

Interviewer: [00:00:00] So this is for The Community Brain's industrial estates heritage project. It's the 2nd of June, and I am with Andrew and Ruth McKinlay at their home in Chessington. Um, Andrew worked at the Gala Cosmetics factory, um, in, um, uh, for, for a few months, um, and has also served as a councillor for the Kingston borough.

Um, as well as being MP for Thurrock between 1992 and 2010. Uh, Ruth's mother, uh, also worked on the Gala factory. Um, Andrew, first of all, do you mind stating your name for the tape and your date and place of birth?

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah, well, uh, I, it's Andrew McKinlay and, um, I was brought up in Tolworth, went to, uh, our Lady Immaculate School, primary school, and I was, spent all my sort of growing up years on the Sunray Estate.

Interviewer: Yep.

Andrew Mackinlay: In Tolworth. Um, I did have a holiday, holiday job in [00:01:00] 1974, um, sorry, 1964, um, at Galas. Uh, and I think the month's salary would've been, uh, less than 24 pounds.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: I can't remember precisely, uh, when, when I say a salary, of course, in, in those days, I think we were paid cash.

Interviewer: Right.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, but, uh, I always remember Galas as a, um, seen as a prestigious company and a good employer. It had a reputation as a good employer.

Interviewer: How did you first come across the opportunity to work there? What was the, what was the story?

Andrew Mackinlay: Well, um, 15 in law I could work. Uh, I wanted to buy a record player. Which I still have funnily enough.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: And, um, I, uh, wanted a job, uh, to, to, to achieve [00:02:00] that. And a friend had a friend of a friend. I think the man who, uh,

helped get us a job. His, I got a feeling his name was, Freddy Fripp, um, has come back to me. I didn't know Mr. Fripp, but it was through him. He, uh, either worked at Galas- and in those days it, there were, the employment market was very much places like Gala needed a staff.

It, I, I remember turning up the Monday morning and some paperwork had been, sort of felled up. They didn't have me on the list and I'd come from my job, you know, and I thought I was gonna be disappointed, but they, they sort of found me a job in stores. Where I was for the four or five weeks, except for the, I think the penultimate week I operated the Gala lift.

Um, it was one of these concertina things. [00:03:00] Uh, and uh, that was a great job. Probably the best job I had- I've had. Um, I'd be going up and down what I seem to recall were four or five levels of the Gala factory.

Interviewer: Right, right. And so that was just the lift for, for, for everyone to, to use.

Andrew Mackinlay: Absolutely, absolutely.

I met everybody and it was very sociable and, and it was fun.

Interviewer: It must be, yeah, it must be an interesting way to to to, to get into the heart of an organisation is just see- 'cause, 'cause everyone has to pass through there presumably.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yes and, and in, in those days. Whereas we all now operate lifts ourselves, don't we?

Either through health and safety or the technology, you had to have a custodian of it. And I was the man, I was in charge of the lift.

Interviewer: And was it literally as simple as just the, someone would come in and say a floor number and you'd press that button and

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah.

Interviewer: That was the job.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yes. And I pulled back the, this concertina shutter, um, the sort of thing was, I, [00:04:00] I think they had them in sort of like the big stores. Are You Being Served? type of stores.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. And you, you mentioned a role in, in, in, um, in the Gala stores as well. So, so, so, so, so what did they involve?

Andrew Mackinlay: Well, the, the, the stores were obviously on the ground floor along with dispatch, and they were big, uh, quite labor intensive. Um, the stores where I worked in, uh, obviously they would get orders from the production line.

They, they producing thousands of cosmetics and they needed to be boxed up, so they were uh, proper Gala, cardboard boxes to be taken up to the production line and bottles and labels. And, uh, the thing I remember is that, and it didn't seem odd at the time, it was very good throughout the day, they would play The Light Programme, uh, which was, [00:05:00] uh, the predecessor to Radio 2, I would say.

Um, and, uh, there would be Workers' Playtime on. And so throughout the day, you would be enjoying BBC light music, comedy and as I say programmes such as Workers' Playtime, which was actually designed for that kind of industrial situation. Also on the ground floor level was dispatch and it speaks for itself, obviously.

Um, there were lorries needing to be loaded all the time, um, and, and quite labour intensive. I, I, my recollection is that both in stores and dispatch it was all fellas, men, except for one lady who was very glamorous and she was management. Um, but she, she stuck out one because she was glamorous, but two, she was management and she was the only female on that level.

[00:06:00] Of course, on the other levels, the production line was all women.

Interviewer: Managed by men, presumably.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah, I'm, I would hope so. I joke!

Interviewer: We wouldn't have, we wouldn't have, wanna have to cancel you.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah.

Interviewer: Uh, um, yeah. And so, so what, what kind of roles were you doing there? Were you, were you kind of, uh,

Andrew Mackinlay: Well, literally there would be orders from the production line for, you know, a dozen boxes of such and such category and size, uh, or so many thousand labels or the bottles were obviously designed for particular product lines.

So Outdoor Girl would have a, a different, um, bottle.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: From Mary Quant or, or anything like that. So it was, it was you, you've got to visualise lots of shelving with say, the, the products bottles, um, [00:07:00] labels, tops manufactured separately. Um, and, uh, cardboard boxes planned and labeled with the particular product.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, um, so you were only there a couple of months, is that right?

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah. Yes. Less than that. Yeah. Less than that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Um, uh, but as I say it allowed me to buy my record player.

Interviewer: You got your record player in the end?

