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| **Project: ‘Glasgow’s Highstreets: An oral history…’**Respondent: Catherine (Kay) MorrisonYear of Birth: 1934Age: Connection to project: Lived in Glasgow when young.Date of Interview: 7th July 2023Interviewer: Dr Sue MorrisonRecording Agreement: YesInformation & Consent: YesPhotographic Images: No (Number of: )Length of Interview: 1.02.02Location of Interview: StirlingRecording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics) | **Glasgow Story Collective** |
| Time(from: mins/secs) | Description | Transcribed Extract(from- to:mins/secs) |
| 0.37 | - Kay born in Airdrie; moved from Coatbridge to Shawlands, Glasgow, at age 13.- City a new experience – surprised at the scale of Glasgow.- Particularly remembers the old trams as open and cold; newer trams more enclosed but smelled of nicotine, and wet clothes in winter. |  |
|  | “Well, particularly the trams come to notice (in terms of the smells) because the old trams…the people who wanted to smoke went upstairs. And it was pretty open the new trams were much more closed in. But the old trams had a very open bit just above the stairs and another open bit at the other end. So the air was going through but it was…if…everyone smoked in those days. And they smoked up there. So that…I tend to get travel sick a bit. So I didn’t like going upstairs. But when I stated to smoke I’d to go upstairs too (laughs). It was cold up there. It was really cold. Then when they changed from the old trams. Brought in the new trams. They were much more streamlined. Much more enclosed. But they weren’t pleasant because people could still smoke upstairs and since the place wasn’t open it filtered down. And, I would think, even in the downstairs seats. They were all upholstered. There was this smell of nicotine. The whole place seemed impregnated with it. And on a wet day peoples wet coats and the smell of cigarettes it…People…in the winter particularly people were clad with so much…masses of clothes. It was really quite smelly… (laughs) .I mean you got used to it. That was the way it was.” | 1.44-3.27 |
| 5.32 | - Sometimes went to Glasgow Green to listen to piping competitions, and also to People’s Palace; mostly went into the city to shop.- Remembers several shops: Daly's Department Store (The Willow Tearoom, Sauchiehall Street), Copland & Lye, Pettigrew & Stephens. - Mum refused to shop at Watt Brothers – deemed to be inferior. |  |
|  | “When we did shopping. With my parents. Well, not Dad. Dad didn’t do things like that. But, we went up and down and Mother had favourite shops. And there was one called Daly’s in Sauchiehall Street, And Daly’s was, sort of, the crème de la crème. You… If you bought your things from Daly’s you tried to make sure that people could see the label (laughs). And then if you wanted not quite so posh you went to Copland & Lye. And that was pretty posh. And Pettigrew & Stephens. And that was still quite…They were all within moments of one another. Just almost next door. And so, there was another one called Watt Brothers. We didn’t shop in Watt Brothers. Ladies’ outfitters and Gentlemen’s outfitters. And, my mother would sometimes say-‘Yes, of course. She buys her clothes in Watt Brothers.’ Now, that was a right put down. (laughs) She preferred Daly’s.”  | 6.25-7.35 |
| 7.35 | - Describes Daly’s Store – luxurious; several counters and a tea room.- Describes Wendy’s café (West George Street) as a delight to children. |  |
|  | “Well, it was on the left hand side (Daly’s) and when you went in it was very opulent compared to the likes of Marks & Spencers. It was carpeted. And then there were lifts. And I seem to think that there was actually a lift chap. A lift man. I don’t think you went up yourself. Someone took you up. And you could go up the stairs. But, it was very lavish. And the models of clothes were much more upmarket than many other places. Furs and beautiful suits It gave you a real taste. You couldn’t always afford them. And, of course they didn’t do…I don’t think they did children’s clothes at all. I only went if I was going with my Mother and my Aunt. And I had another Aunt who loved good clothes. She was a single lady. And she would always take you up to go round Daly’s. And, of course, they had a jewellery counter, a perfume counter. And I don’t think I’ve ever seen anywhere quite so luxurious. Maybe because I was so young. And you could smell the lovely smells as you went in. And there was a tearoom where you went up in the lift. And I don’t know whether it was two floors up. It was certainly more than one. It was two floors. And very dainty afternoon tea, sandwiches and meringues and so on. All in dinky bites. You know. Little frilly cases for the meringues and so on. If your Aunt said-‘Would you like to go in to town?’ You always hoped she’d decide to go into Daly’s. And usually they did. Cause they knew I liked it.” | 7.38-9.33 |
