

Ella Mallett (music accompanist) b. 15/4/1894 - ?

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BIOGRAPHY: Ella Mallett was employed at the New Gallery Cinema, Regent Street as part of the orchestra from May 1914 until the advent of sound. From 1930 she worked at the head office of Bloom's Cinema Circuit, until her retirement. She is interviewed at the Cinematograph Trades' Benevolent Fund rest home, 'Glebelands'. **SUMMARY:** In this interview, Mallett talks to Roy Fowler, primarily about her memories of working at the New Gallery, accompanying silent features. She recalls specific films such as *The Battle of the Somme* (1916) and *My Lady's Dress* (1917), and the musical effects used for these films. She talks generally of her memories of the New Gallery staff and of cinema-going in the silent period. She also discusses the history of the CTBF and the atmosphere of 'Glebelands' where she spent her retirement. While it is brief and a little sketchy (Mallett was 94 when the interview was conducted) this interview gives a remarkable insight into the life of a cinema musician.

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Interview Date: 1988-06-15

Interviewer: Roy Fowler

Interviewee: Ella Mallett

Tape 1, Side 1

[N.B. side 3 of another interview takes up about a quarter of side 1 of this tape, before the above interview starts.]

Roy Fowler : It's still the 15th June, 1988. We're still at Glebelands and we're about to talk to Ella Mallett, who has a long and distinguished connection with our film industry. I trust this isn't too un-gentlemanly to ask you, but may I ask when and where you were born?

Ella Mallett : I was born in London - English mother and Channel Island Jersey father.

Roy Fowler : Right. And would you care to tell us when?

Ella Mallett : 15th April 1894.

Roy Fowler : Ah.

Ella Mallett : I'm 94 years of age.

Roy Fowler : Right. You would have been what, two months younger than my father, who was born in February that year. No, he was born in April, he was born in April. He always said he was born April 1. But anyway, I have a feeling that there is an enormous amount of information you can give us, but you can tell us your career in the film industry, the film business?

Ella Mallett : Well I went to the New Gallery, was interviewed by Terry Siskin[?] and Louis Levy in the May of 1914, just before the first Great War. Of course I carried on with the musical life until sound came in.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : And when sound came in, well I really didn't know what to think. Life had ended! So I put an advertisement in The Cinema, the weekly magazine. And I had an answer from Chancery Lane Ballroom [Bowmans/Beaumans?] Theatres. I bet you know [May Line????], don't you - there she is! And I remained with them until I retired.

Roy Fowler : Right. Can you tell us about what you did?

Ella Mallett : Well, mostly clerical and inspecting. I was between the managers, reporting to the office, checking and all that kind of thing. Fascinating, but not like the music.

Roy Fowler : No, well tell us about the music then. You were trained as a musician?

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : Right.

Ella Mallett : Well music then was something difficult to describe. I was describing it to Ted Parker at Cornwall and he was down talking all the business and as old as I.

Roy Fowler : What in a theatre orchestra was he? Or also in cinemas?

Ella Mallett : Both. And he's as old as I. And he spoke about a certain film, and I said, "Well I think it must have been before." It was the first film that Lon Chaney did - The Hunchback. You know him.

Roy Fowler : Lon Chaney, yes.

Ella Mallett : And I said, "We had no score for the last scenes where he's climbing, that poor, deformed creature." I said, "We simply struck chords with the violins muted. And as he climbed each step, we struck another chord. And the timp. quietly rolling. And as he got higher we moved the mutes. When he grabbed the bell we stopped dead." And I said, "It had a most dramatic effect."

Roy Fowler : And that was all extemporaneous was it? Not scored?

Ella Mallett : That's Louis Levy you see. He was absolutely a wonderful person.

Roy Fowler : Right.

Ella Mallett : He went to Gainsborough.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : After a break.

Roy Fowler : He was their Musical Director for a long time was he not?

Ella Mallett : Yes he was. Very clever. But they all were. Terry Siskin[?] was dead. But, he had a heart attack and died in the band room.

Roy Fowler : Oh did he?

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : I hope the film wasn't responsible.

Ella Mallett : So of course Levy took complete Musical Director, you see. Otherwise he was first violin.

Roy Fowler : Yes. Let's go back to the New Gallery, when you first went there. How did you get the job there?

Ella Mallett : Well I had an audition, I got a smack on the back and I was told to come and meet the crew.

Roy Fowler : And was that part of an orchestra or were you solo? How many people in the orchestra?

Ella Mallett : Oh, if I remember and count them rightly I think there were nine.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : Without the organ.

Roy Fowler : A-huh. Oh there was a pipe organ - or an electric organ?

Ella Mallett : A Compton.

Roy Fowler : A Compton, yes. Did it come up from the pit?

Ella Mallett : Oh no. They hadn't been born then! [laughs]

Roy Fowler : No, that's a shame. I used to enjoy that. The mighty illuminated Wurlitzer.

Ella Mallett : The Wurlitzer hadn't arrived.

Roy Fowler : No.

Ella Mallett : No.

Roy Fowler : Were you an organist yourself?

Ella Mallett : Oh no. My feet are too small and they go through the...

Roy Fowler : I see, right.

Ella Mallett : No.

Unidentified : Where did you get your musical training?

Ella Mallett : Well, at a school, musical school [????], by a German, Dr Slazenger. Lively young man.

Roy Fowler : What are your earliest memories of films? Any special film that you can remember from when you went to the Gallery?

Ella Mallett : A film that always impressed me very much was Gladys Cooper in My Lady's Dress.

Roy Fowler : Yes. That was a silent picture?

Ella Mallett : Well I'm recounting that now, I don't know. It was very clever. Did you see it?

Roy Fowler : No, no, I don't think so, no. What do you remember about it?

Ella Mallett : Well you see, when she appeared, she was in full evening dress and her cloak was thrown over a chair. And then it was like camea you saw the outfit being made, and the silk being silk worms and all. And each little cameo was a little story, sometimes told a little dramatic, others romantic and going from Lyons in France and then you got the fur in Russia with all the dog teams and the curing because that was fur needed curing. And the lace being made in Brussels, and of course the diamonds were in Holland, Amsterdam. And the flowers that she wore in her corsage was the poor little crippled girl's of Whitechapel. And when all the story was put together, that was the final, and she stood again in her ball dress.

Roy Fowler : Do you remember when the film was made?

Ella Mallett : Well it must have been made between '14 and '17.

Roy Fowler : Yes? It would be interesting to know if it survives.

Ella Mallett : And Samuelson's made it.

Roy Fowler : G.B.? G.B. Samuelson? Samuelson father?

Ella Mallett : [indecipherable] [laughs].

Roy Fowler : Yes indeed, the founding father. That sounds a bit of a busman's honeymoon. Did you enjoy watching the pictures?

