

BOLTON REMEMBERS THE WAR

Transcript of interview with Barbara Smith née Kirkham (BS) • ENSA

Interviewed by Ken Beevers (K) 03.06.2005

K: Well, first of all what's your name?

BS: My name's Barbara Smith.

K: And, is that your married name?

BS: That's my married name, yes. I was Barbara Kirkham before.

K: Right, and where were you born and where?

BS: I was born in Blackpool in 1923.

K: And what did your parents do?

BS: My Mother was just a housewife and my Father was a wood machinist, at Fleetwood. He worked at Fleetwood.

K: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

BS: I had a brother, yes, eighteen months older than myself.

K: So where were you when War was declared?

BS: I was at Blackpool, I was dancing in the Tower Ballet. I was principal dancer in the Tower Ballet. And then I used to go down to the Tower Circus at night and do things like riding on elephants and in a troop of acrobats and I was always the smallest so I was sent to the top of the pyramid. (laughs) And I was doing that when the War broke out. Yes.

K: So when you left school, what did you do?

BS: When I left school, well I was doing the Tower Ballet and the Tower Circus in the summer and in the winter I was a student at a school of dance and so I was learning to become a teacher of dancing, to take all my certificates to become a qualified teacher.

K: So that was what you'd always wanted to do?

BS: Oh yes, yes. Well, I wanted to do 'Variety' to go on the stage really, but I took the certificates in case I failed in some way and then I'd always have something to come back to.

K: So when you heard that War was declared you were actually working?

BS: Yes, working in the Tower Circus and the Ballet.

K: So how did you feel about War?

BS: Well, I was young, I was only seventeen, if that - I'm not quite sure, but I was very young and it didn't really register how serious it was. I was too intent on my own career to worry much, very much, about War, I'm afraid.

K: Did you worry that it was going to stop your career?

BS: Well yes, I did because I always had this feeling that if the War was very bad, they'd close theatres, which they did, a lot of them, when the bombing started. But I wanted to develop my career in - on the stage and when I left the Tower Ballet and the Tower Circus I was part of a variety act and we toured all round the country, from Scotland right down to London. And we went to places where there was heavy bombing and it was a bit frightening, that. The worst one was in Norwich, the bombs were falling very heavily that night. So the theatrical landlady said 'Come on, we'll go down in the cellar', so myself and the people that were in the act went down in the cellar and she took a bottle of gin, and every time a bomb fell, another swig of gin, so by two o'clock in the morning, when the bombs had finished, she was really a little bit tipsy. But she felt braver for having taken her gin with her you see.

K: So you would be doing your bit by cheering people up really?

BS: Yes, well at that time I was with Frank Randle, not a very nice gentleman, but supposedly very funny, (laughs) Morris and Cowley who was supposed to be old age pensioners and the humour came from being the life as an old age pensioner. And we toured the variety theatres, but as well, did a certain amount in the camps, we went to Catterick Camp, and one from the Air Force, in Norwich way. And so, from that, I could have been exempt from going into the Forces, because I'd done so many weeks entertaining in the big camps. But I decided I wanted to have a bit more action, so we dismantled the variety act and I went down to Theatre Royal, Drury Lane for an audition, and I was accepted, and so they issued me with a uniform.

K: This is for ENSA?

BS: For ENSA yes, because apparently if you were a civilian and you should be caught by the enemy you're treated differently, if you're in civilian clothes. Whereas if you're in a uniform you have to have certain privileges, so that's when I started with ENSA.

K: So were you ever in the theatre, before that, when there was bombing - you said heavy bombing in Norwich..?

BS: Oh, yes, yes, yes. A lot in the suburbs of London, Hackney Empire, Finsbury Park Empire, oh, I can't remember some of the names of them, but they were all in the suburbs of London and I experienced bombing then, yes.

K: The shows stopped, and you all went for shelter, or was it 'The show must go on'?

BS: I think they did, sort of, cut it short, yes, when it did get very bad, yes, we packed up and everybody went home or to the air raid shelters, wherever they were.

K: Did you ever come to Bolton, during that time?

