



SAMS Roots Interview transcript

Jenny Taylor interviewed by Caroline Pearce, transcribed by Caroline Pearce

27th July 2015 at Jenny's home in St Albans

Recording length: 44m31s

CP: There are two main things to talk about and I can see you're very prepared for the second thing. I wonder if you can tell me how long you've been a member of SAMS?

JT: We joined SAMS in 1994 and it was around about February.

CP: What is it that you like about the community?

JT: The egalitarianism to start with is great, and it's a very sociable, very friendly, it's a lovely community, very very nice. We joined the synagogue for personal reasons. We were very active members in the St Albans United Synagogue and personal reasons made us move, or change synagogues. The first service we came to at SAMS was Andrea Berry's son Remy's [barmitzvah](#) – that was the very first service we came to. We were made very welcome, and one thing led to another, and we joined soon after.

CP: The community has changed quite a bit [since then]...

JT: Drastically, oh my goodness me! It was all very much do-it-yourself and getting things out of the Quaker Meeting House cupboards and moving the Ark from room to room so it was all very different, and the numbers [of congregants] were so small in those days. I suppose about thirty families, but a hard core of about fifteen or twenty.

CP: So it changed a lot. Even those early services were at the Quaker Meeting House...

JT: Yes, right the way through. About a year after we joined my mother died which coincided with the Friends' Meeting House having a refurb and I remember Jonathan Freedman had organised for the shul to have its services in one of the disused buildings in the old hospital, St Albans City hospital, and I remember saying [Kaddish](#) in this bleak room. It was not very pleasant, and not the best of times.

CP: You've lived in St Albans practically all your life...

JT: Yes, I was born here. I was born at the top of St Peter's Street, just beyond the Seventh Day Adventist Church going towards Harpenden as you go into Harpenden Road. On the left hand side there's a building up on a slope – it's now, I think, a Busy Bees, or certainly a children's nursery – and I was born in there. It was in those days a nursing home. It was pre-NHS days [when] there were www.e-sams.org/roots

private nursing homes, and that's where I was born. When Rick and I got married in 1966 we moved away from St Albans, bought a house in Kingsbury, hated it...I had just lost my father, my mother came to live with us and she wanted to come back to St Albans too so we all came back and bought a house in King Harry Lane. My mother lived with us for a while in Kingsbury, then in King Harry Lane, then we moved to Grange Street and while we were in Grange Street she became very ill and eventually developed dementia and ended up in the Jewish Care Home in Hemel Hempstead where she died in 1995.

CP: I can see you brought a number of photographs and objects. Which of them would you like to talk about?

JT: OK let's first bring it up to date. This was my parents' shop – do you know the Peahen? – that was it. Where the restaurant part of the pub is now was my parents' shop. My father and mother opened it just before they got married in 1932. My parents both lived in Kilburn, in north west London, and they met as youngsters at synagogue youth club, tennis club. They were childhood sweethearts. When they decided to get married neither of them wanted to live in London so they came up to St Albans – my father had a car [shows photo of his car] – they came out to St Albans and fell in love with it. There was a very very small Jewish community here and they became founders of that community [by joining] up the people that were here and they opened a business just before they got married.

CP: So there was a small Jewish community here...it was clearly important to them to be part of it...

JT: Oh yes, absolutely, absolutely. You've seen the history project so you know the history of the Jews in St Albans...my parents came here in 1932 and they had services in various places in St Albans before they opened the United synagogue in Oswald Road.

CP: So it was a sort of pre-United [community]...

JT: Yes, it was pre-United, independent, affiliated to the United synagogue in those days. It became a United synagogue after we left, after we joined SAMS. I think I'm right in saying this. [My husband] Rick was warden [in the old synagogue] for eleven years. He might remember when it was.

CP: Did he wear a top hat?

JT: Never, never! I don't think any of the wardens did, even when I was a kid. My father was on the board of management for many years. He actually used to decorate the shul, literally decorate the shul. When it got really grubby everybody used to say 'we'd better start painting the shul' and [my father] told one story that he – or the shul – had decided that they didn't have the money to pay for a decorator, so he should raise money by going round and getting money from the members. So he went to one particular member and said 'I'm going to paint the shul. Would you like to make a donation towards a pot of paint?' and the chap said 'Do you mean it's only going to take one pot of paint?' My father painted the whole of the inside of the shul in Oswald Road.

