joy, myself, my sister – young sister.

His parents lived with him because you had to look after old people then – you looked after your own old people, didn't you? They lived with him, they had 10 shillings a week old age pension.

ALK: Yes.

JG: Which they used to give him so he had precisely £2 a week. Now things were cheaper then but he had £2 a week to keep himself, his wife, 3 kids and his mother and father. So, we couldn't afford to go to the doctor. My father couldn't afford to go to the doctor. We couldn't afford to go to the doctors.

My father never went to the doctor. A horse jumped on his foot once and broke his foot. He never even went to the doctors. It set itself and was all deformed, you couldn't afford to go to the doctors.

I know when we were kids my mother used to pay so much a week into what they called, oh I don't know, some club and, if you wanted a bottle, kids could have the doctor for nothing 'cos the club paid for it. But she did.

I can remember as a little girl going to the doctor's, 'cos she didn't take me. I went on my own, on my bike, on my little bike.

I was only about 9 year old. I used to go to Stalham, to the doctors and she used to say to me you count how many people are in that surgery and when they are all gone you can go – don't wait for the people coming in behind – and then you can go. So I used to count before I went in and after they went I'd go in to the doctor and say can I have a bottle of medicine for my cold please? And he'd say yes.

ALK: He didn't say Where's your mum?

JG: No. They didn't want to know where your mum was in them days.

ALK: What was the waiting room like?

JG: Well it had benches all round the sides and was dark green.

ALK: Yes.

JG: Like they all were, with brown doors.

I got my bottle of medicine and put it in my bag and my mother used to say Don't knock it on your bike coming home or you'll break it and you can't have another one . So I had to be careful how I biked home with it.

ALK: What did it taste like?

JG: Lovely, that was lovely. It was absolutely lovely

ALK: You think it did you any good?

JG: I dunno, I suppose it did. I suppose... I had pneumonia as a child

ALK: Did you, Do you remember that?

JG: Yeah, I had whooping cough. I remember having whooping cough.

ALK: Yeah, I do too.

JG: God, that was horrible.

ALK: What was it like for you?

JG: I coughed and coughed, I whooped and whooped and my nose used to flow with blood. It was terrible it was.

ALK: Were you sick at the end of the whooping, throwing up?

JG: Yeah

ALK: No vaccination in those days?

JG: No, no vaccination, nothing like that.

ALK: How ill, were you ill for a long time with whooping cough?

JG: Yes, quite a while

ALK: Did the others get it? Did your sister get it?

JG: No. No I don't think... She wasn't very ill. She never got a cold. She never was ill with a cold but I was one of those people.

ALK: It was you. You were the sickly one?

JG: If I got a cold it went straight onto my chest 'cos I'd had pneumonia and that sort of thing, as a little girl.

ALK: How old were you when you first got pneumonia?

JG: I don't remember

ALK: Were you a baby?

JG: No. I was older than. I don't think I was at school.

ALK: It was, like, spoken about in the family that you had it, been ill? Did you have anything else wrong?

JG: I had measles, chickenpox,

ALK: Everything...

JG: Everything bar mumps.

ALK: You didn't get mumps?

JG: No, and my children had mumps and I didn't even get it then so I must be immune to mumps.

ALK: And were you ill, do you remember, with measles? Do you remember being unwell?

JG: No, I weren't too bad. My sister was ill, she had people climbing up the wall and all that sort of rubbish. You had to be in a dark room, mind.

ALK: That's right. That's right.

JG: Yes I remember it .

ALK: And chickenpox?

JG: Yes, I had chickenpox. I can't remember too much about it. I kept I remember my mother saying don't scratch, you'll have scabs.

Don't scratch your face whatever you do, don't scratch, she used to keep saying. It itched, you weren't allowed to scratch.

ALK: And, em, when you went to school did everyone get ill at the same time or Did they suddenly empty the classroom out?

JG: No. I don't think so. You went to school whatever happened, didn't you? Your mother was glad to get rid of you, wasn't she?

ALK: Were people afraid of being ill, apart from the expense?

JG: No, I don't think so. The older people might have been but children weren't.

ALK: They weren't

JG: They don't care.

ALK: You didn't have any of your school mates die of anything?

JG: No. No. I don't ever remember any of my school mates dying of anything.

ALK: So, when you were ill...

JG: We were hard in those days. We weren't like kids today, were we? I was only a little girl when my mother took, when my sister started school she was only a year older than me, my mother took her on the back of her bike to Stalham school.

ALK: Yes

JG: Two and a half mile.