Ella Mallett : Well I enjoyed every moment because it was something about we were all together, we sort of lived that. It was very exacting on all of us. Some very strange...anyhow, you know. But there was an art in that.

Roy Fowler : You're talking now of what? The music or the silent film?

Ella Mallett : The music.

Roy Fowler : The music.

Ella Mallett : All kinds of people with no idea at all. But must have been a very quiet and exacting study for both Terry Siskin[?] and Emile, which was his brother in law.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : And he must have worked everything out and everything to time. And so of course you followed all his pencilling on the score, and cutting. I've always thought, wouldn't the public like to see a silent picture. I thought we had as many thrills as they have now!

Roy Fowler : Oh I think that's true. But do you know that a man called Kevin Brownlow and a musician called Carl Davis have been working at restoring that kind of experience, with a full orchestra, but they've done it for films such as Lillian Gish in *The Wind* and *Napoleon*. And it's a marvellous, marvellous experience to see a silent film, a good print, and the orchestra, a full orchestra and an exciting score. Louis Levy seems to have had a great influence on your professional career.

Ella Mallett : Yes I think so. Somehow we were all in harmony. We lived the picture, although it was just a glance. We'd run through, but I mean to say you took your cue from him in every way, although you had [knew?] the score.

Roy Fowler : And would he conduct every performance?

Ella Mallett : Please?

Roy Fowler : Would he conduct every performance?

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : How many a day?

Ella Mallett : Three.

Roy Fowler : Three a day, right.

Ella Mallett : Well that's the musicians isn't it. An hour and a half, an hour and a half, an hour and a half.

Roy Fowler : Is it? Right.

Ella Mallett : Four and a half hours a day.

Roy Fowler : What would you have been paid in 1914 for a week's work? You were paid by the week I suppose?

Ella Mallett : Ah-huh.

Roy Fowler : Do you remember what they paid?

Ella Mallett : I forget. It wasn't a fortune.

Roy Fowler : No. But musicians have been reasonably paid I hope, haven't they would you say?

Ella Mallett : Well I was perfectly satisfied.

Roy Fowler : You were happy, that's good.

Ella Mallett : Yes, more than happy.

Roy Fowler : Right. Would you think perhaps it was a pound a day? More? Less?

Ella Mallett : I suppose it would be more.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : Good gracious me. Do you know we didn't think of money? When we did it all the time.

Roy Fowler : Not at all? No.

Ella Mallett : We just gave ourselves up to the performance.

Roy Fowler : What would there be? A matinee and an early evening performance and then late evening?

Ella Mallett : Yes, then a break, which of course came from the trio in the - up in the tea room. And then they had there. And then of course the two evening shows you see, with a break between. But the feature film was not as long as they are today but the news of course - there was no radio. The public relied on it. Scraps of reel. And anyway, the news and the travel picture, was more than valued. You see they go out now. But many of the people, they hadn't been out of their villages. Then they suddenly found that they were living in a big world. Oh yes that was. And when there was an opportunity - not often - there was a little effects. We could use the tubular bells, you see, if there was a church in the distance, then you could simply - it made it alive!

Roy Fowler : Right. Did they use things like birdsong and...

Ella Mallett : Oh yes, the old [indecipherable]. Oh yes!

Roy Fowler : Yes? Right. Were you called upon ever to extemporise, or was it always scored?

Ella Mallett : Oh at times, yes.

Roy Fowler : And how would you approach that?

Ella Mallett : Well, you'd memorise all...

Roy Fowler : You'd memorise the picture?

Ella Mallett : Yes!

Roy Fowler : And what - you'd play with one eye on the picture?

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : Or two eyes [laughs].

Ella Mallett : One eye! [laughs].

Roy Fowler : What sort of house was the New Gallery? Was it a classy house? What sort of pictures did they play?

Ella Mallett : What, the New Gallery?

Roy Fowler : Hmm.

Ella Mallett : We had royalty there.

Roy Fowler : Yes? So you had important pictures?

Ella Mallett : I don't know who chose them, I'm sure!

Roy Fowler : I don't know who owned it then, I remember going to the New Gallery in the 30s when they played all the Disney pictures. Snow White was there I remember.

Ella Mallett : I would say that that was finished, when sound came in.

Roy Fowler : When sound came in - well you would wouldn't you? [laughs].

Ella Mallett : When sound came in, the beauty of the picture went.

Roy Fowler : Right, we'll come to sound in a minute but I'm, curious about the films that may have stayed in your memory from the silent days. Did they get American pictures?

Ella Mallett : We showed The Battle of the Somme.

Roy Fowler : Yes, well that's a famous one.

Ella Mallett : That played for some time. Of course, I'd never seen such a thing as that. Some of the shots, of course, were taken at the Front. And we had the opportunity in that one in the scene where all those wagons with the wounded men - was able to play Beethoven's Pathetique.

Roy Fowler : Yes. Right.

Ella Mallett : That made them weep.

Roy Fowler : And did you have the songs from the trenches too in the score, do you think?

Ella Mallett : No, too heavily dramatic for that.

Roy Fowler : Ah, right.

Ella Mallett : No. But of course we had Mary Pickford.

Roy Fowler : What was she in?

Ella Mallett : She played in The Poor Little Rich Girl. What did they play? I'm not who the ladies were, but I think... what were they called? I'm not sure because her first tiny picture was Her First Biscuits. You see they used to talk of what happened before and in 1914 after all, pictures were the respectable thing.

Roy Fowler : Oh yes.

Ella Mallett : Because that was what made me smile. I was told I'd come into business and now it was respectable. Well I, being a silly, I took it on the respectability of Regent Street [laughs]. I didn't know what had happened in America with the Trust, you see! Which had ended. I heard all that...

Roy Fowler : The Motion Picture Trust - you know about that do you?

Ella Mallett : Ooh yes, I of course! Laemmle and Fox...

Roy Fowler : Right. Did you follow that at the time or is that something you've read about since?

Ella Mallett : Please?

Roy Fowler : I say, did you know about that at the time or is it something you've read about since?

Ella Mallett : No. I heard it as I went on you see.

Roy Fowler : I see, you're very interested in the history of films with that book that's been given to you for your birthday.

Ella Mallett : Yes!

Roy Fowler : Yes, a lovely book. 'Happy Birthday Hollywood' - I don't know of that, I must try and get a copy.

Ella Mallett : They've had 100 years of film.

Roy Fowler : Since we're recording on audiotape, I won't take the time to look at a book now because that will baffle the people listening to the tape in future years. But I will mention the book - it's called 'Happy Birthday Hollywood: One Hundred Years of Magic - A Commemorative Edition'. Very handsome too.

Ella Mallett : You won't get it in England.

Roy Fowler : No, no, no.

