

BOLTON REMEMBERS THE WAR

Transcript of interview with Jack Morgan (JM) • Royal Marines

Interviewed by Ken Beevers (K) 01.12.2005

K: If I could begin then by just asking you your name?

JM: My name is John Morgan, normally called Jack.

K: And when were you born Jack?

JM: 1924 in Preston.

K: Whereabouts?

JM: Preston Fulwood Barracks.

K: And what did your Father do?

JM: Well, he was a Sergeant Major in the Army, 5th Loyals.

K: And when did you move to Bolton?

JM: Well, we moved first of all down to Salisbury Plain for a short period, then we came back to Bolton, 1925, it would be... In 1925, yes, in Fletcher Street Barracks. We were inhabitants of that barracks there.

K: And where did you go to school?

JM: I started at Ss Peter and Paul's, in Bolton, a Catholic school. I didn't like that particular place, but there we are. When my Father moved... because of the job in the Army, he moved to different areas, and the first place he moved to was Farnworth, from there I went to St Gregory's and he moved to Little Hulton, and there I went to St Edmund's. Then he moved next to the Greyhound Hotel on Manchester Road, Bolton and there I went to St Michael's, and whilst I was there I managed to pass a scholarship. Not anything great, but I wanted to take advantage of the fact that I'd passed this, and so I asked the local priest who was a chap called Father Cobber - very dominant fellow, very difficult man to... and I was eleven years of age, and I went to see the man. My dad made me go to see him, 'You want to change your school, you've got to go and see him' so I went. And, you can quite imagine the picture, he was six foot tall, very arrogant, very dominant person, and it finished up with him raising his arms and telling me he'd excommunicate you - 'I'll excommunicate you!' I said 'Well, that's all right Father, carry on'. And I went to Folds Road. That was the best school I ever went to. Short-lived - my Father died and we had to move again then, back to Kearsley and I went to Harper Green School, which was another fine school. A good school, that one. Good teachers, good staff. Tried to understand the pupils, not just bully them. And I made good progress there, until the War started of course.

I joined ... oh I joined the Territorials in 1938, I forgot about that. I joined the Territorials, as most of us did, to get a free holiday. We'd no money - only holiday I ever had was a school half day to Southport. And then I went to the Isle of Man with the Territorials in 1938, and then up to Catterick in 1939, and then of course, we were coming home and the War was declared, so we were held in barracks until they decided... a number of us that were too young, so they kicked us out. When I started work at 14, I used to cycle to Trafford Park from Farnworth Station to Trafford Park, on a bicycle, with no mudguards, no brakes, no lights, nothing! And I did that for about 12 months, and then somebody got me a job in Bolton, as a change. I went working for a pie manufacturer - Allen's Steak Puddings, they were called. Decent people, Scots, very, very keen with their money.

And from there I went down the pit then, Mosley Common, yes. I learnt more about life in 12 months in Mosley Common pit than I've ever learned since. I was amongst men. A couple of good experiences. I stood at the bottom of the pit shaft and the cage broke, bumff, straight to the bottom, woof! I was stood four feet from it. Nobody in it, just the tubs. And then we had to leave the pit, of course, and to do so had to climb up another shaft. I was terrified... oh boy! Another experience down the pit, this was Mosley Common Number One pit. Didn't always work correctly, and there were always accidents of one kind and another. People think it's the roof that goes on a pit - it isn't always, it's the floor that comes up, and we got trapped, in the sense that we couldn't move freely, and the mechanism for moving the coal along the face was stopped. So we had to leave the pit at this stage and along the way, the main road, as they called it, was girders, you know, the bent girders, and at one point it had collapsed, so that there was a small hole, not too big, but I came to this hole, and I stopped. Frightened to death! I thought, 'If I touch those boulders, I'm a dead man' and the big deputy stood there and he said 'What's up lad, ar't frettened?' I said 'I am!' 'Oh aye', he said 'Hmm. You think if I go through will

thah?' Well, of course I did. That's leadership and I learnt a lot down the pit. It taught me a great deal.