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah, yeah, I got the record player.

Interviewer: Um, and did you get a sense of uh, among your colleagues, uh, who had been there for, for, for, for longer than you, uh, did you get a sense that they were happy to be there, that, that it was a good place for them to work?

Andrew Mackinlay: It, it was a good, a, a good employer and, um, they had what today we would call human resources. They weren't called that then, but

looking back and bearing in mind, I've had some industrial experience as a trade union official later in life, I would say it was a pioneering uh, [00:08:00] employer. Um, there was a degree of cleanliness as well.

I think if you look at the few pictures available, everyone was kitted out in, um, protective clothing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: And, um, uh, and the term health and safety wasn't invented in those days, but so far as I can recall it, it was a model uh, production, you know. Cutting edge of, for the early 1960s.

Interviewer: I mean, why, why do you say it's a, it was pioneering in the, in, in the way that they treated their employees, or,

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah. Well, I, yes, indeed. Uh, and I say, I think they had like human, what today we call human resources. They, they obviously valued their employees. The marketplace for labor was with the employees. Uh, say you could just walk in anywhere on the industrial estate and, um, and get a job instantly. I.

Interviewer: Mm.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, it was [00:09:00] a relatively boom time. Uh, uh, so, um, you know, would occasionally be people who might have worked in Deccas or Siebe Gorman or uh, uh, Andre Rubber or Galas, and some operatives would've, you know, canceled one job and gone to another one.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: But, uh, Galas was, uh, I think cutting edge for its time.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, and Ruth, just turning to, to, to you, uh, I mean, uh, we, we, we are here in your home in Chessington now, and, and we are talking about your mum being employed in Chessington back then.

So presumably this, this specific area is, is, is, is has played quite an important part in, in your life?

Ruth Mackinlay: Yes, it has. My, um, parents moved into Chessington. Uh, in actually into Sanger Avenue soon after those houses were built. Um, in 1950. I went to school, as did my brother and sister to Buckland Infant [00:10:00] School and to Moor Lane Junior School.

And uh, I suppose my mum would have found the job in Galas via a friend of hers, uh, who was called Irene Hood. And I think the reason why my mom wanted to go out to work was to help the household budget. My dad had a job in the east of London, so he took the train every day from Chessington North and uh, and he worked until about seven o'clock every evening. Came home at seven o'clock, I should say, every evening.

So eventually, I think my mom would've found this job, been told about this job round about the late 1950s, early 1960s.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Ruth Mackinlay: And that would've meant her going out in the evening, 'cause she and Irene Hood, her friend, were doing an evening shift and I think their task was to sit and [00:11:00] fill small bottles with whichever product needed to go into the bottles, be it a lotion or whatever, and put the tops on and to be honest, the only phrase I can remember my mom saying, um, when she came home was that she and Irene, in trying to work really, really fast, would sometimes say to one another, I'm going up the wall. I can't cope, I'm going up the wall, which really meant they, they just couldn't keep up with, keep up with the speed they were meant to be going at.

But nevertheless, that wasn't a bad thing. It really wasn't a bad thing they, my mom enjoyed. Um, I think if you, I think my mom enjoyed, um, going out. I think she, I think she was certainly, in a sense, in a sense, I, I deem her to have been a bit of a pioneer because she was going to work at a time when women weren't going outside the home to work as [00:12:00] much.

Um, so she would've left our house in Sanger Avenue uh, when my dad got home. And she would've walked from our house to Galas, which wasn't far, but I suppose in the wintertime and in the dark and the cold, she may well have driven, um, the old car that she, she had, my dad could drive, but my dad didn't drive.

My mom had learned to drive during her time in the Civil Defence, she was in the Civil Defence and she had learned to drive on lorries. So there she was, um,

as I say, going out to work, uh, and contributing to the household budget because we really had very, very little back in the day.

Interviewer: And how long was she at Galas?

Ruth Mackinlay: I. I don't remember, uh, specifically, but I would say about two years.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Ruth Mackinlay: I think about two years.

Interviewer: Yeah. And that's, yeah, and that's from about late [00:13:00] fifties crossing over to sixties,

Ruth Mackinlay: Late fifties, early 1960s. Um, because by then I would've been entering sort of teenage years, and I think by then she was changing her job and going to a firm in Weybridge.

Where she used to do the driving for this firm. So she'd gone down, she'd actually gone down that route and she turned away from, from Galas. But I never remember her saying anything bad about Galas. I think it was quite a revelation to her.

Interviewer: And, um, how old would you have been at this point?

Ruth Mackinlay: So if it was the late fifties, I would've been 11, 12 years of age.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Interviewer: Um, and, uh, we were just speaking before we, we started the interview and, and you recalled her bringing home the goodie bags, the shilling bags.

Ruth Mackinlay: I do, I definitely do. And, uh, that was a source of great joy. My mom loved makeup. She just loved wearing makeup and to get these goodie bags. I don't recall how often, how frequently they got them, but absolutely [00:14:00] she was thrilled to bits to have whatever came, whatever came with

them, be it lipstick, she loved lipstick, be it a lotion, be it some powder, face powder. My mom was absolutely delighted as everybody was with these little goodie bags. I don't recall if it was the, if it was Miners, because I know there was Miners. I know there was Outdoor Girl. But whenever those little goodie bags came, it, it really was like a treasure trove, to be honest. Yeah.

Interviewer: And then as, as you grew older through the sixties, did you, did you start wearing the Mary Quants of this world and, and any of that stuff? No.

