Jill Craigie (writer, director, producer) 7/3/1914 – 13/12/1999

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BIOGRAPHY: Best remembered for her landmark documentary, The Way We Live (1946) about the rebuilding of Plymouth, Jill Craigie was a committed documentary film-maker and socialist throughout her career. Having worked as a journalist through the 1930s, she entered the British film industry as a documentary scriptwriter early in the War, her first film was Out of Chaos (1944) profiling British artists in wartime. During the 1950s she worked on scripts for a number of Rank feature films, including Trouble in Store (which she refused a credit for) and The Million Pound Note (both 1953). SUMMARY: This document contains two interviews – one made by the Imperial War Museum and a second made by Rodney Geisler for the BECTU History Project. In both, Craigie recounts her writing and directing career, concentrating on the War and immediate post-war years. She discusses her passionate interest in art, architecture and town planning, citing the writers and philosophers who influenced her thinking, and the effect the experience of wartime had on her Socialist politics. She also discusses her film work, particularly on Out of Chaos and The Way We Live, she gives lively impressions of many of the people she worked with, including Henry Moore and John Davis, and provides some interesting comments on the relationship between documentaries and the popular audience.

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Interviewers: First 3 sides - unknown, side 4 - Rodney Geisler

Interviewee: Jill Craigie

Tape 1, Side 1

NB: First three sides are Imperial War Museum tapes. Name of interviewer and date of interview is not given. Side four is an interview conducted by Rodney Geisler on 27.4.95.

Interviewer (unidentified): Jill Craigie, will you tell me when and where you were born, please?

Jill Craigie: Oh, I think I was born in London, but I'm a product who is rootless.

Interviewer (unidentified): When were you born?

Jill Craigie: Born in 1914

Interviewer (unidentified): So can you tell me a little bit about your early life?

Jill Craigie: Well my early life is a rather dismal, sordid affair because I went to several different boarding schools. I had no home ever. My mother was Russian and she was married to somebody in the Sudan, but she was always travelling all over the continent. I think she had a series of lovers, and I went to a series of schools, where I was left during the holidays as a rule. So I had no kind of upbringing at all, in fact I only remember spending two or three holidays with my mother, and she was apt to send me away in the middle of the holidays back to school, to be alone.

Interviewer (unidentified): What were your interests as a child?

Jill Craigie: I used to write. I was very unhappy. I often spent holidays with school friends and the only thing I ever learned from my mother when I saw her was to marry a rich man. It was rather typical of the sort of mores of that period - there was no other hope for women. She didn't even say have a career, or anything like that. She just used to say, marry a rich man, that's all. I rather resolved to marry a poor one as a matter of fact, because I didn't think her life was up to much!

Interviewer (unidentified): What about this interest in writing. What form did this take?

Jill Craigie: I wrote poems, very realistic poems, not fantasy ones. I was good at school, I was usually top of English and that sort of thing, and I longed to go to the university, but there wasn't the money there. Sometimes my mother sent me to expensive schools, and sometimes she sent me to cheap schools. It depends what her income was at the time. It was a very unsatisfactory life.

Interviewer (unidentified): You said that you wrote realistic sort of material. Were you influenced by realist writers - I'm thinking of Zola and stuff like that?

Jill Craigie: Well I went to two Belgian convents, and one of them I ran away from. I was sent there because they were cheap, and I learned a bit of French. And then I read Dickens. The English girls there had to attend Mass, but they didn't have to say the prayers so they could read books from the library, and I thought I'd discovered Dickens! I didn't know he was so well

known, even. Previously I'd been to another school where everything was - the map that was red belonged to Britain: it was a great Tory sort of empire-building school. When I went to Belgium there was a French poem about Joan of Arc which ended "Ceux sont les anglais qui voulent voir mourir une femme", and the English were the great villains. This had a tremendous effect upon me, because it never occurred to me there was another point of view. I learned that the Belgians had won the war, instead of the English had won the war. And this made me very critical of my previous teachers - I felt they should have warned me. And this gave me great doubts about authority. It sowed the seeds in my mind that authority cannot be trusted, which I suppose was a sort of way towards socialism, really.

Interviewer (unidentified): What age would that have been roughly?

Jill Craigie: Quite young, very young.

Interviewer (unidentified): In your early teens?

Jill Craigie: Oh earlier, much earlier.

Interviewer (unidentified): You said that you began to go towards socialism...

Jill Craigie: Well I didn't know that was socialism at the time, but I remember being very impressed that the Belgians and the English saw the war very differently, and I felt that I had been misled by my schoolteachers who hadn't told me that of course there were other points of view. I was a rebel, and this fed my rebellious instinct.

Interviewer (unidentified): What about in other ways? Were you aware of the Depression in the 20s and that sort of thing?

Jill Craigie: In the 20s?

Interviewer (unidentified): Well, the late 20s and early 30s. You would have been older then, wouldn't you?

Jill Craigie: Yes, I was older then. I can never remember dates very well. I never met any socialists. I went to school at Harrow - that was one of the more expensive schools, and it was a very snobby school, because we little girls learned the public school boys' ties, like little boys learn the names of aeroplanes and cars. And I remember that one of my school friends, when we were away at the seaside - there was a boy I rather fancied - and they said, well he's only Wrekin, which was a despicable public school that was very cheap, and we were only concerned with schools like Winchester or Harrow or Rugby, or Eton of course. Some of my friends at school in Harrow of course were the sisters of Harrow boys, and I think my mother thought I'd marry a rich man by mixing with these sort of people. It was a dreadful upbringing I had, absolutely dreadful. But at that school there was a wonderful schoolmistress, and she took a great interest in me. I was wallowing in Byron and Shelley and Keats, largely to find out about sex, to tell you the truth! We knew nothing whatever about it, but I knew they wrote a lot about love, and I thought I might learn something in this way. And I enjoyed the poetry. And then suddenly this

schoolmistress said: I think you've had enough of that. And she put into my hand Bernard Shaw's 'Intelligent Women's Guide to Socialism'. And it was absolutely like a douche of cold water, it was wonderful. And that's what I think turned me into a socialist.

Interviewer (unidentified): How old do you think you were then?

Jill Craigie: Sixteen, seventeen.

Interviewer (unidentified): Did you read anything else after that...?

Jill Craigie: Yes, I read what I could, and then - but I wasn't a feminist, I didn't know anything about it. I was generally sort of rebellious in my spirit, but not in my actions.

Interviewer (unidentified): At what age did you leave school?

Jill Craigie: Seventeen, eighteen, something like that. And then I got a job on Betty's Paper, for two pounds ten a week, I remember. A journalistic job. I had to write the horoscopes. People sent in for horoscopes. I didn't have to write them, I merely had to address envelopes and send in a sheet. But a lot of boys used to send in for horoscopes, which the paper didn't cater for, so I had a lot of fun making up horoscopes for them, and I learned to write the kind of things that might apply to everybody. I got an amazing number of letters saying, how true. I used to say: you're optimistic and pessimistic in turns! And this does apply apparently to nearly everyone. So that was all right, but I was alone in London, and a young girl alone in London without a family, without a background of any sort, two pounds ten a week, and though I say it myself when I look at the photos, I wasn't bad looking - and one is a prey to every man. Men have a different attitude to a girl without a background, without mothers. I couldn't go anywhere without being followed, accosted, specially by married men, old men, fat men, men that one wouldn't dream of looking at. I was very often hungry and would accept meals, and then they thought they could take any liberty. So I was quite suicidal.

Interviewer (unidentified): Did it change your attitude towards men?

Jill Craigie: Yes

Interviewer (unidentified): Do you think it led you to any ideas of feminism, or anything like that?

Jill Craigie: No. All women, all young girls, were conscious of the fact that there was very little one could do. There was typing. It's a terrible thing to have no roots, and no values. You have to work out everything for yourself, and for a very long time life seemed to be quite purposeless. I was quite suicidal. You have to have love in your life. If you haven't got it, life could be like that, feel like that, specially as I couldn't leave the office and feel comfortable. I always knew I'd be followed. I was always, nearly always, followed. Nobody's got any idea what it is like to be in your teens, alone in London, and good looking - thin, nice figure - and unprotected. But not a prostitute. I didn't dress provocatively, because I hadn't got the money anyway.

Interviewer (unidentified): So your work must have been very important to you, then?

Jill Craigie: No, it wasn't. Nothing was important to me, that was what I meant by being suicidal. Life seemed to be absolutely not worth living. I was miserable.

Rodney Giesler: So what happened then? How long did this period last?

Jill Craigie: Well, you fall in love, in the end. I don't want to go into all that side.

Interviewer (unidentified): Well how about your career then? You were still a writer. Can you tell me about this magazine, 'Betty's Paper'. Who was it for - children really?

Jill Craigie: No, it was for silly young women, like me. Teenage women. 'Betty's Paper' was part of a great combine. During the second world war...the previous period was the great peace movement and there were all the anti-war plays, and my main politics was pacifism then, but it was largely - it was not thought out, it was all received. There were a lot of slogans: nobody wins a war, everyone loses. We all felt we'd lost the first world war, what we knew of it. So I was a pacifist and I would have been among the crowds who cheered Chamberlain. I thought that Czechoslovakia had been betrayed, there's no doubt about that. I thought it was a dirty trick that they'd done on Czechoslovakia, but even that was better than war. I was so naive politically, really. I didn't have anyone to talk to about politics, even when I fell in love. I never met the kind of people, I didn't meet intelligent people that one had discussions with, that you might have met at university, so I was at sea, mentally. But during the war it was very different, because it was a very political time anyway, and I read politics. I read William Morris, Ruskin, everything to do with the visual side. I was soaked in William Morris and Ruskin. Then came the war. I wanted to do something during the war...

Interviewer (unidentified): So had you still been writing, working as a journalist?

Jill Craigie: Yes, I'd been working off and on. And I got married, and I got married to an alcoholic, so you know I might easily have been a dropout in the end...

Interviewer (unidentified): But you wrote a play as well, didn't you, around the time of the Munich Peace?

