



SAMS Roots Interview transcript

Nicholas Grant interviewed by Caroline Pearce, transcribed by Helen Singer

19 August 2015 at Nick's home in St Albans

Recording length 57m40s

CP: Ok, do you want to start at the beginning? Actually before we start, let's talk about SAMS first and what brought you to SAMS.

NG: We've actually been in St Albans for 40 years. The reason I was in St Albans is that when I graduated my first job was in Stevenage and my girlfriend, Sarah, she was living still at home with her parents in Kenton and halfway between girlfriend and work was St Albans! Anyway, so I got myself a rented flat here and so when we married we moved into the rented flat. And Sarah belonged to the United Synagogue in Kenton and so when she moved to St Albans we sort of naturally moved to the United Synagogue where we were members for around twelve years. And I suppose throughout the time it's always been a small synagogue, certainly more people than there are now and we were trying to make a go of the St Albans United Synagogue and various people put lots of effort in, ok I don't really want to bore you with the United Synagogue but we tried very hard to make it happen and amongst the people who were there, there was Stephen Gess, the Gess family and myself, there was Andrea Strauss and her husband Martin who were there and we were the three families who were really putting the energy into the United Synagogue. It was a small synagogue and we felt there was potential to grow a synagogue in St Albans. We went, Stephen and I, we went to Jews' College in North London and we asked them if they had a student rabbi who could come and help sort of get the synagogue going, because Stephen Gess and I we went to see the Head of Jews' College and we said is there someone, a student, who might come. We said, don't send us someone who is very orthodox, what's important to us is to send someone who can help us build a community because we are out in St Albans, you're not going to find the ultra-orthodox people there. So what they did, they sent us a student rabbi who was ultra-orthodox and before he even tried to get into the community he came into the synagogue building and said you haven't got a [mechitza](#) and I can't possibly participate in a United Synagogue that hasn't got a mechitza! And we explained to him that a small United Synagogue which had been going since the late 1940s had worked perfectly well without a mechitza. The mechitza has to be 18 hand breadths high. Anyway, we spoke to the student rabbi and we sort of tried to negotiate a smaller height without wanting to insult the people there and anyway he just wasn't interested, he said either you have the full height mechitza or I'm not going to come and help you.

CP: Did you not have a Rabbi?

NG: The United Synagogue hasn't had a Rabbi since the early 1950s

CP: So it was community led

NG: Yes, it was a very small community led.. what happened was the Jewish Community moved out into St Albans during the second world war when there was a vibrant synagogue there to the extent that there was a kosher butcher in St Albans next to what's now the Odyssey Cinema, the Odeon as www.e-sams.org/roots

we used to know it, just around the corner there there was a kosher butcher, there were so many Jews in St Albans. And the Rabbi had a house in Clarence Road., they had the building which they still have in Oswald Road, the memorial plaque as you go into the synagogue shows 1949 as the year the building was set up and I believe they had a rabbi there until the early 1950s. As you probably know, they now have a Rabbi, they have a Rabbi who just started before [Rosh Hashanah](#) last year. Anyway, this was in the 80s,

CP: So sorry, you were members

NG: of the United Synagogue

CP: before you met Sarah

NG: No, so Sarah was United Synagogue and I belonged to the Liberal Synagogue in Wembley. But it was interesting, Sarah's father had become really anti the United Synagogue and he had already joined the New London Synagogue, Rabbi Louis Jacobs' Synagogue, because he felt the Louis Jacobs' philosophy was the correct one, a more intelligent approach to Judaism. And by maintaining membership of Kenton United Synagogue so that Sarah could go to Cheder there.

So coming back to the Head of Jews' College, well Stephen Gess and I went back and said please don't send us another [frummer](#) because we want someone who will build a community and this Head of Jews' College said to us 'If you were really Jewish you would live in North London and quite honestly we're not interested in helping you'!

CP: Shocking!

