

**Interviewee: Lally Forbes**

Interviews conducted by Nicky Leap and Billie Hunter during research for the publication '*The Midwife's Tale: an Oral History from Handywoman to Professional Midwife*' (1993; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2013)

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**Description:**

Transcript of an interview with Lally Forbes covering her experience having a baby in 1921, her work in a local factory during her pregnancy, and family life.

**Topics include:** Midwifery; Maternity services; Childbirth; Antenatal care; Homebirth

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**[START OF INTERVIEW AND FIRST AUDIO FILE]**

Interviewer Can I just ask you a bit about yourself Lally?

Lally Oh what?

Interviewer Like when you were born and where you were born?

Lally I was born in Sh- Shoreditch on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1896 and uh I've had a- I've had a good- a good council schooling, ordinary school like and I never... I didn't pass anything

Mrs Brian Excuse me, I'm Mrs Brian. I spoke to you on the phone. Have you got that on?

Interviewer Yeah I can turn it off though.

Mrs Brian I'm so sorry ((tape switched off)).

Lally ((Tape switched on)) I think... Well I say four and I was there in the one class until I was 11. I never changed my school, all I changed was my teacher and she was a Jewish named Miss Jacobs and again all those years ago.

Interviewer Yes a long time ago.

Lally And uh we moved in the same... Where I was born, 14 Feltham Street, Shoreditch, M1 and my mother lived there and my mother had 14 of us. My sister that's just died, she was 92, my Sally, but always lived a straight life, you know what I mean? No boozing about and all that. That couldn't have nothing to do with me what they done in their lives. Well uh I was a power operator when I was...from when I was 12 years old. I used to go after the school and uh well to help out and then when I was 14, I left when I was 14, I went to the firm that I was working after school hours and I got my- my husband was a sailor. He done 21 years in the navy and at the Battle of Jutland, 1916, my husband lost his left leg. I was single and I got married 1920, 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, and on the following year I gave birth to my son, eight pound eight or eight pound nine in weight.

Interviewer Goodness me! That's big because you're not very big are you?

Lally But that was the great depression in 1920. Someone said to my husband in the other few months, he said, "Here Joe..." he said...because I was still working, he said, "Here Joseph ain't you got no work yet?" So we said that, "Oh" we had a big maturity. "That didn't make no



difference darling, he- he just wanted to do something.” Well now this man was supposed to be...I don’t know whether it was a friend or not, but wasn’t a friend of mine and I wouldn’t entertain him and if I say a thing, dear, I never go back on my word, never! Now that’s a lot of a statement to make innit?

Interviewer It is is.

Lally Innit?

Interviewer You’ve always kept by that.

Lally If I’ve said I...when I will not do it...

Interviewer Yeah good for you.

Lally ...I will not. I don’t mean to be rude and make myself look big, but that’s my...been my way all my life. Well as the story goes, my son was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and we had the great big hospital at the back on where we lived because they’ve done away with it now, the Metropolitan, and they had the first carnival and that was five pennies and in those days, not flags, nothing like that. Well I don’t think we... My husband... I went to get this job and it was East End. Oh bless his dear sweet face in heaven. When he come back I said, “Alright Joe?” I always used to take it, you know, on the (up and up?) “Well if nothing’s come, it’s tried” but I never worried about that ‘coz I had a good position. So I said, “Oh your shoes” but one of his shoes was coming off and I never knew, you know, he’d walked so far and there were no work and if he wasn’t at work darling, my husband wouldn’t take a slice off that table, no, no. Well that went by so someone said uh, “Here I think my firm wants a man Joe.” I said, “For sweeping up.” He said, “I can’t... Look Lally. Don’t mention it because I can’t...this leg. As I’ve got my- as I got my- my crippled leg.” So he’s left. He’s left was off and now mine’s the left.

Interviewer Was that like that then?

Lally No it went down this... About 12, 13 years I’ve had this. This was uh waiting for a bus. Well when they said to me about, “I’ll have another go tomorrow.” So I said, “Oh don’t worry about it.” I said, “We’ll get by.” So he said, “No I don’t like you still working” because I was pregnant at the time. Well when I turned the work out I always thought they’d always



control...the firm always said to me and sent me a bit of food, a bit of tea, a bit of sugar or something.

Interviewer Oh that's good.

