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AJR
Winston House, 2 Dollis Park
London N3 1HF
ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Grunberg
Forename:	Bernard
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	22 March 1923
Interviewee POB:	Lingen, Germany

Date of Interview:	18 April 2004
Location of Interview:	Alvaston
Name of Interviewer:	Yvonne Gordon
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THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 57

NAME: BERNARD GRUNBERG

DATE: 18 APRIL 2004

LOCATION: ALVASTON

INTERVIEWER: YVONNE GORDON

TAPE 1

YG: I'm Yvonne Gordon, and I'm interviewing Bernard Grunberg, on the 18th of April, 2004 at Alvaston, Derby.

I'm Yvonne Gordon, and I'm interviewing Bernard Grunberg, on the 18th of April, 2004 at Alvaston, Derby.

YG: Right, could you start by telling me your name at birth, your place of birth, and the date of your birth, please?

BG: Well, my name is Bernard Grunberg, or Grünberg as it was in German, and I was born in a little town not far off the Dutch border, called Lingen/Ems, on the Ems in Germany.

YG: Could you spell that, please?

BG: It's L-I-N-G-E-N and then stroke, Ems is the river that runs along the outskirts of the town, and that's spelt E-M-S. And I was born there on the 22nd of March, 1923. My father was a cattle dealer, and I had one sister that was about two and a half years older than myself, and we had a very comfortable life, and were– well, I suppose you would call us an Orthodox Jewish family, but not driven to the extent of every little detail. But the main things like the Sabbath was held every Saturday, we went to synagogue every Saturday, and all the Jewish religious days were held, so by and large I had a pretty religious upbringing.

YG: Could you tell me your father's name and your sister's name and your mother's name?

BG: Yes, my Dad's name was Bendix, his first name, my mother's name was Marianne, and my sister was called Gerda. And the first four years I spent– of my schooldays I spent at the local elementary school, and all the Jewish children went to this particular school.

YG: What was the school called?

Tape 1: 3 minutes 0 second

BG: The– well, it was just an ordinary elementary school: for your first four years you were at this particular school. There wasn't a big enough Jewish community there to justify a Jewish school. Although there was a building within the grounds of the synagogue that was used for religious education that we got, all the Jewish children got, on Wednesday afternoon and on Sunday mornings with a religious teacher, Jewish teacher, that came from a nearby town. But I had, as I said, four years at this school then I went on to a school for higher education, that was the beginning of the Nazi time, in 1933 and, of course, as time went on, things got worse and worse. The– I was always treated exceptionally good by the teachers, even to the extent that if there was anything like Nazi propaganda involved, then usually one of the teachers would come to me and say, 'You needn't bother to stop, you can go home.'

YG: How many Jewish children were there in this school?

BG: Only myself.

YG: Just you?

BG: Just me.

YG: And how many Jewish families were there in Lingen?

BG: Approximately, as far as I remember, 12 or 14. So it wasn't a big Jewish community, but they were well integrated, and also accepted by the population. And they weren't looked upon in particular as Jews, they were part of the town, or part of the city.

YG: What was the population of Lingen?

BG: I don't really know, I should think between 30 or 40,000, I should imagine.

YG: And was your father born there, or did he move there?

BG: No, my father was born further north. Again, very near the Dutch border, in a town called Haren.

YG: Could you spell that, please?

BG: H-A-R-E-N. And that was on the river Ems.

YG: And what year was he born? He was born in April 1988. [i.e.1888]

Tape 1: 5 minutes 41 seconds

YG: And what about your mother?

BG: Me[1] mother was born in– again, further north still, a place called Emden, which was E-M-D-E-N. And she was born in December 1992.

YG: 1892

BG: 1892, Sorry, yeah.

YG: And what was her maiden name?

BG: Valk. That's V-A-L-K.

YG: So how did they end up in Lingen, your parents?

BG: I don't really know. Me dad was in the First World War, and I think after the world war– after he came back from the war, he– I think he still lived at Haren; no, I never knew his parents and I'm sure he didn't either, because he was only 4 months old when his father died, and he was, I think, about nineteen, between nineteen and twenty-one, when his mother died. And there was - how many - there was about 12 children, I think it was, in the family, and one of the older brothers was married, lived in Haren, and I believe that he took me dad in when his mother died, because I can remember they became very, very close.

YG: Do you know what his name was?

BG: Konrad.

YG: Konrad? BG: Yes. YG: And the same surname as you. BG: Yes, yes.

BG: And I think the family– as far as I know, my grandparents on Father's side came from Holland and settled in– emigrated to Germany and settled in Germany. Now, when me dad bought that house in Lingen, the first house that he had, I don't know, I can't give a date, but it was obviously during a time shortly after they got married, because my sister was born in that particular house.

YG: What year did they get married? Do you know?

Tape 1: 8 minutes 0 second

[1] BG can use rural linguistic forms at times, probably reflecting the fact that he has lived in the countryside for much of his life in Britain [Editor's note]

BG: Yes, that would be– oh, one minute, let me think, it was 19– 1919 or 1920, one of those two dates, I'm not quite sure, I think it was 1919. And then he bought a second property in the town, and that's where I was born. And the first property was let then to a hairdresser. And he ran his business in this house, lived there and had a shop on the ground floor.

YG: Could you explain what your family life was like on a day-to-day level, what your house was like?

BG: Well, the house was rather large because it used to be a public house, and prior to that, it housed officers from a Hanoverian group of soldiers. Then, as I say, it was a pub, and me dad, after he bought it, ran it for another two years, and then closed the public house down. And eventually the house was converted into– wait a minute, one, two, three, five flats. We had the upstairs one, and a wing that was on the house, there was a flat upstairs, one downstairs, and the main building had two flats down below. And the idea of that was, because of the Nazi regime as it went on, my Dad always had an idea that if ever he was stopped from carrying on with his cattle-dealing business, he would be able to survive on funds and accumulated funds, and the rents that were brought in– that the properties brought in. Because there was another property at the rear of the ground, that housed two– well, they were semi-detached bungalows. And they were let, so there was a reasonable amount of money coming in rent-wise, how much in detail I don't know.

Tape 1: 10 minutes 43 seconds

I always had quite a happy and carefree life, had many friends and playmates, and felt as happy as any child could be until after the Nazis came to power, and then obviously things deteriorated to such an extent that I lost all friends and playmates, was verbally and physically assaulted in the playground, and always on the way home, but it didn't seem to bother me too much.

YG: And that was about 1933 was it?

BG: Well, shortly after, I suppose the first couple of years it wasn't so bad, but then when the Nazi doctrine was spread to such an extent and young kids were getting sort of told nothing else but to hate Jews and everybody else that the Nazis didn't want, and there was only one group of people that were going to do Germany any good, and that was the Nazis, and of course kids being organised into youth organisations, marching with bands and banners, this was something that any kid would be pleased to join and do. And of course the talk was always anti-Jewish and anti groups that the Nazis didn't like.

YG: And how did that feel to you as a young child, hearing all that going on around you?

BG: Well, I think I must say I probably had what you would call a thick skin and it run[2] off my back like water off a duck's back. It didn't seem to bother me, not in the least.

[2] see note 1 above

YG: Is that because you felt part of the community, so you felt quite safe?

BG: Well, I felt like an outcast, yes, to a certain extent, or somebody who nobody wanted anything to do with, and the others would have looked on it as me being somebody different, or something different, obviously being Jewish, that was the case.
But after the– I think this started in about 1935.

YG: And what school were you at at the time?

Tape 1: 13 minutes 34 seconds

BG: At this school of higher education. But after 4 years, me dad decided it wasn't worthwhile carrying on, because of the circumstances that prevailed in Germany, and I went to this– what they called the *Umschichtungsstelle* in Berlin.

YG: Had you been quite a keen student up to this point? Had you been interested in studies?

BG: No, not really, I mean, I was one of the worst scholars in the school, I'll admit that. And it never done me any harm though, I must say.

YG: So you found your friends turning against you, literally?

BG: Oh well, they did, I lost all me school friends, But as I was saying, in about 1934 I think it was, me dad– or '35 perhaps, more likely it'd be '35, we kept 2 cows. And I learned to milk and then looked after those two cows, took the surplus milk to the creamery before school, and so I was occupied, I had something to do in me spare time, and so I didn't miss my schoolmates at all. And I felt quite happy, as long as I was left alone.

YG: So he actually took you away from school, did he? You stopped going to school?

BG: Yes, and that was after– I would be 14. Went to Berlin, to this school, it was a– well, I suppose it was a training school for people that would eventually emigrate to Israel, but learn a trade, or the beginning of a trade, so that they didn't go as people that– as professional people. Because professional people weren't required in Israel at that time, at the beginning.

YG: Was your father still running his cattle business at that time? And the renting?

BG: Up to the time that I remember, yes. But whether they'd finished during the period, I think it probably would– when I was in Berlin, I don't know.

YG: And what about your mother? How did she occupy her time?

Tape 1: 16 minutes 5 seconds

BG: Well she was a full-time housewife. And we had a big garden, so there was a lot of fruit to be seen to, bottled and prepared and one thing and another, so I think she– although we had a maid as well.

YG: What was her name?