Jill Craigie: Yes, that's right. But I wasn't a success. I could usually get pieces in the papers, but I couldn't earn enough to keep myself until the war came out.

Interviewer (unidentified): Did you want to become a journalist, or a playwright, or a script writer? Did you have an ambition?

Jill Craigie: Well I gradually wanted to become a film writer. But before that I was always having ideas, and I didn't quite know. I didn't have any guidance. What it must be to be in a family like the Longfords, where you're brought up with historians who are talking about it. You need - you've no idea how much guidance people need, or I did anyway. Perhaps I wasn't brainy enough to think things out. I was an emotional mess, because... I've never spoken like this

before. Because if you are good looking, or perhaps more than good looking, or very attractive to men, you get so involved and they absorb so much of your time emotionally, and really and truly that was a time-consuming occupation. Fending off men, men who thought they'd broken their hearts. There were plenty of men who were heartbroken, but you soon find, you know, once you've said no, they get somebody else pretty quickly, it's one of the things one learns. But at the time you're quite convinced that you've done something terrible, that you're hard, that you've said yes I might, I might, I might, and then you don't want to and then they're absolutely mad and go berserk. All this sort of ridiculous emotional...

Interviewer (unidentified): But at this stage you hadn't made that link between the fact that you were being distracted and harrassed really in a sense by men, from what you really should be doing, or what you wanted to do in your heart of hearts - and to some sort of political awareness. That hadn't come yet. You were still in a confused state.

Jill Craigie: Yes, that's right. I was in a confused state until the war, really.

Interviewer (unidentified): So what was it that changed?

Jill Craigie: The war.

Interviewer (unidentified): How did the war change you? Was it the things that you did?

Jill Craigie: Well it was wonderful, because it was anti-materialistic. You got a job immediately, you could work.

Interviewer (unidentified): When did you get a job?

Jill Craigie: Well I was working with the British Council, and that increased during the war.

Interviewer (unidentified): How did that start?

Jill Craigie: I wrote something and sent it in. I was always writing things and sending them in. I wrote some little documentary piece about something or other, I can't even remember what it was, but I got a job on the strength of it.

Interviewer (unidentified): And this was before the war?

Jill Craigie: Just before, just the beginning. I can't remember dates very well. After Munich I began to think about politics. Munich shook me. I was pro-Chamberlain, which is awful to think of now.

Interviewer (unidentified): Was that primarily because of his foreign policy...?

Jill Craigie: Well I didn't know enough about, I didn't really believe - I must have been one of millions of young people who couldn't believe the stories about the holocaust. I couldn't believe that human beings could behave like that. We knew that during the first world war that there had

been a lot of horrors about the troops in Belgium mutilating babies and we knew that had all been false, this was all part of the peace campaign that one had learned about.

Interviewer (unidentified): An awareness of the propaganda

Jill Craigie: Yes, an awareness of the propaganda. And I was very interested in the peace campaign, there's no doubt about that. I was almost a pacifist, in fact I think I was a pacifist. I didn't believe in war.

Interviewer (unidentified): Were you involved in any formal sense? Were you the signatory of that massive paper that went around Britain, or...?

Jill Craigie: No, I didn't know people like that. I didn't even know how to get in touch with them, and I was busy earning my living and struggling. Before I got married, and then I was married to an alcoholic for a while. It was all an awful mess. But during the war it was all sorted out.

Interviewer (unidentified): So, tell me... you sent a proposal for a film to the British Council, and you can't remember the topic?

Jill Craigie: No, I can't, curiously

Interviewer (unidentified): But they then asked you to come and work for them? How did that happen?

Jill Craigie: Mr Bentley - was an old film director, and he thought I had a visual sense, and so then I did a whole lot of scripts and I enjoyed that. One of the scripts was about the glass industry. Well I found out that in whatever industry, there's always an enthusiast somewhere, a backroom boy or someone who's mad about the industry, and I always looked for one of them when I did these scripts. And then I was married, actually, to Jeffrey Dell who was a film maker. I don't know how I met him quite, but I did. He was very much older than me and he was always talking about the first world war. Well you know how it is with young people today, if you talk about the last war, if people talked about the last war to you, if you weren't doing what you're doing you'd be very bored by it, because it's not your war. The Vietnam war is more your war, isn't it? Anyway, we weren't very well off I'm bound to say, because he'd already been married three other times, and was paying vast sums in alimony! So from then on... the war suited me very well, because although it was horrific it was very anti-materialistic. It was the nearest to a socialist society we've ever had, and there were all these discussions going on. You couldn't spend a lot of money on clothes, you couldn't buy furniture, you couldn't crockery, you'd got no petrol for the cars... So everything was... the arts, discussions...

Interviewer (unidentified): You're talking in very general terms. Can you think of any particular instances that made you become aware of a greater egalitarianism?

Jill Craigie: Well I'd always got the socialist feeling from Bernard Shaw. I was a pacifist and socialist without being involved, if you see what I mean. And I'd read a lot, everything Lewis

Mumford had written. I like to get one author and read everything that he's written on - usually it was 'he' then.

Interviewer (unidentified): So you read 'Living in Cities'?

Jill Craigie: Oh yes, 'Culture of Cities', 'The Techniques of Civilisation', all those books I read. I read nearly all the books of the architects. I've got a great library upstairs.

Interviewer (unidentified): So you became particularly interested in housing and architecture. How did you respond to that?

Jill Craigie: I was interested in the arts, and home-making, I suppose not having a home - I was very interested in the home and the creation of homes.

Interviewer (unidentified): It seems to me that people at that time felt that the way you built a town had a great impact on the way people grew up... did you agree with that?

Jill Craigie: Oh yes, yes. I thought that you can't have a socialist society unless the socialists themselves go back to their roots and study their William Morris and their Ruskin. William Morris and Ruskin and Keir Hardie took it up. That side of the movement are the first of the Greens, they're the first of the conservationists. If you read the lectures that Morris gave, they're exactly like Frank Lloyd Wright. Frank Lloyd Wright talks about buildings should grow out of the earth, you know, and so was William Morris. He used to see these black smoke towns and get into a furious temper with these people. News from Nowhere is what most people read, but if you read his lectures and lots of his other writings, he's very very, very modern. So I believed in mixed developments, in regional planning. Regional planning on the grounds that within that region there should be a university and lots of choices of employment, and easy access so that people could stay in their own homes, or in their own environment where they were brought up. A lot of this is of course Lewis Mumford, but it all... Morris and Ruskin and Keir Hardie in some of his speeches were all on to this, and to me socialism is not possible if people can't live happily together, unless they're in mixed developments...

Interviewer (unidentified): When you say mixed developments, you mean different classes together and different age groups?

Jill Craigie: Different classes, all classes. Because they're all dependent upon one another. Like in the Cotswold town, where you see the lawyer living next to the ironmonger, or the blacksmith as he was in those days. It was a mixed development: the squire and the vicar might live separately, but the rest of the classes were all jumbled up together and depended upon one another. The workman's cottage was certainly next door to the very grand Queen Anne establishments belonging to the doctor or the lawyer, and all this was understood in the early Labour Party days. You see, Shaw was interested too in the garden city development.

Interviewer (unidentified): ... So clearly you favour the garden city movement, as opposed to the Architectural Association type of concepts about rebuilding the cities.. and their interest in Corbusier, and apartments and things like that?

Jill Craigie: I'm very anti the Corbusier... because you see if you read your Mumfords... Mumford's geared for the family, and Corbusier has nothing whatever to do with the family, or with tradition. It's a masculine concept. And this ties up with my feminism. It was during the war that I came across Sylvia Pankhurst's book. I read it because I was trying to catch up on my bad education, and here was a subject I knew nothing about, the suffragette movement. It was history, and I was trying to read history. I read this purely to educate myself about something I knew nothing about, and she turned me into a feminist. Then I saw architecture from the feminine point of view, in fact, more than I had done before. Today, I happen to think that one of the things that went most wrong with the Labour Party is its ignorance on this subject.

Interviewer (unidentified): Can we get back to what you were doing...?

Jill Craigie: I was writing

Interviewer (unidentified): So you submitted this, and you made some documentaries for the British Council. What was it like making these?

Jill Craigie: I only wrote the scripts. And then suddenly I wanted to make my own film, I wanted to interpret what the artists and the town planners were saying to mass audiences.

Interviewer (unidentified): Why did you think that was important?

Jill Craigie: Because it tied up with my socialism, and also because, in the war, everybody was interested in that. In fact, at one time, the books on architecture were the best-sellers. And that stuffy old organisation the RIBA was giving the most fabulous exhibitions. People were queuing round the block with all these wonderful slogans... The Better Britain was one of the big slogans during the war.

Interviewer (unidentified): Did you go to any of these exhibitions?

Jill Craigie: All of them. I soaked myself in them. I went to art galleries - we were all interested in them. People went to the National Gallery to listen to music, which I did too. The lunchtime concerts. The firemen, the ARP people were all - I was in the ARP. We used to have painting exhibitions and have people like Matthew Smith and famous painters like Henry Moore come along. They weren't very famous in those days, as a matter of fact, but they were in the art world, to come and judge these amateur paintings, and some quite good stuff, Leonard Rosamund's(?) stuff, came out of that fireman's exhibition. So it was all in the atmosphere anyway, and it tied up with my kind of socialism. And so I wanted to interpret what the artists and town planners were saying, that was my ambition. And so I went to J Arthur Rank direct, I was fed up with working for the British Council, it didn't get anywhere and I thought some of the films were pretty silly. And he was in a benevolent mood then, it was in the early days, and I said: would you consider replacing some of the American B-films with experimental documentaries which were British, which helped the war, I said. Everybody was keen to help the war, whether they were Tories or not, and he said you'd better ask Del Giudice. So then I went to Del, and he said, you will be one of my junior talents. And that's how it all came about.

Interviewer (unidentified): So how did you go about making the film? What did you do then?