Lally I've always been looked after. Someone's always come up and worked something in and as the years went by I had my son on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May and what my husband got for my son on the Saturday, we went out shopping, well bits and pieces, he brought back a pound of beef sausages, three pound of potatoes a penny, truth, the truth, and he came in the room, so he said uh...we only had a front room, so he said uh, "I'm going to cook a bit of dinner." So I said, "Oh Joe I feel so ill." the mid in the wife, whatever you call them, Miss- Miss Sharpe, oh she was a darling. She said, "Now don't worry." I said, "I'm not worrying." Now I was took bad on the Friday night, in cramped labour and you couldn't get anything worse than that. I could not walk, I couldn't sit down, I couldn't do anything. I was took bad on Friday night and I was confined 10 'til one on the Sunday dinner time.

Interviewer That's a long labour then wasn't it?

Lally And when the carnival was coming round the streets and you know when they say, "I'm forever blowing bubbles?" That's the very first... 1921. That's when they first had that out. I'm forever blowing bubbles. Well I got over that. My sister was all comfortable. Good, but different class of a man, different. He was a drunk and that's got nothing to do with me, he wasn't my husband, but he was cruel with it. Not with his children.

Interviewer But cruel to her?

Lally My poor Sally and she's only just died last February, but that went on for a while so I said to my Joe, "When is it eight weeks old, Eddie?" He said, "Now look here Lally, what about the baby being vaccination?" I said, "No-one's going to cut my baby about." He said, "Don't be so foolish." I said, "No. Nope." I said, "I've never been done." So he said, "Now look, I've been abroad, I've had my leg off haven't I? Here I am." I said, "His blood's good. Your good. Your family, nothing wrong with them." Well anyway, eventually Doctor Sullivan never appro- approached me and I had- I had my baby minded by one of the neighbours and they used to stand him on the table to dance, on the table, he was nearly nine pound born and I

never had much food, but I always had a contented mind. If I never had nothing, I'd get it. I'd bet something would come up. Well my husband got this job and it was in Morgat Street somewhere and it was a very particular job. My husband had a good na- good name in the navy and uh the man said...or the gentleman in the factory, he said to my Joe, "Does your wife work?" So he said, "She can't... she won't leave it until it's- until it's proper time. No more signs of a pregnancy" or what they call family and that kind of way of talking and uh he said, "Now how many babies have you got Mr Forbes?" So he said, "I've got one son nearly nine months old." So he said, "How do you find it? Do you find it hard?" He said, "No my hard days are finished now." As we thought. About a month or two after I was took bad at the factory, I'm going to tell you this God as my unseen friend, I went to work all through the baby and each week all those if I topped the bonus, each week. Each week at the top of our machine, how many rings you do, you used to go right along like that. Well I never lost time. Good time keeper and so they didn't stop the bonus. Each week used to help- used to help, only a few pence, but it used to help me. So I said um, "Well Mr Johnson" I said, "I'm sorry I won't be coming tomorrow." God told me something was going to be wrong with me. I knew he was going to, I knew. So I said, "I feel sick." It was for the want of nourishing food. I said, "Well I think I'll leave on Friday." And I left on Friday, I went and got my baby, great big monster. She only used to charge me six shillings a week. She said, "Make sure you're well Lally." So I said, "Oh I'm alright. I'm alright." I said, "Never mind about taking the baby on Monday." I was thinking about the money. Only six bob and he was breast fed and I used to go...had to go to the...didn't have to go to the clinic at all. I'm telling you I was bred and born in Shoreditch, married in Shoreditch, had my baby in Shoreditch and lived in Shoreditch all 'til 1939. I was in my house for 32 years and when I moved to where I am now they gave me my 16 shillings deposit when I went in there.

Interviewer Good gosh.

Lally Yeah. So that's all those years ago with wonderful memories. Yes.

Interviewer It's amazing.

