Irene Wagner, Interviewed: ?

Q: I'm here with Irene Wagner, in her kitchen, interviewing her for the Home Front Recall Project, and we're going to start the interview with asking Irene to start at the beginning: how she came to this country.

IW: Well, it was really after the Kristallnacht, and I don't need to explain what that is, that I came. My parents wanted me to get out because I was politically very engaged all the time. And the time then had come, after what I experienced during the following days. The deportation of Polish Jews from everywhere, in cattle trucks on the railway, and I decided that these people needed to be helped, so I was, during the following day, when all the Jews, the Polish Jews from western Germany were deported. I was on the station giving out pieces of bread to those poor people who were just desperate and a little … I think it was just very little window space they had, and hands were sticking out. And I was there with a basket of bread which the Jewish community had given to some, not only me, but other helpers, to give to these people because they were being deported to Poland. Whether they lived in Germany for any length of time or not, but that's what happened. And I think it was the first time that I came across the inhumanity of man to man. Because that experience will always stay with me.

Q: Could you now tell us about once you arrived? How did you fit in? What was going on?

IW: Well, in the end, of course, I did get away, and I had several scares. And one of the stories which you … my parents quite like, was I had a gramophone and I was always very, very musical and I needed a gramophone to go with me. But it had to be sealed. And the police came to seal this gramophone, but I have … I still think … I have my doubts whether they really wanted to seal it or not, because they sealed it in a way that I could open the lid, and you probably can't ever have known a gramophone like that, but it was the usual one. So I opened it. And friends of mine wanted to give their daughter some money, but you couldn't get money out, so they bought some chemical dishes made of very precious metal. It was not steel, it was platinum. So they had four dishes made of platinum. And I was able to put them into the loudspeaker part of that thing and then close it again and the string was around it and it didn't look as though it had been touched. So that's how I got the gramophone through the Customs in Hamburg on to the ship. And so it was a November day, and there I was in Hamburg, waiting for the ship which was in the harbour, going through all the Customs and the Gestapo and everything, shaking as I … I still can't think how I made it, with all that platinum in my gramophone! On to the ship. And the ship left at night, and the way from Hamburg to Southampton isn't really very far, but we … I don't know why and how, but we spent the night and I shared a cabin with my father's lady friend who was getting to America, because the boat, actually, was going to the States. It landed at Southampton and then it was going to New York. And I had a visa to get to America, but I wanted to stop over

in England to both stay with my father's sister, who lived there and was married to an Irishman, and my mother's sister, who was married to a very famous architect who built the Delaware Pavilion in London, and houses, and built with Maxwell Fry in California and New York various buildings. So he was still there at that stage, which was the end of 1938. War was obviously sort of a possibility already, and people were very worried, so eventually my uncle, Eric Mendelsohn, and his wife, my mother's sister, decided that they would sort of get me a job, and they would go off to Palestine. Which they were great Zionists and so on and so forth. My uncle always wanted me to be an architect, come with him to Palestine, but I was so against Palestine as a place for Jews, I thought that was wrong, and you know, and I had set my mind to go to America, you know, to a new, so to speak, a new country. However, it never happened like that. So off I go, off the boat, on a November day, into a train to Victoria Station, and there was my aunt, my father's sister. And I stayed with her for a short time. Then she talked to my other aunt, the Mendelsohn one, and between them they said: 'Well, she needs a job, she needs to do something,' so they both said: 'We've got connections,' da da da … But my Aunt Louisa, who is my mother's sister, and married to the architect, she said: 'Well, I know somebody at the London County Council and she's got good connections. I'll ask her.' So the long and the short was that I got a job, first of all, with a family of dentists, and of course, coming from a sort of middle class family, I had no idea how to scrub floors! We had maids for that sort of thing, you know! So here I was, thrown in with these, German too, German dentists in Edgware. And so … Well, I tried my best. I don't think they were very happy with me. And what happened, unluckily, is they had beds as I've never seen in this country, which you can fold in to the wall. So that, you know, they had a shelf above that and then you just fold them up, you know. Like so. And one day this fell down on my foot and cut my toe and they had to take me to the hospital, and I had a great big bandage, and I couldn't walk very much so I wasn't any use to them, so they rang up one of my aunts and said can you take her away, she's no use to us, da da da. So I went back to one of my aunts until this thing was almost healed. And I settled for some time, sort of looking after my aunt's flat and met quite a lot of interesting people. And then my other aunt said: 'There's a job going, I can arrange that, there's a friend of mine who's also a member of the London County Council and she's married to an economist from Oxford. She's expecting twins and they want somebody to run the house in Hampstead.' And so this is how I came to become an au pair person to the household of Douglas Jay, who then became a minister and his wife is still alive now. Lives in Hampstead. And I ran the shop. Now the eldest boy was Peter Jay, who became British Ambassador to America, in Washington. The second one was called Vernon, and he became the head of the British Physical Laboratories, because he was a physicist. So these are my two cousins on my father's side, and it was a very sort of compact family, in a way, because my physicist cousin was married to a very much older Jewish lady and my family didn't like that much. And the other one was Ernest, and he and I got on extremely well, altogether, that has got some sort of bearing on what's to come. And so eventually, I used to go and stay for a weekend with either of my aunts,

