

## Voices of Hickling

### Interview Transcript: Mirrie Lambert



*Interviewed by Ann Louise Kinmonth  
on 19th October 2013*

**ALK:** If you can say your name, your date of birth and where you were born, just to get on the tape.

**ML:** **Well I was born here in the village and my birthday is 13<sup>th</sup> June 1918.**

**ALK:** And your full name is?

**ML:** **Muriel Dorothy Lambert.**

**ALK:** And how do you like to be called?

**ML:** **Mirrie, Mirrie. I've got a nickname called Mirrie.**

**ALK:** Mirrie. Its alright for me to call you ....?

**ML:** **Oh! Yes, yes.**

**ALK:** Well that's brilliant, that's a good start. Can we start with any special memories of you growing up in Hickling

**ML:** **Er, yes, I lived with my grandparents until I went to school and, and I came home when I was four and a half to go to Hickling school and I was at Hickling school until I left at fourteen and a half.**

**We had about 4 classes in the school then, and somebody called Ruth Vincent was one of the great teachers there. We also had a woman from Catfield come down too and I was there and I had quite a lot to do.**

**My father being the verger and the grave digger I spent a lot of time in the church. I got very involved in the church and I spent a lot of time up there. If anyone died in the village I used to have to go and, er, and toll the bell.**

**'Cos my father was the village postman as well as the verger, yeah, and if he was out on his round. 'Cos in those days every time someone died you tolled the bell. You don't do it now.**

**ALK:** No

**ML:** **No. I used to go up there with his stopwatch and Ted tolled the bell. You tolled the bell the number how old the person was and you pulled the bell every minute, how old they were.**

**ALK:** Amazing

**ML:** Yes, but em, and I worked at the church. I was in the church choir for years and I used to spend a lot of time – you see things are so different now.

We had, er, the Reverend Cross and them there, and we used to go to things at Norwich Cathedral, the whole choir would go. We were a robed choir and we used to go there and go to things at Norwich Cathedral, you don't see that now.

And that's what's so sad about the place, I think. I think that's what's sad about it.

**ALK:** When you say sad what do you mean?

**ML:** Well, they don't seem to have anything, they're not interested. I find people are rarely very interested. If you say anything "Oh well" she said, somebody said to me a few weeks ago she said "I suppose you read the book". I don't read the book, what I know comes from my heart, I know it altogether.

**ALK:** Absolutely, so if we go back, what's your first memory, what's your earliest memory that really strikes you?

**ML:** When I was with my grandmother at Potter Heigham I suppose.

**ALK:** Tell me about that.

**ML:** Well she, they never had any fam..... They had one daughter after that but they didn't have anyone else. I think she lived in ..., she was a doctor of science, she's a doctor of science, but creatures, those kind of things. She's not an ordinary doctor and I think she still lives in Northumberland, I don't know, we don't keep in touch now.

**ALK:** Why was she your godmother?

**ML:** My mother's sister.

**ALK:** Aah, and was your mother one of eleven as well?

**ML:** Er, no I don't think so.

**ALK:** Not so many?

**ML:** My father, my father was only, there was only, there was only him and his sister, only two there and, er, they lived at Great Yarmouth and they were, they were, they were all a railway family but we never, we never, ----- a railway family and when we grew up we had to go out on our own living.

**ALK:** Where did you grow up exactly, what was the house?

**ML:** In Hickling

ALK: Yeah, but what was the house?

**ML: The one across here.**

ALK: When you say the one across here which are you meaning?

**ML: Well, where the past, past...**

ALK: Past Kingsley Villas and that?

**ML: Yeah, and just past what used to be the shop.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: The house stands back a little just out near the shop doesn't it?**

ALK: Before the shop or after the shop?

**ML: After the shop.**

ALK: Is it sideways to the road?

**ML: No, no.**

ALK: Not Homeport?

**ML: The one that's sideways to the road.**

ALK: On the other side of the road?

**ML: On the other side of the roadway there.**

ALK: 'Cos there were three shops. I'm a bit muddled. There were several shops weren't there?

**ML: Yes.**

ALK: Do you mean the shop Lorraine lives in now?

**ML: Yeah, that was always a shop.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And the other side of that is a little opening where somebody has their garage.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: Then there was this little row.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And I lived in one of them.**

ALK: Set back a little bit

**ML: Yes.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: A two bedroom place.**

ALK: Two bedrooms for 11 of you?

**ML: Yes, and from there we went up to High Hill, to a council house on High Hill.**

ALK: One of those council houses?

**ML: That's right, yeah, and I lived there for a long time.**

ALK: So tell me about the other 10 coming along. What was that like? You must have looked after the other children"

**ML: I always had a pram.**

ALK: Did you? How old were you when you started having a pram?

**ML: I was always pushing somebody about, rocking somebody.**

ALK: Yeah

**ML: We all had our own little bits to do.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: If you came in you had to lay the table if mother was busy. You had to lay the table, you had to clear it away, you had to help wash it up.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And there was no electric. It was all oil lamps.**

ALK: When did the electric come?

**ML: When the war started, when the war started. When they built Loddon aerodrome.**

ALK: How old were you when the war started?

**ML: Oh, God! I don't know.**

ALK: We could work it out, couldn't we?

**ML: Well you could, yes, 'cos I was called up.**

ALK: You were a young woman.

**ML: Yes, I, I had to register on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.**

ALK: Did you?

**ML: And I was working, I was working in Yarmouth then. 'Cos I went to work in Yarmouth as a house parlour maid.**

ALK: Was that your first job?

When did you leave school? Did you go to Stalham?

**ML: No, I started at Hickling and finished at Hickling.**

ALK: How old were you when you finished?

**ML: 14 and a half.**

ALK: And what happened then?

**ML: I had to go to work.**

ALK: Yes. And you went to Yarmouth?

**ML: Yes, my parents went and got me a job and I had to go.**

ALK: Your parents got you the job?

**ML: Yes, they went off on their bicycles, came back and said "We've got you some work, you'll have to start next week."**

ALK: Did you go to Yarmouth on your bicycle?