NG: Absolutely shocking, yes. And so the United Synagogue weren't interested in sending out a student rabbi to St Albans because we were perceived to be out in the Styx and obviously not worth putting any effort into us. I mean that was one of the many stories, I mean another story... the building itself needed a roof repair and they had some money, some funds, as I told you they had a house in Clarence Road. So they sold the house and they handed the money over to the United Synagogue as the United Synagogue said they would give them a better rate of interest than the building society, 1% more or some amount more, so they gave them the money. Anyway, so the time came that they needed some of this money to do the roof repair

CP: Sorry, the house was owned by the

NG: By the St Albans community, the United Synagogue, I mean they were a big enough community that they had their own synagogue building and they had a very large house for the rabbi, where the rabbi held services and held meetings as well

CP: But they needed the money at some point

NG: And they asked the United Synagogue, could we have the money as the water's coming through the roof and they said We will only give you your money if you use our surveyor to approve the work and as we said we were getting desperate and in the end the United Synagogue surveyor would not turn up, couldn't be bothered to come to St Albans, and it turned out that one of the other United Synagogues was going through major refurbishment and that's why they couldn't be bothered to come to St Albans and because of that they wouldn't give us any portion of our money to do repairs to the United Synagogue. And in the end someone threatened legal action on the United Synagogue to release the money that was ours and they eventually got the money but in the meantime the water was still coming through the roof. So anyway I mean there were lots of instances of

frustration with the United Synagogue and then eventually we got frustrated with it and it was actually Jackie Gess's idea of actually setting up a [Masorti](#) synagogue and when she asked us how about setting up our own synagogue because that synagogue was going nowhere and hasn't changed too much really unfortunately and because Sarah really had allegiance to the Masorti through her father and the Louis Jacobs' synagogue and in fact Sarah and I, we were married by Louis Jacobs in the New London Synagogue in Abbey Road

CP: The New North London is the one in Finchley?

NG: No, sorry Sarah's parents had dual membership, the Kenton United Synagogue and the New London Synagogue in Abbey Road, so Sarah and I we got married in the Abbey Road synagogue under Louis Jacobs so for us to go to a Masorti synagogue in that situation it wasn't perhaps as big a hurdle as it was for others. And Martin and Andrea Strauss they seemed comfortable with the idea so we decided that was what we would do and to the credit of the Masorti Synagogue as soon as we said we were going to start up they gave us help in terms of, they were able to get us a [Sefer Torah](#), practical things. I was the first Treasurer of the [shul](#) and I had help from the Treasurer of, I think it was Edgware Masorti Synagogue, and she helped me set up the accounts for our synagogue so as I said they were very helpful. Our children, they went to the Cheder at Edgware Masorti Synagogue to start with. They gave us the infrastructure to get some momentum going to set up the SAMS Synagogue.

CP: So this is back in...

NG: 1990

CP: It's the 25th anniversary. So it was you and the Gesses and the Strausses

NG: Yes, so we are the three founding families

CP: It's obviously grown and grown

NG: I suppose the point has been proven because we thought there would be scope for Jews in St Albans to have a good community because here we are 25 years later, we've been through a number of Rabbis, we've got our own building and I have to say, very sadly, the United Synagogue is still very much floundering. They've got a student rabbi and his wife who are very nice people, very personable, and they're putting as much energy as they can into the building, but to give you an example, around 3 months ago they had a fundraising event and they had some Jewish people who play in a band, they played in the synagogue, which we went to. They told us it's a fundraising event to extend the synagogue, the United Synagogue, there is a little bit of garden space on one side and it was very sad because so few people turned up, even amongst their own community people couldn't be bothered to turn up to a fundraising event. And I think we were the only Masorti people there, we were there cos we know lots of people there because we've been around so many years

CP: So you know people who are still members there?

NG: Yes, it took the people in the United Synagogue, it took some of them lots of years to forgive us for splitting away and starting a synagogue in competition shall we say. In practice, because they thought they would lose members, in practice very few people jumped ship. The Laskys, David and Michele Lasky, jumped ship, Moira's mother Norma Warner, they jumped ship but were there any other families? I think that was it. And Rick and Jenny, they moved across. And as it is with people in the United Synagogue, they are so beholden to the burial scheme they don't want to leave the United Synagogue because they've been subscribing to the burial scheme which is one thing.