Ruth Mackinlay: No, not really because, um, I couldn't afford it for one thing. Certainly not the Mary Quant. That was the top end for me. So not the Mary Quant, but the much cheaper end. Yeah. We would've gone for. Probably Miners, because I think that was, that was being sold in Woolworths. So,

Interviewer: Well, if, if you wanna know a secret, uh, someone

Ruth Mackinlay: I do.

Interviewer: Someone, someone from, uh, some, someone we interviewed from Gala told us, and I, I can't [00:15:00] verify this, but he told us that the products were identical.

They just had different branding on them. So when you bought Mary Quant lipstick, you were buying the exact same thing as when you were buying Miners or Outdoor Girl.

Andrew Mackinlay: I, I think that still endures today in retail

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: In, in some of the big shops, which I won't name.

Interviewer: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah.

Ruth Mackinlay: I don't, I don't think you gave away any secrets there. That's,

Andrew Mackinlay: I mean, it was, it was normal in industrial situation where a product was being made that you could be searched on leaving work.

Interviewer: Mm.

Andrew Mackinlay: In the day. Now, I, I can't recall anybody being so challenged or humiliated, but, um, the, the, the goodie bag is indicative of one, combating theft, but also it was a good employer and it, these goody bags were much appreciated

Ruth Mackinlay: Very much,

Andrew Mackinlay: And I think, I would think in the few weeks I was there, I would've bought 'em to take home to my mum or something.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yes.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah, you're right. It's both [00:16:00] a, a, um, a, a repellent from theft, but also, uh, an incentive to work there, you know?

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah. But you definitely could be challenged.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Both in Galas, but that would've been the norm.

Interviewer: Um, Andrew, I wonder if you could just recall maybe some of the, some of the, uh, just recall some of the sights, uh, the sights and sounds of, of the f you know, what, what, what, what kind of visually do you, do you recall about the factory itself?

Andrew Mackinlay: Well, one thing which I do remember and could be misunderstood is the fact that, um, the lipstick was an una- make- producing lipstick was an unattractive job, and the lipstick production, I think was done on the top level. And all the staff were, uh, either from the Caribbean or from Africa or the, and they were bused in, uh, and, and taken home each day to either Wandsworth or Tooting.

And, uh, never the twain would meet as it were. [00:17:00] There, so there wasn't, uh, deliberate or conscious discrimination, but, uh, the job was exclusively with them.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: And, um, I think it's a classic example of, uh, an unattractive job because my recollection was that the red dye remained on their hands uh, permanently. In other words, or you, a simple wash, didn't remove the red on the hands and arms.

Um, and uh, say, there was no conscious discrimination, but that's,

Interviewer: It was the demographics of where there were bussing people in from presumably.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Um, regards of the area, I think it's important to realise that the Galas and the other factories we've referred to, Decca, Siebe Gorman, Andre Rubber, etc, [00:18:00] um, they were part of a sort of a post-war sensible town and country planning.

Uh, it created employment in that area and next to it was a, a very attractive housing estate. Sanger Avenue. Cox Lane. Um, I'm trying to think what was opposite.

Ruth Mackinlay: Well, opposite Sanger Avenue was Coutts Avenue.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yes.

Ruth Mackinlay: Um, and, uh, Durbin Road. Durbin Road.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah. And, and also what today is, um, Garrison Lane estate and York Way. They were within reasonable walking distance. People did walk to work in those days.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, and um, uh, so there was both, uh, work availability. For people who were working class in what was a, a new and attractive housing estate. The houses in Sanger Avenue, for instance, I think received a, a [00:19:00] prize for their structure and architecture and so on.

And uh, of course in those days it wasn't Kingston Council, it was Surbiton Borough Council.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: Um,

Ruth Mackinlay: Could I just say,

Andrew Mackinlay: Well, just on, on Surbiton.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yes.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, I, I, I remember that the housing manager. Today, he'd have some fancy title, director of something or other, but he, he knew the names of all these tenants.

Thousands of them, but he, he knew, he knew there was that degree of intimacy.

Interviewer: Wow.

Andrew Mackinlay: And care.

Ruth Mackinlay: I, I, I simply wanted to say- I simply wanted to say that my parents who did move into their house in Sanger Avenue, Number 27 in 1950 were completely thrilled. They'd come from one, living in one room in my grandparents' house in Bethnall Green, and they really thought they were in heaven with a three bedroom house.

They had a toilet [00:20:00] downstairs that was inside. They had a bathroom and toilet upstairs. They had a living room, they had a garden, and they were very, very thrilled and they stayed in it for the rest of their lives. But whenever they, uh, talked about being part of Surbiton Council, they were very pleased about that because they always said to us, the people who live in the houses that are run, run, owned, and run by Kingston Council, they actually pay more in rent than we do to Surbiton Council. So they were delighted to be part of that, um, organization. Uh, and so as children, we also counted ourselves very lucky because not only did we have that back garden, each and every one of us backing by the way, onto the railway line. And frankly, we never, ever noticed the trains running between Chessington North and, um, eventually ending up in Waterloo.

Um, but we also had outside, [00:21:00] uh, this estate had green spaces where we could play. We weren't near the road. There weren't, wasn't much traffic in those days, but we weren't near the road. So we could play as groups of youngsters. We could play cricket, we could play all kinds of things, hide and seek, and we felt safe in, in that space. Um, and

Andrew Mackinlay: there was a little space called the Bullwhips,

Ruth Mackinlay: There was a little space, that would be across the road, Andrew. Uh, just off, just off Coutts Avenue. Still there. But in those days it was like a foreign place to us and we would go there after school, we'd all have our tea and, and it was tea, not dinner in those days.