CP: Were [your parents] here throughout the war?

JT: Yes, my father was in the Auxiliary Fire Service during the war and he was based here in St Albans and at Hatfield and he used to drive into the Blitz in the East End and the City. It was quite dangerous. And he was only five foot two! I've never seen the photograph but my mother used to say that quite often - she would be in the shop because she would have to be in the shop because he was out on duty - and she would see the fire engine hurtling down Holywell Hill, perhaps going on an ordinary call-out, not necessarily for the Blitz, and you couldn't see him, all you could see was his helmet. They wore a flat peaked helmet in those days and you could see his head just above the steering wheel because he was so small!

CP: You were born after the war...

JT: Yes, I was born in 1946.

CP: When there was still rationing...

JT: Yes absolutely and I can remember my ration book and I can remember where we got our ration from. In High Street, next to the clock tower, there's an art shop, sells greeting cards and prints and stuff, and that was a Maypole Dairy where we were registered. And I had my ration book, and I could just about get my sweet ration, I could just about reach up to the counter with my ration book. I can remember that very clearly because I was about five or six, it was 1952 before rationing stopped altogether. So by then I would have been getting on for six so I can remember it well.

CP: Did you used to help your parents in the shop?

JT: I did used to go and help my parents. When I was in my teens I used to go in and help on a Saturday and in the school holidays and help them. I wasn't allowed to take the money, but I was allowed to pack and restock. I helped with the stock. I used to go into London with my father when he was doing buying, into the West End in the [shmatter](#) trade area behind Oxford Street and we used to go to the wholesalers and bring stuff back. In those days of course you could park [shows photo], you could park here. Can you imagine doing that now? And [you could] unload the car. One of the perks of course of being born into the ladies fashion business was that both my mother and I were always well stocked with clothes. That was one of the perks.

CP: Because clothing was still rationed too...

JT: From my mother's point of view it was, but by the time I was old enough to wear those sort of clothes, the clothes that he was selling, it wasn't. I could have my pick – even if he wasn't buying it for the shop, I could have my pick in the showrooms of whatever I wanted.

CP: That sounds great! As a teenage girl...that was a dream I imagine. It sounds fantastic.

JT: And even for my girlfriends as well he used to...if I fell in love with something and one of my friends liked it he would get one for them too, which was always very nice.

CP: Do you remember, or do you have an impression of what it was like to be a Jewish child growing up in St Albans?

JT: Yes very much so. Because to start with I went to Holywell House [primary] school...just up the hill do you know where Café Rouge is? Opposite there is a beautiful Georgian house with Virginia Creeper up the front and that was a primary school – it wasn't actually primary, it went right through to fifteen years old – and most of the time I was the only Jewish child there, except for one other, a girl called Laurel Black whose family lived in St Albans. She was there for part of the time I was there. She was younger than me but we were together there for a while. And then from there to the Hatfield Girls' Grammar School, which is now Bishops Hatfield, and where I was the only Jewish child. And it was fine, absolutely fine. I didn't have any problems whatsoever. People say 'as the only Jewish child how did you cope?' but it was fine. I didn't go into prayers. There were another couple of girls there whose parents, for whatever reasons, wouldn't allow them to go into morning prayers, and we would sit outside the hall, and we would be called in for notices and it didn't bother us, nobody made any comment, and it was fine.

CP: How about when you had friends home?

JT: I had non-Jewish friends home and it was fine. Hebrew classes we had at St Albans synagogue in Oswald Road in those days had a thriving [cheder](#) and had quite a high membership. People hadn't started going back to London – it was the 1960s before people started going back – and so they had very good Hebrew classes, and there were plenty of people my age right the way through. In fact Rick taught me! He was one of the cheder teachers when I was at Hebrew classes. So that's how we first met really! That's another story. We started going out at the end of 1964. I was travelling up to London working – I worked in Mayfair – Rick worked in County Hall, on the Embankment, and we travelled up by train together and that's how we started to go out. Our parents knew each other, we knew each other, though Rick's quite a bit older than me. We knew of each other apart from the Hebrew class teaching. And so we started going out then and very quickly got engaged. We got engaged in January 1965, and got married in May 1966. I was nineteen-and-a-half. So it's our Golden Wedding next year – our Golden Wedding and my seventieth [birthday].