CP: Well, you can switch but maybe they didn't want to

NG: The Masorti burial scheme and the United burial scheme have two different burial grounds, two different funds and you can't swap between the two. You can subscribe to both, you can probably as we did, abandon the money that we'd spent on the United Synagogue burial scheme and just start afresh with the Masorti. So yes, it's still very sad it's still really floundering the synagogue there but that's where we were in the 80s. I think it was the infrastructure, the people who were running the synagogue just weren't interested in growing the community. An example give there is, I'd been saying for many years we really could do with having a communal [Seder](#) because there were many people in the United Synagogue who hadn't got family, who hadn't got a Seder to go to and I said we really should have a communal Seder for the community. And the people who were the Board of Management then, their view was that there wasn't any need, they were OK, they all had Seders to go to, they couldn't see why they should be bothered to put on a communal Seder for other people because they were ok.

CP: That's not how SAMS operated

NG: I mean, all sorts of stories...

CP: Well, I think you've given me an idea

NG: It just amazes me. SAMS was around about ten years old by then and somebody from Masorti Headquarters, NOAM youth leaders, some teenage event which they were taking from synagogue to synagogue to get teenagers interested in Judaism, and they said, these Noam leaders, we'll come to St Albans if you like, if you can find a venue to hold it then we'll come if you get the teenagers together because of course we were in rented premises then. We spoke to the people at the United Synagogue and said we've got this Jewish play for teenagers, you've got a building and you've got kids and we've got kids and we've got a person who wants to put on a play, how do you feel about this event happening in the United Synagogue so all the teenagers can get together and do something Jewish so it seemed a good idea, so they took it back to the Board of Management and they turned down the offer and there were two reasons, one of them was they said they hadn't any idea how many teenagers they had, they didn't know what their community was made up of, and the other thing was no-one was willing to come out on the nominated evening, could be bothered to come out, was willing to open up the synagogue to host the event

CP: Seems a little narrow

NG: That's terrible, no-one could be bothered to come out to open up the synagogue for a play for teenagers, what a terrible insight, that they didn't know if they had any teenagers

CP: Yes, how could they not know their membership, maybe they didn't want to say or maybe they really didn't know, it's the proof of the pudding that they still have a very small community and we have a large, growing, thriving

NG: Yes and we do lots of things for ourselves, for the community and everything else. So that's a long way of saying how we came to be at SAMS.

CP: Well, that's a very good introduction.

NG: At SAMS I have been Treasurer, Chairman, I was Head of Security, I've done all sorts of things and it's wonderful, I have no post now

CP: You don't have a job

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NG: I still have jobs but I don't have a nominated post which is...I've sort of been elevated to not having a post, wonderful

CP: Excellent

NG: So that's how we came to join SAMS

CP: Right, well let's move on now, fast forward to March this year and tell me what happened in March, how it came about

NG: So maybe it was just before Christmas, I got an email from my cousin in America who said that there was an initiative in a village/town called Frohburg, which at that time I'd never heard of but it turned out to be where my mother came from and where my aunts came from to have some [stolpersteine](#) installed. These stolpersteine are cobbles, what they do, they take out cobblestones in the street and they put in its place something the same shape and size but it's got a brass cover, plate on top and it's got the name of the people, who they were, where they lived, which concentration camp they went to. And they were planning to put in stolpersteine outside the house where my grandparents lived up until the 1930s

CP: And was it just people who died in concentration camps, wasn't it also people who had been displaced

NG: Yes it was people who had been displaced by the Nazi regime. And my cousin in America, she heard about it because her father had been in correspondence with somebody from the village of Frohburg, I guess post-war, had been in contact, as I will tell you shortly... my grandfather with his brothers they had a factory in the village of Frohburg and there was a man there who as a teenager worked in the factory, and I believe the factory kept going through the war and was only actually flattened around ten years ago, and it was kept going as a factory, and so as a man in his eighties, and it's to his credit, that he actually wanted my family to be remembered for what they did to the community.