and one day my employer, who was called Peggy Jay, said: 'Look, you need a day out, because we've got all these people living in our house.' There was a Czech called Thomas Balloch, who was a Hungarian economist. Who was absolutely fantastic. Worked eventually with Wilson. He lived in the house. He was Hungarian. And then there was a couple from Oxford, I think Philip and Jennifer, and they were lawyers, and you know, they did some sort of shady business, I think. I'm not quite sure how shady it was really. Anyway, I looked after this house, with Peggy taking the children to Oxford for safety, because by then, 1940, the bombs were starting to fall and so on and so forth. And one day my … Peggy, my employer, used to say: 'The Fabian Society is having a 'do, and I told you at [Drew Stalton], there's a very nice man you ought to meet.' And I said: 'Thank you. I've left Germany, I don't want another German young man, whatever, you know. Just F off!' In so many words! Anyhow, so then came this business of Peggy saying there's a dance in the Fabian Society, it would be nice if you went. It's an evening out.' They used to have real dances! What we used to call in German a [ringelpice] and in English, a 'hop'. And so in the end, I said to my cousin Ernest who was without a girlfriend: 'Let's go, you know, if you take me I promise next time you've got girlfriend problems, I'll come with you. So as long as you come with me to that dance we'll be OK.' So we did. And it was very full, and these were all so … These weren't exactly the Webbs, but, you know, people who were in that vein. They were all sort of very … what do you call it … venerable people there. But some were younger. I was sort of teaming up with a very nice young man who was a lecturer at a technical college in West London, and then in the middle of this sort of dance, Peggy Jay came with a young man. Introduced me to him. I don't think she could pronounce his name. So we stood in the middle of the dance floor. And he introduced himself. Clicked his heels. And I thought: 'Oh! That's the absolute end!'

[Break]

Q: Here we go. Carry on.

IW: Right. Well, this is the middle of the dance floor at the Fabian Society in the National … In the National Gallery. Well, I'm going back to the summer before, in 1935, I went to Hungary with my mother for a holiday. Fell madly in love at the age of fifteen, I think it was, with a young man called Yuri, and that has been in the back of my mind for a long time. So when in 1940, the Fabian Society dance, I met this young man and he was introducing himself as Yuri Wagner, I said: 'My God!' You know. I said: 'Where do you come from?' And he said he came from Danzig, which is now Gdansk, and that is, of course, where my family lived, and so of course, we went to the bar and we talked about my family, and he said: 'Well, since you've been in Danzig last year, you must have had an inkling that I was actually the boyfriend of one of your cousins.' And so I remembered the year before I was there, my three cousins, the oldest one was in England, and the second one, Annelie, was also in England already, and the third one was still there. And I slept in my cousin Annelie's bed, and on the bedside table was this