BG: The maid? I honestly can't remember. A non-Jewish person for the reason that they would do the sort of things that you weren't supposed to do under religious law in the home on the Sabbath. So that was part of the reason of having a maid. But life in general, I found it quite a happy youth even after I lost all touch with so-called friends and schoolmates, because I had plenty to occupy me at home.

YG: Did you not have any dealings with them at all? I mean in your private life, or just in cafés, in the street?

BG: Oh, nothing like that, no, no, nothing like that. We were– prior to the Nazi period, we played about very often at home, because we'd got a huge area, you know where you could play football, or whatever, play all sorts of children's games, you know, and out of the way of everybody, away from the public roads and anything like that. Although, you know, traffic in those days was practically nil. You could very nearly lie in the street without being run over. So, to give me a break, during the summer holidays in 1934, 1935 and 1936, me parents took me to me aunt and uncle in Holland, a place called Groningen.

YG: And what were your aunt and uncle called?

BG: Now what was their name? I know it was an uncle Simon– Weinberg, Weinberg. And they had an upholstery business. And I spent my summer holidays there and was allowed to go into the factory. And I sort of took part, in my way like, in starting upholstering furniture, and learned quite a bit that way, and thoroughly enjoyed my time, even to the extent that I learned to speak pretty fluent Dutch. 'Cause I remember going out to do some shopping for my aunt. And so this was something very special to me. And that was away from all the hassle and the– yeah, well, persecution and so on and so forth, and the ill-treatment after school and in the playground.

YG: So your former friends used to lie in wait for you and abuse you on the way home?

Tape 1: 19 minutes 36 seconds

BG: Well, yes, they sort of came out of school, it was more or less classmates, you know, their school finished at the same time as me and those that went on the same way home, they were the ones that done the molesting, well, physical assault. But even that didn't seem to bother me, I seemed to have, as I said, have the will and the power to ignore it.

YG: What about the teachers that had previously been quite nice to you?

BG: Oh, they were the same teachers from beginning to end. I never had any problems with any of the teachers. But, I mean, they didn't particularly defend you in any way, because had they done that, they would have been classed as being Jew-friendly. And therefore in the eyes of the Nazis would be classed as– not as proper German citizens even, certainly not as Nazi Party, well, party followers even or anything. So, I mean, it was a dictatorial state, so people - non-Jewish people - had to be very careful in what they said and what they done. And I think that was part of the reason that I was kept more at home with as little contact with other schoolmates, or former schoolmates, in case I said anything that I shouldn't have said and gone back and the result of this would be some sort of punishment for my father or the family in general.

YG: What happened to the other Jewish children in Lingen? Were they also kept at home, or did they go to other schools?

BG: Well, they were younger than me, most of them, so they were still at the elementary school, and I don't know in detail what happened to them, other than one family with three sons, they fled to Belgium; when the German army came into Belgium, they fled to France - went to Vichy France, as it was known - and of course that particular French government sent them back into France, well a north part, the northern part of France, to be arrested by the Germans.

YG: What was the name of this family?

BG: Cohen.

YG: Cohen?

BG: Cohen, yes.

YG: And the father's name?

Tape 1: 22 minutes 30 seconds

BG: Max. And they all perished in the concentration camp, I know. Some of the other families– well, most of them, were deported to Riga, in Latvia. Now, I got a message, I mean I was in Berlin at that time, didn't know they were deported or anything, no, I wasn't– I was in England, sorry, by that time, this was 1941, I think or '42, when the --- no, '41 when they were deported. And I got a– I was in contact by letter from home, then when– then after the war broke out, all correspondence stopped, other than you could write 25 words in a– through the Red Cross and that was the only contact you had. But my having a cousin in Amsterdam that married in the family, he– my parents used to send letters to him, and he passed them on to me, so I was in constant contact by post right up to the time that Holland was occupied. Then everything stopped.

YG: Can we go back to when you moved to Berlin at the age of 14. Did your sister also get moved to Berlin, or what was she doing at the time?

BG: Well, she went to a– as far as I can remember to a school for domestic science then perhaps you'd call it, near Cologne. But I have no details about that, none whatsoever: how long she was there, what happened, other than eventually she was deported with my parents. She must have come back to Lingen to be with the family or done her course of domestic science, I don't know. That would have happened after I left, after I came to England.

YG: So how did you feel when you had been told, 'You're moving to Berlin to go to school, quite a long way away from here.'

BG: I just took it.

YG: It was all in a day's work?

Tape 1: 25 minutes 11 seconds

BG: Yes, it didn't bother me. I soon met a young lad there, he was a little bit older than me, and we palled up and so I never felt lonely or anything, and there was a married couple there that were at the place, again training, as trainees if you like, and they sort of took to me and made a fuss of me, so I'd got– well I suppose you could say in some way a replacement mother and father, because they really took to me like, you know, and befriended me, more than perhaps anybody else.

YG: What did your parents tell you about why they were moving you there, did they explain it in any detail?

BG: No. I didn't know anything. I didn't even know what it was all about 'til a matter of perhaps 6 years ago, when I got in contact with the lady– with the wife of the person who ran the school. They moved to England, and I got through– by accident got to know her again, and it was this lady who told me what it really involved, namely training prior to emigration to Israel.

Tape 1: 26 minutes 44 seconds

YG: What did you learn in Berlin?

BG: I went through the metal side of it and the joinery. And then after, I got– I think it was through this school that I got onto the Kindertransport.

YG: How long were you in Berlin? Nine months?

BG: Nine months.

YG: And were you in constant contact with your parents?

BG: Oh yes, yes, yes, and obviously I didn't know that after the 9th of November, the Kristallnacht, my dad was arrested and was in Buchenwald concentration camp, this I didn't know. But prior to going on the transport, that was due to leave on the– I think it was to leave on the 12th or 14th of December '38, 1938, that I went home to say my goodbye to the families, to the family. That's when I discovered– that's the first I knew that my dad had been arrested and was in a concentration camp. Well, I had one night to be in– at home, and by coincidence that night my dad was released from the concentration camp, came home, and that's the first that he would have known that I was going to emigrate. And I often think had he not agreed with my mother, what would have happened. Because he obviously must have agreed with it, because I went on the transport. Otherwise I could have been drawn back from it or been withdrawn. The train for me next morning was to go back to Berlin so that I'd be there for the following morning to go onto the train that took me to England.

YG: Had you experienced any prejudice or victimisation while you were in Berlin?

BG: No, none whatsoever. We were in a sort of fenced-off grounds that were owned by a Jewish person. So we were fairly isolated and didn't have any trouble until about– what would that be, June or July, I suppose, 1938, when a group of Nazis came into the compound and burned the joiner's shop down, keeping everybody that was there as a group, isolated, so that we couldn't do anything to try and prevent it.

YG: How many people were at the school?

BG: Well, this must be a guess, but between 20 and 30, no more than that, if that many.

YG: And they were from all over Germany?

Tape 1: 30 minutes 9 seconds

BG: Yes, they came from all over Germany, and all ages as well. From school leavers like myself to people who had been professionally involved to, say, up to the age - again guessing the age – say, between 30 and 35 perhaps, or maybe even older, I don't know.

YG: Can you say more about where you actually lived in Berlin, and who you actually–?

BG: Well you lived at the school, you were billeted there, and you got a few language lessons, and the practical joiner work and metalwork, three months of each, like. I think they decided then that I would be best off at the joiner work and had extra time then in the joiner's shop. But I never felt homesick or anything, and was quite content because you were free to go out any time and this chap I palled up with, we used to go very often in our free time into Berlin in the city centre, you know, so you didn't feel that you were in any way stopped from doing anything that you wanted to do. Well obviously within

reason, but we were free to go out anytime we had any free time. And this chap that I palled up with, he went home just before the Kristallnacht, he left.

YG: What was his name?

BG: Hans Arnstein.

YG: Arnstein?

BG: Arnstein. His father ran a– so I understood, a big multiple store.

YG: Whereabouts?

BG: In Erfurt. And he went home on the night Kristall-night, he was arrested, finished up in Buchenwald concentration camp, came out of there in January 1939; with the Kindertransport, came to England, and by pure coincidence we met up again. In the meantime I'd been through– first of all, to a holiday camp at Lowestoft after arriving in England. It consisted of wooden huts, right by the seaside and we– they gave us a hot water bottle and that turned into ice during the night.

YG: Can you say a bit more about the actual experience of being on the Kindertransport and how it was arranged, and ---

BG: No, I've no recollection of that at all, you know, other than I know my mother must have given consent. I find– it must have been extremely difficult, because she wouldn't know what my father would say, would he agree to that, would it cause frictions? But obviously it didn't.

YG: What kind of person was your mother?

Tape 1: 33 minutes 47 seconds

BG: Very easy-going person and she never took advantage of the lifestyle she could have had, in the way such as clothing and jewellery and anything like that. She was very satisfied,

YG: Modest?

BG: Modest, yeah, had a modest life, definitely. That's how I remember her.

YG: And your father, what kind of man was he?

BG: He was a more dominating person. This led to me having a strict upbringing, I must say. But on the other hand, knowing now what happened, I think it was a good job, because I believe it helped me to overcome all difficulties and I knew how to behave myself, I never got into any trouble anywhere. The– yes, we landed, we were sent, a

group of us, the older boys, were sent to this holiday camp at Lowestoft. I remember the first night I undressed the same as I would at home to go to bed, but the rest of the time I was there I only took my shoes and overcoat off, nothing else.