CP: So he's not Jewish

NG: Not Jewish, no

CP: What did they do in the factory?

NG: They dyed fabric

CP: Okay, so is that because this gentleman felt that your family had been very good to the community?

NG: Yes, they had apparently been very generous to the community and apparently my grandfather or his brothers happened to be very good to this man. And this man, it was amazing, he was saying that his father had also worked in the factory. And when we went to Frohburg in March, he actually showed us a book that my grandfather had given him on different types of weaves

CP: Oh really, so you met him?

NG: We met him, yes, so he was there, this 85 year old man, absolutely incredible, and he had the book, he very proudly showed us and said this is what your grandfather gave me

CP: Very touching

NG: Yes, absolutely. It turns out that when my grandparents were alive and in the village they did a lot for the community and helped the community out. The community all worked, well they were a major employer in the village I suppose, in the area, but they also put the effort back into the community

CP: How many people did they employ, do you have you any idea?

NG: No

CP: This is a small village. Is it one of those places where everyone who lives in the village works in the factory do you think?

NG: It is a small village, it's not a tiny village now but it was probably a very small incidental village and the factory was probably placed there because there was this river, a major river nearby, and of course you need water for working with the materials. Anyway, my cousin emailed me, she wrote to all the cousins saying there's going to be this stolpersteine event, could somebody go to represent the family so all my other cousins live in America so I was the closest being in England. So it was a short, it was easy for me to get to Frohburg. So we said we would go, it was very fortunate, our 4 children came with us as well in the end, to Frohburg, they were all there. It was very good for the children to know their heritage

NG: You said you hadn't known until then anything about Frohburg so what had your mother....

CP: My mother never talked about her childhood, she never wanted to talk about her childhood. My mother has two sisters, my aunts, and they've never, I mean I've since spoken to them about it ... they said they never wanted to talk about their childhood and they never want to go back there, they don't want to have anything to do with it and my mother never talked about it, it was just what the Nazis did for her, I knew my grandmother had died of ill health and I knew that my grandfather had gone to a concentration camp but they never told me any details and it really wasn't until March this year that I actually found out so much about the family

CP: So and it was some students, they were doing a project or doing some research into their local history?

NG: This was the other also remarkable thing that as part of this stolpersteine initiative, as I said this 85 year old man had apparently initiated

CP: Oh he'd initiated it?

NG: He'd initiated it, he wanted these memorial plaques to be placed in memory of my grandparents and his brothers, my father's brothers, because of what they did, I suppose bringing wealth to the village, establishing the village, what they'd done. And so yes the local Frohburg High School, as their summer project last year, they had looked into my family history and so they wanted to know more about my family and when we actually went there in March they presented to me a Powerpoint on my family from my mother's generation upwards which is a bit, these people who I knew nothing about the village, nothing about the people, and here I find the local High School students for the 6th form, some project, they're investigating my family

CP: And they found you through your cousins?

NG: Yes, I've since been, I've met them, in email contact, they're asking me more questions about my mother and her two sisters and how they got out of Germany and so one of the things at the moment they asked me about which [Kindertransport](#) did my mother and her two sisters escape on,

which I don't yet know the answer but I've written to AJR (Association of Jewish Refugees) and the people in AJR they don't keep the records for Kindertransport but the records are kept by World Jewish Relief, WJR, so WJR has been contacted and I am hoping to find out which Kindertransport my mother came over on, and her sisters. I think, very possibly, my mother was something like 14, and her sisters were something like 10 and 8 and as you hear about Kindertransport her parents said to my mother: You are now responsible for your sisters – at the age of 14, and that was the last they saw

CP: That was it. What a wrench

NG: But this happened to so many families, you know, the parents said goodbye to their children and at some very young ages

CP: So that must have had a lot to do with why your mother and her sisters didn't want to talk about their childhood, they just don't want to remember it, to block it out

NG: I think sort of the, Yvonne who was my youngest aunt, I think she was about 8, I mean can you imagine saying goodbye to your parents and everything, it was such a dreadful time for them

CP: And there were many thousands of children

NG: Thousands and thousands came over

CP: And did they have any family that they were going to?