The War started and luckily for me I got a job, where was I? Oh, Lorival, Little Lever. It was originally a shoe sole place and then they started to produce plastics. And I went there for eighteen months as apprentice fitter, and moved to Magnesium Elektron in Clifton, later.

But the point I would like to make about my Wartime experience in the civvies, and it's this: A lot of my relatives lived in the Hulme district of Manchester and assure your public that the people of Hulme experienced as much danger as most of the armed services ever experienced. Land mines, bombs, all sorts of things - fire bombs the lot. They got the lot. And of course they were a bit frightened, but they got over it, they managed.

And then I got into the Royal Marines. I joined at Euxton in 1942. My brother preceded me - my younger brother preceded me into the Marines. And I did my six weeks training, at that point I was given what they call a red star, in other words I was a good lad, and then we formed a Bofors battery. And we were on patrol up and down the south coast with these Bofors guns. But I was, well... made a full Corporal, was given a Bofors gun and did quite a good job. And then, of course, they decided they would change us from being gunners on the land, to being gunners at sea. They give us some sea training at Plymouth, and then they put us on a boat at Southampton, and we travelled up and down the channel and we were involved in one or two little things, nothing serious. And I got a bit fed up with this flat-bottomed boat (laughs) and decided that I'd like to prove that I was a good NCO. So I went to the Training School at Deal. Now that is a very hard Training School. And when the course finished, there were 15 of us in this room, and the Sergeant in charge read some names out and he asked them to leave the room, and when they'd left he said 'Now, those men have failed.' And then he read some more names out and those men had passed. Now on the course I'd knocked the officer off his bike! I'd done everything wrong. I'd sworn at an officer and given him a sound bollocking! I'd expected to be kicked off the course... I didn't... I was one of two men that passed the course. That states the difference between Royal Marine training and Army training - you're taught to think for yourself in the Marines. It's a different set up altogether than the Army and it's difficult for people to understand it, but it's a very good training course. Anyway, luckily for me I transferred from this LCF 37. This is on the record... It were sunk, (sniffs) ...with all hands - everybody - at Walcheren Island.

And the little boat that I was on, D Day came along and we were involved in D Day with the Canadians. And we took the Canadians ashore, with some Free French, and our job was to look for targets for the gunners. They'd decided, top generals, they decided, instead of tanks going ashore and waiting until they'd got ashore to fire, they'd fire from the boat! But they had to have somebody in front of them to find out where the targets were. That was my job... well, our job, and I was a Marine Corporal in charge of this Marine attachment on this little boat... (sniffs) We'd done our job, and we'd come under some kind of fire from the Germans, in fact, we were the only target they had for quite a while. Luckily the boat was on the small side, with the waves going up and down, nothing hit us. We were in more danger from our own firing over the top of us, rocket ships I mean. And well we done the job and the skipper said 'Right, we'll take these men ashore' - three Canadian, I think it was a Major, Corporal and a Private - they were finding the targets for the Canadians gunners on the tanks, and we were all heading towards the shore and we just got hit. Now whether we hit something or we hit a mine or something hit... I've no idea, but I was thrown out of this boat in this turret and landed upside down on the sandy bottom, luckily, and my mates, my own lads, pulled me out, and we were sitting on top of this boat, because it had sunk in seven feet of water. This Canadian Major, he's six foot tall and he drowned in seven feet of water, because he had a wireless on back. The two other Canadians, and our skipper and the seaman lost their lives, there and then. And one of our lads Bert Taylor, he was called, he was from either Grimsby or Hull, and he was smashed up. We looked after him the best way we could, we were picked up, eventually and finished up in a hospital ship. I wasn't too badly... I were wounded, but not too badly. And he... err, I can't... I won't describe them ...(tearful) and he's saying 'Don't tell my wife...'

I'm glad I'm an emotional person, because that's why I'm living so long, I get rid of all my anxieties... you'll die with emotions, get rid of them all, it's a good idea, a good thing that. I can't control it... So we went back to hospital and after D Day, they wanted us to volunteer for anything, so I volunteered for the Army, thinking that I'd get across there, remember, I'm now 82, I was 20 then. I wanted to kill all the Germans, they killed my mate - I wanted to kill the whole bloody lot of them. And I finished up in Northern Ireland for eight months, learning to shoot 25 pounders and the people of Ireland, I know we've had trouble since then, were brilliant.