picture. I asked my aunt who it was, and it was Annelie's boyfriend and so on. And here was this chap from Gdansk, who knew my cousin, who in the meantime was married in Bournemouth, and then he said: 'Come and let's have a drink because this is extraordinary that you know people in Gdansk, and I come from Danzig,' and so on and so forth. So we established in the end, that my uncle, who was a headmaster of a school was also the headmaster of his school, that politically he worked together with my uncle, against the Nazis, of course. And so by the time we had several whiskies and he said he would walk me home from Piccadilly to Hampstead. On the way we discovered how many hundreds of things we had in common and so on and so forth, and then of course, from that day onward came the bunch of flowers every day, and a box of chocolates every day. And so it went on. Ruth Dalton, who was the wife of Hugh Dalton, who was at that time the Minister of Economic Welfare, said you know, 'This is ridiculous, she's in Hampstead and you're in Westminster, you know, so why don't you invite her to send a weekend here in this huge flat in Westminster.' And I wasn't quite sure if I was ready to spend the weekend with a man who I've hardly known. And so it went on for weeks. He was then in the Fire Brigade in Waterloo. And Hugh Dalton thought this was ridiculous. My husband spoke three languages, he was a political refugee, and so the long and the short was he got him a job on the Foreign Office on the research and intelligence side and I was in London, and he was in the country. I had no idea where he was. So that went on for some time. Every week he came back and I asked him what he was doing, and he said: 'Don't ask me because I can't talk about that. Maybe soon.' You know. So we were then married at Caxton Hall, a very posh sort of registry office in London, in Caxton Hall, and the registrar sort of was very belligerent … In the first place, he didn't want to marry me because he thought I was too young. Well, now, all my life I've suffered under this business of looking younger than I am. And I really looked like sixteen or seventeen. I came back from a holiday in the Dalton's house in Wiltshire, I was nice and brown, had a lovely pink dress, and a sort of boater hat with two ribbons hanging down, so yes, I … And then he said: 'Where are your parents?' And I said: 'No, thank you very much, my parents don't even know I'm getting married,' so he found that peculiar and then stormed in Hugh Dalton and said: 'Get on, my man!' And he upset the registrar. However, it took thirteen minutes in the end to get married us at the registrar. And then we had a tremendous reception from a restaurant in Regent Street, which was called … Ooh dear. Ooh dear. It had a town, and it was also run by an ex-member of the London County Council. Anyhow, there was a band and when I arrived, they played …

[Break]

IW: She used to work in the German History Department, here, at the university, an interesting woman. So.

Q: We're back at the party.

