

Castle Markets Project - Oral History

Interview Transcription

Interviewee Details

Name: Norman Bruce Hardy

ID Number: CM_079_Hardy

Place of Birth: USA

Year / Date of Birth: 09/05/32

Interview Details

Interviewer: Hannah Baxter

Date / Time:

Place: Castle Market

Transcription

Time		
	Hannah	First of all please could you state what your name, the year you were born in and whereabouts you were born?
	Norman	Well I was born in the USA of America in 1932 on 9 May.
	Hannah	What is your name?
	Norman	My name is Norman Bruce Hardy. I've been a resident in Sheffield since the age of one.
00:25	Hannah	So you weren't in America very long then.
	Norman	No I was brought over as a child.
	Hannah	Why did your parents move to Sheffield.
	Norman	They were Sheffield people, they'd gone over to America because of the recession that was occurring in this country at that time and they went over there and worked for some years where I was born. I was just about one year old when they brought me back home again and I've lived in Sheffield ever since. I left school when I was fourteen, I didn't know what I wanted to do until my father took me to a baker's shop in Ripley, in Derbyshire. I took to the trade straight away, I came back and got a job in Sheffield on Abbey Lane, took up a night school course, took City and Guilds, passed those exams for bread making

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		<p>and confectionery on the science side and the baking as well. I was sixteen when my father bought me a small baker's shop. At that time everything was rationed, you couldn't go and buy fat or sugar you had an allocation so we had to buy the shop to get the allocation. And I can tell you now that when I started a small loaf the [??] was tuppence three farthings and a large one was four pence halfpenny and it was The shop used to take about £60 a week and that paid for the shop assistants, the baker and myself. I ran that for some years and then I diverted to making pikelets and oatcakes and we were the largest producer of pikelets or crumpets as they call them, in Sheffield doing about 10,000 dozen a week. And we supplied an old name in Sheffield which was Arthur Davy's, they had a lot of shops in Sheffield, very well known good company and [?Styans?]. I think I had four vans on the road delivering pikelets [??] but the problem was that when you, people toasted them and they only had fires in the winter because nobody had central heating then so when the summer came people didn't light a fire, they didn't buy pikelets. And I got married, family on the way and I decided I'd got to do something that lasted all year and I bought a small baker's to start with down Attercliffe and we started baking again. I carried on with the pikelets in winter but we started baking again at Attercliffe, Attercliffe Road and we gradually built that up until we had a factory in Sheffield and a number of vans out also. I always wanted to get into the market. I supplied Mr & Mrs Hanson here with breadcakes. That's how they came to get in touch with me and asked me if I wanted to buy it when Mr Hanson died. We got obviously, we had Hanson's which was this one, we had one in the Sheaf Market and one in the Fish Market and one downstairs in Castle Market. Some of them consisted of more than one stall. Like this was more than one stall you see, I had two, it went from the door there right to the end.</p>
04:27	Hannah	There was a customer information bit wasn't there, it was just
	Norman	No it was
04:33	Hannah	One big stall in the market, and did the one upstairs [?count?]
	Norman	The Fish Restaurant upstairs, I think there's one in between isn't there. Is there another unit between where the fish restaurant was, I can't remember.
	Hannah	At the moment there's a cafe up there.
	Norman	Yes, that was it, we had that cafe, yeh. A very good cafe it was in its day. We used to open about half past eleven by which time there was a queue all down these stairs waiting to go in. I remember we used to

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		shut about three o'clock in the afternoon.
05:13	Hannah	A busy day.
	Norman	And all we served was haddock and chips, cod and chips, pie and chips and apple pies made at our own bakery. I think we had trifle some time and tea and coffee. That was the total menu. But we used to buy our fish from Tissingtons who were in the market down here and he used to fetch it early morning from the docks. We used to clean it ourselves so fish was fresh all the time, we made our own chips, none of this bought stuff.
05:50	Hannah	You made your own chips, your own bread. And you bought the fish from Tissingtons?
	Norman	Yes we made our own chips, we made our own bread, yes. It was a very very successful business.
05:58	Hannah	What was it called?
	Norman	Rooftop Cafe.
	Hannah	So its always been called Rooftop Cafe?
	Norman	Yes, is it still called that?
	Hannah	Yes
	Norman	It was Rooftop Cafe.
06:05	Hannah	What were your stalls called?
	Norman	It started off with R B Bingham's there and Hardy's Bakery then we turned to a trading name which was 'Crumbs' and all the bakers (I don't know what they were called.)
06:25	Hannah	Okay, so this bit was 'Crumbs' and the bit in the Sheaf Market did you call that the same?
	Norman	Yes, they were all Crumbs Shops, yeh. But the Sheaf Market one was a very very busy one very busy. We was the second stall in and I can always remember on a Friday morning when those doors went up there must have been anything up to 150, 200 people waiting to go straight into the market. They were crawling under the door before it got up to get first in the queue. It was a very very busy shop.
07:01	Hannah	Was your role to manage everything?
	Norman	Yes, I was Managing Director, my wife used to manage, she managed