You could knock on a door, in the cold or whatever. You could knock on the door, and you could have a cup of tea, they were brilliant, I don't understand why these things occurred after that.

Anyway, so I finished up then going to Burma with the Royal West African Frontier Force, and I joined an artillery battery there. The artillery by the way in Burma was basically mortars and the odd 37 howitzer. And I met these Africans, and when I think about this, it's funny! I said to them 'You teach me to live in the bush, and I'll teach you to be good soldiers!' Now how can a daft fellow from Farnworth say that? But it's true!

About six months later, I'm on parade, it's my turn on this particular day to muster the parade, the (?) parade that is, to muster the parade, then when it's all ready you report to the Officer in charge. So this African Sergeant Major made sure they'd all turned in and then he called the parade to attention to report to me. He didn't salute me. I had no rank. I was a bit of a maverick, that's why I had no rank, and I couldn't take instruction off people I had no respect for, and there were a few of those people in my mob, straight from Sandhurst. They knew nothing, but they had to assert themselves, so I didn't get any rank at all. Anyway, I'm there and this chap called the parade to attention, he marched up to me and gave me what I thought was a stick, a present, and not until years later did I realize they were making me a warrior, that's the stick. I came home, lent it to somebody, and it got used for firewood in 1947! (laughs)

K: This person obviously needed firewood!

JM: Well, he needed firewood, it were a very severe winter. We had fog in them days and a very, very severe winter. It was used for firewood. Things were very hard to get hold of, and I think about the stick.

Anyway, we finished up then... I never saw any action, luckily for me, I was on patrol a few times, but never saw anything. And this is what happened to me on one occasion, some of these young officers, they'd recognise that I had the experience that they hadn't got, and they wanted to patrol the bush. Our government had called these Burmese civilians, who were wanting to rule their own country, called them Dacoits so we'd shoot them, that was the idea. They'd call them bandits, they'd call them. Anyway the point is, that these young fellows said 'Ah, well yes. I think we'll go and patrol...' and mention to me that they'd go and patrol, I said 'If you think, that I'm taking you lot on a patrol in the bush, you're clueless!' ...this is, I'm talking about young officers. It's true what I'm telling you. They weren't all like that. I met a chap there, a fellow called Noel Rychart who was a Captain. A good man, and he knew I had the talent - well aware of it. When he found out where I'd got to... because we went across to Burma together, that's why I got to know the man, actually his batman, being a clever fellow, you see, I knew that on board ship, it was a very, very boring job, so I volunteered to become a batman and escape all these boring tasks. So I got to know him quite well, and he became ill on the way down to Burma. Down to Takoradi to Ramree Island, and I looked after him - it was just my job - and we formed a very strong association. When he knew where I was, he rang my CO and asked him if I could go across and he said certainly, so he sent me across there to this mob, and he was in charge of anti-tank mob and they explained that he was going to go home shortly but he needed a Sergeant Major, because his sergeant was going home as well. And he offered me the job... and I'm stood there, with no rank, and this fellow offered me the job as a Sergeant Major in charge of a bloody anti-tank battery, and the people that were there already, other young Europeans, I'd fall out with them. There's no way I could have controlled those people. So I said 'I'm sorry Noel, there's no possible way that I can accept that, thank you' and to cutting along story short, I got on very well with Africans, very well indeed. They were good men, good soldiers. They were as good as the men as led them.

K: What year are we now?