|  | “But there was another place in West George Street. And there was another branch of it in Sauchiehall Street called Wendy’s. And Wendy’s…I can’t remember how we discovered Wendy’s but it was…downstairs was just a self-service like any other self-service. But, upstairs it was all done up in, sort of, floral things and pretty tablecloths. Pretty napkins. And in the corner there was a, sort of, thatched little cottage. And you could go in there if you were a child and there were little seats and Wendy’s… and Wendy and Peter Pan’s place. And of course whenever we went to town with my Mother-‘Oh, can we go to Wendy’s?’ And it was wonderful. Because there wasn’t much apart from places like Daly’s who plainly spent money everything thing was a bit utility. You didn’t…I mean most places were just a bit of Perspex or, you know, Melamine and nothing very exciting. And even the food wasn’t very exciting either. But, this place Wendy’s was just lovely and it was always the notion that if we went to town, Wendy’s would be on the list wherever else we were going. And it was relatively near to Queen Street Station. But, those were happy days. That was when I was really quite young. When you got… When you got older. When you were upper school and so on, said you were going to Wendy’s people were-‘Oh really? Really?’ (laughs) so, you didn’t go there any more.” | 9.33-11.27 |
| 11.45 | - Recalls attending evening classes at The Glasgow Athenaeum, including speech classes.- Attending theatre productions with gay students to gain free access.- Started stage management - Met lots of actors and celebrities: John Grieve, Wee Abe Barker, Duncan Macrae, Roddy McMillan, Una McLean |  |
|  | “No, the Athenaeum was a treat. And it had a wee theatre. A little theatre. And, the drama college, I was only there in the evenings. But the drama college full time students put on plays there. And I had made it my job to get to know some of these students. And a lot of them were men who were gay. And, of course, it was illegal in those days. And so they were only too delighted to find a few ladies who would go out without any hope of romantic attention. You weren’t looking for a boyfriend. You just wanted to get to The Citizens Theatre for nothing (laughs). So, a crowd of us would go there. To whatever the shows were in The Citizens Theatre. And you sat up in the gods. Wooden seats. No seats. Just wooden shelves to sit on. And you could see right down to the stage. But you could not only see the stage. You could see the bit behind the stage. You weren’t supposed to see. Oh dear, what laughs we had (laughs) Oh, dear, they were such more fun than the people at Jordanhill Training College. The lecturers there were pretty boring. A lot of them, I’ve said this before, a lot of them had come back from the war. And were perhaps not too keen to lecture to a lot of silly girls. Which we were. The drama college was much... the people in it were so keen to get on the stage that they worked…you know, there was no question of them playing up in class. And even the people in the evening classes…I went to production at one point. And after a bit the chap who turned out to be the principal of the college said to me-‘Excuse me, Katherine, I don’t think you’re cut out for production. And by this time I realised I wasn’t. So, he said-‘How do you fancy doing stage management?’ Oh I said-‘Yes, please. That’s fine.’ So, I did that and mime and voice and it was huge fun. It was a part of Glasgow that put you in touch with…I mean, I knew a lot of dancers but not very many actors. And that was a wonderful time. It really was…” | 13.52-16.31 |
| 19.30 | - Visited other theatres, often to watch pantomimes and plays, or to the cinema: Theatre Royal, Kings Theatre, Citizens Theatre, the Metropole. Theatres and cinemas very well attended during those days.- Kay performed at Theatre Royal – as Sir Peter Teazle. She ‘was awful’!- Cinemas: Regal, Odeon, Cosmo, and on Monday evenings, Kay’s father took her to watch Western movies at The Elephant in Shawlands. |  |
| 26.30 | - Preferred dancing: the Locarno, the Dennistoun Palais, the Barclay.- attended dance classes to learn the ballroom dances.- Highlanders’ Institute – country and highland dancing.- Clyde Valley Stompers – Ma Brown’s. - Queen Margaret Union, Men’s Union.- A non-complimentary painting of Jesus.- The Iona community café – often used by homeless people and social workers, etc.- Had a good time in Glasgow. |  |
