

Castle Markets Project - Oral History

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Interviewee Details

Name: John Farrell-Smith

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Place of Birth: Sheffield

Year / Date of Birth: 1953

Interview Details

Interviewer: Hannah Baxter

Date / Time: 11/12/2012 14:59

Place: Castle Market

Audio File Nos: CM_007_Farrell-Smith

Summary

Time	Description
0.58	Stall 37
2.28	Buying fish in Manchester
4.25	Bought stall 8
4.35	Outfits for the employees
5.10	Success with stall 8
6.10	Crab sticks
14.19	Wholesale
15.05	Establishing a name, putting staff on stage
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24.32	Closing stall 37
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30.31	Giving stall 8 to Hazel
32.22	Feelings and reflections of today's Market
38.53	Favourite memory of the Castle Market, friendliness of people
40.20	Ridiculous of role of luck and chance in trading success/failure

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Hannah: So, if you could say your name and the year you were born, and where you were born?

John: My name? My name is John Farrell-Smith. I was born in 1953 at Jessops hospital in Sheffield. I was brought up in Ecclesfield, a little village six miles outside Sheffield.

Hannah: And please could you tell me about your stall?

John: My stall. Blimey, there's a lot to say. Well I came in to the market in 1979. And that was a very small stall, it was Stall 37 in the meat and fish market, which I tendered for, I put a tender in to Sheffield City Council for three and a half grand a year, rent. And I got, there was I think there was several hundred tenders I heard, there was a booming business in this market - it was a hive of activity here in the 70's so the stalls were much sought after. And I, successfully I turned this stall when my tender was accepted. And the day I came down to measure up, to fit the stall up, there were just an empty space, somebody came and offered me 10,000 pounds cash, there and then just for the lease, just for the tenancy agreement. But anyway...

Hannah: So that was on the day that it was first yours, they offered you that?

John: Yeah, the day I got, I signed the agreement, came down I was offered 10,000 pounds cash just for the empty space and for the tenancy agreement. But at that time I was in the fish and chip business as well, I'd got, I've had quite a few fish and chips shops which I'd bought and sold. And I've still got one up in Gleadless Valley as well before I tendered for the stall. And it took me quite some time to get the stall going it wasn't an overnight success. I had to get up, when I found out was the, in the fish business, Sheffield fish market was too expensive to buy from, so I, that was at the Parkway wholesale market, the fish was too expensive there, but if you made a trip to Manchester, the fish in Manchester was a lot cheaper, the quality was as good if not better and the variety was a lot more... there were a lot more variety to choose from in Manchester, so I used to get up at four a clock in the morning. And I had a flat at Ranmoor in Sheffield, which was a Manchester side of Sheffield. I used to get up at four a clock in the morning drive the van over to Manchester - in hail, snow, wind and blow - I had some soggy trips there over the Snake, and get back here for about half past seven quarter to eight to put the fish on the stall. But it took, I mean obviously it was a learning process for me 'cause I'd only been in the fish and chip business prior to that. And prior to that I was a qualified design draughtsman, and I had a fish and chip shop as well, but I only finished the draughtsman's job because the firm went bust, to which I worked for, so anyway, to cut a long story short. When

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the stall got going I decided to sell the fish and chip business, because one of the reasons was that the government decided to put 15% VAT on fish and chip, which frightened me to death. So I sold the fish and chip business and bought another stall in Castle, which is far bigger, prime position stall. And I think that cost me, in 1980, about 45-47, 000 pounds to buy and fit that, which would probably buy you a few semi-detached houses in those days, but that instantly took off that stall.

Hannah: Do you remember what stall number that was?

John: Stall 8

Hannah: Stall 8

John: Stall 8, but what I did, and obviously because I'd been on a learning curve with Stall 37, what I used to do was to dress my stalls up with Union Jacks over on the outside, I used to dress everybody in red, well sorry, I used to dress the male staff in red and the female staff in white and everybody wore dickey bows, black dickey bows, wing collared shirts and catering hats, which we later changed for straw boaters.

Hannah: So what kind of hats was it first?