ALK: Yeah

JG: Right, well, the year after I had to go to school. She couldn't take two of us, didn't take two of us on the bike.

ALK: Yeah, yeah

JG: So, she used to get my sister ready, she'd start walking. She'd put me on the bike, she'd catch up with my sister and then she would walk with her the rest of the way to school.

ALK: Yes

JG: When I was 6 year old I had to walk.

ALK: Yes

JG: We both had to walk then.

ALK: Yes. A long way.

JG: And we walked two and a half mile every morning to school.

ALK: Yes

JG: With our dinner bags on our backs or in our hand, wherever we carried em. And we had to be... so we had lunch at school and we walked home at 4 o'clock. Quarter to four we used to come out. We used to walk, have to walk home. Two and a half mile home.

ALK: Yeah. And that would be dark in the winter.?

JG: It would be dark by the time you got home. So I was never afraid of the dark. The only thing I was afraid of in the dark was if something rustled.

I couldn't bear rats. Rats and frogs and things, I couldn't bear 'em. To this day I'm terrified of a rat.

ALK: Yeah, yeah.

JG: And a frog. I don't even like a frog. I just stand and look at it now but I aren't afraid of it now. But as a child I was absolutely terrified of a frog. If it jumped, I ran. [BOTH LAUGH]

But the dark, I was never afraid of anybody in the dark, 'cos no more in the dark than in daylight, is it?

ALK: So, all the exercise you had. Do you think that made you fitter, or more likely to get ill?

JG: Well, I don't ever really remember really being ill except for when I had measles and mumps and that.

ALK: Measles, mumps.

JG: And I used to have a cold. I used to get coughs a lot, which I still do.

ALK: Did you go to the doctor again, after the National Health Service came in and when it was new?

JG: Yeah.

ALK: How was it different from what you described to me when you... ?

JG: It wasn't any different.

ALK: It was exactly the same

JG: The same surgery and everything.

ALK: The same green thing. Still queueing.

JG: The same green thing ----- (?)

ALK: No appointments?

JG: They didn't call you or anything. You went in, you sat down and when the other person came out they left the door open and you just got up and walked in.

ALK: Yeah. And what was the consulting room like?

JG: What, where the doctor was?

ALK: Yes

JG: Well, it was just an ordinary room.

ALK: Yeah

JG: It had got a screen across. He used to go behind his screen and mix up his potion for you.

ALK: Yeah

JG: And then you took your bottle of medicine and out you went.

ALK: So, that didn't change when you were 16-17?

JG: No. No. That was still the same because when I had the wasp sting my tongue I had to go down the doctors and it was still the same then. I didn't go down the doctors much but.

ALK: So. There wasn't any big change when the National Health Service came in, even though people said....

JG: No, the war was on then.

ALK: It was the end, the end of the war.

JG: Well the end of the war, but the war was only just over and I think there were rations and everything.

ALK: There were. Yeah. Absolutely, absolutely

JG: Well you were rationed all the way through, during the war, weren't you?

ALK: But you could go to the doctor more often, because it was not rationed, the doctor.

JG: Well, you could go to the doctor whenever you were ill. You only had one doctor and he done. Poor man, he was on the go all the time.

ALK: Was he?

JG: Hmm.

ALK: Was he? What happened to him?

JG: My favourite doctor was the one, he went... he went in the army during the war. He was ever so good.

When my sister, younger sister, had pleurisy.

ALK: Yes

JG: My mother left her in the pram one morning and went up the garden to hang the washing or to go to the loo or something. I don't know, she went up the garden.

When she came back he was sitting there nursing the baby and he'd got his trousers on over his pyjamas. He hadn't even, just washed himself and came up there because she was so ill. He was there late at night.

ALK: Yes

JG: And he just walked in, when she came indoors. Seven o' clock I'd gone... before 7 o' clock in the morning, he sat there nursing the baby and they were so good in those days. But now, you go they don't treat you as a person, do they?

ALK: How do you think it's changed?

JG: I think it's horrible. I won't go to the doctor if I can get away with it.

ALK: What, what's changed for the worse?

JG: Folk don't feel they're being treated like a human being do they?

ALK: Why do you think that is?

JG: Well, I suppose they got so many in there, they treat you as a number. You go into the doctor and he says What can I do for you. Sit down, what can I do for you. I shouldn't be telling him what he can do for me, he should be telling me what he can do for me. And then he just sits in his chair.

ALK: Hmm

JG: And if you tell him what's wrong they just wheel up towards you and put a thing on your arm to take your blood pressure and they still don't get out of the chair, they wheel themselves back and don't get off their backside. One of these times I shall tell them that. You're not treated as a human being, you're treated as a number aren't you?