And we, um, and we sat at the table, we had our tea, and then we got down from the table. Can we go and play on the bull? Yes. Go and play on the Bullwhips. And off we went across the road into this what for, for us, or certainly for me anyway, felt like a foreign country. Trees, bushes, and [00:22:00] there we played hide and seek until we were called in to go to bed.

And, and I know I'm looking at it through rose tinted glasses, but that actually, for us, it was just bliss.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: And uh, I think just reverting to the uh, topography as it were. Uh, I've mentioned the sort of the Chessington estates, but of course you had the underpass, which meant that people could be in their place of work in, in Galas and the other factories within a few short minutes if they lived in Red Lion Road.

Or Fullers Avenue, or from that matter where I lived on the Sunray Estate, it just was walking distance in those days. So, uh, the, the, what, what was available was a very well located, uh, decision. An example of good early town and country planning.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. And yeah, I think the, the housing estate is a really [00:23:00] interesting, uh, point because, um, you know, I think we, part of this project is about celebrating industrial estates as employers, um, as well as centers of innovation and design and production and all that sort of thing.

But as employers of local people, um, and presumably Ruth, what you're talking about, your mum working there, but presumably lots of your friends' parents would also have worked there.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Interviewer: Um, as well, you know, in, in all the various businesses that are there.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah, I think so. I don't, I, I genuinely can't recall. Sorry, but I, I would definitely say yes, most definitely. And I'll tell you why. Because I do recall, um, people walking along Sanger Avenue towards their place of work, no doubt about that. So they could have come from the various, uh, uh, parts round and about. So, um, from Buckland Road, uh, and that estate and from slightly further afield, but also they could have, uh, come in on the, uh, and, and got off the train at Chessington North and walked through.

I think a lot of them did that. And of course, the other end of the [00:24:00] day, they would be doing the same thing. So you did get quite a lot of movement, footfall, if I suppose you call it, uh, coming from the direction of the factories and coming, uh, uh, obviously to go back home. Or, or to get the train at Chessington North.

Um, the only other thing I just wanted to say, which is about a friend of my parents, um, we always knew him as Uncle Cecil. And Uncle Cecil worked at Andre Rubber and he had a motorbike and sidecar. Uh, which even in those days was fairly unusual. But he drove the motorbike and the sidecar from the Copt Gilders end of Chessington, where he lived with his wife Alice, to his place of work at Andre Rubber.

And then at the other end of the day, round about five o'clock, he'd drive past my parents' house. Stop, park the motorbike and the sidecar, and wearing his great big trench coat would come [00:25:00] in smelling of rubber, funnily enough, and would come in and have his cup of tea and a cigarette before he left to go home.

So yeah, I would say that, that most people would've been, um, employed in that industrial estate just down the road from us. Uh, and we, and we just knew that by the numbers of people who, who made their way there each and every day.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Did you ever come across any of the, I mean, yeah. Uh, we, we, we know about Andre Rubber and their relationship to Siebe

Gorman and the fact that they produced during the war, I think they produced, uh, diving equipment for the Navy and things like that.

Um, I mean, did you ever, did you come across any of the other names on the industrial estate over,

Andrew Mackinlay: Well, the, the big

Interviewer: Over your time,

Andrew Mackinlay: The big employer was Decca.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: And Decca had a portfolio of industries from what we would call avionics today, or defence related technology to the produced product [00:26:00] of, uh, Jet Harris and the, you know, uh, pop, pop music, uh, records.

Interviewer: Yes. Well, we know about the pressing plant in New Malden.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah. So Decca was a big, big employer right across the breadth of, its, as I say, its portfolio of things as diverse as, uh, avionics, uh, to, um, record production.

Interviewer: And in your time as a, as a councillor, Andrew, uh, did the industrial state ever play a role in, in, in, in what you were doing locally, politically, uh. Is it, so were the businesses there something you were aware of or was it something that, that, that perhaps wasn't as, as relevant to that?

Andrew Mackinlay: Well, I think it was much valued by the community. By 1965, of course, there was the merger of the local authorities. So it became Kingston Council.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. And remind me of when you were councillor again, sorry.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, 1971 to 1978.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: [00:27:00] Um,

Interviewer: For which, which ward?

cc: Well, Tolworth West, which took in things like Tankerton Road, Ronelean Road, School Lane, Ellerton Road, um, which as I say wasn't far from uh, the subway, which would've taken you to the industrial estate and Galas. And I was living with my mom and dad and brother on the Sunray Estate in Tolworth. And of course I have recollections of the cinema, which used to be where tolworth Tower was. I remember the last film was Peter Sellers, I'm All Right Jack.

I used to go there as a little boy. Saturday morning pictures with sixpence, and of course, I remember in about 1963, 64, the bowling alley being built.

Interviewer: Right. Yeah. Around the corner from the Toby Jug.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yes. So, uh, one, you know, I've seen things change in this area. Um, for [00:28:00] instance, at Warren Drive North, there used to be a wooden pedestrian bridge.

I remember the, the, the public access tunnel. Uh, being built and the bridge coming down. Uh, I think there's still a bridge further up on Tolworth Rise on the peak.

Ruth Mackinlay: I think there is.