|  | “I preferred going to dance things. There were a lot of good ballrooms. The ballrooms were terrific. They…The Locarno was in Sauchiehall Street. And it was very popular. You’d to queue to get into The Locarno. And it was quite difficult. You’d to find somebody to go with. You couldn’t really go a girl on your own. So, you’d to find one of your other girlfriends willing to go with you. And they weren’t all…They were very doubtful about going. Oh, the tales. They had been picked up and this, that and the other. You know. What if you missed the last tram? Well, you make sure you don’t miss the last tram. And, several at school. I mean I was still at school when I used to go first. And they would say-‘Well, how did you get on?’ I said-‘I got on fine.’ ‘But who? But you didn’t know anyone.’ I said-‘But, people just came up and asked you to dance.’ Most of my friends wouldn’t do that. Just wouldn’t do that. “ | 26.33-27.41 |
|  | “And then there was the Dennistoun Palais (laughs).The Dennistoun Palais was enormous. Absolutely enormous. I think, maybe the biggest place I’ve ever been in. And they…My father was a very good dancer. I don’t…I still don’t know when he learned to dance. Mother couldn’t dance at all. So, I had done all sorts of modern dance but not ballroom dancing. And I found myself once or twice, that I really couldn’t follow the people who asked me to dance. So, Dad taught me a bit. And then Faye McMeechan who was one of the Margaret Morris Movement people. The one with the khaki trousers tied up with string. She could do ballroom dancing. So, she didn’t wear the khaki trousers to go ballroom dancing. But, she and Dad and myself went to Dennistoun Palais two different Saturdays. Och, it was so funny. And, of course, Dad said-‘You go on, you go on.’ So, I’d to wait and see if someone asked me. And the others chatted. You see. So as not to make it seem as if I wasn’t to go dance. And I would set off. And it was so big that you barely got all the way back to where you started and the band hadn’t quite gone round the first round. It was enormous. Enormous. It’s not just my imagination. It was huge. And we went several times. And Dad would dance with Faye and sometimes with me. But, he was much shorter than me. I was quite tall then. And he was not. But, it didn’t bother him. And Mother wouldn’t have taken money and gone. And I mean, I must say, looking back, Father was quite good fun. And determined I would be able to dance.” | 27.42-29.50 |
|  | “And the place you all wanted to go to was the art school dances. Up at the art school. Up, off Sauchiehall Street. And they had a group called the Clyde Valley Stompers. The Clyde Valley Stompers were the…Everyone wanted to go there. But, you couldn’t go. Only if you were invited by an art student. So, you really had to find an art student. So, there was a restaurant, a café that was above…below a bakery. In a basement. Called, it was Brown’s Tearooms but it was always called Ma Brown’s. And, someone passed along the word that the art students tended to go there for their coffee. Where the teaching students went to Craig’s at the other end. So, I gave up going to Craig’s and started to go down to Ma Brown’s, and there me and a chap from the Highlands somewhere… Pretty well silent he was (laughs). He could dance but he wasn’t much of a speaker. And of course, you could see, I didn’t have a problem filling the gaps. And he…We would go. And then there was another chap. He did architecture. And, I have to say, that the chap who was an art student lost interest in me. I wasn’t really his type. And the other chap was better. And, so, that meant that every so often you got to go to the art college dances. Uh, and, I can hear it now. I don’t even have a record. Until recently I had a record of The Clyde Valley Stompers. But, I don’t know. I think it got scratched and it’s gone. That was the best.” | 32.00-34.01 |
| 38.00 | - Back to the shops: Woolworths and smaller shops such as Austin Reid (gents outfitters).- Mostly visited the large shops already mentioned.- Kay not from a religious family and she doesn’t really recall Christmas displays. |  |
|  | “And Daly’s, like I mentioned before. Had the most glamorous clothes. And you know how some shops, like the famous Watt Brothers, crammed everything they’d got in the window. So, it wouldn’t matter if it was nice or not. Well, Daly’s only had, like, one thing, and some flowers or two or a mum and daughter. And a little background. That, it was upmarket. But, most of the shops were quite ordinary. I don’t remember very many others at all.”  | 39.03-39.37 |
| 41.00 | - Doesn’t remember any particular characters but saw many homeless people on the streets, some begging, some sleeping in doorways.- Often walked down Bothwell Street at night after evening classes; later realised that she had been propositioned. |  |
