

Ilze Grickus – b. 13/4/1947

Transcript of Interview with Judy Caine 17th January 2019

(N.B. – timecode numbers refer to the audio recording)

Judy Caine: [00:00:01] Okay. I think we're in business. Yes, we are. Okay. I'm just going to identify who I am Ilze. My name is Judy Caine and I'm in Uppingham with Ilze Grickus as part of the **C h a n g i n g C o r b y L a t v i a** Paddy's in Uppingham, and it is Thursday the 17th of January 2019. Could you just for the tape give me your full name and tell me your date of birth.

Ilze Grickus: [00:00:26] My name is Ilze Grickus. I was born on the 13th of April in 1947 which makes me almost 72 years of age. I was actually born in Manchester.

Judy Caine: [00:00:40] Good heavens. So, What's your connection with Latvia?



Ilze Grickus: [00:00:42] Well my parents are Latvian, or were, they are deceased now, my father came over here after the war as my mother, my mother was a nurse. My father was a professional soldier. And then they were offered the opportunity to come to England in order to make a new life for themselves. At the time they had actually thought they were going to go back to Latvia. But obviously as time went on, and then they met up and got married and there you go.

Judy Caine: So, what made you settle in this area?

Ilze Grickus: Well, that was the steelworks. My parents settled in Corby because of the steelworks, my father had a job here and was able to get employment. When Latvians first came here, they actually had to work for two years in the coal mines, or two years on the land or two years in textiles. So, my father actually started off somewhere in the north of England, I can't recall exactly where, working on the land for two years and then, subsequently, after those two years, compulsory years, were completed, then they were able to move around and it's a little strange because there was a, they all came from camps from, not refugee camps but. . . .

Judy Caine: [00:02:14] Concentration camps?

Ilze Grickus: [00:02:14] No, not concentration camps, trying to think of the word now.

Judy Caine: [00:02:16] Take your time ... [much Later on after the interview Ilze remembered they were POW - prisoner of war - camps]

Ilze Grickus: [00:02:20] They met ... when the Americans and the Brits took over, they captured a lot of these soldiers in Latvia, they were put on to go into refugee camps, because they were soldiers, they weren't refugees as such. And that's what I can't remember.

Judy Caine: [00:02:44] Let's just call it camps for now and not worry about it.

Ilze Grickus: [00:02:46] They were in camps and what had happened was that a Latvian male voice choir had been created it was called, it was named after a man called Zuika, Roberts Zuika who first went over to America but the camp, the male voice choir decided that even after the camps were disbanded, they would then continue. They wanted to try and keep together so Corby was a place where there were plenty of jobs available and quite a lot of the choir members therefore settled in Corby as a result of that. My father was one of those people.

Judy Caine: [00:03:21] So this would have been after the war.

Ilze Grickus: [00:03:23] Yes, this was after the war, my father came here late '46, early '47.

Judy Caine: [00:03:31] That's interesting because as a legend in Corby about the Latvian choir coming over in the war, and the legend goes, and it's obviously got a bit misconstrued that the conductor came over got a job in the steelworks and said he'd only take the job if he could bring his whole choir over.

Ilze Grickus: [00:03:48] (Laughs) Well that I can't attest to whether that's true or not to be honest but it was, if there is an element of truth there, that the choir itself wanted to try and keep together and continue to sing because whilst they were in the camps in Germany and in Belgium they actually travelled right the way round to the various Latvian communities, various Latvian refugee camps, and gave concerts. So, they'd already sort of got themselves established fairly well at the time.

Judy Caine: [00:04:17] How big was this male voice choir approximately do you know?

Ilze Grickus: [00:04:21] Oh, I've got a photograph at home and I think that's its heyday, certainly in Corby, there must have been around 40 people in the choir.

Judy Caine: [00:04:31] I'd love to see that photograph.

Ilze Grickus: [00:04:33] I've got quite a lot of photographs at home. Because I actually did a presentation to the younger Latvians in Corby, to just give them the history of how the Latvian community came to be here.

Judy Caine: [00:04:47] Do you still have that presentation, and would you be prepared to give it to the choir and the dancetheatre?

Ilze Grickus: [00:04:51] It's in Latvian?

Judy Caine: [00:04:53] OK. (both laugh)

Ilze Grickus: [00:04:56] But it's easily translatable, when I've got some time!