Jill Craigie: I went to Kenneth Clark, and I said: I want to make a film about the war artists. I want to put them on the screen, and you too, and I'm very keen on certain artists, which I told him, and that won his approval. I know nothing about films, I said, but I'm sure I can manage somehow. Well of course I was trying to walk before, you know, before I knew anything. However, I got his backing. And once I got his backing, the other artists agreed to appear. Henry Moore was the best, because he knew that I didn't know much about films, so he took me to the air raid shelters and talked a lot about his works to make sure that I got it right. When it came to filming, the boys of course - they thought what is this, this is a girl - I was a girl to them anyway, I may not be allowed to say that these days, making a film about these extraordinary people. But when we went to Henry Moore's studio he was like an angel. He did everything he was told, but he said: would you please film my sculptures last? So I said yes, and he was very interested in the technique, you could see him watching and talking to the boys, and when it came to doing his sculptures he took the cameraman on one side, and he used all the right expressions - he said you put the arc there, flood it, mask the baby - he was using all the technical language, and he lit his own sculptures. And this really impressed the team, they thought they were on to something good then. As a postscript to that: the film cost seven thousand pounds. By the time it was finished, Del and John Davis were at each other's throats, and John Davis being the accountant Rank was more inclined to listen to him than Del Giudice, who lost money. So they thought my film was absolute rubbish and they tore up the negative, and it cost seven thousand pounds. However, there were various prints round about the place, and people took negatives from the prints. Of course the stock was quite different in those days, you know, the sound of course is ??... But it was the first film about modern art, and today if anybody wants any sort of stuff about Henry Moore, which they do from time to time, they have to use the bit that I did in his studio, and they charge seven thousand pounds for it. And they've had seven thousand pounds back several times, despite the fact they tore up the negative!

Interviewer (unidentified): Who helped you with the technical side?

Jill Craigie: I knew nothing about that at all

Interviewer (unidentified): Who oversaw that, then?

Jill Craigie: Nobody ... I had William MacQuitty as a producer. He knew nothing about it either!

Interviewer (unidentified): But Sydney Box... JC: Well Sydney Box never came on the set. He was looking after the money. He solely looked after the money. He used to want to know how it was spent. I didn't know how it was spent. He used to go right down the figures, very, very fast, and I couldn't follow - "You see, my dear?" And I couldn't follow at all.

Interviewer (unidentified): Why did they not like the film?

Jill Craigie: It wasn't commercial... Tape 1, Side 2

Jill Craigie: Well I got all this publicity. I wasn't very good, it was just because I was a freak, a woman in charge of four men. Forty men.

Interviewer (unidentified): I was looking at the publicity material that came out for the film, I don't know whether you've seen it for a while, which was written not by yourself, but presumably with your help, and one of the things it says, if I may quote, is: "Faced as we are with the greatest standardisation of living, the artist will have a great part to play in bringing colour and individuality into life." There are two things I would like to ask you about that: first, it seems to assume that after the war there is going to be a more collective society, a new kind of society, and second that that society is going to be rather drab and dull and boring. That seems to be the inference. And in some of the other things in this publicity material it says that. And that the artist is going to have an important role in kind of breaking down, or enlivening, if you like, a kind of socialist society, which could be rather grey or drab.

Jill Craigie: I think that's a misconception. If you listen to Priestley's broadcasts, he was all on the Merrie England that was going to follow under a socialist society, much like the Clarion newspaper during the first world war. I didn't think it was going to be drab. People said it was drab in the 50s because rationing went on. I didn't think that the artist should be brought in to brighten it up. My conception of the artist was that he should be part of everyday life anyway, more than a lawyer or the doctor, that we all need the artist, that it's stimulating, that everybody should have original paintings in their house and argue about them, and that they should be involved in the creation of these new towns, the Better Britain... This to me was all part of life. I thought it was terrible that people should be dependent upon doctors and lawyers, but not artists. But that was my kind of Ruskin/Morris/Mumford socialism. I didn't think it would be drab, no. It was said to be drab because the rationing went on and because everybody was earning more or less the same, there was no glaring rich and poor then. Or there didn't seem to be, you didn't see it.

Interviewer (unidentified): The other thing about this film is that it's a documentary, or it's in a documentary idiom if you like, and you'd script written for that sort of thing at the British Council. Why had you chosen to work in that medium. Was there any particular reason for that?

Jill Craigie: Well I thought I'd be good at it, and I think I would have been if I'd had a training. Nearly all the Ealing boys who were making wonderful films, Carol Reed and David Lean, all these people had been through the whole function of the technical side of filmmaking. They'd started as clapper boys, or they'd been in the cutting rooms a long time. They knew a great deal about the technical side, which I didn't know. I was nervous. I looked self-confident in front of all these chaps, but I wasn't. I had no training, and a woman should succeed if she undertakes something like this rather more than a man should, and I wasn't good enough, in fact. I could have been good enough. I tried to get a job in films. I wanted to get in on that series like 'The March of Time', but my socialism didn't help me, actually.

Interviewer (unidentified): Did you see any of the other famous documentaries at the time?

Jill Craigie: Yes, 'World of Plenty'...

Interviewer (unidentified): What did you think about the way it was made?

Jill Craigie: I was thrilled. I thought it was absolutely brilliant. I knew Paul Rotha - but a woman didn't get any help from any of these people, you know, except the ones who made passes. That's a recurring theme.

Interviewer (unidentified): I'm really interested in when you were in the ARP. Did that start right from the beginning?

Jill Craigie: Within about a year, I think.

Interviewer (unidentified): How did you join it? What did you do?

Jill Craigie: I left my husband... I met Malcolm McDonald, who is a friend of mine, and he gave me his house in Canada while he was the High Commissioner, in Hampstead. And I joined the ARP here and I worked in films, and it was really a very happy period. I was free, I wanted to be free.

Interviewer (unidentified): What did the ARP work involve?

Jill Craigie: Well, we used to go to battle headquarters, as we grandly called it, and we had so many hours on duty, and you had to know the names of all the roads so that if you were called to a certain place, rather like a taxi driver - all the local roads. And you went round inspecting that peoples' blinds were all pulled. And I used to allocate people to certain positions. I can't remember everything, but what I do remember was that - Hampstead was rather grand, the part that I was in, Frognal, and come the blitz, the first time the blitz affected Hampstead, the natural leader was Mr Short. Mr Short was in charge of the animals at the medical institute, and he lived in a council flat with his wife and children, and he became the natural leader. Because he didn't lose his head, he took control, and he was more intelligent and he was a born leader. Everyone respected Mr Short. And this absolutely broke down the class barriers. And this was wonderful, there were no class barriers during the war.

Interviewer (unidentified): Was anyone resentful of the fact that he was doing this job?

Jill Craigie: No, on the contrary. Hampstead - and I'm talking now about the most prosperous part of Hampstead - was a wonderful democratic place, because a lot of ladies, the judges' wives, who'd never done anything but arrange flowers, were suddenly needed. There was no feminism during the war, because all women were needed. They all got jobs. And they used to say, I don't know what I'll do when there's no ARP. This was the best time in their lives because they were all working, they were all needed: No, Mrs Jones, you can't have Saturday night off, we need you very badly, you must be here between seven and eleven. Oh very well then, and they'd go off absolutely delighted. Feminism was a dirty word during the war, so when I read Sylvia's book during the war and became a feminist... it was the worst possible time to become a feminist, actually.

Interviewer (unidentified): Who else was in your ARP shelter?

Jill Craigie: Well, Mr Short. Dennis Matthews was a painter, not the pianist, a painter. He was second in command, he was very good. There was a woman who was married to the editor of a famous national paper. I can't remember any famous people, but they were all well placed...

Interviewer (unidentified): So really people in Hampstead didn't have that much contact with the masses or the working class, did they?

Jill Craigie: Well, those that were in the ARP. But they were rather in the minority, except Mr Short, you see. My little girl, I had a little girl then, used to have Jilly Short to stay and they're friends to this day. When the war ended the class barriers came up overnight. And whereas the Shorts were welcome to anybody's house, the minute the war ended, they weren't. We were the only people that kept up with them. It was extraordinary.

Interviewer (unidentified): You've said about the ARP man being accepted by all as a natural leader. What other examples did you see of this breakdown of class...

Jill Craigie: Well it was easy, because when you went out in the morning, and if there'd been a very very blitzy night... of course Hampstead, it had just got enough to make you feel in the war, but not like the East End. The anti-aircraft guns were on the Heath, so the racket was absolutely terrific. Well when you went out the next day, you talked to everybody. Everybody talked to everybody. "Could you get any sleep last night at all? Did you go down to the shelter?" There was lots to talk about. It was very exciting. It was fiendishly exciting, I'm sorry to say. Sometimes we would stand on Parliament Hill and we would watch the burning of the East End, and you knew these people were suffering terribly, and it was just fiendishly exciting. It was awful, riveting. My little daughter, when she was here, I sent her away for a while, like lots of people. She used to say: may I stay up and watch the flashes please Mummy? But then everybody talked to everybody. You were pals all in it together.

Interviewer (unidentified): Was that the same all throughout the war? Did you not notice towards the end any of those things breaking down, any frustrations, particularly as the war seemed to drag on after '43?

Jill Craigie: People used to say "don't you know there's a war on?" if you asked for things, and people were rather aggressive. I suppose that was a sign of frustration. You were asking for something quite legitimately, but there was a shortage of a lot of things.

Interviewer (unidentified): You were saying before that what you observed to be a change in attitude towards class, that fuelled your attitude to film. Can you tell me that again, please? It helped you want to make film...