**ML: I used to go on, we used to have buses, and also you could walk to Catfield station and get the train.**

ALK: Catfield

**ML: Catfield station and get the train.**

ALK: How did you feel about going off to Yarmouth at 14 ½?

**ML: I took it on the chin.**

ALK: You had to do it.

**ML: Yes**

ALK: What was it like, Yarmouth?

**ML: Yarmouth was a very nice place.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: Very, very, very nice place. Yarmouth hospital was wonderful. I had my tonsils out in Yarmouth hospital when I was about 20 odd.**

ALK: Oh, quite grown up.

**ML: Oh Yeah.**

ALK: Why did you have those out?

**ML: Well, because I was always losing my voice. Er, not having a sore voice, not having a sore throat but I always lost my voice in the summer and they put it down to something and they said the way to stop it, the doctor said, who I knew very well, I see him, he said take**

**them out, so I had to pay but he took them out and I've never suffered with them since.**

ALK: Do you remember it happening?

**ML: Oh yeah.**

ALK: Tell me about having that operation

**ML: Well, you just had a mask put over your face, you went to sleep and when you woke up it was there, it was gone.**

ALK: They put a mask on you?

**ML: They put a little mask on you.**

ALK: And off you went

**ML: Years ago, yes. I think they used gas didn't they, a lot, years ago?**

ALK: Yes. They used gas and air

**ML: Because, um...**

ALK: And who nursed you after the operation?

**ML: Nobody looked after me.**

ALK: You went home again did you?

**ML: Well, I went home.**

ALK: Came back here

**ML: No, I was working in Yarmouth so I went back to where I was working.**

ALK: So you stayed in the house in Yarmouth all the time?

**ML: Um, yes I suppose I did.**

ALK: Yeah, So when you came backwards and forwards, what weekends or visits or...?"

**ML: I used to come back. I used to have to walk from.... I used to get on a bus from Yarmouth to Potter Heigham and walk from Potter Heigham to Hickling.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And then walk back again at night to pick up the bus.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: To pick up the bus.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: Then I got to where the stage that I bought a bicycle**

ALK: Yes

**ML: 'Cos I done some fruit picking and I bought a bicycle**

**Sadly I had to share it with everybody [ALK LAUGHS] so I never knew whether I got a bicycle or not.**

ALK: Did you buy it with your own earnings?"

**ML: Yes, it was £6. I got it from Stalham, a little bicycle shop.**

**A little man from Stalham had a bicycle shop. He only had one, he had a wooden leg and he was a very nice man; very, very nice and I got it from there.**

ALK: How old were you then when you managed to buy your own bicycle?

**ML: I suppose about 15**

ALK: So, one of the first things you did with your pay check was to get yourself a bicycle?

**ML: Yeah.**

ALK: Most people gave their money to their family, to their mothers and fathers. Did you?

**ML: You had to pay your mother and father.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: But my people weren't like that. I know somebody that, when her children, she had a large family, she lived next, nearly next door to my mother.**

**Years ago, I think she's still alive, she works, she lives in an old peoples' home in Yarmouth now, I think.**

**But, um, when they went to work, when they started work, every time they had a meal, a cooked meal they had to pay her a pound in old money.**

ALK: That's a lot.

**ML: In old money.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: That's how they got, how people got their money but that didn't happen in my house, we, er, didn't do that.**

ALK: It sounds as though it was a happy family

**ML: It was a happy family. We were all, well my other sisters weren't, didn't have any connection with the church like I had connection with the**

**church, but then I was in the choir and I did a lot in the church, and, um, er, that was the only way that I thought about, thought about that one day and I thought to myself I dunno at least if I join the church choir I will get out on a Thursday night for choir practice.**

ALK: Yes You didn't have to take a pram to choir practice?

**ML: No, I used to walk up to the church, um, the woman who was here, what is her name? I forget her name now.**

**I know that the organist and the lady in the church choir was Kathy Brooks.**

ALK: Yes. So that was your social life really, the choir and...

**ML: I used to look forward to that very much.**

ALK: What else was there in the village for young people?

**ML: Well, we used to have a, what they call social evenings....**

ALK: Yes

**ML: ... every so often and I was allowed to go to that.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And there used to be everybody, boys and girls all used to mingle, social evening and that kind of thing, but I always had to be in by half past ten.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: Um, and if I wasn't in by half past ten my dad would get very upset.**

ALK: He'd come and get you?

**ML: He'd come along the road to see if I was there. Later, but that was life.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: You took it, you took it in your stride, you didn't bother about it, you didn't bother about it.**

And what did all your brothers and sisters do with their lives?

**Well, I can't tell you. Some of them went into, I had a brother in the air force, I had a brother in the army, I had a brother who was in the last shipload that came back from Dunkirk.**

**Er, they all did their own, own things.**

ALK: Did you lose anybody in the war?

**ML: No. Our cousin I lost in the war, that's about all.**



ALK: But otherwise you came through?

ML: **Otherwise it was alright, yeah.**

ALK: And your memories of the war. What were they like?

ML: **Very, very hard.**

ALK: Yes How would you like to sleep in a wooden hut all night? I wouldn't

ML: **I had to walk to what they called the ablutions.**

**I had to walk, coo, quite a long way to the toilets, lights went out. I was in a wooden hut at Kidlington near Oxford. Funnily enough they've been talking about that this morning, Kidlington in Oxfordshire on the, um, wireless, on the television.**

**We used to walk from the ca..., I was on the camp there, it was a war time camp and I was on the camp there, they were all Poles, Polish people. It was a Polish camp and we had to have, to speak English but, er, you didn't, you didn't.**

**I wanted to go in the medical corps. I wasn't allowed to go in the medical corps, I had to do what they wanted me to do not what I wanted to do and I was, I was living in Yarmouth and then we evacuated, the people in Yarmouth evacuated to just outside Acle at the start of the Second World War and I went with them.**

**It was there where I got called up and I had to not sign on here because I was living down there. I had to register where I was living, it was nothing to do with that here but life was very hard when you come, very hard when you come home here I'll tell you. [LAUGHS]**