NG: There was some family here who I think helped them, they'd already come across and I think they gave them some sort of help. Curiously because last week I went to see some of the family, some of this other family, my mum's cousin's son, who has been investigating the family, has been doing a family tree and he was recounting a story that I think someone in the family, they wanted some money to help get the rest of the family out from Braunsberg people who were already in the country and they wouldn't give their money to get the person out of Germany and of course the person went off to concentration camp and died. But I guess that's what happened. Terrible stories where people had money and greed and they just kept everything for themselves and didn't want to help anybody else.

CP: A lot of fear and denial as well

NG: Fear and denial, all those things. So anyway, coming back to, that was end of last year I got contacted, then the Frohburg High School people contacted me and said they would like to give me a presentation when I come and the teachers, it wasn't actually the teachers but the people facilitating the stolpersteine event they emailed me for help and to get things organised and to be there and I told them I was interested to find out where my grandmother was buried

CP: Just remind me about your grandmother and how she died?

NG: So my grandmother, it turns out, which I only found out in March, the beginning of this year, is that my grandmother, she was ill, she had a blood clot. Under the Nazi regime, Jews weren't allowed to have any help from any doctors or any medication so whatever illness you had you either recovered or you died and so my grandmother died and she died of a blood clot which is relatively better I suppose than dying in the concentration camp cos that's what happened to my grandfather, he was taken away and he was taken to Auschwitz and that's where he perished.

CP: And there's a stone for each of them.

NG: Yes, so the stolpersteine were put in in March this year, they were these memorial stones. Stolperstein translates to stumbling stone but you don't stumble on them, they are actually embedded flat on the ground as a cobble stone is, it's just you've got a copper plate with the names inscribed of the people, when they were there, where they lived and how they perished.

CP: And who was it who started up that project?

NG: So the name of this person was Günther Demnig who we've now met in fact twice because my other grandparents have also had stolpersteine for them and it's remarkable because that was two, last year, the year before? I was called to another part of Germany where my father came from and a similar sort of story where this they were going to put in stolpersteine for my other grandparents. So I'd met Günther Demnig once and when I saw him again this year in Frohburg I said to him, I'm sure you can't remember me with so many ceremonies but this Günther, he remembered us, he remembered the weather, he remembered it was raining and he remembered the event. Absolutely incredible cos

CP: He's put in some 48,000...

NG: He's done 48,000? Wow

CP: In 18 countries. I mean I don't know if he's personally done them

NG: He does most of it himself, I mean his personal ambition, I mean as we said earlier on, so many Germans have got such guilty complex about what they did to the Jews in Germany, so he's putting, he's helping put these memorial plaques being put in

CP: He's not Jewish?

NG: He's not Jewish, no, and I mean it was interesting cos when we were in Frohburg March this year, he gave a Powerpoint presentation on his life as well, which was also very interesting, how he was an art student and how his circumstances were to do these memorial stones and on his Powerpoint he showed us how he'd been around Europe putting these memorial stones in

CP: What was the most striking thing for you then, when you went there with your family, how did it feel?

NG: First of all I really didn't know about my mother's childhood and what it was like there and I was just flabbergasted that people had taken so much interest in my family and I have to say so respectful for the family for what they'd done for that village albeit, how many, 80 years ago, absolutely amazing.