Ella Mallett : It came...

Roy Fowler : No, I do get books from America, so I must get that. A few more questions about the New Gallery -how many were in the orchestra? Do you remember how many pieces in the orchestra?

Ella Mallett : I think there were nine.

Roy Fowler : Yes? So that must have been a very smart little ensemble playing away. Did you make a nice sound?

Ella Mallett : ...very satisfactory.

Roy Fowler : Did the musicians ever get together for themselves in those days? Did they ever...?

Ella Mallett : With the first Great War we went through you see...

Roy Fowler : It wasn't a happy time for anyone was it?

Ella Mallett : It was a very exacting time. And - but still - not much happened, except we went on the roof to see what was happening. Which you wouldn't in the last war! [laughs]

Roy Fowler : Do you remember other cinemas in London from that time, besides the New Gallery? Was the London Pavillion - it was not a cinema then was it? It was Cochran's house I think.

Ella Mallett : No, that was a playhouse.

Roy Fowler : Yes, C.B. Cochran I think was there wasn't he?

Ella Mallett : Marble Arch Pavillion...

Roy Fowler : The Regal wasn't it? Was the Tivoli still yet a movie house? I think that came later.

Ella Mallett : That's one of the old ones. No doubt there were no end of smaller houses which I didn't know.

Roy Fowler : But the New Gallery was purpose built as a cinema was it?

Ella Mallett : Well it must have been built two years, I understand it was built in 1912.

Roy Fowler : I didn't realise it was that old to tell you the truth.

Ella Mallett : Yes, I think you could look that up and check it.

Roy Fowler : Yes. It's a religious place now I believe still isn't it?

Ella Mallett : Ah. I'll tell you what frightened me, they said there's a Woolworths or something.

Roy Fowler : Oh.

Ella Mallett : Oh, it's had a checkered career!

Roy Fowler : Yes it has. It's been closed as a cinema for a long time.

Ella Mallett : Of course they couldn't alter the front. You mustn't.

Roy Fowler : No, no.

Ella Mallett : I don't know what they've done now. But I know they didn't because it had a small vestibule.

Roy Fowler : Right, and one went downstairs did one not?

Ella Mallett : Yes. But they had a very nice circle.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : And a little royal box in a silly place. The screen was on that wall and the box was over there.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : So I mean, they got the side view! But we had a royal performance in aid of Queen Alexandra's [?]day.

Roy Fowler : Who came to that?

Ella Mallett : Queen Mary.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : Queen Alexandra.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : The Princess Royal.

Roy Fowler : A-huh. It was a turnout!

Ella Mallett : The Duchess of Schleswig-Holstein and a regular patron was ex-King Manuel of Portugal.

Roy Fowler : What was the film?

Ella Mallett : Oh...well you've got those in the Institute. I gave them two royal programmes, and I gave them to Mr Ralph Bromhead and John Scott.

Roy Fowler : Well they'll be saved then, they'll be preserved in the archives.

Ella Mallett : Only four pages.

Roy Fowler : Right, I would think they're probably unique - not many surviving copies of those.

Ella Mallett : You see, all the ladies of title sold it!

Roy Fowler : Yes...that sounds...

Ella Mallett : And there's all their names - about eight of them. But they're there.

Roy Fowler : That sounds another world - 'a lady of title'.

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : A long time ago. Your interest in history - I gather you are the expert on Glebelands Miss Mallett.

Ella Mallett : Well, Glebelands had been open 22 years!

Roy Fowler : Yes, how long...

Ella Mallett : ...but of course I was there when the fund started you see.

Roy Fowler : Tell us about it.

Ella Mallett : Oh, the tragedy of Friese-Greene.

Roy Fowler : Yes, was that the start of the benevolent fund?

Ella Mallett : Well, what happened Mr Reginald Bromhead, Mr Peel and Mr Brooke-Wilkinson, they began to think of things, and between 1921 and '24, the CTBF was founded.

Roy Fowler : Right, and that was directly a result of Friese-Greene dying in straits, in privation?

Ella Mallett : Yes, in the Gaumont rooms[?], yes. It was very sad.

Roy Fowler : Very sad - disgraceful.

Ella Mallett : It is disgraceful. And sometimes when I hear them grumble now, in fact do you remember John Brown you know, Mr Brown. Did you know John Brown?

Unidentified : The Cinema Veteran's secretary wasn't he?

Roy Fowler : I didn't.

Ella Mallett : Did you know, Charles?

Unidentified : Didn't know him personally, no.

Ella Mallett : Oh no. And I said to him sometimes, "I think they ought to know. When people know, they have a different opinion." I said, "Shamed, we were." And then he got his son to write a little paragraph. He didn't say about the Gaumont [common?] rooms and exactly what happened as we knew, but he did put, "He died in poverty". Well I thought, "I don't know whether that's any good." But you see, this is voluntary contribution, which of course was - we all felt, I don't know about everyone else, but I suppose they must have done because we've visitors from the north of England. "What did you do?" "Well", I said, "the day..." (and I'm not sure whether it was the day of the funeral, or the day of the memorial - that I'm not sure of - I know he's buried at Highgate). But I said, "At a certain time, by slide, the audience were told that we were going to black the screen and would they stand for two minutes' silence for the inventor of cinematography." We used the word 'kine' then.

Roy Fowler : Yes, in its original Greek form.

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : Did you know William Friese-Greene? Had you met him?

Ella Mallett : No...no I hadn't. But I met the - in fact she hasn't gone only a few years - the wife - you know Robert Paul?

Roy Fowler : No, I'm a youngster.

Ella Mallett : Now let me see, what did she say? Her husband was Polish, although he had an English name. He was Bert Bernard[?], Robert Paul was the Chief.

Roy Fowler : Oh I beg your pardon, Paul, I thought you said 'Ball', oh yes. Yes indeed, a famous name. Yes, I beg your pardon.

Ella Mallett : She came in one morning with a playbill of the old Alhambra, which now is the Odeon, Leicester Square. I didn't know anything about that. Nothing... And she brought this in and was all the thing, and then at the bottom, about a third, "The new wonder, the cinematograph. Inventor, William Friese-Greene". Well of course it was very short, and whatever the little film was, it was used as a chaser. [laughs]

Roy Fowler : Yes. But it didn't work as chaser did it? They all stayed.

Ella Mallett : [Laughs] Yes, they did! But it was something new. Well they went on because - she was widowed when she came here, but just before the second great war, he was looking at the stalls in the Caledonian Road. I'm not sure where it is, I've heard about it. And he saw three tiny film cans, you know, what we had trailers in. He looked in and of course, no operator, he bought them for a few pence. And he took them home and they were all perfect - silent you see. And that film showed every bridge on the Rhine with a caption underneath...