CP: That sounds like two things to celebrate...

JT: Yes, two [kiddushes](#)!

CP: Tell me about one of the other things that you've brought.

JT: Do you want to talk about my parents' antecedents? First of all I must show you this little critter here [shows small stuffed bear]. He's a utility teddy bear and you're very welcome to take a photograph of him. His name is Marty – M-A-R-T-Y please. He was my birth present from my maternal grandma. That was what she bought me when I was born and he has survived nearly seventy years. Button eyes intact, lost part of his whiskers...

CP: He hasn't been sewn up at all...that's fantastic!

JT: No, all in one bit.

CP: And presumably with rationing, did that affect...

JT: Yes, toys were still rationed.

CP: Toys would have been difficult to get hold of. And this was [from] your maternal grandma...

JT: Yes, I didn't know my paternal grandparents, they died before I was born. The only grandparent I knew was my mother's mother who died when I was ten. [Shows a photo of her] She would have been about seventy. It's incredible isn't it? She looks a terribly old lady.

CP: They did then, didn't they? I've seen pictures of my grandparents when my grandmother was about my age and she looks so much older.

JT: [My grandmother] may even have been a bit younger [in this photograph]. And that's outside their home in Willesden Lane, and that was outside the shul at Brondesbury and Kilburn Synagogue [where my parents got married]. My mother, my father, and my mother's next sister up, who was a bridesmaid. This was in 1933. [Shows another photo] This puts another perspective on it from my mother's point of view. My mother was the youngest of eight children – five girls, and then there were three boys who were the eldest. The three boys came first: Harry, Sam and Maurice. Then the five girls. That's my mother, then that is Auntie Minnie, Auntie Florrie, Auntie Ida and the eldest one is Auntie Anne who is there.

CP: This looks like 1960 ish.

JT: That was 1968. That was taken a few months after my father died, and we all went down to Auntie Ida for a reunion, a sisters' reunion in Brighton, and my father had died about two or three months before that.

CP: That must have been really nice for your mother.

JT: Yes it was, seeing all the sisters together.

CP: And what about the brothers?

JT: I have a photograph of Uncle Sam [shows photo]. That's Uncle Sam in the First World War. I haven't got photographs of the other two. That would [have been taken sometime] between 1914 and 1918. He was quite a bit older than my mother. My mother's oldest brother, Uncle Harry, was about twenty-five years older than her because he was married and I'm named after Uncle Harry's wife. He had a daughter who was about eighteen months younger than my mother.

CP: Did they have the same parents?

JT: My grandmother must have been about forty-five when my mother was born.

CP: That was quite old [to have a baby] in those days...

JT: So in fact in the photograph taken of my grandmother taken at the wedding she would have been quite a bit younger because my mother was twenty-one when they got married I think so [my grandmother] would have been quite a bit younger. She wouldn't have been seventy yet, she would have been sixty-nine or sixty-eight, about my age. And that's my grandfather, my mother's father.

CP: He looks like a jolly fellow.

JT: He was – he had a reputation that went before him. There was always a family rumour that he was having an affair with the [rebbetzin](#).

CP: You can tell [from the photo] that he has a twinkle in his eye.

JT: Yes, he had a twinkle in his eye. When they came to England in 1864 ish they had a business, they came with money. They had their own business which they opened in the Jewish West End, in Berwick Street. They had a big shop selling tailor's trimmings and my grandmother, who didn't speak a word of English – my grandfather taught himself English but my grandmother never learnt it very well – she went around with a tray, one of these trays a bit like the old usherettes in the cinema – and she would go around to all the tailor shops in the West End, in the Soho area, selling the trimmings and then encouraging people to come to the shop. And they had this shop on the corner of Berwick Street and Broadwick Street and all the family lived above the shop and it's now a Japanese restaurant.