CP: So it must have been very emotional

NG: Yes it was, to see all that, so yes I mean I was flabbergasted by all these things. Yes so the people from the school we were saying it would be nice if we could trace where my grandmother was buried as my cousin had told me that she died in Leipzig and through their kind help, they found out that there were two, or there are two Jewish cemeteries in Leipzig and they spoke to the administrators of those two Jewish cemeteries. They found out which cemetery my grandmother was buried at, they got a cemetery plan of the layout of all the memorial stones, they found out the number and where it was on the plan, the exact address of where it was and after we had the stolpersteine ceremony which I'll come back to, but we did that in the morning so in the afternoon they took us to Leipzig and they took us to the exact address and the photograph that I showed you, there's this very anonymous looking gate, which you'd have no idea that it was a major Jewish

cemetery, but anyway we went to the Jewish cemetery and yes, there it was, we followed the route map and we found the memorial stone to my grandmother. And my mother, I just had no idea

CP: She hadn't talked about her parents at all?

NG: No, and it is probably like so many people who've been through the war, been through the Nazi regime, they just want to black, blacken out what happened at that time, they just don't want to talk about it. And my mother certainly didn't want to talk about it.

CP: Was that strange growing up as a child, did you have questions?

NG: Well I suppose you don't ask, I suppose some people have parents who have parents, they have aunts and uncles that you go and talk to, but I didn't have any of that, I didn't have any grandparents on either side or any of my grandparents' generations. I mean like so many people they'd just been annihilated by the Nazi regime. But as a child you never think about asking, you just accept that's how it is.

CP: And did your mother's two sisters, did they stay in England or did they go to America?

NG: They both went to America. Although they all came to England to start with, my two aunts both married American GIs, American soldiers who were based over here and just as I guess my mother was introduced to my father, my father was from Germany and when he escaped, when he came to England, he was allowed to join the British Army as an interpreter, as an English interpreter and so my father's name was Guggenheimer, he changed it to Grant because he was in the army and they said you need an English name

CP: It was unusual that they should employ a German

NG: No apparently there were lots of them, I suppose because they were Jewish, they were victims of the Nazi regime

CP: So they were seen as safe and reliable

NG: They were seen as friendly aliens, I think that was what they were called, they were trusted enough to be in the British Army, not to hold any firearms but they could be trusted to be an interpreter. So my father was there as an interpreter and my parents met near Liverpool cos my mother happened to be in Liverpool, my father was stationed near Liverpool, and somehow people heard there was a Jewish boy and a Jewish girl in Liverpool and they were introduced and the rest is history I think so

CP: Did your father come over on a Kindertransport

NG: No and I'm not too sure about how he came over. My father and his parents were in Dachau in a concentration camp and apparently my grandparents bribed the guards to let my father out and I think if I've got it correctly he found his way to Switzerland where there were people who he knew from Germany who'd moved to Switzerland and then they helped facilitate him to come to England. And again, my father he was in Dachau for ten days and he would never talk about it, never talk about it, they were such dreadful times

CP: Presumably he didn't see his parents again?

NG: No, never saw his parents, no

CP: Was he on his own, did he have siblings?

NG: So my father had a sister, Aunt Lorle, who survived until last year, she was almost one hundred and one. She lived in Bradford and she survived. My father died when he was 69.

CP: How did his sister get to be here?

NG: I think she came over just before the Nazi regime had come to power and her parents had had the foresight to send her to England and she had gone into, I forget what the phrase is, she was there as a home help, to clean the house and she managed to find a job, do you call it going into service?

CP: Yes

NG: So she went into service. My father's a whole other story! So coming back to Frohburg, we went to Frohburg, the people were so hospitable, we went there on the Thursday evening where we had our Powerpoint presentations, the mayor was there, he was very hospitable, they paid for our hotel in Frohburg which was very good of them

CP: Well, you were being honoured I suppose

NG: Yes, certainly we were being honoured. We'd had to pay out lots of money ourselves as we'd flown Luton-Berlin. Then Berlin train, you go Berlin to Leipzig and from Leipzig you take a train to Frohburg

CP: You were the sort of stars of the show!