BS: Yes, yes, to the Grand Theatre with Frank Randle. 'Randle's Scandals' it was called and I remember the Grand Theatre very well. It wasn't very nice backstage. It was always cold, and the tiles on the wall! You looked as if you were in a public lavatory all the time because, there were dreadful tiles on the walls (laughs). Frank Randle, he rather humiliated me one night in the theatre and I was very upset about it. We used to have to sit round, as if we were having a party and he came on, told his jokes which weren't very good really, and then he turned to me this night and he said 'Why aren't you laughing at me, what's up with you?'. Well you don't do that, and show your colleagues up like that. I must have been having a quieter night than usual and it was... I didn't like that reaction from him at all, but we carried on. (laughs)

'Here's How' and we started travelling, first of all round the camps in this country. Went in a minibus to the different camps. One I remember... a lot of fog, we must have been around the Norwich area, and one or two nights we didn't reach the camp because the fogs were so bad, we took it in turns to get out and walk in front of the coach. They couldn't even see where the road was, it was so bad, and we took it in turns with a torch to walk in front of the coach. But, we never made it to the camp because it was too bad. But, yes we always went to camps and had... gave a show, and afterwards there was usually a party of some sort. One night it was the officer's mess you went into and another night it was the sergeant's mess and it was very pleasurable really, I mean, it's sad to say it, but I enjoyed my War years! I shouldn't be saying that, should I? But I can't help it. (laughs)

K: You were cheering people up, though weren't you, taking their mind off things.

BS: Yes, yes.

K: So where did you stay when you were..?

BS: Well actually I stayed with an Aunt when I was rehearsing shows in Drury Lane, she lived down in Surrey, and I used to travel up each day to rehearse the shows. And then when we went on tour it was in Army barracks that we stopped to do the shows for a night or two, and then we moved onto another one. Yes, until I went abroad with ENSA and it was altogether different.

K: What year was that?

BS: Eeeeeeh, I've had my passport somewhere, but I couldn't find it, so I'm not very sure which year it was. But it went to the Middle East first, to Malta, Sicily, Sardinia, Italy, and all those were... sometimes the shows were given in local cinemas. The best one was when we went to Venice, we took over the Opera House, and gave a variety show in the beautiful Opera House in Venice, and that time we stopped in a very nice hotel. Some of the places were very rough but they put us up in the Danieli Hotel in Venice, probably a five star hotel now. And we worked in the Opera House, so that was a very nice period of working for ENSA.

K: So, what was it like in Malta?

BS: Well, that was one time, we'd fly and I was a bit afraid, because as the 'plane landed there were so many ruts in the airstrip, the 'plane was bouncing up and down and because they'd had so much bombing in Malta, that the landing was a really bad one. The 'plane was tipping over a bit, but, we got down safely, and we played mainly to the Navy of course, in Malta. We went to a lot of the Naval camps and gave shows to the Navy - never went aboard any ships, but, we did entertain the Navy on the whole, yes. And when we went across to Sardinia and Sicily we gave shows in schools and things like that which were quite easy to play really.

K: What other stars did you appear with abroad?

BS: Nobody notable. My best friend was a girl called Mavis Hill and she'd been at star in the West End, and she was a lovely soprano, and when she walked on the stage, her presence was such that she, even if the lads were being a bit noisy, they went quiet and she was a beautiful soprano. But there were no great stars in the show I was with, but we did meet up with a few when we were out and about. And, one was George Formby, he did quite a lot for ENSA really.

So, after I'd played in the Middle East, I came back here, and it was back at Drury Lane rehearsing another show, and for this show we went out and we entertained all the troops that were lining up on the south coast before going over on D Day. Millions and millions of troops - and I remember it was my 21st birthday and we were in like, a sealed camp. And I never received any post or any communication from the family because it was all strictly censored, anything that came into the camps, they were sealed off. So I didn't receive any birthday cards or presents from friends or family because we weren't allowed to communicate and say where we were exactly. So we entertained all the troops round the south coast and D plus 31, I went over on a tank landing ship to Normandy. We wore flowers in our tin hats (laughs) to make it look a bit more cheerful for our lads and a big lorry took our stage, which had it's own generator and a small piano, mini piano, and all the sections to erect a stage. So when we got to France, a couple of the soldiers would erect the stage, and then we'd perform wherever we were required. I sometimes wondered if they took us too near the front, because, when the soldiers came out for a rest, I don't feel they wanted to be sitting down watching an ENSA show. They were so tired and weary, I think that they would rather have rested. But on the other hand, they were all well attended, the shows, and we seemed to cheer them up a bit.