JM: We're in 1945, going up to '46. Anyway eventually we came, we started to come home, we went down to Rangoon, mustering to go on this boat. The Africans couldn't understand why they couldn't go home when the War finished. They were getting very, very naughty. I'm not complaining about them, I'm telling you what happened. And some of our officers, whatever you want to call them - I don't call them officers - acted in a very cowardly manner, in my opinion. One was a local man, I'll not name that man, and just before we came to board this boat, the officer in charge, called me in and he said to me 'Ah, Morgan, I'm thinking of promoting you, making you a Bombardier' I said 'Not much point you doing that Sir' I said, 'I don't like to quote King's regulations at you, but I'm telling you if you make me a Bombardier, the moment I get on that ship, I'll lose my rank' 'Oh!' he says. And in 90 days I became a full bloody Corporal without even... and that was it. So I came back as a bombardier, when I came back to Salisbury Plain, eventually... Oh a little point, by the way - these men were totally trustworthy, these Africans. I obtained a pocket watch, a gold pocket watch - for peanuts, because they didn't carry pocket

watches in Burma, obviously, you look at the dress they wear they didn't carry them. And I could leave it anywhere. I came back to England, and the first damn day I'm back in England at the camp, Woolwich barracks, somebody pinched it. If I could have got that man, I'd have killed the man. I'm telling you, nothing would have saved him. I went round all the pawn shops trying to trace it.

And so, I went then to Northern Ireland, and when I walked into the Adjutant's office, 'Oh!' he said 'Just the man!' I had to wear medals, you've got to do, well medal ribbons, he recognised I had a Burma Star whatever. 'Yes, I'm looking for a sergeant major to take charge of the parade ground' I said 'I'm sorry Sir, all I want to do is go home.' 'Oh, Oh' so he gave me a soft job and I enjoyed the rest of my stay in the forces then until I came home and that was in 1947 I came home.

And I went back to... er... oh, Metro-Vickers first of all, eighteen months there, good firm Metro's and then I was offered a job at the old firm Lorival. I went back down there and I stayed there for 34 years. Did all sorts of things for the firm, enjoyed my stay there. And then I was offered a choice by a young man I'd met a long time previously, he offered to let me buy his business, which I did and I became 'Jacks Motor Spares' on Bury Road in Bolton. Quite successful, through hard work and knowing what I was doing and being prepared to do anything for anybody who wanted me to do it for them. And I retired when I was 72, and the business goes to my sons and they expanded it and became Morgan Brothers. One of the sons left me, and the other fellow carried on, and I've had nothing to do with the business since 1993 or 4... something of that nature. I now live in a warden-controlled ground floor two-bedroom council flat and I am very, very pleased indeed to be allowed to do so! I thanked the Council at the time. And since then, I've developed this habit of making cakes, and people say to me, and I give them away, I've never sold a cake, and people say 'Why do you do it?' Well, one of the main reasons... *The* main reason was when my wife was having our third child she had trouble and she had to go into hospital, and I was working at Lorival at the time. A lady called Mrs Rothwell, she lived next door but one to me in Plodder Lane, facing Lourdes Church. And she knocked at my front door - I didn't like the lady particularly at the time, her son was noisy, he had a bike motorbike, he kept revving up in the street at half past seven at night when my kids were in bed. I didn't particularly like the family. She knocked on the door, and she said 'Mr Morgan, I believe that you're off sick with your wife.' Because I'd no money, you didn't get paid anything in them days, a pound a week off the union. So she said 'I'll come in tomorrow morning at quarter past seven and you can get off to work' and so I did do, at night she had my tea waiting for me, and she put my children to bed. Got them up in the morning, took them to school ...and when I came home she gave my my evening meal, I went to see my wife in hospital and when I came back they were in bed when I got home. Well after a fortnight, which I had to work a week in hand to get some money, I offered this... well I didn't offer it... I put some money in an envelope, and when she wasn't in the kitchen I put it behind the clock. Well a few minutes later, I'd had my tea and came home, and I was sitting in my house and she came storming in 'You think that I've done this for money?' (tearful) so I apologised. That's one of the things I'm thanking people for. Plus I've been lucky. I could have died on D Day... All sorts of things could've happened to me, and I'm still alive. I've been looked after by all sorts of people. That's why I make these cakes, as a reward to the various people, to various charities, hospital, anyone who comes to work in the flats at all, whatever he be, I always make sure he gets a cake and I give them to the Police Force, the Ambulance Service, the Fire Service, the dustbin man, the post man! I'm so pleased to be alive - and I think this is the attitude I've got that keeps me alive, quite bluntly, and so it developed into a bit of a hobby... and I enjoy it. It's hard work and it keeps me active. To earn the money to make these cakes I do a bit, some part time work, provided by this friend who sold me the business in the first place. His name by the way is David Monks. So I earn the money by doing part time work, I make the cakes and I give them all away. Mainly for charities basically, for people. A raffle for this, or a raffle for that or a raffle for the other and I enjoy my life. And I'm enjoying life right now, in fact, tremendously so. I'm not frightened of growing old, I hope I got a lot longer, a lot older! If I carry on like I'm doing now I'll be as happy as the proverbial pig!
(laughs)