NG: It was very strange, yes, very strange

CP: It must have felt really strange as you didn't know them and you didn't know the history, they were telling you about your family

NG: Yes, they were telling me my history which was strange. And I managed to get three out of four children to come and join us, which was a good thing. Adam was the one who couldn't make it because he'd already booked, he was on holiday then. So I mean that was good, so they came, as I said the presentation was on Thursday evening and then on the Friday morning we went to the house where my grandparents lived and whilst we were there they dug out a couple of cobblestones and in the pictures that I gave you you'll see Günther with his power saw drill digging out the cobblestones to make space for it and then sort of putting them in and one of the pictures I showed you, I was quite pleased and impressed, there was quite a good turnout from the local people. I suppose they'd put it in the local paper that it was happening but still I think in St Albans if someone said they were going to do memorial stones for people who had lived there 80 years ago, you couldn't imagine a crowd. So the schoolkids were there and they read out a summary of what they'd done, what they'd found out, in German, I mean I can't speak any German but there were enough people there who could speak English to translate it for us

CP: You didn't learn German as a child?

NG: No, my parents didn't want us to speak German, they were so ashamed of Germany, they just didn't want any association with Germany at all. So I had the option to learn German at school but they said no, you're not going to do it. Which of course in hindsight it was a shame we didn't speak German but...

CP: You can kind of understand how they might have felt though...

NG: So that was it, so the Friday morning they laid stones and then we went for a walk with the mayor, a walk round the village essentially and we went to the swimming pool and the swimming pool was interesting for me because I didn't know about it but it turns out that the brothers, the people who ran the factory, they sponsored an outdoor swimming pool for the local people

CP: This is in the 1930s

NG: In the 1930s, yes, and when the pool was prepared and ready and they went to the opening ceremony, my grandparents and my mother and her sisters, they went there for the opening ceremony but they were not allowed to use the swimming pool because they were Jewish. Jewish people weren't allowed to use public facilities, even though the family had paid for it, their children, my grandparents' children, weren't allowed to use it. So you can understand why my mother and her sisters had bitter memories of the town, the village. And it was very interesting, I mean, to go there not only to see it, there was a specific, they've done a very old and specific memorial plaque to my grandparents in memory of what they did for the village, albeit in the 1930s. Which is just as you step into the swimming pool, which is still a lovely swimming pool, it's there for people to see. And as you go in, there's a large display board where they have cuttings from the newspapers from 1935 when the pool was built showing pictures of what the pool was like then but also an article about the family and what they did. And I had no idea about this and then we walked round to where the factory was, my grandfather's factory and his brothers' factory, the factory was apparently maintained, was still a working factory until around ten years ago, when it was flattened. And there's a memorial plaque to again, my grandfather and his brothers, saying that this was the factory they created for the village and what they did for the village. Absolutely amazing. Things we knew nothing about.

CP: Quite an eye opener.

NG: Yes, hugely respectful, not only do the Germans have a complex about what they did to the Jews, but it's hugely respectful to this family who, these days there can only be a handful of people who actually remember them

CP: You were local celebrities almost

NG: We were sort of celebrities yes, in a strange way. So yes, we did the stolpersteine in the morning, we saw what my family did for the town, and then in the afternoon the people from the high school they drove us to Leipzig and they took us to the burial ground where they found, we found, my grandmother's burial plot which again was amazing. I really didn't know what happened to my grandmother, I mean I think I remember she was ill but I didn't know what she died from or why she died

CP: Yes, so that must have been quite a shock

NG: Yes, and to find, you know I found out where she was and how she died, the fact that she had this blood clot and she wasn't allowed medical treatment. And that's presumably how so many people perished.

CP: Yes, the ones that weren't sent to the camps

NG: Yeah, if you were healthy you were sent to the camp, if you weren't healthy you died of natural causes.

CP: Yes, that's very shocking isn't it?

NG: Yes

CP: So you really learnt quite a lot on that trip

NG: Yes, so that was it, people were really so very hospitable, they invited us to go back in April next year where they're going to put down some stolpersteine for some of the other members of the family

CP: Do you know which members?