Andrew Mackinlay: Um, and, and I remember one of my old constituents in the seventies. She was in her eighties, but, um, I think that, um, she said that before the bypass was built, Tolworth Rise would've been without roads.

There've been meadows, I guess.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: And I think there was a man called Jack Cobb, who was an aviator, was, uh, kept flying his airplane off tolworth Rise North.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Um,

Ruth Mackinlay: I just want to, if I may,

Interviewer: Of course

Ruth Mackinlay: I just wanna revert back. It's not, it won't take long, but I want to revert back to Tolworth Odeon because we would go there, but only very occasionally.

Money was a [00:29:00] bit tight, but we, we would go there and when we went, we would walk through. From Sanger Avenue to Tolworth Odeon. And I can remember one time my mom saying, well, we're, we're, we're going to see a film and as it's tea time, I'm gonna make jam sandwiches. So we all sat in, we all sat in the cinema, and I think we were watching e- It was either the Wizard of Oz.

In fact, it probably was. Eating our jam sandwiches and goodness knows what we had to drink. And that's what we did. And we walked there and we walked back and it wasn't a big deal. It really wasn't a big deal to, to walk almost anywhere back in the day. We, that's what we did and we went with um, somebody whose name I mentioned earlier, Uncle Cecil's daughter, Betty, would walk us there on a Saturday morning and we would go to Saturday morning pictures and pay the sixpence, or she paid the sixpence for us to get in.

So, yeah, so Tolworth Odeon was a big part of our lives.

Andrew Mackinlay: And Saturday morning pictures, there was, uh, all [00:30:00] children less than, you know, 8, 9, 10, 11 years of age. I think you, if you were ancient, if you were 12, and, uh, the, the manager would come out to, before the films started. And everyone would blow whistles and boo and, and, uh, and then they would have the Odeon club song, which went, um, uh, 'We come along on Saturday morning, we greeting everybody with a smile. As members of the Odeon Club, we all intend to be. When we go up. Grow up. When we grow up as champions of the free, we come along on Saturday morning, greeting everyone with a smile'. But all us lads used to, greeting everybody with a black eye and, and, and, and I think if it was a good Saturday, it was sort of, uh, there, there would be some song about [00:31:00] the, how awful school dinners were.

Interviewer: So this the thing, this was the thing that Odeon did in all their cinemas every Saturday?

Andrew Mackinlay: That's, that's correct.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. It's first I've come across it.

Andrew Mackinlay: The rival chain was,

Interviewer: And it's for children specifically? Yeah. Yeah,

Andrew Mackinlay: Absolutely. Six, sixpence. I, I think you could have a, a better seat for ninepence.

Interviewer: Right.

Andrew Mackinlay: And, um, uh, so that was the Odeon, um, brand. The, the ABC Minors was the one, uh, and the nearest, um, ABC Cinema was near Kingston Station.

Interviewer: I was gonna say. Yeah. The Rolling Stones played there.

Andrew Mackinlay: Did they? Yeah. And, and Stoneleigh, uh, in Ewell.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yep.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, and just while we're on cinemas, uh, the, the, the way the, uh, if you had a, a film, Wizard of Oz, at Tolworth Odeon one week, the following week it would be on at Shannon Corner where B&Q is now.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Ruth Mackinlay: Oh yes.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, they obviously had limit, it was real [00:32:00] film. So they had a system of where the films were passed on.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh,

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. The, the whole cinema thing is fascinating 'cause the cinemas, yeah, as I say, the Rolling Stones I think played ABC. Um, and there's this history of the cinemas as being gig venues as well, concert venues. Um,

Andrew Mackinlay: I, I, I went to one of the few, um, pop shows, and I remember Marianne Faithful was, uh, listed, but to my disappointment, she was, she didn't turn up.

Interviewer: Um, but yeah, actually the, this conversation about Tolworth, uh, I mean, when, when did that, um, when did Tolworth Tower go up? Do, do you, do you?

Andrew Mackinlay: Well, in 1964. About, about then. I mean, it obviously took a year to construct at least.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So that's when the cinema went.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah. Approximately 1964.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Um, and the. It was a groundbreaking [00:33:00] retail down below. It was fine fair. And you've got to realise that we weren't used to sort of, uh, what we consider to be Americanisation of retail.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: So it was the first supermarket, uh, of that kind of style, which we now take for granted. And I was, I, I was employed there for about a week and a half in the summer of 1966.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, fine fare.

Ruth Mackinlay: Mm-hmm. I mean, other than that,

Andrew Mackinlay: Just a question about Marks & Spencer.

Ruth Mackinlay: Now Marks & Spencers. And just, but just across the road. Other than that, we didn't know anything about supermarkets. Um, uh, then, but I do remember, I think just at the start of Tolworth Broadway at that end, so opposite what would've been the Odeon and what is now Tolworth Tower were all the co-op shops selling furniture and carpets.

Andrew Mackinlay: Absolutely. The, it was called the Royal Arsenal Co-Op Society.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. [00:34:00]

Andrew Mackinlay: And they built a lot of the, uh, the shops and the flats above on what is Tolworth Broadway. So what Ruth's referred to is quite close to the um, the crossroads of Tolworth Tower. But further up the Broadway there there was a RACS, Royal Arsenal Co-op Hall.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yes.

Andrew Mackinlay: Which could be hired. And uh, I remember Our Lady Immaculate, they were working on our school hall, so we used to cross the road for our school dinners there.

Ruth Mackinlay: That's right.