One thing I'd like to mention about Normandy, we were with the 51st Highland Division quite a lot and the Colonel said to the people in the show, I'd like you to come to a certain field, tomorrow morning at a certain time, and we wondered what it was all about - he didn't tell us. So we got to this field and stood there and he came out and he said 'This is my thanks to you, for lifting the morale of my soldiers.' It was a misty morning and out of the mist came the 51st Highland Division in their... playing the bagpipes and marching, counter-marching and he said 'Again, thank you for all you've done'. It was really a thing I remember so much, the bagpipes playing in the mist in this field in Normandy. It's a thing that's stuck in my mind all these years.

So after the troops started moving inland, through Belgium and Holland, we were at the back of them all the time. One thing I remember when we got in the Falaise Gap we were about to do a show one night, and we went down this road and it said 'Proceed no further. Enemy ahead!' so we turned round quickly and back the way we'd come, because we didn't want to get involved with the enemy in an ENSA show. And we went all the way up to Germany and through to Russia, when we got to Vienna, we just had one or two shows where the Russians were and I remember them, not so many cars but loads of them in carts and horse and carts, charging round Vienna and making a lot of noise. We were feeling victory was on hand.

So then, after that, I came back to England, and rehearsed another show, and this time we were told we were going to India, so we went down to Poole and boarded a Sunderland flying boat, and the seats were not, as they are nowadays, straight, they were just down the side and on one side just a lot of War correspondents and on our side, we girls in our show and we flew first of all, and landed the first night on the sea, outside North Africa. The second night we landed on the Suez Canal and we went ashore in Cairo and had a night in a hotel there. And then the next night, we flew onto Basra in Persia, as it was in those days, (laughs), and we had a night ashore again then and then the fourth night we landed in Karachi, on the coast there. And we started doing shows on that side of India for a while. We stayed in Bombay and went out every night doing kind of shows for the troops. And then, eventually, we were going across to Calcutta, but, unfortunately, I developed malaria and I was left behind in Bombay. So, if you can imagine, being in Bombay, by myself in hospital, it wasn't a very nice experience. But when I recovered, they put me on a train, right across India to Calcutta and I was warned to watch my belongings, and money etc, because a lot of thieves were on the train. Because all the Indians used to cling to the outside of the train, when it went slow enough for them to be able to jump on and off. So, I thought, well I had a nice handbag with all my possessions in, and I thought well, they're not going to get that. So I put it underneath my pillow and put my head down on my pillow, when I woke up in the morning, my handbag had gone. So, while I was asleep someone had sneaked in and pinched it!

Anyway, I got to Calcutta, and re-joined the show. That was a real shock. The poverty there was appalling. Beggars in the street, oh, hundreds of them and children that were deformed, and apparently, we heard they'd deformed them deliberately so that they would make good beggars. And they used to come up to you and you daren't start giving them anything - not that we had much to give - but, if you started there'd be crowds of them coming round you wanting things, so

I don't remember giving the beggars very much at all, although I would have liked to. And then we went up to Kohima and Imphal where our troops were stationed, and we lived under canvas there, and did mainly open air shows, and as you could imagine, with the footlights on, it was full of mosquitoes and I was bitten badly by mosquitoes and malaria continued. I went into hospital and had all the tests and confirmed it was malaria and it was the type that would re-occur, so even when I came back to this country after the War, I had bouts of malaria. And in the show I did a part of it as a Land Army girl, and there was a little sketch, so you could imagine when the heat was about 120 and I put on jodhpurs and woollen polo-neck jumper, I was absolutely wringing wet through when I came off the stage. But, you know, I got over it... You get used to the heat eventually. But it was very... it was exceptionally hot in the places where we went, so.

K: Did you communicate... any communication with your parents, during this time?

BS: Yes, I was allowed... I don't think they were letters, I think we had cards. So yes, I did write home to my Mum and Dad. Of course, they were obviously worried about me being there, but it was OK. I didn't see much of the Japanese at all, except we were entertaining one night at a hospital and a lot of Japanese prisoners that were ill were in the hospital and as we passed through the ward, they were there. But apart from that, didn't see any signs of them. It was only that hospital visit where I met them at all.

One funny that happened, I don't know whether I should say this, (laughs), we were going through the bush and there was a line of latrines, with just a very fine screen in front of them, so as we were passing in our coach, we shouted, all the girls shouted 'Yoo hoo boys!' and they all stood up from the latrine and waved to us and we waved back, but they were a bit shocked to find women shouting 'hello' to them in the middle of the jungle (laughs). Oh, we had a bit of fun.