K: Is there anything else you would like to add about your War service... or..?

JM: Well, yeah... On D Day by the way, I forgot to tell you, my brother is on another landing craft and he's firing over my head, that's my younger brother! And he got sunk. The boat that he was on got sunk, at Walcheren Island - the same place that my LCF got sunk on. I've been very lucky. I've been very lucky in life.

K: Did you have any other brothers?

JM: Right, in the Territorials, I had another brother called Jimmy, and he was called up... And I'll make this point, by the way, when War was declared I was actually in Fletcher Street Barracks in Bolton, and everybody threw their caps in the air 'Hooray!' because of the boredom of civvy life as it was then, and the poverty that we had, tremendous poverty, they had something to do. A lot of those men, by the way, finished up as Japanese Prisoners of War. We were the first motorised Territorial Army unit, the very first one, and we learnt to drive motorbikes, ride a motorbike and a car... Actually when I was 15 years of age, they taught me to ride a motorbike up and down Beaumont Road, and to drive fifteen hundredweight lorries! My brother Bill joined the Marines, before I joined, and he did a good service, he finished with the Scots Guards in Burma, after the War and got a Military Medal. My younger brother Tom, was in the Navy and he was involved in the struggle with the Jewish refugees just after the War. They wanted to go back to Palestine and unfortunately, the Government of the day, tried to stop them and Tom was on this boat, and they had to board this thing that was carrying the refugees, and understandably the people on the boat didn't want to go back to Europe. They wanted to go to Israel, and so they attacked the boarding party and knocked the officer out. Tom grabbed him and jumped overboard with him. Now that was a dangerous thing to do because the undercurrent from the propeller could easily suck them under. He got mentioned in dispatches for that. My sister Betty joined the ATS and my younger brother George joined the Loyals - he was called up in the '50s, I can't remember when. So my Mother had seven children, six of whom served in the forces. We were lucky, we all came home. Two or three of our brothers died since then. A younger sister died, but we've a lot to be thankful for.

K: When War finished where were you at that moment?

JM: Interesting. I was in the bush, somewhere in Burma, can't quite remember, I'm not quite certain, but I remember we all went wild. All we heard, remember we were very restricted in what we had. Our food was rationed, we were airdropped and that kind of thing, but with a wireless, and somebody turned the news on, and we heard the word 'Surrendered' well we all went wild didn't we? Hah!

K: Was this VE Day or VJ Day?