Jill Craigie: Well how did you spend an evening during the blitz? Supposing there wasn't an air raid that night. You might be on duty waiting for the sirens to go, but you had long vigils. Well, we'd go to each others houses. And what was there to do. You couldn't buy new furniture, or if you did it was utility furniture, which newly-weds could buy, quite decent stuff but very standardised. You could only buy white china. You had coupons for clothes. So you were not competing materialistically with anyone at all, and you didn't have to keep up appearances. So

what happened? You listened to the radio, and you had discussions about Joad and Priestley, and these people who were arguing all for socialism. You listened to music, and you discussed music, you had tremendous arguments about the war and about Churchill. You had a lot of propaganda - everything was a strategic withdrawal to start with. Well you always knew strategic withdrawals were retreats, so you had a lot of discussion deciphering what was true and what was propaganda. It was an intellectual time, really. Ideas were in the air. We've always heard that the Russians read an awful lot... people were very interested in ideas, arguments. It was fun. Finally, when I went to Plymouth, when I was making 'The Way We Live', I explored all these different towns that had plans, that had planners. Well it was the same everywhere else. There was another side to it. People say that there were spivs, that there were lots of people who were going to expensive restaurants, who were getting round the rationing, and all this side's been written up. I never saw it.

Interviewer (unidentified): So for you, it really was the idyllic kind of life?

Jill Craigie: Yes, I never saw any cheating at all. In fact, quite rich people were very proud to show that they were keeping to the rations, you know - most people.

Interviewer (unidentified): Do you think in terms of what had happened in the 1930s, and the class divide in Britain, and the way that the rich had been attacked and vilified - whether this was quite a relief for them?

Jill Craigie: Yes, it was. Because I went to rich houses where the butter ration was kept to strictly, and they were proud to show it. There was no doubt a lot of cheating, but I never saw it. And nobody I knew saw it. We never talked about it. Like we do today, for instance, if you take the directors who are now having salaries of half a million and more, and golden handshakes, and the workers are being screwed to nothing... well there is a resentment about that today, isn't there, but there was nothing like that in the war that I met.

Interviewer (unidentified): Did you go to the cinema regularly?

Jill Craigie: Yes, yes. It was wonderful, because the British films were coming into their own, and the American films were a huge joke, because they kept making films that suggested they'd won the war. Errol Flynn won the war on one occasion, so we all hooted with laughter. And we were making these rather good films. Ealing was making these comedies, and they were all on the left, everything was on the left. There was a song called "You've got to be left to be right"!

Interviewer (unidentified): Which cinema did you used to go to? Was there a regular one?

Jill Craigie: No, I went to odd ones. Odd ones in different parts of the country, actually.

Interviewer (unidentified): How often did you go?

Jill Craigie: Well, if there was a good film... not necessarily regularly. I was quite busy.

Interviewer (unidentified): Once a week?

Jill Craigie: No. But people were going once a week and twice a week, actually.

Interviewer (unidentified): What do you remember of the film programme, in terms of what was shown?

Jill Craigie: Oh, the Ealing comedies.

Interviewer (unidentified): But when you went to the cinema, what used to come up on the screen? Now, you have some adverts and then there's the film. But then, I understand there were newsreels and other things...

Jill Craigie: Newsreels, and then there were terrible American B-pictures, which were frightful, which you had to sit through if you wanted to see the newsreels. And then it was the main film. They were mostly British films. It was very crowded, and they were very good.

Interviewer (unidentified): Do you think they were well received?

Jill Craigie: Yes, they were. They made money. And then of course there was the Evening Standard, the campaigns in the newspapers. But the BBC was very, very popular. The Brains Trust with Professor Joad and ... have you ever heard any of those?

Interviewer (unidentified): Yes. Can I go back to the cinema? What about the Ministry of Information films? Can you recall them?

Jill Craigie: Yes, I do recall them. Grierson and all that lot... yes, I met them.

Interviewer (unidentified): Well, more the MOI films...

Jill Craigie: Yes. Well the films weren't subject to criticism, and therefore they could get away with anything. I happen to have a great thing about criticism. I think that one of the reasons for the decline of architecture in this country is because it's not had proper criticism. And I think that any imaginative work of art must be subject to criticism. And therefore the Ministry of Information films, although they'd got some awfully good people and made some good films, and Beddington there was also using the artists, it was all very laudable - but they were boys there, there was a sort of slight hostility between me and them. They never took me on. I wish they had done, I might have felt better about them. But I so disapproved of their films not being criticised.

Interviewer (unidentified): How about the audience? Can you remember how they reacted when the MOI came up on the screen?

Jill Craigie: They were bored, on the whole. And I think they were bored with mine too, actually. They weren't bored with the Plymouth one...

Interviewer (unidentified): How about the newsreels?

Jill Craigie: I don't know that there was any reaction. I think that they were quite interested, really. They weren't audibly bored, but they were audibly bored with documentaries.

Interviewer (unidentified): Do you remember the Food Flashes? What was the reaction to them?

Jill Craigie: Well, they used to be laughed at quite a lot, because they made so many gaffes... "Margarine tastes as good as butter", that was the Edith Summerskill one that was famous. It sounded terrible. But you see the food, the rationing, was wonderful. Quite a lot of people said they felt much fitter than they'd ever felt in their lives. Because it was very well worked out, and very healthy.

Interviewer (unidentified): You said people were audibly bored by these MOI films. That was your general reflection... What about the Humphrey Jennings films, 'Heart of Britain', or...?

Jill Craigie: My recollection when I saw them was that they were audibly bored, and the word documentary became a dirty word.

Interviewer (unidentified): So, booing, or...?

Jill Craigie: No. Well it depends where you saw it. You see John Davis didn't like these sort of things, and he had a charming little habit of showing the films that he didn't like at Warrington Wakes Week, or at the East End. They showed 'The Way We Live' - I have to jump here, because it makes the point - he showed it at some cinema which was a bad house. And I was very depressed because it got booed, got the boot. They said, well that's nothing, they throw tomatoes at the screen at Henry V! So it depends, I mean, if it was in some sort of rowdy house in the East End... I never heard it myself, but the documentaries might have got something thrown at the screen.

Interviewer (unidentified): Were you ever in an audience where the reaction was noticeably down?

Jill Craigie: Well, I heard it noticeably down at some terrible cinema when they showed 'The Way We Live'. It got a terrible reaction, but it didn't at Plymouth and it didn't at other places.

Interviewer (unidentified): I'm not talking about your films...

Jill Craigie: Yes, I heard it two or three times. But I can't remember where. I know that 'documentary' was almost as dirty a word as 'feminism' during the war.

Interviewer (unidentified): I read somewhere that the cinema exhibitors were very worried that documentaries would put their audiences off, so occasionally they used to run them in the interval when the lights were up, or things like that. Do you recall that?

Jill Craigie: No, I don't remember that. But I should think they did it at Granada, I don't know if Sydney Bernstein was operating then. That's just the sort of thing he would do, and then sell the

ice creams at the same time. That's the sort of thing he did. But there's no doubt that the documentaries were very unpopular. They were very inhuman, you know.

Interviewer (unidentified): Why do you say that?

Jill Craigie: Because they were nearly always about machinery, and the way machinery works. They were overloaded with that type. I don't say they all were, but there was an awful lot of that.

Interviewer (unidentified): Although you were involved with Glassblowers (?)...?

Jill Craigie: Yes, it's one of the reasons why I got... If I'd made [sic] about glass, I'd have got - I'd found this little boffin. At one time, in the glass industry, all the different firms had their own secrets for making glass. And there was a little boffin I came across who set up who blew all the secrets, who published all the secrets. So they could all copy each other, and the British industry prospered. Well I would have made a film about him, not about glass, if I'd had the chance. So that's why I left, in a way.... Imagine the excitement in the ARP when you've got a lot of people who have been painting, who've never painted in their lives before. Or some have. And you have three big chaps come and judge these paintings to see which are the best. Well everybody's terrifically excited about this, and they're having their paintings looked at by the most famous artists in the land, and commented upon. Well this was the sort of thing, the kind of way people got their pleasure then. Because they didn't just go through these pictures and throw them all on one side very quickly and say "this one's good". They'd say oh, this one, he's really got a feeling for composition, and they'd go into each painting and it was a tremendous boost for the ego for these artists, and it was fun.

Interviewer (unidentified): So that partly led into 'Out of Chaos'?

Jill Craigie: Yes. That's right.

Interviewer (unidentified): Because you were interested in...?

Jill Craigie: Yes, I was interested in all this too. I was interested in their comments, and I could see how the people were excited by it...

Interviewer (unidentified): In the film you use an argument between some sceptics, a group of people who are looking at a painting, I think by Graham Sutherland, in the National Gallery. Did you ever see those sort of discussions taking place?

Jill Craigie: Yes, yes. I didn't put this into the film, but Eric Newton, who was a critic, was very rude about Graham Sutherland's paintings, because he says, poor Graham has an ulcer and he's always painting stomachs! He used to make all these irreverent remarks... Pretty well everything I do was taken straight... I just wanted to translate what was happening and impart the enthusiasm felt by these people to mass audiences. I didn't succeed!

Interviewer (unidentified): One thing that's said about the war and it was said in the publicity for this film also, was that there was a growing interest in art. Do you think that's really true?

Jill Craigie: Oh, absolutely. There's no question about it. All these firemen in the ARP were painting regularly, and having exhibitions regularly. The galleries were filled. And the same for the architectural exhibitions. It was exciting.

Interviewer (unidentified): When you went to the exhibitions at RIBA, say... Did you ever see that film, 'When We Build Again'? The Bournville film? That was sometimes shown at those exhibitions...

Jill Craigie: No, I didn't see that

Interviewer (unidentified): ... these exhibitions at RIBA, what sort of people would go?

Jill Craigie: Ordinary people. There were crowds. It was like going to a cinema. There was a queue round the block. It was wonderful.

Interviewer (unidentified): Was that throughout the war?

Jill Craigie: Yes, after the blitz. No doubt about it.

Interviewer (unidentified): Could you describe those exhibitions for me please?

Jill Craigie: They were very, very exciting because they made people think about homes in a way that they'd never thought before. I got some of the slogans on my banners. They would show you a car, and show you how much thought had been put into the car to make it comfortable. There were lots of slogans: Your hand is in the right place for this, your back is in the right place for this. And then compare it with an old-fashioned kitchen. Don't forget we didn't have modern kitchens then. They were very human, and very evocative too. It made you think what a terrible society it was of the past. It all helped socialism.