And it was Calcutta - we stayed in a hotel in Calcutta while we were playing the different camps around there, and it was infested with rats, huge rats. You could walk past them and they didn't scuttle away, they were so big and old and fat that they were just walking slowly up and down the corridors of this hotel. So they started evacuating the troops and in the end... because they started being poorly and they thought it had come from the troops, was it bubonic plague or something like that? And at the end there was only the show, the dozen or so that were in the show that were left in this big hotel, all the... everybody else had been evacuated. And we thought 'they're leaving us here in the middle of all this trouble with rats' but we were moved out eventually because, I think they thought we were in such danger.

So. Oh, while I was there I met an American, and he said 'We're going for a game of golf. Do you fancy a game with us', (laughs), so we'd never played golf 'Oh come along. We'll show you how.' So a friend and I we went to the golf course and I remember the golf course had loads and loads of water, so every time we struck the ball we always seem to land in water, and they had little Indian boys who used to go and wade in and collect your ball for you. That was a bit of fun.(laughs) I don't think we did much good though in the first game of golf, it wasn't very spectacular. So, we did have some good times, as well as tough times, in a way, you know, because... with the heat, and the travelling and that, you did get a little bit tired.

K: So where were you when War, you know, VE Day and War finished?

BS: Well, VE Day, I was on my way home from India, we flew out, in the Sunderland but we came back by boat. And we were just going through the Suez Canal when it was announced that it was VE Day. So I remember we all had one drink, I think it was that the Captain allowed to be issued, but we all cheered and pretended we were very happy about it. Which we were, of course, but there wasn't much of a celebration really, because we were on this ship, which was confined to just troops and just one or two ENSA shows coming home. But I think I was home when VJ Day was, came to it, yes...

K: What do you remember about your time in England?

BS: In England?

K: ...and sort of food, or rationing.

BS: Well, we did very badly when we were touring, because if you lived locally, the shopkeepers got to know you and they'd give you perhaps an extra ration here and there if their favourite customers came, their regular customers came. But when you're variety as I was, you were a stranger handing your ration book in and they just say 'Oh we haven't got butter this week' and 'we haven't got bacon this week' and you never got your full rations. When you were with ENSA of course you had the rations that the soldiers had, mainly corned beef hash, corned beef fritters, corned beef cold, any way they could think of to make corned beef look a bit different, you had it, you see! And if you had a bit of Spam, that the Americans had in their rations, you thought you were on top of the world, because that was something special! So no, we missed

out a little bit with travelling on the food front. Very little fancy stuff, I mean, we never saw oranges, bananas... You didn't see those sort of things, or course, during the War because they didn't come in on the ships. The ships were too busy moving troops from one country to another, so, there was nothing like that.

K: So what about clothing? Because you would need, well presumably you had some of your...

BS: We had our costumes made at Drury Lane. We had the khaki uniform, which was very smart, for wearing every day. I remember it was a nice skirt and jacket and we had a very nice cap. As a matter of fact some of the troops used to salute us and we used to say 'Oh you don't need to do that love, we're only ENSA!' (laughs) so they used to mistake us for officers!

And clothing was rationed, of course, and I remember I had a very nice dress for when I was with ENSA and when we were in India we had a dhobi-wallah we used to call them, attended to different needs for you, and he used to iron our clothes. And in the jungle you know, there was no electricity of course, so he had a charcoal iron, which he used to heat up and iron the clothes. And one day he put this iron, which was too hot, on the lovely black georgette dress I was using, and it went right through and made a hole in my dress. Luckily it was at the back, so I had to carry on using it because couldn't replace it you see. So... we managed to get a few civilian clothes now and then, but on the whole we stuck to our uniform.

One day when we were travelling from Italy to Yugoslavia it was a good job we had our uniforms on because Tito's men, who were bandits, lived in the hills and when they saw these vehicles going along the road, they came down from the hill and stopped them - ran into the road with their arms up 'Stop!' and we rather had the feeling they were going to do something awful to us, so we got out and we all started singing and trying to convey to them that we weren't soldiers, (laughs) we were a troop of entertainers! And I think they got the message, because they said 'Oh, go on then, you're all right.' (laughs) So, yes, it was a bit scary that moment, that was about the only scary moment I think I had in the whole conflict. (laughs)

K: Really?

BS: Yes, because we never got near enough to the front to be in the line of fire of anything like that...

K: So it was more scary in England then? When the bombing...