Lally The doctor came round and he said, "Mr Forbes..." he says, and he must have phrased it, "...we have to send your wife away." And I heard that and I said, "What did you say?" He



said, "Mrs Forbes..." He said, "You've got double pneumonia and pleurisy. When did you leave work?" I said, "Friday." He said...because there was no phones about, no not like you've got now. So four doors away my sister lived. The doctor asked her would she come over? So up she come to the baby. So I said uh, "Oh look after him Sally." She said, "I've looked after all of you. I'm the eldest one." Then my Joe said uh... Oh no the other thing that I ((unintelligible)) but they wasn't the class, my class, but the things I used to say, dear, I didn't mean to be rude or unkind, I didn't mix with it. I couldn't understand why and when I said that, "Oh now are you going to go and take the baby? Don't let- don't let- don't let put my baby..." "Well I got other..." I said, "Don't finish the subject about your other commitments. I don't want you up here Granny Forbes anymore." And I didn't know, I was half and half not, but that went on for a while for about a fortnight after Doctor Edwards said to me, he said, "Just lay up and see." He said, "Would you like to go away for a holiday Mrs Forbes?" So I said, "No thank you sir." So he said, "I'm not a sir" he says, "I'm only a doctor." I said, "Well you're a sir to me." He said, "That's a wonderful speech Mrs Forbes." I said, "I'm young and I'm poor" I said, "But manners I'm first class." And wouldn't take the baby away from my husband, my sister had done the best she could, but as the years went on he went to a good scholar my son and uh not a posh school, to me he's handsome. I said, "Go in your grandfather's job. I'll take you." Well he was 15 and he's six foot, blonde. Well I don't know about now, he's 64. So he said, "I don't know what to do." I said, "Look you've finished school now." I said, "This is the place where your grandfather worked." My father was a first class cabinet maker, also a French polisher, but in those days 18 shillings a week was a lot of money. 18 shillings and you was in a gold mine. Got the job...I placed it to him and uh the years went by, he wouldn't have a girlfriend or nothing. I wasn't look- I wasn't looking for him to be at home. I'm looking for him to make his life, make his way. So he come home one Friday night and he said um, "Mum" he said, "I've been with Edwards, that's Alfie Edward, and we've been up the Dominion, the big picture place up the West End." I don't know. So I said uh, "Oh..." he was 17, I said, "Oh, but listen to me" I said, "You're not a girl" I said, "But you're a first class man now. If you're going to have a sweetheart I'm not supposed to tell you what to do." So he said, "No I don't want no girls mum." Well he went to the Dominion or something, they- they picked up two girls at the pictures. I supposed she



meets...well he come home and he had no key. I had to go downstairs, open the door and when he come in he said uh, "I'll introduce you" he says. I said, "What?" He said, "I could." I said, "Oh well we'll see what your daddy says." Well I... yes I saw right through her. It's a wonderful thing, but if you've got your mind the right way you can tell a person when you look at them, you don't want to know nothing about them, you already know. You can tell what they're like. So she said, "I've got a mum." I says, "Hello here we come." So I said, "Well where do you live dear?" She says, "I live in Pearson Street." I said, "Oh I know that." I said. I didn't and I told a white lie. I thought, "We're going to get something out of her see if she's a straight girl." Well they was together for a little while, a few months and uh he went- he went to her house supposed to for Saturday in the night not dreaming about he was going to stop all night. So of course I've never had a vile temper, not a quarrelsome temper and what I've got to say, dear, I'll say and if it offends I'm very sorry. ((loud noise)) Thank you. He never come home. I found out where she lived, stupid, stupid. That momentary, it's stupid, really and truly. I can only recall what I done that day, well I knocked at the door Sunday dinner time and I said uh, "Mrs Pearson live here?" Because I was very smart when I was a young woman. I had a lovely head of blonde hair. So I said, "Mrs Pearson live here?" She said uh, "You're speaking to her." I said, "Have you got Eddie Forbes in here?" So she said uh, "No they've gone to leave with something for fishing." "Oh..." I says, "I see." I said, "Well. When he comes in..." I said, "He's got to have dinner at home." And I never said no bad words to the mother or anything. She said, "Do you disagree?" I said, "Now you wait a minute missus" I said, "She's the first girl that, to my knowledge, that's ever had and I don't want you class of people making out all nasty remarks about whatever they do, whatever they don't do..." I said, "And I've heard..." I said, "And I'm his mother and you're her mother..." I said, "That might be a bit of goings on in this garden out here." So she said, "Well one of them's bound to..." I said, "We're all born and we're not buried" I said, "He's not even born yet." And I said, "And when he comes would you tell him that his mother's enquired?" So of course he comes home and it's tea time. He said, "I've got some fish mum." What they'd got out the river Lee or somewhere. I said, "You've left that little bit of fish behind you ain't ya?" "I don't know what you mean Mum." I said, "No? You please yourself Eddie. You're only a baby yet." I said, "If you like the girl it's not my liking." I said, "I've seen her