IW: We're back at the party. After the wedding, and then Ruth Dalton said: 'We are going away for the weekend, you can have the flat to yourselves.' So, you know, we just had wonderful ideas of how we'd spend the whole of the evening in bed, when the telephone rang and the telephone said that Churchill has said that France going to collapse any moment and you've got to come back to the job in the country. So, here, at six o'clock in the evening I said good-bye to my husband on our wedding day and he went back to work and I was stuck in London. And I had very little to do because I had given up the job. So, you know. I did all sorts of other things and eventually my husband said: 'The authorities have allowed us to live together, so you can come to a place called Woburn.' That is where he was stationed. In a most wonderful stately home called Woburn Abbey, which housed the whole of the intelligence services as far as propaganda is concerned. And that's where we started work. My husband started work straightaway, of course, but I started, having been got down to Woburn, to the village, boring myself to bits, until one day there was a knock on the door, and it was a woman who said: 'My name is Dora Gaitskill. And my husband is a Parliamentary candidate, and he is working down there, and I've got two children and I'm bored, and would you sort of occasionally come with me to the park.' So, if people haven't been to Woburn, I just say very shortly, it's a beautiful eighteenth century country house of the Dukes of Bedford, in a wonderful park. Absolutely gorgeous. And a very nice sort of tidy village as well. So I stayed in the village. I couldn't live with my husband who had to live in. I lived out in Woburn. Then I got myself a flat in something called Woburn Sands, where my husband then came to visit me, sort of occasionally. But then, in the end, it was getting a bit ridiculous. And we had the place in the village. And he used to come sort of every night and stay and then have to go back to work in the mornings. That went on for a little while. In the end he brought back work for me to do because he was so busy and there weren't enough German speakers there. And the head of the unit was a chap called Dick Crossman, who was a Parliamentary candidate in Coventry. So he was the boss man. And so eventually, my husband and I moved together into a flat in the village and every day we went to work in a riding school! And that was a part of this complex of stately home. And it had wooden flooring so clonk, clonk, clonk! And there were lots of people who did all the work there. Among them there was military intelligence, we had Air Vice-Marshals, we had Army personnel, Navy personnel, that sort of thing. And it was, essentially, writing leaflets, to begin with, at least. And it was quite an idyllic life because it was so multi-cultural and we've had units, French units, Italian units, Scandinavian units, and people were coming backwards and forwards, and eventually we just couldn't bear living in this community up there, so we moved to Woburn Sands, which was the next village. And that was a little bit more isolated. However, we … from now on it's going to be a little bit more difficult. We had sort of directives, of course, and we had background, because there were monitoring units all over, there were people who lived in Belgium and Holland who by night used to come to Dover, you know, and with information. And we would provide information for them. And eventually there were various things that were detailed for us to do. One, we

used to print a lot of leaflets which were then distributed … no, I don't mean that. The Air Force dropped them over various places in Germany. And the most extraordinary thing that happened to me last year, when I went to Kaliningrad, which used to be called Kenigsberg in east Prussia, I went to a museum there which is underneath the main square. And it had sort of about ten cubicles in a way. And in one of the cubicles were all the leaflets which my husband and I produced in England! Which were thrown in a town over the retreating German troops in Russia. There they were! I could not believe it! I screamed and the interpreter who was there said: 'Oh, my God, what the hell is happening to her?' Just look! One of them was called 'Neues Deutsche and New Germany', which was entirely sort of helping the Russians, it was Russian politics in mind, so that was quite useful. And we also sort of had very near to us, in Bletchley, the unit that decoded everything. So, as Wagner's opera always says, 'Never shalt thou ask me', they were so secret that we didn't know they even existed! But we met in the pub, you know. And there were all these people in uniforms, hundreds of golden stripes and green stripes, and Air Force blue, and Navy and oh! And we used to go there because we were the only couple that lived outside Woburn Abbey. And so we were in the pub. And it was very useful because the publican was an ex-naval rating, he was quite lowly. But he had tremendous bosoms. And he had sort of t-shirts. T-shirts then were ordered only from America. The people who from Bletchley Park, all these high gold officers and that, used to go: 'Bom! Bom!' you know, on his boobs. And we found that absolutely revolting. Sort of war time service, bar, bar. Anyhow, but his wife was as flat as a board! It was extraordinary. And we used to meet in the pub, which was very useful. And so one day, one of these officers, a Naval officer, I remember he had more gold than I've ever seen on anything. They were arguing very hectically. And we were drinking rum and orange. That was the drink because all the whisky was exported to the States to make dollars. And this, you know, the rum and orange, was not exactly making you high, but it sort of made you quite happy. So one evening there was a tremendous argument, and of course we wouldn't mix with those people. And the publican came over and said: 'Look! They are arguing about something and you could quite easily solve that. So why don't you go and talk to them?' They could bloody well come here and talk to us, you know. And that man with all that gold came up and he wanted just something about the Rhine and German troops movements, something which was not very secret which he could have had from tickertape. And so that was the beginning when we talked to people from Bletchley Park, who were the most secret people on earth. And our girls, our secretaries, their husbands worked there, and they worked with us so there was always a link. But we then started really, sort of getting going, the war was … France had fallen and there was great need for more and more propaganda. And so we were … because we were multi-lingual, we had in Woburn Abbey departments, I think of all sort of nationalities. There were sections. There was a French section that dealt with France and the Italian one with Italy. And there slowly and steadily came quite a lot of Scandinavians who had fought in Norway, Swedes, for instance, who had fought in Norway. Sweden was neutral. And Germans who became prisoners of war, God knows