Judy Caine: [00:05:01] Which is not at the moment?

Ilze Grickus: [00:05:05] At the moment no, I'm afraid I've sort of got myself tied up into all sorts of Latvian things which we'll come onto no doubt.

Judy Caine: [00:05:11] Could I see that photograph of the choir or maybe have a copy of it?

Ilze Grickus: [00:05:14] Yes. Yeah, I'll get a copy, I've got it, I've got it scanned so I can send it to you.



Judy Caine: [00:05:20] Thank you very much. That would be lovely. So, your father came over as part of the choir?

Ilze Grickus: [00:05:26] My father came over as, well I guess as part of the choir, yes, well, I mean they were scattered across the country to start with, but then eventually, having got settled in Corby my parents came to Corby in about 19.., about the end of 1949. My mother was a nurse. So, for her getting a job was less difficult.

Judy Caine: [00:05:53] So your parents are married in Latvia and came over.

Ilze Grickus: [00:05:56] No, my parents were married here.

Judy Caine: [00:05:58] So your parents met in the UK did they?

Ilze Grickus: [00:06:02] Yeah. Yeah.

Judy Caine: [00:06:03] That's lovely. And this six years of like two years on the field two years in the mine two years in the steelworks ...

Ilze Grickus: [00:06:09] No, they only had to do two years at either or, as I believe.

Judy Caine: [00:06:15] Oh I see.

Ilze Grickus: [00:06:15] Because my parents in law, they did two years in textiles up in Yorkshire. So, it depended on what you felt you were most suited to.

Judy Caine: [00:06:31] Indeed. So, you were born in the late forties, forty-seven. What do you remember of your childhood in Corby in the Latvian community?

Ilze Grickus: [00:06:42] Primarily I think it was more ... I don't know whether I remember anything specific about the Latvian Community, except going to school, that we had a Saturday school where we were. And that was it. You know the Rockingham Road School ...

Judy Caine: [00:07:04] ... Pen Green?

Ilze Grickus: [00:07:05] Yes, on Pen Green, opposite that ...

Judy Caine: [00:07:08] Rockingham Road Primary school,

Ilze Grickus: [00:07:08] Yes, the primary school. We had lessons there to start with. I do remember the lessons there. But generally, I think just generally it was just how home life was, speaking Latvian, and kids on the street used to speak English. So, I was sort of growing up with both languages and both, to some extent, both cultures and apart from that it was just, there was nothing sort of stuck out because I didn't think there was anything special about any of it. You know it was just something, quite natural. I think it's only when you become aware later on in life when you start to understand who you are what you are where you came from and start to associate yourself in that way that it's some, that then there's some kind of impact on you and you have to make decisions as to which direction you go.

Judy Caine: [00:08:05] Did you feel Latvian or English as a child?

Ilze Grickus: [00:08:09] I don't think I felt either. I just, for me it was just something completely natural. But you know, I go to school I speak English, I'm at home I speak Latvian. I didn't have any particular issues one way or the other, it never really came up until I guess, until I went to grammar school and then that was when sort of as you grew up, you sort of started developing a wider circle of friends, you then distinguish between your Latvian friends and your English friends, you got you've got yourself engaged in things like Latvian dancing and so on and it's then, when your English friends start to say well, you know are you British, are you with, English, are you Latvian and sort of started questioning it. But it was never, it was never a big issue. The friends I had were super and I still have them. I mean even all this time ago my best friend is, probably we've known each other now for sixty-one years.

Judy Caine: [00:09:19] That's lovely. So, Tell me about Latvian dance?

Ilze Grickus: [00:09:23] Ah yeah. As we were growing up, I mean, we'd all been quite used to Latvian communities. As such, one of our group, a guy called Viktors Grigulis who now lives in London, has lived in London for a long time, decided to establish a Latvian dance group.

Judy Caine: [00:09:44] What year was that?

Ilze Grickus: [00:09:52] That was, I'm trying to think when it was, it would have been, 60s sometime ...

Judy Caine: [00:10:02] Early 60s?

Ilze Grickus: [00:10:06] It would have been, yes, early to mid-60s. Again, I've got actually programs at home where there was, I think it was, the 10th anniversary or the 20th anniversary so I could probably be much more definite as far as a date is concerned but I haven't got that information with me.

Judy Caine: [00:10:26] Have you've got that scanned at all?

Ilze Grickus: [00:10:27] Yes.