YG: Do you remember arriving in England at all?

BG: No, the crossing– the last thing I remember was the reception we got, as I mentioned, at Oldenzaal in Holland, the first bit in Holland, after that I'm completely blank.

YG: Could you say a bit more about that reception?

BG: Well you– I mean there were quite a lot of Dutch people on the platform, and they literally showered us with cakes and biscuits and drinks of all sorts, cold drinks, hot drinks, tea, coffee, lemonade, orangeade, anything that anybody might want. And, you know, gave us generally a very, very pleasant reception. May I go back to the holiday camp there? Well, we were there about a week, and as I said the hot water bottles during the night turned to ice, so you can tell it wasn't a very pleasant life or reception. But I don't think– I can't remember anybody making a lot of fuss about it, because we looked at it as fun, as kids, like children would.

YG: How many people were there to a dormitory?

Tape 1: 36 minutes 48 seconds

BG: I think there'd probably be four at the most, there would be no more than that, because they were family chalets, you know, chalets. Well then, after that they moved us down to Dovercourt, another holiday camp, these were brick chalets and that was obviously a lot better, and I also spent a short time at the salvation army home at Harwich. Again I spent a short period in London, and a short period at Lord Rothschild's estate, at Waddesdon, in Buckinghamshire.

YG: Oh yes, was that a kind of refuge?

BG: That's right. But how long I was at those three– in any of those three places, I've no idea. But I didn't even remember that I ever went to Waddesdon 'til I came into contact with a chap that had been there. He belonged to a group that Lord Rothschild fetched over from a children's home in Frankfurt-am-Main in Germany. The people that ran the home approached him and asked if he could do anything. And he got them over, fetched them over as a group, the whole home, how many people, children were involved, I don't know. And gave them a cottage on the estate to live. And to make room at Dovercourt for the next transport, Kindertransport, they tried to get the children to as many places away from there to make room. And I was amongst those who went to Lord Rothschild's estate on a temporary basis.

YG: What year was this? Was this '38 still, or–?

BG: It could be the beginning of '39, I don't really know. No, actually, yes, must have been, because I mean it was only December when I came over, and that was mid-December so there wasn't a lot of time, and I'd been at Dovercourt and at Lowestoft in between, so it must have been '39. And I couldn't remember being there, I'd no recollection, I'd got some photos, I didn't know where they belonged to, a group. But I met a gentleman, I was recommended or asked to meet this gentleman, that lived just outside Burton-on-Trent, which is very near, and would I like to meet him. Which I did, and I took these photos and looked at them, and he looked at them, and he fetched this out and he'd got an identical photo that I'd got. And I said to him, did he know where this was taken, and he said 'Yes, that was taken at Waddesdon.' And that's how I found out that I'd ever been to Lord Rothschild's estate. And in the meantime I was sent with about 50 boys, we were sent to– because the British government allowed us to start work, but only in coal mines or agriculture.

Tape 1: 40 minutes 20 seconds

YG: You were 16 at the time?

BG: Yeah. And I could, I went– well they obviously knew I'd got a type of agricultural background, and I was sent with about 50 boys to what they called a farm training school.

YG: Did you speak English at the time?

BG: Very little, very little. And this training school turned out to be a Borstal institution. And it had a very, very bad and destroying effect on me.

YG: Where was that?

BG: Wallingford in Berkshire. Although in the meantime I'd had a full set of joinery tools sent by my dad over to England, and I don't know who got to know about it, I hadn't been broadcasting it, and I was sent out to a gentleman that worked or was employed, I must say - it'd be better - by Morris Motors in Oxford. And he lived in this big private house, and I was sent there to do some joiner work, such as making and fitting shelves in the house and then came to the fact that he thought I was capable of building a greenhouse. So I was away from the everyday running of the Borstal institution.

Tape 1: 42 minutes 5 seconds

YG: Could you say a bit more about the horrors of the everyday there, just why it was so unpleasant?

BG: Well, you see, I felt as though I'd been imprisoned, as though I'd done something wrong. And the boys that were there were convicted offenders and were all in a certain uniform, like a brown type of lumber jacket and shorts, I don't know what colour they were, I think they were black. And I felt extremely uncomfortable there.

YG: Why did they send you there?

BG: Well, to get agricultural training and get you off the– well, how shall I say this, the cost, to support yourself if at possible at all.

YG: Did it have a name, this place?

BG: Yes, it was called Wallingford Farm Training School. As I say, I wasn't too badly off, because I was away from the mainstream, working privately at this gentleman's house that told me that should war be avoided he would get me a job at Morris Motors. Well, of course war broke out, and I thought, well then, my job there finished, I'd done what he wanted me to do, back into the mainstream of the school.

YG: How long were you with this man in Oxford?

BG: Again, it's something I can't remember.

YG: Do you remember his name?

BG: No, there's no name that I can recall, nothing at all there. I think I was too preoccupied to get out of the place.

YG: Were you still in contact with your parents at this time?

Tape 1: 44 minutes 3 seconds

BG: No, no, this was– this must have been after Holland was invaded, or certainly shortly after anyway.

YG: Did your father keep you in touch with the situation at home?

BG: Oh, they daren't. I mean, that would be a criminal offence that would be punished, if not by death it would be punished by concentration camp.

YG: So what did they write in their letters?

BG: Just general things. Again, I haven't got any of their letters, and I'm ever so sad that I didn't keep their letters when I kept so much memorabilia from home.

YG: Can you remember the last letters that arrived?

BG: No, no. The last letters, literally the last letter, would have come prior to the occupation of Holland.

YG: Which was when?

BG: When was Holland occupied, good question. Well, war broke out in September '39, wasn't it? So it would have been probably in 1940 that Holland was occupied, I should imagine.

YG: You mentioned that your mother had the foresight to pack some photographs in your suitcase.

BG: Yes, I've still got the original album, although I've taken them out and put them in my own album, but I still got the original album that the photos were in that she sent. Anyway, so back into the mainstream of this training school: I volunteered then to go into the cowshed, because I knew I'd been used to handling cows, also was a very efficient milker, hand-milker. So– and I asked to go into the cowshed to prove that I was good enough to be sent out to a dairy farm, to be employed there. I was sent into the cowshed, I was in there for about a fortnight or three weeks, and they found me a job. On a big estate, farming estate, dairy farm, well dairy in general, farm in a place called Aston Rowant, at Lewknor in Oxfordshire.

YG: Could you spell that name

BG: Aston Rowant is A-S-T-O-N -two words, R-O-W-A-N-T, and Lewknor is L-E-W-K-N-O-R and that's in Oxfordshire. And it was a real gentleman's farm, I mean, and he was– he came over as a real gentleman, not what we generally term as a 'gentleman farmer'.

YG: What was his name?

BG: Dashwood, Hayes-Dashwood. Dashwood-Hayes, sorry, that way round. He treated me exceptionally well. I was called to the tribunal for aliens at Oxford and I can only remember that I walked in and practically walked out again without any problem at all. And I, to this day, honestly believe that his influence had a lot to do with that. And I was then classed as a friendly alien.

YG: So you weren't interned?

BG: I wasn't interned and I honestly believe not only because I was working on what they called 'work of national importance', but also because of his– well not interference, that would be wrong, well, his influence, that's it - I couldn't find the word for a minute - his influence on the proceedings, and obviously giving me an excellent reference, I suppose, as well. I think he– to this day, I honestly believe that he had a lot to do with me going through the tribunal without any bother whatsoever. I can't even remember any questions that may or may not have been asked. I stayed there for about three years in this place, and then after that - I was always in lodgings obviously - and I found then that I was free to travel as long as I reported to the police if it was outside a 5-mile radius, from the home and I got to the stage then that if I was fed up with a job or the lodgings weren't what I liked, I just used to pack my bags, so to speak, and went off.

YG: And how was your English by this time? Did you pick it up slowly?

BG: Oh, yeah, I know, I picked it up very quickly. It was a very, very short time being in this country, a relatively short time, that I wasn't even taken as a foreigner even, very often taken as Geordie, Welsh, or even Irish, but very seldom as a refugee or foreigner.

YG: Did you experience any prejudice or victimisation at all?

Tape 1: 50 minutes 16 seconds

BG: No, none whatsoever. The only incident that I remember, I was with a chap that I had palled up with, he was an Irish lad, and we went to this pub, been there several times, this was on a Saturday night, shortly after war broke out, and somehow this chap got to know that I came from Germany originally and I believe this caused him to be insulted and I believe this wasn't because of being Jewish, but this was because of being German, and war having broken out against Germany and this made him a little bit prejudiced. But I said to my mate– gave him a nudge, and we went out and left him there, you see. But that's the only incident that I can recall where there ever was any problem.

YG: Were you aware of the situation in Europe at that time?

