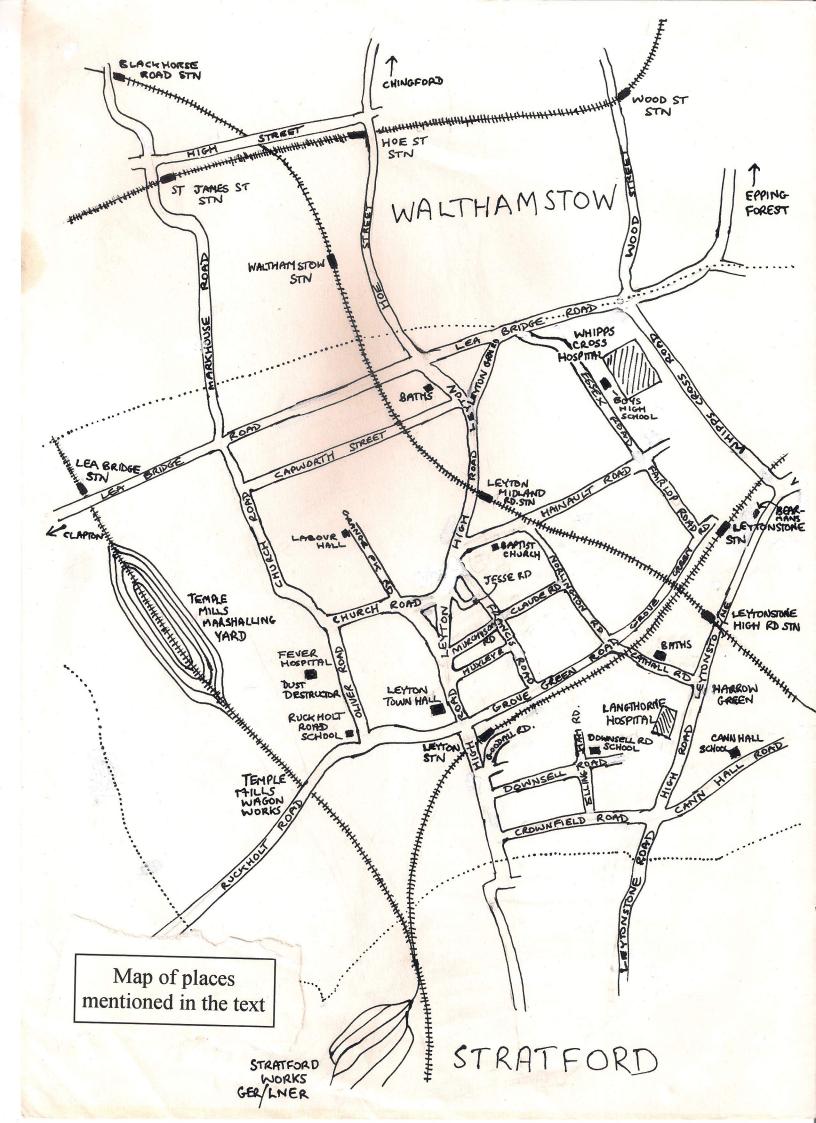


Waltham Forest Memories 7

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Introduction by Harry Cohen, M.P. for Leyton and Wanstead

Jenny Hammond was a great woman. I am privileged to have known her in her later, but still splendid, years.

She was a strong woman of clear purpose. She saw peoples' lives blighted by poverty, economic unfairness and injustice, and she was determined to act to improve their lives.

I recall her telling me how, with other mothers with babies in their prams, she stormed Leyton Town Hall to demand free milk for babies. This was vital for underprivileged families and they were entitled to it under Maternity and Child Welfare law. The administrators were mean-minded, and sought to deny the milk to wives of strikers. The demonstration shamed them and they had to cave in faced with such determined women led by Jenny.

Jenny detested the workhouse and means testing system which hung over from the Old Poor Law and was a cause of indignity, fear and continuing impoverishment. She wanted the indignity of poverty ended.

She knew the importance of political action, but it was always for the purpose of improving peoples' living conditions. She was above all, outside her own family life, socially minded. Jenny was a community builder.

She joined the Labour Party because she was annoyed with injustice. She repeatedly pressed for better conditions for the unemployed, the poor, and for families, particularly mothers and children.

As a Leyton councillor for very many years she helped build our local public services from scratch, virtually brick by brick, and against ignorant old fashioned and plain mean minded opposition. With other strong minded, radical councillors she introduced public provision like the public baths, health clinics for child welfare, a foot clinic for the elderly and council homes of quality to replace slums. These transformed peoples' lives. Public health improved and communities were given the chance to thrive.

We forget the role and achievements of early councillors like Jenny, but they were truly progressive and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Her activity was in many ways inspirational and shows what progressive councillors could still achieve for local communities if they had less shackles upon them from central government.

In the War Jenny's tireless, voluntary welfare work with the Women's Volunteer Service won her a well-deserved honour. Typically she said it was for all the women in the local 'S. Again she supported families and the under-privileged, as well as the bereaved and bomb victims. It seems to me that on some occasions she must have been cooking morning, noon and night, and then doing more.

In later years she was a freeman of the borough and still attended Council meetings to use her influence if necessary and keep us on track. She was Honorary President of Leyton Labour Party and was universally acclaimed and honoured by party members. She remained active in the Women's Section, and they put an enormous amount into Leyton life.

She also had sincere religious beliefs and was much respected in her church in Hainault Road.

I personally am grateful to her for her support for me, as councillor in her ward, and as Parliamentary candidate and Member of Parliament. She was particularly supportive to me when the SDP (Social Democratic Party) broke away from the Labour Party. She contributed to keeping Leyton Labour Party together, especially as a party reflecting a broad range of local people and opinion, when it faced a serious threat of breaking up,

I recall her canvassing for me in her nineties. Sadly that was the period of rampant Thatcherism with its antisocial ingredient of narrow, personal greed. One man simply said to her "what's the Labour Party gonna give me" It wasn't a meeting of minds and she simply said afterwards "what a rude man". But for me, what he wasn't was what she was. Not for her a narrow selfishness, She was a community builder who personally put far more in to social life than she took out. She improved the lives of very many thousands of people as a consequence.

Her fine qualities are still what is needed. In Waltham Forest and over a far wider terrain we still need many more people with the spirit of Jenny Hammond.

I congratulate the oral history society in printing her memoirs, which stand as a fine tribute to her. I am happy to add mine in tribute to a fine woman,

Harry Cohen M.P.

Honour for a Labour stalwart

LEYTON Labour stalwart Jenny Hammond has won her party's highest honour — the National Executive Committee's Certificate of Merit.

The sprightly 86-year-old first joined the Labour Party during the General Strike of 1926.

And her long political career has included a 35-year stint on Leyton Borough Council.

Jenny served as Leyton's Mayor during World War Two — and dedicated voluntary work throughout the Blitz earned her the OBE.

Mrs Hammond, of Claude Road, continues her work as vice-chairman of Leyton Labour Party's Grove Green Ward.

And she is also vicechairman of Leyton Labour Party Women's Section. MP Bryan Magas

MP Bryan Magee presented Jenny's Certificate of Merit at a meeting last

Mrs Hammond told fellow party members: "I'm going to treasure this more than anything else I've ever had."

Looking back over her many years' service, Jenny said: "I was a member of Leyton Council's Pensions Committee. We were only allowed to give money to those of 'good character and low income."

A Leyton Labour Party spokesman said: "We proposed Jenny for the award because of her enormous contribution to local politics and the community.

Preface

This book is based on the memoirs written by Jenny Hammond that she handed to Harry Cohen, presently Member of Parliament for Leyton and Wanstead, shortly before she died. Harry felt that Jenny would like them to be published.

Some years before this the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop had interviewed Jenny no less than three times. It therefore seemed appropriate to combine these tapes with the memoirs for publication. To complement these sources we interviewed a number of people who knew her, including her daughter and son.

These two types of testimony add up to a picture of someone struggling to improve the lot of working class people in an outer suburb of London [technically metropolitan Essex]. She was active at a crucial time in our recent history. She was involved in the very important role of protecting local citizens during the worst excesses of the Blitz. As well as that Jenny Hammond was at the forefront of creating the welfare state as interpreted locally in the Borough of Leyton. She was prominent in the education service, but her achievements also include a range of social welfare provision - home helps, meals on wheels etc.

This is a story that needs to be told about those crucial years around the Second World War and one woman's role within the local state. The memoirs are reproduced word for word, including the abbreviations and grammatical idiosyncrasies that Jenny typed.

A different type face is used for this text(courier).

The rest of the book has been compiled from edited recordings from all the contributors.

Many past and present members of the workshop have been involved in the production of this book, including Sue Ashworth, Bryony Batchelor, Ken Worpole, Robert Wilkinson, Norma Crooks, Wendy Maclean, Michael Custance and Nick Hayes.

Chapter 1 - Early Life

I was born at 23 Downsell Rd, the 4th child of seven. There were then 2 brothers and one sister, each in steps about 2 years. After 8 years another sister was born, and following years twin brothers. My earliest memory, I was about 3 years old, my mother had a telegram to say mother had been found drowned in a pond near her home in Holbeach, Lincolnshire. She had walked into a pond along a country lane in fog returning shopping. My sister Grace and I had black frocks trimmed with heliotrope braid, wore every day.

I went to Downsell Rd. school when I was three years old. I only remember one holiday, my mother took us to Holbeach to brother, Spring Villa, Holbeach Bank, to us a lively double fronted house, how we picking loved apples, gleaning corn in the fields. When I was about 6, father, an engine driver, was transferred to Hertford. Here shared a house another driver, Mr Moxham and family. I still meet some of them now. We had to walk 2 miles to school, no transport or school meals Children of ages all taught in one large room, about 70 of us, sitting forms, gallery style, no desks. After 9 months my father was sent back Stratford. We arrived at the station with a wooden case with live chickens in it. Somehow they got out and we all chased them over roads back into the box. was common to keep chickens in those days. We had a flat in Stewart Rd, Leyton for a

time, we soon moved into a house in Downsell Rd, where my parents lived until their death.

I was nearly 9 years old when Mabel was born, how we loved her. Within 2 years the twins were born, what upheaval, 3 in 2 years. As a result of the attention focussed on the twins Mabel pined and refused to eat, the Dr warned unless mother had her in bed with her she would lose her.

On tape Jenny adds:

My mother used to pay a penny a week for a doctor. With the seven children she'd got she paid seven pence a week, and we were able to go to a doctor free on that. I can remember going to the doctor and walking quite a long way. I suppose it was only certain doctors that were in the scheme, from Downsell Road, down to Cann Hall Road, which is a good three quarters of a mile. Sending me to the doctors because I had been so queer, and I got anaemia, and I had it for months. I had to have iron medicine, but she never came with me. She never did go to the doctor with us. If there was anything wrong with you, she sent you round to see the doctor, we never had the doctor home. One friend, told me she paid three shillings every other day for the doctor to come to her house, she had a child ill every other day. Of course that was quite a lot of money then. I think that was about when I was ten. It's a good many years ago. I don't know how she paid it. Mum used to pay that penny a week to cover us in case we needed a doctor. There was an association called the Health Service Association that charged a penny a month, where you could go and get a doctor or go into hospital.

We others had to share the housework before going to school. I was kept at home

every Monday, washing day, this my mother was for summoned before the School Board, when she told them how she was placed, she had their sympathy, this made me real upset as I loved school, and was hoping the board would not agree to my absence.

Jenny elaborates:

My mother never went out anywhere. She had seven children, and the women used to look after them. Now it's a bed and breakfast thing. They go home and have their meal and go to bed and they don't see any more of their children. I think it's dreadful. They don't know their parents, they can't be affectionate as we used to have to be. I mean my mother never even went to Southend for the day. I can never remember her going out for the day. She was working in doors all the time, cooking and cleaning the place. Course you had to clean your place yourself then. Now they don't have to do anything at all hardly. They have all sorts of things they can use for it. We used to have to kneel on the floor and wash the lino over every day in the living room.

But as for her brothers:

I don't remember them doing anything in the house. Might have done the gardening and that sort of thing, but anything in the house, they didn't.

We were not allowed to skip because of wearing our shoes out, my father repaired all shoes, even the inner soles, wasn't I happy when we started skipping a physical exercise. our cookery lessons were at Cann Hall Rd. school where we had to walk quite a long distance once a week. I reached the highest standard (class 7) at 13, and sat for what was then called the Labour exam, if a child passed this it could

leave at 13 instead of 14. 1 passed. Mother had to show my certificate, birth registered my birth February instead of December, she had not notified my birth within 6 weeks, and liable to a fine, so she gave my date of birth as February not December. By this record I had been too young to enter allowed to leave. not Wasn't pleased, I I resulted mention here, this in my increase pension due at 80, was not paid to me until 8 weeks later.