CP: It's amazing that you know all this [family history]...

JT: My mother was always pretty good at telling me all these things, and also this auntie here [points to photograph], she was wonderful at recounting stories. So it's all up here [points to her head] – it's all in my mind.

CP: Do you have loads of cousins?

JT: I have millions of cousins. I am the only only one – no I'm not, there are two others of us who are only children – but they all had loads of children. But I'm the only child with nobody, no descendants, beneath me which is sad. But everybody else, all my cousins, have lots of kids. [Shows a photo] As you can imagine in my father's [large] family...sadly that one has died and had no children, and she [pointing to an auntie] died without children, but all the others have several children.

CP: There were nine children altogether [on your father's side] so I can imagine...

JT: Yes, they were prodigious, quite productive.

CP: And I'm sure they all have stories to tell...

JT: They do – and I do have a story. Do you want to know my story of my father's family?

CP: Of course!

JT: My grandparents came over here also about the 1860s from Klodawa in Poland. My maternal grandparents also came from Poland, they came from Warsaw. My father's parents settled in the East End, they came over with very little money.

CP: [Looking at photo] This is them, Wolf and Kate?

JT: Yes, and that's my dad at the end, Sidney. So they came here with very little. They must have come over here a little later because my grandfather was born in 1869 so I reckon they must have come over in the 1880s. They married in 186...that [the photo] doesn't make sense. I don't know where my cousins got this from...

CP: [Indicating a date on the photo] That must be the wedding date because it's the same as the [ketuba](#)?

JT: Yes it is indeed, I think it is. Anyway when they came over they settled in Cannon Street Road, in the East End, it's still there, number 124 Cannon Street Road they settled in. And my grandmother's family all came over with them together. My grandmother, Kate, had a brother called Maurice, whose wife Matilda was sister to Aaron Kozminsky, and Aaron Kozminsky was one of the prime suspects for Jack the Ripper. Now that's a story. He ended up in Leavesden at the lunatic asylum as it was then called. He was never charged, as there wasn't enough evidence against him, but a recent book, published a couple of years ago, does make him out to be the only true suspect – but nobody will ever know. If you look up Aaron Kozminsky it's very interesting. So he had a sister, Matilda, who married my great uncle, Maurice or Moshe as he was called in those days.

CP: Do you know any more about Aaron Kozminsky, why he was suspected...

JT: He had already threatened other people. There's a lot to look up, if you look online it's very interesting, and you can learn a lot, but it's all hearsay – there's no firm evidence but he was very much a prime suspect.

CP: It's too bad they didn't have DNA testing...

JT: Exactly. If they'd had DNA testing...it all revolved around the shawl, which is still in existence and I think it's in America now, a shawl with blood samples on it and they reckoned, they think it was in his possession. But there's no firm evidence.

CP: I wonder how it ended up in America...maybe somebody bought it on eBay! I didn't know there was a lunatic asylum in Leavesden.

JT: Yes, it was quite well known. It only closed in the 1970s. St Albans was surrounded by mental hospitals. There was Napsbury, Hill End, Harperbury, Shenley and Leavesden and there was another one called Colney Hatch [in Finchley, north London] where he was incarcerated and I think from Colney Hatch they moved him to Leavesden. [Colney Hatch] is now I think the site of the Lady Sarah Cohen home.

CP: Of course people were put in lunatic asylums for all kinds of reasons ranging from depression...

JT: It's very different now. This [shows book] is my father's [Tanuch](#). A Tanuch is not a Chumash, but the five books of Moses straight out – no commentary, no translation, just the five books of Moses. And he had this presented to him by Kilburn, Brondesbury and Hampstead Talmud Torah on the occasion of his bar mitzvah and he pressed some flowers [inside]. If he was alive today he'd have

been 105 years old, so they're ninety years old. It's incredible that [the flowers] haven't gone to dust.

CP: There's another wedding picture [indicates photo]...

JT: This is Auntie Anne's wedding, and my mother is her bridesmaid, and the other sister, Minnie is that lady there, and this lady is the niece that I was telling you about, Uncle Harry's daughter who is just a couple of years younger than my mother.