John: It was just catering white trilby, white trilby catering trilby. But that was an instant success, that stall. I know on the first day, we opened it on a Saturday, on the first day we took 3000 quid, which was good in those days. Like about, you know, you're probably talking in the same terms probably 12, 000 pounds now. There used to be 16 of us on that Stall 8, we were serving all the time, and we used to have queues all day long. What we did, the reason why we weren't the cheapest in the market, but we offered the greatest selection, and also what we did is, we brought a fabulous selection of continental fish which we used to buy from a chap in Birmingham. But one of the reasons why I decided to sell the fish and chip business, not only because of the 15% VAT, it was because if you've heard of a crab flavoured fish stick, which wasn't anywhere in the country by then, I used to, on a Wednesday of each week, travel down to London's Billingsgate Market, and I used to deal with a supplier called Lennon Gibson Holdens down in Billingsgate, amongst many other suppliers, stayed at a hotel in Swiss Cottage go down to the Billingsgate for about six in the morning, load up, leave Billingsgate for about 7 and get back to Sheffield for tea time. Now what happened one particular day, when I was down in Billingsgate, this chap, one of the directors of the company, John White, he placed a box on a plinth on his, on his sales plinth, and he said here you are John what about these? So I said what are they? He says well we can't sell them and we're not gonna get anymore, he said they call them crab flavoured fish sticks. I said oh yeah, he said they've never seen a crab in their life but they're supposed to taste of crab, but we just can't sell them nobody wants them here, so I say why don't they want them, he said because they want real crabs and real crab meat not something flavoured with something, so I said what is it, what's the stick consist of? He said it's white Alaskan Pollock fish with a crab flavour, I said well I'll try it I'll take this box. So I took the box up to Stall 37, because I had not bought Stall 8 at that stage and put the box on the stall, never advertised it, just popped the box on the stall, and I think it lasted about 20 minutes that box, people bought them they didn't even see what they were buying, they were just impressed by the look because they looked nice and reddish.

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Hannah: So were they like the half red half white stripy ones?

John: That's it, they're sort of red on the outside and white underneath the skin.

Hannah: So this was the first time crabsticks were in Sheffield?

John: First time, well first time in the country, because this importer he used to import from different places in the world, that's why, that's one of the reasons I went down to London. The one chap used to get on the plain to Paris every week, another firm used to bring stuff in from Japan, one used to bring stuff in from Taiwan, and there'd be stuff from around the world that used to go into Billingsgate because it is a cosmopolitan society down there feeding restaurants and hotels. So, because, when I was down there buying and got myself presented with this box that no one knew what they were or what they were about and definitely they were never gonna sell them anymore, and I put the order in Sheffield, and the people here didn't what they were but they soon found out. But, anyway, I took that one box a particular Wednesday and then on Friday, they were gone in a, I think they were gone in about an hour and ten minutes. So I got a manager on the stall, because I just bought another fish and chip business, the one on Infirmary Road, well the manager said yeah bring ten boxes next week. And when I went back I said I'll have ten boxes, he said you're kidding. I said I'm not. He said ten pieces, we have tried to sell these all around London, hotels, restaurants, wholesale, wholesale markets around in London, fishmongers, he says are you sure? I said yep, I'll have ten boxes. So I brought ten boxes back and they went quickly, within two days those. So my manager said well we'd better have the lot 'cause people are going mad, he said, I'm getting to the stall early in the morning, before anybody else and there's a queue at the stall before the fish is even on the stall for these crab sticks. So it was basically just word of mouth, why they got popular, no advertising, just word of mouth, people going home and saying I really enjoyed that get down to Farrell's, and you know, well yeah, people were excited, people enjoyed them. My manager said bring me forty boxes back, in my van I had other fish to bring back as well, I said well, I can squeeze thirty in, well bring me thirty anyway, and it was colossal, it was queuing at the stall each morning. So I tell the man down in London he said, I just can't believe it, so if you can see a future we will carry on, because the man in Taiwan he was having a problem, he's having a problem selling, even he can't see a future, its only you who can see a future. He said is everybody else asleep in your wholesale, and I said well you know I only stood that one box in the stall in the fish market in Sheffield, I said you know obviously we've got more potential in Sheffield than we have down London for this sort of product [turns to talk to friend Hazel]. Anyway, I decided, well I made this decision not only to buy Stall 8, that wasn't the reason, and crabsticks, it was the VAT they put on the fish and chips and I was not happy with that, crabsticks yeah, it looks like there's a facility, I don't know how long and how popular they're gonna be, how long they're gonna last, will people get fed up, we're showing good signs now obviously - I'll take - there was some empty units in the Parkway wholesale market. Now the loading procedure here is a spiral ramp into Castle. The loading bay, you have to go up a spiral ramp to actually unload into the main fish section. So the biggest waggon you can get up there I think is a small Class 2. What I said to the chap down London, the director John White, I said I'll tell you what I'll do I'm gonna open a wholesale business because I know there is an opening for reasonable priced fish here, because I've been having to go to Manchester every morning at four, so I said I know there's an opening for fish, but also I need the space for storage for crabsticks, because. And what John said to me, was he said we can send a container up, while it's delivering around the country to drop you a