Jenny's son Bernard explains:

My mother's exact date of birth to the best of my knowledge, she certainly told me, was 19th December 1894. Her mother registered it late for the reasons that she'd given in her memoirs, because she'd not done it within the prescribed six weeks. So she changed the date of birth to make sure she didn't get into trouble with the law. So the birth certificate shows 19th February 1895.

We lived in a 5 roomed house, the only room ever heated was the living room, a coal fire, all cooking done on the same stove, no gas or electricity. My father used to put a brick in the oven to warm the beds. After always having an lamp on the centre of table, we were thrilled have 2 oil lamps in brackets on the wall, these had to be filled and cleaned each evening. I remember the first neighbour in the road having a gas cooker, every one went in to see it.

Bread was then penny-three farthings a loaf, margarine four pence a pound, we never had butter, eggs halfpenny each, sugar three-half pence a pound. We had half-penny a week pocket money, and spent

it a farthing a time, one ounce of sweet wrapped in newspaper. 1/4 pt of milk was left on the doorstep at 7am another delivery at 10, called the "pudding round". This had a large churn with a tap, on a barrow. We wore stockings, black woollen penny three farthings a pair, always a white pinafore over our frocks to go to school.

My mother always had her luncheon beer, penny three farthings a pint, if children went to the off licence, the bottle had to be sealed with sealing wax. We could buy pennyworth of cheese and 1/2d pickles, for supper. Mother paid a penny a week for each of us for a doctor. Although I had anaemia over a long period, and had to have iron medicine. Its amazing how healthy our parents were and in spite of hard work, lived to their eighties.

Wash day was a full days work, rubbing and scrubbing clothes, and after scrubbed table tops, broom handles, anything that was white wood. Coal was one shilling and one pence a cwt, the greengrocer at the top of the road would carry it to house on his back. Members of the family having a serious illness were nursed home. Scarlet fever, measles, whooping cough and chicken pox were common. My brother Ernie had pneumonia, we all took turns sitting with him during his delirium.

Although money was scarce it was bread and margarine for breakfast, always a good dinner, and bread and margarine with sugar for tea. I can say we were never really hungry. I can remember enjoying a breakfast of

broken bread covered with boiling water, pepper and salt, it was called bread sop.

Sometimes we walked to the fish shop in Stratford for winkles for Sunday tea. We often walked there and back to Lipton's for cheap groceries. This must have been when I was about 15, often Wally and his sister came with me, he later became my husband. It Was halfpenny fare by horsebus to Stratford, it seems we could not afford this,

My father earned a £1 a week as a railway fireman, it was many years before he became a driver at £2 a week, he was an honest steady working man, and lived to 84. He had paid in for a pension of 19/- a week, when he retired at 65, after being employed there since he was 12, he showed me the letter he received, curtly saying "you are now of pensionable age, and your services are no longer required". I may mention here he was an orphan at 7, his elder sisters cared for him in turn. I never remember my parents having a holiday, or even going out for a day. A line of unemployed men came round the streets regularly singing "We've got no work to do, our wives and children are starving - we've got no work to do". It was quite common to see a neighbours furniture put into the front garden, because they unable to pay the Moonlight flits were common, this was when they moved during the night hoping they would not be traced.

I cannot say my childhood was unhappy, in spite of doing so much housework, blackleading

the stove, cleaning steel firearms, washing the floor everyday.

Jenny comments further on tape:

I always had to do some housework before I went to school - wash the floor over before I went to school in the morning. Hardly anybody had carpets in those days, amongst our people anyway, nearly all had lino. That [the grate] was blackleaded. Had to do that every blessed day, and we had steel fire-arms and a fender that had to be cleaned with a sandpaper everyday. Oh dear! The work on those houses then. We had coal fires and we had a stove that you could put all sorts of saucepans on it, a closed in stove so as you could cook in the oven and on top all the time. You had to have fires all through the summer, Had to get down on your hands and knees to make the fire up. We never knew what the temperature of the oven was but did all the cooking there, Never had any gas. I always remember the lady over the road having the gas. She was the first one that we knew that had had gas and we all went over to look at it. We thought it was marvellous. You spent a whole day washing, Everything had to be boiled that was white. You never think of boiling anything today do we? I still do my washing on a Monday, never left off.

When I left school at 14, I got a job at a butchers shop in Stratford, they needed someone to be with their little girl, 18 months old. I was paid 9/- a month, lived in and had very good food, I thrilled to have bedroom of my own.

I went first into service. We were expected to go into service in my young days - the girls did. They nearly all went into domestic service. I went and lived in; they'd got a butcher's business in Stratford. And I was so pleased to have a bedroom of my own, coming from a big family you see. I thought

I was in heaven. They were very nice to me. I think they paid me about two shillings a week but I had my food and everything. I was very happy there.

After 5 months my mother suffered from varicose ulcers needed me at home, think I cried all night, couldn't bear the idea going home. They told me if I went to work again, not to go into service. I used to take the baby in a pushchair and walk to the grandma Hainault Rd. about 1½ miles, people. they were grand Т remained home some months. I then went in to a duplicating office at Liverpool St., and for 2 yrs took a course Commercial Correspondence, book-keeping, English Cookery. After some time my mother again needed me home, and although the firm gave me an increase to 10/- a week, I had eventually to leave. After a period at home I went to see my first employer, who recommended me to her brother also a butcher who engaged me as a cashier (some bookkeeping) I was then about 17, I was paid 10/- a week, and given a joint for my mother Saturday. Hours were to 9pm, 7.29a.m. Friday 11pm. 10p.m. Saturday walked home to my meals, about a mile each way. There was no heating in the shop, & no access to a toilet, cash registers were not in use, I think there was record of my takings. After a year the firm closed down. got a job at Everets Stores, large firm in James st. Walthamstow, worked the same hours, and walked from Downsell Rd there and home again, about 2 miles each way. I was only paid 8/- a week, but had all my food, here I served in the bakery dept.

Jenny adds further details:

To work, we had to be in the shop at 8 in the morning 'till 9 at night, 10 Fridays, 11 Saturdays. I used to walk both ways. I was standing behind the counter first before I became a cashier. I had no social life. I would get home ready to go to bed. I can remember sticking out for a chair behind the counter, they used to expect us to stand all that time. There was a law apparently that nobody knew about. I found out about it, that they must provide a seat for people serving behind the counter. On Saturdays the shops would open at 8 'til 11 and I would walk down and walk back again. All I got was 8 shillings a week and my food. We used to get a dinner, good food we got. I ended up as a cashier

After 2 months they asked me to manage a branch in Hoe St. I had to go by train from Hoe St. to James St. every night to pay in my takings, and for the mid-day meal. Not at any did we ever have holiday. The girl who worked with me was a very fine character, very outspoken, she was one of the resident staff and on one occasion was so furious with the boss, she his features on pillow punched and it vigorously, calling him all kind of names. She was cheeky supervisor the & sacked her. I was very upset at the treatment of such a worker, and gave notice in.

I then got another job at a bakers, Walklings, East Ham. I slept in and had all my food. The shop opened at 7 am, we had breakfast at 7.29, I was quite happy, good food, went home Thursday afternoon and all day Sunday. I worked on the books with Mrs Walkling, there were 13

with roundsman horse delivering bread every day. At Easter they delivered hot buns Good Friday cross morning, we worked nearly all night Thursday to get them ready, and spent next morning in bed. We didn't get extra money for this. I used to do the wages with the boss and was then paid 15/week. I well remember petty cash was once £1 short, and was very tempted to put it in from my own money. Walkling was not easy approach, I eventually had the courage to tell him, and to my amazement he said he had borrowed it before going market in the morning. This taught me a lesson never keep money problems myself, ever since I always reported shorts or overs to my chief, it usually turned up somewhere.

Jenny describes Walklings:

You always had somebody behind the counter, never able to go in and do what they do now - walk round and help yourself all the time. I liked that much better when it was behind the counter. There was nothing exposed; they'd got all their stuff behind them; you asked for what you wanted and they gave it to you. You usually stayed once you went into one part of the trade. You used to have to weigh every loaf in those days: had to weigh two pounds and you cut the other loaf up to make up the weight if you were short. I don't think we had any discount [on shopping]. I was cashier in the desk for a time. We used to take pound notes: they used to bring a bill when they paid their money in the desk and you had to put all those bills on the adding machine after you'd closed and make sure it all tallied with the money you'd got in your till before you could go home. So you'd done extra time afterwards.

I was at East Ham when the

1914 war started. How Mr Walkling cashed in on bakers shops owned by Germans. The public used to riot outside they were forced dispose their business. the Thatched House, Leytonstone I saw the piano and furniture burned in street, & all the windows smashed, Mr Walkling bought 3 shops.

The men called up for the army marched through the streets singing war songs, I wonder how many returned. Zeppelin raids were few, the scouts came round in cars with bugles to give the air raid warning. We were in the street one night - coats over nightdresses and saw first Zeppelin brought down at Cuffley, it looked like a large lighted cigar broken in

I was 2 years at Walkling's and very happy with my workmates, the roundsmen and the bakery. in Every morning there were barefooted children outside waiting for us to give them some stale bread. (when the boss was not around). I left in 1916 to get married, I was then 23, and my husband 21, he had just completed 7 yrs apprenticeship on the railway as a fitter at 7/6 a week, and then received a wage of £2 a week. We married and with the help of a friend got a flat for 6/- a week. Even in those days it was not easy to get accommodation.

On tape Jenny explains these problems: I went to live in Goodall Road in a flat, when I got married. We had ever such a job to get a flat. They grumble today, but we had such a job to get a flat at all. Somebody happened to know the landlord or I wouldn't have got that. I remember that,

how difficult it was then to get living accommodation. They didn't dream of buying them. I can remember when they did buy one in the road I lived in, paid £150 for it. We thought they were ever so well off. Oh dear.

The firm gave me a lovely dinner service, a fire screen and a 2 tier wedding cake. The staff a silver plated teapot engraved "Our Georgie" (my maiden name was Jenny George). My sister Grace & I arranged a double wedding, dresses alike & shared expenses, we hired a Church Hall for 5/- and did catering ourselves. fiancé was called to the army 2 weeks before, he left for Italy when they had to marry before our arranged date. My husband worked a lot overtime, & I helped Walklings on odd days, they gave me their piano & stool as part payment. Wal had a legacy of £100 from an aunt when he was 21, after he had given mother his and sisters a gift, we managed to buy our home, he gave me £10 for a present I which put in the Office & was shocked to find that was all we had, everything was paid for. We were still having air raids, and spent many sheltering under the arches of Leyton Railway bridge, it was at the foot of garden. The war ended in 1918 in November, Iris was born in January 1919. Of course we thought both our child wonderful. Although a Dr was engaged only what was known as a handy woman was present at the birth. Strange never had attention from anyone those days from the time of booking the Dr till he was sent for after birth. When she was 3 months

old we went to a cousins wedding at Peterboro, this was our undoing. Wally was attracted to getting a job there, my father whom I usually went to for advice, encouraged us to go, he always thought London a terrible place to live in. Wally got a job as fitter on the railway. We stayed with elderly aunt several weeks, unable to get anywhere to live. She was having 5/- a week state pension, after walking the street for days had the offer of unfurnished rooms. I came to London and stayed with my mother for the week end to arrange for the removal, and settle the rent of the flat. I arrived back at my aunts on the Monday morning only to learn the rooms had been cancelled. Imagine our plight, the furniture on the railway and nowhere to put it. I told the woman I would have to go to a magistrate for advice, the next day she arrived with an offer from someone else. Imagine getting furniture from 3 rooms & a scullery including a piano in to 2 rooms. I had to cook all the food on an open fire. Within 2 months we got 2 rooms nearer to Wall's work. People do not realise how difficult it was even in those days to get accommodation, for the rest of our married life we had this trouble.

However here I had other problems, I began to miss food from the cupboard, then money from a little dish in the bedroom. I became suspicious of the woman of the house, when I went to a sale with her I saw her taking tickets off lower priced articles & pinning them on more expensive ones before

buying them.