once with that- the bragging and the boasting and the this and the that and the showing off." I said, "I don't think much of it." Well I let that go on. He said, "I'm not going to see her that often." "Now look dear don't you take no notice what mum says about that." So he said, "Well I'm not going to...I haven't done anything wrong Mum." I said, "No I'd never mention such a thing." But I said, "If you did or if you- or if you're thinking about it, well re-think twice." Well I don't know and from that day to this now... So it was on...not on this...on this holiday, the next one me and my husband, we always used to go to Ramsgate with the one people. So I said, "Maisie..." I said, "...I don't think I can have a holiday this year." She said, "Why not?" I said, "No I don't like this girl my Eddie's with." "Oh that will be all sorted out alright." It doesn't matter how clever you are darlin' you're caught. Doesn't matter how clever you are. It doesn't matter how many steps you try to take at once, you only get up one. Well it went on and went on so I said, "Here Joe..." I said, "Eddie's with that girl." "Oh..." He said, "They're only boy and girl together. What's the matter with you?" He said, "Like you waited for me right up until 1918." I said, "Don't matter, she ain't me." I said, "I love my son." He said, "Well he ain't the only pebble on the beach is he?" He said, "If she don't want him someone else..." I said, "No look Joe. I'm looking at the right thing." I said, "I'm nervous about whether anything that I don't like..." He said, "Look Lally, they're men now and if they should make a mistake we'll get them married." I said, "Blimey you're coming out with something now aren't ya?" He said, "Well you're putting the question to me..." He said, "And there's only me, you and him." Well he comes home and he said uh...and it was in '38 and I'll never forget, never forget that Friday night. He walked in and I got a nice big chest of drawers what I've still got now, over 40 years I've had them. The old fashioned ((unintelligible)) He said, "Mum you might have a letter from the government." I didn't know he's joined up, joined the Royal Field...joined the Royal Field Artillery. So he come up, the letter came and I put it straight on the chest of drawers. "There's a letter son, it's yours." My husband come home so he said uh, "A bit rough about the crisis innit?" I said, "Oh well, God got us through the first and God'll help us to get through the next one." He said uh, "Ah it will be tight going." I said, "Well we ain't got it yet." He's brought the paper back ((unintelligible)) and I said, "Swing the paper back so it's right ((unintelligible)) So he said all confused, so he said uh, "I'm going to have a bath mum." I said, "You always have a bath





don't you Friday night?" As far as I'm concerned, it's not a bath it's out in the gar- out in the yard in a big tub. He's all excited and all this and all this and all this. The letter's...got to be there, got to be at the barracks before 12 o'clock and I never touched the letter, I just left it there. So he said, "Mum?" "What? What dear? What? Oh..." I said, "What's all this confusion?" "Well..." He said, "I'm going away tonight. I've got to be in the barracks at 12 o'clock." I said, "What barracks?" He said... Because I've never lived this way. I don't live this way now. "Penton Street" he said and I said, "Now you're as wise as me dear. I don't know nothing about that." He said, "Well I won't have nothing to eat, I'm too excited. I'm going to meet Edward" his mate he joined...his mother never knew he joined up in the first crisis. I never knew nothing about the army, my husband being a navy man. Well anyway, bless his dear face, he went up to the barracks and never c-... oh I was frightened out of my life. I never saw him for a fortnight and the letter he sent me was from Pevensy Bay. They were stationed there and it's the first thing he done, sent me a postcard all old fashioned scribbling, "Mum I'm safe. Don't worry. I'll see you soon." Well I don't know...because see he chucked this girl up. So he never had no sweetheart, but as far as I knew... Well bless his dear heart it had been a year right round before the war came on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September. So... Who's going to come in and listen? It's a story. It's a story about your Lally's past life. It's a gooden. I've said it once dear haven't I? Not to this lady. So the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September my son joined up to the Royal Field Artillery, Penton Street. Now I never knew nothing about that name at all. They went away to Dartford. From Dartford they went to Mersey Mertrew ((?)), that was his first landing and he was in the Royal Field Artillery on the guns from 1939 to 193- no what...? '45. Well I saw him once in that five years and that was a time when he came home and he said, "Mum I've got ((unintelligible))" some big word and I said, "Oh aren't you going thin Eddie?" He said, "Well I was never fat was I?" Well they gets married 1940 and my Eileena Joyce was born 1946. It was in ((unintelligible)) whatever they call it. 1945 I got him a beautiful three room flat and off people who knew me and his wife, lovely girl, my Gladys, a wonder lust. She was one of them that couldn't settle down in one place. She was on the ((unintelligible)) guns on the coast. She come out full sergeant, my Gladys, and when they come out of the army I got them this beautiful flat. We came round and she said, "My husband bought me a French divan piano in the music box in Dorsten. Bought it