**It's funny though because we had military police everywhere, you got to know them and my mother used to say, when I, "the police are here", she used to say, said to one of the girls, "the police are here I bet Mirrie'll be home soon" and they seemed to know because you had identities on, you had to, and you weren't allowed, you weren't allowed to go in civvies. You had to wear uniform all the time and you had to know exactly if you were walking down the street here. [COUGHS]**

**If someone was coming and now is he an officer, 'cos if he's an officer you have to salute him, otherwise he'll pull you up and I have a nasty well, I got wrong for that one.... but I was home once and I had a cousin who lost their baby.**

**He had brain trouble and my father had had a stroke and wasn't able to cope and wasn't able to go to mother's church and mother didn't want to leave him.**

So she asked me if I would go up there. So I said yes, I would have to go in uniform mother. She said well that won't make much difference so I went off to church and there coming out of the church, going down to the old part of the churchyard I saw these two policemen in their uniform standing there.

And I thought what do they want? And I come back the same way as I went in, when I got back to the main gate "Hey. Come here", and I was stopped and asked if I'd got my pass on me and what I was doing walking about the village because they had no recollection of my being home.

Evidently they used to say when you do things "What were you doing down there?", "Would you like to know?", "Yes I would", "Well, I've just been to a funeral, "Well was that important?"

I said "To me it was, yes , it might not have been to you but it was to me". You had to a little bit stand up for your own rights.

ALK: Yes

ML: You had to stand, and to think that when you had, you got in there and you were, I can't remember what you got now, not very much money.

It didn't get you anywhere because if you wanted a weekend pass and it wasn't a weekend when you could get a free pass and you wanted to go somewhere for the weekend and you got 48 hours to get out of the camp you had to find enough money to get from A to B.

But of course, in those days, um, you never had to look for a lift 'cos if you were in uniform I mean I had a lift with the old Queen Mary.

ALK: What was that?

ML: I been up to the north and I was coming back home and I knew I'd got to cross the road to get onto the Norwich road, and so I crossed the road, crossed the field and crossed the road where I was going and I thought "Oh yes" I'm on the Norwich road now and started walking about, and this car came and passed me by and, of course, you always did that kind of thing.

You might get a lift and you might not – it all depends upon... and, oh I thought what I was doing – you had your tin hat and your gas mask on your back and your kit bag with you and so it wasn't all honey – you had to drag it along.

And this car pulled up and came back and a man got out in his peaked cap, and he came back

He said “The lady would like to know where you are going because we’re now going sailing. I’m now going to take the lady sailing off Hickling Broad.”

ALK: Really

**ML: So I said “Well, I am going to Hickling”.**

So he went back and said something to her and he came back and said “The lady said she will give you a lift. What part of Hickling do you want to go?”

I said “I want to go to the middle of the village, the village sign that’s where, near where I live and he went off back, and he came back again and he said “Yes but you must sit in the front with me”.

Well I didn’t expect to sit in the back with her I had to sit in the front with him and he brought me and dropped me down there, but when I got out of the thing she pulled the window back and spoke to me, shook hands with me and said goodbye and hope I had a nice holiday and she was sure she was going to enjoy herself on Hickling, Hickling Broad

After that whenever I came home I often used to see her and she used to wave to me if she was going through the village ’cos she used to sail on the Sandringham, you see.

ALK: Yes

**ML: And of course that was that.**

ALK: Yes. What a story.

**ML: Yes, but I, of all the family I was the only one that went in the forces.**

ALK: Ah! What did the others do then? You mean the only girl?

**ML: Yeah. The girls, the girls, went away, they did all sorts of things but they never left the village.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: But they never left the village.**

ALK: So, when you think of yourself in the family do you think of yourself as the head of the children?

**ML: No.**

ALK: Who was? That’s a boy!

**ML: I, I used to get cross but I never, never, never....**

ALK: Who was the sort of head of the family, apart from your parents, among the children? Did you have that?

**ML: We were all the same, all the same.**

ALK: So it wasn't a special thing from being the eldest daughter? You weren't expected to...?

**ML: There was such a lot I learned as a child.**

**My mother was a sewer. I was taught how to sew and I was taught how to knit and I was taught how to iron.**

ALK: Yes. Where do you think you got most of your education?

**ML: At Hickling school.**

ALK: Yes. not in the forces?"

**ML: No.**

ALK: They didn't educate you?

**ML: Well, you learnt a lot when you...**

ALK: They educated you in life.

**ML: You weren't, weren't allotted digs see.**

**I mean I told somebody who'd got, the lad and he volunteered – he said they won't do this to me they won't do that to me.**

**I said "You wait and see mate" and yet, I saw him about a year later he was, he's still in the forces, and he thought about getting out I think and he said "Your words came true" he said.**

**I was very much surprised. I mean you lived, I lived, some people were in not a wartime camp. I was in a wartime camp.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: So it's all wood and things.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And you weren't allowed to light the fire until a certain time,**

ALK: Yes

**ML: Lights had to be out at a certain time.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And you had to read your orders every day to see what you'd got to do.**

ALK: Yes

**ML:** No matter what trade you are you had to be out at 5 in the summer.

You had to be out at five o'clock in the morning to be on parade while they put the flag up.

ALK: Yes. What did you think of all that?

**ML:** Well, I didn't like it but you had to get used to it, you had to put up with it.

That was life and you had to put up with it.

ALK: And where you when peace broke out?

**ML:** Er. Salisbury Plain.

ALK: What was happening?

**ML:** Nothing. I just got thin and I came out and got on the train, got the bus to London and I got the train and came home.

ALK: No celebrations?

**ML:** No, I don't remember.

ALK: You didn't stay in London for the celebrations?

**ML:** No, no I didn't.

ALK: You just came home?