I had been in touch with an old friend & neighbour friend of my mothers who now lived in Peterboro, persuaded us to share her house with her, weren't we relieved. How happy we were with Mr & Mrs Wright & Gladys. The next I remember the miners came out strike, & the railwaymen were put on a 3 day week, for 12 weeks Wall's wages were 29/a week, no extra help then. Some weeks after out, engineers came husband was active at the works gate picketing. I always thought this was why, on returning to work he was one of the 50 who were dismissed. This started 2 yrs unemployment for us, the benefit was a £1 a week for man & wife & 1/- a week for a child. our rent was 5/- a week, no extra help available then. Wall used to try to earn a few odd shillings, at one time he helped on a farm, had to cycle 7 miles each way and was paid 27/- a week. Only 7/- more than unemployment pay, I used to lay awake at night and pray it would not rain or he would lose a days work. I sometimes on market day went to help as a waitress for 4/- a day. Mrs Wright & I did some pea picking at home, 2cwt bags were delivered to us to sort out the discoloured dried peas, we were paid 5/- a sack, it took us hours. My dear old Dad used to send our 5/- rent which we repaid. Then came the chance of a job at Cambridge, I went down the road to meet my husband I couldn't rest until I knew how he had got on. He had the job and for 6 months he had to lodge there, coming home week ends. He then got a

transfer to Stratford. was now 5 yrs old. Strange how we kept our heads above was never in water, This was our 4th removal in 4 yrs. I often bought a sheep's head for fourpence halfpenny & made a good meal from it. Half a bullocks head was one & sixpence, this made 3 or 4 meals. After our transfer to Stratford came the struggle to get somewhere to live. My husband's sister told us of a Dawlish friend in Rd wanted to let 2 rooms, I was then ill with 'flu and Iris had measles, when he told me offer, the I remember saying - if we can get the furniture in take them. Mr & Mrs Field were very kind to us, & for the first time for 4 yrs we enjoyed meals on our own and some privacy. We paid 8/- a week rent although the whole house was rented at 9/6 a week. We were very happy.

Hilda Downs, nee Field, remembers Jenny and family:

My parents lived in a house that was able to accommodate two families, but at the time we were just living on our own. Mrs Hammond was looking for accommodation because her husband had been moved to Temple Mills railway and I think it was probably neighbours who put her on to my parents in number twenty seven.

She came knocking at the door asking if there was any possibility of accommodation, she had a little girl and was hoping to start another part of the family. I think at the time when she knocked at the door and saw my mother, mother agreed to rent the rooms. And she was a bit worried because her daughter had measles or chicken pox or one of the infectious diseases. So Mrs Hammond arrived there and then.

At the time when Mrs Hammond came to live with us we lived upstairs and they had the rooms downstairs, but my brother was keen on piano playing and my father was able to purchase a really nice piano, a bit large. And it wouldn't go up the stairs, so while the others were at work and the younger ones at school Mrs Hammond and my mother, Mrs Field, decided to move house. "We'll move upstairs and you'll move downstairs, and you can get the piano in the front door and into the front room downstairs". So when we arrived home from work and school we'd moved. That's the kind of thing that happened all the time we lived together.

Iris, Jenny's daughter adds:

I slept in what they called the parlour - the front room I don't know how the Field family managed because they only had one bedroom with a family of five.

I was determined to another child now we had our own rooms, my son was born a later, again year no present. I had the "handy woman" that had been with me 6 years previous when I had Iris.

Again when interviewed Jenny elaborated: We nearly always had a midwife at home for births, very rarely a doctor because it was expensive. The midwife used to come and we had a woman they called a handywoman. She used to get a living doing that, going into your house looking after you, getting your food and all that sort of thing, while you were in bed with the baby. You really got to know them in the district. They called them 'handywomen', I don't know why. They would come for so many days, how I can remember her, when I had my son, she was supposed to go on a certain day, and she said, "You're too weak to leave, I'll stop another two or three days, while I'm having my food, you need not pay

After the baby was born when they were

me". They weren't really trained.

there and not the doctor. You could book a doctor, that's one thing my husband did do with both my children, though we weren't well off, we booked a doctor to come to the birth, and you never saw him again that nine months, you never saw a soul, he never came to see if you were alright or anything. Just arrived when you sent for him. I can remember when she sent for him he said, "You're a week past", and I thought to myself, "Why on earth didn't you come to see me then?" Yes a week over my time and he said it would cost me two guineas. In those days it was quite a lot. There was no free milk then at all, not for anybody, and in the end, the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee set up an appeal committee. I got onto that committee because I was so annoyed about not having milk. They used to fill in an application form, it was a foolscap sheet giving particulars of their income, the expenses and everything else before the committee would grant the free milk for their baby. That was done on an appeals committee, I don't know what they would say today.

Birth control, we had a lady in the Labour Party, she was very keen on birth control, but that was thought to be a terrible thing to talk about. Mrs Hardy, she was a suffragette, she tried to get them to give birth control information to women through the Council, but the Council would not allow it. The people in Leyton were mostly Catholic and were absolutely up in arms about it. Giving birth control to women they thought was terrible, so that was never set up at all.

We had very little money had to pay all expenses ourselves. I remember my help stayed 3 extra days because I was so weak, she would not accept payment for this. My baby was 9 months old when a general strike was declared, poor Wall had been through so much with short time strikes

and unemployment, we had just again. begun to settle said to me, "What shall I do" replied you must do what you think is right. He joined the strikers, they were out in sympathy with the miners. I was determined then not to stay at home grieving over our difficulties, and led a procession to the Leyton Town Hall to demand free milk for the baby under the Maternity & Child Welfare Act, we were told free milk could not be issued to the wives strikers. After a deputation the Committee it allowed. (I little thought one then I would day Chairman of that Cmt.) the Trade Unions there advised us to apply for Poor relief. The women themselves had to make application, would not be paid to the men. I received £2 a week for 2 weeks - and had to sign for it on loan to be repaid. I the was SO incensed by injustice, we paid it back 1/- a week. What a difference now.

This was when my husband & I began to take an interest in public affairs, an urge to strive for better conditions for the unemployed.

Bernard recollects life at home:

Home life, when I look back, it was largely a routine sort of home life, a very fixed sort of routine. There was always a lot of housework to be done in those days, no matter how small the house, because there weren't very many aids to cleaning houses and doing the washing. So there was a definite domestic routine. My Mother worked very hard domestically in the house. I can remember her doing it all. She kept the house spotlessly clean and we had these old ranges that had to be blacked and I can remember seeing her do that and the front

door-step was always whitened every week and I can remember seeing her on her knees doing that. So housework was quite a heavy routine. And of course she had a husband who had a fairly dirty job. So the washing wasn't easy by any means I shouldn't have thought.

As does Hilda Downs, living in the same house:

Mrs Hammond had some friends from Peterborough who came down and we all mixed together. My two brothers and Mr Hammond were keen on teasing this girl, and so they used to get a little Andrews Liver Salts tin, fill it with gas and make a tiny hole in the top, put it on the stairs. Gladys, this girl from Peterborough was upstairs in bed, it was all quiet, and gradually as the flame burnt down the gas finished, there was this terrific explosion and the lid of the tin shot upstairs.

Another time when I had been out the others had put a string round the sheets on the bed where Gladys was sleeping. And when we had all gone to bed and every thing was quiet we heard Gladys call "Jenny, Jenny, Jenny, the sheet's coming off the bed, and going out of the window." It was right up Mr Hammond's street.

Iris also recalls:

I remember Grove House which I think was something to do with the trade union movement because there were always men going in and out of there. They let the rooms off for different things and I was sent to the Socialist Sunday School held there every week. I wish mum had sent me to a Church Sunday School as it wasn't until I got to Ruckholt Central School that I learnt anything about the Christian faith. Being a good school we had an Assembly each morning. In fact I used to play the piano sometimes for the hymns and we used to have R.I. lessons.

We had days out. I don't think we had a

proper holiday until we went camping with Alderman Bechervaise and his wife at Roydon one year. That's the first time I remember going away and staying away, other than a day out.

Then some years later also with Mr and Mrs Bechervaise we went to Midhurst in Sussex. He had some sort of contact with the preacher at the church there who had a cottage called Wool Cottage. He would allow people who couldn't otherwise have a holiday to stay there for a holiday and we went there for two weeks - but we actually stayed for three. There were seven of us, including and aunt and a cousin we had a really lovely time and I've been back since to see the cottage. I was 13 or 14 at the time.

The next holiday I can remember was with Mr and Mrs Field and family at Dunster near Minehead. That was a wonderful holiday as well - we walked miles and miles. I can't remember my father being there, probably because he couldn't get the time off as it would have meant him losing a week's pay. The railway works were shut down for a week in August without pay. I don't know how my mother managed, but dad did get certain priviledges regarding rail travel.

Hilda also remembers the holidays:

At Dunster in Somerset we had these three beach chalets, one had Mr and Mrs Hammond and Iris and Bernard, my family Mr and Mrs Field and my brothers, and Gwen my sister-in-law, and friends of my brothers. The whole holiday was walking, you didn't have cars.

We were waiting for a bus to come along to take us from Dunster into Minehead, there were about eleven or twelve of us. And a tractor came along with a long, long, long tree trunk on it. As it came past Mr Hammond stepped out and he sat on the end of this tree trunk and was going up and

Borough of Leyton

RESULT OF POLL

ELECTION OF A

COUNCILLOR

FOR THE

HARROW GREEN WARD

OF THE ABOVE BOROUGH

the undersigned, being the Returning Officer at the Poll for the Election of a Councillor for the said Ward held on the 1st day of November, 1937, DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that the number of Votes recorded for each Candidate at the Election is as follows:—

Names of Candidates (Surnames first).	Place of Abode.	No. of Votes Recorded.
HAMMOND, Jenny	28, Dawlish Road, E.10	945
SEWELL, Philip Herbert Wait	166, Hainault Road, Leytonstone	402

And I do hereby return and declare that the said

JENNY HAMMOND

is duly elected a Councillor for the said Ward.

Dated this 1st day of November, 1937.

A. E. BECHERVAISE,

ALDERMAN, RETURNING OFFICER.

Town Hall, Leyton.

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Chapter 2 - A Political life begins

Jenny recalls:

I joined the Labour Party because I was so annoyed with the injustice of things. That you could not get any nursing milk for the children and the Pensions were not given enough money and the things that were going on like that. Mainly the milk. I was annoved about it. It was welfare when the men were on General Strike. The whole came out, the miners, they were only out for about five or six days, it wasn't successful. They would not give strikers, or what was then the Poor Relief would not give them any money at all. They would give it to their wives if they went up and got it. So I had to go up to the one [clinic] in Dawlish Road, it's still there, with my baby, and ask for some help, and we would have to sign for it on loan, could you believe that. I wonder what they would say today. I would get about two pounds, because it was just over a week they paid it out for me and the baby, because my husband was on strike.

I had a demonstration for milk. I got the baby in the pram and when I had heard they weren't going to let us have any milk, I got a lot of them to follow me up to Leyton Town Hall with our prams and babies, When I got there I went to take it in and the porter said, "You can't bring that pram in here." So I said, "That hall's as much mine as anybody's. I'm not leaving my baby outside." And I didn't. He looked as white as a sheet. The committee was sitting then. Of course I wasn't on it then, and he went up to see them, and we waited quite a long time, anyway eventually he came down and he said, "It will be alright, they have been through to the authority concerned and you will get the milk." I said, "Thank goodness for that." So we got it.

Hilda Downs adds:

Little did we think that when Jenny started

to be interested in politics that she would go so far. Because in those days my parents weren't members of the Labour Party, but they were Labour minded and to the left. So when Mrs Hammond stood, my parents were keen, they were older than her, they were keen to encourage her. I remember my mother saying "Well you go out and do your canvassing mate! (She always called them mate), I'll look after the children", so of course Jenny was given a free hand to go out as much as she needed and wanted to.

The miners conditions & pay were shocking, I was on the platform with A.J. Cook their leader at a public meeting at Leytonstone, the slogan was "Not an hour on the day not a pay". off the penny remember poor Ellen Wilkinson led the march of workers from Jarrow to London protesting the thousands who were for unemployed. She wrote a book entitled "Jarrow - the town that was murdered". Locally organised soup kitchens, formed a Boot Fund Committee supply school children with boots, and had a 2 day bazaar in the Town Hall to raise money. My old friend Bechervaise, who himself sacrificed his job for political Union & Trade activities, organised a tea for children of unemployed in the Boro, they filled a large Public Hall, my husband & I became involved now political work, assisted elections, to Hyde marched on several occasions, once I pushed my son all the way in a push chair, another time we rode on a Co-op coal cart, they were horse driven then. We held a meeting Albert Hall, I was steward & was very moved when crowd sang International. In 1932 there were 3 million unemployed.