JM: VJ Day. Oh on VE Day I was going out to Burma, on the boat, going out through the, down the middle of the Atlantic, because at the time the Germans were still fighting. When it stopped it was on the 8th May. We were then proceeded through the Mediterranean and across to India, and we landed a Bombay, travelled across the Calcutta, from Calcutta a place called Karmala, when I met the African people. From Karmala to Takoradi that's on the coast there, north Burma area. Then I went by plane then to Ramree Island. That's an interesting thing. We got on this plane. It was a Dakota. It had no doors on it. The runway was a metal runway they laid down, and this young Canadian comes aboard, about 22 years old he'd be, looks at the load he had on 'I think she'll make it!' He took off! (laughs) that was the first time I'd ever flown... No point in being frightened. If you were going to die, they were all going to die - nothing you could do about it, so we accepted it. We landed at Ramree and from Ramree we went across to a place called Tongup. From Tongup to Prome, from Prome down to Rangoon. And I've been back to Rangoon since then, a few months ago, and I couldn't recognize anything at all! We were kept in the bush. Because we were the African Frontier Force, we were kept in the bush out the way, so we couldn't run into any kind of trouble. I expected to be able to recognize... But I couldn't recognize anything, except Shwe Dagon Pagoda. But even that isn't recognisable compared to what it was. It's now full of marble floors and gold plated this and gold plated that. In those days in were simply a place of worship, a nice posh place to... You came across these pagodas all through the bush, all through the jungle. Some of them were neglected and overgrown, because it grows very quickly - undergrowth grows very quickly over there. And one little incident, by the way... I hadn't been there very long and we'd marched down this road and marched into the bush, straight into the bush, down a little track. 'Halt! Left turn! Cut your way through that!' and we had to cut our way through everything, including ant hills! Well we were doing this on one occasion, a little black and gold snake came out and I am bending down to pick it up and this African knocked me on my back, woof! 'Don't touch, that will kill you!' - They're word was 'chop', and he explained to me, well somebody explained to me, like - they could mostly speak a bit of English. I learnt a few words of their language. I got on very well with these people. I never had any trouble or difficulty with them, they might have been Africans, but they were *men*. Anyone who complained about the attitude of these people, look at *them*, not the Africans, look at them people that's doing the talking. Because I had a very good relationship with them.

K: Was that where you were when VJ Day..?

JM: On VJ Day I was in Burma. Remember where we were, we couldn't go mad and drink. There were nothing to drink, or anything like that. I think we got a ration of a bottle of whiskey, or a

bottle of spirits or some cans of beer. I tell you what I did on one occasion. I never thought I'd get home from Burma, I know it sounds silly now, but I didn't think I'd ever get home, so obviously, whenever I'd get any wages of any kind, pay, I always spent it, and a lot of these NCOs who were entitled to this beer, this whiskey. I bought it off them, and I borrowed a jeep and went down to a local camp, I think it was a Welsh regiment, I'm not quite certain, and asked permission off the officers, could I take some of these lads back to my basher with me. And I don't know if these lads can remember it, but twice I went down into this mob and took them back to my basher and we got rather drunk and I took them back the following morning. On the same principle by the way, and these lads come ashore on this boat, they were Geordies, and 'Come on then lads, let's give you a treat!' so we got them drunk. Of course they couldn't go back to their boat - they had to sleep in our bashers. I took them back to the boat the following morning, and he was just pulling up the gangplank, the skipper, I said 'I'm very sorry Sir. I realize these men have been off the boat and they should have been back and it's my fault.' and he just accepted it and let them go back on board again, otherwise they'd have been left ashore.

This officer, by the way, that I'm talking of, he said to me - he's coming home - he said 'I'm going to get married when I get home,' he said 'but I'll wait until you come home.' Now this fellow was educated wherever he was educated and I was a numb fellow - numb as a brick from Farnworth. I got home and I had corresponded with him slightly, and I'm in this camp at Salisbury Plain, Amesbury, and he sent me a letter with an invite to his wedding. So I took the letter into the Commanding Officer, asking for a weekend pass and he gave me a five-day pass and I had to go and meet this chap, he lived at Kingston-upon-Thames. Nice big house, nice people, lovely people, and his father had been a surgeon in Harley Street, one of these specialists, plenty of money, but no edge. I knocked at the front door, and this lady met me at the door. 'Come in' so I went in, and... remember I'm from Farnworth, wooden table, perhaps with a newspaper as a cloth or whatever and here I am... A big oval table and all the accoutrements are all on silver podiums sitting on the table and the knives and forks are all over the place. His mother, looked at me across the table, and indicated that she'd show me which one to use. So we got through the meal - I'd never had such a posh meal in my life! And the following day we went up to Edinburgh. His father died by the way. His mother took my tickets off me, my Warrant, and gave me First Class - travelling First Class! Good Lord! We got to Edinburgh and there was no room in the hotel they stayed, so they put me in another one - a posh one. And that evening he had his stag night in his room, and I found myself sitting on a bed in his room, surrounded by all these young men, his mates. They must all have been college people, and looking back I've often thought *why* I did all the talking - they did all the listening. I could never understand that then. But they wanted to know what the working man was all about... what the ordinary working man was really about. And I was explaining to them what we *were* about, about the poverty that existed where we lived, children without shoes on their feet, and rickets and that kind of thing.