Judy Caine: [00:10:28] If you could send me that as well that would be wonderful.

Ilze Grickus: [00:10:30] Yes.



Ilze Grickus: [00:10:32] So, that's really how it all started. The dance group and so. Because we also used to have access, sole access, to a hall on Stuart Road.

Judy Caine: [00:10:50] Oh yes, next to the Church ...

Ilze Grickus: [00:10:52] Yes, well that church was a Lutheran church and was actually paid for by the Americans if I remember rightly. And the church hall next to it was, it was ours, it also belonged to the church, but the Latvian community in Corby used to look after it and there was a

library there, and it was also used for events, dances and 'dos' and stuff, and we also used to do our practice on Friday nights, and as we got older we could then go to the pub afterwards. (laughs)

Judy Caine: [00:11:25] Essential! I have a feeling I might have seen some footage of an event in that church when I was trawling the internet trying to research about Latvia and about what was happening in Corby. And I have the faintest of notions there is some video even in the Corby film you mentioned earlier, or on a YouTube film - it might have been a BBC thing. I'm sure I've seen some footage of that.

Ilze Grickus: [00:11:53] There might have been.

Judy Caine: [00:11:54] So how long were you with the dance group?

Ilze Grickus: [00:11:57] Well I was with a dance group until I was about, I guess 21, 22. When I was 18, I went down to London to study and so on, and by that time most of us had started to go in different directions. But we would still meet up in holidays and so on, and we still would take part in various European events like those European song and dance festivals where we as a group would participate. We participated in Hanover and Hamburg and can't remember where else. But gradually the older ones sort of went their own way and a younger group did come up, but eventually most people, most Latvians actually of my age and slightly younger moved out of Corby in order to find jobs or to study. Latvians are very strong on education and most of the parents wanted us to have a good education and go to universities and get good jobs and so on. And those opportunities weren't available really in Corby. So that's why so many moved out eventually.

Judy Caine: [00:13:26] You talked about going into different parts of the world to perform the dance. Did you ever go to the big festival in Riga?

Ilze Grickus: [00:13:33] Only when I was older, because the festivals really were only started to open up as true Latvian festivals in 1990. That was the first time.

Judy Caine: [00:13:42] The year before the Second Independence?

Ilze Grickus: [00:13:44] Yes, the renewal of independence Yes.

Judy Caine: [00:13:47] That's interesting.

Ilze Grickus: [00:13:49] So that didn't ... they continued their festivals, but it was very much influenced by the Soviet Union in terms of what they could sing and how they behaved and so on. So, it wasn't something that, because my father was an Army person, it wasn't very safe. My father actually had a first family out in Latvia. He had a wife and two children whom I'm very much in touch with. In fact, my brother's daughter, youngest daughter phoned me last night and we spoke for two hours on the 'phone. But no, that was the first time. My father was still alive in 1990. And so that was the first time my husband and I went to a festival. But the other festivals, there were regular European festivals. There were also festivals in the UK in Leeds and Leicester are the ones I particularly remember. Then there was also a, one in Canada where the dance group took part.

Judy Caine: [00:14:57] What about song? Latvian song. Were there any Latvian song groups apart from the male voice choir in Corby and when did the male voice choir ceased to be.

Ilze Grickus: [00:15:08] The male voice choir ceased to be around, Valdis Auers should have told you this - he would know when the male voice choirs ceased because he was a member.

Judy Caine: [00:15:20] Yes, he said it was late seventies he thought but he couldn't give me a precise date. He was going to come back to me.

Ilze Grickus: [00:15:28] Yes, I, I would have thought perhaps it might have been 80, 81 but I'm not certain either, but that was simply because a lot of them had passed away and it was getting difficult for people really to keep the choir together and there weren't any new people coming into the choir. But, I mean ... and then they joined the choir at Catthorpe.

Judy Caine: [00:15:56] Tell me about Catthorpe, what happens there? Because that's a huge centre for Latvians.