Iris recalls:

The big thing I can remember is the miners' strike when I went in a procession to hear A. J. Cook, the miners' leader. He was a very popular figure at that time and I think we all wore a brooch depicting the miners lamp.

I It was in 1927 was appointed a member of the Appeal Cmt. The Pensions pension was then 10/- a week if the applicants 70, income was no more than £1 a week.

Jenny when interviewed remembered:

I was on the Old Age Pensions Appeals Committee, where they gave them - then it was five shillings a week - old age pension, and they had to prove their age of course. You would be surprised the number of people that had no evidence of their age. Their parents had not registered them in some cases, and so the Appeals Committee would just turn them out and would not allow them anything. I began to get annoyed about this and I said we must get something that said how old they'd be, let's get in touch with their school, their mother must have given their age there even if they didn't give a certificate. So they did that. That meant several people got their five shillings pension they would not normally have got.

This was my first experience of how brutally the law was The administered. chairman bully, the poor was a old people who came before us were too frightened to explain their case - quite a number were unable to produce evidence of birth, it was not unusual some people's birth had not been registered, felt many were deprived pension. We gradually introduced some humanity the proceedings, and eventually had a Labour chairman.

The Labour Govt increased the income before claiming benefit from £1 to 25/- a week, and ultimately introduced the Widows & Old Age Pensions Act Contributory.

In 1928 I became a member of the Maternity & Child Welfare Committee, here again only allowed milk was those with very low income, fill applicants had to form with strict details their income, appear and before a "ladies Comt". Many mother an expectant was reduced to tears and was thankful when this Cmt ceased to function at my pressure.

Jenny adds:

The children were young, they used to go to bed about 7 o'clock. And I can remember my husband persuading me to go up for the Council, and I said, "I shall be practically out every evening, what am I going to do with the children? I'm not going to leave my children here on their own." He said, "As long as you leave one evening a week for my Trade Union meetings you're all right, I shall be here." And he persuaded me to put up for it.

She explains the commitments:

I went on the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee first. I joined the Labour Party at the same time. I did not want to be into a political party, but I found that being on my own I could not do anything. I had to be in an organisation of some sort. So that's when I joined the Labour Party. Then they put me forward as first co-opted member on the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee. I then became Chairman. I never thought I would do that. It was like an appeals committee, but they did away with the foolscap sheets of information about them all. I thought that was dreadful. You can tell one or two bits that we want to know, but the way things were done in some places it was terrible.

Then of course they persuaded me to put up for Council. So I went onto Harrow Green and I was the only Labour Councillor at that election. I only got a few votes. I remember coming out of the Town Hall and they called me orphan of the storm. It wasn't a strong Labour Party. You could have your own ideas, but it took me about five years to get it going. You keep on saying you ought to have this and that, but it didn't seem to make any ground for about four or five years. It's nearly as bad now I think.

At election time Leyton Town Hall used to be crowded waiting for the result of the election. One side would be singing the red flag, the other side singing God Save the King. You used to have some fun at election time.

1929 Ι was elected a Councillor, having been nominated by my husband's trade union. I still have the letter inviting both of us to nomination. The accept suggestion rather amused me the time, it was husband who encouraged me to accept, so long as I left him time for his union work, had 2 children and could not leave them alone evenings.

I can remember my father's routine of going to work. He worked on the railway at Stratford as a fitter in the workshops there. He would go off every morning and he would come home for his lunch from Stratford within the course of an hour's lunch break and eat a full meal at home which Mother had to have ready to put

straight in front of him the moment he came

in. He only had about a quarter of an hour

to eat it and get out again and he really did

Bernard remembers home life at the time:

down the road when he was coming for his lunch and he was almost running to do it. He wasn't a very big man but he could certainly move. So there was that routine every day, my Father at lunch time to have the full dinner ready. Of course I was sharing in that as well because when I was at school we always come home for our lunch from school. We had a two hour break at school in those days so there was a family lunch round the table every day really.

rush. I can remember seeing him coming

This commenced my 33 Council service. We were both interested & happy in voluntary work for many Then came the years. time when my husband was at cross purposes with members of the union & ceased his activities, although retainmembership. He ing election work, and even had 2hrs off work on election day, which we could afford. Eventually he had a difference with members the Labour Party, and ceased membership. This left me in a difficult position, as I was involved in several committees, and felt I could adopt his attitude.

Bernard sheds a little light on this:

One of the unhappinesses of her life I suppose and everyone's to an extent. Although he was very keen on it obviously at a time that I can't remember. I can just remember him playing a part in organising Labour Party socials and that sort of thing. He would have been quite good at that. I remember him organising some of those things when I was very young because there were some of the entertainments that I was taken to. But he fell out or in some way had disagreements with people first of all in the trade unions, which I didn't know about until I read the memoirs. I didn't know about his union activities because that was

really before I was conscious of what was going on but I am sort of half conscious of the fact that there was a time when he was going along to Labour Party socials and all the rest of it and then it stopped and he had nothing whatever to do with them from a certain point onwards. He dropped it. So they certainly had that division at that time which for a few years must have been a strain on both of them I think. I don't think he ever tried to persuade Mum not to carry on with doing it, certainly not to my knowledge. He seemed to accept that she wanted to carry on doing the work and he admired her for doing it I'm sure. But he didn't have any further part in it himself. So they weren't together as much as they had been prior to that. But they came back together again later on as I say, when the War came particularly because they both found things to throw themselves into then on the Home Front. That's what happened when the War broke out. Politics didn't exist really. The Government was a combination government wasn't it. All these political issues that bedevil daily life in peacetime, they all got buried in the War and everyone was working for the same thing and all that mattered so it ended this division between them over the political life and the non-political life.

Jenny recalls some of the concerns at the time:

We had a lot of unemployed in the borough. People think it's bad today, but my word, they should have seen what it was like then. They didn't get the help they get today. Anyway, I can remember them having a demonstration in the council chamber up in the gallery. It got so terrible up there that they had to adjourn the meeting and send for the Police.

We had a Boot Fund Committee. I was on that. Children used to wear boots then not shoes. You were supposed to be very well off if you had shoes instead of boots. We used to run little functions like jumble sales, and get money for it and give our boots to children at school. It wasn't unusual for children to run about bare footed. My father was an engine driver and I remember him telling us of the children waiting at Leyton station for the drivers to come off the trains when they came off duty. They used to take sandwiches with them to work. The children would say, "Got any over?" The children used to be bare footed waiting for the drivers to give them what they had got left. The Boot Fund was a voluntary thing, but it was very well supported. We did quite a lot of work with that, the children applied from the school.

Bernard paints a picture of life at home with his mother increasingly involved in public life:

In the evenings once my Mother was involved in the Council work she would be going out soon after our evening meal two nights a week pretty regularly. Sometimes if it was a heavy week she might go out three. There'd be the odd week of course when she had a light week but on average I'd say she went out two nights a week and wasn't home until quite late. My Father was at home then. He didn't normally go out in the evenings. I suppose he formed much of my company in those days.

Christmas was always a very exciting time. My parents always made a lot of Christmas. It was always a great big family thing and my Mother always took the lead in having the Christmas party, which was a big party because she had a lot of brothers and sisters and they all came with their husbands and wives and children later on There were always a few odd friends as well that come in on the act and I can remember we lived in a very small flat and our living room was about 15' x 10' I suppose. I can remember Christmas dinners in that room where we hadn't got enough chairs for everyone who came and planks were obtained and were

perched on various supports. We all used to get squeezed together along a great long table which went the whole length of this room and the whole family would get round this table somehow.

Christmas - my father always went to the market in High Street, Walthamstow to get the turkey on Christmas Eve, where they were usually being auctioned off or sold off from the stalls and he always came back with the most enormous turkey. It had to be pretty enormous for the number of people it was going to feed and it really was enormous. Always at Christmas we had this massive bake-up and for weeks before my Mother was preparing cakes and Christmas puddings. I was helping her, getting the fruit ready and the nuts ready and all the rest of it. I can remember that. Those are the highlight times. I can remember as a very young child the Christmases were really quite remarkable considering that we were really pretty poor. Not desperately poor obviously or else we wouldn't have had turkeys at Christmas. So I'm not going to suggest that we were so desperately poor as all that because there were a lot of people who were far worse off as my Mother refers to when talking about children with bare feet. Well we were never in that category. We got by and even a bit more than got by because we could have occasional treats and we had treats at Christmas.

While his sister adds:

I was taught to play the piano from the age of five and I think it's an absolutely amazing thing that my father only earned about £3 a week and yet he paid for my lessons and he kept them up until I went to work. All that time he paid for the music and paid for the exam fee, for him to make that sacrifice I think was wonderful.

He was the pianist, but he couldn't read music. If you started to sing something he

would pick it up and play with you. He had a good ear for it I suppose. We used to have lovely parties at Christmas singing round the piano. Sometimes he used to play but I think I did most of it. All the relatives used to come to our house, and all used to stand behind me, singing at the tops of their voices. We had some lovely times but people don't do that nowadays.

At one stage he took up refereeing local football matches. I can remember him learning all the rules. He used to take me to cricket and football matches. And I remember playing shove ha'penny on the table on a special board. His other interest was gardening. He always had an allotment and I can remember gathering up the potatoes as he dug them up. He must have taught me a great deal because I have inherited his love of gardening.

My work on the Council was a real education to me. I was chairman of the Edcn Cmt. for 9 yrs & represented the Leyton Authority on the Essex County Council at Chelmsford, it was a days work to attend the meetings.

Jenny adumbrates:

I was Chairman of the School Committee for about 9 years and we were then under the Essex County Council. Our reports had to go to Chelmsford, and I as the Chairman had to go to the Chelmsford Education Committee meetings that were held about once in five weeks. That would be all day. We used to go out just after eight in the morning, and get the train. We used to get our fares paid but nothing else. I don't know what they would say today. They get about six pounds a meeting, terrible isn't it, I think it is. I don't agree with payment for councillors, I think it's encouraging the wrong sort of people. I did it for years for nothing. I shall send my account in one day! Thirty five years I was on there, and I was on the Education of the Boy's High School for thirty-six years. I'm still a governor of six schools. I am surprised at that really.

Iris comments how much her mother was out:

A lot. That was just accepted but I think the time came when my Dad got a bit fed up with it. Two or three evenings a week and the council meetings in those days lasted until after midnight, they used to go on interminably.

humble when felt very the schools, but visiting conscious I had became life in experienced my to circumstances unknown of different status, this gave me a fuller of the understanding to difficulties had many I was amused when the chair the Cmt. were appointing a Head Teacher for Downsell Rd school the officer advised us not appoint a lady as it was a difficult school to manage children in the needed strict discia plinarian, he little realised I was a product of that area, and had attended the school from 3 to 14 yrs old. I am still a manager of school, also 6 others. I was Governor of the Boys Grammar School 35 yrs & chairman 26 yrs. In 1957 I was elected National President of the Association of Authorities. We never had a holiday when the children were young. On one occasion Sorensen (now Lady introduced Sorensen) to us the Vicar of Midhurst who owned a lovely cottage which he invited people to use for a holiday. We had a happy 3 weeks there, walking country for miles. There was a four-poster bed, & I would sit up at night and read from a book on walking tours, our plan for the next day. another occasion the Supt. of the local fire brigade suggested we went with our friend Bechervaise & family to a camping site he owned at Althorne, near the River was a large there Crouch, tent we could sleep in with stretcher beds on casters. We seemed to slide all over the place on these, so decided to the ground sleep on smaller tents. I used to ride on the back of Eric's motor cycle to the town to do the shopping, we had the use of a rowing boat, and had a lovely holiday.

Council work demanded much of my time, serving on Housing, Maternity & Child Welfare, Education, Public Health Libraries. My children were doing well at school, remained there until they were 16, I was anxious they should have the opportunity I never had, & I must say in this I had the support of my husband, he was willing to pay the fee for Bernard at the Grammar School, there were only a few free places then, Iris went to what was called Central a School, neither of them ever gave me anxiety during their younger days or since. Iris achieved success as pianist, and Bernard with the violin, he gained 1st place a local Eisteddfod when about 10 yrs old, there (were) 31 competitors, I have memories of them playing many hours together at home. husband was gifted in music, could play almost anything on the piano. Those were the days we enjoyed our entertainment, no television and in the early days, wireless, and no money to go out for entertainment.