And in that particular subject about pre-War poverty, the worst place I ever lived in was Little Hulton. It was the most poverty stricken area I ever came across. To such an extent... We used to play marbles - all children did in them days, we weren't badly off, my Father had a good job, we got a bit of spending money, a penny, but we could play marbles. We bought them at 25 for a ha'penny, 20 for a ha'penny, sorry, 40 for a penny. And men, fancy a man, 65 year old being reduced to playing boys at marbles. When he got 20 of them, selling them back to the boys for a ha'penny, and when he'd done that twice he'd have a penny, and with that penny, he could go across the road and buy either three SOS cigarettes in a packet for a penny, or two Woodbines with two matches. That's how poverty stricken people were in those days in that area. And the schools I went to, they weren't schools in the sense that... They were *dumps*. I went from one school to another, I went from a Catholic school to a Protestant school, and when I got there, at the Catholic school I was taught separately, supposed to be intelligent, a girl and I were taught separately as too clever for the class we were in. We were taught separately. We get to the school, and because me dad had moved, they gave us an examination to see what kind of intelligence we had, how we could cope, and I finished up in a class lower than what I should have been! That's the difference between the schools that were then. There was a tremendous difference between the quality of schools in those days. I hope it's all been levelled out now. We were certainly poverty stricken in this area. No work, three days a week. If you worked three days a week you couldn't draw any dole, so the management, between them and the dole people they worked it between them, either three days dole or three days... you didn't get three days dole and three days work... When I was 14, my dad had died and we were all hard up and we were all trying to earn money to keep my Mother, she was too proud to ask for any of these charities. We all worked to keep ourselves together, and a situation arose that I was 14 on 12th January and I think at that time the last date that you could leave school was 11th January. If otherwise I'd been born on the 11th I could have started work there and then, so my Mother

asked the official of that time, if it would be possible for me to leave school early, and the letter she got back, heh! ...addressing my Mother with all this pomp and... Council officials, in fact *all* officials in them days... We were rubbish to them. I have a letter here, I kept it, I'm trying to remember what it said, but the tone of it - talking down to my Mother. That were typical by the way, I were changing jobs during the way, and I had to go to the Employment Exchange, I was 17 at the time. And the employment exchange then, the counter, would be about four foot six high. Anyway, I went in this day and this man was very arrogant - this short fellow - very, very arrogant indeed and I can't remember exactly the words that were spoken between us, but he said to me 'Do you realize that I have fought for you in the last War' 'Yes you bloody fool, and I'm trying to fight for you in this War!' I went out and went back the following day 'Morning Mr Morgan, please come in. Yes, now what would you like to do?' That was the attitude the change from one to the other, that's how Civil Servants and people like them generally treated the working class, not all, but generally treated the working class. We were *worse* than rubbish.

K: I think if you were any kind of boss you lorded it over people.

JM: It was a standard. A good job was a postman, and a better job was a policeman, any kind of... a dustbin man, any kind of job at all - you had a job. Fancy cycling from Farnworth Station to the middle of Trafford Park on a bicycle in the winter, with a bike with no mudguards, no brakes, no lights, nothing, You used to put your foot down on the tyre to... Oh... for peanuts. It was a 47 hour week in those days, I was 14... Everyone did the same, I was no exception. And we were asked to work, we weren't lawfully allowed to do so, we were asked to work two nights overtime, we actually worked for 51 hours and we drew... I finished up with twelve and tuppence in my hand. When I went home to my Mother, she gave me a shilling back, a penny in the shilling - that were standard if you were working... your mother gave you... so that was it. I had a shilling spending money. I worked for... as a boy, for a good man, a fellow called Cookson, on Albert Road in Farnworth. I had the biggest paper round in Farnworth. I was paid the most money, but I had the biggest round. I was paid six and sixpence, which was a half of an apprentice's pay. I used to start at half past six in the morning, and I'd come home, in the winter particularly, freezing and crying, through the pain and I used to give my Mother six and sixpence and she gave me sixpence back But it was my contribution to my Mother, and this idiot - this was a letter sent to my Mother, when she applied for me to leave school, a day after the date I could have been eligible to leave school. In other words 11th January, as against, my birthday which was on the 12th. 'Dear Madam' this was from a fellow called Tyrer, Bsc by the way barrister at law, director of education, Mr Tyrer, Farnworth Education Committee, and it states: 'Dear Madam, Your letter of the 22nd December last, has been considered by the Education Committee. I regret to inform you that under the existing law your boy should remain at school until the end of the term which commenced on the 10th inst. and no employer can legally employ him before that date. In any case, since you reside in Kearsley your application should have been made to the Education Committee in that area. Yours faithfully HJ Tyrer Director of Education. Mrs J Morgan, 5 Cemetery Road, Kearsley.' That states categorically the standard that people addressed the ordinary working MAN WITH, and that's my letter.