BG: No, no. The only thing I knew that war had been declared and that there was some fighting going on, but nothing else, because they couldn't, even if they could have written to me, they couldn't write really what was going on. So I wandered about from different district to district, I worked for a time in Northumberland, I worked for a short time in South-East Scotland, and eventually made my way down here again and finished up– I worked on a farm just outside Derby here, about 3-4 mile out from Derby, for 22½ years, and worked there until I was sixty, was made redundant owing to some circumstances where it involves a long story, I won't go into that. I worked for the father first and then the son took over, worked for the son and we got on extremely well 'til something happened that I didn't agree with, and even his wife didn't agree with it and agreed with me, but anyway it led to frictions that hadn't existed at all. And, as I say, I was made redundant, because you can't very well sack somebody after 22½ years, can you, and say, well he's no good. So the thing was that I was made redundant, I then worked for a haulage contractor, driving the lorry and helping with the maintenance, then --- oh, no, I didn't, I worked for a land drainage firm first, then worked for a local haulage contractor 'til I retired.

Tape 1: 53 minutes 38 seconds

YG: And you were staying in different areas all this time?

BG: No, I was in lodgings. Oh, wait a minute, where was I? What happened when I went to Weston on Trent? We were married by then. That's right, I lived in the Farm Cottage at Weston on Trent. And then after about 10 years I think it was, slightly less than 10

years, I bought this house, so then I was independent, and that's why I managed– I could work for whoever offered me a job, I wasn't in a tied cottage. So the– that's how I could manage to work on this job, the land drainage job and then later on, as I said, on the road haulage firm.

YG: Well, we're near the end of tape one now, so we'll carry on with tape two in a minute.

Tape 1: 54 minutes 47 seconds

TAPE 2

YG: Beginning of tape 2, interview with Bernard Grunberg in Derby.

BG: Well, the– I came to the– I mentioned about the time that I worked in this one particular farm for 22 ½ years, then made redundant and–

YG: What was the name of that farm by the way?

BG: Weston on Trent. Hall Farm. Hall Farm, Weston on Trent.

YG: So could you tell us exactly what you were doing there?

BG: Well, my main occupation there was maintenance of agricultural machinery and lorry driving. I did very, very little fieldwork, practically none. So being someone who was always interested in tinkering about, you might say, I– yes, I could class myself as a semi-skilled mechanic and done quite a lot of the maintenance work for there and if it came to sometimes too big a job than they thought, or even that I thought maybe a little bit over the top as far as I'm concerned, or my knowledge goes, then outside professionals were fetched in, but it didn't happen very often at all. The other thing I did there, during the summer harvest time I was the person that drove the combine harvester and we did a lot of outside contract work on farms within the region here. So that was another main occupation during the harvest period. And also at a later stage they installed a grain dryer unit and in my– well, in the time that I was there and was available, I also looked after the grain dryer. So I had an occupation there that wasn't exactly farm work at all. I was working on a farm, but more on the basis like– perhaps like some big contractors. I thoroughly enjoyed this and had a happy time there, but I wouldn't have been there 22 ½ years if I hadn't enjoyed it.

Tape 2: 2 minutes 47 seconds

YG: What year did you actually start that work?

BG: Well I started working on that farm in 19– I've got to think a bit now, '58 or '59, I think.

YG: ’58 / ’59.

BG: I think so, I think that was about the time.

YG: But what had you been doing previously to date up to that point?

BG: Well, I was– I was at one farm in South-East Scotland, again I was doing lorry driving there, the farm lorry that is, and general farm work there, whatever came across, came on; and then again during the summer it was a big estate, a big farm that was, they ran three combines, and I was driving one of the combines during the harvest time, and the rest was general farmwork, whatever came across you know, with the rest of them. No, more tractor driving was part of the job, but nothing as specified or as detailed as I did at Weston on Trent.

YG: Right, so that was more casual work for a few months or a few years at a time, but not as intensive as–

BG: No, no, as I say, I was doing practically no farm work at all, practically none whatsoever. I was kept occupied more or less with the maintenance of the farm machinery, a bit of lorry driving and the combine harvesting, you know, so– and of course later on with the grain drying plant as well. And that went on, the grain drying, went on most years until Christmastime, and sometimes even beyond that. You know, grain that’s been stored on farms that were bought up by– in this particular case by a firm called Rank, Hovis and MacDougall, they bought the grain, and it had been stored but wasn’t dried down enough and they sent it to this– to our farm there to be conditioned and dried.

Tape 2: 5 minutes 20 seconds

YG: Did you feel your early family background had quite a bearing on your skills in this area?

BG: No, I don’t think so, I think the farming side, yes, because I’d had no training whatsoever, I had no education to any extent, I wasn’t one that could do night studies. That didn’t appeal to me at all, and that’s how I drifted onto farmwork. And never regretted it, I enjoyed the work, generally speaking. And it– the other part of it, the mechanical side of it, was something that I was interested in, and self-educated. You know, I never had any– was never in any sort of apprenticeship or anything to be taught. It’s just something I picked up. It started really with the first car I had, which I maintained totally myself, which– obviously in those days they were a lot more, they weren’t so sophisticated with computers and electronics and one thing and another, so you could do it yourself then. But now - this is something that I wouldn’t attempt now. But that brought me into an interest in machinery generally. And then after I retired, again I took something up that I’d never done before, and that was wrought iron work. And then, because of the incapacity of my wife, and me having to look after her as well as the house and everything else, I just lost interest in it because I couldn’t spend enough

time on it. And well, I felt she couldn't really be left alone for any long periods, so it meant her being in the house and me being in my workshop, as I call it, well it is a garden shed, more than a garden shed, and so I didn't bother to do any more of it.

YG: Can you say a bit more about your wife and how you met?

BG: Well, during the war she was in the land army.

YG: What was her name?

Tape 2: 8 minutes 0 second

BG: Daisy. She was in the land army, a Londoner by birth, and we sort of met through her working on various farms, and in one instance for a time on the one where I was working.

YG: Which one was that?

BG: That was one at– oh, what was it called, Stratton Audley that was near Bicester in Oxfordshire.

YG: And when was that?

BG: Oh that would be 1940– yeah, somewhere between 1940 and the end of the war, '45, certainly before the end of the war. And, as I said, eventually we got married and I got naturalised as soon as it was possible after the war to be naturalised, and I feel, I can say this, I feel today that maybe that I feel more British than someone who was born in this country. Germany to me is not– is a town– is a country where I was born, but it's not my home country.

YG: Do you speak German still?

BG: Oh yes, I do, I picked it up again. Germany as such is to me– is the same as to a British-born people, person, namely a foreign country in Europe, that's what Germany means to me now - although I had to take German citizenship back on account of applying for a small pension from Germany. But the thing is, although I was born there, brought up there, and through no fault of my own, the citizenship has been taken off everybody - in my case as well - all refugees, all Jews even, and in spite of that they didn't give you simply your citizenship back, even now you are classed as a naturalised German subject. And I find this insulting. And I mean, I wouldn't apply for a German passport if it was the last thing I needed. I wouldn't have a German passport at any price. Because, namely, because of one reason: that I don't consider Germany to be anything but, as I said a foreign country.

YG: How did your wife respond to your background and your experiences?

BG: Accepted it, never questioned it.

YG: How old was she when you met?

Tape 2: 11 minutes 20 seconds

BG: Well I was in my early twenties, and she was a bit older, she was 5 years older than me. But nothing seemed to interfere with that at all. I mean, I never– well, I didn't talk about it a lot, she would listen to it, but I don't think it really sunk in, you know, because she couldn't put herself in that sort of position.

YG: What was her background?

BG: She'd always been a shop assistant. She worked as a book binder at one time: mind you, this was a long time before we met, also worked in a flower shop and then worked in– did do part-time work on some of the farms where I worked, in others where it was possible, she got a job as shop assistant.

YG: Was she working in London at all?

BG: Yes, yes.

YG: Whereabouts was she brought up?

BG: Maida Vale, Maida Vale. So she took to the countryside quite easy and also took to the moving about, you know, didn't seem to– well, at least she never complained about it, but if she did really inwardly feel that it was about time we stopped wandering about, I don't know. She certainly didn't say anything about it. And of course then in about– yeah, it would be about 30 years ago, 31 years ago, I bought this property and then settled there ever since.

YG: So you'd saved money with all your jobs through the years?

BG: Yes I, I was put on that by a gentleman that befriended me, very much so, we got very close, him and his family, and he suggested I should take an endowment policy out and pay as much as I could afford. And at that time I was paying £10 a week into this endowment policy. It was– I was single then, mind, and it was just about how much I could afford though anyway, without cutting myself short. But I wasn't one to run about into pubs or to gad about, I was quite content to be at home, or such as it was. Probably the first three years of when I was working, probably I would have been far too tired anyway, because I was working from at least six o'clock in the morning 'til six at night, and during the summertime when the cows were outside in the fields, I had to fetch them in and I used to go out at about 5 o'clock in the morning so as a young lad, literally a young lad of 16, going out didn't appeal to me at all, I was too tired. Except this chap I palled up with, the Irish lad, we used to go out perhaps at the weekend, on Saturday and sometimes on the Sunday but not very often.

YG: What was his name?