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		the shops down here eventually after the children grew up and were all at school and I had the bakery. It was like two companies. Hardy Bakers Ltd, the retail side was R B Bingham's but it traded as 'Crumbs' cos we had other shops as well. We had some sandwich shops round the city, we had one on Union Street, one on West Street, one at Darnall and one in the Wicker. In fact the sign for the one in the wicker has only just been taken down, a few months ago. [Laughing] Trading Standards! Its been there all that time.
07:57	Hannah	Did you get to carry on baking or were you just too busy?
	Norman	No I didn't actually do much, at the end I didn't do much baking myself.
	Hannah	Do you still bake at home?
	Norman	No, it turned out more office work I think than anything, eventually. I had a manager at the bakery, because we had 8 vans on the road, I think it was, delivering to shops all round. Round about Sheffield you know so it was quite a big bakery. And then I eventually sold the bakery to a Mrs Gordon, I think she passed it on to somebody else and they burnt it down.
08:42	Hannah	So this was the one in Attercliffe?
	Norman	No the bottom of Gleadless Road, the very bottom of Gleadless Road. The flour silo is still there. Do you know where Ponsford's is? If you look at the side of Ponsford's you can still see the silo.
	Hannah	Is Ponsford's the big furniture shop?
	Norman	Yes.
	Hannah	I've got to walk past it later so I'll have a look.
	Norman	Have a look up the road, I'm sure its still there, it used to take twenty ton of flour at a time.
09:16	Hannah	Did you enjoy your job?
	Norman	Oh yeh I did. As soon as I started baking I couldn't get enough of it. That's the reason why my dad bought me the small bakery. I say he bought it me, when we moved in he gave me a bank statement and we paid a £1,000 for this business and on the top of this statement was £500 and I said to my father 'you're generous aren't you'. I said 'is that to get stock and everything in?' and he said 'No my son that's debit not credit, you pay that off.' And we did eventually [laughing]. So I started off with a £500 debt which I had to pay off. As I say it was quite a lot of money when bread was tuppence three farthings. It went on from

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		there.
10:16	Hannah	So is your dad a businessman?
	Norman	Yes and no, he was the managing director of a company called [????] on Bramall Lane and it was sheet metal working actually but a lot of car repairs but they also did all kinds of other work, where sheet metal work was concerned and things like that
10:42	Hannah	What was it you liked about baking?
	Norman	When I went to, my mother took me over to this bakery in Ripley and they were friends of my mum and dad's and she got this idea I wanted to be baking, I didn't like the idea at first. I said 'no I'm not putting an apron on, no way.' Anyway, 'well you're going'. so they took me on the bus to Ripley and it was a father and two sons [????] they called it and they had a baker's shop and a cafe in the market stall in Ripley and one of the sons sort of, he was very good to me and he showed me all round and started me doing bits of things, I was only there for the day. And eventually we made some pastry and he said 'I want to put some of this in the tin and block it out into a [???] So I did that and he said 'Right we're going to fill it now with jam' so we did that. We put it in the oven and he showed me how to, when they were baked and he said 'as soon as the jam starts to bubble up that's it, take them out, they're done'. We waited till they were cold and then he said 'Right, I want you to put them on a board four jam, four lemon. He said 'now you need to take it into the shop'. So I took it into the shop and a woman said 'Oh those look nice, can I have three of each' and I thought 'I've made them' and that was it, I was hooked on baking. And it went on from there.
12:37	Hannah	Did you enjoy selling things as well?
	Norman	I did enjoy selling things, yes and I got a job in Sheffield and the bakery manager, who was called Gordon Webster, I was only fifteen at the time and I worked for him for probably six to eight months and then he left and he went to Tuckwoods. I don't know whether you've heard of Tuckwoods but they were the bakers in Sheffield on High Street and He'd been there a bit and he come round and knocked on our door at home one night. And he said 'Is Norman in' so she said to me 'You're wanted' and I said 'Oh hello, what are you doing here?'. So he said 'Well you know I'm at Tuckwoods' which belonged to Atkinsons, the Atkinsons that's still in Sheffield and he said 'I want you to come and be my confectioner'. He says 'I know you can do it' but he said 'you'll have to apply for the Improvers Lad's job because Mr Atkinson wont accept a fifteen year old as his main baker'. [Laughing] so I said 'Alright', so I went down for the interview. It was Bob Atkinson, he said

