

Castle Markets Project - Oral History

Interview Transcript

Interviewee Details

Name: Gordon Shephard

ID Number: CM_013_Shephard

Place of Birth: Sheffield

Year / Date of Birth: 21/01/1935

Interview Details

Interviewer: Helen Finnerty

Date / Time: 11/12/2012 13:33

Place: Castle Market

Subjects: Old stalls/characters, the war, changes to the market, long term decline in Castle area

Transcript:

Helen: My name's Helen and I'm here today and it's the 11th December and I am with

Gordon: Gordon Shephard

Helen: Gordon Shephard. Okay would you mind telling me your date of birth?

Gordon: 21/01/1935

Helen: Okay and have you travelled far today? Do you live nearby?

Gordon: Woodhouse

Helen: Right okay. And how long have you been coming to the market?

Gordon: Since 1940.

Helen: Wow. Gosh. So what was your first memory or what are your early memories of the market?

Gordon: Well my father was the manager of Liptons which was just above Dixon Lane so we came out of Liptons, walked past Burtons which was on the corner of Dixon Lane and there were all the little traders with the little stalls selling fruit and veg and stuff like that. And then, that was both sides of Dixon Lane, which was at the side of the Market Hall and in the Market Hall you could buy anything from a shoe lace to a bucket of flowers, books, anything.

1.36 *Helen:* So was that here in the market?

Gordon: In the market hall, yes, which was down the side of Dixon Lane and Exchange Street and the frontage was on Haymarket.

Helen: Do you remember anything about any characters in the market?

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Gordon: There was one called old boy there and he'd got three stalls, one sold shoes, one sold shoe repairing equipment [Inaudible - interrupted by another person talking] My first job was as a junior clerk in an accountants office and we did this old boy's books but he didn't keep books he just had a wooden box till on each counter with a roll of paper and every time he opened the drawer to take the money the roll of paper moved up and he just wrote what he'd sold and how much it was and we in this accountant's office used to have every year this set of till rolls and tried to make him up a set of books from these.

Helen: Quite a big job! [Laughs]

Gordon: Oh yeah. In the middle of the market was a big fountain and it was also a drinking fountain.

Helen: Right. Did you used to come and buy things here? What did you buy?

Gordon: Oh yeah. As a boy? Comics, American comics, American comics with photographs of old film stars. My friend he was into films, he was a year older than me, and he was into films so we used to buy pictures and things like that.

3.25 *Helen:* So you could get all of this here?

Gordon: Anything. Books, second hand books, stamps, coins, lots of flower stalls, fruit and veg. And then Exchange Street, the bottom side, the trams used to run there that came from Rotherham, so people could come on the tram from Rotherham, get off the tram straight into the market hall. But opposite side of Exchange Street had been the Brightside and Carbrook City store which was built about 1920s, new store, blitzed in 1940 and that was just a crater. Bomb, massive bomb site on the site of this store and they built a little wooden bridge across so that people could walk from the market hall across this little ...

Helen: Is that the same bridge? [Gesturing to photograph]

Gordon: Yeah, into the fish market, which the fish market didn't get blitzed – it got damaged - but the City Stores was completely wiped out. My gran, my old gran, Sarah L Kenney, she was on the Board of the Brightside and Carbrook and she worked to get the City Store built and there was a plaque in it with the names of all the board, she was on that, and it broke her heart when it got bombed, you know, in 1940. And she'd been to a meeting on the Thursday night in the City Stores, cos she was on the board, and she came out and the blitz was just starting and a policeman said to her "the beams are on Sheffield" they knew they were coming, and he said to her "There's a big shelter under Marples you ought to go down there". But she says no she says "My Willie" that's her husband "My Willie's at home, he's expecting me to come home" and she walked up Granville Road to City Road and managed to get a tram and she got home and Marples got a direct hit and everybody was killed in Marples cellar. It was a big pub on the corner of Fitzalan Square and it got hit so badly they just couldn't get the bodies out.

5.55 *Helen:* Gosh, look at that, so that was some kind of twist in destiny wasn't it that she managed to take the alternative?

Gordon: Oh yeah, she wouldn't want to stay in town with her husband at home.

Helen: Yeah. Gosh, it's amazing isn't it? I was looking at that bridge and people were saying, oh yes we remember it, so, you have a story to tell, my God. So what changes have you seen in the market?

