Speaker 1:	00:00	What is your name,
Tony Buffery:	00:02	Anthony Terence Buffery.
Speaker 1:	00:05	What year were you born?
Tony Buffery:	00:06	1940.
Speaker 1:	00:06	Where were you born?
Tony Buffery:	00:11	In what was then a town called Retford in Nottinghamshire.
Speaker 1:	00:18	What did your parents do for a living?
Tony Buffery:	00:21	My mother was a housewife. My father worked at Butler's Wharf in the London docks. He was a junior manager at that time.
Speaker 1:	00:34	Describe what your local area was like for you as a child before the war started.
Speaker 3:	00:41	[Inaudible]
Tony Buffery:	00:44	I can't answer that because I was born as an evacuee.
Speaker 3:	00:49	Okay.
Speaker 1:	00:51	How did you and your family felt when war was declared?
Tony Buffery:	00:57	I can't answer that either I was too young. I was born in 1940, which is just after war was declared. So my memories begin when I was about three years old. Say 1943 onwards,
Speaker 3:	01:16	Okay.
Speaker 1:	01:18	What did your parents do during the war?
Tony Buffery:	01:22	My mother looked after myself and my sister. My father continued working on the docks and he was also an air raid warden in the Civil Defence Corp.
Speaker 1:	01:36	How did your family prepare for the war?
Tony Buffery:	01:41	I don't know. I wasn't there Oh yes, we had well, much of that had already happened before my memory starts working every house had a, an Anderson shelter in the back garden and they

were utterly useless. They, they were symbolic. You were supposed to dig a trench in the soil line it with brick which you had to steal from a bomb site and then you put in these corrugated sheets of iron, which was just a sort of hoop thing and then cover it in earth. But you know, you will feel much safer in the house during a bombing raid than you would in one of those things. I've always on occasion woken up, you know, three or four o'clock in the morning during a bombing raid and we all have to go down and to go out and enter this freezing cold dump shed full of beetles and worms. They were simply not safe. It was I think pretty much somebodies, good idea that never really worked.

Speaker 4: 03:04 Mmm.

Speaker 1: 03:05 Tell us about any experiences of bombing do you face?

Tony Buffery: 03:15 As I said, my father was an air raid warden, it was his job to check after every bombing incident to find out if who had died and to collect up the remains and to do any paperwork. I was often at home during bombing rates. I don't really like to talk about it.

Speaker 1: 03:49 How did you feel when you first found out you were going to be evacuated?

Tony Buffery: 03:55 Not a relevant question. I was born as an evacuee, but my mother was evacuated when she was pregnant with me. So I was born in a maternity hospital in Retford. I'm probably are not as old as most evacuees.

Speaker 1: 04:23 How did it feel waiting for your new foster parents?

Tony Buffery: 04:34 Well, I didn't have foster parents. The police I lived in was a tutor Manor house out in the country. It was a huge place. It was all glazed brick and dark panneling. It had three wings and one wing was occupied by evacuee families. They were all mothers with children like my mother. And the East wing was occupied by Land girls. So the lady of the house

Speaker 4: 05:14 [Inaudible]

Tony Buffery: 05:15 We got at herself as being landed Gentry and she was not well disposed towards either Land girls or evacuees, she, she tried to avoid us. She lived in the middle wing and stayed there.