Ilze Grickus: [00:16:00] Yes, it's a centre, yes. Catthorpe Manor, in about nineteen seventy-five we had premises in London which we still have, that's the organisation, that's been translated into English as the Latvian Welfare Fund. But basically, what it is, is the organisation that was created by the ex-servicemen who, in the camps, in order to try and support each other and to keep and to support their families. That was established in December 1946. Now that, as an organisation when a lot of Latvians, when they were in the UK, joined the organisation as members. It had at one point, had some 5000 members, that's dropped quite considerably. But, one of the things that they did was to try and with the use of their own money, they wanted to buy their own property so they would have places to meet so that they wouldn't have to depend on other places. And they said that there was a place in London, and there still is a place in London in central London which the organisation owns. And in '75 the organisation invested into Catthorpe Manor and the whole estate. And it did a number of things that got ... the manor itself housed some thirty old people. It was it was almost like a care home. So, people who'd be left on their own were able to live there and also then they had a building programme where they built houses and bungalows for people who wanted to actually live on the estate as such. All that property now actually has been registered as a charity with the Latvian Welfare Trust of which I am a trustee, and so the idea is that the money that comes from its business activities (there are separate companies that run the business) that money that's earned then gets fed back into the, into the trust and, then that, and then we as trustees will use that financing to help the Latvian community in various ways but in accordance with our charitable status and charitable objectives. But in the manor house and then there's a separate building where there are two large conference rooms, meeting rooms, wedding venue rooms and a bar and then there's dotted all sorts of accommodation, of various types of accommodation available for various people.

Judy Caine: [00:19:07] And so it's not just exclusively for the Latvian community then?

Ilze Grickus: [00:19:11] Well, no look at the business part of it which runs the weddings and conferences and so on that's for any nationality but the benefit from all of that is for the Latvian community because that then is the benefit is for the Trust.

Judy Caine: [00:19:26] So what activities take place. What Latvian activities take place by Latvians and for Latvians?

Ilze Grickus: [00:19:34] Catthorpe Manor has a Latvian school that runs there. Zane runs her Latvian dance group there. There is the Catthorpe Choir which is a mixed choir that operates there.

Judy Caine: [00:19:53] Valdis mentioned that because he's still part of that.

Ilze Grickus: [00:19:54] Well yes, but I think he's just recently retired from that because I think he's finding it just a bit too much. And then there are things, little concerts going on every so often and because there is, apart from the main buildings, there's also a small, a smaller building, a smaller hall which is exclusively for the use of Latvians, it's sort of their own little community centre. So, they have people in the local branch of the Latvian Welfare Fund that organize various activities. They've just had, Zane was a one of the main organisers, a New Year's Eve party which apparently went really, really well. The biggest thing happens on the estate is in June at midsummer. Because, like the Scandinavians, in the Baltics we also celebrate midsummer. And there are some special activities that go on there and so everything associated with that, because the grounds are quite large, it's a huge great big field and some 3,000 Latvians gather there, and on the twenty third, twenty fourth of June, or the weekend as close to those dates as possible. And then there's also summer schools in August - two summer school camps - one is primarily for children who don't have a good understanding of Latvian language or don't have any Latvian language probably, because either they're in a mixed marriage or something similar. And the other one is for purely for Latvian speaking children. These are each a week-long period during August.

Judy Caine: [00:22:05] Why do you think it's important to pass on Latvian traditions, Latvian customs like the summer thing, the song and dance to the next generation.

Ilze Grickus: [00:22:20] Well I think that's important because it's part of your makeup. You know. When I was younger, and people who really didn't understand, would say to me but you're English. I said No I'm not English. I said if I looked like a Chinese or a Japanese, or . . . what would you say I was then? And even if I was born, because I was born here, this is why people would assume, yes I am entitled to British nationality and I do have British nationality. But my roots are actually completely elsewhere. You know if I did my DNA then it w o u l d n ' t b e t h e E n g l i s h a l l y DNA - although I mean even if there is English DNA judging from some of the things that have written. But my roots are actually elsewhere, and I think for me it's important, now not everyone probably feels the same way, but for me it's important because I believe that's where I come from and that's my heritage. That's part of my history. That's why it's important to me. And I would hope that the children that are growing up here now from the, from the next generation that have come in these last 15, 20 years that they will appreciate where they actually come from. Even if they don't go back to Latvia to live, it's important to understand where you come from, it's part of, it's part of your whole genetic makeup to me.

Judy Caine: [00:23:57] What specifically do you want to pass on to those young people? What I'm getting at here, and apologies if I'm not putting this very eloquently, I've done a little bit of research about Latvia obviously and I don't know much about Latvia but from what I've read around the subject you seem to have had a tremendously varied history in that the Germans the Russians, Polish, Swedish all at some point have had a controlling arm in the country particularly the Russians. That must have led to a huge melting pot of cultures. What is essentially Latvian that you need to pass on?