Roy Fowler : Oh really? [Laughs.]

Ella Mallett : He said to his wife, "Louis[?] we're going to the War Office. I'm going to give this." And he gave it. You should see the letters she had it back.

Roy Fowler : Who was that now?

Ella Mallett : Mrs Rentool[?].

Roy Fowler : Ah-huh, right.

Ella Mallett : And she was the wife of Bert Bernard[?] that partnered Robert Paul. And this film would be shown in every training camp in England. When I told Mr Box, as she went away to a nursing home, I said, "See if you can get it." I said, "I begged of her to give it to the film." I said, "It belongs to the film trade" but she couldn't. She just put a kiss on it and put it back.

Roy Fowler : Oh dear oh dear. Well - someone's knocking at your door [break in recording] Right. So possibly that film is lost for all time.

Ella Mallett : Not the film.

Roy Fowler : No?

Ella Mallett : No - where it'll be, history - it's in the Imperial War Museum isn't it?

Roy Fowler : Right, yes, well either there or the National Film Archive I would have thought. One or the other.

Ella Mallett : Well it was at Pinewood wasn't it?

Roy Fowler : Was it? What, the archive?

Ella Mallett : They took everything over there didn't they? I think you made some MOI Pictures?

Roy Fowler : Yes, during the war, yes.

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : But it wouldn't be there now.

Ella Mallett : They didn't make a film for six years.

Roy Fowler : It would be at Aston Clinton...well they were making propaganda films...Desert Victory, things like that.

Ella Mallett : Yes there they were.

Roy Fowler : Yes, Crown Film Unit, yes.

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : Before we come onto Glebelands, there's one thing I should have asked you before, and that is the advent of sound - the end of the silents and the beginning of the talkies - your memories of how it happened. It came as a great blow obviously?

Ella Mallett : '27 in America, '28 in England.

Roy Fowler : Right.

Ella Mallett : And there you are.

Roy Fowler : But how did it affect you personally? How did you begin first of all to know that your career of twenty years - well not twenty years, about fourteen years - was in jeopardy?

Ella Mallett : [laughs] I was told that the red light's gone up. So they asked me and two strings, a cellist and - would I do a little season on the coast, which we did and enjoyed it. Well that was the finale, I thought.

Roy Fowler : There wasn't even a transitional period where some houses still had music?

Ella Mallett : No, O-U-T everybody - hundreds.

Roy Fowler : Terrible.

Ella Mallett : And some were of course trained for management, like Mrs Wilkinson's husband. He was a pianist.

Roy Fowler : Which Mrs Wilkinson is that?

Ella Mallett : She's a resident here.

Roy Fowler : Oh she's here, right.

Ella Mallett : With her husband, he trained for management. And later on they had a cottage and then he died and she's here. But no, I was fortunate when I came back and put the advertisement in there. I hadn't much to offer, just a musical career. And, except that I held a certificate for mathematics at school - but, and then I had the answer and I kept the appointment and a Mr H. B. Groom. After a moment he came in, he said, "I think you're the lady I could train for what I want."

Roy Fowler : And how long did you spend with the company? [pause] How long, how much longer thereafter did you spend with the company?

Ella Mallett : [laughs] Thirty years!

Roy Fowler : Thirty years. I hope they gave you a good pension.

Ella Mallett : [indecipherable].

Roy Fowler : No, no. Ah, we're coming to the end of that side, so the best thing I think is [break in recording] This is side 2.

Ella Mallett : The Glebelands that you see today, not the aftercare, but this new wing, is Reginald Bromhead's memorial.

Roy Fowler : Right. Was it his bequest?

Ella Mallett : I was invited to the opening on July 12th 1958.

Roy Fowler : Was it his bequest?

Ella Mallett : Please?

Roy Fowler : His bequest?

Ella Mallett : I couldn't say.

Roy Fowler : Or someone gave the money, though, in his memory.

Ella Mallett : Oh I expect so. Yes you see, I've given all that to someone that suddenly died, thinking that I would be the first, being old. And said to Mr Barnet, that's gone - because he was deep the business. I said, "If anything happens, give all this to Mr Gass[?]." He's on the Committee, you know. And I said, "It belongs to the cinema." And I - and there was everything there. It was - everyone that donated, there's residents in this house that were before me.

Roy Fowler : So now, he's passed on, and you've no idea where that material has gone. Is there any way do you think it could be traced? How long since he died?

Ella Mallett : Barney? Barney hasn't been gone long - this year.

Roy Fowler : This year, oh we must see if there is any way in which we can...

Ella Mallett : You see we had breakfast together and he just walked for a little walk and...

Roy Fowler : Where do you think he kept these records - here?

Ella Mallett : I know he treasured everything.

Roy Fowler : So...would they have been kept here do you think?

Ella Mallett : No, it was in the cottage.

Roy Fowler : It's in one of the cottages.

Ella Mallett : But he was here when he died.

Roy Fowler : Right. But the stuff would be in the cottage. I'll ask Mrs Randall if there's any way of tracing that.

Ella Mallett : Well he's got a relation, and I wonder if when they cleared his things - because I knew he treasured them.

Roy Fowler : Well yes, but people destroy things without realising their value. But we'll see what we can find out about that.

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : Do you know anything about the history of the house itself, before it became...

Ella Mallett : Yes, as far as I can tell you - is it 1896 they were bought?

Roy Fowler : 1897.

Ella Mallett : '97. Well it was...

Roy Fowler : So you were what - three years old?

Ella Mallett : It was built two years after Lord Ormond's place, the next estate. And it was built, as I was told, for one of the retiring governors of Australia. A Leslie Wilson. I think that's the correct name. The same architect built both houses. He had four sons - lost them all in the Boer War, so the house must have been sold or rented, I don't know. But Sir William Jury, who lived in Caversham, and of course you know Jury's Imperial Pictures.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : He always said, "If ever that house comes on the market, I'm going to buy it for the purpose it is." Well it came on the market I understand in '34. And he bought it. And in '36 it was opened and anyway - for the purpose it is, the old house.

Roy Fowler : Did the Fund have a rest home before that?

Ella Mallett : Please?

Roy Fowler : Did the Fund run a rest home before that, or this was the first rest home that they had? The Benevolent Fund?

Ella Mallett : Oh, this was the first.

Roy Fowler : This was the first, right.

Ella Mallett : Oh no. Mr Reginald - always the cost. Mr Reginald was away when we opened the Craggs at Morecambe. That was opened in '47 wasn't it?

Roy Fowler : That's the one in the north?

Ella Mallett : Yes, yes. We had to give that one up because when Bert Bernard died at Morecambe, they were resident there, the husband and wife, and Mr Reginald Bromhead to the funeral. And so...

Roy Fowler : Was he a friend of yours - Reginald Bromhead.