K: Don't lose it, it's interesting that.

JM: Oh it is that.

K: So you had to be 14?

JM: Yes, it was the 10th you see, not the 11th - it was the 10th. I was two days out.

K: So you would have to leave at Easter did you?

JM: Yes, I'd leave at Easter, that's right.

K: You had to do one more term, for one day.

JM: That's right. That's when I joined the Territorials. We'd no money, I had to do something, I had to get money from somewhere. I used to go to school in my Army boots. Well, boots cost money, don't they? What did they used to call me at school? Was it Jackie Big Feet or something like that? I can't remember, something like that, you know.

K: Because your Mother would be a widow with...

JM: With six children not working. My Mother.... Her pension was a total of thirty shillings, remember my Father had been earning perhaps £4 or £5 a week, and we lived in quite good surroundings. My Mother had a nice house, and, she got thirty shillings a week, ten shillings pension for my Mother, five bob for the eldest girl, and three shillings for the remainder of us. So she had thirty shillings to keep seven of us - herself and six children, that was her pension. And she was too proud to go to the Parish Relief, they used to call it in them days, and I never forgot that. I've never forgotten it.

K: Did you find it hard to adjust when you came out the Army... after the War?

JM: All I wanted to do was to get married. I never thought I was going to get home, which I why I refused promotion, I wasn't interested. I was a fool really you know, because if I'd have taken promotion when I was offered it, I could have been whatever... And when I came out of the Army, the Army Education Corps by the way, did a wonderful job, lets clearly understand that. They taught us that we were human beings. I took a correspondence course, and I must have been doing quite well, but I'd got married and I was doing things, like trying to build up a business. I bought the house. I had a lot of responsibilities. I had to finish up by saying I had to resign. They wrote asking me to carry on - they must have thought I had some talent, which when you're brought up to believe that you're nobody... My Father, who was typical of the people pre-War, typical, a pre-War father... We were brought up to be seen and not heard. Now the implication of that is exactly what I've just said - to be seen and not heard. If you were in Father's company, you kept quiet. He did the talking - you were not even considered. And to go from that...

I understand why people are so keen on education, but I think a lot of people enter education for the wrong reasons, which is why... I have recently been asked to take part in a mediation scheme between the young people, that go astray. I'm still thinking about it. I think I'll do the job, but I'm 81, you know, I'll be 82! (laughs) But it might work, I might well be able to do something. This behaviour of today, they can't read and write properly. Well, I say to people: learn to read and write, so that you can more appreciate life. You can have a better understanding of life. I also recognise by the way, that a ten year old child knows more about the world in general, than Archimedes did, than any of these philosophers did, and it's amazing - that's what we forget. I knew nothing when I was 14, nothing, except what I had been lucky enough to learn at Harper Green School. I knew nothing at all, and we'd no newspapers, the houses had no hot water, in fact, you were lucky if you had a tap in the house, it was sometimes in the yard. An outside toilet, draughty windows. Look at us today. Look at this - double glazed, centrally heated, ooh, I'm glad we're all the same.

All I'm saying to people is that life is worth living, it is worth living and it's worth learning to live.

ENDS