Ilze Grickus: [00:24:41] I'm not sure that there is a huge melting pot. I think one of the admirable things about the Latvian peoples are that, in spite of all of that, they've actually still maintained their own very unique culture.

Judy Caine: [00:24:55] Tell me about that?

Ilze Grickus: [00:24:59] I'm not an expert on unique culture but I mean they do have a very rich culture. One of the things which is unique to Latvia is they have, I don't even know how that translates. They have these little verses which are which tell stories about everyday life or day or teasers. There's a sort of a way that men might sing on one side and women on the other side where they're teasing each other through these verses and there's thousands and thousands of them.

Judy Caine: [00:25:33] What are they called?

Ilze Grickus: [00:25:34] They are called 'Dainas' in Latvian, but I have no idea how you translate it. And our ex-president who was a lady was brought up in Canada, she's an expert on these and she lives in Latvia now. But that is really unique.

Judy Caine: [00:25:57] When does this happen is this at events?

Ilze Grickus: [00:26:01] No it's something, it's actually a tradition that goes back years and years and years. I couldn't even tell you when it all started. But it's something that has come through the ages and it's actually there's a sort of a historical context you can actually read some of these and you can see how people used to behave towards each other all male and female and so on. There's all sorts and I think that is unique to Latvia. But also, it's songs. It's the songs were the earlier songs are very much about the country, about the love of the countryside and the dances are also ... All of these things are actually a part of the cultural fabric if you like of the Latvian nation which has come through the ages. Admittedly as we've moved into the 21st century or even the 20th century new things are added to all that, to that culture. But that's all part and parcel of, the base of it all goes back years and years.

Judy Caine: [00:27:19] Is there anyone that you know of apart from Valdis, maybe a younger person, that you know who could help me understand the songs more and who you think might be able to come and run a workshop for not for the choir?

Ilze Grickus: [00:27:32] Well, I mean that there isn't obviously a choir in Corby at the moment but it's possible that the lady who is the conductor of the Catthorpe choir might be willing to help on that.

Judy Caine: [00:27:50] Could I go to a rehearsal and meet her?

Ilze Grickus: [00:27:56] I think the thing to do, is that I have a word with her. I mean I do know her quite well.

Judy Caine: [00:28:04] If you could introduce me that would be fantastic. Because what I would like to do and I'll explain this later, is to do a weekend of workshops - and we have some funding to pay people to do this, we are not expecting it for free - is to bring somebody to a venue in Corby rather than try and drag the whole choir to Catthorpe and get them to run some song workshops and some dance workshops just to give people a flavour of Latvian and song and dance. We can't afford to take it to Latvia sadly because it looks beautiful but c'est la vie.

Judy Caine: [00:28:44] What about national costume in Latvia - can you tell me about that?

Ilze Grickus: [00:28:46] Oh, there are so many.

Judy Caine: [00:28:50] How many different regions are there that have their own costumes.

Ilze Grickus: [00:28:55] Virtually every region, I couldn't tell you, I couldn't tell you. That in itself is a whole study on its own and I'm really not an expert. I mean I've had two, but we had to, one time when I was in the dance group, we had one which was from the south west of Latvia. The one I've got now is from the north west. But it's, there are that many. And also, what's going on now is that people have started to look back even further. The ones that we have that most people have been wearing up until now have been the ones that have been sort of 19th, 18th, 19th century but a lot of people have now, particularly it was noticeable in the last song and dance festival, a lot of people have gone back even further and been looking at costumes as they were much earlier than that and I couldn't even put a date on them because it's not my area of expertise.

Judy Caine: [00:30:01] Fair enough.

Ilze Grickus: [00:30:01] But they are a completely different style but also, they are becoming quite popular as well.

Judy Caine: [00:30:10] Now you did at the beginning tell me not to ask you about food because you know nothing about it, but I do just have one very small question. Again, if you don't know, that's fine, but, is there a particular dish that says Latvia. Like in England, you might say roast beef and Yorkshire pudding or fish and chips.

Ilze Grickus: [00:30:29] Yes there is. Well there are two. There's little snack dishes that you have which are little pastries filled with bacon and onion which are really very traditional at Christmas and times like that. They are 'Piragi'. The Polish have something similar as do a number of other Eastern European countries. But I guess, you know, if you say to them what's a typical meal it would be sort of sauerkraut and sausage.

