

Castle Markets Project - Oral History

Interview Transcript

Interviewee Details

Name: George Buckley

ID Number: CM_024_Buckley

Place of Birth: Sheffield

Year / Date of Birth: 15/01/1946

Interview Details

Interviewer: Hannah Baxter

Date / Time: 20/02/2013 14:48

Subjects: Norfolk Market Hall, Rag & Tag, views on the new market

Place: Castle Market

Transcript

Hannah: Sorry! Third time! Hopefully it will work! [There had been some trouble with the recorder]

George: [Laughs] The battery's alright?

Hannah: Yeah it just decided not to do it. Right! Please could you tell me [Laughing] your name, where you were born and the year you were born in?

George: Right. My name's George Buckley, I was born 15th January 1946 and I was born in the Northern General Hospital. My parents lived with my grandparents on Sanderson Street, Attercliffe, and after me grandmother died we all lived together in one house in on a place called Sheaf Gardens which is roughly at the bottom of Granville Road. It's a little industrial estate now.

Hannah: Please could you tell me about coming to the markets as a child?

George: Well, one of the things - it were, we were very short of money - so what my mum used to do, I think I was either four or five years old, it didn't cost anything to go on a tram if you were under five so me mum used to put me on the tram at the bottom of Granville Road, I used to get off near the market near Commercial Street, walk through to the Rag and Tag market and then I used to have to knock on the counter of the little shop - Bingham's it was - and I used to hand them my list of food that we wanted to buy and then they'd put it me all in a little bag and then I'd get back on the tram and me mum would be waiting for me at the other end.

1.46 *Hannah:* What sort of thing did you buy?

George: Ooh everything was packed separately so we'd have a , you'd have to buy something like half a pound of butter, some sugar, the sugar was in a little blue bag which they packed themselves, biscuits, things like that, and not too much cos I was only a little lad. She used to send me for a shilling's worth of potatoes to the top of the road every day - a shilling's five pence [Laughs]. And I used to go up there and depending on what it was like, what time of year it was, how much potatoes you'd get, and I'd carry it down the road with me brother or me sister. That's it.

Hannah: So did you find it heavy?

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George: Of course! That's what I was saying! It used to be very heavy. A shilling's worth of potatoes was a lot of potatoes. Me sister or me brother, two of us between us would have to carry the bag, with all these potatoes in. I think we used to live on potatoes! [Laughs]

Hannah: So were you the littlest one?

George: No. Me sister she was born in India. And me mum and dad were married over in India. Me mum, she was a nurse in India during the war. They brought me sister back, I was a war baby so I was born straight after the war, then I had - I think there were children every year and a half - cos there were five of us until they found out what was causing it I think! We were a Catholic family.

3.34 *Hannah:* Do you have a favourite memory of the market?

George: My favourite memory of the market actually is the Norfolk Market Hall. It was one of those things, it had got a smell to it, Sheffield had got a really horrible smell all around Sheffield, you could either smell the steel works or you could smell the brewery but when you went in the market it smelt of flowers. It was a really, really strong smell of flowers. There was a Tom Marsh's in the corner, there were one or two other shops, but the main thing in there was flowers. There was a fountain in there where they used to fill up the buckets to put into the bowls that they had the flowers in. But absolutely amazing smell, it really was. Just outside there, there was some like little arches underneath the market and I can always remember going in Tom Marsh's, the original Tom Marsh's was under there, we used to go and have a look at the dogs and cats for sale and they used to sell parakeets, budgies, things like that, rabbits, not so many rabbits, people used to eat them I think.

Hannah: Do you have any particular traders that you remember?

George: Tom Marsh's. I can remember them ever so well. There was also in the Rag and Tag Market there was Ogle's who sold animals. Not a lot of the others I can really remember. Although when I was a bit older, when I was about fourteen, I used to work for a chap in the market, in the Rag and Tag, he was a, he used to sell cloth and remnants and all the women used to come and pick out these remnants and pick all the bits and pieces out of it and you know he'd sell them cheap. My job was to pack them all up neatly at the end of the night, for which I was given half a crown. That was for all the week, by the way!

6.03 *Hannah:* What did you do with your half a crown?

George: Spent it on sweets and things, I think [Laughs] I actually saved up and bought myself a radio when I was a bit older with the odd jobs, I used to do little odd jobs like that. Me Dad had got two second hand shops in Sheffield and when I was a little boy he used to just leave me in the shop and just say 'Just get whatever price you can for the stuff' so that's what I did, you know, I was selling stuff at the age of seven or eight years old at this shop, second-hand chairs, second-hand carpets, settees, we used to have an old handcart, two wheeled big hand cart which we used to use for delivering the stuff all over Sheffield. We used to walk miles all round Sheffield with a three piece suite on a handcart.