Interviewer (unidentified): There are two strands in the way housing is presented. One is: this is the plan we've made for you. This is the world we're going to build for you. I'm thinking particularly of a newsreel that I saw. And there's another strand which is a more interactive approach, like yours... I think it's interesting that those two strands should go side by side. One is quite paternalistic, and almost dictatorial, and the other is... Were you aware of that dichotomy? How did you see that? Did you see other people taking up a stand?

Jill Craigie: I was terribly against the paternalistic one. Also, my feminism came into it. It was too much under the control of men, anyway. And the men dictated the terms far more. There wasn't quite the advanced state of market research that you've got today, but I had a sort of feeling that the people must be consulted far, far, far more. I don't like my films I've made, but I would have made much more of Charles Riley and his village green. Charles Riley was a great man, and he was the father of town planning. He believed that we should go back to the village green concept, that is to say that we should build round a green, mixed developments where the people looked at each other instead of everyone keeping themselves to themselves, that you should leave great gaps for organic development because you can't cater for the diversity of human need all in one go, you don't know what they might want in the future. They might want a

launderette which hadn't even been invented then. And he says that if people all face each other, the children can play in safety on the green. That is the front, your green. The backs are facing the roads, and that is where your tradesmen come. He says if you keep yourself to yourself, you don't all talk to each other, you don't create neighbours, your children don't mix. And the village green idea is everybody mixes, they discuss things, and they won't take it all from the radio and from authority. That was his idea. And this wasn't in the Abercrombie plan. I brought it into my film as a reaction against the paternalistic attitudes that you've just mentioned. But no doubt I didn't do it well enough, you see.

Interviewer (unidentified): That actually comes out in the film. I can't remember whether Abercrombie said it, or whether it's the narration. I picked it up in the film. Because you specifically say "radios and newspapers"...

Jill Craigie: Yes, that's right

Interviewer (unidentified): Were you involved in these discussions about housing, architecture? Do you remember the ARP people talking about these?

Jill Craigie: Yes, all the time

Interviewer (unidentified): There must have been arguments.

Jill Craigie: Yes, lots of arguments

Interviewer (unidentified): So there wasn't a consensus...? How did the argument go?

Jill Craigie: Everybody thought there would be a better Britain. We were wholly taken in by the slogan. There was this wonderful new chance. But not everyone agreed with the Abercrombie plans. They did think those arguments were - you know - isn't it all too paternalistic, and how can you cater for the diversity of human need, on paper. Which is what the architects still try to do today, they think they can do it all on paper without proper consultation. They have quite a lot of mock consultation, don't they. I've been to quite a few meetings with Camden Council, where I've heard the people boo the plan, actually. Well in the war, this was an argument. These were the ideas that we used to discuss, how you could do it.

Interviewer (unidentified): These are people primarily on the left though, aren't they. At least they agreed we should re-plan the cities. But there were people on the right who didn't want the cities to be replanned. Did you come across that?

Jill Craigie: Yes, who didn't want planning at all. There was one in my film, the head of the Co-operative Stores. This was rather ironical, because he said... Tape 2, Side 1

Jill Craigie: Well, there were quite a lot of people, even in Plymouth - but not the Astors, they weren't necessarily the right and the left, it cut across party lines because the Astors were very much in favour of the plan. Hore-Belisha, who used to be the old MP there, was very much against the plan but the Astors were for it. And the Astors were Tories, as you know, as was

Hore-Belisha, so the arguments cut across left and right. It wouldn't be at all fair to say that the Conservatives didn't want planning and the Labour people did. The Labour people were more naive, and I was more naive, in thinking that the planners probably were right, and that Abercrombie was right. I had a slight reservations, otherwise I wouldn't have brought in Charles Riley and his village greens. And I'd seen some other planners who I thought were better than Abercrombie, actually. Like Thomas Sharp at Durham. He was certainly one. Awkward customer, and the best people are often awkward customers. And not at all photogenic, and not carefree in front of the camera like Abercrombie, who would give me no trouble. These were the kind of ideas that we used to sit up at night and argue about, like being at a university I suppose.

Interviewer (unidentified): What about land? Contingent on planning was the discussion of land use...

Jill Craigie: Yes, nationalisation of the land. Well in Plymouth the municipality took it over. They did actually make it work, and they made a fortune out of it, of course.

Interviewer (unidentified): But there was a lot of opposition to that, wasn't there?

Jill Craigie: Much of the opposition went on in closed rooms after I left. When they started building the plan they compromised a lot, I think they made a real old mess of it. I think it wasn't a very good plan myself, in the light of what we know now. I don't think Abercrombie was very good.

Interviewer (unidentified): Architecturally, what did you think of Abercrombie and people like him?

Jill Craigie: Well, I'll tell you. We believed in the planners, because before the war, I was conscious of this somehow, I don't know how I got into this exactly, the planners made a lot of fun of ribbon development and the awful way our towns and cities had been built. They showed how you could be uncompromisingly modern, use modern materials, and yet you were a good neighbour. And you fitted in. One example of this was Peter Jones which Sir Charles Riley supervised. Today, this is a very modern building and it sits perfectly in Sloane Square, it doesn't offend and it's not out of scale, and all the rest of it. And they had proved their worth with a whole number of buildings. Maxwell Fry was another one, and he did some very good ones. The ones in Hampstead for Sunhouse (?) which has been bought by the Indians for an official building, that is. And there's the Penguin House at the Zoo. They used their materials with great sensitivity. Well, after the war the architects betrayed their ethics. They had all these slogans during the war which I fell for, because I'm a great one for falling for slogans, they used to say: "A town should be for a citizen what a country estate is for a rich man: a pleasant place to walk in." This was wonderful, and this was what we hoped would happen. Well you can't say these tower blocks they've built with these beastly little places they can't use, all draughty at the bottom, make pleasant places to walk in, can you? It seems to me that the architects betrayed their ethics, and whereas you can't only blame the architects because the local authorities are all in on it, it's a team job - they should be criticised like films, you can criticise the director and the cameraman and the acting - and therefore if there'd been informed criticism in the papers, and real blasts... Nobody had dared to say anything about Denys Lasdun's National Theatre until the

Prince of Wales said it. Well I thought that was wonderful! Partly because I agree with him, I mean outside it looks like a morgue. Another of their slogans used to be "A building should express the purpose for which it was built". That was another wartime slogan. Well you can't say, looking at the National Theatre, that's an exciting place to go for a wonderful evening's entertainment. They might be making lampshades out of human skin, looking at the outside, it's so sinister. So they betrayed their ethics, and therefore I think they ruined London, and ruined a whole lot of places. All the authorities began to vie with each other as to who could go the tallest with the tower blocks. And it's because there's been no criticism, and names are not named. Only the Prince of Wales opened it up.

Interviewer (unidentified): At that time, when you were making 'The Way We Live', were these sacred cows? Was Abercrombie a sacred cow?

Jill Craigie: Yes, he was. He was a sacred cow except that - I happened to have more regard for Charles Riley. He was the father of town planning, he had founded the first Chair of Town Planning. I thought Thomas Sharp was better than Abercrombie. I'd studied it more than other people. That didn't mean I didn't respect him. I thought that something could come of it all.

Interviewer (unidentified): Was there any way of characterising the Abercrombie type?

Jill Craigie: No. I'm sorry, it would be nice to be able to do so, but I don't think you can. There was no typecasting at all.

Interviewer (unidentified): Back at these exhibitions... do you think they really took in what was happening?

Jill Craigie: Yes, they were so well done. They couldn't help it. All the slogans were terribly easy, they all had catchy slogans.

Interviewer (unidentified): But there's also a sense about your film, and other films, and in architectural magazines like the Architects' Journal, there seems to be a feeling among planners towards the end of the war that people were losing interest in planning, and there was a need to reawaken that interest. Because if they didn't become mobilised, the new Britain might not be built. And at the beginning of your film, I felt that it's actually quite a depressing beginning. There's no New Jerusalem in the beginning of the film. Obviously that's a good opening, because it leads to the discussion later on. But initially, this writer arrives. And there's a big question mark at the beginning of the film. He goes to a shop and looks at all these books, and says: all this planning, what about freedom, and things like this...

Jill Craigie: That was the mood...

Interviewer (unidentified): Yes, that's what I'm asking

Jill Craigie: That was made towards the end of the war, wasn't it.

Interviewer (unidentified): Well, '45, '46.

Jill Craigie: I felt you had to keep up the propaganda. There was tremendous excitement about the Better Britain. And the slogan was on all the billboards. People were fed up with the war in the end. They were fed up rationing... I don't know what they were fed up with, quite. They wanted the war to end. They weren't suffering.

Interviewer (unidentified): Can you remember conversations with people that struck you about that mood?

Jill Craigie: I think they'd been subjected to a lot of propaganda. The troops were coming home, the girls were coming home. The New Look... When the war ended, there was an extraordinary switch. Like Mr Short no longer having entree into all these rich houses. He said to me that closed overnight.

Interviewer (unidentified): He actually said that to you? What did he say?

Jill Craigie: Oh yes. He said it's not like it was, I'm no longer invited in anybody's home except yours. Then the New Look came in and there was tremendous excitement. The New Look was long skirts, rather full skirts, at a time when there was actually a shortage of fabric, and we were still supposed to be economising. The debutantes came back. It all came back overnight. It was something to do with the Daily Express and the Daily Mail. They helped to sort of change the mood. It was alarming.

Interviewer (unidentified): But this is somewhat ironic, seeing as the Labour Party had just won the general election with a landslide.

Jill Craigie: Yes, that's right. You've no idea how much fuss there was over the New Look, after women had been wearing tight, short skirts. And this rather sort of flouncy... awful, really. I was very alarmed by the New Look and the debutantes. This smacked to me of being difficult for socialists. It was a return to the class system in a big way. I was an awful prude, of course, in those days. Gosh, if I'd read a book like Alan Clark's book, I know how shocked I would have been!

Interviewer (unidentified): Tell me about 'The Way We Live'. How did you come to make that film?

