

Colchester recalled

Name of Interviewee: **GEORGE WILLIAM ROBERT**
Scrivener.

Name of Interviewer: Colin

DE'ATH.

Date of Birth: 10th November 1922.
1991

Date of interview: 9th October

Place of Birth: 14, Eld Lane, Colchester
Green,

Schools Attended: St. John's

Colchester.

Current Address: 44, Berechurch Road, Colchester

Adult Occupations: Errand Boy
General labourer
Labourer, Tent erection

Employers: Sainsburys. 1936
Masons. 1937
Godfreys, Chelmsford,

1938

Seaman

Merchant Navy 1939-

44

Trainee Bricklayer

Colchester Borough

1945/46.

Labourer then Jointer

Seaman Contractor

1950s/60s

Jointer

British Telecom 1967-

1987

Tape Summary by C.F. Scrivener

C90 Tape 1, Side A (Bruns Machine Counter)

000 Introduction. **ELD LANE.** Lived there for 9 years, until 1931. In Eld Lane there were the Almshouses at the top end. Lived opposite the Church (Baptist). Further down on the right there was Mrs PAPWORTH's Secondhand Shop and a fruiterers. On the other side was the Labour Club Hall, and there were houses before the CO-OP built up Victoria Place, the houses had long front gardens, the houses were well set back. The house where born is now an Electrical Shop (Merrills). Mrs SANDERSON lived on one side, and Mrs APPLEBY live on the other.

023 **14 Eld Lane.** There were two rooms up and two rooms down. There was a tap on the wall outside overlooking Vineyard Street. The wall was about 4 feet high, with a drop down into Vineyard Street. Understood the wall to be the Roman Wall. The hthouse was separated from the wall by a four foot open passageway. Looked down (about 15 feet) into a Lodging House in Vineyard Street, the **old Rose and Crown.** There was a passageway between the houses, next to No. 14, for the three houses. The Tap and Toilet were shared by the three families. There was no garden, and just enough room to turn round in! You could stick a pram in there.

045 **Family.** Had three sisters. Elder sister, lives at Bentley, went to the County High School, and became a schoolteacher at Thorpe. Two younnger sisters, May, now dead, the other, Jean, lives in County Durham.

060 **Neighbours.** At that time there were people rather than shops in Eld Lane. There were real old ladies who lived there, Mrs. ALEXANDER and Mrs. ETHERIDGE. Two other boys, SIDNEY BROWN, who lost a foot in the War (II), and LES MILLER, who went tp America after the War (II).

069 **Eld Lane.** Old Mr. Page, who owned the Outfitters Shop at the corner of Eld Lane and Long Wyre Street, used to leave his car in the Lane, and sometimes gave a penny for looking after his car. **STANLEY MANN,** the Milkman used to come through with his milk float. You had to take a jug out for a pint of milk. It was a horse drawn cart, with a low step at the back, and the horse never stopped, so Stan ised to sell the milk on the move. He was very popular along the Street. It was his own Dairy which was just down the road (Berechurch Road).

090 **Fire at the Methodist Chapel in Culver Street.** 1928/9. Sat at bedroom window with

mother and watched the flames.

105 **Eld Lane.** Vehicles used the Lane, they could pass. They would turn right and go up Lion Walk. There was a little blind alley up there, where ALEC RUFFLES used to live, his father was caretaker at Lion Walk Church. Alec was killed early in the war, he was a pilot, he was a school friend..

116 **Starting School.** Went to St. John's Green School at 4½ . **Teachers;** (infants) Miss ROFF, governess, also her sister, Miss ROFF, was the Head Teacher, Miss WEATHERALL, Miss SPRINGETT. (Upstairs) MR. COX was the Headmaster. LES EVERETT, and Mr. SEARLE, who was later headmaster at East Ward, Mr PARTRIDGE, MISS PEAKE, MISS STOREY, and Miss SMYTHE. There was a part time teacher called Mr CLEVELAND, who was a favourite because he played for Colchester Town football team sometimes, Len Cater (Spud) who was one of the lads at school, also played football for Colchester. St. John's Green School was only school, left at 14.

142 **Father.** GEORGE. Worked for the railway as a Carpenter's Mate, at North Station. He had an Allotment behind the Loco Sheds at North Station, there was about 40 rods. As a 12 year old, collected horse manure from the streets. And took it down to father's Allotment in a barrow. Picked it up early in the morning, and then took it down to North Station after school and before being allowed out to play. There was tons of it in the streets. Later got smart and went up to the Barracks for it, because there were hundreds of horses at the time, Army Remounts, Artillery horses and Enniskillen Dragoon Guards, so there was never a shortage of horse manure.