Speaker 4:	05:34	Okay. What was school like?
Tony Buffery:	05:39	There weren't any schools. Not for me. All of the schools in London were closed because they were too obvious targets. And then from the air you can easily see a school and it's a ready target. So what schooling take place only happened in rural villages or small market towns that were not targets. I didn't go to school until, Oh maybe 46 or 47, but most schools were shut. Yes.
Tony Buffery:	06:26	It was very pleasant. In the summer at least the, the house where we lived had a walled garden back when you went out through the kitchen door. It must have been about an acre in size. It was completely walled all the way around, up to the walls of the house, and they grew everything in there. Everything they needed. Unfortunately her ladyship lived upstairs and her windows overlook the garden, so you couldn't pinch anything. But they often used to let the kids out, cause outside it was fields and woods. We often just used to go out and walk and explore and look for food. Blackberries were popular. If we could find apples or plums, we'd have those. And if it was wet, then we'd go for mushrooms. Later in the year we collected any nuts we could find for food. We'd take them home and eat them because there wasn't much food. In Retford the adults were kind of confused and out of place, children, well, children are like puppies. They can adapt to anything that they find themselves in environments and they adapt to it. You, you, you're not in a position to question it.
Tony Buffery:	08:12	Oh, I knew that. I lived in London. I knew what my home is like in London. I also knew this big house. It didn't bother me either way, that that was how I lived. Children were not bothered at all about environment. They found themselves in. They just made the best of it. But the adults were, well I wouldn't say distraught. They were sort of confused.
Speaker 3:	08:57	How different was it from London?
Tony Buffery:	08:58	You mean how did Tooting differ from Retford? This place was hell. There was always full of dust and grit and smoke. They were craters and bomb holes everywhere. Everyone had to go out and doors to buy food because there was no refrigeration in those days. And you never knew when you were going to get bombed. When my mother took me out shopping, we went to the shops between bomb shelters the nearest bomb shelter to where we live was the one outside of his church. After that,

there wasn't another one until he got to Tooting Broadway. So from St Boniface church, to Tooting Broadway we had to move very quickly because if the air raid siren sounded you were in deep trouble.

Speaker 3: 10:12 [Inaudible]

Tony Buffery: 10:12 I was with my mother the entire time. That was how I said, we, we, we used to come back to London fairly regularly. When we did my mother more or less stopped me on my father. And he, he looked out at me and the dog, if my father went out on his patrols, he always took me with him. Although it only little, I was in no more danger out of doors with him than I would have been in the other son shorter. So there was no reason why I shouldn't go with him. And it was, I know, very bored in this job to go out and after every bombing late to survey the damage and report on it and to report on casualties and to collect top and he remains that he had to process everything and complete the paperwork.

Speaker 3: 11:29 [Inaudible]

Tony Buffery: 11:29 Well, I know some evacuees had to move around quite a lot, but I didn't, I was either here at home or I was in Rockford in this big house. I remember we had to travel out and back by train. The trains were often attacked by German fighters.

Speaker 4: 12:02 [Inaudible]

Tony Buffery: 12:04 People do get killed that way. But that was more or less it

Tony Buffery: 12:15 Which way? Back to London. Well it was a journey I had made many times before. There were a lot of suitcases. It was a steam train. They were all painted brown in those days. And the coaches were often painted in camouflage. On the way home, of course we didn't have to use blackout blinds because at night, every window anyway, I had to be blacked out. It was well just a piece of canvas, black, black and canvas that you pulled down because you couldn't let out light because it could be seen from the air and that marks you as a target. So we, we, we traveled home on the train and for the first time ever, you didn't have to keep looking out of the windows for aircraft because when you're on a train and there was no [inaudible] you know, well, it was, it was a safe journey home. The first one I made.

Speaker 4:	13:39	[Inaudible]
Tony Buffery:	13:39	Mixed feelings. At Retford it was out in the country. They were birds and there was grass and trees. But back where I lived on it was, it was a wreck therey were bomb sites in practically every street. In Salterford Road a V one destroyed about four or five houses at the top of the road. And the whole of the bottom is sort of, the road was destroyed by a V2. I was there when it hit. It was just rubble. You get a sort of fog of mist, dust and ashes. Every time the wind blows, dust and ashes blow around it. It was sort of gritty fog everywhere was like it. After five or six years or so things change because nature began to take over and all the bomb sites were covered in wild plants and all of the animals came back. And after that it was wonderful. I spent much of my childhood growing up on bomb sites.
Speaker 1:	15:03	How had London changed
Tony Buffery:	15:03	As I said, this area first owas a wreck. But after a few years nothing was done. There was no money for anything. The bomb sites were just left. They greened over and trees and bushes came back around. That became very pleasant.
Tony Buffery:	15:29	During the war there were very few people living in London. Anyone with children was evacuated. Men who were able bodied were fighting abroad. So the only people actually living in London were essential workers, like doctors, nurses, building site workers who were essential to repair damaged buildings. Other services that people might think essential like fire brigade and the police, but also in the forces. Most of that sort of emergency work was done by the home guard and the ARP. That's civil defense.
Tony Buffery:	16:19	It was, it was under populated compared to the way it is now. I'll give you one example. My father was responsible for patrolling the patch between Nimrod road, Moyser road, Rectory lane and Southcroft. That was quite a big area. And in his jacket pocket he carried a notebook and it was the name of every road. And a list of occupied houses. Now. He kept that in his inner jacket pocket to do that nowadays, he would have needed two shopping trolleys full of notebooks. It tells you how few people they were in London. After the war, of course, they all started coming back.
Speaker 4:	17:08	Yeah.