Jill Craigie: I was really very keen to make that. I persuaded Del Giudice to let me make it. He said yes, and then I went to Plymouth, and then I went to all the blitzed cities. Had a fine time.

Interviewer (unidentified): Which ones did you go to? Hull?...

Jill Craigie: All of them. To Hull, Coventry, Durham, Liverpool or Leeds. That's all. I chose Plymouth because it was a wonderful setting, Abercrombie was easy, it had a sort of American link, the Astors were big names and I thought this would appeal to the Rank organisation. It was the easiest to do. I actually thought Coventry was better than the Plymouth plan, in fact. Gibson, wasn't it?

Interviewer (unidentified): Did you see 'A City Reborn', the film made about Coventry?

Jill Craigie: Yes, ultimately. I can't remember it now. It was made after mine.

Interviewer (unidentified): What about 'Land of Promise'. Did you see that before you made your film?

Jill Craigie: Yes. I think I saw it in Leicester Square. It was a supporting film. I thought it was wonderful. I remember very vividly seeing that, because I came out with Paul Rotha and Dick Winnington, the critic. I didn't think it was as good as Land of Plenty, but he was on the right lines, old Rotha - jolly pompous he was...

Interviewer (unidentified): What struck you about the film?

Jill Craigie: All I can remember now is I was very impressed by it. And was I depressed by it as well?

Interviewer (unidentified): It's a radical film in the same way as yours was - it proposes nationalisation of land...

Jill Craigie: Yes, that's right. Both Paul and I were in bad for our socialism, you know. It didn't do us any good. If I had been a good little Tory, and perhaps better at my job, I'd have got a job with the Rank Organisation, I'm sure. But John Davis thought I was terrible.

Interviewer (unidentified): When you saw 'Land of Promise', did it have an impact on you?

Jill Craigie: Yes, it excited me. I thought he was on the right lines.

Interviewer (unidentified): What sort of films did you want to make?

Jill Craigie: I wanted to translate my films into more human terms. I tried to do that. To have characters, real people in it. His was an intellectual argument wasn't it, 'Land of Promise'. You can't say mine's an intellectual argument, although it's a bit of a mess. It's explaining what these people are up to, and what their aspirations are, and what ordinary people's reactions are. The interaction between building and planning and families. These are the things that concern me. The conditioning with which we've been brought up is terribly important, isn't it. I don't see how you can have a socialist society without taking that into account.

Interviewer (unidentified): Do you remember the reaction of the audience to 'Land of Promise'?

Jill Craigie: It was good. But it was a sophisticated audience in Leicester Square, and a lot depends on the audiences. I distinctly remember the very word documentary, or the sight of a documentary, people groaning. But this didn't happen with 'Land of Promise', it didn't happen with 'The Way We Live' in certain places.

Interviewer (unidentified): Some people have said that 'Land of Promise' was a party political film - it made a fairly thinly-veiled appeal to the Labour Party...

Jill Craigie: Yes. But the country was very left, you know, at that period.

Interviewer (unidentified): Tell me about going to Plymouth and making 'The Way We Live'... you wanted to make a human film...

Jill Craigie: Yes, that's right. Tape 2, Side 2 Interview conducted by Rodney Geisler for BECTU on 27/4/95

Rodney Giesler: Jill Craigie, can I ask you when you were born and how you came to get into the film industry?

Jill Craigie: I was born on March 7th 1914. And I got into the industry during the war, really, because a lot of us when we were very young during the war, became extremely politically minded and developed social consciences. If we were in our early 20s, perhaps we'd just been enjoying ourselves up till then. I always had an interest in the visual side of life, and I wanted to interpret what the artists were saying and the architects. I wanted to interpret that, put it in film form, because after the blitz and during the blitz, there were the most wonderful exhibitions by that stuffy old organisation, the RIBA - Royal Institute of British Architects. And they held, during the war, some of the most wonderful exhibitions on The Better Britain, one of the big slogans during the war, which we all believed in. And of course there was a great chance for these blitzed cities. You could build again in a new way. And of course there was a lot of interest in the war artists, and in art generally, because we'd got nothing to spend our money on. We used to have great political discussions, those of us who were in the Air Raid Precautions services, as I was, the ARP, and we used to have art exhibitions and we used to flock to these architectural exhibitions, and I wanted to translate all this into film form, to get the cinema going audience as enthusiastic as we were in groups.

Rodney Giesler: Did you have an artistic education? Did you go to art school?

Jill Craigie: No, I didn't. I just developed a fascination for the arts, and I've kept it up ever since. I was one of the first to buy a Henry Moore. Those were days when you could get Henry Moore for ten pounds, fifteen pounds - which was quite a lot of money, I may say! I had to struggle to pay. So I made a film called 'Out of Chaos',. Terrible title. As Priestley once said to me, I should have called it I Know What I Like. This was about the war artists, and I tried to interpret what the war artists were up to and what they were saying. There was a tremendous row in those days between John Davis, who was the distributor and the accountant for the Rank Organisation, and Del Giudice, who was the head of Two Cities, and he was an Italian who wanted to give "ze British talents a good chance" which they have never had when Korda was there. Because Korda was a great one for nepotism, all his relatives were in positions of influence in films. And Del made, sponsored, a lot of the big war films like In Which We Serve and This Happy Breed, and some of the David Lean films, Brief Encounter. And he also had "ze junior talents", and I was one of ze junior talents. But John Davis, who was J Arthur Rank's accountant and a distributor, loathed Del and Del loathed John Davis. And so ze junior talents were rather pawns in the game

played between Del and John Davis, both of whom were vying with each other for Rank's ear. And Rank was rather benevolent to start with, and was rather keen on Del Giudice, who was all for giving "ze Breeteesh talents" a chance. But John Davis insisted that Del was non-commercial and no good. And the way he could insist on Del being no good was that, in those days, the Rank Organisation owned two circuits, the Odeon and Gaumont. And if Del made a film, John Davis would put it in the worst cinema at the worst time of the year to do it down. He would put it in Warrington in Wakes Week when everybody had left Warrington. There's always a better site, usually speaking the Odeon was the better site, a more popular cinema. So he put all Del's pictures in the worst sites so they didn't make money. So people like Bernard Miles, who made the film - what was it, about a little bird - Tawny Pipit, we were all absolutely for it from John Davis. I was making this film 'The Way We Live', which was about the Plymouth plan, which Del sponsored - having already made the one about the artists, that is, I'll tell you a bit more about that later - and in the middle of shooting John Davis sent a message to say, stop shooting. Del had sponsored this film about the Plymouth Plan, and we'd stirred up the whole of Plymouth - the local council, the traffic, we'd got the whole of the town of Plymouth involved in this film about the plan, which was Abercrombie's plan. I was shooting the town council, this was a very big council with a Lord Mayor, when the message came saying: stop shooting at once. Well we couldn't do that, so I said to my producer, MacQuitty, keep shooting and I'll go up and see Rank. So I took the night train to London, and I demanded to see Rank, with the message we have not stopped shooting. I was admitted to his office, and John Davis was there, and I said to Rank we cannot possibly stop shooting, you will make such a fool of yourself. I produced a press cutting book. Because I was a woman director, and considered to be the only one at that time - I wasn't the only one, I think Mary Field was making children's films, but somehow they said I was the only woman director... and young, very young, and looked rather frivolous... The press used to say things like "although she is very feminine and only 20, or whatever, she is in charge of so many men" - you had a unit of 40 in those days - because I was young and feminine, I had tremendous publicity. And I had a press cutting full of the Plymouth Plan, and I made sure that every interview - it was wonderful of Rank to sponsor this film, and we had pictures of the crowds, we had a very good still cameraman, Pennington was the cameraman, anyway Rank turned over these pages and saw quite a lot of praise of himself. The whole of Plymouth had been turned upside down, and we'd had great processions, and all the traffic had been held up and everything, it was quite a big do. And he turned to John Davis and said, John I don't think we can stop this film. He seemed quite pleased when he said it. And John said no, I suppose we can't. This was fine, so I went back in triumph and finished the film. But when it was finished, John Davis played his great trick of putting it on at a terrible cinema at a terrible time, and the audience booed and hooted. And of course it wasn't a commercial film anyway, it wasn't meant to be. I was very depressed about this, and the man said: oh you've no reason to be depressed about this, you should have seen what they did to 'Henry V'! They threw tomatoes at the screen. And that was the kind of cinema that film had been shown at. So...

Rodney Giesler: Can I just backtrack slightly and find out: when did you become radicalised in the political sense, up to the war period. What made you...?

Jill Craigie: Just before the war, really. A lot of us who were not in politics, I didn't know any politicians...

Rodney Giesler: Your family wasn't in politics?

Jill Craigie: No. Rather the opposite. Rather reactionary in as much as I hadn't got a family, really. When Hitler marched into Poland, I knew that there was going to be war. There were quite a lot of people who didn't know there was going to be war, even then, you know. When Chamberlain came with his piece of paper, it was really evident that he'd sold Czechoslovakia down the river. This was monstrous, and I think that woke me up to political issues more than anything. I thought, this is a dreadful thing - peace in our time, with honour, with selling poor old Czechoslovakia to this man Hitler. But I didn't know anything about the holocaust, really. It was something one heard vaguely about, but you hardly believed it. One couldn't really believe that until you saw the pictures, ultimately. But I became very political from then on...

Rodney Giesler: Did you first come into the industry with Del Giudice?

Jill Craigie: No, I was working for the British Council writing scripts.

Rodney Giesler: 'Flemish Farm', I believe you...

Jill Craigie: Oh yes, I did that too. That was when I was married to Jeffrey Dell...

Rodney Giesler: Tell me a bit about how you came from the British Council into films, the actual sequence of events.

Jill Craigie: Well, I got a job with the British Council writing scripts on my own initiative, and did them for quite a while. And then I had this idea during the war, and I went to Rank and Rank put me onto Del Giudice. This was the time when Rank was quite benevolent. Well then I was married to Jeffrey for a while, and we did 'Flemish Farm' together, but it wasn't a very happy marriage, I must say. Although I think he's brilliant, and I still think he's written the most brilliant book about the film industry, which should be reprinted. You've heard of it, have you? 'Nobody Ordered Wolves' was an absolute classic, really about Korda and working for Korda. But I got very browned off because he had this immense talent and wonderful notices, but he'd just make any old Saint(?) stories and any old scripts in order to make money...