for him." He's married. Well that went off alright. We were poor, very poor, but we lived happy and we were a happy couple. But Lucy had a baby 1946. That would be 33 on 8<sup>th</sup> September. So I said, "Here Joe, Gladys." So I said, "Hello Glad." She said uh, "I'm pregnant." Or that word, you know, or something. "Oh.." I said, "...three cheers. I'm going to be a granny at last." Oh she says...very sarcastic, very, very, very, she said uh, "Oh well I hope and I hope it's not a boy." Oh I said, "Well whatever God sends you, be thankful. It doesn't matter...a rabbit, it doesn't matter what it is. As long as you get over it and you're happy with Eddie." That went off alright. She had- had Ei- and she named her after...not her mother, one of her relations, whatever. Eireeny Joyce Forbes. That's her name. Well now they was in that flat that I got them in Newington Green, three room, beautiful flat, bathroom and everything and uh I never knew, not my place to know what they do in their married life. She came round on the Saturday, she was in my 'lum club, I used to run a Didlum club. I had 10 bob, Joe had 10 bob, she had 10 bob, he had 10 bob. They've bid two pound every Friday. She carried the books. I'm not speaking wrong about her, don't get me wrong. I said to my Joe, I said, "Here we still go to Mrs Nolan's..." I said, "...don't we? Down at Ramsgate?" I said, ((unintelligible)) I go round the club thinking I'm going to draw some money out, she's drawn a loan off of the full books. Her own two certainly. Not to keep it, no I never believed...no, no, no. I hope that him and her never get me wrong, I never meant anything about keeping it. The only thing I was dead against being artful about the situation because when I went round on the Friday for my money, he said uh, "What do you want Lal?" It wouldn't happen in front of the little girl. "What do I want? I want 40 quid." Oh, and they make me laugh. "Where's your books?" "Gladys has got them. Oh wait a minute..." He says, "She come and drew the 40 pound Monday night." Well I'm quick tempered, but I'm not spiteful. Even now and then when I wanted... I goes round there ((unintelligible)) so I said, "Eddie is your wife upstairs?" He said, "Come up mum." I said, "No. No I don't darken this door never, never no more." "Oh mum what's the matter?" I said, "In years to come you'll know all about it. You can come round home if you want to and you can please yourself whether you come round or not, but I don't want her up there with my granddaughter." He said, "If I can get to the bottom of this..." I said, "You will." I said, "Time will tell." He said, "Well..." I said, "Is she upstairs?" I said uh, "Would you tell her to give me...give you your



anothers...two books. I only want two books and 40 pound. I'm not moving away from this free door. If it's all night I'll sit on the step." He said uh, "Anybody..." I thought, "Hello your true- your true colours are coming out now." He said, "What do you think? I was going to move?" I said, "No I didn't think you was going to move, but..." I said, "Don't you think you've done a very, very rotten, selfish, mean trick to me?" I said, "I've been a good mother-in-law. I never give you anything, but I've guided you on the right road." I said, "I've never had nothing for myself, but whatever I've had I've always shared with you two." So she said, "Oh we won't be...we won't be much troubling much longer." So I said, "What's your pounce? What's your pouncing for Gladys?" So she said uh, "Oh that will be a surprise." I said, "I'm full of them." So I said, "Well goodnight. Goodnight." And I looked...oh bless her sweet face, she's a woman now, she said, "Granny I'm going to leave home." She was about eight I think. She said, "I've got them all ready." "Oh..." I said, "Darling where did you get..." "Yeah..." She said, "I've had enough of the two of them talking about you granny." I said, "Now what you know dear make out you've never heard nothing." Well I'm going to meet my husband on the Saturday morning and he was in uniform, Bandelier and I gave him the silver sixpence just to put in his purse and there was Bandelier and everything, oh he was smart. Well my son and her, she was in uniform, but they was going to a big procession, a soldiers' dinner up the big West End somewhere and uh I said, "Joe..." I said, "That's Eddie and that's Gladys coming down Marks & Spencer's staircase." He said, "Come here." I said, "No. Oh no, not me..." I said, "I'm going out," He said, "Well you're determined with everything you say." I said, "But I didn't mean it to keep away for good. I didn't mean that." He said, "Well that's alright." He saw me. He got down the last three steps, come out the shop and I'm out in Liverpool Road. He said, "Hello mum." So I said, "Oh hello Ed. How are you?" He said, "Oh I'm quite well and how about you?" "Oh..." I said, "I'm alright." I said, "I've been back to bed." So he said um... I said, "Where's Eileen Joyce? She got older yet?" Well I went to talk to my granddaughter, "Eileen?" I said, "Don't you never do that to me Gladys."