**ML:** You were just glad to get home.

ALK: I bet

**ML:** And many a time when I used to travel on the, on, come, when I was north I used to come, when I was in London I used to travel on the mail train

ALK: Yes

**ML:** And come into Norwich and sit in the, on Norwich station, bombs falling all round Norwich, and sit on Norwich station, er, amongst all the luggage, mail things and the, er, only see the two who were on duty at the station.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Porters, And I'd stay there until it was daylight when I'd walk along the road and try and get a lift.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Otherwise you waited for a bus.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** And I was, you can't really explain it all to anybody 'cos, as I said to somebody a few months ago and they were talking and he said, I said You've got to be in it, you've got to do it. You can explain it but you've got to do it.

**ALK:** Yes. I know what you mean.

**ML:** Because I was talking to someone once, not so very long ago now, how the time goes, and he was going well.

You didn't know anything about it I said "You weren't here. You only know what you've read and what you've been told."

**ALK:** What was it like when you came back to the village after the war?

**ML:** Same as anything else I suppose.

**ALK:** Did the war change the village for you?

**ML:** No, I don't think so. We got, you see this village suffered, we had a lot of incendiary bombs in this village.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** A lot of incendiary bombs.

They used to come, they used to come in from Germany and they used to, we're very close to the North Sea and they'd come round and they took Hickling church as their target, they used to come round like that and machine gun this and then go back out again.

**ALK:** Horrible.

**ML:** And I've stood, at the beginning of the war I used to stand under, it's crazy, you think about what you done now, it's crazy.

We used to drop down to Yarmouth beach to watch the German planes come in, never thought whether they'd got machine guns but they couldn't very well machine gun us on Yarmouth beach.

They got wise on that one though 'cos when they came in, you see, there's the water on one side and, and, so, of course, they dropped the bombs, they used to go in the water.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** And then they came in and they used to fly along it.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** And I, I was evacuated from there by Acle, just outside Acle and I used to see the men when they were ploughing the fields, er, if you were out for a walk or anywhere and you suddenly heard this you got

under the shelter of a hedge so they didn't see you, 'cos they, 'cos they used to machine gun you.

I've seen the men who were ploughing the field being machine gunned many a time, many a time.

And I was, came from Yarmouth and that was before I went away and we lived at this little house, Beighton White House and it had no electricity or anything – just a little house that we were in there and, er, we used to have to get up we used to have to get up in the night for the bombs and when we got up we used to sit on the stairs.

You couldn't go any further down the cellar because it was full of water, the cellar was. Always had water in it and so you sat on the stairs hoping that you were going to be safe.

And we got up one day and never thought much about it and got on with our work, and the people I was with they, everybody and suddenly this man came along on a bicycle, he'd been and got his cows out of the field and he shouted, shouted at me and they said "Go and see what he wants" and he said "you had a near one last night didn't you?"

So I said "Well we had to get up last night, why?"

"Well, you go over that hedge" he says "you see the crater where the bomb and don't go near it 'cos it's not exploded."

They came down the next day and exploded it.

And then, once when I was there and I'd been home here and I thought it was time to go back mother said to me "You better go back" she said "Because it'll be dark before you get back if you don't hurry up" and, er, going down the dip, what they called the dip, where you came through the back way and onto the Acle main road.

ALK: I know where you mean

ML: Just before the bridge. And, er, that was where there was a great big army camp, that was a great big army camp there but you never felt afraid because nobody was going to do. Like now you'd look twice.

ALK: Yes

ML: Before you got in anywhere, back then you didn't you see you didn't think you were going to be afraid. I, I never felt afraid.

I mean I hated cars passing me with its lights on, but, er, not every car stopped. I was always very wary who I got in the car by but during the war you didn't think that kind of thing because nobody, there was nothing happening, everybody was ok, everybody was for picking up everybody else.

ALK: Looking after each other

**ML: Yes.**

**You see my father being a verger was at the church, so, of course, if I come home and I went to the church and I couldn't stay there for the service 'cos I had to come out to get to Potter Heigham to get the thing .**

**I'd then got to walk by myself to Potter Heigham to pick up the bus.**

ALK: Yes. I do see."

**ML: But, but it was just one thing, just one of those things. None of my family had to do that what I had to do because they were all that much younger.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And things changed, changed every, every year I suppose.**

ALK: Hmm. You said you'd asked to go in the Medical Corps but they gave you something else

**ML: Oh they gave me, gave me, said I had to go and clean officer's buttons.**

ALK: Yeah. Not quite as good as the Medical Corps.

**ML: No, no, I got.....**

ALK: So what happened? Why didn't you become a nurse or a doctor do you think?

**ML: I dunno. I suppose. Well, I dunno, um. I think money had a lot to do with it.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: You didn't get anywhere unless you paid.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: You see, By now my elder brother, he had a career.**

**He's dead now but he did a career in, er, um, in the air force.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And he worked, well, I guess, I think he was quite well, well, up when he gave it up but, er, he did a career and he wanted to go in and he had to get, I can remember that he had to get 10 or 12 signatures from different people in the village who'd known him all his life.**

ALK: That he was a good 'un



**ML:** That he,,,, I went through all this business, interviewing and all that . I know that when he went for his interview, um, he went to interview with quite a lot of other people as well and, and he was the one that had got the most points, marks. He got more than anybody else.

**ALK:** So when you came back how did you get into becoming Nanny Lambert?

**ML:** Oh! That was a long story that was. That was a long story.

I went to work as a nanny for the Traffords for 14 years.

**ALK:** But how did that happen?

**ML:** Well, someone said, um, somebody wanted somebody to look after their children and, er, she said well, the person said well why don't you ask her if she will come and look after your children 'cos when I went as a mother's help I would help doing everything as well as the children.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** And, er, it's all. I sort of worked up from there really.

**ALK:** And you went all over the world

**ML:** I was in Africa for about 6 or 7 years.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** And, um, which, er, I loved every minute of it.

**ALK:** Yes. I bet you did."

**ML:** I loved every minute of it.

But, er, er, they wouldn't, they wouldn't, my family wouldn't do that.

One was a Red Cross nurse, she used to work on Palling beach and the others I don't know what the others did.

Um, they all did, they all, you all, you all had to go, there was no choice – it was either domestic service....

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** .... or nothing.