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few pallets off. I said, well I'll chance that, I'll do that. I shall take three units of the wholesale, I shall put a big fridge on one unit and a big freezer on the other unit, and get some of your crabsticks in storage so people don't have to wait between me going to London and back and selling out all the time, and keep a continuous supply for them, and also supply other people that wanted to sell them. So, little shops, fish mongers and etc. And also there would be a facility for them to buy continental fish and other fresh fish as well. So he said, yeah ok, so we will send you, the container will come up every Wednesday. With a container lorry you can get into the wholesale market, but you can't get onto the spiral ramp here, 'cause it's too small, so I went off and I think I sold the fish and chips shop. And I think we took, I think the first week of the opening of the wholesale we took about 40 grand first week. But I mean I'm not a wealthy man, I must admit, I am just a man with plenty experience. And what happened after that? You ask me now?

Hannah: So did you have the wholesale and Stall 8 at the same time?

John: Yeah, Stall 8 and 37.

Hannah: And did you

John: Wholesale, and I took two stalls in Chesterfield through a debt, cos I started supplying these two people in Chesterfield, they couldn't afford to pay me, so they took stall, I took Padleys in Chesterfield, fish market, and I took Mason's over there, as well.

Hannah: Did you stop driving to Manchester then?

John: Yeah, I did, cos I ran the wholesale business.

Hannah: Were you the only stall that dressed its staff?

John: Yeah. I was the only one. Well the reason why I did it was because I hadn't got an established name. There were many businesses in here. Many firms in here that had been in here, their granddads had been in here and their great granddads had been either here or another place across the road or outside or. So with me not being an established name I thought I would make it distinctive. We'll put special lighting in. Dress up, smart, clean, presentable. Put flags up, so it creates a theatrical effect. We were virtually putting staff on stage, which made people look, and obviously with them looking at us, they would be looking at the products and we'd be known as the stall with the Union Jacks. So having walked round the market, there is quite a few of the older stalls, the older people that would still probably know me.

Hannah: What was your stall called?

John: Farrell's was the Stall 37. And John Farrell, Stall 8. If you look on Facebook you will see pictures of the John Farrell stall, with all the stash and the crabsticks and it's on one of my story picture pages on Facebook. You will see us all there. Smiling with us dickeys on.

Hannah: Can you tell me about Clive the Lobster?

John: Clive the Lobster. Well that, what happened there was, in Chesterfield retail fish market I used to keep lobsters in a tank at the back of the stall. And this was mainly for Chinese

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customers, cause they would like to come and by a lobster, live and take it home to whatever they wanted to do with it. And one particular day, what happened, one of my staff knew a reporter, and he told the reporter, because, the reason that he told him not because of the fact that I sold lobsters because I sell live lobsters because there was one lobster, he used to fight with the rest, and I wouldn't sell it cause I got attached to him, so I called him Clive. Ferocious fighters, lobsters, sometimes they used to knock the light out of the top of the tank, flick their tails up when they were fighting because they are territorial, they like to keep their own corner, that's my corner, if you come near they would be having a fight. So this particular lobster Clive, she told a reporter about me keeping Clive as a pet. And the next minute we knew there were down, there were two reporters came, and they said would you take your lobster out of your tank and have some photos taken outside in the outside market, with you and Clive. So I held him up here [gestures to his shoulder], smiling, and I got a full front spread in the Chesterfield advertiser about Clive. And all the other traders were right jealous cause it were for advertisement obviously.

Hannah: Did you sell lobsters in the Castle Market?