ALK: It's interesting isn't it? Because there was only one doctor before with a bottle of medicine.

JG: Ah. That's right, and you were treated as a human being.

ALK: And now there are 10 doctors with all that treatment behind them.

JG: Yes. And they've got everybody to wait on them, somebody to get the medicines all up for them. In them days there was one doctor, he did all the medicines.

He was out all hours of the night. Accidents, he had to go. Accidents, he was an accident, police accident doctor, he had to go out on that.

ALK: Yeah

JG: Whatever time of the day or night you called him – Saturday, Sunday, Monday, holidays – he was always there.

ALK: Yes

JG: But now Friday night they go home and that's Bye. I think that's, um, the doctors I go to, about 5 or 6 doctors work in that one surgery but nobody can be on at the weekend. Six of them, if they had one on call how long would they be on duty?

I think it's absolutely ridiculous. I think the doctors are just taking advantage of the National Health.

ALK: Yeah

JG: That's my opinion.

ALK: Yeah

JG: They draw a hell of a wage.

ALK: Yeah

JG: Treat people as numbers, you're not treated as a human being.

I'll go to the dentist tomorrow, I go to the dentist any day. You go to the dentist and he treats you as a human being.

ALK: You think the dentist got it better, got it right?

JG: I think the dentist got it right.

ALK: Yeah

JG: You go in there, you're treated as a human being. They're kind.

ALK: Yeah

JG: They know they're going to hurt you. You know they're going to hurt you.

ALK: Yeah

JG: But they're kind and I'll go to the dentist any day before I go to the doctor.

ALK: Yeah. Yeah. But what about when you had your eyes done – how did they treat you?

JG: I went up to the hospital and you couldn't have got anyone better. I went to Cromer hospital. Those girls...

ALK: So. That's the National Health Service

JG: You couldn't ask for anyone better than those girls, and the doctor was brilliant.

ALK: Really

JG: He told you everything he was going to do before he did it.

ALK: Yeah

JG: 'Cos I know they don't do --- they just do it with a laser thing, don't they?

ALK: Yes, yes

JG: They numb your eye and do it now. But he was absolutely brilliant, the man was. He talked, talked his way through it as a human being.

Those girls treated us as a human being and I couldn't fault find them one little bit.

ALK: So you see that as quite a different part of the National Health Service?

JG: Quite a different part of the National Health altogether. The same as they keep moaning about these ambulance, it's not the ambulances' fault. I got no patience, I lose all patience with the world, I do.
[LAUGHS]

ALK: So, if you could wave...

JG: I sit here sometimes. They said there were 17 ambulances queued up outside the Norfolk & Norwich hospital.

ALK: Yes

JG: And there's people crying out for them, there was 17 there with people in, couldn't get them into hospital.

ALK: Yeah

JG: Which was Friday night or Saturday because the drunks were going in there with a cut eye or got a bit of glass in their hand – all running into A & E so they couldn't get those people off the ambulances 'cos it was full of drunks. They should put those drunks in the garden, special place for drunks.

ALK: Yeah, yeah

JG: Well, it's all wrong, isn't it? Why should you go in there very ill....

ALK: Yeah

JG: And then someone rolling about drunk being sick all over the place – that ain't on.

ALK: So, if you could wave your magic wand what would you have the National Health Service be like now?

JG: Well, I can't fault find the National Health ----- hospital. I haven't been into hospital to stay, don't get me wrong, I've only been day trips. But my sister has been in and she said she loved it.

ALK: Yeah

JG: Like being on holiday, someone to bring you food, somebody to wash you, somebody to do everything for you.

ALK: Fantastic.

JG: She. Some of the men come in there, the men come and wash you. He said Do you want a wash? She said "Yeah, I want a wash". Help you wash.

ALK: Really good

JG: Well that's what she ... I mean I've never been in to stay, touch wood. Don't want to go.

ALK: No

JG: I should hate to be institutionalised.

ALK: **Well, Jack hated it**

JG: I should hate it.

ALK: Yeah

JG: I shouldn't want to go in some Old Peoples Home - don't get me wrong, they treated my father well in there and he didn't, he enjoyed it. But I wouldn't want to go because I'm so pig headed and I'm going to do as I want to do, and nobody's going to stop me. I always did that as a child.

ALK: Yes. Yes.

JG: As a child I was very wooden headed and wanted to do as I wanted to do, not as I was told all the time. 'Till I got a smack and I had to do as I was told.