Ella Mallett : I didn't...

Roy Fowler : You didn't know him.

Ella Mallett : Only like the business, you knew so many names.

Roy Fowler : Yes, well his is a famous one, very famous one.

Ella Mallett : Well because, now Mr Ralph's gone. But I do know where the daughter is. Mrs Box, she's safely back in England, which I'm very glad. But - and living in the family house at [6, Astley Park Road] Walton-on-Thames!

Roy Fowler : So there. They seem secure as a family then.

Ella Mallett : Oh they're a great team. So then Glebelands started as I say, as you see it now, without the aftercare, in '36.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : So when the old house was used, the chemicals for the residents. More residents than there are now - must have been. And, because the matron only had a bed sitting-room, the splendid people. And right up to '58 when it was opened. So then of course the idea was that every resident should have a room in the building, which of course it is. When this room was built, that gave them 18 rooms, and another if they take the billiard room, which was part of the dining room, and put it up on the roof, you see!

Roy Fowler : I imagine that was a great excitement to everyone.

Ella Mallett : Oh must have been.

Roy Fowler : All that - yes.

Ella Mallett : It must have been.

Roy Fowler : How long have you been here now?

Ella Mallett : Well I came in 1st September 1958.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : And I'm still here.

Roy Fowler : So doing some quick mental - you're the one with the mathematics certificate. Um I'm trying to - um '58, 30 years, 30 years. Mercy me!

Ella Mallett : Full of memories.

Roy Fowler : I'll bet. Who were some of the people who've been fellow resident with you? Names we might know?

Ella Mallett : Well I'm sorry to say the one that would have loved to have talked to you only passed away this year. A Mr - oh dear, what's his name? Mr [Floop?].

Roy Fowler : Yes...

Ella Mallett : He was here.

Roy Fowler : What had his work been?

Ella Mallett : Well, technical.

Roy Fowler : Right.

Ella Mallett : And he used to arrange all sorts of things. He wasn't resident, he was still [?].

Roy Fowler : Ah, right.

Ella Mallett : And - where did I put that now? [pause] He gave me a postcard of Glebelands before it was officially opened. This side was finished but yes I must show you.

Roy Fowler : Well be careful of the microphone. Why don't we leave that until we've stopped recording, once we've taken your microphone off.

Ella Mallett : So it was a wonderful elegant opening - dignified. And so pretty.

Roy Fowler : You represent a previous and a more gentle culture I suspect.

Ella Mallett : Well it was. It's only the last few years that it's so greatly altered. And of course the Lord Mayor of London, with all his retinue, the Mayor of Wokingham, and all gilt chairs for the visitors.

Roy Fowler : It must have been quite a do.

Ella Mallett : It was [RF laughs]. I mean what surprised me because I was, knew nothing, and I was feeling not too happy and the first person that the steward brought as they came through the gap in the hedge, you see - and J. Arthur looked at me and he said, "Hello!"

Roy Fowler : Now, tell us about J. Arthur, where did you know him from?

Ella Mallett : The Red Cross.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : When he wasn't in the business.

Roy Fowler : When?

Ella Mallett : Only financially...

Roy Fowler : He was just still a flour miller.

Ella Mallett : Yes, we were both in the Red Cross, voluntary workers.

Roy Fowler : This was when? In the First World War?

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : Was it?

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : I think that's a side of Rank that probably is not known much about.

Ella Mallett : That's his private life. And there were financing [???]. And he was with Miss Latter - you know the Latters, he was the chief of the Red Cross depot, he was.

Roy Fowler : So what - you were a little Red Cross mafia were you? All getting together?

Ella Mallett : No...

Roy Fowler : I'm teasing you.

Ella Mallett : All needlework.

Roy Fowler : Yes, not raffia but mafia.

Ella Mallett : Countess Ferris detachment, the officers' section. Springbank House on the north side of Clapham Common.

Roy Fowler : Right.

Ella Mallett : And he used to come of course and see Miss Latter and then make a tour and see all the ladies all busy.

Roy Fowler : What exactly did Arthur Rank do for or with the Red Cross?

Ella Mallett : Goodness knows, I expect he was - he was genuinely interested. He was a thoroughly good man.

Roy Fowler : But he remembered you after almost 40 years?

Ella Mallett : Oh goodness me yes and I was in uniform! I was surprised, but I felt so much better.

Roy Fowler : What can you tell us about him?

Ella Mallett : Very little because I mean to say he didn't have - he made a few religious films of his own. I don't know where he showed them, whether they showed them in later years because I moved to Cinema House and into room 65, you see, for the circuit. And it appears he went to Hollywood and he must have seen all the tricks of the trade there.

Roy Fowler : Well I think they say that one of the problems with his religious films was that he couldn't get them shown and this is why he began to get interested more and more in the film business and eventually he ended up owning almost all of it.

Ella Mallett : I mean it was growing and growing and growing.

Roy Fowler : They used to say, "There's Methodism in his madness."

Ella Mallett : Hmmm, he was a very good man, well then he bought that house, Hetherwood Hall - Heatherwood I think?

Roy Fowler : Hetherden, where Pinewood is. Hetherden House.

Ella Mallett : Well he called it Pinewood.

Roy Fowler : That's right, yes.

Ella Mallett : He wasn't going to have any Hollywood, or any other 'wood'. And there were so many pine trees, he called it Pine tree.

Roy Fowler : Hetherden Hall.

Ella Mallett : Pinewood. And at that time of course I think he'd learned much and seen much. Pinewood was lovely to go to.

Roy Fowler : In its prime oh yes. In its prime it was a lovely studio.

Ella Mallett : Oh yes, we had dinner there, it was lovely.

Roy Fowler : Well the old house is still there, the dining room, yes.

Ella Mallett : Pinewood itself, yes. And up in the gallery...

Roy Fowler : The minstrels' gallery, right.

Ella Mallett : So...

Roy Fowler : No, picture gallery.

Ella Mallett : It seemed very sad, and I was very upset when I heard of the fire. And I wrote to Mr Howard [NB Cyril Howard] and he wrote back and said, "Don't worry, it's all covered with insurance."

Roy Fowler : And they had it up again in almost...

Ella Mallett : "All we've lost is time."

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : "That's all we've lost."

Roy Fowler : They very quickly rebuilt it, the big stage.

Ella Mallett : But I understand that Cubby Broccoli is coming back.

Roy Fowler : Well the present one is being shot in Mexico, at Churubusco. Because...

Ella Mallett : Yes, well we're out of touch, somehow the studios don't take any notice of us now. Shepperton really at one time was always here. A friendly side, Shepperton were.

Roy Fowler : They're no longer studios in the old sense, they're now just four-walled conglomerations of buildings, and they're in different hands too. And they're owned by public companies that are answerable to their shareholders and so forth.