John: Not live ones, no I didn't no. I couldn't get permission to sell them in the Castle. I got somebody to sell them in wholesale, but I was too busy doing what I was doing really in the wholesale to be messing about, cause you gotta, there is a certain amount of care due, to keep them live. The water's got to perfect, the temperature got to be perfect, the air's got to be perfect in the water, the salt content's got to be perfect, so I was just too busy really. Chesterfield gave me the opportunity to do what I wanted, with setting the aquarium up with the seafood in. Crabs are very dirty creatures, they dirty the water too much, it was a complicated filtration system when you keep crabs, but lobsters are quite clean creatures, they don't create any mess. Do you want to know about the Yorkshire Television with me when the helicopter flew my tape in to the Leeds news?

Hannah: Yeah.

John: Well on Stall 8, one particular Monday I came by, and there was the Yorkshire TV film crew waiting for me on a Monday. We've just been told that you've dismissed the three staff for talking too much, which I said yeah that's right. Can you tell us all about it? Blah blah blah. So I told them my opinion and they said well, this is going to be on Calendar in just over an hour, so I said well how are you going to get it there? There wasn't the facility with mobile phones, texting and all that stuff then, and they said we've got a helicopter, it's just up the road there, we're flying it by helicopter, this tape. So the second half of Calendar was a meeting on the set of Yorkshire TV to discuss the women [unclear] of the month. They had a psychiatrist there, psychologist there, a doctor there, and a nurse there and they had a good old chat about me sort of dismissing these staff because they talked too much, my opinion was probably no more than chaps, at the time of the interview. It might have come across like that, but I was on the TV with all the regalia on and the strawboaters.

Hannah: So, were people with you or against you?

John: Debatable really, I had a couple of women come morning the day after, with a couple of oddies. Yeah, nothing nasty really. I think, well I'm a believer that... Well I've been in the paper

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for all different sorts of things over the years and I've never had any, any bad feeling really. I think news, I think it's when you're not in the news you've got to worry about 'cause nobody wants to read about you anymore. While you're in the news, you could say you're a saleable asset, and if you could sell papers it's not too bad. Well obviously if you're that bad your encapsulated in some sort of prison, but if your off to, but your still gonna be in the street selling papers. But anyway, that's a long storey. Blimey, you ask me.

Hannah: What did you sell on Stall 8?

John: Continental fish, shell fish obviously, rabbits.

Hannah: Rabbits?

John: Yeah. Rabbits with the fur on. Not live, dead. We used to sell steam roasting fowl, steam roasters. I said continental fish, plus English fish obviously, I had cured, dry cured from Scotland.

Hannah: So did you start with fish and then branch out into rabbit?

John: You will find in the very old fishmongers, my father worked for a fish monger many years ago, and that fish monger is now still open actually it's on Ecclesall Road, they called it Robert's. And you used to find all fishmongers used to sell game, rabbits. They used to hang them upside down, which, you know, in those days it were acceptable, but it's not acceptable anymore now. What my father used to say was when pheasants were hung up, you used to put a saucer underneath the pheasant's head and when the first maggot appeared on the saucer that was the right time to eat it. In those days, obviously, in the olden days, they delivered on pushbikes. They always used to sell more, and were able to deliver a few kippers along the line. Two, three miles there and back with a pair of kippers.

Hannah: So were any of the rest of your family traders in the markets?

John: No. I mean my father was a qualified engineer. And I was a qualified design draughtsman in engineering, so really we, whether it was good or bad or not that we diversified into fish, game and poultry, I don't know if that's good or bad. I think we regret it now, 'cause we keep, we came across the worst of the system. We got a barrage. An entrepreneur is not a, it's not good to be an entrepreneur in Sheffield, it's not good at all. Sheffield hasn't got a Labour Ward, and they don't want small little lad off Ecclesfield coming and making a million bucks in a short time which I was doing. So I got a lot off harassing. You're better in a sort of conservative drift than labour work.

Hannah: When did your stall close?

John: Well we sold it.

Hannah: Sold it when?