Tape 2: 14 minutes 47 seconds

BG: Jeff. But I don't know his other name at all. So I was quite content with a quiet sort of life and, as I said, this chap got me in the– got me onto the idea of having an endowment policy, this was running for 25 years, it matured when I was 45, no, 49, was it 49 or 45? Yeah, 49, that's right, I was 24 at the time, and it paid out just under a thousand pound. Well, that went straight into a building society, I didn't have to touch it, and in between I'd taken out other policies, because it appealed to me as a compulsory saving. And all these– I say all these, I think it was two, or was it three, either two or three, I don't– I forget now, that I'd taken out over the period of years, as I could afford it, and they all matured when I was 65. I maintained no more insurance payments after that. I'm going to have the benefit of it then. Well then, of course, on top of that the restitution all came in after the war - you've probably heard of it - and I'd got– well, I don't know how much, but it must have been a considerable sum, because it come in bits and pieces. As each section was completed and paid out, that was it, I received the money.

YG: What happened to your family home? Was it sold?

BG: It was a forced sale, yes. And also the first house I mentioned, where my sister was born, that was sold private, prior to the forced sale. But the rest of the property and ground, and a piece of grassland, that my dad owned, that was force-sold, sold by force, he had to sell it. And of course none of it fetched– was paid the value, and under the restitution law– I never had any intention of going back to live in Germany anyway, never had even any intention of going back, leave alone living there, so I had no interest in taking any of the property back, which I could have done. Although when I think today, it's a pity I didn't have that piece of grassland back, 'cause eventually that came within the city boundary, it housed a Co-op supermarket and a petrol filling station. So that would have increased in value terrifically from what it was originally, but anyway, I mean, that's water under the bridge as far as I'm concerned, often think about it, but not in a way that I'll say oh, why didn't I do it? I didn't do it, so that's it, forget it, you know. It's not bothering me.

YG: And did you try to find out what happened to your family when you lost touch with them?

Tape 2: 18 minutes 15 seconds

BG: Yes, in 1947, I think it was, either '6 or '7, I got a letter from the Red Cross out of the blue to say that my parents and sister had been deported to Riga in Latvia and nothing further had been heard of them. Well, I hadn't even heard of Riga. Had they said deported to Buchenwald or Dachau or Oranienburg or anything like that, I would have known that meant a concentration camp. I had no idea what Riga meant, or was, and I

just put it off and thought to myself, 'Oh, well, they'll turn up again someday and we'll all be reunited.' That was the– that's how I accepted this letter from the Red Cross.

YG: Where were you living at the time?

BG: I was in South East Scotland at that time. Anyway, then in 1983 when the town where I was born invited me back to attend the unveiling of a memorial to the Jewish families that lived in the town, this lady that lives in London, she went to Riga with her family and knew my family. And we met there and she was born in the same town as me, and we knew each other as kids, and she didn't want to tell me anything about Riga, but I insisted and practically forced her to tell me.

YG: Had you learned anything in all that time?

BG: Up 'til that time I didn't know anything what Riga meant.

YG: So what did you think?

BG: Well, I was devastated. I mean, it really affected me very, very badly and, yes, I could say there was buckets of tears came. And it went on for quite a while afterwards and then it eased off but it never stopped. Many a time the wife would be in the other room, I'd be in here, I'd come in here purposefully to be on my own. And this happened for years after that. I'd have to be entirely on my own, nobody else around and I'd cry my heart out and then things would be alright again and I could cope.

YG: Did you find out the details of what happened?

Tape 2: 21 minutes 5 seconds

BG: Yes, well not the detail other than they were murdered there. The other thing I found out, it was that when the Russians started coming forward and it looked like they may overrun Riga camp, the Nazis forced a certain group of the inmates, so I understand, on a forced march, another group could have been a group from there, that was put on this ship at Gdansk harbour and told they were going home. When the boat was out in the Baltic Sea it was torpedoed and no attempt was made to rescue anybody.

YG: Do you know what boat that was?

BG: No, I don't know the name or anything detailed. The only thing I know is that it was true, because a Professor of History from the University, I take it, in Jerusalem, was at Beth Shalom and this came up, and I asked him was it possible that my mother and daughter– sister were on that boat and was it– did it actually happen? He said 'To both questions I can say, yes without any doubt whatsoever.'

YG: So your family were definitely on that boat?

BG: Well, as far as he could ascertain. I mean he doesn't know, nor do I, but he specifically said that that boat and the torpedoing of it, did happen. That was so. There was a possibility that my mother and sister were on that boat. Three months prior to the end of the war, Ruth - that's the lady that lives in London - had seen my mother and sister. They'd been on an outside work, outside, working outside the camp, on a farm. And they were brought back in when the Russians started coming forward. And up 'til that time she said they didn't look bad at all because they probably had extra food. But what happened after that she doesn't know because they weren't allowed to talk to other inmates, it was a serious offence if they were caught, and she said she didn't see them again, she thinks that a possibility is that they died of typhoid or pure starvation, you know, nothing, you don't know. There's no definite proof one way or the other. But to me, what does it matter, to me they were murdered. How it happened, whether they were stood against a wall and shot, whether they were left to die of typhoid, whether they died of starvation, to me its all murder. I don't see it as anything else but murder. Because had it not been for that, or been forced into that, they'd probably be alive, well not today, my sister yes, perhaps, but they would have lived longer, put it that way, my parents.

YG: And this lady, Ruth, what's her surname?

Tape 2: 24 minutes 40 seconds

BG: Ruth Foster at the moment.

YG: And where does she live?

BG: In North London, North London, yes. Not far from Tottenham, I don't think, it's very close to where she lives. I don't know what they call that district. No, I don't know

YG: Finsbury Park maybe?

BG: No, it's– oh, what's it, the nearest Tube station might give a clue. No, can't think of it now, it might come back.

YG: When you found out about your family, how did it colour your perception of the past or change your attitudes?

BG: It didn't change my attitude or the thoughts of the period at all. I mean, I knew then– 'til I knew that my family personally was involved, up 'til then I knew what concentration camps meant and what the final– what Hitler called the 'Final Solution' meant, that it meant the destruction or the murder of any Jewish person that could be found, and also what's it, oh, any disabled persons, gay people, anybody like that, gypsies, that didn't comply with the Nazi doctrine, or they were sent to concentration camps and were murdered there. So you know, but until I found out the fate of my own family, up 'til that time I must admit there was a few tears shed, especially in that place where I was for the first three years because I was totally on my own then, strange surroundings, very little knowledge of English, nobody spoke German, so it did affect me

a little bit and I think it was probably more homesickness than anything else, but apart from that, the – well, there wasn't any hatred, but the dislike then - the intense dislike of Germany and what happened didn't come 'til much later. But after I'd spoken to Ruth in Lingen and found out more detail of what happened, it had a very, very bad effect on me. It– but I could cope with it by, yes, letting it out, so to speak, through crying on my own, when I was on my own, walk out next morning to go to work and I was a totally ordinary person again.

YG: So how many years did you have to carry it within you like that?

Tape 2: 28 minutes 36 seconds

BG: Can I tell you; even to this day it happens. I might be in this room, I might be in the other room, doesn't matter, sit there, I might have the television, radio on, music on, CDs on, or - what's it - tapes on, and all of a sudden my thoughts go back and without even trying the tears flow. May only be for a few seconds, may be a little bit longer, but it's there. And that will never stop. And, one time, I couldn't talk about it because I got very emotional and just broke down with crying. But now, having done it several times, and also doing it, having done it several times at Beth Shalom, it, I can cope with it. I sometimes have to stop a second or two just to compose myself again, but I haven't had to break down completely. I haven't– well, I haven't broken down completely since, after that. So I suppose that's a plus. But the horrors of what happened will stay with me for ever, certainly to the grave. And as far as forget and forgiveness goes, never. How can I? But at the same time, I've often said it, I will not blame the children for what the parents may have done. That to me would be totally wrong and unacceptable. And because of that I can go back to Germany, make friends with people but totally ignore anybody that was– even was only my age at that time.

YG: Do you recognise people; do you come across people that you actually knew?

Tape 2: 31 minutes 10 seconds

BG: Yes. And I would have turned them round, with the greatest of pleasure and put me foot on that part of the body that they sit on. That's putting it polite. I would have had the greatest of pleasure in doing that.

YG: So how did you feel when you were invited back to your hometown of Lingen? When did that happen?

BG: '83, I think it was, and, of course, that's when I got to know the full story of what really happened. One little instance that happened: I'd been there a few days then, it happened one evening in the hotel foyer. Several people were sitting there, we have become good friends, I must say, by now, but not by that time, it was– I met them the first time. And one of them turned round and said, 'Aren't you proud to be back in your hometown again?' And I screwed my face up a bit - I well remember it - and I said to him, 'What?'. 'Aren't you pleased to be back in your hometown?' And I said, 'This isn't

my hometown, this is the town where I was born, no more, nothing else, and I said, 'I might tell you the proudest possession that I have got today is this [gestures], my British passport.' Never ever was anything mentioned like that before or similar. They just take it for granted that I've come back, I'm coming back each year, no more.

YG: What brought on the initiative of you being invited back?

BG: Well, the unveiling of a memorial to the Jewish families that lived in the town and that was so brutally murdered. Because there were only 5 survivors out of the total Jewish community there. At present day there's only 2. But the other three died a natural death.

YG: And who is the other one?