Tony Buffery:	17:11	Up in town. They put up hoardings and screens to cover the major bomb sites. So you couldn't see them anymore. But nothing was done. There was no money. The country was bankrupt. And I can remember from the end of the war to not even 50, 51, nothing changed. Theere was still food rationing. There was nothing much to eat. I think I first tasted, I thought I saw a banana when I was 11. That was the first time I'd seen a piece of foreign fruit. But it wasn't yellow. It was black. My mother thought bananas were supposed to be that colour.
Speaker 3:	18:04	[Inaudible].
Tony Buffery:	18:04	It was in a yes, that they were street parties at the end of the war, but there was nothing to eat. There was bread, there was margerine and spam and everyone going aye, aye, aye. It was pathetic. Nothing got had any better until the early fifties. Well, perhaps I'm a cynic but that's what I remember.
Speaker 1:	18:36	Did you stay in touch with any of your hosts family?
Tony Buffery:	18:41	Nope. We were from all sorts of different places and relationships between evacuee families were well social, but we didn't really want to socialize because there were too many problems back home and my mother was fully aware of what my father was doing as a, as an ARP and she never knew if he was going to be a lawyer of next week or the next day. So everyone was under stress or the parents were under stress all the time and I didn't socialize. The kids did.
Speaker 1:	19:36	Looking back, how would you say your experiences as an evacuee have affected your life?
Speaker 3:	19:46	[Inaudible]
Tony Buffery:	19:46	As an evacuee? I suppose I developed an attachment to the countryside, but most of what I recall from that period of my life was here during the bombing. And that was bad.
Speaker 1:	20:16	What are your strongest memories?
Tony Buffery:	20:19	The V2, did I mention that? I, I live halfway up salterford road and well it was just after my sister had been born. My father was on duty at the ARP office, which was just up the top below the tennis courts you know, they're not called tennis courts anymore. They're Graveney school playing fields. Yeah, well they used to be tennis courts. That's what they were built as. At

the bottom there is a green bank, which is artificial. There's a stream underneath, which is why they never put up buildings on that site. And the bank is a retaining wall to stop the tennis courts collapsing. On that bank they built a bomb shelter, which is still there. It's underground. And at the end on the corner of chillerton road was the ARP office, which is where my father was stationed.

Tony Buffery: 21:24 My father was in that office and he had a telephone call and I remember I was in the living room with my mother and my dog. My father came rushing in and he said he just had a phone call that a V2 was predicted to hit south furzedown in 10 minutes. And I didn't know what V2was. Neither did my mother. So he went off to the master bedroom where my sister was in her cot. He pulled her out of the cot, pushed her underneath the bed, and he pushed the dog underneath the bed. My mother and I were confused. He pushed both of us into the toilet, which happened to be between two chimney breasts on the outer wall. So it was the strongest part of the building. He shut the door and said, don't come out. And then we just stood there like idiots. Then all hell broke loose the ground vibrated. There was a pressure wave. I fell to the ground, so did my mother because of the pressure on my ears. I couldn't breath literally for several seconds. And then there was a tremendous bang and there was a noise of things falling, it didn't seem to stop. It was a confused period when everything went quiet. When we opened the door, all the windows had gone, window frames had gone. There was glass all over the floor. When we went into the living room, the, pieces of glass from the window had stripped all the plaster off the walls as they whizzed running around the room. It was just bare laths and the glass was, you had to walk over the glass. You couldn't walk on the carpet. And there was no sign of my father. My mother went off to t living room to check on my sister and a dog. They were both still unconscious. And when she came back my father was underneath the dining room table, covered in bits of glass. He, he was bleeding. But my mother started having a sort of hysterical upset. My father said he was still on duty. He had to go out and he told my mother to look after my sister and he took me with him.

