

Castle Markets Project - Oral History Interview Summary

Interviewee Details

Name: Nora Platt

ID Number: CM_008_Platt

Place of Birth: Sheffield

Year / Date of Birth: 1948

Interview Details

Interviewer: Hannah Baxter

Date / Time: 12/12/12 11:29

Place: Castle Market

Audio File Nos: CM_008_Platt

Summary

Time	Description
0:24	Atmosphere
0:46	Scales
1:17	Potty Edwards
2:17	Atmosphere
3:46	Using market because it was cheap but good quality
6:30	Family, especially shopping with mother
8:26	Sweets
9:52	Using market as a child, and then later as an adult
11:08	Changing Sheffield – old buildings falling into disrepair
12:00	Politeness – how to address adults as a child
12:45	Friendliness in market, especially in fish and meat market
13:49	Feelings on market today
14:39	New market

Transcript

Hannah: Please could you say your name? And the year you were born and the place you were born.

Nora: Right. It's Nora Platt. And I were born in 1948 and I lived at Brightmore Street, it were 10 Court Brightmore Street. And I used to come into Sheffield with me Mum, we used to walk, they were back to back houses, we didn't have a lot of money, and we used to come to Rag and Tag market and that were a wonderful place. Just full of atmosphere - I were only little so I can just remember the atmosphere and some of the characters. And I remembered this chair that looked like a thron and this, what seemed to be an old lady, maybe she

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weren't so old when I look back, but she, I think you used to pay her a couple of pennies or whatever and it used to weigh you. And everyone used to queue up to go on it, or they used to look at it longingly if they couldn't, if they didn't have any money for it. And then, the main character I remember is this man – and you've just told me his name and I've still forgot...

Hannah: Potty Edwards, was it?

Nora: Oh right – Potty Edwards, that's it. But he used to have this thing with pots. He used to just pile them up as he were telling you what he was going to sell you – dinner plates, tea plates, cups 'n' saucers – and then we all used to wait cos he used to sorta like chuck them in the air and catch them and we used to think something will break but he never broke anything. And he brought his prices down and eventually women would buy em, there used to be a few men hanging around but not many, it used to be mainly women. And you'd buy yourself a tea set or whatever off him but you could buy just a cup n' saucer, always cups and saucers not mugs them days – only pint pots for men - I think some of them got sold as well. And it were just the atmosphere and everything – and it sorta got smaller and smaller - the Rag and Tag market. There were a bit across road and I know there's a name for it but I can't remember what it were I think that had a different name from Rag and Tag and I shopped there for quite some years with me Mum and eventually that closed and we started shopping in Castle Market – I think the two might've crossed over I'm not sure. I can remember this part, coming in for everyday things, and clothes and things like that but a lot of time we used to go in to other side cos that were your greengrocers, everything like that. Probably we'd come through for fish market, meat, and as I were saying today when I came in I said I expected to smell meat and fish, cos that were smell I thought of. But it were just, it were so busy it were the noise, the chatter, the atmosphere, it felt as though all Sheffield were in here, particularly on busy days. There were just everything, everything that you could want, you didn't need to go anywhere else, as I remember it when I was little, you couldn't afford to go anywhere else! Not where I came from, people didn't earn enough, we were in little back to back house – you've got your rent, you've got your husband working and you managed week to week with a little bit to spare if you were lucky. I think generation before that, me grandma and me granddad, they went through hard times, in t' '30s, so probably the market would be how they existed along with little local shops which I suppose have died out now but me granddad had an allotment down at Rivelin so he grew a lot of his own stuff and he'd been through two world wars and he'd lived in Canada, he went as a Barnado's boy. And they just know how to exist, being part of like managing and buying in the cheapest things. But what I think I'd like to say about market as well is that it were good quality, just because you were working class and you were buying cheap I don't think you were buying rubbish, you know, you might have gone for cheaper cuts of meat or cheaper fish or whatever but what you were buying was quality. And I think, somebody was saying, that this building dun't look good now, but I never remember it anything but clean and sparkling, decorated up...Christmas would have been wonderful in here – you'd have come in just to see it. So it were different, you can't judge it on what it looks like today because obviously businesses have gone and it's been neglected. But that's not how I remember it, it were, to me it were heart of Sheffield. Sheffield had lovely buildings, which later on when I got a bit more money I went in. But you know, this weren't working class in that it were awful, that we were coming to a dump to shop – you weren't, it were, the whole area, all Castlegate, it were lovely, all the square and the post office and everything, it were lovely, it

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weren't a dump but I can just imagine young people thinking 'What a dump!' (laughs) but it weren't it were wonderful it were like best place you could shop.

Hannah: What's your favourite memory of the market?

Nora: Coming with me Mum (laughs), cos she's gone now, and me Dad's gone, me grandparents have gone. I think it were coming with family and meeting people – and me Mum always knew somebody. Where we lived at Brightmore Street she knew everybody, she went and wallpapered for 'em, she went and shopped for 'em, she worked in t'pub at bottom – I used to go with her when she used to be cleaning pub – and later on she worked in people's homes, someone on Hanover Street which were posh (laughs) and she knew lots and lots of people. So we never come to town without knowing somebody. Me Dad worked on trams, and later on, on buses so he knew lots of people as well, not that I can ever remember him coming shopping with us except at Christmas (laughs) - my Mum did all t' domestic shopping. But it were just that atmosphere and everything and knowing people. Stall owners knew you because you came, well sometimes we come for three times a week – so they knew you – and you had all this banter and everything. So it were shopping, it were like going into a super market now and people might be friendly with you because they're trained to do that but they don't you, you could go in for years and they don't know you but here you were known, and people quickly got to know you.