Judy Caine: [00:31:20] Really? I'd associate that with Germany?

Ilze Grickus: [00:31:22] But it is, there is this Germanic thing. But you know I think sausage, pork is very popular. But I mean the reason I said don't ask me about food is because I just hate cooking. But then you've also got a lot of Latvian menus, very fulsome soups like pea soup and my husband used to love, not spinach soup, what's that French, sorrel soup.

Judy Caine: [00:31:55] Oh that's nice.

Ilze Grickus: [00:31:59] Sorrel soup. Those are very traditional soups as well, so there are these sort of various traditional foods. And that I mean we always laugh at Catthorpe because we now have a professional cook in there and that person doesn't always actually cook a Latvian menu and he says well he really wanted sauerkraut and sausage. So that's why I mentioned that.

Judy Caine: [00:32:25] One final question on food, well two actually. What are grey peas?

Ilze Grickus: [00:32:31] Grey peas are just that, grey peas. They are actually traditionally used, done, on New Year's Eve. To me they actually taste a bit like processed peas. But, they are coloured grey rather than the green that you get here and they are normally served with bits of bacon and bacon fat and traditionally on New Year's Eve you're supposed to eat them all and you shouldn't have any peas in the house at all after New Year's Eve because otherwise you won't have luck in the next year.

Judy Caine: [00:33:11] That's interesting. One other food question desserts - what sort of desserts do you have?

Ilze Grickus: [00:33:23] Pancakes, with primarily with probably some kind of a jam or some of something like that. Otherwise I'm just trying to think what else you'd have. Oh yes, there is, but I don't know how you'd translate it. There is something called Buberts, which is a sort of a semolina and whipped egg sort of pudding type thing that is a cross between a semolina and a custard thing. I translate menus for the hotel that we own in Riga - I translate from Latvian to English - and that's the one thing I've never really found an equivalent word for I find it. I just simply can't explain what it is.

Judy Caine: [00:34:32] Never mind the name, just enjoy the food.

Ilze Grickus: [00:34:35] Yes, (both laugh).

Judy Caine: [00:34:35] Christmas, can I ask you about Christmas and Easter. Do you have big celebrations around those two religious festivals?

Ilze Grickus: [00:34:42] Yes. I think more so we used to when we were younger than we do now. But I mean Christmas - it's always Christmas Eve was very special. When my husband and I were living in London, his parents lived up in Leeds and mine in Corby, so what we used to do is to travel up to Leeds for Christmas Eve and then back down to Corby for the Christmas Day. But Christmas Eve was actually probably the important thing. Christmas Eve is traditionally the day that you bring your Christmas tree in and I have to say that's gone a little bit beyond because it's too late. I usually like to get ours in a couple of days earlier, but I still don't like it when three or four weeks at the beginning of December Christmas trees are up, and Christmas decorations are up, and to me that still seems to be very, just not on. But yeah Christmases are very much family gatherings and you know Boxing day's not particular important, but Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are.

Judy Caine: [00:35:53] So does food feature big at Christmas?

Ilze Grickus: [00:35:55] Oh yes. Food and the Christmas tree.

Judy Caine: [00:36:02] And do you have Turkey like we have Turkey here or is it more fish and vegetables?

Ilze Grickus: [00:36:06] No no no. Probably be more something like pork or at best maybe a goose or something like that, but Turkey is not a Latvian dish you don't really see Turkey at all.

Judy Caine: [00:36:21] Do you eat meat on Christmas Eve or is it all fish and vegetables?

Ilze Grickus: [00:36:24] No meat. Latvian's are primarily Lutheran and that is the German influence obviously. Except for the south, southeast corner which is very Catholic which is the one that borders Lithuania. They're Catholic. But yeah there's no, we don't have any restriction in terms of what we, what we actually can eat unless it's self-imposed.

Judy Caine: [00:37:02] Easter what happens at Easter in Latvia?

Ilze Grickus: [00:37:04] Easter again. I remember, again I have to go back to one when my parents-in-law were alive. My parents-in-law, on Good Friday, my mother-in-law used to switch the radio off, ~~w e r e n ' t h a v e t h e t e l e v i s i o n o n , n o t h i n g~~ at all had to be very quiet. I have to say my parents weren't that strict at all. In fact, I don't remember them ever saying anything like that but yes, Easter was Good Friday. Easter Sunday was celebrated and very much the same way as Christmas.