Tony Buffery: 24:03 What, he opened the front door. I could see that all the windows were missing. I didn't know but ours were missing as well, they were gone. The entire road had its rooves stripped off. There was rubble everywhere. It wasn't scattered everywhere. It was in straight lines. And my father turned up

the road, I knew the explosion was at the bottom. I said to him, why aren't we going down there? And he said, because there will be no survivors. So we went up the road, the people who were in occupied houses, by this time had come out of their doors. Those who still had their front doors left, half the houses had their front doors blown inwards off the hinges. My father shouted at them to get back in doors and start clearing up. And then we went up and stopped at Welland road we walked along and then down the next road what's it called?

Tony Buffery: 25:11 Well, we went down now and again, my father knocked on a couple of doors, but the people didn't answer that. My father guessed that they were out at work, so they wouldn't have known anything about this. And then we got down to the bottom, to southcroft and there was nothing there. Literally you could still see the scar left by that rocket. It destroyed the houses in salterford road on both sides. All the houses facing it in southcroft were destroyed and it also destroyed some of the houses in Sealy road, which is the other side of the Graveney. My father went onto to the, site and I followed him, we found this crater, which was about 15 foot deep, which is where the missile had hit. But it had not exploded upwards, gone, sort of sideways, at an angle.

Tony Buffery: 26:14 Most of the rocket engine was buried in the wall of a demolished house and there was a very strange smell, which sort of rather like bleach coming off this thing. I assume it was coming from the fuel tank. Anyway, we then walk around up salterford road and all the trees have been uprooted. And my father put me indoors and said, you know, he had to go and make a report and he didn't come back for about five hours. When he did he said that three wardens and about half a dozen home guard had searched the V2 site at the bottom. They had found one casualty.

Tony Buffery: 27:03 It was a bicycle with a boy's shoe with a foot inside it. That was what they had found. They did know that it was a newspaper boy because while they were at work a policeman came along and told them that he'd been reported missing. Well, that was extremely fortunate because so many houses had been destroyed and yet they were all empty. But I'll never forget that. And V2s were peanuts compared to today's missiles. I know what it's like to be attacked by a missile.

Tony Buffery: 27:59 That's difficult to answer because I don't know what other people have told you. One of the things you learn when you get

old is that history is very seldom accurate. It's often written by people who have an agenda of their own. Well, to take one example, everyone's heard of the battle of Britain. It never took place. It, the expression was invented after the war. There was a lot of combat between the Luftwaffe and the RAF in 1940. I don't remember it because I was too young and I wasn't here, but that expression was invented as propaganda. Afterwards. Another expression that was invented after the war was blitz spirit. People did not behave differently during the war than they did afterwards. They said they weren't so terrified. There was no special spirit. People did not cooperate any more than they would normally in extreme circumstances. People do what they can to help as anyone would nowadays. But human behavior didn't change. And food rationing, as I mentioned earlier, food rationing was not good for us. Everyone was half starving. The only, well the only fresh meat was bacon and that was only available once a week. For the most part, we lived on spam and came out of a tin and tinned Corn beef. There were plenty of fresh vegetables because most people had an allotment. My father had one up at Furzedown recreation ground. So during the summer we had plenty of vegetables to eat and then during the winter there'd be nothing but potatoes and cabbage because that sort of grows in the winter.

Tony Buffery: 30:14 But it was not a good diet. It was not a healthy diet, it's just that the government likes to pretend that it was. I do remember there were no fat people when I was a child. I think the first time I ever saw an overweight person was when I was about 16. I thought he was ill, nowadays you see somebody who's thin on your think they are ill, but that's the way it goes.

Speaker 3: 30:50 Are there any questions from the group? I've got one. Yeah. You were saying you're going backwards and forwards. Yeah, it seems odd, why do you keep coming back?

Tony Buffery: 30:50 Because most men were in Europe fighting essential workers were at home in the thick of the war. And if they had wives and children the wives would be extremely concerned about their husbands welfare. As I've already said, my mother worried continually about what was going on with my father because every, every evening on the news they were able to announce another bombing raid. My mother had no idea whether my father was alive or dead. The only telephone available to my father was the one in the ARP office, which he was not allowed to use because it was on the military network. That's how I knew about the V2 coming. And by the way, there was no air

raid siren when that thing came and whoever telephoned him must've been one of the RAF radar people.