John: We closed Stall 37, I don't know why to be honest with you. I think, well I could talk for hours actually, I'm a good psychologist as well, or not a good psychologist as the time was, was probably a businessman. You got to be a good psychologist and a good businessman too, absolutely, to strive through the system. And the people on Dragon's Den, well I wouldn't be sat

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with you now if I was as rich as those on Dragon's Den, but they're bloody good psychologists. Good businessmen - there's been millions, they're ten a penny - there's a psychology behind the business actually, it strives you forward. And I fought with authorities me, the stubbornness of the, you know, and I do earn loads of money, and I shut 37 I don't know why. This bloke he didn't like me here, Prince they called him at the time. And we sold 37 in short terms, and what I did, I was at a time where I wanted a break really, I'd really worked a long time, getting up early in the morning, a lot of years, feeling tired. I took two years off. Took two years off, and then, and I kept the stalls in Chesterfield going, they're under management. And then I decided to run one myself. That's when Clive came, when I was running that myself, which was quite a long time after the crabsticks selling scenario. But it died down actually. What I was telling you about crabsticks, when, basically I was on a, I was told in London, that if it wasn't for me they'd be none in this country, because they were gonna finish them full stop that's it, you know what I mean? In provided some generation in a sale, that commodity, which and when you are doing something, well I mean when you are selling things people notice, the competition notice, and suppliers notice and producers notice and they watch and look. And when they know that there could be another, why should it be just selling here, crabsticks, why should they just sell in Castle. And you walk out and they sell in Leeds or in Manchester, why is it here, obviously, it will be popular here, it will be popular in Manchester, and what happens then, is when people see you being successful selling a product, people are asking about the product, and also lots of people got family in other parts of the country. You then get into a situation where they'll ask other fish mongers or the shops, and it is just like The Beatles when they became famous, people would go in to record shops and say have you got a record of The Beatles, you know Brian Epstein's would say who the hell is that, well they're just playing down the road, well I'll go down the road and have a look then, you know. And that's how products starts, it starts little, well it's always got to be some unusual word, to get it actually off the ground. But the unusual part about it Castle Market is important, not only for its history, and it's got tremendous amount of history with the old castle here, but for the fight this was the place in the country, on Stall 37 where the crabsticks were born. Because the little man in Taiwan, he was on his last leg, he was putting a lot of money in to them, the machine was breaking down. Me and John White sorted his machine out, because I, I got a bit of money behind me, he got a little money behind John White, Taiwan chap was vitally finished and shut. That was one of the reasons as well, there wasn't gonna be anymore crabsticks. Because of my engineering knowledge and John Whyte's facility, of import facility, we got this crabstick machine going, and we got the things for it, and so, I mean I'm fair to say, from what people have said and some people in here the story aligns, still know that I'm the man that brought crabsticks into the country, not to Sheffield, but into this country.

Hannah: So Stall 37 is the first place where crabsticks were ever sold?

John: Yeah, yeah in the country. In to actually successfully sell. And I think now, the chap next door to me now, on Stall 37, was a lad called Steve Ellis. He was a poor butcher, and he's father was in the market, Brian Ellis. Steve Ellis he used to be in the navy, and he was a security man for Prince Charles at one time. And he used to come back with fish from Manchester as well, blah blah blah, and then when I decided to class the Stall in 37, Steve Ellis took the stall, extended his port twice as big, and he still sits up there now with a bald head, he'd got a full

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head of hair when I was there but that's thirty years back. Still there now is Steve Ellis. You could quite well ask him, just say well I've been having an interview with John Farrell.

Hannah: Yeah, I might do that.

John: He will say oh no is he still alive? And everybody in that market will tell a version of events about me. Some will be good, some will be not so good. Pardon?

Hannah: So you and Steve didn't get on?

John: Yeah, yeah, yeah. He was one of the staff, not all the staff, it's just certain ones, that's another story to tell as well, which I won't really go into. But what you want to do is just pop round here and say you just interviewed John Farrell about setting crabsticks into the place, and you'd think [makes a grumbly noise] you know.

Hannah: So do you remember when Stall 8 closed?

John: It didn't, I gave it to Hazel, gave it to Hazel.

Hannah: Oh alright so then Hazel had it?

John: So she ran it for a bit, for a few years, and then she sold it to a chap in London, funnily enough, a fish monger. She sold it to a fishmonger, and because he got...