BG: It's Ruth Foster in London. And she lived– well, and her parents lived just around the corner from where I lived, I knew the family like, and her especially - I mean right from the– as soon as you can, from the time that you can remember anybody, put it that way. So I was quite young when I knew them. But no, I mean, I've had no animosity against Germans or anything against them, but I've had the– well, I wouldn't say the pleasure, I've had the opportunity to meet, yeah, 5 former schoolmates, 2 of them I know were decent folk, and so were their families. One of those, I believe, has died since. I've contacted– I've been in contact with them, and we've met, spoken, and I was quite at ease with them. Another 3, that I couldn't remember their names, have come forward and introduced theirselves, and I've made it abundantly clear without saying anything that I don't want them. And they've taken the hint and they've never attempted to come again, come forward again. Then a teacher that belonged to the high school in Germany, obviously an English teacher, she done some translation when there was an Israeli group, and I happened to be over there at the same time, came to visit this memorial school that used to be the old school, the memorial hall, and to visit that, and she came as interpreter from English to German and vice versa. Because they were an Israeli group, they could speak enough English to understand the conversation and, on the German side, there was very few who could understand enough English to follow anything that was being said. And she done the interpretation and at the end she came to me and said, 'You were at our school, weren't you?' and I said, 'Yes', and she said, 'Why haven't you been back?' I said, 'You want a good answer,' I said, 'I've never been asked.' And I said, 'I don't go anywhere where I haven't been asked to go'. 'Oh well,' she said, 'we'll put that right.'

Tape 2: 36 minutes 28 seconds

YG: How did that feel to be back there after all that time? Was the reception on the whole very welcoming?

BG: Oh, very welcoming, yes. There's no– nothing like what I'd sort of visualised, you know. They sort of treat you as– sort of say, that little Jew boy that used to be– it was nothing like that at all, no, no, quite pleasant. Although I took a lot of persuasion to go, but after that it put me quite at ease. And anyway, then I was invited eventually to come to talk to a class that she - this lady - was teaching .

YG: What was her name?

BG: No, no idea, can't remember, 'cause I only met her that once, anyway, well twice, second time was when she took me to the school, introduced me to the present headmaster and he said to me, he said, 'Why haven't you been here, come back, before?' I said 'I've never been asked, and as I've mentioned before, I don't go anywhere where I'm not invited.' So that's been the end of that. So whether he took that as I didn't want to go again, doesn't matter, I've never been. I've got invitations from plenty of schools to speak, to tell my story, without going there particularly. It's usually every year when I've been I've had an invitation to speak to groups of pupils at various schools. There was one instance, you might be surprised to hear, there was 150 children assembled from this particular school and you could have heard a needle drop. So intense did they listen.

YG: Was this here in England?

BG: Yes, yes. I've been to two different schools here in Derby, but that's– since then it seems to have faded, nothing more's ever come from that, so that's it, if they want me there I'm here, if they don't want me, I'm still here. You know.

YG: What measures have they taken in Lingen to try to take responsibility for what happened?

BG: Well, I don't know: what they have done is to try to keep the history of that period alive. By, for instance, as I said, having this memorial stone put in the Jewish cemetery for me, having a wreath-laying ceremony every November, on the 9th of November, having bought the old former Jewish school, at great expense, I do know that, and renovated it and put it into a remembrance place, as they call it, that's the only way I can translate it, and putting all sorts of memorabilia from the Jewish families and their history as far as possible, within this schoolroom. It's only– well, it's about as wide as this, maybe a little bit wider, and perhaps twice, maybe three times the length. It's not a very big place at all, I mean, I don't know, you saw a photo there on the video, I'll let you see some photos of that if you've got time. And so as I mentioned before, I feel obliged to support it, or support the effort that they're making, because at the moment I'm the only, the only survivor that still goes there.

YG: Does Ruth go there?

Tape 2: 40 minutes 46 seconds

BG: She's– well, she's not physically able to go now, she's very bad on her feet and legs from walking and that, you know.

YG: The other three, did they used to go there as well?

BG: No, no. Although one of them in particular, I do know, I don't know what happened to the other two, one that lived in– a lady that lived in America, they invited her and paid the expenses, but she wouldn't have it, she said that– well, the memories are too bad anyway, maybe she was a bit prejudiced that way, but I'm not, I didn't mind it at all. I did the first time, I'll admit, because I wasn't sure what sort of– the reception would be, but after the initial meeting with people there, I feel quite at ease. And I–

YG: How many times have you been back there?

BG: Every year since. At least once, sometimes more than once. I was back there last January, but only on a flying visit. A cousin of mine, well a second cousin, that's this lady that I showed you, that I pointed out on the video–

YG: What's she called?

BG: Ruth, Ruth Grünberg. The same family, this goes back to my father's side. Her granddad and my dad were first cousins. So her father and my father were cousins. And I'm his first cousin to him, second cousin to him rather, and the daughter and myself we're third cousins, if you like, third generation cousins. And he died in January. He'd been in the Riga camp, was deported, as a– he was, I think he was 15 or 16 years old and came out and started a cattle dealing business in the town where he– where his parents lived and that–

YG: What was his name?

Tape 2: 42 minutes 52 seconds

BG: Oh, Louis. Louis Grünberg. And he married there, they had a family of six children, and this Ruth in Lingen, she's like the third cousin of mine, she's one of the family. I met the rest of her brothers and sisters during the funeral of her dad because I was determined to get over there, you know, no matter what or how. And, yeah, I suppose in some ways, not that it matters, I mean, just as a matter of passing, it was probably the most expensive funeral I'll ever attend, perhaps except my own, you know, but that didn't matter. I wasn't bothered about that, I was determined to go, although we weren't ever so close, but we've met again through me having gone back to Lingen, and he lived nearby, and he was always invited to any special ceremonies, and that's how we got to know each other. And the daughter, especially because she lived at that time, well still does, lived in Lingen itself. And so– and I felt obliged because he was the only relative I knew of, or know of, that properly is still alive, or was still alive. Because my father was a– came from a family, I think, of 12 children, was it 11 or 12 children, I don't know now, yeah, I think it was 12. And so the age span– he was the youngest. Some of the– I can remember meeting his older sister and, I mean, I must have been quite young then, I can only very faintly remember it, but I remember thinking 'Well that's not my aunt, that must be my grandma.' You know, so you could tell the age gap was terrific. And those that did get married, married quite a while before my dad, so me cousins from Father's

side would be at least anything between 15 and 20 years older than me. So there's very little chance that they might be alive.

YG: Did any of them survive the war?

Tape 2: 45 minutes 25 seconds

BG: Yes, they emigrated, quite a few of them. There's one family with three children, they went to South America; there's two cousins went to South Africa, there's a cousin went to Israel; there's another cousin went to Cuba; then on Mother's side a brother and his family, the two children, I pointed the two out in a book, in the photo album, they went to America; another cousin of mine, apart from the two families that I mentioned, another one, she survived in Holland, married, I think she lost her husband, I'm not sure, or got divorced, married again, went to Switzerland, then to America, and died in America, I do know that. But she's about my age.

YG: What's she called?

BG: Hetty, Hetty Ness. And, but I've never kept in touch with any of them. Because I had this feeling that nobody bothered to try and do anything to help my parents. And I've been proved wrong, I'll admit that.

YG: And what kind of help did your parents get?

BG: Well, none really, other than he got in– I know he phoned– he was in contact with his brother that had emigrated earlier to South America, by phone, but this was after I'd been away, after I came over here. Now I must tell you this, this is a horrible story. The first time I went back to Lingen, there used to be a bakery where we always dealt. And I often used to go there and collect the bread for home. And two sisters and a brother run it. The brother wasn't there, I think he died, yes he'd died by then. These two sisters were still alive, had sold the business, and always were very friendly, and I can remember I'd usually get a cake or something like that, some bit of bakery thing, whenever I went there to collect bread or whatever it may be. And I always expected them to be very friendly. And Ruth was with me then, and she said, 'Shall we go and visit the Sauerbreis?' as their name was. And I said 'Yeah, alright then.' I went and I got a very, very cool reception. And on the wall was a wooden frame with 6 pewter spoons. And I looked at them and I thought, 'I remember we having had something like that at home.' But didn't say anything because I thought, 'Well maybe they're duplicate', you know, they needn't be them ones. All of a sudden one of the sisters turned round and said, 'Those spoons, they came out of your house, but you can't have them because I promised them to somebody else and their name is on the back of it.' And she said, 'You know, these phone calls to South America weren't cheap.' I thought, boy, how could anybody be as inhuman as that. I came out– as soon as I was outside, I cried my heart out. Needless to say, I never went there again.

Tape 2: 49 minutes 31 seconds

YG: I'm not surprised.

BG: When I told– it came up in conversation with the curator of the local museum there. I told him what had happened, he happened to mention their name, and had I gone back there or did I visit them or anything, and I told him the story. He said, 'They didn't do that!' I said, 'They did'. 'Well,' he said, 'they ought to be ashamed of themselves.' And that was the only unpleasant - to put it mild - reception from any time or anybody since I've been going back there. But, needless to say, as I mentioned, I wouldn't even acknowledge them if I met them, had met them since, in the street. I don't think they 're alive any more. The other instance was the ceremony that they made to– for the Honorary Citizen Certificate. The Town Hall made a big do about that, you know.

YG: What was that?