CP: So she is on the far right of the photograph. This looks to be about 1920...

JT: This would have been in about 1925. Auntie Anne's daughter, my cousin Sybil, is eighty-seven, I'm seeing her on Thursday, when would she have been born...1928. So I'd say [the wedding] would have been about the mid-1920s.

CP: Who are the two little girls?

JT: I don't know, it may be Uncle Charles's family.

CP: It's really interesting to see the types of clothes people wore then, and even the flowers that they carried, so formal.

JT: This [another photo] is another one of my mother. I think this is from February 1928 which would have been [when] my mother - she was born in February 1911 - so she would have been seventeen.

CP: She looks older...

JT: She does, doesn't she? Again it was the fashion. Look at those shoes! And the shiny stockings! A flapper - very much the flapper.

CP: I can actually see the resemblance...

JT: There is a very strong resemblance. My mother wore glasses in her latter years and we did look very much alike.

CP: She was very active in the [community]...

JT: She was very active in St Albans during the war. She was chairman of the Ladies' Guild for quite a while at the United shul, for many years, but her main claim to fame was that she helped to organise the visits to the patients, the soldiers, in the Second World War brought to Hill End Hospital for reconstructive surgery. They had a surgeon there whose name I can't remember, and my mother used to organise members of the Ladies Guild and other women in St Albans to go to the hospital and read their letters for them, write their letters for them, do their shopping and just sit with them as [perhaps] their relatives were living miles away and so she organised that.

CP: When the Ladies' Guild evolved...

JT: The Ladies' Guild evolved and eventually I became Chairman. What happened was that when...we just went on and on and on. I became Chairman in 1976 and Jeanette Grenby became Secretary and of course we were still going strong as a United [synagogue]. When SAMS was formed twenty-five years ago we lost some of our members and we decided that in order to encourage members from SAMS we should disaffiliate from being a member of the Association of United Synagogue Women and we should become just a group of all women from whatever shul, or no shul, in the St Albans area and that's how it's evolved. And I'm still the Chairman, and Jeanette's still the Secretary...nobody [else] will take it on. Andrea Berry is a great help, [she] does a lot.

CP: What kind of work does the group do?

JT: Basically, we did have a very good mentoring group where we had a contact group which Sarah [Grant] used to organise but now that both shuls have their own mentoring groups we have dropped that but we do some fundraising on a small scale and each year we are able to distribute about four to five hundred pounds to local charities, national charities and Jewish charities. We raise money by our membership subscriptions, by collecting money at each meeting, and having very small fundraising [events], keeping it very small, just manageable, no big events, and it just kept going. It's like Topsy – it doesn't necessarily grow, it just keeps on going – it's lovely, great social gatherings. We have speakers. In fact I've just organised a speaker for our November meeting, a lady who is the wife of a local architect. She's Jewish and she's going to talk about eating disorders within the Jewish community.

CP: How many members do you have?

JT: Our mailing and distribution list [numbers] about sixty and of that we have a hard core of about thirty and we get about twenty at a meeting, that's a pretty good turnout, twenty at a meeting. We meet at people's homes on the second Monday in the month and we have an AGM each year and we do it very properly, proper formalised accounts, election of Officers – that's always a farce!

CP: It's nice that you've carried on where you mother left off...

JT: That's right. I couldn't do it without Jeanette, I must admit. We've had a couple ...Michele Lasky was Treasurer for years and now Barbara Davidoff is Treasurer. She's Hilary Gold's mother, she just joined the shul.

CP: How many Jewish people [do you suppose] there are in St Albans?

JT: I don't know...we know how many members SAMS has got but most of those...not a lot of those live in St Albans. They're all over the place and I don't know what the membership is for the United [shul] because a lot of their members live in Luton who don't want to go to the Luton synagogue come to St Albans. The Chairman of the United Synagogue lives in Whipsnade so I don't know. And there are probably plenty of Jewish people in St Albans who are not integrated with either synagogue, so we don't know the answer to that. The diaspora is quite spread, probably because the membership [of SAMS] is not ultra-Orthodox and doesn't feel the need to live around the shul. In Borehamwood it's different, and in Radlett, as there are a lot more Orthodox people and they live around the shul.