Interviewer: So you're just continuing on the, on the topic of, of, of Tolworth, but also Chessington the, the, the, the borough more widely.

Um, obviously both of you have, have, have been around for quite some time and I wonder if you could, could just maybe reflect a bit about how much you've seen this area change over the years. Uh, to what extent those, those changes are, are welcome to what extent they're not, you know, what, what, what, how, how, how do you see the evolution of kind of Chessington and, and and, and the Kingston borough more widely?

Ruth Mackinlay: Well, I [00:35:00] think, uh, in, in speaking mainly about Chessington, so I can go back to the time before, for example, the existence of what is now Jubilee Way, which, uh, which links to, excuse me, um, the road leading into Tolworth. And so for, for, for me and for my friends, and so on, we, we would walk down to what, to the industrial estate um, that was, that was actually already there. But Jubilee Way wasn't, but yet we could walk down to, um, I've forgotten, having a senior moment. The woods that were nearby that they were, and they're there, they're now what they called, the woods that you and I explored.

Andrew Mackinlay: The um, Tolworth Court Farm

Interviewer: Tolworth Court Farm Fields.

Ruth Mackinlay: Thank you.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Yes.

Ruth Mackinlay: Everybody, thanks.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes.

Ruth Mackinlay: Tolworth Court Farm, I beg your pardon. What is now known, what is now known as Tolworth Court Farm. That's [00:36:00] right.

Interviewer: Yes.

Ruth Mackinlay: And when we would go there, uh, but we went, you see, in those days you would walk as a group of children. You didn't have adults with you. We never went with adults because they were busy working and if they weren't working outside the home, they were certainly working inside the home.

So, uh, we made our own amusement and we would go and take little ones with us, uh, and so on. So that I do remember, and it felt kind of more, I suppose, countrified. I mean, we would walk also when we were living in Sanger Avenue, we would also take walks across to Copt Gilders and to the Hogsmill stream. That now runs, um, behind the houses in, um, Thrigby Road.

And we would go down there and we would look for, I suppose, newts and, and go paddling in the stream and so on. And again, uh, oh, and look at the bluebells, of course, in the, in the May time, et cetera. But always, uh, on our own, we didn't have the [00:37:00] dangers of crossing a busy main road because there weren't any cars.

In fact, I could remember walking down to what was then, and still is actually, the Bonesgate and the stream, the Hogsmill stream running underneath the bridge there. And we would feel, we, we would feel very, very, um, brave that we would take off our, uh, shoes and socks. Go down into the stream and walk underneath the bridge till we got to the other side.

Um, so, so that was quite an adventure for us. But if we had seen a car either on the way there or on the way back, it was something we had to point out to one another. You just didn't see cars, you really didn't. So, um, I suppose the place was quieter. Uh, oh and then in those days, I think, w- in the 1950s when now, [00:38:00] uh, our built car, uh, cars, I beg your pardon, houses behind the Chessington North parade shops, which again, weren't there.

Uh, but the houses, th there were no houses then. And the land was a bit waterlogged, but every year would come at a certain time of the year. And I just don't recall. I think it would've been the beginning of autumn time and there would come a small fair. So we had the fairground come, uh uh, just, just literally down the road from us.

And obviously in all the things that went alongside that, the rides and so on and so forth, the candy floss. Uh, and then that got built on and Chessington North parade shops came along. But I think, you know, we are talking about something that in- to me now feels like a completely different age, different way of life.

Um, and really just people by the way, using obviously more [00:39:00] public transport um, to get about.

Andrew Mackinlay: 601 trolley bus, wasn't it

Ruth Mackinlay: The trolley bus into Kingston.

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah.

Ruth Mackinlay: Um, and for us, for me going to school, the 468, 'cause I went to school in oh,

Andrew Mackinlay: The 603 used to turn.

Ruth Mackinlay: The 603 - oh did it?

Andrew Mackinlay: Going back to Fulwell at Red Lion Road.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yes, indeed. That's right.

Andrew Mackinlay: Something you said reminds me.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yes.

Andrew Mackinlay: As well as your funfair in Chessington, uh, also on the big space of land now occupied by Tolworth Tower. There was the cinema, which I've referred to earlier, but there was open land there and used to have a circus every year.

Ruth Mackinlay: Is that right? Yes.

Andrew Mackinlay: With wild animals, I remember

Ruth Mackinlay: My goodness.

Andrew Mackinlay: Extraordinary. And, um, the, the other sort of thing which I remember is, uh, the, by the interpass, the, uh, and the roundabout, uh, there used to be Fox and Nicholls petrol station.

Ruth Mackinlay: Oh, yes.

Andrew Mackinlay: It was National Benzole I think. Their [00:40:00] badge was some sort of Greek guard or something flying.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yes.

Andrew Mackinlay: And, and I remember that they must, they had also had a car showroom there and they had Stirling Moss landing uh in one of the fields, just the other side of the railway to launch, uh, you know, some event there. So everyone was, you know, um, hanging outside Fox and Nicholls to see Stirling Moss, who was a real hero in those days.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: The other thing which might be of interest is, um, there was a, before the war, as well as there being an intention that, that the railway would go from Waterloo via Tolworth and the Chessingtons to Leatherhead. And it, 1939 stopped that and it still was yet to be built. Um, but in addition to that, the other transport, uh, plan, which was aborted by the war, would've been a road which [00:41:00] would've come from Malden Manor.