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		'Yes, we'll give you a try my lad' so I got a job at Tuckwoods and Gordon Webster was very good to me, he used to take me home at night and show me how to decorate cakes, wedding cakes and all that kind of thing, I used to do them as well and then Tuckwoods was bought out by Marks & Spencers, who are still there to this day and I was, my dad was in the process of buying this little shop when they bought us out, so I went straight from there into my own little business. But obviously Tuckwoods closed down and Marks and Spencers bought the [????]
14:41	Hannah	How old were you when you moved into the markets?
	Norman	I'd been going a couple of years, I'd be about eighteen.
	Hannah	You were still very young.
	Norman	Yeh, yeh.
	Hannah	And how long were you here for?
	Norman	Years and years [laughing] I can't remember when I eventually packed up. We sold some of them and the bakery, I was, yes we were sort of winding down, you might say cos I actually had another business in Chesterfield. That's another story. We sold some of the stalls off and then Mrs Gordon who eventually burnt the place down, she took the bakery although the property was still mine. There you are that's my life history.
15:45	Hannah	That's great. Did your children follow you into the bakery.
	Norman	No, none of them wanted it. My eldest son came down, probably shouldn't say this, but I didn't get on with him, and eventually he started, I don't know whether you remember the [YM????] being where people used to buy [????????] He started that. I brought that into the market here and we had two or three [?viewing/] places doing that as well. Then he went over to Stockport and he started doing it there. He ended up with a chain of shops and sold out for about half a million pounds. He came back to Sheffield and he started a company called Ancient Wisdom, little bottles of aromatherapy oil. I lent him some money to get going and that business last year turned over five million pounds. He now has a nice, very nice [?property?] in Spain.... Although he still has a warehouse in Sheffield up Langsett Road, 45 thousand square feet, that's as big as this market, full, full of giftware [?????] and all that kind of thing, jewellery, loads and loads of silver [????]
17:29	Hannah	He's done very well

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	Norman	So he's done alright yes. His younger brother he works with him on the computer side and then I've got another son, the middle one he lives in Sheffield, got his own van and does some work, not so much a business man but a good plodder.
17:53	Hannah	Did your wife retire about the same time as you?
	Norman	We parted company, which was sad in a way. It was mainly arguments over business and I eventually ended up giving her Hardy's Bakery Ltd and I had [????] but sadly she made and she ended up selling the bakery for £90,000 It was the reason why [??????] so its sad in a way. It was a success in its day.
18:37	Hannah	What was it, are you wanting to go?
	Norman	Well I'm looking at my parking meter, I've got 10 minutes.
	Hannah	I just wanted to ask, what was it like working in the market with the other traders, was it a good place to be?
	Norman	Yes, well I mean we knew a lot of them, yes. But I had a business in Chesterfield, a fairly big business actually, which was [????] a department store and we wanted to sell pots and things and I'm trying to think of his name now, he was a pottery man, a well know pottery man.
	Hannah	Edwards
	Norman	Edwards, so I just went to Mr Edwards and I said 'Hey up, I've got this place in Chesterfield. 'I'll take you to potteries' he says. And we went, he took us to the potteries in Stoke and introduced us. So that's how, he was a good fella.
19:31	Hannah	So people helped each other out?
	Norman	Yes, he was, well even. Yes they did they helped each other. It was a really good busy market in its day. I hope the new ones as good.
19:50	Hannah	Do you think you'll go and have a look in the new market.
	Norman	Yes. I'll go . It's been a big part of my life. I enjoyed it. Market products were a bit, I wouldn't say they were a down market but the price was always [????] I mean you went on the High Street they charged top rate prices. We only catered for the people that were here. When we was in the Sheaf Market I had a stall, it wouldn't be any bigger than this and they used to queue and I'd got four assistants on and I said 'Right as soon as there are only six people in the queue you stop serving, only one serves because people like to join a queue. I

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		said we mustn't be without a queue.
20:51	Hannah	That's true, you go where there's queue because you think that is the good place to go.
	Norman	Yes, so we always had a queue. This one here, he was half and half, one bakery and half cut meats and he used to have one girl doing nothing but open tins of ham and as soon as she'd opened one tin, it went on the slicer, there were two slicers and they were sliced up, tin after tin of ham, roast pork and corned beef, tongue. Yes it was good
	Hannah	Thank you very much.
	Norman	Alright.