

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee: **Gordon Rumble** (GR)

Date: 30th July 2025

Interviewer: Julianne Mackrell (JM), Trudi Mayo (TM)

Location: Gordon's home

Other people present: Karen Noad (KN)

Audio files: Interview part 1, Interview part 2



Note that the following is a verbatim transcript of what was spoken in the recording. Our best efforts have been made to capture and represent the interview in its entirety, though there is the possibility of error.

GR: Do you want the light on? You don't want the light, no cameras?

TM: No, no, no, just with just the audio.

GR: No.

JM: So we thought we'd start at the beginning Gordon. We know you were born in Odd Down, but when were you born and where exactly?

GR: I was born in Bath in Norfolk Buildings, about three houses away from what was the Midland station, along James Street West and Midland station. We had a row of houses built from the Midland station up, and my grandfather was, my uncle, was Thomas Hays, [of] the furniture [company] and he owned that house. My father rented it from him, but he also worked for him so he used to go to work every day on his pushbike from there. But we moved up to Odd Down when I was 4 years old and that house was destroyed in the Blitz.

TM: Oh gosh

GR: I was, that was in 19 [unintelligible]

JM: When was it, 45?

TM: 41 or 42

KN: 42 yeah, I think 42 was about it.

GR: But we moved up to Odd Down when I was four years old, into old Fosse Road.

KN: Yeah.

GR: And with my two brothers and my mother and father, yes. And we went St Phillips, St Lukes School.

KN: Yeah.

GR: It was St Lukes then. And. I was there right way through till I left at the age of 11 for City of Bath Boys School. Grammar school, yeah, we all got there, the three of us by by scholarship, yeah. And it was a wartime, about that time the war started. See. So from 1938, when I joined Beechen Cliff School at war and we had loads of evacuees. Hmm. And we had more, more evacuees than there were classes for. So sometimes when there was a group out on the playing field, the other lot took their classes. You know what I mean? Yeah. And every time there was an air raid warning. We had to evacuate the school and all the avenues leading up from the Bear Flat, Shakespeare, Kipling, all those dear ladies there used to open their houses for us, and we were allotted one house to go to. And even if they weren't there, they would leave the doors open.

TM: Really.

GR: And you wouldn't do it today.

KN: No.

GR: And yeah, we'd perhaps stay over an hour or so until the all clear went. When I learned to play chess [unintelligible], I had a chess set that I used to take, it would fold up you know. I'm sure some people never heard the old clear. [Laughter]. I had one guy at school. He he must have finished up in Pentonville, he was a con guy. And he got himself a white helmet. Every time the air raid went, he used to disappear. Say he was on special service or something. Came back with a dent in it one day and said he'd been in the middle of it, you know. [Laughter].

TM: Gosh.

GR: We, we we we don't think we lost any scholars. Bear Flat was badly bombed and we had to pass that so often. Yeah. And the bank there was completely destroyed. Which is why I've got buddleias in the garden because I can never, never forget seeing their buddleias. Wild buddleias growing there in the wreckage, and I've always liked buddleias since. Yeah.

KN: Wow.

GR: Yeah, but yes, I did my scholarship there. And I worked for two years in Bath as a vehicle electrician. I did all the electrical work on the [unintelligible]. And at 18 I was called up for National Service the month before the war finished, so I didn't see any active service, but I had to do all the training. I've fired machine guns and thrown hand grenades and. I've fired [unintelligible] you know and things like that. So I never killed anybody. But my trade was on vehicles. And all sorts of American 10s[??] on Max to Bedford Wells [??] transport there with motorcycles and everything. But that was my trade. When I passed 3 trade tests in the army, which qualified me for a full time trade, when I came out. But I never passed a driving test. I was in some several different posting I had. I think one was in West Croydon or somewhere once, he said you've got three tonne Bedford to look after. I said I can't drive. He went in the office and wrote me an army driving licence [laughter]. I learned on the job. I didn't take real because I was so in the marked area, but I was driving him around. Even these 10 tonners, you know. And that qualified me for a civilian licence.

KN: Wow

GR: I did a lot of driving after that. Yeah.

KN: That's good.

JM: Do you want to see if that's doing what you want it to?

TM: Yeah.

Pause in recording to check that phone has been recording OK.

GR: Since the age of 4, before it was called what it is now. My brother had, my older brother was two years older than me, he had the privilege of ringing the school bell. That was the highest thing you could do, yeah. But we had wonderful teachers there. An ex-army officer who was headmaster, Howard Collins, but all lovely, he was. The main couple of women who ran it were, they lived together for years. But they were such lovely teachers and the, yeah.

JM: Do you remember their names?

GR: Oh yes, they're all in my book, all in my story there. Miss Barhum [??] and Miss Down lived together. Mr. Howard Collins was the headmaster, and Miss Joan French from Midsomer Norton. Yeah, people like that, they're all in my book somewhere.

JM: Excellent.

GR: My my wife was a year younger than me, and went to the same church, that was the Congregational Church on the corner, you know. It's used for all this electronic stuff now. We were married there in 1950. There's a picture there somewhere. That one on the bottom on the right. Outside that, outside that little chapel. I think Eunice Payne [??] was married there as well. And my twin brother's there, my mother and father are there and Joy's sister there.

TM: Okay.

GR: Where they got the clothes from, I don't know, but they had a, some member of the family was in millinery sort of thing so where they got that material after the war, I don't know, it was 1950. When we were married, we were married for nearly 73 years.