Ella Mallett : I'd like to see some of the old musicians that know what it's worth, like Ted Parker and myself. When they play now and I listen to very often the music. They miss half the notes, the speed they play. And I think, "It's wrong, it's wrong, you're missing the beauty of it." And yet they shouldn't.

Roy Fowler : You're talking now of music film tracks?

Ella Mallett : Yes, I mean...

Roy Fowler : Or just music playing generally do you mean?

Ella Mallett : No...

Roy Fowler : In films?

Ella Mallett : Hmmm.

Roy Fowler : But the recording techniques have never been better.

Ella Mallett : Oh sound is excellent.

Roy Fowler : It's beautiful isn't it?

Ella Mallett : Yes, but the speed they play! I mean to say that half the beauty's gone.

Roy Fowler : Yes. And it's no longer Beethoven's or Tchaikovsky's Pathétique.

Ella Mallett : [???

Roy Fowler : But it isn't is it? It's all rock and roll.

Ella Mallett : But I mean what they do is all wrong. They slide from one to the other. Every note should be heard.

Roy Fowler : Well, properly so, properly so.

Ella Mallett : Yes. So anyway...

Roy Fowler : You were undoubtedly a member of the Musicians' Union - do you have any...?

Ella Mallett : No I was not!

Roy Fowler : Were you not? Now that's very interesting. I thought everyone had to be.

Ella Mallett : No.

Roy Fowler : I thought if there were one closed shop for sure it was the Musicians.

Ella Mallett : No, Jerry Siskin[?] asked me, and I said, "Is it compulsory?" And he said, "Well, of course they're all continentals, you see." I said, "Well I don't want to be governed by someone sitting miles off, who doesn't know a crochet from a quaver!" I said, "I take my orders from yourself, or Mr Reece[?]." So he said, "You be freelance, and if they catch up with you, well... !" They didn't! [laughs]

Roy Fowler : I'm absolutely astonished. I would have thought they would insist upon jurisdiction over the London cinemas. That's a revelation that is.

Ella Mallett : I got away with it.

Roy Fowler : You did - yes. You were against unions generally?

Ella Mallett : Well, I don't know your profession, but I knew mine. Well I wouldn't want you to tell me what to do when I've got a trained musician to tell me.

Roy Fowler : You sound a very conservative lady, I bet you voted for Winston Churchill?

Ella Mallett : We were great friends.

Roy Fowler : Were you? Yes? Tell us about that.

Ella Mallett : Yes. I have some of his letters too.

Roy Fowler : Yes?

Ella Mallett : Yes!

Roy Fowler : How did you know him?

Ella Mallett : I didn't know him personally.

Roy Fowler : Oh I'm sorry, I thought you meant...

Ella Mallett : I knew Missy, Mrs Churchill. But I wrote to him on the Normandy Landings, after D-Day.

Roy Fowler : And he would write back?

Ella Mallett : That's safe with my people on the island.

Roy Fowler : Did he write back to you?

Ella Mallett : No he wrote to me.

Roy Fowler : I say, he wrote back to you, yes.

Ella Mallett : And then I wrote to him when they didn't want him any more. And his letter was very nice. Small, neat writing.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : He said, "I've had many letters expressing your opinion but I tried my best during the sad years." That's Winston Spencer Churchill. No, those letters are safe, in the church in Jersey.

Roy Fowler : Good, good. Are you still aware of politics today? Do you follow politics, what's happening?

Ella Mallett : What, in this crazy world?

Roy Fowler : This crazy world.

Ella Mallett : No! [laughs]

Roy Fowler : Yes, yes. It isn't a silent picture any more, up there on the screen is it? It's a bit different.

Ella Mallett : No.

Roy Fowler : Do you watch television? Is your eyesight still good?

Ella Mallett : Yes, excellent. No, it's too scrappy. That's what I find.

Roy Fowler : How do you spend your time?

Ella Mallett : Reading and I've got my radio, and I love channel 3.

Roy Fowler : Yes, Radio Three, right.

Ella Mallett : I did go to a film, three weeks ago, and saw Pinocchio.

Roy Fowler : Did you?

Ella Mallett : Yes, they said that it was the last fall[?]. We don't have in the summer you see. And they said, "It's Pinocchio." "Oh" I said, "I would love to see that again." So I did, because we've got a big screen you see...

Roy Fowler : This is here at Glebelands - not in the cinema in town?

Ella Mallett : In our own cinema.

Roy Fowler : In your own cinema, yes, yes. Tom's going to show us that next I think.

Ella Mallett : Yes, very nice. And so I saw that. But...

Roy Fowler : Well you must be one of England's oldest movie-goers I think.

Ella Mallett : I don't know.

Roy Fowler : Yes, surely.

Ella Mallett : Well if you'd have been here last year...you would have met a lady one hundred years old.

Roy Fowler : Yes?

Ella Mallett : And she was a [?].

Roy Fowler : What, in the box office? Or in the manager's office?

Ella Mallett : She was the - used to take the tickets, box office. And she talked about the royalty, as you would, "We went one better, we didn't do that." I said, "You did have Valentino and he stopped all the traffic in Oxford Street [laughs]." It was a personal visit.

Roy Fowler : Going back to the New Gallery - did you ever have personal appearances by stars?

Ella Mallett : No, not that I know of, no. Well of course the period of the war and then the decision - it puzzled me, those programmes are in the museum - on the front page of the open - it's very plain, "This theatre is loaned to BCT (full title there) by [?] and Grossmith." the two impresarios, you see?

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : So I take it myself, I don't know if I'm right because it was coming to the end and they were closing it as you know, and completely altering it, I went to Cinema House you see. And so... what happened then - and it was only Mr Fielder [NB William Fielder (interview no. 53)], he was a Pathe man, older than I!

Roy Fowler : Here?

Ella Mallett : No, yes, he's here.

Roy Fowler : Oh yes, Tom Peacock was telling us about him, I remember now, yes.

Ella Mallett : Did you have a chat with him?

Roy Fowler : No, no, no, it was Tom Peacock who was saying that there was a Pathe man here.

Ella Mallett : Yes, he's a Pathe man. Because he puzzled me, and I thought to myself, he spoke of the New Gallery. And I said to him, "Were the two Indians there in the vestibule?" "What Indians?" I said, "Yes, they stood in the vestibule. One of their names was Rodrigo and the other was Vincent." He knew nothing about it. So I thought "Well, you're a poor historian!" I told him they were there - London's number one we'll say the Gallery was - or considered back then. But the Coronation and the daily [?] was in 1911 and that opened in 1912. Well, the interest in Regent Street of all places - two indians. And when there was a royal performance there was double doors to the royal box - Vincent stood one and Rodrigo the other.