[John breaks off to talk to Hazel 'well I'm just talking about crabsticks')

And I come to live with me mum, me mum, 'cause she'd nowhere to live. So I was with my mum for a bit. Being a fish stall for years, I don't know why they changed it to a veg stall, well I mean I could see the end of the day with the fish 'cause it was running short, we got, cod wars going off and fish shortage, one thing and another, and I could see the market going down hill, and I could see the council workmen are gonna prop up the market.

Hannah: So when did you sell it to Hazel?

John: Well I gave it to her, I didn't sell it. It was about 84 I think, 84-85. She did very well here, she did do well, she called it Hazel's as well.

Hannah: So how do you know Hazel?

John: She's my wife

Hannah: Oh, she's your wife?

John: Well, we've been divorced for a while, but we still kept friends.

Hannah: So did you carry on running the stalls in Chesterfield while Hazel ran this stall here?

John: Yeah I did, yeah. Yeah, that was right, I was running Chesterfield yeah, for a few years either side of that, I think I went into finance then.

Hannah: How does it feel to come back?

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John: It's strange, it is. It's strange to see this. I mean I've got my own story to tell, why it's like this, but I know why, and if you want to know I'll tell you. It is, it's lack of, it's lack of management, lack of good management, and it's... The markets been left on an edge, the worst thing that actually did that was knocking Sheaf Market down, it was lack of customers, less variety, less of a choice. A lot of the staff in Castle Market, they all blame the bus fares for the decrease, for the downfall. I could see it coming in mid 85, I could see the writing on the wall, I said we'd better get out. If you look at the clientele, you look at it now it is, I mean this stall I am sat here in an empty space, I mean for years and for years there would be queues outside this, this whatever it was where I'm sat, for years and years. And there was no reasons why those queues couldn't continue, with proper management from the markets. From the Council Markets. But the thing, the thing is the Council aren't business people, they are always over the budget every year, they always spend too much money, they're not businesspeople they're just people with a very difficult job to do, and a very tight budget, and that's your problem. That's your problem. But it's a shame, it's sad to see. I always tell Hazel that if I've been in, it's sad to see, you could cry when you walk in. Well I mean there's the stories and the goings off that's gone on here for years, but there's good business, there's been a lot of wealthy people made in this place, a lot of wealthy people in the good days in the 50s, 60s, 70s, and then it just dropped of. Within five years, it was still booming really when I left, well I mean I could have had another few years here, it's how long is a piece of string. The cleverest businessman is to know how to get out in the best time, non at the worst time, you've got to get out at the best time, cause when things move up there, there is only one way it can go, and that's back down. It flattens of a bit, it always ends up, but it comes down, then it goes up. So, it is a shame, it is. It's a shame, I could cry with it.

Hannah: So how often do you come back here?

John: Here? I think I've been, I bet I've been back half a dozen times since the 80s, or so [unclear, noise from trolley]. A few faces, one of the girls that's up there now, she used to clean when fourteen or fifteen years old, she used to come up after school, with a friend, we call her Debbie. She met a lad over at one of the stalls, Smith and Tissingtons over there, and she's still with him now. So she didn't come and clean for me, Paul used to ring her up at teatime, and they've got a family now.

Hannah: Yeah, I've met them.

John: And it's just how things happen. Paul knows me, he'll tell you more than I know about myself. He'll see from the newspapers side and the staff side. No, I mean therre's been some goings on. But its all history and it's all experience. Life's a learning curve, it's not about making money, it's a learning curve is life. Sometimes you make more than one mistake, sometimes you make the same mistake more than once, but you got to laugh about it. Yeah, I can laugh, it's not because I'm a wealthy man, I mean I'm not a fool, but I've put in a lot of peoples eyes to see what I've done, but I can laugh about it all, all the good the bad, because of the fact that I'm still sat on this chair talking to you, that's the reason. I mean I'm not, sort of. And I've seen in this place as well as with the shops I've had, where people can't handle situations as good as what we should do really, they end up taking their own lives, which has happened to a few of my staff and [unclear] it's sad to see. Well I basically, I [unclear] because I've seen, I've been in situations and I've taken some of my tenancies homeless and I'd take them in, because of the people,

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because I've had the experience of this sort of the dark side in life, people without homes or without food or. Well one of the chaps I took in he lived in a cave for a few years, and can you believe it in this society of people living in caves. The rest of the world will walk past that fellow. But because I've been through what I've been through...