Rodney Giesler: He was an independent producer, was he, working for...?

Jill Craigie: He was a writer. He worked for Korda, he did 'Sanders of the River' and one or two other things. He had a terrible row with the Boultings. But anyway - that's another story altogether. But I will tell you about my first film, if you can call it a film. Very amateur. I knew nothing about making films. My work was extremely amateur. But I had these people like Henry Moore in - people thought it was outrageous what he was doing in those days. The Rank Organisation, John Davis, said it was rubbish and he destroyed the negative. The film cost seven thousand pounds to make, I earned three hundred.

Rodney Giesler: You wrote and directed it?

Jill Craigie: Yes. So anyway, it was seven thousand pounds down the drain as far as John Davis was concerned. But nowadays, if anybody wants to make a film about Henry Moore, they have to use what I shot, because it's the only time he was ever filmed when he was young. And he did a very wonderful thing, which was a very good trick for films, because he did a drawing on a white canvas with white crayon, so you didn't see anything at all. And then he took a brush with black, or a dark colour, and washed it over, and two heads appeared - restless heads of two women in the air-raid shelters. The paint didn't take where the white was, it only took where the white wasn't. And so it looked like magic. It was a very good piece of shooting, that. Anyway... the negative was destroyed. Everyone in the art world was interested in what I'd done, amateur or not. And it was certainly amateur. So negatives were made from the prints. Well, today, if anyone wants to make a film about Henry Moore, they have to use my bit. And it costs seven thousand pounds a time. The Rank Organisation have made seven thousand pounds three times already. So they've got their money back at long last.

Rodney Giesler: How did you get on with Henry Moore?

Jill Craigie: Oh, I adored him. He was wonderful. I had Graham Sutherland in it, and Stanley Spencer. But Henry was a dream, because the technicians - we had huge teams in those days, about forty, you know - and they all went down to his studio, and here was a girl as a director, with a sort of chi-chi subject of this extraordinary man... And they were rather, sort of, laughing at it. Which I was very aware of. Henry was very quiet, and he said: will you do the sculptures last? I said certainly, and he did this wonderful trick, which did rather impress the technicians - they thought, well he knows something. And when it came to the sculpture, he went very quietly to the cameraman, and he said if you put the Baby here and spread it, and the Arc here, and he used all the jargon - he'd learned everything about lighting just by watching the technicians. And he lit his sculptures, and did it in a very, very charming way without humiliating the cameraman. And then of course they knew he was a genius. Only a genius could do that! So that was very nice. He used to take me into the air-raid shelters during the war, we used to walk hand in hand down the shelters, and he'd talk about his art. It was really rather romantic, and very exciting.

Rodney Giesler: You watched him at work in the shelters?

Jill Craigie: Oh yes. He stopped and did sketches and talked to people, and tell me what interested him. He taught me a lot.

Rodney Giesler: He talked to the people sheltering there?

Jill Craigie: Yes

Rodney Giesler: Tell me a bit about that

Jill Craigie: Well, Hampstead, you see. I was living in Hampstead, in Malcolm McDonald's house and was fancy-free. But Henry was married to a very nice Russian woman. But we got on like a house on fire. He was determined that if I was going to be in film, I'd have to get it right. And so he took a lot of trouble with me, and taught me a lot, and taught me what he stood for. He used to say, if you look at any of my sculptures - he loved people to feel his sculptures, he said

always feel my sculptures - do you know what this curve is? That's my mother's lumbago. My mother used to have lumbago and I used to have to massage her hips for ages and ages. And he massaged my hips to show me the movement. And if you had your hips massaged by Henry Moore, I assure you you don't forget it! I can't see a Henry Moore now without seeing where that curve is for the mother's hips. Things like that, well that's very interesting, isn't it? So that was nice, I enjoyed these things.

Rodney Giesler: What about the families in the shelters? Did you talk to them, find out who they were?

Jill Craigie: Yes. They were nearly all from the East End.

Rodney Giesler: Which particular shelters were you in?

Jill Craigie: Hampstead was the deepest shelter. I was in the ARP, so if I wasn't in the shelters with Henry, I was very often... you have to go round seeing everybody's got their blackouts, and if any light was showing you had to tick them off. We used to go up on Parliament Hill. It was absolutely fiendish, because you'd see what was happening in the East End. There was a tremendous racket, because the anti-aircraft guns were on the Heath. So you really felt you were in the war, but at the same time just a few bombs dropped in Hampstead. The mass of the bombing took place in the East End, and you could watch the East End on fire.

Rodney Giesler: And all the families came all the way over from the East End?

Jill Craigie: Yes, they did. A lot of them. It was very crammed.

Rodney Giesler: So they were coming over in the late afternoon? What was their routine?

Jill Craigie: I don't know what time they came, because we used to go at night. They were already there, packed in, so they must have started pretty early.

Rodney Giesler: What were the toilet facilities like?

Jill Craigie: Not very good. But it was all quite sanitary. There are lavatories in...

Rodney Giesler: They brought their own bedding, I suppose?

Jill Craigie: Oh yes. They were all snuggled up, strangers. They brought their own bedding, they were all close together packed like sardines. Henry did a lot of drawings of them... I bought a lot, I persuaded other people to buy these drawings. I thought Henry was very broke, and I was broke. I don't think he was as broke as I thought he was, but he was teaching at the time. He couldn't live on his... And Sydney Box said to me, well if you think Henry Moore is so good, I'll have a corner in Henry Moore, buy all the Henry Moores you can find. And people like myself, we never thought of investment in those days, we weren't much interested in money, we just loved these lovely pictures. Anyway, Sydney Box filled his flat in Bayswater with Henry Moores. He got some of them so cheaply. I didn't make any money out of this... And so Henry

was quite pleased to sell them all. I couldn't bear parting with them, because I really loved them. Muriel [Box] didn't like them, nobody liked them in those days, even art collectors. And then I didn't see Sydney Box for about seven years after that. Then one day he came up to me and said, you're a very clever girl, Jill. I've sold all those Henry Moores and I've made over a hundred per cent profit on them all! So in other words, he'd sold Henry Moores which he'd bought for ten pounds, fifteen pounds, twenty pounds, you know - for fifty pounds, eighty pounds. Whereas if he'd kept them they would have been worth a lot of money.

Rodney Giesler: Henry Moore has always come across to me as a very warm sort of person. He was one of the miraculous survivors of the trenches, wasn't he? One thinks about what the world would have lost if he had been killed on the Somme...

Jill Craigie: I don't know a lot about his past... he wasn't that old?

Rodney Giesler: He was certainly old enough to have fought in the trenches

Jill Craigie: I mean, Henry Moore, if he hadn't been married... We girls in those days, we really had scruples about men. We didn't make passes at married men or go for them. But if he hadn't been married I would really have gone for him in a big way. I thought he was wonderful, just my type.

Rodney Giesler: Before we started recording, you looked at this list, and you said: there are not many women on it. And there certainly weren't, as you said, there was only you and Mary Field, and possibly a little later on, Budge Cooper - whom I worked with at one time. It's quite extraordinary for you, as a young girl, to have catapulted yourself into that position at that time. Were you very aggressive?

Jill Craigie: No, I wasn't. I was quite persuasive. And I could write. I could write so that you could see it. I don't have great literary pretensions. But I could write so that people could see what it would look like on the screen. And I persuaded people, I wasn't nearly aggressive enough. If you're a real artist, you sacrifice everything for your art. So I couldn't have been a real artist. I wasn't good enough, that is the truth of the matter. I was just as good as a lot of people who made the grade and got on, my films were quite well reviewed although they were very amateur, there was something there. But being a woman, I wanted the Rank Organisation to take me into one of their series like 'Life', 'Time Marches On' [sic]. I wanted to be one of the team. I never had a chance to experiment or to learn, really. I was untrained, and being a woman you either had to be much better than the men... you didn't have the best facilities, and things like that. So I didn't really make it. Then I went more into scriptwriting, and was two years at Pinewood. I suppose The 'Million Pound Note' was the best thing I did, with Greg Peck, and that was fun. And I helped other people with scripts quite a lot...

Rodney Giesler: You were talking about war artists, and said you were going to go back and talk some more...

Jill Craigie: The thing I was going back about was the Rank Organisation making all this money out of the thing that they tore up the negative of

Rodney Giesler: Which other war artists did you work with?

Jill Craigie: Stanley Spencer and Graham Sutherland. Paul Nash.

Rodney Giesler: How did you find them? Were they contrasting characters?

Jill Craigie: Stanley Spencer was a riot. He was quite mad, of course. We would go up to Glasgow in a third class carriage. He was doing the welders on the Clyde, and to everybody in the carriage - the carriages were very full, we had no money and would always travel third class - he would hold forth and say "all my painting is sheer masturbation! I masturbate, I masturbate, I masturbate. He would go on like this in front of mothers and children. And he would do all these little sketches on lavatory paper. He'd do all these welders, and unroll a bit, and do another and unroll a bit, and it would flutter in the wind because we'd say: well hold that, we'd like to shoot you like that. Then he'd say: if this rips up, my lavatory paper's worth ten times more than your camera! This was Stanley Spencer. He was very funny, and very extrovert, and outrageous. Always outrageous. He liked dirt, and he used to wear filthy dirty pyjamas under his suits that he hadn't washed and changed for months. And sometimes he smelt quite badly. He approved of dirt for its own sake. I think he was dotty. Malcolm McDonald was one of his sponsors and he used to take him to expensive restaurants, but the commissionaires wouldn't let him in, so Malcolm had to come out and take him in, proudly. I found Graham Sutherland rather vain. He wanted to be filmed wearing a helmet, to look as though he was doing important things...