CP: I think it's probably got something to do with the [SAMS] community as well, it's got such a great reputation...

JT: It has. It's got a warmth, its reputation goes before it.

CP: Shall we look at one of your other [photographs]?

JT: These here are photographs of my father and two of his siblings. And this isn't a very good one, it's very grainy because it's a photograph of a photograph. This was taken before my father was born. It's my grandfather, my paternal grandfather whose name was Wolf. Their [sur]name was Kirsch and when they settled in England they changed it to Cash. And my grandmother who was called Gittel, but called herself Kate, and these are my father's siblings above him. Hymie [the baby in the photo] is the brother above him, but this [photo] is still missing some children. [Indicates another photo] That's my Uncle Charlie, and that one is Uncle Cecil and that's my father, the baby [of the family].

CP: It's interesting that from here to here [indicates part one of the children] he could almost be a modern child...by looking at his face and his hair.

JT: Yes, it's only because he's wearing pantaloons and lacy boots...that would have been taken when my father was about five, in about 1914 or 1915, maybe just before the war broke out. Chubby knees and long socks!

CP: So your grandfather would have been too old [to go to war]...

JT: My grandfather died in 1916. He died of tuberculosis in 1916 when my father was six. He was a tailor, a tailor's cutter, in the East End.

CP: He looks so young...

JT: Yes, he was, they were very young. [Looks for photograph of grandmother on the beach but can't find it.]

CP: When [your father's parents] came over from Poland, how old were they?

JT: They came over with Joseph and Jack as far as we're aware, all [the other children] were born here. [My grandmother] died quite young, I don't know how old, but quite young. [Indicates two] This one and this one emigrated to South Africa, Hymie – Hymie and Cecil – both emigrated to South Africa together for health reasons. I must have been about three or four when they went.

CP: It's interesting to see the names [of your relatives]. In my family we have similar names, and similar stories of them spreading out and living in different places for various reasons as well. Did the rest of them stay?

JT: Yes, they stayed in London. [Hymie and Cecil] were the only two [who left]. He called himself Ronnie.

CP: That's another thing that makes it so difficult when tracing family history...

JT: Yes it does, because you don't know [what their names were at birth] She [points at a photograph] called herself Lena. She had twins, Lionel and ...I don't know what her daughter's name was. [Lionel] was shot down during the Second World War over Holland and only about four or five years ago we traced that he had married and had a son. And the son has come to light so that's another lot of family. It's a very very complicated and long story, that in itself...but interesting.

CP: I'm sure. There's a difficulty with the names changing – the last name is bad enough, but if it's the first name too that makes it even harder to trace.

JT: Her married name was Cohen and when her son joined the Air Force he changed his name from Cohen to Walter because he didn't want [to be identified as Jewish]. Walter was his middle name. He was named after his grandfather. And so he changed his surname to Walter, he called himself Lionel Walters, and he had this son we didn't know about, Barry Walters, and he came to light when another one of my cousins went to find his grave in one of the war graves in Holland and he looked at the visitor's book and found that somebody had visited [Lionel's] grave and we managed to trace [Barry] through that and it turned out that he was [Lionel's son]. And he's married with two children of his own and living in Southend. It was quite an emotional experience when we all got together.

CP: Did you have a big gathering?

JT: We did, it was...I have got a photograph of the gathering. Do you want to switch [the recorder] off for a second and I'll get it?

CP: Yes, sure. Thank you.

[Recording ends]

NEXT RECORDING: 7m18s

JT: This is a photograph of cousins at a gathering about five years ago when Barry Walters – that's him [indicates photo] came to light so he is grandchild to Lena Cohen. He's sitting in the front [of the photo] and that's his wife at the back. That's a sight to be seen. Cyril is 95 now. He's son to Jack and he has an older sister who is 97, so I have a 7-year-old first cousin. She lives in Manchester with her daughter.

CP: He looks much younger – he could be in his seventies.