Hannah: Where is that?

John: ...I've been through Castle. I wasn't gonna go out Castle.

Hannah: So in Sheffield?

John: Sheffield. Lived in a cave.

Hannah: I didn't know we had caves in Sheffield

John: Yeah. I used to play in that cave as a kid. And, I mean I could write a book.

Hannah: Yeah, you could.

John: That life which you don't think happens or you don't see about, poverty. But some of my tenants home they, they're just people that's, I would say the autistic side of the person, because they suffer from autism perhaps, they could get left off the ledge, by family and education, that's the problem. There's no fail safe system, it goes to hell, finance, keeping Castle Market working.

Hannah: What is your favourite memory of Castle Market?

John: Favourite? Well it were fantastic, every minute were fantastic here. I loved every minute, to be honest with you, there was never a dull moment I loved it. I miss it now. I miss the, there was so much going off, it was so exciting, it was so exhilarating, it was so...people were so kind and genuine, lovely customers, people, staff - I had a few problems - but lovely people. Sheffield people are lovely people. You know, the woman that used to come in the market for her daily shop, for her meat, for fish - such caring people, honestly, and that's - I can't sense it, I can't feel it anywhere else but the feeling was here, the kindness and the, you know, amongst the trading types, although some had bad times that were after that, but the times in here for me were good. I enjoyed it. I mean I wasn't making money all the time, no, I lost a lot as well, but I wasn't bothered to me it were something that I loved to do.

Hannah: When you started trading, did you think you'd love it or was it...?

John: You know what? And this is what I can't understand now, I can't understand why I ever took a stall here. When I look at...'cause I didn't think I'd get the tender for a start, so competitive then for getting a stall here, everybody wanted a stall at Castle Market. And I really didn't think I'd get it and I can't understand why I didn't sell it for ten grand on the first day I came down. But I can see the shops now I was going to buy at the time and the empty units I was gonna take on at that time then why I bothered to come in here I don't know why. I mean I was very naive and stupid, you do naive and stupid things, I was only young.

Hannah: But if you hadn't we'd never have had crab sticks!

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John: Well...

Hannah: My Grannie would have been very sad about the crab sticks!

John: Would she? Well people think I'm some sort of idiot. If you go into the pub and a shellfish man walks in with his basket I say I brought those into the country! Don't be so stupid you idiot! You know [laughs] it's stupid. It was only through accident that he slopped that box on the counter, you know, why that man in Taiwan decided to make that bloody thing to make them I'll never know 'cause it must have been a ridiculous idea for him and he hadn't got much money anyway, he was about on his backside, bust. You know, if I hadn't gone down to London, if he didn't only sort of convince me to go get another stall here, he obviously convinced wholesale man that you know, we're gonna get these things, yeah John can get them going, how come he can get them, he's only got a little stall! And then it saved his life of work in Taiwan! Isn't it so ridiculous how you can plan, you can do a business plan, but the best business always start off by something...just a stupid chance. It's ridiculous it is! It's hard to believe, and I find it hard to stomach, you know, what happened. I mean, I'm not being, I mean I'm trying to be truthful with you, but I would say that I would have had a lot better life if I hadn't brought crab sticks into the country. I would have honestly. It was a massive, it's like putting explosive lighter fuel in your car when it wanted premium graded. You know when you give a little chap that came from Ecclesfield too much success at his age, you're not doing him any good, it's like then as it was winning the lottery you know, sometimes unless you have counselling and expertise and right people around you, it's the worst thing that can happen. And that chap that lived in the cave, by the way, he was a multi-millionaire at one time. And if it wasn't for that fact then he wouldn't have been in that cave after his cash run out. I've been in that position anyway so I actually knew, nobody else knew what it's like. There was a documentary on the television about when they left that door open on that ferry and half the people got killed but the survivors actually survived in the water and got pulled out, they had, half of them had an extra ability to deal with situations that are sort of...such as that homeless man down there, I could deal with him better than most people because I've been in that life and death situation myself and I've survived the ride. Anyway, if you just go and talk to people in the Castle and say you've just talked to John Farrell you'll get some interesting opinions, I'll tell you that. [Laughs] You're not going to put me in the paper again after all these years are you? I've been in The Star that many times.

Hannah: Well, thank you very much!

John: You're alright.

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