Judy Caine: [00:37:45] Do you have things that we have the Easter Bunny and Easter egg hunts. Do you do that sort of thing?

Ilze Grickus: [00:37:49] We do Easter egg hunts. Yes. And the Easter Bunny and some of these things have actually come from the West in more recent years. Eggs were definitely part and very much part of part of it.

Judy Caine: [00:38:06] Were they proper painted eggs or chocolate?

Ilze Grickus: [00:38:09] They were painted eggs, t h a s t i l l v e r y m u c h a t r a d i t i o n , t h a t y o u a c t u a l l y , that you don't, you don't need to paint them, what you do is to wrap things in leaves and flowers and then boil them. I'm not very good at it but it's that, those were the eggs that the way that you used to do eggs and then used to actually play with the eggs so that you would knock them together and see who had the hardest egg.

Judy Caine: [00:38:36] Bit like conkers?



Ilze Grickus: [00:38:36] Conkers yes. Except you do it with eggs. But eggs, painting eggs is really a very big thing at Easter. You get all sorts of wonderful colors with particularly with onion leaves. As I said I've never really mastered it, but I've got whole tray full of it at home. What my husband used to do was actually to paint them by hand and that's, although that's not quite so traditional as Latvian but it's still painting eggs and it was something that everyone used to do on Easter on Easter morning, paint your eggs.

Judy Caine: [00:39:18] I c o u l d t a l k f o r h o u r s b u t I w o n ' t , Is there anything we haven't talked about that you'd like to tell me, you'd like to talk about?

Ilze Grickus: [00:39:34] I'd have to have a look and see what I said in the presentation that I've got to see whether I thought anything was important.

Ilze Grickus: [00:39:42] I think it's important to, what is important, is that there are still organizations in the UK which are still active particularly as I mentioned the Latvian Welfare Trust

itself, and the way that it's trying to help to keep the community together, to help to support the those who actually are working and ensuring that the young children coming up are speaking the language, understand the history of Latvia. That are there are opportunities through people like Zane, who are keen to get people to dance, to learn that the folk dances and there are also now quite a few areas where choirs are starting to build up. There's just a few days ago I saw on Facebook where in one area, I can't remember what the area was, where people said do you want to come and sing, do you want to be part of the choir. There seem to be little pockets building up. Also, little Folklore groups playing all sorts of instruments and singing all sorts of folk songs rather than the choir songs. There is a slight difference between them. I think it's, and this has started to develop in the last two or three years when the Latvians who were born and brought up in Latvia started to come over here, after they joined the EU primarily, in 2004, they weren't so active, we couldn't engage with them. But they are now becoming very active and they're creating their own pockets of activity in their different areas. They are not necessarily joining the existing organisations of which there only, out there actually are only two, the Latvian National Council of Great Britain and what's now the Latvian Welfare Trust specifically.

Judy Caine: [00:41:56] Where is the Latvian National Council based?

Ilze Grickus: [00:41:58] They don't really have a base they're just there a group of Latvians who, because they come from all over the country basically, it's just, it's just a council that actually tries to ensure ... well its role has actually changed because it was created in the 1940s again when there was no embassy in the UK, when that actually stopped. And so, it was created in order, by the then ambassador, in order to try to keep the Latvian community together and to give them a sort of a point, which the embassy used to serve. Now we now have a strong embassy that is actually doing things related to that and therefore the Latvian National Council's role is now changing, the issue really is basically is how does it need to change and where does it go from here. So, I think that's a little bit still of a question. But there's some people that . . . it's about still about culture, education and there also is an archive in Cattothorpe Manor of everything that's gone on in the UK in the past 70 years basically. So those communities are still there. Those communities are still there, and they are still hopefully working and will have a purpose for the Latvian community in the future. So, I think, you know, after 70 years for this community still to exist it's quite something.

Judy Caine: [00:43:49] Absolutely fantastic. I've just been absolutely fascinated I could talk to you all day. It's been fascinating talking to you. Thank you very very much for your time.

Ilze Grickus: [00:43:59] You're very welcome. Sorry I wasn't quite prepared for all of the questions that I should get some answers to.

Judy Caine: [00:44:08] Let me turn this off and we can deal with those later.