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6.18 Gordon: Well, I saw this built. We didn't like this from the outset. We preferred the old market hall which we thought should have been refurbished like Leeds. Leeds kept their market hall with the outside market behind it, which Sheffield had. It had the market hall and the outside market behind it, at the bottom of Dixon Lane, everybody called it the Rag and Tag for some reason. And there were all open stalls, with Tilley lamps and you could buy anything. In the old building at the back which, I think it had belonged to the Water Works originally, you could buy animals in there, pet rabbits and guinea pigs, hens and stuff.

Helen: Somebody was telling me about a guy who sold pots and used to carry them [Inaudible]

Gordon: Oh yeah. He used to throw 'em about and make a fan out the plates. He had a like a handle of a hammer and he banged and banged and his spiel – Potty somebody they called him. But there were also there were an old lady who had brass weighing scale with a seat that swung, all like plush, and you'd sit on this big brass and she'd weigh you with proper weights. Going back to weights, down each side of Dixon Lane, these chaps with a little stall, just boxes and all their veg and stuff on top, they had pan scales with pan on the side and the weights, pound, half pound, on the other and they all faced the same way going down Dixon Lane cos Dixon Lane sloped so the pan scale, if you'd have put it level ...

Helen: It would have been a different measurement so they all agreed to put it in the same direction. Yeah. Amazing.

Gordon: Yeah. They all used to shout their wares. I remember oranges – 5 for a tanner – oranges 5 for a tanner - that's 6 old pence.

Helen: Helen: Hmm, hmm, hmm

8.36 Gordon: And Christmas! Christmas! Me father, the manager of Liptons, the turkeys used to come undressed, that's with all the feathers and their legs and everything and their innards. He used to have to - in the run up to Christmas - he used to clean up dozens and dozens of turkeys. In the back area of Liptons was the courtyard of a pub which had stood there called the Yellow Lion. And in this courtyard which was narrow we dressed all the turkeys, all the bacon. We had a big bacon machine I used to turn the handle cos bacon had to be scraped and then a circle of twine used to pull the ribs down, the ribs out, and the bacon, the bone bacon, was put in the machoine and I used to turn the handle to slice the bacon.

Helen: Nowadays you go to a supermarket and it's all done behind the scenes.

9.49 Gordon: And the shop had two sides, provisions and grocers, each side with the staff, and they all had a cash railway and they used to put the money and the bill in a little cup into the cash railway above their head on wires, pull the handle and the cup went up the wire to the cash office which was at the top of the shop. There was a square at the top wall and the cash girl sat up there and she'd take the cup off, opened it, see what the bill was, put the change in the cup, sent it back to the assistant who gave the change to the customer.

Helen: So, a completely different system.

Gordon: Oh yes. 1950s, Liptons decided that all the staff on the counter could have their own cash drawer. Me father said, that this is the end of it. The next move - he left in the 50s and bought his own sweet shop cos he couldn't take to the changes. I mean, he'd managed it right through the war.

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11.04 Helen: What do you think about the changes happening now here with the move to the new location?

Gordon: I don't think it'll work personally. Cos people in trading markets live mainly this side of Sheffield and they've always come on the bus and the tram as was get off, the markets there. The other side of Sheffield, the people aren't really market type customers. I mean I don't think that people who come to the market as it is now will go to the bottom of the Moor. They want it in this area where it is, where it's always been, where they've always known. I mean this was the thriving part of Sheffield up until thirty years ago - Haymarket, Angel Street, Kings Street, Dixon Lane, Market Hall, Exchange Street - it was a really thriving area but over the last 20-30 years it's died on its feet unfortunately.

12.25 Helen: Why do you think that is?

Gordon: Well, Woolworths moved and then disappeared. Why? It's been let go. It's disgusting in't it? When I walk through Exchange Street, that area, and I remember the Market Hall and when it was thriving and to see it now is just tragic and it's not something that's just happened it's been happening over the last 30-40 years.

Helen: And today, are you passing through? You're shopping?

Gordon: This is a pure one off. I've just had my watch repaired at Baines opposite the back of the cathedral and it's not quite right so I've brought it back this morning and I'm just walking down to the station to catch the train.

Helen: We're very lucky to meet you then

Gordon: Yeah. Anything else you want to know?

Helen: No that's fantastic. Thank you so much.