Hannah: You must have been quite a strong kid then.

George: Me Dad was. I wasn't! I used to have a ride back on it on the cart! [Laughs]

Hannah: So he was in the army and then?

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George: He was in the RAF.

Hannah: Oh the RAF.

George: He was a fitter, aircraft fitter in the RAF. Yeah.

7.25 *Hannah:* So do you remember much about coming in the Castle Market?

George: Only in later years. When I was very young I can't remember much about it. The Castle Market. I can remember it as being the fish market and a great big hole in the road where it had been bombed. After that I can't remember much more, I can remember when I'd got young children I used to bring them in the market on a Saturday morning. We used to, I used to love taking them, just to get the feel of what it used to be like in the old days, so I'd take them to the tripe shop, and we'd get a little plate of tripe or a plate of mussels or cockles or something like that. They used to love it. I used to, like I said, to get them to have a feel of what it used to be like, then we'd go in the new Mace's which was this side, when the other place had got knocked down there was Mace's at this side. So I used to take them in that and we'd look at the dogs and cats and goldfish and what have you in there.

Hannah: Do you still come shopping in here now?

George: I'm going to be going shopping shortly up here. I do a bit of, I buy a bit of veg and things like that. Don't buy so much meat, my wife is a vegetarian now so I tend not to eat as much meat as I used to but every now and then I'll come in and treat myself to a steak but not all that much, no.

9.09 *Hannah:* So you come in here every now and again.

George: Every now and again yeah.

Hannah: What do you think of it now?

George: I just think it's a shame what's happened. I'm not sure whether it's the traders fault or the council's fault. At one time there used to be the other Sheaf Market but they knocked that down saying they were going to build a new market with the money from it and they never did. they sold the land and pocketed the money as far as I'm concerned. I'm getting a bit political here.

Hannah: That's okay.

George: So I was always bothered that they'd never spent that money that they said they were going to spend but when that market was knocked down it sort of took the atmosphere away from the whole area. If you lose one market it detracts from the other markets, well I think so anyway. A lot of the people from the other markets moved into here but you hadn't got the amount of types of people that sold things. In the old market a lot of people used to - a lot of people will probably have mentioned Potty Edwards - you know to hear somebody like him selling all the plates and things like that, absolutely amazing, you'd stand gobsmacked standing listening to him selling stuff. It was - there's nobody like that at all now actually. Even in the old Sheaf Market at the end of the night when things were, you know on a Saturday afternoon at half past three, the vegetable sellers used to shout to sell their wares cheap, so you know they'd sell a mixed bag of fruit for something like twenty pence or something like that. It's all gone. Where people were shouting their wares it just doesn't happen anymore. And it is run down. You get one lot of people going, then somebody else goes, then somebody else goes, it's empty because it is empty if you see what I mean. If more

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people moved in people would come down looking to buy things and it would start filling up again. So it's a shame.

11.46 Hannah: So what do you think will happen with the new market?

George: I know at least one trader who said he will not go down there because it's going to be very expensive down there. At this moment from what I gather there's not that many traders have taken it up yet. I don't know, I could be dead wrong, but I think it will be good for the bottom of the Moor area, you know the shops that are down there, but I just don't know what's going to happen to this end of town. It's becoming more and more decrepit. I think they should be doing something with the old courthouse, somebody with a brain could sort that out I'm sure. In other towns they've made things like the old courthouse into little market stalls, I don't know if you've seen them in other towns, I have. Where they've put them in to - Leeds has done ever such a fantastic job with theirs. They've also got Marks and Spencer's actually setting up a stall in the market. I think that's brilliant! You know somebody coming up with an idea like that. There's got to be ways that you can keep markets working.

13.15 Hannah: I've seen a similar one in Edinburgh I think.

George: Yeah?

Hannah: Yeah. Do you think you'll go to the new market?

George: Well I know I will. Cos I shop at that end of town normally. I go- there's a pub there at the end that I go to quite often. That pub is hoping - the Moorfoot Tavern - they're hoping to turn into a very profitable pub once the market's open, you know, they're going to put food on and things like that. There used to be a pub halfway up the Moor, before it got knocked down, that used to sell lots of food really good food for the old age pensioners and what have you. But the Moorfoot Tavern is probably hoping to do the same.

Hannah: Do you have anything else you would like to say?

George: [Laughs] I think I've said it all.

Hannah: Well thank you very much!