BS: Yes, yes it was. When we played the camps in England, even then, you were bombed if... I remember one camp where we were entertaining the Air Force and the sirens went off, and the whole audience vanished. They all were running to the 'planes, it was during the Battle of Britain I presume - yes it would be. As soon as the sirens went to summon them to their 'planes, off they dashed and we'd no audience left at all, because they were all too busy doing their duty. And, we were bombed, I suppose, in Manchester, an odd time, Liverpool - that was... that was a bit scary, I suppose, not too bad.

K: What about the blackout?

BS: Oh yeah, well we lived with theatrical landladies, of course, when we were on, when I was on tour with... in the variety theatre so we had the blackouts, black curtains up at the window and it was very difficult finding your way around, because there was no road signs, they removed all the road signs with the blackout. No lights on in the streets, of course. And one night going to the theatre, we nearly walked into a canal, because, it was one of the really black nights, and I don't believe we even had a torch, and we were trying to find our way to the theatre, and we nearly walked into the canal (laughs) we found it just in time, the right way.

K: Well, you'd always be somewhere you didn't know, wouldn't you?

BS: Of course, yes, every week we were in a different area you see, so it wasn't like going around in your own hometown. It was somewhere different, so.

K: So, what was it like, what happened at the end of the War?

BS: The end of the War, I started to teach dancing. I came home from ENSA and I started teaching ballroom dancing and ballet dancing.

K: So you would be de-mobbed just like any one else.

BS: Oh, yes, yes. You could have carried on and been in the voluntary service, overseas voluntary service, because they continued quite a bit of entertainment after the War because the troops weren't de-mobbed straightaway, of course. But I decided to come back and take up teaching dancing. So, I taught for the World Ballroom Champions, they were called Fred Morris and Eva Lawless, and when they went away doing demonstrations and entering competitions, then I ran a studio for them teaching ballroom dancing and children's ballet dancing.

K: Was this in Blackpool?

BS: Yes, in Blackpool, yes. And when I came to Bolton, I taught in the arcade in the town centre. I taught ballroom dancing there for two or three years.

K: So when did you come to Bolton?

BS: About '52, I should imagine. Not very good on dates! (laughs) I'm sorry.

K: And why did you come to Bolton?

BS: Because, well my husband was studying accountancy and he wanted to go into a public place. There was no work in Blackpool like that, so he applied to an agency for professional people and they said there was a job vacancy at Whiteheads store in the middle of Bolton. So he contacted them, and he had an interview and he was appointed the company secretary of Whitehead's store in Bolton.

K: When did you meet him?

BS: Well, when I came back after the War, as I just said, I started teaching ballroom dancing and he came to the studio to learn how to dance. He particularly wanted to learn how to tango, so I taught him the Tango (laughs) and he took an exam, and he passed it by quarter of a mark, (laughs) so I can tell you, he wasn't very good at Tango! And so, that's how we met really, through the ballroom dancing, yes.

K: And then you came to Bolton..?

BS: And then we came to Bolton to Whitehead's, yes. And then I continued teaching dancing until I started having a family and then I gave it up.

K: Did you continue after your family..?

BS: No, I didn't continue dancing. I gave it up then, well, I was a dinner lady actually at High Lawn School. (laughs) Bit of a difference that, isn't it to hectic Wartime?

K: So as a member of ENSA were you sort of looked up to or not? It was something special being an ENSA?

BS: Oh yes, it was, I mean, there weren't so many of us really. It was certainly a pleasure to be in a show, to entertain the troops. I mean we entertained the Canadians and the Americans as well. A bit apprehensive about going to an American camp, but they were great, they were really, really, very good.

K: It was very competitive to get into ENSA was it?

BS: Well I wouldn't say so much really, because the bulk of entertainers were in the Forces, the top class ones, when they joined up they continued entertaining, and in Blackpool we had a wonderful band, Squadronaires and they were all boys that were in the Air Force and they formed a smashing band and played concerts around Blackpool probably other places too. So the cream, shall I say, of the profession, they were in the Forces, but there were very good artists, too, in ENSA. But the one stigma we had, they used to call ENSA - 'Every Night Something Awful' - that's what it stood for! It wasn't fair really, because they were very good shows really, but not top class, should I say.

K: Yes, a bit unfair that.

BS: It is a bit unfair, yes! (laughs)

K: Do you remember anything else about Bolton when you visited it, as the entertainment? Did you think 'I don't want to live in this place'?

BS: Well, I did a little bit, I can't remember where our theatrical digs were.

K: Yes, that would be interesting really.