how, anyhow, we always had a couple as well. And so we sat there. We had all sorts of people. Austrians. Swiss. An odd Swiss, here and there. And we listened to the radio which came from Belgium. Most of the news came from Belgium. And they were very, very closely monitored. There were tickertapes, ticker apparatuses that were captured from the Foreign Office in German, the German Foreign Office, which worked very well, so every day we had all the latest instructions by the German Foreign Office to the various embassies and we could then make our propaganda according to what we heard on the tickertape there. And of course, there were always people there who went and came, and Ruth George and I sort of had chats with them. We drank a lot of coffee. Which was also not very easy. And what we were aiming at is a complete de-stabilization of the Army. We weren't so much concerned with the Navy because the Navy was going backwards and forwards to the States and after all, supplies, and all that sort of thing. But we were then most concerned with the Army, and the Army was then sort of preparing to go into Germany and to the … And our information came by Switzerland, neutral country. France, which was unoccupied, that part of France, and Spain, which was neutral. And via, in the end, Portugal. The information we could use for our propaganda was based on really good information coming straight out of the various countries. And I remember to get the acceptance, we had to think about all sorts of things, like there is a paperback in Germany which one had in schools, which are the classics and all this. So we re-printed some, and pages sixty to eighty were just pure propaganda about how to fake venereal disease, because you would be out of the Army. That would demoralize the Army. That kind of thing. How to put together two wires to make an explosive, or something like that. Honestly, I had nothing to do with that because I was much more gathering information than the rest of the staff. And then we had a straight opening through Switzerland. And planes then flew from Switzerland to Spain and from Spain to Portugal, as I said before. And they brought all sorts of information that the Swiss had gathered. But the Swiss were pretty awful during the war. However. And then there were all sorts of openings in further east, Turkey, I remember sort of information coming from the eastern front via Turkey. And we made use of that in our propaganda. And most of the time, as I said, this information was used for demoralizing, I think was the main aim. In the end, of course, we wanted to demoralize the German population, of course, as well.

[Break]

Q: OK.

IW: And then we struck lucky, we thought, in a way. Troops going into Germany captured all sorts of things, among them ration books. So they came back and we said: 'Right. We will flood Germany with fake ration books and that will destroy their whole food distribution system. Brilliant idea!' So we printed those, hundreds of these rations books, which were about that size, and had sort of stamps in it which you could give for milk, for meat, for butter, God knows what

else. And so we printed. And the Air Force dropped a lot. And apparently it completely, utterly, confused the German distribution, food distribution service. For a very short time. So my husband was getting very worried about this now, here we are and people on the ground say people have been arrested for having these ration cards, so what … looking just like the German ration cards. They were dropped over field outside the town, people went there to pick it up. Complete mess of the distribution of butter and milk and meat. Then suddenly, nothing! And it's only after the war that I found out what went wrong, actually. We used British printing presses. The ink which was used was not the ink that the Germans would use. So when they analysed those ration cards, they found that one out. So anybody that picked up a ration card in Germany was immediately arrested for using a fake ration card and God knows what. And we felt really pretty awful about this. But as far as I'm concerned, I was mostly concerned with background. I had a vast card index of names which came out of German newspapers, and we got most of the German newspapers every day. And I used to read them, cut them, and extract names, and they eventually went into a book which was called *Who's Who in Nazi Germany*, and it was printed and everybody in the Army, who was on the forward troops had one of those to arrest people straightaway in Hanover, in [Burgerborg], and [Paderborn], God knows where they came across that. So that was very useful. How many were released, I've never been able to find out afterwards, but I mean, my card index, which must have had one, two, three, four … six thousand in one cabinet and then vast number of cuttings in other cabinets, where all the German Nazi papers were cut and classified. So the back up for our propaganda was pretty efficient, I must say. And here I am, sort of a librarian, carrying on with card indices, no computers, of course. Nothing of the kind existed then. But it was pretty good information. And it was very much later, sort of fifty years ago that the BBC asked me to, asked both my husband and me to do a programme. We said if you can get hold of these filing cabinets, God knows where they are! You don't really need us to do a talk, but in the end we gave a talk.