Speaker 3: 32:35 So how often do you, would you say you were coming up and down?

Tony Buffery: 32:36 Every couple of months. It varied. On the day of the V2 attack we'd only been there a couple of days. Afterwards my father told my mother to go back to Retford and not come down here again because there was no way of stopping a V2. After that, we stayed away for about six months before my father said we could come back again because by that time they bombed they, the allies had bombed the V2 launch sites. I can remember often making that journey and it was a long one on a steam train.

Speaker 3: 33:30 Can you described the journey?

Tony Buffery: 33:35 It was from one of the North London stations. I can't remember which one. I know, obviously I couldn't read a lot at that stage.

Tony Buffery: 33:51 The trains were the old ones they were made of wood. They had atrocious springing, seats were uncomfortable and they creaked and groaned. And if you did open a window all the smoke and soot from the engine would come in. So it was not a luxurious journey the way it is nowadays. And of course, a train is an easy target for anybody in an aircraft. They were often attacked, especially if it was a passenger train.

Speaker 1: 34:26 Taking you back to the big house. What did you do there?

Tony Buffery: 34:38 The only member of that family, there was the lady of the house. Her husband was an officer and he was somewhere in France. The woman was accustomed to having servants, but they'd all gone and she had to rely on the land girls for jobs around the house. I remember land girls were mostly the same sort of social class she was but there were two of them. One, her father owned a bakery and she was very good at making bread and cakes because this woman could pull strings, she could often get enough sugar to make cakes. So this land girl was taken off duties. Usually she drove a truck, so she was taken off those sort of duties and put to work in the big kitchen. And that kitchen had the biggest fireplace I've ever seen. At that age I could walk inside it without touching my head and I could have, you could have laid three or four children down in the full length of it. It was enormous. There were seats inside it and

there were several ovens actually inside the fireplace and that was where all the cooking was done. But it was, it was a peculiar setup.

Speaker 3: 36:18 There was other mothers with children there.

Tony Buffery: 36:19 Yes. The ones who had been sent up in 1940, that was okay. But some of the newer arrivals were often traumatized before they got there and they didn't want to talk to anyone. Earlier, one in the war. If a family lost their home in a bombing raid and I was still alive, then they would immediately be evacuated later on in the war they didn't bother doing that. Because there wasn't anywhere else left to be evacuated to. So it was a very mixed bag.

Tony Buffery: 37:20 The rooms in this house were, all the rooms were much the same. They were dark oak panelling from the floor to ceiling. Some of the ceilings were plastered and white, but others were still had the original Tudor panelling, it was like walking inside a piano. It was always very gloomy. I didn't mind the kitchen because this fire place was made of stone and there was plenty of light. It is tudor houses had very little light. And windows was this crisscross lattice stuff? Leaded lights, so you couldn't see out. The place will probably be worth a fortune nowadays.

Speaker 1: 38:14 Did you ever experience, did you ever hear gunshots?

Tony Buffery: 38:40 Yes, I was once on a train going back to Retford. It was nighttime and the blackout blinds were down, I was sitting in the window seat. And all of a sudden there was a strange phut, phut, phut noise. And I looked up a row of holes had appeared in the blackout blind a few inches above my head. And I was sitting there looking at them and I had a thump and the man sitting on the other side of the carriage had fallen down. And we, we just sort of sat there for a few minutes and one of the other passengers pushed him with his foot and went and called the guard. We had been attacked by machine gun, a German fighter. The guard came up. He couldn't carry the man so he had to, he went up and down the train until he found a soldier and then the two of them took the body away. That was the sort of thing that happened regularly.

Tony Buffery: 39:42 People could die at any time. It could have been you - that state of mind. Unless you keep your wits about you, you will die in seconds. That, all children learnt that, it takes a long time to outgrow it. You know, it becomes a reflex. You don't think about

what's happened until long afterwards. That's when you become traumatized. Not at the time. All you're worried about at the time is your own survival. Either that or you don't know what the hell is going on. I didn't. I was fascinated by these holes that were appearing suddenly, and of course this man lying on the floor, I had the same holes through his chest.