I became very interested in improvement of the local services. It was not easy to get interest of other members to set up a foot clinic, was conscious many elderly this service needed to them prevent becoming This housebound. was much appreciated, and is now well established service. The provision of washing machines in the Cathall Rd Baths was a major project, in an where few houses had facilities. Later a scheme planned to build was new There baths at Bakers Arms. was active opposition from Conservatives, the and a public enquiry was held. This in the plan resulted being amended the to exclude provision of shower baths & wash-houses.

The building provided a main swimming bath, children's swimming bath, & wash baths. In the winter the large bath was covered and used as a hall. It was ironical that the Tory Mayor who had opposed the scheme performed the official opening. For some time the baths were open Tuesday afternoon for ladies I only, with a party friends went regularly & with their help learned to swim, Many families in the area were without a bath room, to were able go there regularly (myself included) for a bath for 3 pence.

The old Leyton Baths concerned Jenny later on in her life:

There were no bathrooms in any of the houses. I was one of the ones that had helped them build Leyton High Road Baths. Of course, I had been fighting for them to keep it because they wanted to knock it down I addressed a meeting there. The scouts got in touch with me, I'm vice-

president there, they use it a lot and they were going to knock the Baths down. They said they did not need it to stand any longer. We had a public meeting here and it was full. I thought, "My goodness, have I got to speak to this lot!". They asked me to go and speak about it and I said, "They're saying that the Baths are fifty years old, well I'm going to ask them when are they going to start knocking every where in Leyton that's fifty years old, because there would hardly be a house left". Wasn't it ridiculous, anyway we saved it but they are still on about it, so I will have to put another fight up soon. They say it wants a lot of money spent on it, but I said that's your fault, you should have spent on it years ago, and kept it in proper order. It's been neglected now and they don't want to spend the money, they want to knock it down and put a factory there. Have you ever heard of such a thing.

That was the only way it was, I can remember paying three pence. I used to go up there for my shopping at the weekend and have a threepence bath before I came home. Lots of the roads around never had a bath. There was quite a lot of T.B. about I know, I can't ever remember anybody taking much notice of it, we used to have children we said had bandy legs, but it was rickets they called it, really that was because they weren't fed properly. It was quite common to see children walking around with bandy legs, they used to put a splint on their legs to straighten them out. That was caused through not getting enough food, and it was very common too. If you wanted eye glasses you had to go into Woolworth's and pay sixpence for a pair, pick up that you could see through, and you had them. You never thought of going to have your eyes tested. I can remember my father doing that. He always wore his sixpenny glasses from Woolworth's.

Apart from ensuring that Leyton was kept clean Jenny concerned herself with more direct health matters:

The Council then set up welfare clinics in the Boro. at that time sessions were held in Church Halls not properly heated or otherwise equipped, eventually a Clinic was built at Knotts Green and another at Park House Leytonstone, this improvement necessary in mother care & child welfare.

She recalls the health provision for most people in the area:

It was very strange, it was taken for granted that every child had measles. In fact mother was very pleased when the child got measles and it got over it you see. It was very infectious and if one child in the family got it, they nearly all got it. It was quite a common thing for every child then to be expected to have measles in those days. It wasn't a very good thing to have you know, you had to be careful of them. Children were not allowed to go to school with them. The other brothers and sisters would have to stop at home from school in case they carried it and chicken pox. You never hear of that now, that was very frequent in young children and whooping cough. That was dreadful, that's dying out now I think and mumps when you had a great swelling all around your throat. That was catching too.

Mother used to just look after you, that was all, you didn't hardly ever have a doctor. My mother used to always give us castor oil at the end of the week. Anyway those were the things nearly every child had. They seldom had a doctor in the house. Mothers would hardly ever have a doctor. And scarlet fever, bronchitis, that was always nursed at home, they would put you in a bedroom with a disinfected sheet hanging over your doorway outside for bronchitis and scarlet fever, so that nobody went in

past that sheet, only mother, so they didn't catch it.

They did not always send them into hospital they should have done really but they didn't. There was a fever hospital they called it in Leyton, it was a wooden building, a hut next to the dust destructor [the rubbish processing works over the road going along to Markhouse Road, up Lea Bridge Road, Church Road there. You can just imagine what the dust destructor was like in those days because it was all fire, that was all tipped over in there - and a hospital next to it. I can remember it was supposed to be a temporary building and it had been up for twenty years when I went to see it. I happened to go onto the hospital committee, and I was amazed to have a wooden hut next to a dust destructor and it had been temporary for twenty years until they closed it. For bronchitis they used to have a steamed kettle in your bedroom, put you to bed and you were in that room the whole time with a kettle steaming the whole time to make the air steamed. Scarlet fever of course was a very nasty complaint to get really, but it was quite common for people to get. I can remember my own brother having it and mother had him at home and he got delirious, used to jump out of bed and we would have to take it in turns to go and sit in his bedroom. To watch him when he was getting out of bed and back again and that sort of thing.

The fever hospital closed down eventually, so we have not got such a thing now. I can remember when my son had diphtheria, I was on the hospital committee then, and the Medical Officer was on that. He wasn't at all well, and I went to the meeting in the afternoon and left him in bed. I spoke to the doctor about him, and said he would come home and have a look. He came and said he'd got diphtheria and he said I should take him to West Ham Hospital. I got a car to take him, and they would not take him

because it was infectious, so they sent us back again. I had to go and find a fever hospital, because they would not take him in the ordinary hospital for those sort of complaints.

Iris also recalls:

I had scarlet fever when I was about eight or nine and spent six weeks in the Isolation Hospital. I remember talking to my parents over the high wall surrounding the hospital.

Jenny also saw that the "presentation" of health care needed to be separate from the forbidding workhouse:

[Langthorne Hospital] used to be a workhouse, and there was a wall to separate the men from the women and children. I can remember singing in the church choir there on a platform to what were the inmates, as we used to call them on Sunday. It was a terrible place. It never

really lost it's history because lots of people didn't think much of the place. If you said, "You have to go into Langthorne, " they would say, "Oh no, I don't want to go into Langthorne."

There is a big brick wall around Langthorne Hospital and when I was on the Committee I said. "That's a terrible eyesore, it ought to be knocked down, I can't see why you want to have a wall like that around a hospital, it's not a workhouse." No they said, all sorts of things would happen if we knocked it down and that's how they used to go on about it. So I used to keep on about it. In the end they knocked it down. You would be surprised how nice it looked. They can see the gardens in there, you can walk through. It's open to the public and they never had any trouble. It took me five years to get them to knock that wall down.

deputation After Council unemployed at a meeting when the police were called (the meeting had to be adjourned) a scheme for their relief which was started, included slum clearance, tree planting in roads that never trees. had had first slum clearance was the removal of wooden huts along the banks of the river in Lea Bridge, they were just room, no toilets, they used a cesspool a few yards from the hut. The occupants were moved to the first Council flats to be built in Leyton, in Jesse Rd. Strange some of occupants did not welcome the upheaval, the Medical Officer insisted Lea Bridge health hazard.

/3^{r4}. June, 1949.

Dear Alderman Hammond,

I was very pleased to see your name in the recent Honours List. I know enough of your public services, particularly in the maternity and child welfare field, to realise that this recognition by The King is truly well deserved, and I congratulate you most heartily upon it.

Yours sincerely,

Show Bevers

Alderman Mrs. J. Hammond, O.B.E., 28, Dawlish Road, Leyton, E.10.

Letter from Aneurin Bevan when he was Minister of Health

Chapter 3 - The War

In 1937 came the 2nd war, another upheaval, my son was evacuated with his school, my daughter to Manchester with her firm. I was always and still am at heart a pacifist and was determined to have nothing to do with carrying on the war, at least I would paid job take a decided eventually to do welfare work, the war responsible for changes our lives from which we never seemed to recover. Very little contact with my children during the most formative years, my husband was loaned by the railway to work at the docks.

local then formed the branch of the W.V.S. This engaged my efforts full time. We enrolled 500 members and what a fine set of women they were, on call at any hour, willing to undertake work, all voluntary, had to pay for their uniform, not even reimbursed their fares rest around the town. centres were manned, at one time all were in use.

On every incident the mobile canteen operated (this was sent to us from America). An Enquiry Point was set up, information being supplied to us from the Medical Officer, of injured particulars deaths, we worked with borrowed table & chair in the middle of the road, sometimes the bitter cold with hurricane lamp. A voluntary pool was organised provide cars in an emergency. We were adopted by a town in Lincolnshire, Lindsay, who collected furniture and goods household the for homeless, and organised transport. This was stored in an empty factory, and a point used system was distribution. Our worst incident occurred near factory in Crownfield Rd 21 were killed and the bodies were placed in the factory, which was used as a temporary mortuary. That same morning a load of furniture arrived and secretary & I had the depressing task of checking lost her in. One woman husband & 3 children. I was unable to get water to make tea and a soldier from a tent nearby brought us an urn full of tea, & said "here you are mate, don't tell anyone where you got it from".

Jenny adds:

I never forgot that, because you really do want to go round with tea and that. We did get on with taking the dinners around. We used to have a lady that cooked them voluntary at the basement in the Leyton Town Hall, and we charged them sixpence for them, a good dinner. We used to put them on a van and take them around to people who didn't have any cooking going. We made a housewife service too for some of the WVS who would go round into some of the houses that were badly damaged, and helped them get one room that they could use and live in. That was called the Housewife Service.

I was invited by the W.V.S. Organiser of Lindsay to do rest, there for week's a suggested Headquarters could speak at some of the villages where so much had collected for homeless, & tell them how we organised the distribution. retired Her husband was a they lived Colonel, in wonderful house, (mansion to me) the landing was like a huge lounge, private bathroom, four-poster bed. I had a wonderful week away from the bombing & noise. Following my visit the lady came to Leyton, visited some of the homes that had been refurnished with their gifts, and presented us with a cheques for a £100.

We organised a Red Cross gift shop at the Electricity Show Rooms at Leytonstone for one week, we made a profit of £250. The Mayor & Mayoress came to open it, & during the proceedings a bomb fell in Huxley Rd. where they lived. quietly enquired of the telephonist concerning the incident, & kept the news quiet for a time. We then had to call the services out, the Mayor's house was damaged & they had to sleep in the Town nights. several We received loads of gifts from America, the staff at the Centre did a wonderful job keeping records distributing, the damage to homes was classified, the Town Hall staff supplied us with full particulars & we goods according to classification. A party of ladies were always busy in the sewing room at Fairlop Rd. centre, making & altering clothes, the leader was a wonderful person, in later years lost her sight, always cheerful & loved to talk of her experience with the W.V.S. My secretary was a great character, it was she who persuaded me to start the Darby & Joan club, the 1st Club for elderly people in Leyton. We had no financial assistance from anyone & I to be certain we had enough members to pay a penny a week, this would cover the rent of the hall 7/-. It has now been going 29 yrs, with a splendid team of voluntary workers. We opened a second one at the Welcome Mission Leytonstone. Following this some churches formed clubs. Much as I deplore war which I think brings out the worst in man, my experience in the W.V.S. seemed to reveal the best. Man's job was to kill, ours was to restore damage to homes & relieve the suffering of human beings, when will the time come when differences will be settled round the conference table not on the battlefield.

It was towards the end of the war, my daughter phoned me from Manchester to say she was coming home to marry. I had 2 weeks to prepare at the flat in Dawlish Rd. At 9 a.m. the morning following wedding a bomb was dropped in Murchison Rd., I had immediately call out W.V.S. services. There were 20 killed. I saw a bed in an upper floor flat, the whole of the side of the house was down. The Warden got up there and roused an old lady who was unharmed, first thing she said was "who has taken my black-out down" the warden "half your ----replied house is down mate". When I asked a lady to sign for some clothing we provided, said its alright I know what to do this is the 3rd time I've been bombed. Another sad incident occurred at Ruckholt first Rd. School, a centre at the time, 3 girls on duty were killed, I was Deputy Mayor that year & attended their funeral at Manor Park cemetery, while the service was being conducted, a bomb dropped at the entrance to the cemetery, imagine the shock to bereaved relatives, we had only just missed it.

We erected a mobile feeding

(a corrugated iron shed) on most sites & in 3 days served over 4,000 meals. staffed 120 women 14 Centres. There were 290 women the housewives service, helped families prepare at least one room to live in, whose homes had been badly damaged. I cannot speak too highly of every member of W.V.S., who fully supported all the work let the organised, & never service down, I feel they all deserve the honour I received when awarded the O.B.E., for my voluntary service during the war, I feel they share it. Strange how when tragedy becomes common universally, people of different religions social political faith & status become united working for the relief of those in distress.