**ALK:** Pretty straightforward then.

**ML:** Yes. Because they didn't have the, you only worked, you only went on the land or you worked outside when it was fruit picking time.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** They had enough men, and it wasn't until the war came on they got the, brought the, land girls, land girls in to, er, help with the land

**because the, all the men had been called up so they, that's how they got the land girls.**

ALK: Did you do any work on the land?

**ML: No.**

ALK: No. But your sisters did.

**ML: Yeah. Yes my sisters did. Well you worked in the garden at home, you didn't bother about that. I never, well I fruit picked I suppose.**

ALK: Yes. But not the potatoes or the beans

**ML: Er, I have picked up potatoes, yes.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: Well, yes I did because my brother used to have a field up here years ago.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And he used to, we used to go and pick the potatoes up and he used to sell 'em.**

**You see, that was another thing, you grew potatoes on your allotment and, um, if you had a good crop you'd sell 'em.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And people would come and buy, buy the sacks off you, you know.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: You see people would do that kind of thing. Oh yes. But, er, that lot there, we'd go by the church, that's all fields now but they were all peoples' allotments.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: Where people had the allotment.**

ALK: Did you have one of those?

**ML: No. My brothers did.**

ALK: Your brothers.

**ML: And my brother was picking up potatoes for somebody who he knew, um, we lived in the council houses up there then, when Town Street got burnt out.**

ALK: Yes. What was that all about?

**ML:** Oh. That was a big fire. That was terrible, that, that really was dreadful. It was a lean-to, and a lady had been baking, I think.

Some of it was thatch, they were thatched houses up there then, the thatch, something caught the thatch, you know.

She'd been baking and the chimney, a spark flew on to them and luckily, although it burnt to the ground, they had about 8,9 people in these different little houses, nobody got hurt.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** There was a lady there, she went about in this old, she was pushed about the village in these long basket chairs.

She was an invalid and you always stopped to talk to her, 'cos she, she was never lying down, sometimes she was and sometimes she was sitting up. And you used to stop and talk to her.

She was, somebody would bring her out for a walk and they got her out, wheelchair, everything.

**ALK:** That was opposite the Reverend Cross

**ML:** He lived in the bungalow, he lived in the little house then I think.

**ALK:** Yes, did he?"

**ML:** He lived in the little house then.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** I had a ride with him once. I rode in the back of his dicky car, in the car.

And when he died, if I remember rightly, when he died he laid in state at Hickling church for so long.

**ALK:** Really?

**ML:** His full regalia on, if I remember rightly.

We had, um, people who lived up Hill Common called Lord and Lady Desborough.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** And they had a great deal to do with the church and that kind of thing.

And there was a very big service which they, one of them died, in Hickling church and all the schools, all the schools were there.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** The whole of the village school walked to the church.

**ALK:** Fantastic

**ML:** Because it was a Church of England school.

ALK: There was a big congregation in those days?

**ML:** Oh yes.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** You didn't, you didn't go inside the church unless you had a hat on.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** All the years that I cleaned Hickling church up and never took any money for it.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Had to clean it all up.

ALK: It's a big church

**ML:** I was, I got there half past eleven at night to make the fires up.

ALK: You had fires in the church?

**ML:** Oh lovely, two lovely great big stoves, one that side and one that side. They've been gone for years now.

ALK: Amazing, yes

**ML:** That was my, er, thing on a Saturday, to put, because our choirs were all robed.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** And to hang the peoples' robes, not near the fire but over the pews so that they were nice and aired.

ALK: Warmed

**ML:** Warmed. Well, they were warmed. Yes.

ALK: How many people were in the choir? Quite a few?

**ML:** Yes, we had a boys' choir....

ALK: And a girls' choir

**ML:** Girls' choir.

ALK: Very good

**ML:** A ladies' choir and a mens' choir. Oh yes.

ALK: Did you sing soprano or alto? What did you sing?

**ML:** I was singing. I used to, I had, I can't now but I used to sing a lot, I was so proud, I was very proud that I could sing.

**ALK:** Yeah. A marvellous thing to be able to sing."

**ML:** It was, because I went with somebody to, to a, um, well I used to sing quite a lot. I used to sing alone in church, in church too and she said "Sing a bit, will you sing a bit louder" she said, "nobody's, they're all afraid to sing in this church."

I think we went to a funeral, she said "Go on. Sing a bit louder. Perhaps they'll all join, they'll all join in". Which they did do, I think.

**ALK:** I'm sure

**ML:** They did do, I think.

**ALK:** So, you said you had some stories to tell me about the Reverend Cross

**ML:** Um, I'm not going to tell you. No.

**ALK:** That's fine. You don't have to. [BOTH LAUGH]

**ML:** He had a name for himself, he had.

He liked the women. Very friendly with, he always liked the women, always liked the women, but, um,

He used to live at Hickling Hall didn't he?

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** Yes. Years ago. He used to live at Hickling Hall. And they used to cross the road, come out of the gate and cross the road and then go through, walk through the footpaths, the footpaths I suppose are gone now.

But the kissing gate, it was a public footpath and you walked through, practically into the church.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** Into the church. But I, er, things changed such a lot.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** I mean they, they do change such a lot.

**ALK:** And what big changes would you notice in the village?

**ML:** Oh! A lot pf people aren't as friendly as they were. Oh no. You can't talk to many people.

I do talk to somebody but lots of people say "Hello" but you don't have a very good conversation with them because, er, they seem to know

everything. Or, at least they think they know everything but there's a lot they don't know. There's a lot they don't know.

I mean, years ago, when anyone died you knew, when anyone died you didn't know who they were but you knew they died because the bell was tolled.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** The bell was tolled. We were allowed to go up to the top of the church, up the steeple and look over the .... It was wonderful. I remember going up there once when we had the 1953 floods and I'd come back from London somewhere and I went off to the church and, er, you could get up, up to the steeple, and we went up.

It was a wonderful sight but, er,

ALK: What did you see?

**ML:** Nothing but water.

ALK: Really

**ML:** Just the roofs of peoples' houses, everything was water.

ALK: Everywhere

**ML:** Everywhere was water.

ALK: Really. So when you came down again did you get your feet wet?