Interviewer What she didn't want you to talk to her?

Lally So I said, "Eileen?" I said, "Eileen?" She said, "Yes nanny?" I said, "You're not too proud to speak to your grandma are you?" She said, "No I love you grandma and I love granddad."



She said, "Won't you let me live with you?" She said, "Do you know I've heard a rumour." I said, "No dear, I don't darling, I don't want to know anything about what mummy and daddy..." She said, "We're going on a big ship." October 1959. Well hello this is wonder lust again. So I never knew anything about it, none of my family knew, not a thing. Well now she had...my Eireeny said, "Mummy and daddy's put their home in Wallis" the big...he keeps all the people's home that's going abroad. I said... Oh bless her, I said to my dear Joe, I said, "She's gone by" he said, "Is she? Is she?" "They're going abroad." I said, "And they've just come back ain't they? They've been away five years and I've not seen his face." Well I couldn't do nothing being the wife, I couldn't do nothing. Well I never heard. I never heard, never heard a note, a letter, a airmail or a...anything whether dead, alive or buried or what. On the Christmas Eve a airmail come. I said, "Joe it's a letter!" He said, "Alright, alright." I said, "New Zealand." When I looked at the airmail as well I said, "Joe never in your life..." He said, "What's the matter now?" I said, "That part of New Zea-..." It's true what I'm going to say, Maori has not been discovered for us not yet. Only some of us in that country, Maori, wear all the grass skirts and all the different... It's quite true when I say, they wasn't in no Maori, she'd gone and got like they do in this country, you might have a few words for your daughter or something uh we have a box up here, you don't live here, but you're going to put that letter in that box. What's on that letter, that post, that's where it's come from isn't it? The proof in the pudding's in the eating of it, that's what she done. She got on a bus or something or a car, went to this big place in Maori, got the airmail there, had the stamp there, sent it onto England to me and my Joe. Well I was so thrilled. "Oh..." I said, "Joe..." I said, "The money I'm saving won't be wasted." "What money you're saving? What money?" I said, "I've not touched his allowance all- all the time he was in the army." I made him 17 shillings a week allowance and believe me darling that's going to belong to me. I never touched that green paper until 1945. There was all that money to give him back. Well as the story went, I said, "They're in New Zealand Joe." "So what?" He said, "That's alright. You've got me. While you've got me you've got everything. When I'm gone, I don't know when I'm going to go" and he said...and this is what he said to me, darling, and I'm telling you the God full truth, "If I go first..." he says, "I know what your life is going to be" and I said, "If I go first Joe, I'll never have another man lay beside of me." You know mw, Billie. No no-one's never



going to let...and I've been there 23 years and I've kept my word. I've had it...I have, I've had a chance... no-one's going to lay their hand where my bed is. You can always come round and see me, there will be always a cup of tea and a bit of bread or something for you and I made a vow and I would never lay beside of another man and I never have. Now my son's been in New Zealand as far as I know, that's all I've had that airmail all those years.

Interviewer That was it? Nothing else but that letter?

Lally No. You know what she's done don't ya? Because I've laid out a lot of money to find them, useless. They changed their name. You're finished. You're finished. So I don't know what their name is now, but...

Interviewer So not even your granddaughter, you don't hear?