Rodney Giesler: He was introverted compared to Stanley Spencer, but was he a difficult person to know?

Jill Craigie: I don't think he liked me, I don't know why. I think he very much liked my producer... He was very, very happily married, and he'd got the most wonderful wife, a very beautiful wife, but I remember when we were signing in a hotel, and you had to say what sex you were - very curious questions you were asked during the war - and I remember him looking up at my producer and saying: I never know what to put for this question. And I thought this was very strange. I don't think he was a practising homosexual, there was absolutely no sign of that, but...

Rodney Giesler: Who was the producer?

Jill Craigie: William MacQuitty. He was very good looking, a rather sort of flamboyant Irishman. I don't think Graham liked me, I think I was a bit of a flop with him. I can't say I was all that keen on him, either. Paul Nash was interesting...

Rodney Giesler: What work did he do, what areas of the war...?

Jill Craigie: He was surrealist. He used to do these great dumps of crashed aeroplanes. William MacQuitty had never been interested in art at all, he was my producer, and he really had quite crude ideas about art, then. And I was really rather priggish, I used to say: don't say I know what I like, you know, the artist won't like it if you say that. I used to be a terrible little prig, I used to give him these hints. However, we were in the National Gallery and we were looking at Nash's paintings, and suddenly to my astonishment MacQuitty said: Oh, the poor fellow. He's really

suffering from claustrophobia. How he needs air. I thought this was the most remarkable statement from someone who knew nothing about painting. I didn't know what he meant, and why he said it. He was one of these Irishmen who'd been all over the world and done everything, you know, these... and he'd studied psychology for a while under Steckel (?) And he knew how to interpret dreams, and he could see from the surrealist themes that this fellow was gasping for air. Well then we went to Nash's home to film him, because I always took Liam - as I called him - to look at the paintings before we met the artist, it was all part of the game, and when we went to his home he was in a tiny little room. His wife was an Egyptologist, and the kitchen table was filled with rubbish and debris and brushes and combs and washing-up brushes, a complete muddle, and a tiny little space was left for Paul to have his lunch. You could see immediately that the whole thing was on top of him, which was why he was gasping to get out. So it was rather interesting. After that MacQuitty himself took a much more sophisticated interest in painting, and then acquired a wonderful collection. He became a great connoisseur in no time. But it was his studying under Steckel (?) and understanding the surrealist art that put him on to it. Rather interesting that, isn't it? I was a little prig thinking I knew everything and he knew nothing, but he knew more than me, really.

Rodney Giesler: Who was the sponsoring force in the Ministry of Information? They had Dame Laura Knight, of course...

Jill Craigie: Beddington. He was terrific

Rodney Giesler: Because they were difficult artists to communicate with everyday people...

Jill Craigie: Jack Beddington really had a great feeling for it. He was excellent. A lot of the artists and the musicians did well. The other thing that Del Giudice did was - Muir Mathieson went to Del, and said we've got wonderful British composers, and Vaughan Williams - I worked with some really good composers - he earned five hundred a year writing songs. He had some private income, but he said British composers couldn't afford to write symphonies. They hadn't got the money. It costs a lot of money to write a symphony. And time. And he said that it was Muir bringing on people like Walton and Vaughan Williams, all these people - they earned good money in films. Muir had to persuade them it was worthwhile. Of course Walton did Henry V, and earned very very good money. And this brought on British music, before the BBC ever did it. This was entirely Muir Mathieson, who was a conductor with a mission to sponsor the best of British music. He went to Del, and he was another 'British talent', whereas old Korda always had Spoliansky who was some Hungarian friend of his, a member of the family or something. RG: From your war artist series... I've got a very inadequate list here. I've got 'Flemish Farm', 'Out of Chaos'... Those are the war artist ones. What followed 'Out of Chaos'?

Jill Craigie: The 'Way We Live'. Then I did the one about mining, which I think is terrible, 'Blue Scar'. 'The Way We Live' was the one about the Plymouth Plan, and I got a lot of publicity for that. I had temporary fame. And Lejeune wrote to me and said I was only one inch less than 'Henry V' or something ridiculous like that. And then I went to Pinewood for two years, and I wrote scripts. I wrote the first Norman Wisdom script. But when I saw what they'd done with it, I took my name off it.

Rodney Giesler: Which one was that?

Jill Craigie: 'Trouble In Store'. I wrote a satire about a store, but I couldn't bear what Paddy Carstairs had done with it. The whole industry thought I was mad to take my name off it, they thought I was highly political... Well, I was. Why not?

Rodney Giesler: That's your reputation, anyway. I want to go back to Plymouth. When did you actually start it - after the war had finished?

Jill Craigie: No, during the war. We were there for VE night and VJ night too, I think. That's when I met Michael Foot. He was standing there [as MP] for the first time.

Rodney Giesler: You helped him campaign, didn't you?

Jill Craigie: Yes, I certainly did. I was campaigning like mad before he arrived, because he was in San Francisco. Nobody thought that the Labour Party was going to win down there, not even the city fathers. We thought he would, but people who were in politics - and there's hardly any exceptions to this, nobody that I met who was in politics - ever thought that we would win, except Nye Bevan. He was the one exception. And nobody who was out of politics, like we were... it was inconceivable to us that Labour couldn't win. It was very strange. Hore- Belisha was standing there. I went and interviewed Hore-Belisha, he was against the Plan. And I said how can you be against the Plan? Everyone's talking about the Better Britain. They want to build better cities and more beautiful cities, and you're against it all. Well, I have to say, judging by what came out at the end, maybe Hore-Belisha was right! In some ways, not in others.

Rodney Giesler: It was a new city - the centre was quite spectacular. I was serving in a destroyer there after the war, and I can remember the completed city then, which was something totally new... But tell me, about the time of the election - the Beveridge plan was the great big promise during the war, which everyone was striving to fight and get the war over for... now that presumably fired up your campaign. Did you get positive canvass returns at that time...? How were you so sure you were going to get a positive...?

Jill Craigie: Oh, the whole atmosphere during the war. I was in Hampstead, and on the BBC there were these Brains Trusts every week, with Priestley and Professor Joad. They were all socialists, the Left Book Club, the newspapers, the film industry, everything was left. There was even a song, You've Got to be Left to be Right. For people who knew very little about politics - I was quite naive about it all - it was inconceivable that there could be anything but a Labour government. It never occurred to me. But then I was quite surprised, I kept meeting these political characters who said no, he doesn't have a hope of getting in. And that was Michael. Then I talked to Hore-Belisha and I said, but you're not in tune with what people are thinking, they're all crazy about this great new Plymouth we're going to have. It's a wonderful chance to build a beautiful city, much better than the old one. Do you want all the old slums and the traffic muddle? He was out of touch, it seemed to us. But so were the city fathers, the very left-wing wonderful city fathers who had founded the socialist party in Plymouth, people who could have made money in their own right, they were bright. But they didn't think Michael would win. It was extraordinary.

Rodney Giesler: But he did win. Did you spend more time in politics then than in film making?

Jill Craigie: I got involved, yes.

Rodney Giesler: When did you marry Michael?

Jill Craigie: 1949. We've been married a long time. We were living together first... People did in those days. The present generation don't seem to think that we did, but we did!

Rodney Giesler: So after his election did you move to London?

Jill Craigie: Yes, we moved to London. I was working for Pinewood then, on scripts. But I sort of drifted out of films, which shows that I can't have been any good. I don't think they wanted me, anyway. It was too tough. It was a marriage, you know, really. I'm sure that if I had been brilliant or really dedicated I could have made it. My early work was no worse than a lot of people's early work who made good subsequently. On the other hand, it wasn't that brilliant. I would have made a good, competent director who could have held my own with anyone, without being tops. That's my own assessment. But it was very difficult for a woman, really... Feature films... It's a marriage. It was easier for Betty and Muriel Box, because Sydney Box was a producer and he could sponsor them, and bring them along. But I hadn't got anyone like that to look after me... This is where there's a difference between the real artist or not. The real artist will sacrifice relationships. And personal relationships mean a lot to me, I couldn't do that for my career. I don't think my career is so important that society's the worse for not having it...

Rodney Giesler: You mentioned 'The Million Pound Note'...

Jill Craigie: It was successful, yes.

Rodney Giesler: Which other feature film scripts...?

Jill Craigie: We did 'Windom's Way'. I did quite a lot with Henry Cornelius, although I don't have a credit, but I did work a lot with him on Genevieve, actually. He was very very funny. He had Genevieve analysed - they were very keen on analysis, Henry Cornelius and his wife Marjorie. They had a married couple, and Marjorie was being analysed by the husband, and Corny, as we called him, was analysed by the wife, both of whom were psychiatrists. So Corny had the characters in Genevieve analysed to see if they were all correct, and this was all correct and it was all very good. And then nobody was paid for the script, because he'd written it independently with this American, Rose I think his name was, and he couldn't get the money for it. I thought it was wonderful. Mick Balcon thought it was very good too, but he didn't sponsor it, and the people at Pinewood thought it was too slight. That was the criticism. And the male psychiatrist said, well I've got a Communist patient who has a terrible complex, and if he puts a bit of money into Genevieve, and if he loses a bit of money in film, maybe that will cure his guilt complex. So it was really it was the psychiatrist who got the communist to back Genevieve. Well because Genevieve had got independent money in it they managed to get some sort of distribution agreement, and I suppose the wife's been living on the proceeds ever since.

Rodney Giesler: Who was the Communist?

Jill Craigie: I don't know the name of the Communist. So I should think that's about it, wouldn't you?

... One of the people I worked with was Vaughan Williams, and in fact I worked with some very good musicians indeed, including women musicians. I gave women a special chance because I thought they were hard done by. I once asked Vaughan Williams, in his 70s and rather doddering, but very mischievous and very interesting to talk to, and I said have you any regrets in life? And he said yes, the temptations I've resisted. And when he said that I think of Henry Moore. Because I was very upright, and we didn't go for married men, but I was very tempted by Henry Moore. It was a temptation I resisted. I don't know today whether I regret it or not!