ALK: And when did you get married. How old were you when you got married?

JG: Now that's a sorry point. I don't remember.

ALK: **Not sure. Cos we've got you at sort of 16-17. What did you do for your first job?**

JG: I went to work in the house

ALK: Locally, in Brumstead?

JG: No. No, at Ridlington. I went to work in the house. My sister and I both went. She left school before me and we both went to work in this house.

She went as a parlour maid and I went as the cook. I'd never boiled an egg in my flaming life. I was 14 year old when I left school and I went there as cook and the cooking I had was what I'd done at school.

ALK: And was there a cook to teach you?

JG: No

ALK: You were it?

JG: I was it.

ALK: Blimey

JG: I was...er... I was 14 in the January and I went there at Easter time . Christmas time I cooked my first Christmas dinner. I cooked turkey.

ALK: At home to try it out, or there?

JG: No there. I didn't come home after I got there. I had to live in. I had to cook turkey and all the trimmings.

ALK: How did you do it?

JG: I had to, had to make the bread sauce and it had to be made from the start.

ALK: How did you do it?

JG: Onion with the cloves in floating in the milk, and breadcrumbs. It was all done from the start. I was 14 year old.

I was 15 in the January when I cooked my first Christmas dinner and that's what makes me so impatient with children today 'cos they don't know they are alive.

ALK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JG: All they want is money.

ALK: Who did the house belong to?

JG: Well, he was a farmer.

ALK: A farmer

JG: Yeah, but he was one of these rich farmers.

ALK: But did his wife know she was taking on someone who had never cooked an egg?

JG: Yes

ALK: She didn't mind?

JG: No. She would come and tell me what to do, or show me what to do.

ALK: And she showed you? She liked to have you?

JG: She was quite helpful. Don't get me wrong, she didn't do the work.

ALK: No, no. I hear you.

JG: She wouldn't soil her hands, one of those people who didn't soil her hands. [LAUGHS]

ALK: Oh dear! Oh dear!

JG: That was a house with a flat roof.

ALK: Yes

JG: And that was during the war.

ALK: Yes

JG: Well, of course the soldiers that were stationed at Walcott, they used to come there and go up on the flat roof, observing.

ALK: Yes

JG: And all of a sudden in the middle of the night you used to hear thump, thump, thump – soldiers coming on the flat roof.

ALK: Because you were sleeping up at the top?

JG: No. I was sleeping at the same level as them but that was a different..... further away from them.

ALK: OK

JG: The stairs went up between my bedroom and my sister's bedroom. I didn't go near their bedroom.

ALK: Good. I'm glad to hear it

JG: And the soldiers used to go up there in the nights and .., you know

ALK: Look out

JG: Observer Corps used to have it and all – on this flat roof in the night, during the war.

ALK: Yes

JG: But I didn't stop there long. I stopped there about 6 months.

ALK: Then what did you do?

JG: I went to work in a bakery. In Stalham. There was hardly any men so of course we had to do a man, there was me and an old , the owner – he was 74 and I was 16.

When I went there and there was only him and I left in the bakery because what men we had left , the older men, were out doing the bread round, taking the bread round to people, weren't they, so there was only he and I left there. So when we were left we had to put flour into these little, silly little bags you know you get the bag of self raising, the bag of plain – 3 lb. bags they were then. We used to have to do that and get it ready so, for when they wanted to take some out.

Of course there were 20 stone bags that were in – 10 stone bags of flour, sorry, 10 stone – they were all 10 stone.

Well of course when the old gentleman used to carry them through he was carrying them one day and he fell down with it so I had to get the sack off him.

I was only 16 and I was trying to get the sack off him, got him up and after I wouldn't let him carry them. So I used to carry them, I used to get

them in 'cos they used to stack them 3 high, one, then the middle one, the top one. I used to say to the men "Take the top ones, don't take the middle ones 'cos I could get the middle ones." They were too high for me to get. So I used to go in there, in the storeroom.

ALK: Yes

JG: And get this 10 stone of flour.

ALK: Yeah

JG: From the middle one. So it was just my height.

ALK: Yeah

JG: And then I could get that on my back.

ALK: Yeah

JG: Carry it through in the bakery.

ALK: Yeah

JG: When you got there you had to undo the top and shoot it into the big bins.

ALK: Yeah

JG: And make it up. Mix it up into self-raising flour. Fill it all in bags and that sort of thing.

ALK: Hard work, hard work.

JG: You weren't allowed to have too much machinery during the war because they wanted it

ALK: Electricity

JG: In the factories and things.