Roy Fowler : And there's no knowing where they've gone?

Ella Mallett : Well they weren't - he knew nothing about it. And I said, "What about the dome?" I said, "Is it moveable? It was moveable. Made wonderful air conditioning."

Roy Fowler : What did that open to? The sky?

Ella Mallett : It moved.

Roy Fowler : But did it open to the sky?

Ella Mallett : Well, no. It must have moved on rings I expect - moved to the side or something. And on a dark night, wonderful air-conditioning. He said, no he knew nothing about it!

Roy Fowler : Oh I didn't realise it was such a low building. I thought there was something above it.

Ella Mallett : No, can't have been because some of it was built on the back of those shops in Vigo Street - through to Heddon Street, you see. So there isn't a great deal, I don't know anyone else. And I didn't know that until I was testing the air and Mr Samuelson was not... presently we gave it up. [NB possibly she means Mr Fielder] And speaking to him, and he puzzled me. He said, "I was on war service." "Oh" I thought, "yes." He said, "I didn't go to the Gallery until '21."

Roy Fowler : Which Samuelson is this - G.B.?

Ella Mallett : Yes, when it changed over.

Roy Fowler : This is G.B. Samuelson do you mean?

Ella Mallett : No - Gaumont British.

Roy Fowler : No sorry, you said Samuelson, did you say Samuelson?

Ella Mallett : Mr Samuelson was President.

Roy Fowler : Yes, was that G.B. Samuelson?

Ella Mallett : I couldn't say.

Roy Fowler : I wondered if that were the father of Sidney and David. Because he was a producer and involved in a great many things. I don't know if you...

Ella Mallett : I don't think they could have been born, the boys.

Roy Fowler : I don't know if he were involved in exhibition.

Ella Mallett : Because I think David was 62 about two or three years ago.

Roy Fowler : Was he - right.

Ella Mallett : And I knew that because one of my directors which I'm still in touch with, Mr Doug Bloom and he had a full arterial bypass and I said, "Do you know how Bernard Bloom is?" So he said, "Don't worry about him." He said, "David had the same thing and he goes jogging." So I thought, "Well David had better be careful still." Anyway, I hadn't heard and Mr Bernard's all right. But that's how - and of course Mr Samuelson - Sidney Samuelson, who we were very, very fond of, and a lot are still living. What a wonderful family!

Roy Fowler : Indeed, indeed.

Ella Mallett : They had over three hundred years in the family, put them all together.

Roy Fowler : Yes, yes. And I think they're up to four generations now aren't they? Is it four?

Ella Mallett : Oh it must be.

Roy Fowler : At least three.

Ella Mallett : They've got a tiny girl, who was training for the brother.

Roy Fowler : Now tell me, do you think there are any other memories that we haven't covered - things that occur to you, that come to your mind?

Ella Mallett : I do remember sometimes and I go back - memories wonderful! They don't believe you! [laughs]

Roy Fowler : Oh, why not?

Ella Mallett : And I'm told it's very rare that I get someone that was - men like Barny, or the Reece technical side. But some of the residents that have passed on here...you see they were nearer in age and experience from all parts. Because there was a Mr Hayden here, and he came from somewhere in the North... Bolton! And he could speak of the funeral of Friese-Greene - "What did you do? Did you send a wreath?" I said, "Yes, most cinemas did." But I said, "I'm a

funny soul. I thought, 'You've covered him with flowers and all he had in his pocket was one and ten pence.'" I said, "That hurts me."

Roy Fowler : Yes, it was a bit late wasn't it to send flowers.

Ella Mallett : Very, very sad.

Roy Fowler : Indeed.

Ella Mallett : But...

Roy Fowler : You saw the film The Magic Box I imagine? Did you, do you remember the film?

Ella Mallett : No, I didn't see it.

Roy Fowler : I wondered if you thought that was a true picture.

Ella Mallett : But I did read that they still keep the plate over the door in his - where he used to live.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : And...

Roy Fowler : I'm sure there is a plaque now to his memory.

Ella Mallett : Yes, they've still got that.

Roy Fowler : And on my local cinema, that used to be the Odeon Chelsea, there is a plaque to him too, but it is late. You know, it didn't do him much good.

Ella Mallett : It's more distracting, but you don't study things you don't know. Everything has a beginning...

Roy Fowler : And indeed a continuation.

Ella Mallett : And so on, so it goes.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : Well it took them - I was 52 I think when I was checking all of the shows and the manager said to me, Mr Page, "Come and see this. I don't know a lot about this." He said, "We knew the tricks they got up to." So I said, "Well I've got to go into Box to check on the carpets and so on. I'll take it in." So I thought, "Well he won't be horrid to me I know." So I said, "Don't you think this is wonderful? Did you have anything to do with it?" I said, "Well some of them" and managed it. And when I went back I said, "It's all right, you can issue them." [Laughs]. I

remember, all those years before they could get a note down to the last minute. I don't think it ever will. But all those little things, and sometimes they would come in, "Oh so and so's going to happen." So sure of themselves. No. One step forward, two steps back all the time. It's been a fascinating business. When I opened my salary slip one week when I was with Mr Bloom, they were all gentlemen, and I found a ten pound note in it, so I wrote to him privately and thanked him. When he saw me he said, "My girl, don't thank me. It's we who thank you." He said, "If it was not for you people that have dedicated your lives to this business, there wouldn't have been a cinema."

Roy Fowler : Well he had a point.

Ella Mallett : And I thought to myself, "How very true." And the more I've been in it and had so much of those here, all differently engaged with their experiences...

Roy Fowler : Looking back, what would you have changed in your life?

Ella Mallett : I wouldn't have changed a minute of it.

Roy Fowler : Not a thing?

Ella Mallett : I'd live it all over again.

Roy Fowler : Talkies you would have done would you not?

Ella Mallett : In their time, not now. Because there's no confidence now. I had no fear, good gracious! When there was a royal performance, the King didn't go up until 11 o'clock. So the final playout was ten minutes past, and into the band moves it through - gone! [?] But when there was a royal performance we got about a forty minute's break there, and got through the programme again!

Roy Fowler : Ah-huh.

Ella Mallett : And I walked from the New Gallery to the Embankment to catch the tram car because I lived about 8 miles away! [laughs]

Roy Fowler : Where did you live?

Ella Mallett : I lived in Mitcham, Surrey.

Roy Fowler : Yes, and what - you had a tramcar all the way out to Mitcham?

Ella Mallett : I could get the Underground.

Roy Fowler : Yes. What did a tramcar cost? What did a tramcar cost?

Ella Mallett : I don't remember what it cost - very little. I know there was a there was a bomb terror in Piccadilly and - going out because we used the Street entrance you see, and the doorman there said to me, "You won't get through to Piccadilly tonight you know." "Oh?" So I thought, "Oh well." I thought, "I'll go that way, and get it at Dover Street." I did, cost me one penny to go through Dover Street and I was on the platform before anybody else! [laughs].