Lally No. They writ that...I fetched that and show as the airmail come to me with that Christmas card in it to the dear and the sweetest...and I could bash both their heads in. The dearest and sweetest grandma and granddad in the world. Oh Jesus in heaven. No that was only her made up and I've not ever had one single word. I went in person when I've been here. I went to New Zealand House, now the business they are there's frit- what you say, it's all in the bottom and, "I presume..." he said, "You're Mrs Forbes?" And I said, "Yes sir." So he said, "You want to know the whereabouts...?" I said, "I don't want him, I just want to know whether he's alright." "Well..." he said, "Straight forward talk..." he said, "It's a straightforward question." I know he's got it all down on that thing whatever it is, but I didn't care because I knew that it was the truth that I was saying. So I said, "And why is this...?" I said, "Look sir..." I said, "He's the only one I have ever had and..." I said, "I've been here nine years here...in here..." and I said, "And I've searched I think everywhere." He said, "Look Mrs Forbes..." he said, "You see all these cabinets in here? They're all situated on the same book as you are. They want their mum or they want their dad or they want nothing to do with the family. All these big brackets that you're one of them, I'm going through it now." I said, "Well I don't want to know what they got. If I only knew whether he was alive." Well he said, "You can't go no further in here." He said, "Eventually he must've gone..." So, "No..." I said, "He re-joined after coming out after doing...re-joined the army." Now he's full...as far as I know. She was full sergeant when she come out on the Ak-At guns, but got three of those things,

but he wouldn't entertain it. He wanted to be...as he always was because I don't know about now whether he's dead or alive darling, I don't know, but after the Salvation Army he went somewhere else and it's cost me a lot of money and it's been useless. I should've gone to them in that place up there. He said, "Look all these big things is full of one of you." So I said, "I'm quite satisfied sir with what you tell me." Just as heart rendering. "Nine years ago..." I said, "I've been a widow." I said, "22 years..." I said, "But I'm happy" and he said, "And how do you live?" I said, "Well it may be peculiar what I'm going to say..." I said, "But you could refer to a place called Field Lane. I'm quite well." I said, "I live there in a certain extent and only sleep on Redden Street," I said, "Well I have my food there, I have my breakfast, my dinner, tea in the afternoon." They always buy me something to take home of a night because they know that I wouldn't disturb any food I wouldn't...no I say thank you for everything. I've been here nine years October and everybody in here loves me, everybody.

Interviewer It's a smashing place isn't it?

Lally Do you know what I had for my birthday yesterday?

Interviewer No.

Lally I got a personal friend that she was with me when I had my oper- two operations that is...

**[END OF FIRST AUDIO FILE]**

**[START OF SECOND AUDIO FILE]**

Lally And they took me to Bath Hospital so that's what they done. They had to take a bit off the tummy to put on the femurs to make a new femurs, but I'm alright. I don't know, I think it's because I'm like...I'm truthful and look, dear, you tell a lie, you've got to tell another one to cover it over. I don't say a lie to get anything for anybody or tell a lie to help yourself, now that's a lie for trying, but not- not because you want to be like...but once they know that you've had it, you know, they'll never believe you again and I've been here nine years and I know Mrs Brian, I know all her children and her son brought me a beautiful card yesterday. I had a little round basket of flowers. I had a £3.00 box of Dairy Maid chocolate. Another fella here gave me a pound before I left on Friday. The nurse I had in Bath, the staff nurse, she's left there and she's a midwife now. She's married. She married a doctor from Bath. Now

she's got three children of her own. Alison's named after me. Now she sent me a five pound note in a letter. I had one for my birthday, a letter, and another Christmas and there's always money in it, but this being a special day, she sent me a big one. Now in here even, even in here I've had uh another lady who come to...uh come through does my work and that not thirty she brought me a pair of- pair of filled pillow cases and uh somebody brought me a big linen tablecloth. What else did...? Oh and I had two pairs or long satin ((unintelligible)) and one of the men give me a pound. ((Unidentified person enters the room)) Hello me darling! It's not the truth! Not the truth.

Female Voice How was your birthday yesterday? Happy Birthday, how are you?

Lally I had a lovely birthday yesterday.

Female Voice Happy Birthday.

Lally I was 90 yesterday.

Female Voice I know, it's beautiful.

Lally I had a big basket of flowers like that with 90 on it and four- four tea...no, no four 20 candles and one in the middle. You know Mary and her husband came? And they bought me a £3.00 box of Dairy Maid. Them two young ladies out there go and bought me a box of...another box of chocolates, and a lad bought me something else and I had 16 cards, but not one from my own family, never mind. Not one.

Female Voice From your own family?

Lally Nope. God knows if he does come he'll send you a messenger. I don't have to worry about people. He'll give you all you need.

**[END OF SECOND AUDIO FILE, INTERVIEW AND TRANSCRIPT]**