**ML:** No

ALK: So the water didn't come up to the church?

**ML:** No. Not to the top of the church. No.

ALK: No, but when you went back down again.

**ML:** No. Well it was wet if you, if you.

Another thing we used to do, I and my friend used to do was, er, we would have, we used to have a bucket and a mop and after we swept and dusted and done all the pews at the end of the day we used to wash all the aisles with a mop, and a bucket and cold water.

ALK: Fantastic

**ML:** And leave them to dry.

ALK: Yes Very clean

**ML:** I once, I once told somebody off.

We'd been up there all day anyhow, and it was getting on, quite late now, well after lunch and we got our bicycles out, my friend and I and we were going .

And as we were going out near the gate we met this man with a camera on his back, on his shoulder and he, he spoke to me and I said "it's no good asking me. I'm not the boss. You'd better ask that lady there.". So I called her, I said " Joyce, come and talk to this man, he wants to know about the church". She said "I've nothing to tell him".

So he came to speak to her "Oh yes" she said "It's quite alright, we've just finished cleaning up" she said "It's not locked". 'Cos we don't lock it, it is locked now quite a lot I think. She said, yes, she said.

He said "I want to take some photos"

She said "That's alright, there's nobody about. You can take some photos".

He said "If I go up in the pulpit?"

"Oh yes". She had a conversation with him and as we were coming along she said "You're rather quiet" and I said "Joyce, you shouldn't have talked to that man and told him what he can do".

She said "There's nothing wrong with that".

I said "I don't trust him".

She said "Why?" I said "I don't trust him" I said "I bet he hasn't got a camera in that thing".

She said "Don't be so silly". Because we parted, we parted company up there and I came back.

And about three weeks later there was a piece in the paper and I was reading the paper and I saw that man what we talked to at the church, and he's stealing things.

I put on my coat and went up to my friend's house and I said "Have you seen the paper, Joyce?"

And she said" No, her husband hadn't brought it in. I said "Well look.

This is that man that we saw. I think they got him somewhere in Norfolk, stealing money out of the church boxes."

"Gosh" she said.

ALK: So you were a good judge of character.

ML: Yeah

ALK: Yes

**ML:** I said, I said, because I like the, you see, we were all christened up there.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** And in those days people never went out unless they'd been to Mothering Sunday first, to thank the Lord.

I used to, once or twice I've come out of the choir and my mother, my father was at the church and my mother has come up, 'cos she never would go outside the gate unless she had went to church first, after her baby.

She never, it was Mothering Sunday, she went and thanked the Lord, and I used to, once or twice I stood in the porch and people were coming out of the church and my mother used to go in and go up, 'cos the vicar used to go straight back up to near the altar.

**ALK:** Yes Then mum and dad would be up there and I very proudly used to hold my brother or sister.

**ML:** In the ----- (?) used to look at it, everyone used to look at it. That was a great heyday for me.

**ALK:** Wonderful

**ML:** Really, really and truly.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** But, of course, dad, dad died when he was only 40, he died very early.

**ALK:** I'm sorry

**ML:** He had heart trouble.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** He had. He died early, very early.

And you see, there again in those days you weren't taken to the morgue, you were left in your house.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** You went into an undertaker, put in the coffin, the coffin came back, and you stayed in the house till, till the funeral and they came.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** And you walked up the bier, the old bier that's up there, you walked up there, right through the village and everybody, everybody, you went past and everybody had their curtains shaded because there was a funeral on.



ALK: Yes

**ML:** And the bell would be tolled so you knew.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** They met you at the gate and that was that.

And you used to go into Hickling church a lot, in the east door where they go in now, little door, and they used to come out of that, those great big doors at the back.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Which they opened up in the summer and the sun shines down through those doors, nearly to the altar.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** It's a wonderful sight.

And we've got, in Hickling church, I suppose it's still there, we've got these wonderful altar frontals.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** And I know at one point they wanted to get, the vicar wanted to take them to Ludham and I said he wasn't to take them to Ludham, 'cos they belonged to Hickling church. [ALK LAUGHS]

It's one of these things. I mean we had when you think about it, what a lovely memorial we've got in Hickling church.

ALK: Beautiful church

**ML:** Now somebody was saying that should be in the middle of the village. We don't want it moved.

ALK: No

**ML:** And then there's that lovely, the other one was ----- (?) that we had here, that's another great thing.

ALK: It is

**ML:** I mean, er, you know, you don't. And when there, there, where that door is, I think it's still there, that door. I haven't seen it open but there's a great big black, black slab there.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Where, where used to be outside, it was brought in, and, er, I have seen that open, but not very often. That never was opened, not very often. But you see at one time if you went in the east door you came out the west door.

ALK: Yes

**ML: You never came out the same door that you went in.**

ALK: That's very interesting.

**ML: Because they didn't used to like, like they did used to like to turn it around or something.**

ALK: Now I'd like to turn our attention a bit to health.

You told me a very interesting thing about your tonsils and you told me your dad dying with heart failure, but I'm quite interested in how people got their healthcare before the National Health Service.

And I think that when you had your tonsils done it was before the National Health Service"

**ML: You paid for it more.**

ALK: So, how did it all work?

**ML: You had to save it up.**

ALK: And were you a healthy child? Were you a sickly child? Did you have to go, you said you knew the doctor well, why did you know the doctor well?"

**ML: I, well, you got to know people didn't you?**

ALK: Socially rather than because you were going to see them because you were ill?

**ML: Oh! Mind you, people, people take a lot of interest in you sometimes.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: But, er, I dunno, I can't remember.**

ALK: Can't really remember. So, when the National Health Service came in did it make any difference to you at all?"

**ML: I dunno, I can't think about it.**

ALK: No, its fine. You don't have to. I just wondered if you, if you did because I know you had your tonsils out.

**ML: I think my mother. I know when I was a kid mum, people, my mother never had a doctor unless she was forced to, she had to pay the doctor.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: You had to pay the doctor.**

ALK: Did she take you to the doctor when you were little? Do you ever remember going to the doctor?