Hannah: When you came in with your Mum, a few people have said that they'd have a special treat on a Saturday like cockles or chips, did you have anything like that?

Nora: Not on a regular basis because money were tight. And I think probably if we got a few pennies we went to local shop, sweet shop, because me mum knew her – Mrs Cade they called her. I've got a photo of me brother and me sister in front of shop, all I think about it ooh we used to go in there and spend ages picking out these sweets. So there might have been times when we got some here as well. Later on when I lived, when I got married and I lived at Hillsborough and I came here - I'd still come in market even though by that time I were a little bit better off. I knew I'd get what I wanted and I'd get bargains, then I might treat myself. Shops I couldn't afford when I was younger I'd think 'oh yeah I'll go in', you know. And they'd do little bags of sweets and things, so we ate all these terrible sweets that now I wouldn't look at cos I'd think ooh, you know, I'd certainly have no teeth now! They're all rock hard things, boiled sweets – I used to love Yorkshire mix – and when you look at them now in these new shops where they do them traditional sweets you think 'Oh my goodness'. It's a good job we didn't have much money really! (Laughs)

Hannah: Do you still come shopping here now?

Nora: Yes. I still come up to Sheffield. Particularly since I've retired because I've got more time. But I always used to come up once or twice a month or something like that, two months, it's just like I'm coming home. I lived up in Sheffield til I were ten and then we moved to Rotherham and then I back when I got married – which were too early, I was only twenty (laughs) and silly – I did all my shopping in Rotherham, I used to walk from Hillsborough to Rotherham, to Sheffield, sorry, just to shop and have a walk around. Sometimes I couldn't afford much but I'd come in. So I used to come back to market cos that's where I knew, so I knew this market really, really well in those years because it just saved me money. I mean they had good shops in Hillsborough but it'd just be a change to

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come into Sheffield so I'd just walk in. Just have a walk round and everything and I think that's why now I feel when Sheffield's changing – I know it's got to change – but I just think we've got to preserve some of Sheffield cos it's got such wonderful buildings and you just think once they're empty if someone doesn't do something with them they're gone aren't they? And you can't replace them and they weren't built to just last for a few years they were made to last and it's only us that lets them go so I just feel really strongly about that. So sometimes I just come up to have a look what they've done. And I say 'hmm'!

Hannah: Are there any stalls or traders that you particularly remember?

(Sounds of trolley being pushed by)

Nora: Not particular people cos I think when you're young you don't. You know people are talking to you and you're having a bit of banter and it's lovely but you don't...The first time from me being born I was too young to really know people's names. There used to be this really strict thing that you didn't ever call anybody older than yourself by their first name. So if me Mum used to use their first name I wouldn't use it because I'd've got into trouble. Everybody either called them auntie or uncle somebody or you called them Mrs or Mester and on market it weren't like that, I don't think people did that, you know, as much, so I didn't pick names up. Second time that I lived back in Sheffield I think it had changed a bit weren't so many personalities. People were still friendly. I think going into the fish and meat market, strangely enough to say I'm a vegetarian, were the most friendly people that I can remember. They couldn't do enough for you. If you wanted certain fish, certain meat, or whatever, you wanted it prepared or whatever, it were done and it were in your price bracket but, like, there were no rushing, no, you know, like you didn't matter. I think that's mostly what I remember rather than individual people.

Hannah: How do you feel coming in here today?

Nora: Sad really. One because it's going and one like when I came down a few months ago I had only been upstairs when I came and somebody told me there was a stall down here doing knitting wool and stuff, and I still knit for the grandchildren, so I thought well I'll come down and have a look and the stall's wonderful but I couldn't believe how empty it were. It were just like I don't know, like going back to a place where you were born and everything changing. I just think, you know, you just feel sad.

Hannah: What do you think of it moving?

Nora: I don't know. I'm hopeful that whatever they do, they do it well and I mean I think it will be funny it not being on this site, being up Moor. And I think saddest thing is there were quite some nice shops up Moor and they bulldozed them to make site and I just sort of think, why did they do that? When there's working businesses going and they use a site where it is. I mean, maybe they should have shut this and built it on here. I know there's people want to preserve site of Sheffield castle, and I understand that cos I love history myself, but I just think maybe it'd've been better to have been on this site rather than up Moor. Because I think Moor's got a different personality hasn't it? I know a lot were bombed in t'war and it were just devastated, Moor, so that's why it's newer buildings and everything up there. But I just think it might have been just nice to have had it on same site as markets have been on this site for a lot of years, I don't know - I'll tell you when I've seen it (laughs).

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It's across from my favourite shop which is Atkinson's – I absolutely love Atkinson's - and it's a family firm so that's good. So we'll see. It might bring life to the Moor, mightn't it?

Hannah: Yeah. Thank you very much!