BG: Getting the honorary citizenship of the town, of Lingen. The ceremony that they held to do that, I don't know how many guests they had. The Town Hall really made a feast of it, you know, and this particular chap, a Jewish person, he went back to Germany, lived in the region of Osnabrück, I think it was, very much involved with the Jewish living and life and people for the whole district, which included Lingen, he was there, he sat on the same table as me; he must have known who I was, because of what had been said prior, we had met before, he totally ignored me. Next time I saw him, Ruth and I, that's Ruth Foster and I, we were both there again on a visit, walking up this main street in Lingen, and who should come the opposite way, him. Ruth stopped, I walked on, and totally done the same thing he did to me, ignored him. All of a sudden, I didn't go that far past, Ruth called out, 'You can come here, you know.' I said 'Oh yeah, I know that,' I wouldn't turn round even. And I thought, well, I felt ever so pleased with myself, to have paid back. And well, apparently he wasn't the best-liked person anyway, but again that's water under the bridge now. But no matter how many times I would meet him, I'd ignore him each time if I ever met him again. So that gives me great satisfaction I can say. Perhaps it's not something anybody or everybody would agree with but, as I say, that's me.

YG: Of course.

BG: And nobody would change that. I'm too long in the tooth for that.

Tape 2: 53 minutes 25 seconds

BG: The other thing there that they've done, the Town Hall, as I say, apart from that, they've put this memorial stone up for the families, they've put a memorial stone up to say where the synagogue used to be, or as near as they could, and are very much involved with it. And also - I think it was mentioned in the video there - I was asked– I had stopped making the wrought iron work, but one of the lads that had been here, he was the one that walked into the station with me on the video there, he approached me, he said, 'Look,' he said, 'Anne,' - that's a lady who's very much involved with this, with the whole memory, to keep the memory alive, very much so, very active, and deserves all

support that she can get - he said, Anne had asked me, 'Do you think you would be willing to make the entrance gates to the old school and the memorial garden there?' I said, 'Well, ' I said, 'yes, I'll do it, but it might take a little bit of time, because I haven't got that much time each day,' but, I said, 'I'll do it and I won't charge anything for the work, if the Town Hall is prepared to pay for the material.' Well, when I got it all summed up, it was that little that I thought, 'No, I'll do it, providing you're prepared to put a little plaque there to say who made it and donated it, then,' I said. 'The only expense you'll have is to fetch it,' I said, 'I can't transport it in the car, it's too big.' Well, the gates I could have done, but not the posts. Because by the time the gate itself is about 5 foot 6 to 6 foot high, then the posts will have to be at least 18 inches into the ground, and perhaps be a little above the gate height, so there was no way could I transport them. No that's no problem, they came in the van and fetched it.

YG: Well, we've just reached the end of tape 2 now, so we'll be with you again in a moment.

BG: OK.

End of Tape 2

TAPE 3

YG: Tape 3, Interview by Yvonne Gordon with Bernard Grunberg. Though you don't actually have any regrets about leaving Lingen, at the same time you wouldn't want to live there again, or entertain–

BG: No, I've never regretted that I had to go out of there, although obviously circumstances altered my life completely. I don't really know what would have happened, but certainly it would have been a different life altogether from what I've had to live. But that didn't play on my mind at all. I was only too– I only realised a little bit later how lucky I was to get away from that, from a certain murder, and that includes the 10,000 mainly Jewish children that came over on the Kindertransport. I mean, they would have been practically certain to have been murdered. So you've got a lot to be thankful for.

YG: Do you think you might have followed your father into the cattle business or if you would have followed another profession?

BG: I don't think I would have done. I don't really know. As I got older, I seemed to get more interested in machinery and so I suppose I would have liked to've perhaps run an agricultural machinery business and repair shop, you know, something like that, and be more responsible for agricultural machinery. But whether that would have happened that way, I don't know. I'll admit the property that we owned, or my dad owned, would have certainly have been well suitable to have run a business from there. And I suppose as mechanisation increased, demand obviously would have increased as well. But it's very hard to say. I mean, looking back, if I had an opportunity, that's what I would have done,

certainly would have done. But as for going back, it never entered my head to go back there to live, certainly not. Because I am of the opinion that if circumstances in Germany turned out to be, say, the same as they were in 1933, and somebody with a big enough mouth promised to do this, that and the other, then there would be much the same sort of thing going on in Germany, except that the Jew population, the Jewish population, wouldn't be large enough to persecute so they'd probably go onto a foreign people. Foreigners that lived– came into the country after the war, they would be the main target then. I mean in some cases at sometimes, they've already targeted some groups in Germany, have targeted foreign workers. But you know, so I didn't want to go through all that again once, having had a very happy, peaceful life here in England, grateful for being accepted here, that I've no intentions whatsoever ever to go back to Germany to live.

YG: And how do you feel your identity as a person. Do you identify with Judaism in any form? Are you a practising person?

Tape 3: 3 minutes 57 seconds

BG: No, I'm not a practising Jew at all, I don't hold back if anybody sort of hints to that effect. I mean, sometimes I've been asked, you know, or been said through a conversation, it was said that I'd been born in Germany, and, 'How long have you been in England?', 'Oh, since 1938.' 'Oh, that was before the war, did your parents come out?' And I said, 'No, unfortunately they were murdered in a concentration camp.' And nine times out of 10 the person that you were talking to will say, 'Oh I take it they were Jewish then?' I say, 'Yes,' and I mean, that was it. I don't make a song and dance about it particularly. I might tell you, here in the street where I live, up 'til the first time that the Holocaust memorial was held in this country, and Derby took an active part, there was only one family here in the street knew the details and knew that I was Jewish. Nobody else knew. All they knew, and never asked, all they knew was, well, he's the chap that came from Germany. Why should I inform them of something which may or may not have repercussions? And I was asked then to take part in the Memorial, the Holocaust Memorial Day thing here in Derby and I was a bit reluctant. And the person - it was a Jewish person by the way - said to me, 'Well, we've never had any trouble and we've lived in Derby for a long while and we've never had any problems, so we can't see that you should have.' I said, 'Well,' I said, 'There's idiots within any community and I've never come across any sort of anti-Semitism or bad behaviour from anybody towards me,' and I said, 'I've had it peaceful and I'd like it to carry on like that.' But anyway I was persuaded to come out with it, and since then I've been interviewed by the local press, I've been interviewed by Derby– Radio Derby, I've been interviewed by the East Midlands– BBC East Midlands Television so, you know, the whole town, the whole city would know by now. Except that nobody's given the full address, which I obviously didn't want, and they respected that. But I said, otherwise I– well, every Holocaust Memorial Day I would take an active part now. They have an all-faith service in Derby Cathedral, and I done a reading there last year. The other involvement I've got is with Beth Shalom, the Holocaust Memorial Centre which, again, I honestly believe is something I've got to do as a survivor of the Holocaust. If we – and I mean this for

everybody - if we as Holocaust survivors, can't support an active part like Beth Shalom that has been built up by a non-Chris–, non– Jewish family, I should say, then who should, or who could? I mean they need every bit of recognising that they can get and support, and they certainly get mine.

Tape 3: 7 minutes 51 seconds

YG: So do you give talks there regularly?

BG: Every time I've been asked. I've had to turn it down once, that was on one particular Sunday, about 6 weeks ago, because I'd got a visitor coming and I definitely couldn't put that off, it was too late, I wasn't informed 'til Friday, could I come on the Sunday. But otherwise, every time I've been asked - there've been quite a few times - I've without any hesitation accepted that. They mainly do it during the month of August, every time they have visitors, but otherwise it's just done providing there's a large enough group have booked to come. Then they'll try and get someone to talk about their experiences.

YG: And you're also involved in the AJR meetings from time to time.

BG: Oh yes, yes. That came about because the Kindertransport was a separate organisation. And then when Bertha Leverton that, well, sort of organised it, when she retired from it, the AJR took over, and the Kindertransportees and the AJR amalgamated, and anybody from the Kindertransport that wanted to carry on joined the AJR then. And it's sort of the AJR– I suppose a branch of the AJR you could say, is the Kindertransport.

YG: And they have regular meetings in this area, do they?

BG: Yes, they usually have it in Nottingham. We did have one meeting, one particular meeting, once, at Beth Shalom. Why they didn't carry on with it, I don't know, but now there's usually two families, two private houses, that make their house available for meetings. It's only a relatively small group of people that come, anyway. Although the group itself - the AJR group - covers a much wider area than say Nottingham and Derby, but it includes Leicester, Newark, and all around in that circle, but most of the people find that it's too far to come and either haven't got transport or are perhaps even getting to that age where they are unable to attend, you know because of physical disabilities, so that's understandable, but it's quite a pleasant get together and I enjoy it. I've also been asked here to take part in a– well, mainly older people's– an elderly people's group, a Christian group. Well, I went once, but I felt totally uncomfortable, and I never went again. Although they keep in contact, well, the leader of that group, but it's– I don't know, I didn't feel comfortable there at all. You know, if I'd have kept on going, I might have eventually but, no, it didn't appeal to me at all. So I politely stayed away, put it that way. But I don't know, it's not because I can't mix with people, It's not that, but I just don't feel right. Whereas with Beth Shalom and the AJR, that's something I look forward to each time, and Beth Shalom especially. I mean the Smith family there, well they're more than just the Smith family to me. Always when people ask me, 'Do you come here often,' and I say, 'Yes, it's my second home,' and that's how I feel.