Roy Fowler : This was on the Piccadilly line?

Ella Mallett : Yes. I had to change.

Roy Fowler : When? When did they close the Dover Street Station? Do you know? I didn't realise it was operating as late as the war, Dover Street Station. Because there are all sorts of lost stations on the Piccadilly line aren't there? There's Brompton Square and oh I don't know, others.

Ella Mallett : You see Blooms had five theatres.

Roy Fowler : Yes, where were they?

Ella Mallett : One in Bounds Green.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : Well I had to use the Piccadilly line, and then of course the line was changed and... Because I wanted to change to get onto the Northern line that would take me to - when the, from 1926 - when the line was extended, I could go to Tooting Broadway and then get on the bus you see.

Roy Fowler : Right. It was all very different and I think more efficient in those days. Sid do you have any questions?

SC: Actually my memory of the prewar New Gallery was a school - we had a school party who Captain somebody and he had a Golden Eagle. And he showed this film of the Golden Eagle and he had it with him perched on his shoulder. The last thing he did was to fly round the audience and back again. That was at the New Gallery, I don't know if you were there at the time?

Roy Fowler : Was that the man in I Know Where I'm Going - Mickey Powell's picture? There's an Air Captain someone in that with a Golden Eagle? [NB Captain C. W. R. Knight]

Unidentified : Probably was, I think it was that one - yes.

Ella Mallett : They didn't do any of this publicity like they did later. That was a thing that fortunately didn't happen to us because we had two on the coast at Deal the Regent and Royal. And thank goodness it didn't happen to us. That happened during the silver jubilee of Queen Mary and King George V. And they were making a tour of London, and one of the shows there, on the marquee were all the pennants. And a gentleman walked in the day before and said could he see the manager. He said, "Do you know what your pennants read" He said, "No." "Danger:

smallpox on board!" [laughs]. Well I think George V would have seen the funny side and you know now public are!

Roy Fowler : Oh well yes, things like that, yes.

Ella Mallett : I know that Mr Bloom said that if it had happened to me he'd have had passed away! [laughs]

SD ??? : Could I ask you one thing? Did you have any other ladies in the orchestras you played in?

Ella Mallett : Yes, a lady named [indecipherable].

SD ??? : And what did she play?

Ella Mallett : She played the harp.

SD ??? : I thought it was going to be the harp because the harp was very much the ladies' instrument wasn't it in those days?

Ella Mallett : Yes, and she doubled with the viola. But there was one film where that was really spectacular - Neptune's Daughter.

SD ??? : Oh yes with that...

Ella Mallett : With Annette Kellerman.

SD ??? : Annette Kellerman, yes, yes.

Ella Mallett : Well of course as she came so gracefully, no orchestra, only the harp. And the graceful movements were the beauty of the harp. Very effective that was. Yes, Neptune's Daughter. It's so long ago and that somehow I can see them. Yes, [indecipherable - the harpist] I don't know her nationality. But there were Austrian, Iranian, Sitolacov[?] was a Russian, then Gelder was Dutch, then Levy and Jerry Siskin...very...

SD ??? : Did you do the music for any Garbo films?

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : And then when I went to 165 Oxford Street, he was a Polish leader. Oh he was a magnificent player. And they played - he said, "We're going to play the film The Broken Melody. Nothing but music and that'll be the cellist." And he said...what was his name? Herr Junge [?] was the cellist, he said, "Well of course you'll..." So we had a run through, the cellos would play a big part. He came to me with his bow swinging in his hand, and he said to me, (because you see I'm French on one side and English the other) "You are a little bit of a froggy aren't you?" I said, "Mr [?]. Music has no nationality." I know what he thought. But instead of

letting him finish with the beauty of the cello, I would have played a dominant chord. I couldn't hurt music like that myself. Anyway, a little while later he gave me a little jewellery box with a beautiful little enamel frog in it with droopy eyes. Tiny little incident.

Roy Fowler : Sid wondered if ever you worked on, or accompanied any of the Garbo films. Did you have that opportunity?

Ella Mallett : No. No. It was ever so straightforward while I was there.

Roy Fowler : Yes, well, witness to a great many years.

Ella Mallett : What I didn't like was the one at Cinema House - Eric Hacken[?] they were all very hard, but very good.

Roy Fowler : Who were they?

Ella Mallett : But too demanding, yes.

Roy Fowler : At the company? This was a company? Exhibitors in the cinemas?

Ella Mallett : Yes. But he was hard.

Roy Fowler : Yes.

Ella Mallett : And I thought He'll only drive people. So I was transferred to 165. I got on with [Leo Liff?] we got on very well together. A small orchestra, but still, it was real and real enjoyment. And quite a common word was, "Ah...that film's going to play into our hands!" . Some did and some didn't you know, and not easy!

Roy Fowler : It seems a more innocent and carefree world. I'm not sure it was at the time. I think there was the full share of human agony. I think William Friese-Greene proves that doesn't it. But it does seem, looking back now, a gentle time, an innocent time.

Ella Mallett : The public were. And when it was heavy, and certain films and certain music dominated that. [indecipherable] in Britain. What a relief when [indecipherable]. But I mean there it was - you made it live through the music.

Roy Fowler : Yes, yes - it was an art as well as a craft.

Ella Mallett : Especially when you had people that understood it and were, well I mean to say - had excellent taste - could read a book and live through that book.

Roy Fowler : Tell me - have you ever met Kevin Brownlow?

Ella Mallett : No.

Roy Fowler : Who specialises in the history of the silent film. I think we have to tell Kevin about you because as I say, one of the things that he and Carl Davis have done is to recreate that magic.

Ella Mallett : Yes.

Roy Fowler : And they've done it superbly.

Ella Mallett : You can. It's like Ted Parker when he wrote to me and then he said the different experiences he'd had with music. And I said, "You can."

Roy Fowler : I think we're getting towards the end of the tape now Miss Mallett.

Ella Mallett : Probably.

Roy Fowler : May I say what, not just a pleasure, but an honour - it's been a privilege to have this chat with you. Thank you very much on our behalf, all of us. Very kind. And I hope you have another thirty happy years at Glebelands. Thank you very much indeed.

Ella Mallett : I more than admire the Fund. To me it's great, what they've done. I can find no fault.

Roy Fowler : Well there is some gentleness left in mankind then you think.

Ella Mallett : Oh, different people, different ways.

Roy Fowler : Right, that's true.

Ella Mallett : But it's taking it for what it stands, and I find no fault.

Roy Fowler : Good. Well thank you very much, we'll have to stop there.

[end of tape]