Across the Hogsmill, where today there's a footbridge, but there would've been a road bridge, up Knollmead on the Sunray Estate, uh, crossing the railway by Knollmead School. And, and the, there was this bridge, which is sort of been built for a road, uh, and then it would've traveled, the road would've gone through what today is Knollmead School, um, in a southerly direction. Crossing over the Kingston Road where there is now the Jubilee Way. The Jubilee Way was built in the 19-

Ruth Mackinlay: 60s.

Andrew Mackinlay: Early 1960s ju- using that line of route, travelling south, and it would've been a fast road probably to Leatherhead and it would've connected up with some of the Chessington roads so that that's what might have been. [00:42:00]

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, yeah. It's, it's so interesting to hear about, um, all these, uh, changes, uh, over the years. I mean, I think Tolworth in particular, has seen maybe the most dramatic and quick transformation from, from, you know, what was virtually fields a hundred years ago to, to now the most traffic laden

Andrew Mackinlay: Yeah. I, I think, um, Ruth and I were married at Tolworth Catholic Church, which is on a quite a prestigious corner.

But, uh, the parish priest who built that church, it was built, uh, opened in 1958. Uh, a Father Redding, he was a, a big man and unintentionally has contributed to the growth of that area. Before the war he bought up the site, which is, uh, the Catholic Church and the Catholic school, Our Lady Immaculate, he built what today I think is still the school hall where mass was [00:43:00] done for 20, 30 years, uh, until he was able to build that church on the corner there.

Uh, he, he also bought land for the churches, the Catholic church in Ewell and uh, I think in Chessington. Which is now St. Catherine of Siena. Um, he was a man who thought big, although he was a pastor primarily, and a very good one. I remember him well. He, he nevertheless helped to develop Tolworth, uh, and uh, create a, a school in, in the fifties and the church in 58.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: And, um, just a complete, uh, reverting back to Chessington, uh, St. Catherine of Siena, which is between, um, Mansfield Road roundabout and Garrison Lane, uh, close to the, uh, [00:44:00] supermarket.

Ruth Mackinlay: Lidl.

Andrew Mackinlay: Lidl.

Ruth Mackinlay: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: Um, I understand that Italian prisoners of war would go there to mass and they were from Siena.

Interviewer: Wow.

Andrew Mackinlay: And so the patron of the church was St. Catherine of Siena.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: The, the Italian prisoners of war were cited where the Hook Centre is now the ah, the uh, and the library

Ruth Mackinlay: Just by Elm Road. Yes.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Andrew Mackinlay: So it's interesting how

Ruth Mackinlay: Fascinating

Andrew Mackinlay: people like clergy can affect things.

Interviewer: Yeah. Absolutely. Um, but Andrew, when you were talking about the, uh, Cox Lane Industrial Estate, you, you used the phrase, um, I think you said it was, it was an example of sensible town planning.

Andrew Mackinlay: Correct.

Interviewer: Um, uh, I mean, do you think that that, that the same level of sensible town planning is being considered today with developments in the, in the area and, you know, we've got, 'cause you've got Signal Park going up in Tolworth now, and you've [00:45:00] got various things in Kingston and you know, to a lot of people it just seems to be adding more, more traffic and more disruption.

Do you think, do you think town planning is, is as sensible today as it, as it was then?

Andrew Mackinlay: I, I fear not. Um, some of the developments you've just mentioned, uh, sort of challenge the concept of sensible strategic planning. The rapacious appetite of the developers and indeed political parties, both left and right, to build housing units, um, threatens what is, I think a precious, very precious thing in and around Tolworth and Chessington. The Green Belt.

It's under threat and uh, we, when we think of the post-war Atlee government, one of the great benefic- benefits from that government was the National Health Service. But one we take for granted is the Green Belt policy. And in my view, it is as [00:46:00] important, certainly in environmental terms as that thing, but it could be eroded in the next months or years, decade to come.

Uh, and I understand the political pressure on housing. The only thing is, is that, uh, I, I, there's a gravitational pull, uh, which you will never sort of satisfy regards building of London. You know, if you build a hundred thousand more houses, it will still not be enough. It will just attract more people and, and, and the problems of accommodating people of relatively low incomes is still going to be with you.

So I think the country's got it wrong, and certainly we in Tolworth and Chessington are custodians of an invaluable uh, green lung, not just for our own community in the borough, but for Greater London and, um, I think [00:47:00] people should be very wary about the temptation, which faces both politicians and town and country planners to give up on the Green Belt.

Interviewer: Yeah. And then, um, yeah, just before we, we wrap up, um, just to consider and reflect on. The, you know, staying on the subject of town planning, but the role of the industrial estate. I mean, we've spoken about what Cox Lane can do, but outside- what Cox Lane has done- but outside of Cox Lane, just, just more broadly in society, do you think we should be thinking about industrial estates as a, as a, uh, when we, when we, when we think about planning, when we think about employment and, and, and

Andrew Mackinlay: Well of course, but of course employment has moved on. I mean, um, I would imagine if you did a census of the industrial estate we've been referring to in the Cox Lane area, I imagine the number of people who are employed in those industrial units is a fraction of, [00:48:00] uh, those who were employed in the days we were talking out particularly, but not exclusively in relation to Galas.

So, um, uh, but you do need, in my view, location of industrial or commercial, uh, places, um, on brownfield sites close to, um- thing today that is more important is communication and, and of course our area is pretty well served by the railway line, um, and communications, well, sometimes I get very cross. It can be quite congested leading to the M25. But, um, if there was sensible planning, uh, uh, mobility and, uh, co connectivity could be, uh, enhanced

Interviewer: Because do you think the days of, uh, everyone sort of walking to work for the, those days are gone?