Tape 3: 12 minutes 14 seconds

YG: Did your wife used to come with you to Beth Shalom?

BG: No, no she's never been. Because for one thing she was sort of partially invalided then, and to go and see the exhibition that's downstairs and going downstairs which was going to be difficult and there was no– at that time - there is now - there was no wheelchair facilities to go around the garden. So you know– but I don't think, I don't know, it was never mentioned, but I don't think she was that particularly interested in the whole affair, you know.

YG: Was she actually religious herself? Was she a Christian?

BG: She was a Christian, yes, Church of England but, again, didn't mean anything to her. I mean, it wasn't that she went to church or anything like that, didn't come into it. So, well, we were both people that didn't follow any religion at all. I was asked once, well invited to go to Nottingham, with a Jewish couple here from Derby, to go to Nottingham to a liberal Jewish synagogue and attend a service, again reluctantly I went, and it didn't mean anything to me. For one thing, again a lot of people wouldn't agree with me, but my contention is, there's no two ways: you either are religious and stick by the book whereas the liberal Jewish community, and the other - what's the other group now - the liberal and the reformed Jewish communities, they've only made their own religion to suit their selves, and to me: no, not on. I'd rather be honest and say, no, I'll have nothing to do with it, than pretend. Look, I know there's no other way, perhaps it's better than not at all. Those people that live here in Derby, for instance, any Jewish family - I only know one family, but there may be others - supposing they go to Nottingham, what they got to do on a Saturday, the first thing they do is go against their own religion by getting into a car or whatever transport. So how can they be religious when they're breaking the, well, the simple rules, religious rules to start with.

YG: So when you say you're Jewish, are you referring more to a historical identity?

Tape 3: 15 minutes 8 seconds

BG: Well, I suppose I would be the same when I say– that would be the same as somebody else saying, 'I'm a Church of England goer or I'm a Catholic' or whatever. But not– as I say, non-practising. I would never deny that I have a Jewish background, if you like, no, why should I? If it has consequences it has consequences. It's had consequences before, and people have overcome it, so you know, I quite openly– I mean, I don't go in the street and start shouting about and say, 'Here look I'm Jewish, I'm a Jew boy' or whatever, but if people come on to it during a conversation then I won't deny it. Immaterial what their reaction to it is, but I've never had any bad reaction to it at all. But I worked 22 ½ years at that one place, they never knew, all they ever knew is that I originally came from Germany. They never knew that I was Jewish, until I met the boss's wife. They got divorced and I met her on one or two occasions after that. And I did tell

her, and that's the first time they ever knew about it, and that's years after I actually finished there. But they never asked, so I never said. I mean, I've had remarks from a couple in the village that I knew quite well, and still see 'em occasionally. There was a councillor on the Derbyshire County Council that was Jewish, and he wasn't the very best of councillors nor the best-liked person and I was in the house and somebody started a conversation, something was said, 'Oh, aye, there's that b-Jew on the council.' And I sat there and I just laughed, didn't say anything. The other instance that I–, this is a very funny story. I was on a trip, with the wife, a coach tour into Austria, on the way back they passed near Munich and near where Dachau concentration camp was. And the co-driver, standing in the bus there, he said, 'Oh, we're just coming past very near past the Dachau concentration camp.' And I was in, I think, the front seat or second seat back, and I said to him, I said, 'You've just brought a tear to my eyes. And he said, 'Why? What's the matter?' And I said, well I said, 'I lost all my family in a concentration camp.' 'Oh dear,' he said, 'I'm sorry I mentioned it.' I said, 'No it's alright, not to worry I don't feel offended, not in the least.' So then the next thing they organised, they were going to stop in a certain place in Holland, for an evening meal, but wanted to order it prior to getting there, so they didn't have to wait too long. So when he came to us, we decided to have some pork. So he said to me, 'How is that, a Jewish person having pork?' I said, 'Oh, that's alright, in Holland,' I said, 'they have kosher pork.' So that ended the conversation like, but he laughed, I mean it didn't matter to me. I eat what I enjoy now, and I don't feel any worse for it. Me conscience is quite clear, in spite of everything I haven't got a bad conscience over it. But I know another person, I won't mention this person's name, but I know when this person got the chance to eat bacon or any pork product she dwells on it and yet she is supposed to be a religious person. Well, the reason she– this person said it herself, she said it to me herself, if you've got a daughter married to a chap that's, again, supposed to be very religious, they've got two children. She said, if I didn't have a typical Jewish household me son-in-law would stop me grandchildren coming to visit me. Yet he's a– again, that came from the mother-in-law herself. He's a fanatic for cricket, yet if there's a game on on a Saturday, nobody's allowed to switch the television on, not on a Saturday, but if there's a cricket match on, he'll switch it on. So that's how religious he is, you know. That to me– well I just can't stand that.

YG: Now just to sum up: is there something you'd like to tell the viewers if there's something that you'd like them to take away when they watch the tape, is there a particular message you want to convey to people?

Tape 3: 20 minutes 34 seconds

BG: Yes, I think, don't dwell on the past and think about it as a bad thing. Think about your life - if it is has been decent - and say to yourself, 'Look, I'm still alive, surely that's worth more than anything else.'

YG: Thank you very much, end of tape 3.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 9 seconds

[Photograph of a family standing outside a house]
YG: We're now looking at some of Bernard Grunberg's photo albums. Could you tell me when this photo was taken and where and who were the people in it, please?

BG: Well, that was the parental home, the house where I was born. But it's been demolished, it was demolished after the war as being unsafe, and some of the people there in front is me– my mother, myself and me sister, and me granddad on mother's side, but the other people I don't really know, I can't remember who they are at all. But that was the original building where I was born.

YG: Thank you very much.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 10 seconds

[Picture of two young people, a boy and a girl]
YG: Could you tell me who the people in this photo are and when and where it was taken please?

BG: Well, that's my sister and myself, my sister was about 2 ½ years older than I was, and I think, well obviously that was taken before 1938, but the exact period, I don't know. I should imagine that it could be between, well anyway, around 1935 perhaps, when that was taken.

YG: And what was your sister's name?

BG: Gerda.

YG: Gerda. Thank you very much.

Tape 3: 22 minutes 48 seconds

[Photograph of a large group of children]
YG: Can you tell me when this photo was taken and where it was taken and who the people in it are?

BG: Well that's the *Schul*– the school class in Germany in me first year at school. And that's me sitting there right on the outside.

YG: How old were you then?

BG: I'll be between five and six. Probably just turned five, you know, but perhaps not quite six.

YG: So it would have been about 1928. Thank you very much.

Tape 3: 23 minutes 26 seconds

[Photograph of a man standing between two women]
YG: Could you tell about the people in this photo please and where and when it was taken?

BG: Well, that's my mother and father and sister, and that was taken in Germany, in Lingen. And I would say it probably about 1940, '39 to '40.

YG: And where was it taken?

BG: In Lingen.

YG: Thank you.

Tape 3: 24 minutes 2 seconds

[Photograph of BG being presented with some flowers]
YG: Could you tell me about the people in this photo and where and when it was taken please?

BG: That was taken during my 80th birthday celebration in Germany on the– because I was invited to have this birthday party in Germany and that's myself and the mayor of the town.

YG: Was that actually in Lingen?

BG: That was in Lingen, yes.

YG: And when did that take place?

BG: Would be last year, last– 12 month ago last March.

YG: Thank you very much.

Tape 3: 24 minutes 33 seconds

[Photograph of a headstone]
YG: Could you tell me where this memorial is located and when the picture was taken?

BG: That memorial stone was put into the– in the Jewish cemetery in Lingen, because I asked to have this stone put there because my– that would have been the last resting place of my parents and it was– would be about 19– yeah, late 1990's, I think, when that was– any time prior to 1990 when that was put in. Although I initiated it and wanted to pay for it, but the Town Hall decided they were going to pay for it, which they did.

YG: Thank you very much.

Tape 3: 25 minutes 36 seconds

[Picture of wrought-iron gates]
YG: And these gates, I understand you made them for Lingen. Could you tell me a bit about it and how it came about please?

BG: Well, they knew that I had done a bit of wrought-iron work, and I was approached and asked if I would make the gates for the entrance gate to this memorial area in Lingen. I donated the gates and they came with a van from Germany and fetched them and put them up.

YG: And when were they installed?

BG: That was in– now you've got me on dates, early 1990s I would say, roughly.

YG: Fine, thanks very much.

Tape 3: 26 minutes 33 seconds

[Photo of BG and wife on his wedding day]
YG: And can you tell me about this, your wedding day, your wife, when it was taken and where?

BG: That was taken in London in 1947, June '47.

YG: Whereabouts?

BG: Maida Vale.

YG: And that was your wife, called Daisy?

BG: Yes.

YG: That's nice. And how many people were at your wedding?

BG: Only a small group because, I mean, there were no family members of mine were there anywhere near, or could be, anyway. And there was only a small group of her relations, so the total people that were there would be about 10 or 12, at the most.

YG: Ok, thank you very much.
Tape 3: 27 minutes 31 seconds

END OF TAPE.