171 **Mother.** Maiden name was JELLEY. Her father was a pilot on the Thames, he died about 1929. He lived in Colchester only the last few months of his life, with Aunt Lizzie in Harwich Road. Father's Father (William) lived at 3 Greenstead Road, nearly opposite the Gates. Family comprised 3 sons and 5 girls. Reported in family that Great Grandfather (Paternal) had been Bishop of Cambridge, but not certain.

200 **Church/Religion.** Later, after move to St. John's Avenue, (where Tesco was built), belonged to St. Giles' Choir. Parents only went to church for Harvest Festival and Christmas. Mother insisted on the children going but not herself.

212 Moved house to a bigger house and own lavatory at 3 St. John's Avenue, and a few years later the family moved to No. 9.

220 Father was never out of work. He was a hard working man. He started work early, before the children were up, lit the fire, and you would not see him again until 8 or 9 at night. When he finished work he would go straight on to his garden (allotment). Often Mother would take tea and sandwiches down to him. There was always plenty of fresh vegetables.

242 Mother worked as a Housemaid for Lord and Lady Bingham, (Parents of Lucan, the missing Lord!). She worked at White Lodge, Mersea Road, near cemetery. She was married then, but the children were getting older then.

258 The family ate very well, but the clothes were not always so good, and father used to do 'Snobbing' himself, of the shoes, which would be repaired with a bit of old motor tyre nailed onto a shoe. A lot of people were worse off. A Shoe Repairer was called a '**Snob**'.

273 **Washing** was done by mother with a wash bowl and a scrubbing board. Drying was done on a rope outside from Eld Lanedown to the toilet. Airing was done on a Clothes Horse round the fire, after the children had gone to bed.

286 **Lighting** in the house (Eld Lane) was by **Gas**, there was no **Electricity**, but there was in St. John's Avenue. Missed the gas lighting, it seemed 'homely'.

295 **Meals.** Favourite was Saturday mornings. Used to go to the Cattle Market at the bottom of North Hill, and come home to mashed potatoes, home made piccalilli and corned beef, which was the cheapest meat. Also used to like rabbit stew. Father used to set rabbit snares on his allotment. There was always a fire in the range, and a kettle or a stew on it. Mother was a good cook. She made her own

bread
sister became a Domestic Science Teacher at school.

sometimes. Elder

320 Right and Wrong. Parents viewed differed to own, or that was how it appeared. Punishment was from father, who had a strap, but the girls did not get hit. Hated Father, but it was Mother who made the bullets! Generally loved Father, more than Mother.

342 World War II. Story of being torpedoed while in the Merchant Navy, in the Indian Ocean. Family received Telegram saying "Missing believed killed". Returned home to emotional re-union with girlfriend and family.

386 First job when left school was at Sainsburys, on a trade bike, and then several odd jobs, Errand boy, etc. and then joined the Merchant Navy in 1939, just before the War. Was in the merchant Shipping Pool, and you went where ever they sent you. Blue Funnel, Cunard and the P&O, Canadian Merchant Navy. Later running wheat from Australia to Calcutta, when torpedoed. Story of contact with German Submarine after ship sank and in lifeboats. Expected to be killed, but German Captain gave them cigarettes and gave them their position. Picked up after several days (8?) at sea. This was in 1944. Came out , invalidated out, of Merchant Navy, because of seizure and returned to Colchester.

513 Return to Colchester, 1944. Everywhere you looked there were Canadians and Yanks. Every pub had a piano going, and was full of Airmen, Seaman or soldiers. There were some British Troops, but it seemed that the British Troops had been sent somewhere else and all the Foreigners were here.

532 Married Gwen Steers. (eventually divorced after 10 or 11 years). Eventually got a job as a casual, with Telephone Contract Company, we were doing a contract through Colchester.

550 End of Side A, Tape 1

Side B, Tape 1.

000 Continued. It was a Sub Contract to the Post Office. It was laying underground cables from London to Colchester. It was the biggest cable they had at the time. Went to the Contractors Jointing School in Woolwich, it was SEAMANS the contractors. Passed out as a cable jointer, and then travelled with SEAMANS. After that went with TELECOM.

012 When married , lived in rooms for a while , then got a "Prefab" at Sussex Road over looking Hilly Fields.

018 On return from the Merchant Navy, went on a Government Course as a bricklayer, and was issued with the gear, Was sent to Old Heath and Monkwick as Direct Labour for the Council and it was alright in the summer but in the winter the "old hands" took the inside work and the new "boys" were stood off, or put on short time. Told that you could not leave, but sold tools and left anyway. This was just after the War.