NG: It's, so I talked to you about my mother having two sisters. My mother also had a brother who died in concentration, he was, somehow he ended up in Drancy in France in a holding camp and then from there he was taken to Auschwitz where he perished. And also I think there's more stones for some of the other brothers who were involved in the factory. So that was in March, an amazing time, and then fast forward to May where I got an email from one of the teacher-supervisors for the stolpersteine event for my family, very apologetic email to say that the stolpersteine had been vandalised and in fact I think they said in the email that there had been three attempts to vandalise and destroy them and clearly from the email they were very upset. They say the neo-Nazis do it and I guess they feel there must be some neo-Nazis in the Frohburg village or nearby and they're just so upset that those people are in the area. I think they're ashamed, deeply ashamed of what's happened, that those sort of people are still around in the area.

CP: How did you feel about that?

NG: I was surprised, shocked. Shocked I suppose, why would neo-Nazis I suppose why would they do it? But what was very heartening and as you will see in the email, they arranged for the children from the high school to come and clean up the cobble stones. And they said they will have another attempt in November in a few months' time, have another attempt to clean them up and bring them back to how they were.

CP: Do you think you will be able to go again

NG: So, yes I'll certainly be back in Frohburg next year in April for the next lot of stolpersteine and I do have half a mind to go back in November when they do the next clean up. Unfortunately, we've got a wedding, this cousin who set us up to go to Frohburg, her son's getting married in America, in Washington, in that week so we probably won't be in the UK, we'll be in America at the time when the clean up is going on. But I really feel as a matter of principle that, maybe I can get some of our children to go....

CP: Yes, it sounds like they're going to a lot of effort to put things right, not just the mistakes of the past, the mistakes of the present, so I mean with all their embarrassment about the past and shame about the past

NG: Yes, we ought to try and do something. Yes, so that's my family's story. I've gone from knowing very little about my mother and her childhood and understanding why she didn't want to talk about her childhood to suddenly knowing quite a bit about what happened but to find myself being emailed by the Frohburg high school students, they're still emailing me, asking me for more information that perhaps I should have known but don't. Because I never asked my mother about Kindertransport when she came

CP: So they must have some sort of understanding about that though, that you know, people here, people who went through those experiences wanted to block them out, didn't really want to talk

about them. But for you, you've had all these revelations in a short space of time. So when you first got there, and you saw the stones being put in, how did you feel then?

NG: I don't know, is the word humbled? I was just, I was so amazed that the local people were interested, respectful, supportive of having this memorial. My family were there in the 1930s, probably 1920s, 1930s, clearly they were a major supportive force to the village in its wellbeing, it's just amazing that they still want to remember them and respect them. And it's part of this stolpersteine that they want to remember, they have this guilt complex and they want, I suppose it's part of their way of dealing with it.

CP: They want to remember what your mother and lots of people like her went through

NG: That's right. And I've asked my, they've asked me the High School kids, have asked me all sorts of questions and I've asked them back to my aunts and they just don't want to know, they're not interested

CP: What, your aunts are still...

NG: Well as I said, one of them is still compos mentis, one of them's got dementia, she'd probably be more willing but can't remember and the other one can remember...

CP: Is she in America?

NG: Yes, she's in America

CP: So you might see her at the wedding?

NG: Oh yes, I'll see her at the wedding, actually I'd forgotten about that, maybe I'll ask her then

CP: An opportunity to show her some pictures

NG: I've already emailed out the photographs which apparently they reluctantly looked at but they really

CP: It's too hard for them

NG: Yes, it's too hard, they don't want to know and I think as I said, before we switch the mike off, my cousin and her mother they went to Frohburg it turned out, in the 1960s when it was still part of East Germany, still under the Russian regime and my cousin said she remembers being there and there being horse-drawn carts sort of going through the village in the 1960s and so it was one of the first questions my cousin asked me, do they still have horse-drawn carts going through the village, which I'm pleased to say they don't! But of course Germany's now a unified country, the Russian regime has moved away

CP: There are four wheeled motors

NG: Modern times and mobile phone aerial masts and all the other things of modern society

CP: Ok, well I think that's a good way to finish so thank you very much

NG: Thank you to you!

[Interview ends]