JT: Corinne and Perry – they are children to Charles. They live in north London, in Stanmore and in Wembley. That's Perry's wife Loretta. This is husband Irwin, husband to Corinne. They lost their son in 2000. He was murdered outside his shop. It was a terrible thing, as you can imagine. He was an optometrist and he had a practice in Mill Hill. He was my first cousin once removed. [His father, Irwin] celebrated his 70th birthday last week which was lovely – his wife and his daughter put on a wonderful party. This gentleman here is Dennis and he is son to Israel and Ronnie. He has sadly died. That's his daughter who was the hostess and that's his son Trevor. There are unfortunately some people who weren't there as it was in the summer and there were a few people who were away.

These younger ones here...this one and this one are children to the host and hostess. That's her husband Phillip, that's Della, that's Rick...we all wore labels because we had no idea who [the others] were. It was overwhelming for [Barry]. He was absolutely shattered. And the strange this was he does look very much like his grandfather. None of us knew his father, because his father was killed...I tell a lie – Cyril knew him well and so did Dennis. They were the only two people who actually knew his father. His father was Lena's son. So Lena's son and that one...we were all first cousins. [Barry] is the next generation down. He's the same generation as that one, that one and that one. Although he's a lot older, he's a generation down. There's a big age difference [between the cousins from the same generation]. [Barry] is about 73 I think – older than me, but a generation down. We exchange emails [now and again]. He's married to a non-Jewish lady, a lovely lady, she's ever so sweet – Georgina. We exchange emails at Christmas time, Chanukah – he says 'Happy Chanukah' and we say 'Happy Christmas'.

He had absolutely no Jewish upbringing at all. It was all very secretive, very strange. He told us the story that he used to go and visit his grandparents, Lena and Nat, in Golders Green, but none of us knew of his existence – none of these brothers, none of us knew he existed. My father particularly used to go and visit his sister Lena regularly and never ever saw him unless they smuggled him into another room whilst my father was there. He used to go nearly every week to see her and unless they smuggled him into another room [so he was out of sight, and my father never saw him]. He was a little boy, and nobody knew. We reckon [the she reacted like that] was because she was ashamed because he was married to a non-Jewish woman. In those days, of course, that was what they thought. I don't even remember what his mother's name was.

[This all came to light] because Dennis went to the war graves in Holland and looked at the visitor's book and found that someone had visited Lionel's grave and traced [Barry]. The War Graves Commission was so helpful in tracking down who it was [who visited]. [The visitor's book] was signed 'Barry Walters' and Dennis knew that our cousin Lionel had changed his name from Cohen to Walters and the sad thing was that there was a cross [on his grave] because he wasn't registered as Jewish so Barry has had it changed and had a [Magen David](#) put on a new grave stone. And as far as I know he goes back from time to time to visit him.

[Recording ends]

Recording resumes.

JT: Apart from [Barry's] grandparents Lena and Nat he had no idea of anybody in his father's family. He never knew his father [Lionel] because he was shot down [over Holland]. Lionel's wife was pregnant with him when he was shot down. He knew his mother, he was brought up by her. His mother somehow or other put him in touch with his paternal grandparents, I'm not sure how. Probably because of the pension. There was some war pension I think...so [Barry] did know his paternal grandparents, and presumably knew his maternal family rather than his paternal family. He had no inkling. His mother was English, and he grew up somewhere in Essex I think because he stayed in Essex – married an Essex girl and stayed in Essex. He was not at all aware of his Jewish grandparents.

CP: I wonder how that was for his grandparents...

JT: It must have been very strange because he seems to have been smuggled away. Nobody knew of his existence.

CP: Whereas they must have been so happy to have [Barry] as a reminder of their son.

JT: [Barry's mother] was a very bitter lady. First of all having lost a child, then – there were two sets of twins in the family. There was her, and Joseph, the first one – he had twins too and lost one of them.

CP: Lena lost one of her twins, so then she just had Lionel? That must have been pretty hard to bear...to know that her son had produced a son which one would have been a wonderful thing...

JT: Yes. That she would want to show him off, you would have thought.

CP: But in those days...

JT:...it was swept under the carpet.

[Interview ends]