I was elected Mayor in 1943, there was of course no social life at that time, I had some curious experiences. On one occasion a Minister failed to attend a meeting of relatives of prisoners of war, I was asked to lead the meeting in prayer. on the day set apart National Prayer organised a combined service all denominations. was such an argument whose church should be used; I decided to hold it in the Leyton Town Hall, much to the chagrin of Canon Bertin, Chaplain. I suggested just prayer could be sincere in a public hall as a church. Incidentally Canon Bertin was a friend during the war, he was my emergency driver, on call to take me anywhere necessary time. The any same arose who argument as to should give the sermon, so I invited a very dear friend not attached to any church,

but whom I knew had sincere religious faith. It was service, Iris wonderful played the piano for the hymns. On another occasion a massed choir from all churches in the Boro rendered the Crucifixion at the High Rd. Baths, the hall was full. It was a great performance. Another musical treat enjoyed by the public, when I managed to have Gladys Riple, soprano, & Dennis Matthews, pianist at a concert held at Town the Leyton Hall, known as became well musical Mayor. These evenings were a wonderful distraction from the horrors of During my year of office served a year as a Magistrate, and was of accepting conscious responsibility for a position for which I had no training, pleased was when automatic appointment to the Bench of the Mayor ceased.

Iris explains how she became Mayoress: It was unusual in those days to have a lady Mayor, and as mum had to have a Mayoress she asked me if I would help her in this respect - I was 24.

Bernard adds:

She (Iris) was Mayoress to Mum when she was Mayor so she was accompanying her on mayoral duties all the time. I wasn't even there at that time because first of all I was evacuated at the beginning of the war then when I finished my schooling I came back home for probably close on a year or round about a year and was working in the Treasurers Department at Barking.

My mother, thinking that because I was always good at figures and liked figures that the Treasurer's Department or accounting was probably it. Unfortunately you didn't get anything like as much advice on careers in those days as you do now and I had no

idea. Nobody, either at school or at home ever thought of, I can't remember anyone ever saying, "What do you think you'd like to do These are the sort of jobs that there are around." I'm sure I'd have found something I'd have enjoyed more if I'd had some help. But anyway, Mum started me off in the Treasurer's Department and I didn't care for it. I started trying to study for a qualification but I didn't think it was appealing to me and then out of the blue one day I had a letter from some Government Department saying that the Government was instituting what one called engineering schemes because they were looking ahead to the progress of the War and envisaging that they were going to have a desperate need for technical officers, engineering officers in the various services. They were looking ahead to the extent of writing to everybody, I presume, in the country who had achieved a certain level in their matriculation examinations within the last year, which included me and I'd had very good results. So they wrote to me and particularly you had to have a science and maths. You were invited to go for an interview to go on one of these courses which I did and passed the selection board and was then sent away to Lincoln where I spent two and a half years, beginning a serious training in engineering qualification and then went into the forces after that. So apart from that brief period after I came back from being evacuated and working at Barking I didn't really live with my mother from the age of seventeen and a half.

Jenny when interviewed gave a lot more details on the role she played during the war:

i] WVS and the war:

I think they wrote to the local authority and then they asked me if I would form it [the WVS]. I wrote to the different organisations in the Borough and asked if they could join and help us. [I] had a very

good response, we had about five hundred [people] in the end, all doing voluntary work. I was a pacifist you see, and I didn't believe in people making money out of wars. I always say that if they didn't make money out of wars they wouldn't have wars. It's just greed. Helping with the voluntary work, welfare work, I said I would do that. But I wouldn't do anything connected with the war.

[The WVS had] quite a good relationship [with other branches of the civil defense]. They used to ask us if we could help them at all in anything, in anyway. We used to have meetings with the wardens. They would let us know if they wanted us to call on anybody or get anything for anybody.

I think I had to do it [the administration] all my own way, yes, I did. We started working on the floor. Hadn't got a chair even: the place was empty. We managed to get the organisations, one or two gave us chairs and table and a typewriter. I think it was the council that found it [the site] and they paid the rent of it. [We weren't] paid anything, [All the stationery and other things that were needed] was supplied afterwards [by the council]. That [the rations] came from the feeding centre in the basement of the Leyton Town Hall. They had a feeding centre for people who were hard up. Used to go and get a meal for about 6d. That's all I paid for meals when the meals on wheels started, 6d a meal. I started that service. [Getting extra food wasn't difficult] because that had been in the Town Hall for years, a woman had been running a voluntary service for hard-up people. Used to do cooking down there and some of the shopkeepers used to give her food and they used to come there and have a free meal about twice a week. We worked in co-operation with her.

Well as soon as the bomb dropped I had to wait by the phone for the medical officer to

let me know where it had dropped, and what services he wanted, how many people were homeless and all that sort of thing. And then I used to call out the services at different centres in the borough. [All the volunteers would be] waiting for my call. I think that [the telephone] was installed for me [by] the council when I took over the WVS.

The medical officer of health probably got the information from the warden and he phoned Mrs. Hammond.

ii] How the rest centres worked:

We had the offices in Fairlop Road, and we had a lot of clothing and things - gifts there you see. There were people who were on call, you see - as soon as anything happened. And then they would go to where the rest centre, the area nearest where it [the bomb] had fallen and open it up. And, just have the food sent there from the schools. The schools used to cook the food. They did bring us some mattresses for them to lie on, to have at night. [People could stay a couple of days and talk to someone]. We'd find somewhere for them to go in the rest centre or somewhere and help them with their furniture too. We would assess how much had been damaged and give them some of the furniture we'd had given to us from Lincolnshire.

iii] The Housewife's Service, to help families back into their homes:

It would be quite a number. I should think about a hundred [who worked on this service]. [They would] help them to clear one room so they could live in it. The police used to be at the end of the road, wouldn't let the public down. I often had to come away from it and go to the police and say, "Let her through, its alright." You know somebody that had come to help us. The roads were cut off. [We] would help with clearing it out, making it fit to live in and seeing what they wanted.

iv] The 'goods for the homeless' scheme and the link with Lincolnshire:

That was from headquarters you see, they asked for voluntary - people from towns if they would voluntarily sort of mother us, you know. That's how we got in touch with Lincolnshire [the town was Spilsby]. It was marvellous going up there. I was up there I think - a week. But they took me round to all those villages. And I had to tell them what we were doing with the furniture they were giving in, you see. It was a really good idea to let them know; they could ask me questions about what we were doing with what they were sending us. It was a lot of furniture. [One of Mrs. Hammond's reports said it was fourteen lorry loads at four tons a time]. They [people needing help] couldn't get anything without the doctor's coupon you see. We didn't give out anything to anybody unless they'd got a point system on. [The doctor] would check and give them a coupon to bring to us with so many points on it according to the amount of damage that was done, Some were practically without [anything], some of them. It was a marvellous scheme, that was. We did try to [find them temporary billets] - yes. Its funny how when you get occasions like that, people are very helpful. They were very good.

v] Emergency feeding stations:

We used to let the council know, and the Civil Defence. And they'd send the feeding unit to us. We used to have to put it up. We told them where to put it, They used to come and take it away again when we'd done with it, and that sort of thing. Sometimes it lasted for a week in a particularly bad bombing. We had more than one feeding unit. [One was a corrugated metal type which was taken apart after each session; Mrs, Hammond had pictures of herself erecting it, Another one was a lorry]. It was like a big well, like a van. It would be in a certain place that I could call upon it if I wanted it, you

see.

[There were 500 members]. They were on duty all day anyway. Some of them came out in the night. If it was necessary 24 hours could be covered. I couldn't get away, no. I had one deputy. She was a very good worker.

vi] The provision of goods:

They used to send me a telegram sometimes to say that somebody was coming. She gave me his name there, but I wouldn't know who they were. [It was organised through the WVS in Lincolnshire]. I used to have to sign for it - check everything that come in and sign for it - so they knew it was there alright. Oh dear [laughing]. And then we used to set about putting points on it, you know, how much we'd give away to people. We used to show them what they could have for that number of points in the way of furniture clothing or or crockery sometimes. We had a lot of clothing from America. America were very Blankets as well. [There was no linked town in America and the clothes came in to "S headquarters]. America sent us dozens of pairs of combinations. Oh, those combinations, they were ever so old fashioned. We hadn't seen any for years. The storage site for the furniture from Lincolnshire was that one at the Thatched House. It was a factory, an empty factory [in Ellingham Road]. There was always a deputy left there, to put things in order.

vii] Sewing parties:

I had already set up a sewing party for altering clothes that we'd had given us at times. And, they took them over and cut them to pieces and made different vests and things out of them - sometimes little knickers out of them. They were at full time work in that sewing room, the women were. I should think there must have been about twenty in there. The women used their own sewing machines. We had knitting groups too. I think you had to have

[the wool] on coupons. In this case a family would have to give up their coupons to knit for the groups. They wanted warmth, you see [so it was] mostly vests and things like that. They did knit for soldiers too, you know, sort of pullovers and things like that.

viii] Feeding arrangements:

We did man the British Restaurants with voluntary workers for a time. [After having cooked in the emergency unit people went on to the restaurants]. I should think a couple of hundred could be fed in an emergency feeding unit in one day with a full meal. Sixpence that's what they paid for it. This was passed on to whoever provided the dinners. After the bombing stopped, the job wasn't finished by any means. Oh no, it carried on for another year, more than a year I should think. [there was also a rehousing scheme]. By letting the local authority know that people wanted homes. And if they'd got them then they would offer them. 'Course, otherwise they were still in the rest centres you see. Most church halls were made as rest centres [and schools tool. A lot of children were evacuated. We provided the cars to take the children to wherever they'd got to go, to the station where they were going off to. [Everyone had to work alongside each other]. That's right, yes.

Mrs. Hammond was not involved in the repair of houses but gave a figure of approximately 29,000 that were in need of repair.

I was the assistant officer for Civil Defence on the Council. People paid for their uniforms and had no special protective clothing. I didn't have any dropouts. Jolly good, all of them. I don't think we had any time for [social life]. Sometimes we were called out in the night. We managed alright: my children were evacuated. They were away and my husband worked down at the docks. He went on night work sometimes too.

Chapter 4 - The Peace

When the war was over, there was a difficult period of readjustment. My son had done school, but at headmaster did not advise him remaining there for further studies as the teachers were not available. He went into the Treasurers Dept. for 18 months, & was away for 2 yrs on National Service, he was 21st Greece on his birthday. He then went College for 2 yrs, it was parted he regrettable from the family for so long, but one must be thankful at least we were spared injuries or loss of life during the war. I can honestly say I anxiety never felt any of my either concerning children when they were I have absent from home, always been proud of them, & it is grand to live to see them both happily married.

W.V.S. continued as organiser for 4 yrs after the end of the war, I cannot express how much I valued the loyalty & voluntary service given by so many women, who could have made so much money, as many did, had they taken a paid job. It is not remember possible to number of things they did, the clothing scheme at its first issue helped families, with over 1,000 garments. Over 13,000 people were evacuated in three weeks, were provided with Coupon free wool escorts. issued to relatives service men, we had 96 loads furniture from Spilsby, Lincolnshire, collected from 380 villages, all had to be issued on a point system, in one incident 100 houses were demolished, & 3,700 damaged.

We also went round the area in a dust cart, & collected salvage 2 tons in 2 hours.

In 1948 I started the Meals on Wheels service, this was to assist people unable to shop or cook for themselves. The Local Authority was not interested, we managed to get volunteers with a car deliver 3 days a week, the Old Peoples Welfare cooked the meals in the basement of the Town Hall, & we packed them in a tea chest lined with an old eiderdown & paid for the meal. It was to see the shocking conditions in which some of the elderly were living. One I went to had only one room, the coal had been shot on the floor in the corner, an oil stove on the table, the only means of cooking, the table was covered with newspaper for the meal. We had to take all the plates back to the office to wash them. This we carried on for about 2 years, the Local Authority then took over responsibility for the cooking and the vans, W.V.S. still for many years provided voluntary helpers for delivery, eventually they assistants, employed paid this was after about 15 yrs. I then became interested in starting a Home Help service. This was to help elderly at least twice a week, to have their housework done. Again it was not easy to get the support of the Local Council, but eventually the Medical officer co-operated, he was to recommend the cases & the staff were to be paid by the Council. I remember appoint-ing the first home help & anxiously awaiting the result. The scheme developed quickly, the Authority then accepted full responsibility, it is now a well appreciated service. In 1950 owing to a health, of ill period resigned W.V.S. leadership, the Local Authority recommended I should receive my of honour for years voluntary work in W.V.S. & Civil Defence (I Assistant Welfare Officer for the area). I was awarded the O.B.E. & Civil Defence Medal.