**ML: No, I. Well, I remember having, the whole village having measles.**

ALK: Did you have them?

**ML: Yes. My brother brought them, my brother brought them, back from Norwich.**

ALK: Oh dear

**ML: He was a..... Well I was in Norwich, I could have brought it back.**

**That was the day when we had, er, something on at the cathedral and we didn't know we'd got it but they did discover afterwards that I was more of a carrier than getting it myself, um, but it went through the village here.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: But it never shut the school, they never shut the school.**

ALK: Really

**ML: No. They never shut the school.**

ALK: So, if you think about. Have you got a doctor that looks after you at all now? These days.

**ML: Well, you don't have to pay, do you?**

ALK: Well, that's true, but you can't compare it at all, the kind of care you get now. Have you had to use the health service at all?

**ML: Oh! I don't very often visit a doctor.**

ALK: I don't think you do

**ML: No, but I did have a time when I had to visit the doctor a lot.**

ALK: And was it satisfactory or could you have made it better?

**ML: No, it was alright.**

ALK: You haven't had to use the hospital service at all?

**ML: Well, yeah. I've been in hospital, yes.**

ALK: Was it alright?

**ML: Yes.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: I've been in the James Paget.**

ALK: Yes

**ML:** And, there again to me it's, the last time I was there I had to go on a mixed ward.

**Its not necessary to have a mixed ward I don't think.**

ALK: So you'd make a change there?

**ML:** Well, I, I would, er, I think, um, people don't want to have a man each side of them.

ALK: No. I can see that

**ML:** When they come, they come, I dunno, I mean, I don't think anything about it. I, if I have to go in, I have to go in..

ALK: And do you have any support here, in the rest home, at all? Do you have anybody coming in or are you completely independent?"

**ML:** Independent.

ALK: Independent. No meals coming in or anything like that?

**ML:** They come quick enough for the money, for the rent.

ALK: For the rent. Oh! You rent this do you?

**ML:** It's rent. It's rented. You pay rent for it. They are, they're better than they were

ALK: Yes

**ML:** But, er, there's a lot. I had a friend of mine and he kicked up a fuss about the plug.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Harry, he kicked, he kicked up a fuss about the plug and he, he got on to them, um, and the next thing I knew they come and repaired the plug. They're, they're, they're very – you see there was, I paid for a lot, all these plugs. Because I wanted, you see, I wanted. So I paid for quite a lot actually.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Different, different ....

ALK: Upgrading it

**ML:** Yeah for me. Yes for me.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Like the other week.

**You see, that's a bedroom, that's a bed sitter and it's classed as a bed sitter. Well, I had someone from up the top there, I don't know what she**

come to the door for, so I asked her in and she said “Where’s your bed?”

I said “Through there.”

She said “you can’t have your bed there. This is a bed sitter. You’ve got to have your bed here”.

“My dear” I said “You don’t tell me where my bed can go, I’ve got a sitting room and a bedroom.”

“Oh” she said.

“Yes” I said and I had that, I had that, um, curtain rail put up, and that curtain rail put up, ’cos they were already ----- (?)..

And I only said to my sister a few weeks ago “You know when I die and I have to go out of here, don’t leave the curtain rails here. Whatever you do, take the curtain rails out.”

ALK: You’ve fitted it very nicely haven’t you?

**ML: Yeah.**

ALK: Are you comfortable here?

**ML: That, that, that.**

ALK: That made it comfortable

**ML: But I mean, er, I’ve got a washing machine.**

ALK: I can see you have

**ML: Yes, well, Mrs Yardley-Barlow, do you know her?**

ALK: I know her house, Mrs Yardley’s house. It’s on Hill Common, yeah?”

**ML: Yeah.**

ALK: What’s that all about?

**ML: She was a tartar. She was a tartar.**

**Because I had the washing machine put in, and she came round here one day, she used to come, come for the rent, and, um, er, she said, er, “What have you done to that? Where’s that cupboard gone, Miss Lambert?” and I said “Well, I’ve taken it away.”**

**“You know”, she didn’t actually say when you die, she see me dead and gone. She said “You know when you leave this house you’ve got to put that back”.**

ALK: When you leave the house

**ML:** When you leave the house you've got to put it back." she said. [ALK LAUGHS] You've got, you've got to put it, you've got to put it back. And she said, she said, because that's part of the, oh yeah.

**ALK:** Well, you've outlived her.

**ML:** Well, I know. But there is one thing, when I came in here, was you couldn't get only a little, tiny fridge.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** But if I was living in here now I'd have a fridge there, where my fridge is I have a fridge/freezer, 'cos you get them all different sizes.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** But years ago you had to have, what, what, er.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** You see, I had a session about my heaters, they wanted to put my heaters underneath there.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** And I had, Eastern Electricity put them in and, um, "I'm not having them there" I said

I said "When you draw the curtain at night all the heat will be out that way and we'll be here."

So I had one heater put each end.

**ALK:** Very good

**ML:** You see I had one, I had one heater.

There's a lot, there's a lot of things that I've done.

**ALK:** Yes. Independent.

**ML:** Yes. Well, I always ask about it, if I can do it.

**ALK:** You always tell them you mean.

**ML:** Mrs Johnson is our head one.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** And Brenda Gibbons is the one who comes and gets the rent and any complaints, what you want to do.

**ALK:** Yes

**ML:** I mean, it shows how stupid they all are. We had all new windows put in, quite a long time ago now.

ALK: Yes

**ML: And, of course, they never came and looked at each window. So, when they got to mine the window didn't fit.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: Because it was as if, they had to put some stuff down each side to get the windows to fit in.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: To get the windows to fit. I mean they were different windows then to what you can get now, and I know when they put these windows in I said "There's not much good you putting them in.**

**What happens if we're in here and there's a fire?**

**You can't get through the door" I said "We've only got one door, you know."**

ALK: Now my dear I think we've been talking for ..... exactly an hour, which is what we said. And I don't want to exhaust you, but I do just want to give you a chance to just think for a minute about anything else that when you thought I was coming you thought you'd tell me. If there were any other particular stories, high points of life in Hickling or things that you remember. I don't know , you know, sometimes things about the terrible winters, those awful winters.