Q: Did they find the filing cabinets?

IW: I don't know. I have no idea. But by the end, we moved from Woburn Abbey to London, to a place called Ingersoll House, and of course, that was very much near the BBC in Bush House, and there were lots of air raids. But we did carry on. And in the end, of course, the information was all printed, as I said, in this *Who's Who in Nazi Germany*, was given to all the forward troops, officers, who went in to Germany, and from the end I found mine in Kaliningrad in east Prussia, you know. That is how far this sort of information did go, apparently. But then I just … We then were asked to move from Woburn Abbey to London, to set up the new set-up altogether. We were very near the BBC so also servicing much more than … At that stage the BBC was still doing the research all the German papers were still … Because, basically, in the end, the BBC and its German broadcasts were doing a very good job in sort of making Germans feel pretty uncomfortable. And in the end, I think, the fines, and God knows what

else. I'm quite sure I've forgotten all sorts of bits and pieces which might be of interest. But basically, I think I wouldn't have like to have been on the forward front with my little German *Who's Who in Nazi Germany* in my backpack, but it's helped when, we put, for instance, we were asked do you think So-and-So would be suitable as a mayor, we said yes, he worked with us during the war. He may have been a German, like me, but he's very reliable and so one of our colleagues became a Lord Mayor of Hanover and another one became somebody in sort of the American zone in Frankfort, also somebody. And 'cause then, our people went to places like Belgrade, you know. When it all collapsed, on every front, we just sort of, you know, thought: 'Oh, well, this is it. We've done out best. We've done an interesting job.' I had an interesting job. And sometimes you saw the result of what you were doing. And the technical … I don't know if we had a computer then, how much more we could have done, I don't know. There were only … I don't know in a present war situation, in Iraq, how much else one could … I talk to soldiers occasionally, people I know, journalists and so on who have just come back from Basra, and you know, we talk about … and they don't really want to talk about war. But we did talk about war. And, you know, nothing changes much. The weaponry has changed tremendously, but war, as such … But people then ask me, what a wonderful war you've had! But what is wonderful about war? Basically, war is evil. But if you can hurry it up by making it shorter, and you contribute, so be it. I've thought a great deal about whether I really contributed lots to the effort. You never know. You don't, really. When I was in Kaliningrad and saw all of that stuff in there … I've got photographs of that, actually. So that's about it. If you've got any questions, I think that would probably be useful.

Q: OK.

IW: OK?

Q: Well, I don't have any questions right now. I have to absorb all that.

IW: You can think about it. You can see if you have any thoughts, then just ask me, and I'm trying to go backward and see if there's anything …

Q: So did you, I mean, what did you do once the war was declared over? Did you celebrate?

IW: I had a baby.

Q: You had a baby!