|  | “When I was at Margaret Morris Movement in the evenings. When I went down to get the last train out to my parent’s house. I went down a street called Bothwell Street. And, that seemed to be a place that a lot of people slept in doorways. And, it was also a place of ladies of the night. And, of course, nobody told me. My parents were very naïve. They let me go and do things on my own that you wouldn’t even dream of nowadays. I was allowed to wander about Glasgow at night unsupported. And at one point I said to one of the teachers- ‘I’m away now. Are you coming? Are you going my way?’ And she said-‘Which way are you going.’ I said-‘I’m going down Bothwell Street.’ She said-‘You can’t go down Bothwell Street on your own!’ I said-‘I’ve been going down Bothwell Street for ages on my own.’ She said-‘But, have you not noticed?’ I said-‘Sorry?’ I was dead innocent. My Mother had never prepared me. And she said-‘Does anyone ever stop the car and offer you a lift. I said-‘Funny you should say that…funny you should say that. Several people have done that.’ And I said..she said-‘What did you say?’ ‘I said, no, I’m just going to Central Station.’(laughs). I wore 3 inch heels and my hair on top of my head in a bundle and a lot of lipstick (laughs). I could have had another career altogether (laughs). I was not to go that way anymore. In fact, I think this girl insisted on taking me to the train for a few weeks. I thought they were just being kind. I was so innocent. And nobody at home had prepared me…” | 42.25-44.38 |
| 45.15 | - regularly visited Collets book shop with her father; they then had lunch at the Ca' D'Oro restaurant. They were vegetarian at home but often ordered steak pie; they did not tell Kay’s mum this.- Had good times with her father. |  |
|  | “Well. One of the things we did when we lived in Coatbridge. This was way at the beginning of this. This would be in the ‘40s. Just towards the end of the war. And my Father had started a school library in his school. And he was a history teacher but he’d opened this big school library. And, in order to get books for it. To buy suitable titles and so on. We came into…on the bus to Glasgow. To the middle of Glasgow. Where beside the Central Station. Just, sort of, almost under the Central Station. There was a book shop called, I think, Collets book shop. And this was where he bought a lot of books for the schools. And I always got to choose a book for me while he was choosing. Then we went across the road to a place called the Ca’D’Oro which had a restaurant. It must have been a baker and grocery down below. The fabulous grocery things that we never bought. But, upstairs was this restaurant. And, we always had lunch. And, we were vegetarians at home. My Mother was a vegetarian. So were we. So, he would say to me-‘What do you fancy?’ I would say-‘Steak pie.’ And he would say-‘Steak pie.’ So, we’d have this steak pie. Thoroughly enjoyed every morsel of it. And when we got home my Mother’s very tactful. She said-‘Did you have a nice lunch?’ She knew fine not to ask us (laughs). But, that was another place the Ca’D’Oro, it was a nice…sort of, in between. It wasn’t posh, as it were. But neither was it a sort of melamine counter. It was really nice. Proper cloths and so on. That was a regular Saturday trip.” | 45.16-47.21 |
| 48.16 | - Kelvin Grove Park and the Kibble Palace; pub on Byers Road named The Curlers – a student pub. Dined at The Ubiquitous Chip as a big treat.- Lots of tiny boutiques near Glasgow University. |  |
| 51.20 | - Favourite memory of postwar Glasgow during that time: dance. The dance community was confident and Kay enjoyed the social life. |  |
| 55.30 | - Kay’s memories very much centred around dance- she does recall the Orange Walks in Glasgow – had a wee run in with a walker.- Glaswegians love to dance.- Kay’s dance clothing – skirts, a blixy (leotard), and high heels. |  |
|  | “I do remember the orange walk. The orange walk, now that was a thing. Now, we didn’t necessarily go especially to see it but on more than one occasion I was coming out the Queen Street Station and I was to meet a friend. And the orange walk was just going past the bottom. The friend was on the other side of the road. And she couldn’t see me. And you could see her…So, I waved to her, you see and she still looked baffled. So, I thought, och, I’ll wait till there’s a wee gap. And I nipped across. Well, you don’t. I don’t know if you know much about the orange walk. But, you do not interrupt the orange walk. And two great big, hulking chaps came forward threatening me. I said-‘Hmm, hmm.’ So, they went away again. (she put her fist up at them and carried on walking). Yeah, my friend was pale by the time I reached there. It was quite a long crossing. Just outside Queen Street Station and she said-‘Kay, Kay! What are we going to do with you?’ I said-‘Well, you looked as if you couldn’t see where I was.’ She said- ‘neither I could.” | 55.41-56.59 |
|  | Interviewer thanks the respondent for her contribution to the project. |  |
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