JM: That's incredible, isn't it?

GR: It's only over the last, well she was taken into care with Alzheimers, but probably I lost her two or three years before that.

KN: Yes.

GR: And there's a lot of [unintelligible], she didn't know me. Or she would disappear at night, you know. And people would ring up and say she's with us, you know.

KN: Difficult time, isn't it?

GR: In the end, one day my two brothers came and they found tablets in her bag. They said she hadn't been taking tablets, but I knew she had because I used to watch every one, but somehow these had got in there and they wouldn't take her a word for it. They said you'll have to go to a doctor and get re-tested. She says, I'm not going so they took her to the hospital. That's the last I saw. They kept her in and sectioned her under section 1 [unintelligible].

TM: Aahh

GR: And I didn't know where she was, but later that night, I had a call from Swindon hospital to say she was there, no room in the RUH. And she was asking for her, I don't know what she said, I told them to stop phoning me at night, because I couldn't.

KN: Yeah, you've got to get your rest too.

GR: Umm, then they put her in the Orangery. She was there for nearly 13 years, thanks to visit her nearly every day on my scooter, and uh. And they, lovely carers, lovely, some were managers, you know.

JM: Where was that though?

GR: The Orangery

JM: The Englishcombe Lane one.

GR: Yeah, along Englishcombe Lane. And uh I was part of [unintelligible] for 13 years, you know. In fact, I used to hold a little service after she passed away. Used to go down with a friend, church secretary. And um, we did it for a bit, I gave up eventually.

JM: But you had lots of happy times up here, your married life in Odd Down?

GR: Oh God, wonderful, it's all in the book. The best time was growing up.

KN: Yeah

GR: But we had nothing, no-one. We moved up here when that estate on Odd Down was built, all these houses. We walked along Old Fosse Road, my father brought us up from the town, and he wanted the right house, if some were occupied, some weren't. Now I could see he'd worked it out, and he said, let's go along to number 40, because it had a, you could go round the side of the house, it was the end of a row, he wanted to do that, and that that's when we lived until I got married. Yeah, but Joy, my wife, lived at the top of Rush Hill. Where Clark's had a factory, don't suppose you remember that do you?

TM: Slightly, yeah.

GR: It's gone now you see. But um Joy's father lived extremely at the top of Rush Hill, before it meets Old Fosse Road, and he had two cottages over there.

TM: Oh yes, I know, I remember those cottages.

GR: And uh he also had one on the Old Fosse Road where his son lived, he used to keep about 30 pigs there, and he would, he had a breeding um, you know, what do you call it, a boar, which his son got because he'd been in the army and that was something he could do. I actually kept a pig once, one day with Joy, but when they took it off to slaughter I thought never again, I can't kill anything.

TM: No, no, I wouldn't want to!

KN: Well, yeah.

GR: And we had a big ex-Army [unintelligible] we used to light this big light up and make an Army fire, which is where they start a fire, put a metal plate over it until it's red hot, and you've got a tank of oil for it on the one side and a tank of waste oil on the other. And you

had tubes coming in, you'd feed it onto this red hot, um, plate, and that's the way we did all the cooking from the pigs. I knew how 2 was coming in new feeder onto this red port? Wait last, we did all were cooking from a pigs.

KN: Oh I don't know.

GR: Now, it's very efficient.

KN: Hmm.

GR: And uh, but I'd never kill another pig, I can't even slaughter a fly! [laughter] Oh I was taught how to, I've done bayonet charging and spraying and shouting [??]

JM: So do you think Odd Down is different today than it was?

GR: Well in those days, people, people who moved up were generally very poor in really poor conditions in Bath, and the thought of having a council house at a very reasonable rent must have been transforming to them, you know. Everybody knew each other, I knew everybody's names, all the way up Old Fosse Road, Vernham Grove. [Unintelligible] I did a talk about it once, about what sort of names, sort of thing, there were some funny names, you know, and uh I remember them all. Our group of kids went to school together, I went to Sunday School in the old chapel. And my mother would, well we'd go to the morning service, then we, and uh, and the afternoon and the evening

TM: Mm, really?

GR: Afternoon, Sunday school. I joined the Christendom [??] movement as I got older, became a trainee teacher, we had to take tests and things. I was a teacher for a long time. And then I moved to Frome once the when we got married, and I was Sunday school superintendent there, uh, after a period, and I went to the Rush Hill church, and because of my service to the church I was made a life Elder, I didn't have to be nominated. So I am a life Elder, but I don't do anything at the moment.

KN: Mm

GR: Ah, they were giving me the news, but I haven't been to my church since August. But when Johan came here [Johan Allen, Team Pastor at St Philips Church], that was just amazing.

KN: Yeah

GR: So that was real church, you know?

JM: Lovely, well, hopefully he'll be coming again in September.

GR: Oh, he's amazing. Well we always got on well.

KN: Yeah, he's lovely.

GR: I know plays the guitar aswell.

KN: That's right.

GR: And uh, he was here, he must've been here for well over an hour. He left here, he'd been to a home on the top of Rush Hill there somewhere before that, but he gave me the full works, so Communion, wine and, which I'd never had before. And uh, it was so different, so wonderful.

KN: Lovely, that's lovely.

JM: Probably a nice time to wind it up.

TM: Thank you very much!

JM: Thank you Gordon. We'll let you get back to making your dinner!