IW: Well, what happened was, I'm not quite sure what, but we used to go to a little restaurant just down this end of this road. They were Italians, but everybody said they were fire-eaters! Why fire-eaters, I can't tell you! But we used to go there for lunch occasionally, and they were really Italians, and of course, the

Italians were also enemies, so you know, why were they running a restaurant? But we used to go there for a meal out so that you don't have to use your ration card. And eventually, it was in March, I think, when Montgomery and Eisenhower sort of crossed the Rhine, and we knew from the news, which we had on the ticker, that the war would be over in about a month, or even days. So we went to this little restaurant with a bottle of wine, because they didn't have wine then. And they said: 'What are you doing, drinking wine?' So we said: 'Oh, you know, Montgomery's just crossed the Rhine!' Oooh! And no sooner had we said that then the whole restaurant knew that Montgomery had crossed the Rhine, which would obviously be the end of the war. That is how we came to the end. But also, towards the end, which was awful, the Germans had this incredible flying bomb, which you never heard until it cuts out in the end, and oh! And during that … I think this must have been '44, they had a lot. And we used to go for lunch, home, and then go back. Bush House had a red flag on the top if there was an air raid or another flag when there wasn't an air raid. And we had just one day, we went home and we heard a tremendous bang while we sitting in the kitchen, and we went back and there was … literally, the pavement was full of glass. Now my shoes, during the war, had wooden soles. With a … to make them bend, they had two little kind of devices … It's not like clogs. But so that they could bend, and they had leather on the top. And to go down Kingsway after an air raid, with all that glass was stuck in the wood. And the crunching … I shall never forget. A bomb falling somewhere down in Kingsway, all the windows came out and shattered on the ground. And we got there, we noticed that the library which was on the ground floor was very badly hit. A librarian was killed there, apparently, this all while we were at lunch. And in Aldwych there were huge water tanks, absolutely vast. Imagine a sort of large lorry, size of the lorry, full of water, in the middle of Kingsway. And that was meant for the fire brigades, so that if there's a fire, you can put your hose in and suck up these millions of gallons of water. Well, what happened at Aldwych, outside the BBC, a bomb fell into that so people were around that for safety, and they were all drowned from the water, this incredible amount of water. Like all the Dresden air raid, also hit all these sumps, as they were called, these water tanks, and quite a lot people were not only killed by bombs, but they drowned because of the water. And there was also Post Office. And there were lots of people in the Post Office. And they were also killed. That's in Aldwych. So that's the nearest I came to really sort of heavy … I mean, we were sort of, when the bomb fell, we were already here, I think, having lunch, and then subsequently … We only had an hour for lunch. But we had facilities, talking about food, we had facilities, in the BBC there was a canteen. You could always go and have a … in the canteen. I'm not quite sure whether you had to take your ration books with you and they would snip out coupons for a meal or not, I don't know, but we had ration books for food, and eventually for clothing. What was never rationed was potatoes, milk. Children had extra butter. Children had cod liver oil. And children were, on the whole, very well looked after, there's no doubt about it. But if I think of anything else which might be of use … Rationing went on until 1952!

Q: I know!

IW: And I remember the first butter. It was Danish, and it was gold cover with a little green sort of clover leaves on it, and that … I bought a half a pound of butter! And I thought I was in heaven! My husband who was then lecturing, it was just shortly after the war, my husband was then lecturing out in the country, and I came home from having taken the baby out and there was on this table a bowl. We had a sort of ceramic bowl which was brown outside and white inside, and it was full of eggs! And we had seen only one egg per month until then. It was this bowl here. The bowl, I mean, a similar one is still there. Full of eggs! So I made an eight egg omelette and we were so ill after that! I tell you. So that was food. Liz had, for instance, an extra quarter of a pound of butter for children, and of course milk was free. Health Service was very good, too, as far as children are concerned. There was cod liver oil free, and orange juice. Concentrated orange juice. So the wartime children, really, they were good and strong and healthy, whereas, of course, the generation after that didn't have all that sort of thing, so there was a downward trend for that. But I mean, that's about all the bits and pieces, if you can think of something else I'm quite happy to think about it. Clothing, yes. Of course, that was also rationed. So I can't remember how many clothing coupons you needed for a blouse or a skirt, or a pair of shoes or whatever, but shortly after the war, when of course, my husband lost his job straightaway with the wartime Foreign Office, and I did, so as a librarian I sort of joined my organization and set up libraries everywhere, so I was OK with that. And from there developed … all sorts of interesting things developed.