BS: Yes, I can't remember where I lived at that time. One thing I found with travelling though, when I came to places like Bolton and Oldham and Wigan, and all these sort of places, the landladies were always great. They used to throw the door open and say 'come in love, I've got a meat and potato pie in the oven for you'. You'd go down to London and they didn't want to know you. Yes, so much more friendly in the north. So, we used to enjoy coming to Lancashire and Yorkshire, but not London. I went down to London with George Formby and was in his show, and he was very apprehensive about going down to the south, because as you remember he was a northern lad who had northern humour and that sort of song that was well understood up here but no so much down in the south. But he went down very well. He was successful there and yes he was very good. He had an overpowering wife though, have you heard about Beryl?

K: Yes, I have yes.

BS: Oh, she kept an eye on George all right - We had a very attractive juggler in the show, a Russian girl, I believe she was, and George started talking to her and Beryl popped her head round: 'George!' little finger curl pointing 'Come here, George' and George had to go and move away from the lovely girl and be with her, yes. (laughs) But, he was alright, he was quite friendly and all right to be with...

K: How many people would stay in the digs? When you were in the theatrical digs?

BS: Well, a was in a trio act, another girl and a boy who we recruited through a dancing school, so the three of us did this act and Doreen, the other girl in the act, her mother, used to tour with us, so there used to be four of us, mainly, in theatrical digs. And very often we had to sleep three in a bed. (laughs) But the boy had his own bed, of course, but Doreen and her mother and myself we used to have two at one way and one sleeping in the opposite way so. Just in one double bed, because there was a lack of theatrical digs.

K: Did you have to have your gas mask with you at all?

BS: Oh yes, yes, that was very necessary. When the War broke out and I was still in Blackpool, working in the ballet, I went to a local school there, where they were issuing gas masks for the children, and I helped to issue all the children with them. Even babies had big sort of cradle things that were gas-proof. And, yes we all had them. But eventually it seemed to be a waste of time, because we didn't have any gas attacks at all, so after a year or so I think everybody dropped taking their gas mask. You did more when you were in London. You felt, you know, a little bit more precarious there, so we used to take them with us in London, but when we got out in the wilds, we stopped taking them.

K: When you were in London did you ever go in the underground stations to shelter?

BS: Yes, yes. Once or twice.

K: And was it exactly like you see on the photographs?

BS: Yes, oh crowded, but always cheerful people. You know, they used to sing songs and carry on. A few were getting drunk of course, and making a nuisance of themselves, but then it eventually quietened down. Probably two o'clock in the morning and everybody had a sleep, and then came out the next morning to see what damage had been done.

K: What about Christmas? What was Christmas like?

BS: Christmas, Christmas in England, I think things were played very quietly, I don't know if we had much at all in our stockings and I can't remember having turkey really. I don't think we had turkey. We had a good roast or something like that. Because they weren't as popular in those days, turkeys.

K: Did you go home then, when Christmas came?

BS: No, because it was a busy day, when you were in the entertainment business, because the theatres were open... I think they closed on Christmas Day but Boxing Day, we were open again, all the time. Yes, so you'd no break at Christmas. Mmm, apart from just Christmas Day, mmmm...

K: It was pretty relentless then wasn't it? You never stopped and you had to rehearse as well.

BS: That's right, yes. I was in panto one Christmas in Scotland, after I'd finished in the ballet and there again, we rehearsed right up to Christmas Eve and opened on Christmas Eve, and did the pantomime - Boxing Day right through until New Year, and... New Year was a bit of a let-down in Scotland. I was looking forward to it, hearing all about how great they were at Hogmanay, and I was with a comedian called Jack Radcliffe, and he had a home there, and we thought ooh, I think we're going to have a lovely party and it never happened! It was a bit of a letdown, so, yes...

I was a singer and a dancer, so I did ballet dancing, stage dancing, tap dancing - that was my main one tap dancing and sang too. And then I did what you used to call 'point numbers' when you had songs with a slightly risqué meaning to them and I used to do sketches and that sort of thing, with the comedian in the show. There was usually about a dozen of us, oh, the one when we went to India, there was less than that. And Normandy, we only had four in our show there. One was a soprano, I was, what they called 'soubrette' and did a bit of everything, a good tenor and a comedienne. Because comedians were in short supply, because the men had gone into the Forces, so this lady who was with us, was, you know, forty-ish and she hadn't been called up and she was quite a good comedian. So I think that's about all I can say on that!

ENDS