

Castle Markets Project - Oral History

Interview Transcription

Interviewee Details

Name: Alison Longden

ID Number: CM_052_Longden

Place of Birth

Year / Date of Birth

Interview Details

Interviewer: John

Date / Time:

Place: Castle Market

Transcription

Time		
	John	Hello, this interview is being conducted on behalf of the Castle Markets Project and I am speaking to a stallholder at present by the name of?
	Alison	Alison Longden.
	John	Alison Longden. Alison, the first question I would like to ask you is how would you describe what the stall is and what it sells, what are the products it sells?
	Alison	We sell watches, clocks, a lot of watch batteries and watch straps and also electrical, small electrical appliances, leads, batteries, light bulbs, Every light bulb you want we've got, even the old fashioned ELS ones. Lighters, pipes, digital watches, cameras, rechargeable batteries, ornaments, Betty Boop, got quite a big selection of those.
01:00	John	I can see a guitar.
	Alison	A guitar, that's a CD player
	John	A CD player, oh right, that's interesting.
	Alison	We've got juke box, CD players and a [?????] recording CD player, hair dryers, tongs, video cassettes, lots and lots of small things,

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		shavers, hair clippers, radios.
01:29	John	There's a lamp with an interesting artistic design to it
	Alison	Table lamp
	John	You seem to cater for a lot of people's needs.
	Alison	Magnetic bracelets.
	John	Magnetic bracelets, what are they for what do they
	Alison	If you have arthritis they're very good for taking the pain away. You wear them constantly and it takes the aches and pains away from them.
	John	That's good. I see you've got some cushions and
	Alison	Yes that's Betty Boop, this is all Betty Boop things.
01:58	John	That's market product, it sells well?
	Alison	Yes she's very popular, yes.
02:05	John	So would that be for the younger
	Alison	No its all age groups.
	John	All age groups?
	Alison	All age groups yes.
	John	So this stall does cater for all age groups. So you've got
	Alison	And mirrors, we've got mirrors over there, lots and lots of clocks, wall clocks, mantle clocks, alarm clocks, hoover bags.
	John	And hoover bags?
	Alison	Hoover belts
	John	And hoover belts
	Alison	And hoovers, we haven't got one on at the moment but we do hoovers as well. Also electrical appliances we do, hair dryers, tongs, straighteners.
02:45	John	So people must get to know by word of mouth the sort of product you provide. They will know where to come to buy the products that they need. So that's very interesting. Would you now say how long has the

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		stall been established in Castle Market place?
	Alison	We're actually, we've been in Sheffield Markets for 105 years. We have been in Castle Market the last 16 years but we was one of the original Sheaf Market traders and we came over here 16 years ago we was downstairs and it was absolutely horrible, there was no custom, we've like survived, just managed to survive but 18 month ago we had chance to come upstairs onto this main floor and we've picked up a lot. We've got the people walking up and down so you've the foot fall, it makes all the difference.
03:32	John	Its more of a captive area for customers.
	Alison	Yes, cos people don't go down into the basement.
	John	I've walked around there on occasions but a lot of the stalls are closing now so probably ...
	Alison	Yes now everyone's come out. It wasn't always like that cos even when it wasn't like it, it wasn't good. I mean we had a very good business in the Sheaf Market, we had a big big unit and then we got about a third the size we was downstairs and now we're about, well we're like a postage stamp, so small but it is better than downstairs.
04:02	John	So was the Sheaf Market an open market?
	Alison	No the Sheaf Market was an indoor market like this but they shut it and brought all the traders over into the Castle Market 18 years ago for the new market to be built. That's what they told us and it was always going to be next year, next year, two years and we've waited 16, 18 years for it and now we're actually there aren't we cos we're going in November hopefully.
04:24	John	So that would be a bonus for you, you're hoping that's going to expand your trade.
	Alison	Well, hopefully, we don't know where we're going yet but we want a bigger stall than what we've got because we sell so many lines it very hard to display everything because we're so small. I would like two stalls, I'd like to be double the size what I've got here.
	John	Yes that would be useful and you'd employ more staff as well.
	Alison	Of course, yes, I employ six people now. I have a business in Rotherham and Sheffield and the staff work between the two businesses plus I just took a trainee, one of these Government trainees what the Council's helped us with, with a view that she's with me for

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		twelve month and if she's alright she gets a job at the end of it.
05:10	John	Well that's good, so she's enjoying the work while she's here, interacting with other people. So from what you said the stall must belong to not only yourself but it also has family connections?
	Alison	Yes, its my husband's family. We was Arnold and Graham out of the market who was in the Rag and Tag, then the Sheaf, and now we're in the Castle and I am actually married to one of Arnold's sons, Barry and we run it under Arnold and Grahams B & A Longden because Longden is our surname and the B & A is for Barry and Alison because Arnold has died sixteen years ago, but I can't change the name because people stand at the stall and say "Oh Arnold and Graham, oh I remember Arnold so we would never change the name.
	John	Yes, its got that link
	Alison	Its an old Sheffield Market name.
05:58	John	An historical link, yes. That's interesting. So what have you noticed whilst you've been running the stall in relation to any changes within the market regarding, well you have mentioned there's been a change regarding the demand new products from moving downstairs to upstairs. Is there still a strong demand at present within this market or has it tailed off over recent years.
	Alison	The market isn't, I mean I am busier because I have come from downstairs to upstairs but the overall on the market the foot fall has fallen, the other people all tell me this isn't bus to how it used to be. I'm busy because I was in such a bad position before but it should be a lot better than what it is. Once we get to the new market and have a lovely environment and everything nice and new, it will be lovely. I mean if we're successful in going we are completely refitting out stalls, all new cabinets and everything, I mean, its going to be brand spanking new.
06:57	John	That sounds good, it sounds very optimistic.
	Alison	Into the 21 st century we're hopefully going with it.
07:03	John	So it could attract a broader spectrum of customers is that what you're hoping?
	Alison	We do get a broad spectrum of customers now, we get the little old ladies to the students to the people who work in offices, we do a big spectrum. One of our main things is we do watch batteries and we get a lot of quality watches, we've got a very good name for it and that's what I'm wanting to build on and my straps. We don't sell cheap

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		things, we sell good stuff reasonable.
07:29	John	Yes, at a reasonable price, good quality. What is it you like about your job?
	Alison	I love the market, well I'm 60 at Christmas and I've been brought up in the market from being 5 year old cos my family was a market family but in Rotherham and I love the market, its my life.
	John	You like the atmosphere.
	Alison	Oh its my life, I will never retire. I will always go on, perhaps not work as much as I do work now because I work full time but I like the market, the atmosphere and the customers and its lovely.
08:00	John	So its like a hobby for you, not just working, its a living.
	Alison	Its my living, if I don't take the money, I've got nothing to live on but I enjoy it. I put everything I've got into it.
	John	Its an interest as well, yes. Is there anything you may not like so much about the job or you generally like it, you do love it.
	Alison	I do love it, I do like coming to work, I'm not a housewife type person. I like the business, I like meeting the customers, trying to help them, always give them satisfaction. When they turn round and say "Oh thank you, oh that were nice" that's lovely.
	John	That's good, it sounds interesting doesn't it, interacting with other people.
	Alison	Yes, yes.