Vi Gosling remembers the political life of Leyton after the war:

Those women particularly Jenny Hammond, Mrs Burrell, Mrs King, very strong women. They weren't playing games with anybody. They knew what they wanted and they fought for it. I don't think they were interested in alliances or anything. Somebody might contradict me on this. I have a feeling that it was simpler and cleaner. They were individuals and fighting in that way. Then I joined them. Some people think today that women have just emerged. They really are living in Cloud Cuckoo Land. Those women were all extremely vocal, extremely strong.

A few months after the war my husband was transferred back to the Railway. He then began suffer from a duodenal ulcer, I cannot help thinking this had been the result of the from travelling to & Docks during air raids, having his evening meal the Anderson shelter, & for some months we slept there. One night a fire bomb dropped outside the entrance, we then decided to sleep indoors. My mother died soon after the war, she was bedridden 2 yrs, her about failing, many nights I slept there to give my father She was 82, rest. children were a credit to her, we all had to take our share in the housework, not allowed to talk at meals or arque.

Jenny recalls:

Everything happened in the home. You were born there, and you died there. I always remember my mother died in hospital, my father died at home. It was very expensive, you didn't get much insurance in those days. I think we paid about a penny a week for insurance. When my husband died, I just had enough to bury him. It cost about twenty nine pounds all together, I had a bit from his Trade Union and a bit from his policy he had got.

appointed Justice I was the Peace at Beacontree Court, Stratford in 1949, & had to retire from the court sittings at the age of 75, it life although is a appointment for other duties. then the age Since retirement has been lowered to 70. It has only been that recent years appointed J.P.s have received This is training. very essential. It takes many gain knowledge & months to experience necessary to accept responsibility when It was judging cases. certainly revelation to a know the problems of living others have to face. attended one day every week, the domestic court meant many hours of sitting, one had to prepared to serve day. I always felt whole concerned for the children of broken marriages, if only the could give consideration to the effect upon the children resulting from their separation, and much their own satisfaction, I think the unhappiness of parents would not be too much a price to childrens' pay during the early years at least, when they may be able to fend for themselves.

There were always many cases

difficult many for people, & often when knowing the temptation and circumaccused, stances of the must admit, I often thought "there but for the grace of God go I". It does seem there is more crime since we have I made some poverty. the good friends among colleagues I served with, and quite Chairman acted as often, although pressed accept permanent chairmanship I was reluctant to face such responsibility. It although strange how you never consulted one another in court, when we retired to cases we seldom discuss disagreed. Experience taught us to be able to assess the of the accused character evidence cross during 8 examination, also to be tolerant of their failings. Magistrates in the main are very fair, & if there seems to be the slightest doubt of the persons guilt, the case I dismissed, always thought it better to err on the side of mercy, than to risk a wrong conclusion. I visited several prisons, I was very depressed to see how someone was always watching every action of those serving sentence, even the toilets had only half doors.

dishonesty & pilfering,

the years following the war

By 1946 my husband & I were able to go for a nice holiday 3 successive years to Scotland, once to Guernsey, & the final one together to the Isle of Man.

For some years he suffered from an ulcer, he was determined to have the operation, although his Dr. did not recommend it, if he diet was to a he relieved from pain but

enjoyed his food he would not take persistent precautions, & booked to enter hospital. At the time he was notified a vacancy, we had returned from a holiday the Isle of Man, I remarked if they knew how well he had been for many weeks, I sure they would not operate. However he said "I am standing for this for rest of my life" I shall be a new man afterwards". I got my ticket to Germany with the Wansbek Friendship Assoc. said I must cancel I could not visit, as abroad while he was really he was hospital, annoyed at my decision, said he would be convalescent at the time. However I good & what persisted, a I did, although thing recovered from the operation he died 4 days later. was great shock, he was yrs old.

Bernard also recalls this time:

He (Father) had this duodenal ulcer and decided that he was going to have the operation which he didn't appear to have any fear of. I think he must have known others or at least one other person who had it and said, having had it, he was fine and had no more trouble. so he was determined he was going to have this operation. I didn't know until I read my mother's memoirs that he had not been recommended to have it. I didn't know that at the time. But he went in for this operation and I was at home with her. I can remember this because he'd had the operation and I was visiting really. Just to see how he was and we were going to go to the hospital a bit later to see him and a phonecall came through to say that he'd taken a serious turn for the worse and we should go immediately so I went with her and it was only a few hours later that Dad died. We were both with him when he died.

It is frequently expressed "time heals", after all these years, it hasn't, you only learn to adjust your life to face up to it.

This meant serious consideration of my future I was pleased my son was married, children sometimes are conscious of some responsibility for a widowed mother, I did not want this to happen. My husband did not believe in insurance, kept some old policies paid (then about 2d each week, & managed to get a job, at this they were really shocked, as I was 59 yrs old, & had not a paid job during my had married life, 34 yrs.

One Tuesday at the end of a walked court I session at along Stratford Broadway feeling very depressed, went into Boardmans Departmental Store & asked the Personal Manager if they had a vacancy for a part time clerk. I was accepted, & joined the office 3 days a week, this enabled me to continue my voluntary work, so I entered rather a full life, but was glad to be self supporting & independent.

Bernard remembers his mother at this time: She literally went out to work again and at that age it was really quite remarkable to go back to work, not having been to work since the time she married. She had not been in office work at all and she went to Boardmans in Leytonstone and as far as I could gather she became one of their most treasured employees in the particular area in which she was working. She was always very good at figures. She was extremely literate, which again was remarkable considering the education she had, leaving school at fourteen. I can remember her giving me sums to do almost as an

entertainment to get me quick at them mental arithmetic. She was determined she was going to develop that skill of mine.

Of course in the Cashier's Department down there looking after the cash side she would have been first class because she was very good at figures and money and she'd always organised money in the household and had to very carefully so she certainly knew how to look after money. It became a new career for her really. She did it for many years and enjoyed it. Enjoyed the company, I'm sure it was a Godsend to her. Having lost Dad at that time because it was sad really. I mean it was at the time when she was doing less Council work and she has a less burdensome domestic life anyway because the children had both left home so she'd come to the time of her life when she could have enjoyed life with Dad much more then... well they had begun to.

She talks in her memoirs about three holidays they'd had together prior to that so they had begun to step out and enjoy what you might almost call retirement and they were beginning to enjoy the freedom and the rather better financial circumstances they were then in, and I think Dad was probably getting rather more money from his job anyway. Things had improved. Wages had come up after the War. So they were at the stage when they could begin to enjoy some of the pleasures of life. But then Dad just died like that and she was left without the income which he was bringing in and looking forward to whatever pension he would have got because he died when he was, what, 58, something like that.

She then had to decide what she was going to do with her life. This was what she did, She not only got in more money to support herself but she also opened up a whole new range of social contacts and friends because they all thought a lot of her. I can remember her talking about many of the people that

she worked with who became very close friends of hers. This was when she was, I suppose, 60ish. She kept that on for quite a lot of years.

After time a I was transferred to the cash desk, this was when payment from every customer was put in a container & sent up a chute for acceptance, & change to I was returned. then assistant cashier, this meant dealing with accounts, banking, & giving out wages. I was very happy with the staff. there were about 16 carriers to attend to, & when to busy we seemed passing one another always on our feet. My colleague did not have very good health, I suggested we could manage if we sat on a stool & covered about half the carriers each. She remarked she had never worked seated, & when the head of the firm came into the office for time she was embarrassed because he had her sitting down. However I told her by law we should be provided with a & no one objected. Eventually the system money taking by the chute was abandoned, we then had to prepare the cash floats for the tills every morning & check the takings handed in night. I reduced working days to 2 a week, my wages when I started had been 17/6 a day, by the time I left after 20 years it was £3/10 a day, I had a very happy relationship with all the staff, my superior (whose sister married Mr Richard was always Boardman) very good to work with, during 20 yrs we never had a cross happy I feel my experience, especially in the early days, did to help me adjust myself, I am happy to

say we never had unresolved money query. During the sale I remember finding a £ note among the bills hooked up on the wall. On another occasion, I was in charge & was £1 short, the cleaner found it in the waste paper basket, which beneath my cash desk. the firm closed I was given a cheque for £100, for which I was grateful, very enabled me to have a lovely holiday with my daughter & her husband to Majorca, my first experience of flying, how I enjoyed it and the opportunity of seeing something of the lives others.

Mr Child a great friend then suggested I write to Managing Director of Bearmans Leytonstone, & to my surprise I was accepted at the age of 79 as a Clerk on the Cash Office. Here again I was very happy, they even asked me if could type, although learned shorthand & typing, when I was 18 I was never able to get a post as a typist, & had never used it. However they asked me to try, & to my amazement had the job of typing accounts postage. After 2 yrs a new manager was appointed, & all part time staff over 60 were dismissed, & so at 82 yrs of age I retired. I sometimes think it was blessing disguise, I was still involved in a good deal of voluntary work. A Council representative on 10 schools, member of a Youth Committee (of all things), help O.A.P. club, member of Old Peoples Welfare Comt. Chairman of Leyton/Walthamstow Save (the) Children Fund since its inception 10 yrs ago.

Bernard reflects on his mother's activities during this period.

She was working part time. She wasn't working every day of the week and of course she had all these other activities she was still doing. She was involved with the WVS for many years after the War. She got involved in Charity shops and she stayed on the governorship of schools until very late in her life because she almost made a joke of it to me and said, "I can't think why they keep wanting me as a Governor of a school at my age." In the end I think she decided herself, I don't think they liked to say, or else they thought she had so much experience that they did like to have her there. But I think she gave it up herself in the end because I think she thought it wasn't very logical for a lady who was probably in her eighties by then to continue to be the governor of a school.

Mrs Punshon, another Labour Party activist whose husband, Arthur was a mayor of Leyton recalls:

She had a great deal of experience and it helped us a great deal too. She joined in everything we had, we did and everybody became great friends with her and sought her out for advice on all kind of different things.

Particularly interesting was the pageant we had at the Ross Wyld Hall [to celebrate the Fiftieth anniversary of women's enfranchisement] Mrs. Hammond was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson in the pageant. It really was a lovely occasion and I know Mrs. Hammond enjoyed it very much indeed.

She was always there. She used to take over and introduce the people. She was our chairman for some time but she had other commitments so mostly she served with us as vice-chairman. She was an absolutely marvellous person. I couldn't speak more highly of her.

She advised us on all kinds of things that we did: wording of resolutions and things which we sent, miles of things up to different places for hopefully some kind of action. She was so fair and thoughtful. She'd sorted it all out and thoroughly thought about the situation. Everyone was free to speak as they wished and of course on governing bodies you've got all parties and she gave everyone quite freedom to speak as they wished and I think everyone would applaud the way she ran the meetings, I really do!

She had a presence if that's the word. I don't really know what word you could use but she was just able to do all these things. She really was confident and yet I never heard her raise her voice ever. She spoke very quietly and coolly, but she knew what she was speaking about, you know she'd read and considered very well before she ever attended meetings and people listened to her, least I found that was how she was. She tidied things together and made the thing quite clear in people's minds what they were voting for and what they weren't. She was just very capable. She had a lot of experience, I suppose that's the reason.

Chapter 5 - Later life and Reflections

When one reflects over the past 50 yrs. What changes have taken place - & how much the present generation owes to the sacrifice & life long efforts of those who to struggled to reform the conditions that prevailed & the suffering endured by so many. No longer do unemployed march the streets for pennies, or those Parish Relief, as it was then have to sell goods known, from the home before receiving assistance, or the elderly have to rely on their who were forced contribute towards their keep. Unable to pay for medical attention, children suffered from rickets because of lack of nourishment. Every Monday people pawned articles to pay the rent, there was no child sick benefit, miners worked under appalling conditions, married women unable to get jobs because so many men were unemployed. had experience of this when my husband was out of work in Peterboro, I applied for a post as Auctioneers clerk in market, the man who interviewed me said he wished he could appoint me, but was sure I would he subject to abuse from men who could not get work.

There was no cheap milk for mothers or babies, no family allowance or school meals, unmarried mothers were ostracised as a disgrace, & often single girls in this position were disowned their parents. Elderly people today have lived through 3 major crisis, 2 world wars unemployment. Young today people of should appreciate how much they are indebted to the sacrifice & pioneering of the previous generation, we often walked miles could not even afford a halfpenny bus fare, now they sometimes enjoy 2 cars to a family. Even receive redundancy pay if the firm no longer needs their services.

