



Martin - Housing around Petticoat Lane and in Tower Hamlets

I recall going to my father's old block of flats, and when you went inside, you went up onto first floor, and the first landing had four flats, one in each corner. No running water, no heating, it was all coal fire, and in the middle was an open range kitchen and one toilet. And the four families shared the whole thing.

If you wanted to have a bath, then it was a big tin bath, which you brought out from another room, filled it with water. There was a water heater fuelled by wood or coal in the flat, and they used to heat the hot water. And then all the females would bath first, and then they throw the water out down the sink, and then the men would be able to have a bath. And that was the kind of poor upbringing they had.

Also, all the neighbours on the floor, on the one floor, had to share the cleaning of the common area. So once a week somebody had to wash the stairs, take down the rubbish. And the common areas outside the block, they were divided into blocks, the flats, and there was the playground area where all the kids played, and that was the experience I had in Hackney too.

We moved to a modern block of flats after I was born, and playing in the playground with the kids was great, because you always had friends. We were dozens and dozens of kids, virtually all the same age, and that's how my father was brought up as well.



My mother had a different experience, because they lived in a house, a terraced house. They didn't own it, but it was rented in the Minories literally facing Tower Bridge. And that was a magical place, because when we went there, from their living room window, you could see the Tower, Tower Bridge, there were often horses and carts going by carrying the beer from the Truman's Brewery. I remember the sound of the horses' hooves on the cobbles.

And right where Tower Gateway DLR station is, was where their house was, right on that spot. And when I go there now, I can actually close my eyes and see the house where we used to go. But of course, it was an old-fashioned Victorian terrace, and it was actually a bit of a slum, but they kept it clean, and that's the place where we used to go and eat every Saturday.