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, they have gone now. I, I, I [00:49:00] think we have to accept that, um,

Interviewer: But but they still, yeah, but they still have a role to play in economy.

Andrew Mackinlay: Oh, I'm, one of the things, talking to you and reflecting on the matters we discussed is it reinforces for me the need to have good town and country planning.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: Which is, say I fear is being neglected.

Ruth Mackinlay: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: Not just Kingston Council, I mean, uh,

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Across the, the whole, the whole thing. Al also, um, uh, the boundaries of Greater London were fixed in 1964.

They're now inappropriate. Um, I, I, there's a case for enlarging Greater London taking, uh, for instance, Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, some of the Mole Valley. Or to reduce it, but the, the existing boundaries have no logic at all and don't meet [00:50:00] the needs.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

Ruth Mackinlay: One of the things -just very, very brief. One of the things very briefly that I just wanted to say was, and it's only just now come into my mind, um, is how a very, very small country zoo, excuse me, which I was taken to when I was still in Buckland Infant School at the age of about six, uh, to visit to see the animals there has now become the enormous theme park, Chessington World of Adventures, which is an enormous, um, employer locally and probably for miles around. Excuse me. And I suppose this has also contributed to, uh,

along with the M, the M25 having been built, um, the enormous increase in traffic locally.

Uh, so you know, those days, those sort of so-called idyllic days of the 1950s, 1960s when there was very little traffic, uh, long, [00:51:00] long since gone and, uh, traffic has increased wholesale. Uh, this is not a diatribe against the World of Adventures. Of course not because it, it fulfills a very important function,

Andrew Mackinlay: An important employer,

Ruth Mackinlay: A very important employer, indeed, very good employer.

Um, excuse me. But as I say, it has led to a huge increase, along with, along with other factors, uh, as well, uh, this being a, the Leatherhead Road, being a feeder road onto the M25, Junction 9. But so yeah, the

Andrew Mackinlay: O opposite what we still call the zoo. Uh, we have to struggle to say Chessington World of Adventure. It's -opposite there is, is, uh,

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Chalky Lane.

Ruth Mackinlay: Chalky Lane.

Andrew Mackinlay: And, uh, Chalky Lane used to have a railway bridge going across it. Yeah,

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Because there is this, what I call the ghost railway line, which, uh, peters out just south of Chessington South station. But the, [00:52:00] in 1939, they built the, the railway bank right down beyond Chalky Lane, and the railway bank is still there.

And, uh, it's what might have been.

Ruth Mackinlay: Mm-hmm.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, and, and, uh, say when we were kids, the, the, a substantial railway bridge crossed Chalky Lane, uh. In World War II for some months the royal train was,

Ruth Mackinlay: I was gonna say,

Andrew Mackinlay: was stored

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: On that piece of railway line.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: I mean, it would've made sense 'cause it would've been covered by tree, a tree canopy, uh, and could have been a sort of a target for bombing.

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, but it, it was, it was, um, kept there for quite a time. And the other other thing, which, um, people might help us on this, I'm not sure what year, but, uh, the, the Derby, when it [00:53:00] used to be held on a Wednesday, once the Queen arrived at Chessington South Station.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Um, she, so she came down from presumably Waterloo on a special train. Uh, arrived at Chessington South, caught a car to be whisked up to the Epsom Derby.

Interviewer: Wow.

Ruth Mackinlay: And I,

Andrew Mackinlay: I can't, I can't, I've tried to locate um, if there are pictures, I'm sure there are pictures and what year.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Uh, but ballpark figure, probably 1954, 1958.

Ruth Mackinlay: Mm-hmm. Because after,

Interviewer: It's just after she's been coronated, is that right?

Ruth Mackinlay: Yeah.

Andrew Mackinlay: Well, she was coronated in 53.

Ruth Mackinlay: 53.

Interviewer: 53.

Andrew Mackinlay: She was queen by the time she, she came to Royal Chessington.

Ruth Mackinlay: Royal Chessington, but she also came after that. Um, following that, uh, again, everything happened in the sixties. But uh, I remember that we, we heard, um, that the Queen and the Royal Party were to be driven from Epsom back to Buckingham [00:54:00] Palace, um, and that they would turn to the right by Ruxley Lane.

So a great gathering of people went down to Ruxley Lane to see the royal party go by, and all I can remember, I would've been about 12 at the time. I think all I can remember seeing is this, is a car sweeping past at great, almost at great speed it seemed. And then in the car behind was somebody wearing a pale blue hat and a pale blue coat. With her hand up waving. And that was the Queen Mother. And that's the end of how I saw the royal party on.

Andrew Mackinlay: That's the last time you met them, isn't it? Yes.

Interviewer: Well, there you go. It's nice for the royal borough to live up to its name every now and again, isn't it? Um,

Ruth Mackinlay: Indeed.

Interviewer: Well that's, that's lovely stuff. Um, unless you guys have any other thoughts that, that, that, that come to mind.

Um, I think,

Andrew Mackinlay: Do you want us to do anything again?

Interviewer: No, no, no, no, no, no. I don't, I don't think so.

Ruth Mackinlay: Thank you.

Interviewer: No, I think, I think everything was, uh, was really nice. So yeah. Thank you so much guys. Thanks for your [00:55:00] time.

Andrew Mackinlay: Do, do either of, both of you know, uh, do you on your computer, work out when the next bus is for...