The elderly today appreciate the generous help they now receive, & regret their parents never similar consideration, though working 12 hours a day even I did). (as I how remember pleased father was when railwaymen were first allowed 4 days holiday a year, this was the holiday my husband had at the time of our marriage, but lost a day's pay every bank holiday, 2 days pay Easter.

One does not wish by means to sound puritan, but does the experience deprivation and injustice help to mould stable a understanding personality, & can the absence of conditions be responsible for the attitude of so many people today. No shame in pilfering, glory in mugging, no consideration for children when a marriage is so easily dissolved. When the majority are living in debt, living much beyond income, not for necessities but for elaborate luxuries. Homes today seem to be just a place for bed & breakfast, in many cases children only have contact with their parents early morning and evening. One cannot wondering what kind of a new generation this will create, & whether we are really progressing. Admitted science certainly has, but spending

millions on Concorde, atom bombs etc., while cutting health services when we are in such need of medical services, education & social services.

Members of Local Authorities paid thousands of being pounds for doing work that up 1973 was voluntary, undertaken by people who were really in need of a few more week. So shillings a continue, called so could progress does not seem have given us training priorities, consider my experience has taught me to character before value wealth, contentment before power & greed. It gives one great experience to mix among people - & so to realise every person has a different outlook, lives in different circumstances conditions & sometimes be that can responsible for adverse to face diffapproach iculties. It is good to try to think one's own opinions are not necessarily correct or the best, there may come a day when even our own ideas change. and conclusions never been at cross purposes of with anyone different religious or political views to my own, & can claim to have many wonderful friends among such people.

Mrs Punshon comments on the position Jenny took when the SDP (Social Democratic Party) was set up:

Mrs. Hammond and [Bryan Magee] got on very well together and she was very very sorry when he relinquished the position [of MP for Leyton]. I don't think [she] would ever have thought of leaving the Labour Party any more than I could.

Jenny adds:

I am still in the Labour Party, I don't think a

lot of it now, but have not got the heart to leave. I have been in it 56 years. I have a lot of friends in the Conservative Party,

If only we would learn the art of living together - wars would cease. How many years of suffering & sacrifice have been endured by so many to achieve the changes that are Just a accepted today. as artist never struggling his the value of enjoyed work, which after many years & others recognised receive its value.

I can remember tramps lining up outside the high wall at the workhouse in Union Rd, for a nights lodging, bundles on their back, they had to do some work in the morning before leaving & going on to another district.

member of the was a Hospital Management Cmt. for Whipps X & Langthorne we were with able to be in touch patients staff & much today, different the Area removed Health Com. is far from such helpful sultations. I was amazed that in the top floor wards Langthorne elderly permanent patients, some had been there years, could not even from a window, they were all eye level. above It about 5 yrs to persuade the to lower the windows, this has now been done many wards. Also the tall brick wall surrounding the hospital reminded one much of the old workhouse. getting successful in this demolished, it now looks so different.

We could go to the pictures, (silent movies) for 2d in the afternoon, including a cup of tea. Stratford Empire was a

good variety Theatre, also the Boro. Theatre Stratford. We paid 3d for a seat in the gallery, I remember Marie Lloyd & Vesta Tilley, there were microphones then, no were trained use the their voices to carry sound across.

In her latter years Jenny's interest in religion was reawakened as Hilda Downs recalls:

Mrs Hammond said the young people there (at the church) were very kind and very thoughtful. She enjoyed their company, and it was somewhere for her to walk to.

Her daughter Iris adds:

During the early part of my life she never went to church. Yet in her later life she went back to the church again and she was going regularly to the Hainault Road Baptist Church. In fact she was taken ill in the Church when she died.

Although I am blessed with wonderful friends, happy memories, I must confess as I look back, I am conscious of some regrets mistaken attitudes towards some deserving of more appreciation, it has been said that if one admits these failures, we are forgiven. hope this is true

was a member of Leyton Council 33yrs, Chairman Education Committee 9 yrs. Elected Alderman Deputy Mayor 1937/38, Mayor 1942/3. Deputy Mayor 1949/50 & 1960/61 Organised Home Help Service 1946 Organised 1st Darby Joan Club 1947 Organised Meals on Wheels Service 1948 W.V.S. Organizer 1937, same date Assistant Welfare Officer Civil Defence. Freeman of the Boro. 1959 Vice President Leyton Scouts Vice President old People Welfare Com. Hon Commandant British Red Cross Magistrate 1949 Appointed served 20 yrs, National President Education Association 1953.

Jenny died when she was 94, as Bernard recounts:

She had a heart attack. She had taken to going to a little local Baptist chapel in Hainault Road and she went there fairly regularly once she had moved to the flat in Claude Road because it was only just around the corner and she had a lot of friends there and they were very very good to her in the latter period of her life. She was one of their old people of course and she was very well looked after by them.

It was on a Sunday I think that I had a phonecall to say that she'd been at the Chapel and had been taken poorly. They thought possibly she had a slight heart attack and that somebody had taken her to Whipps Cross Hospital. They said she's being looked at by the casualty people at the hospital but they rang me to let me know what's going on. They thought she'd had a mild heart flutter. They'd got her into bed and she would be sleeping now. They suggested I went in the morning, which I did. I went and saw her in the morning and spent quite a long while with her the next day. She was sitting up in bed, linked up to machines and things. Very quiet and subdued and I couldn't get her to say very much but she wasn't in any pain at all. In fact they came round asking her what she wanted for her meals and she was listening to the menu and telling them what she'd like so she was perfectly on an even keel although she was very weak.

I stayed with her for a good deal of the time

that day and then saw the doctor, and the doctor said, "Oh we can't really tell at the moment but I think that there's a possibility that if she carries on as she is.... we'll just have to see how she goes. We might get her home within a few days". But then the following morning I had a phonecall to say she'd had another heart attack during the night and by the time we got there she'd died We weren't with her when she died so that was very quick. You know, Sunday taken ill at the church in the evening, I think 6 o'clock service or 7 o'clock service and she must have died 34 hours later or thereabouts.

Mrs Punshon adds her valediction:

She was able in some ways to guide people the way to go about their daily things, financial things you see. She knew the problems of the poor and underprivileged and she did her best to make life easier for them. She would put people in touch with someone who might be able to help them, I don't know if she had any ideas on policy but she knew what she didn't agree with.

Vi Gosling also recalls:

She had a party for her 90th birthday with many accolades for her work. Certainly within the Party she was much appreciated and from generations who were very distant from her really in terms of age.

Bernard considers his mother's achievements:

The things that impress me most about her were - she was a fighter, whatever happened she would always fight, either for someone else or for herself And this tremendous sense of duty really. I think her life was almost ruled by her sense of duty to whoever - to the children, to the family. It was very much a sense of duty that dominated her life, I think. She always had to think, "What should I do? Is it my duty to do that? If so I must try and do it." That was the motivation. To many people she

had a remarkable life. I had nothing like that sort of remarkable life. But I suppose you might say in some ways she might have missed out in other things because that was such a dominating influence. She was away from the family much more than a lot of people would want to be because of all these political activities, but she had this driving force in her. She saw all the injustices around her. Wherever she saw an injustice, and she refers to them in her memoirs, doesn't she, about even when she was at work as a young working woman and one of her workmates suffering and injustice and telling the Boss about it. She could never let it pass.

I think she certainly instilled that in us although no one else in the family has had the same driving force to do it in the same way. And of course you don't follow. I don't think many people follow the precedents from their parents. I'm sure there have been times in my life when I've said I've been put off politics for life. You can be, can't you, if your parents are doing nothing, I mean, my wife and I, we've got things that dominate our lives. Your children don't want to do it because they've seen too much of you doing it and they turn the other way, They turn in another direction, don't they? And I think that would be the same with a mother like Jenny Hammond. All this political activity, I'm wondering how on earth she did it all. You just get put off it if you live with it really because it was papers, papers, papers, committees, sitting reading the papers for the committee and all the rest of it. For many years it dominated that part of her life apart from keeping the house going, which as I've said she never in any way at all neglected. That always got done before the politics came in, which was largely in the evenings. She was meticulous. I can remember now the papers that used to come from the Town Hall every week and I said she was out two evenings there would be at least one other evening when she was just reading them because there was a lot of stuff to read. It used to come in a big envelope. Of course once that sequence of committees was over she must have thrown them away because I can't remember there ever being any store of these things, I suppose if she ever wanted to refer back she could always do it at the Town Hall. She never kept all these at home for years. She wouldn't have had the room for them. She was very diligent in reading everything up.

All through life I try to remember -

How little it costs - if we give it a thought To make happy some life each day.

Just a kind word and a tender smile

as we go on our way,
Perchance a look
- will suffice to clear

the cloud from a neighbours face And a press of a

hand in sympathy a sorrowful tear efface.

One walks in sunshine -

another goes all weary in the shade.

One treads a path that is smooth and fair

Another must pray for aid.

It costs so little - I wonder why

we give it so little thought, A smile - kind words - a glance - a touch.

What magic with this is wrought.

Jenny Hammond. O.B.E. J.P.

It has been my privilege to have been introduced to The Queen Mother Princess Anne Princess Alexandra Princess Alice Duke Edinburgh Lunch at the German Embassy, with Wansbek Assoc.

POSTSCRIPT

After Jenny Hammond's death Waltham Forest Council decided to honour her. In the 1980's they named a road after her - 'Jenny Hammond Close' in Leytonstone. In the early 1990's the former Cann Hall School was renamed 'Jenny Hammond Primary School' in recognition of her services to education in the former Borough of Leyton.

With love and best wishes on your birthday and tranks for your great to the Party

WHY I JOINED THE LABOUR PARTY

By MRS. J. HAMMOND (Leyton West Women's Section)

(Mrs. Hammond's essay was placed first in the competition open to Section members in the Eastern Counties for a scholarship for the Summer School at Great Chesterford).

WHEN one is asked to make a definite statement, as to "Why I Joined The Labour Party"—and perhaps for the first time consider the question—it becomes a real revelation even to oneself, to realise the number of circumstances and wide range of events that culminated in Party membership.

Unemployed!

To experience, personally, managing a home for nearly two years as the wife of an unemployed railway worker, with a young baby, and only 21/- unemployment benefit, and during the terrible gap of three weeks with no pay out of every eight; to have to manage through a series of strikes—one of three months with only 10/- a week Trade Union pay—must inevitably force one to start thinking seriously, not only of herself, but of those in a similar or worse plight.

Hundreds of men—skilled and willing—refused the opportunity to work—reaching that awful period of despair, when they feel they are no longer usefur citizens, and wives dreading lest they should end their lives in tragedy.

Labour's Efforts for Workless

The first Labour Government was responsible for wiping out the gap in unemployment benefit previously referred to, and only those who suffered its iniquity can appreciate their efforts to the full.

During the General Strike the Labour Party's activities were very significant; mothers who were the wives of strikers were refused the free milk under the Maternity and Child Welfare Act. The gallant fight of a few local councillors in this district forced the ratepayers' majority to accede to the demands of the women's deputation (with babies in prams) of which I was one.

Joining the Party

It was then I realised the unselfish service of Labour representatives, not only during a crisis, but at all times, in the interests of working people. I felt—what right have I to accept the benefits of their activities and remain myself inactive?

For long I was prejudiced against membership of any party, realizing that parties, like human beings, are not perfect, and that as a member I would be equally responsible for its failings and its wisdom. For some time individual efforts, though better than apathy, were of little avail. It was like a non-swimmer trying to cross a river without a boat. I knew what was wanted, but how to act effectively I had yet to learn.

This necessitated a sane leadership, which could only be found in a Socialist Party striving for similar ideals.

My personal injustice and suffering has been as nothing to the wide range of social wrongs existing. I decided I could no longer remain a passenger through life, grumbling just when those things went wrong that only affected myself, but I must take my turn at the steering wheel, and accept my share of responsibility for *all* to enjoy a freer and fuller life.

What I Have Learned

Many years of Party membership have taught me to be broader minded, to have sympathy with the other fellow's point of view, to be tolerant with their failings as I would wish them to be with mine. I have learned not only the rights of citizenship—but what is even more important—the duties of citizenship. The problems of human nature and social injustice I have been encouraged to study, and this study has been invaluable in assisting me to have a clearer vision, and hence my humble efforts on various local committees have helped to ease someone's heavy burden.

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