**ML: Oh crikey! Yes. I done the time when you go just past the school to High Hill.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And I've seen it, I've seen the, the snow there above peoples' houses there.**

ALK: I've heard that.

**ML: And we walked on the top.**

ALK: Amazing, up near the rooftops?

**ML: Yes.**

ALK: When was that?

**ML: I can't remember when it was. But I lived across here then.**

ALK: Yes. So quite a long time ago?"

**ML: It's quite a long time ago. I, I, I don't think I lived in here then. I think I lived, lived, lived across there then.**

ALK: Did you, did you do skating on Hickling Broad? Were you one of those?

**ML:** Yeah. I'll tell you what I have done. I have, I worked for the Traffords for years and I used to push the baby in the pram across Wroxham Broad, across Wroxham Broad to the bridge.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Shop at the bridge.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** In Wroxham and then walk back here with the pram.

ALK: A real short cut!

**ML:** Yes, rather than come, rather than come down the icy roads where it was piled up, you couldn't push the pram, I used to push the pram the other way, the other way.

ALK: Yes. That's a story!

**ML:** Broad House, that all got altered while I lived there. They altered a lot of that while I lived there.

ALK: Was that Broad House in Wroxham, not Broad House down here in?

**ML:** No, the Broad House in Wroxham where Sid Trafford lived.

ALK: Yes. Who else did you work for around here?"

**ML:** That's about all.

ALK: So, the Traffords

**ML:** Yes.

ALK: And then Beatrice's family, that's not the Traffords.

**ML:** Whose?

ALK: The lady who was here when I came to see you. Your last family

**ML:** Oh they, they live at Hoveton Hall.

ALK: Right. So, not the Traffords then?

**ML:** They're not the Trafford family, no. No. They're the Buxtons at Hoveton Hall.

ALK: Yes

**ML:** Um, I brought their children up.

ALK: That's what she was saying."

**ML:** I brought their children up.

ALK: So you've had a lot of children really?



**ML: I have, yeah.**

ALK: Is that one of them, the boy there?

**ML: Yes, that's Harry. That's one of the girls, er, that's the youngest one of three boys.**

**hey share two girls and a boy and that's Harry, the youngest one.**

**And that photo, that photograph was taken especially for me.**

ALK: Lovely.

**ML: So that has to be there.**

**The other one is me in my uniform, I didn't have that.**

**And that one, the other one of me there was when I was about 60 I think.**

**When I was about 60 somebody, I had a birthday and they come and took my photo.**

ALK: Very nice. And Harry still comes in to see you by the sounds of it.

**ML: He was here yesterday.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: And he was on the phone this morning.**

ALK: To see you are all right

**ML: He's coming to see me tomorrow.**

ALK: Well that's good.

**ML: Well, he's got a lot of knowledge and it pays you, not ..... To go on your knees to your family.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: It pays you to have some extra advice.**

ALK: I think you always want advice and he looks like a good source of advice.

**ML: Oh! Oh! He, he, he's wonderful. And they said that as a child he was a bit dyslexia and he got a, one of his children was a bit dyslexia too and, er, he was dyslexia and he overcame it all, he overcame it all and what he does now and what he knows and they said he would never play football.**

**I always remember that one, he would never play football. He would never do this, he would never do that and he would never drive a car. And he does everything.**

ALK: Fantastic

**ML: He does every mortal thing.**

ALK: That's wonderful.

**ML: But, um, you know they listen to him, they listen to him.**

**And he had great difficulty, I know, when he was younger, in writing. He used to write sort of backwards or something.**

**But she was left handed, I think it's something to do with her actually and he took it from her.**

**And, er, I used to say "I'll teach you how to write the right way" and he got the better of it.**

**One thing he was very good at, where he used to go down and see them, if they'd been out for the day and they were, well, he'd go down with them and play a game of cards, cards he was wonderful with. He was wonderful, you, you couldn't.**

ALK: He'd got a mathematical mind

**ML: I know. I know.**

ALK: So, any other things that we should say before we stop that and just have a general ending chat?

**ML: I don't think so.**

ALK: You can't talk for too long at a time, can you?

**ML: No.**

ALK: No. We can always....

**ML: Well, they, er, so many things have altered since, since I've been here, since, how much our, our village has altered, that kind of thing.**

**I mean, er, I know this is a main road, the main road to Sea Palling now. Sea Palling, always has been and everything that has to go down to Sea Palling if they go through this way, they can't ..., well they can go back way and come back again but that is the main road.**

**Everything that goes to Sea Palling has to come through Hickling to go to Sea Palling.**

ALK: Yes

**ML: Um, and I mean if there was. Hickling House now, there was The Bull, a public house up there called The Bull.**

ALK: Exactly

**ML:** And that house, that's in the corner there, where the holly hedge is, that was a little sweet shop.

**ALK:** There were shops all down here?

**ML:** Yes. There was a, um, here, there and we had a, there, and we had, um, the butchers, we had the fishmongers.

And you think of what we had, you see if people don't know anything about it, they aren't interested in you really. I mean they aren't, they aren't.

I don't think they're interested in you really because people, all people coming here, all they want are street lights. [LAUGHS]

**ALK:** I'm going to stop it there. I'm saving it.

**ML:** Well, I dunno, I mean people do get the wrong way sometimes don't they?

**ALK:** They do.

**ML:** You never know do you.

**ALK:** Now

**ML:** I mean there's, I, I've never been down to the Barn. Well, I have been to the Barn but I don't go down to the Barn. That was our. I .... (?) that field where the Barn is, that was our playing field and that was given to us in '53, in '53.

When you think about it they used to have that done every year and we used to, when Ben Amos was alive in those days, and we used to have a flower show and everything.

People used to take this and grow this and take this and go round that and, and, everybody together. Now you hardly know do you, hardly know. I really don't know too much about it now because I don't, um, there's so many people in the village now I don't know about. I don't know, they do say "Hello" that's about all but people, people as I don't really know.