

Castle Markets Project - Oral History

Transcription

Interviewee Details

Name: John Burkhill

ID Number: CM_031_Burkhill

Place of Birth: Sheffield

Year / Date of Birth: 1939

Interview Details

Interviewer: Helen Finnerty

Date / Time: 22/3/13

Place: Castle Market

Audio File Nos: CM_031_Burkhill

Summary

| Time | Description |
|-------|--|
| 00.18 | Earliest memory of Market - Rag and Tag Market |
| 01.02 | Favourite characters |
| 01.26 | Market Character - Tony |
| 02.23 | Frequency of coming to market |
| 02.48 | Charity work for Macmillian Cancer Support |
| 03.05 | Description of his collection pram |
| 03.40 | Description of his clothes |
| 04.25 | Sadness at market being pulled down |
| 04.34 | End of Interview |

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Helen: Can you tell me what your full name is?

John: My name is John Burkhill, but I'm better known in Sheffield as the 'Mad Walker with the Pram' [John is known for dressing all in green with a green wig and going around with a pram full of Macmillan (cancer support charity) merchandise to see and raise money for them].

Helen: [Laughter] Ok and tell me about your earliest memory of this market, how long have you been coming here?

John: I've been ... well I've known many, many, many of these stall holders over many years... very, very supportive, wonderful, wonderful people but I mean, I'm a Sheffielder and I remember old Rag and Tag, I've been coming here as long as I can remember, since I were a kid. [Right, right] I'm 74 now but I can remember since I were a kid I were coming here ...yeah, wonderful people.

Helen: So what are your earliest memories of the market?

John: Earliest memories I think were of old Rag and Tag Market but coming down to here when they did the old fish market and everything and we'd get everything, when we were kids and they were fantastic, fantastic people, they really are, sommat else, sommat else.

Helen: Did you have any favourite characters here or...?

John: Sally's and everybody down there [Sally owns a café on the Lower Ground Floor], there's some real characters, Tony here used to sell things outside, outside you know, and stuff like that, wonderful, wonderful people, you know, they've all been there, they're salt of earth, every one of them, brilliant, brilliant people, lovely people.

Helen: So you mentioned Tony, what did he do?

John: He's died now love unfortunately, but he were a bit of a character he used to sell stuff outside, he could sell sand to Arabs put it that way, you know what I mean, he were a bit of a character

Helen: Right, right, do you have a favourite character now?

John: Well, I know most of them, you know what I mean, but a lot of 'em unfortunately as I said [Sound of coffee machine] it's all about trying to keep it together, but I mean having said that now it's not going to happen now, unfortunately, this damn Council, they should've - I've always said they should have knocked Parkhill flats down I said and built this place up see, these people don't want to go down to the Moor, they don't want to leave this place, people in Sheffield don't want it to move, they don't want to lose it, it's part of our heritage, you know what I mean, it's a shame it's gonna go, but I mean, I don't know it'll be heartbreaking it really will be, it will for me as well, it will a lot of Sheffielders, you know what I mean, it will be very, very hard, very hard.

Helen: How often do you come here? How often do you come here? Do you come every day? Once a week?

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John: I come, I mean as I say, at moment I'm pushing this pram all over the country for Macmillan, you see, cancer support, and these are very supportive but I try to get down on a Saturday morning because a lot of people come down with coppers for me, you see, so they chuck it in my pram, and the stallholders and everyone is very, very supportive over many years, they've donated quite a lot of money to Macmillan over the years.

Helen: How long have you been doing charity work for Macmillan?

John: For Macmillian, I've been full-time since I retired 8 year ago, and I've been lucky enough to raise 150 thousand for 'em, at the moment I'm trying to raise 40 million, we are getting there slowly, you know what I mean, we are getting to that stage now.

Helen: Can you describe your pram for me please?

John: It's 55 year old and it were my daughter's pram. She worked here, she worked in the market, she died many, many years ago, in fact they've got a plaque to her somewhere in I think it's in the ladies' rest room, I'm not sure, [Sound of coffee machine] [Inaudible] ...hopefully they're going to give it me when they do knock the market down. I think it's in the ladies' rest room.

Helen: What was her name?

John: That pram is her pram. And daft as it sounds when I'm pushing it round I feel she's with me, you know what I mean, that's twenty odd years ago.

Helen: OK and would you like to describe what you're wearing today?

John: I'm dressed in my green, all Macmillan stuff on and everything, all people they know me, the mad walker with the pram, they know me in this gear like.

Helen: You've got a wonderful green, light green curly wig on, which looks absolutely fantastic [Laughter]

John: Thank you very much, thank you.

Helen: Does it keep you warm?

John: Yes it does, it keeps us going, yes, that's part of my Macmillan outfit everyone knows me in Sheffield in this attire, you see so it's fantastic really. It's just as I said, it's a damn shame they're going to pull this place up it really is, it's going to be heartbreaking, it really will.

Helen: OK, alright, well thank you very much John, that was very kind of you to give me your time.

John: You're very, very welcome, anytime .

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