So, to make bread, you made it all by hand in the big troughs. I used to help to make that. That wasn't easy work, that was hard work. You lift up a great armful of dough and see how much that weigh. That weren't two pound and, er, we used to mix up all that.

Well, then when I finished that I'd go out on the round with the men sometimes to help them. All depends what I was doing. 'cos there wasn't too much in the bakery to do 'cos you couldn't make a lot of cake 'cos you couldn't get the flour.

And you didn't get the flour and the fat and that was all rationed and, even to bakeries. Flour until later on, flour was rationed and all, but I used to get wrong every time I went to the Food Office.

ALK: Did you not get food because you were out in the countryside, farming. Eggs, bacon and stuff?

JG: Well, yeah. You kept chickens in your own house, in your own house. You know in your garden. You had them but you didn't have anything else.

ALK: No. Did you keep a pig?

JG: No. We couldn't afford to keep a pig

ALK: To give you something to eat.

JG: But, no. My father used to do a bit of shooting during the war. He was always a man with a gun.

ALK: Rabbit

JG: We had rabbits and pheasants.

ALK: Yeah. They didn't give you rat?

JG: No, they didn't give me rats. [LAUGHS]

ALK: Rat. With frog sauce.

JG: No, we didn't have rat. No, as I say, that's when I first knew Hickling – when I used to come round there with bread. I was 16-17 year old.

ALK: Yeah

JG: And there were so many people in Hickling that I knew because I used to go there with bread.

ALK: Yeah

JG: I know more people in the churchyard than I do in the village.

ALK: Yeah

JG: Which is absolutely pathetic isn't it really?

ALK: Well

JG: Wrong. Isn't it?

ALK: That's life isn't it?

JG: Well, is it life?

ALK: I dunno. If you started to go round with bread now, you'd know them all again wouldn't you?

JG: Well, yeah. But they aren't the people I did know, are they? Well, no. But they wouldn't be because they're in the graveyard. That's life [LAUGHS]

ALK: That's what I mean by That's Life

JG: People in the village don't mix like they did then.

ALK: Sorry about that

JG: Well, people in the village when your mother first came to Hickling.

ALK: Yeah

JG: I mean, she had a holiday cottage in Hickling. She was above us, we only worked for a living. But she wasn't. She was always bringing herself down to our level.

But there's so many in, I mean when you met Mr Tallowin the farmer, if you were on your bike and he was in the car he'd hold his hand up. If you met Mr Borrett he'd hold his hand up. If you met Mr ----- (?) he'd hold his hand up.

Perrins, if I was waiting for a bus in the, in the, Potter Heigham. I don't mean the Perrin that's there now, old granny Perrin and Meredith, if I was waiting for a bus in Potter Heigham and they came past in the car, 'cos they used to go to Yarmouth, Yarmouth, once a week, the Perrins did.

They had a chauffeur because Meredith couldn't drive, the old lady couldn't drive. They'd stop the car and pick my sister in law and myself up, 2 kids, and take us into Yarmouth and wait and bring us home.

Well now they just drive past you if you're walking. They just drive past you. See life is so different now, isn't it?

ALK: It is, yeah.

JG: Well I'm glad I'm going out of this world rather than coming into it. Shall we have it like that? Because if people have children now I think they're absolutely stupid.

The times I told my daughter not to have children is unbelievable. What you never have you never miss, do you?

ALK: Oh I dunno

JG: So, if you don't have children, how the hell you gonna miss children if you don't know what they're like? If you don't have them, you don't miss 'em, do you?

I mean you don't miss all the naughty things, you don't miss the hard work trying to bring them up to be human beings and decent citizens, don't you?

I mean I hope I brought all mine up all right. I don't know.

ALK: You did

JG: I think I did.

ALK: Yeah

JG: They've never been any trouble to me. [LAUGHS]. Never been any trouble to me. But, as I say, they've always been 4 good kids.

ALK: Yes, yeah

JG: I know when my kids were my life, sort of business. I did, Even now.

ALK: Yeah

JG: And my grandchildren.

ALK: Yeah

JG: They're very good. They always come home and see me and that sort of thing.

ALK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Very nice.

JG: No, all have decent jobs.

ALK: Well my dear

JG: There you are.

ALK: That is 50 minutes, so

JG: Yeah, turn it off.

*This transcription has been made to back up, not replace,
the audio tapes that form the main record output of the VOH Changing Village project 2015 to 2020.
The transcribers used their best efforts and checked back for proper names and places.
We ask for forgiveness for any errors...*