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| **Project: ‘Glasgow’s Highstreets: An oral history…’**  Respondent: Norman McNamee  Year of Birth: 1945  Age:  Connection to project: Respondent  Date of Interview: 11th of August 2023 Interviewer: Will Syson  Recording Agreement: Yes  Information & Consent: Yes  Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 108 )  Length of Interview: 1 hour, 26 minutes and 1 second.  Location of Interview: Norman’s house in Rutherglen  Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics) | | **Glasgow Story Collective** | |
| Time  (from: mins/secs) | Description | | Transcribed Extract  (from- to:  mins/secs) |
| 0.35 | Interviewer asks the respondent during which era he first remembers Glasgow’s Highstreets. | |  |
| 0.40 | Remembers Sauchiehall Street, Buchanan Street. Renfield Street busy. Argyle Street, Trongate. Merchant city lots of shops. | |  |
|  | “I do remember under the Hielanman’s Umbrella there was a place called The Clyde Model Dockyard. And this was all your toys, model railway sets etc, etc. Not that you could afford them but you loved looking at the window. Window shopping costs nothing. Lewis’s was another big shop that was there. It was good to go there. The record shops…Listen to all the latest records. And maybe buy them. ” | | 1.33-2.06 |
| 2.27 | Interviewer asks the respondent where he grew up. | |  |
| 2.29 | Grew up in Milton. First came to Glasgow in 1946 to stay with his gran in Springburn. | |  |
| 2.50 | Interviewer asks the respondent if he has any memories of the high streets in Springburn. | |  |
| 2.53 | In the 1950s Springburn was a busy place. Springburn Rd had Sellyn’s and Lots of pubs. Swimming baths, his school, sweet shops that sold penny gobstoppers. Was dingy but they didn’t know. Lived in single end with an outside toilet but you never thought of it. It was just where you lived. People say Glasgow is dirty now but people make it dirty. People didn’t litter then. | |  |
| 4.43 | Interviewer asks the respondent for his memories of Springburn. | |  |
| 4.47 | Went to primary and secondary school there. | |  |
| 5.15 | Interviewer asks the respondent if he ever went into the centre of town when he was younger. | |  |
| 5.30 | Father took him to a chip shop called the Savoy at the top of Renfield Street and Hope Street called the Savoy next to the Savoy Cinema which was next to The Majestic dancing now the Sauchiehall Centre. | |  |
| 6.03 | Interviewer asks the respondent if he ever went to the cinema. | |  |
| 6.05 | Went to La Scala, The Odeon, The Gaumont. Went to local cinema The Vogue in Possilpark. The Avon. A Cinema in Bishopbriggs as well. The Kenmure cinema. Went to cinemas in town as he got older. Went to the dancing met his wife in The Barrowlands. | |  |
|  | “The Barrowland was great. I was not a dancer. I went there on a Saturday night with guys. And that was the first time there. And I never asked anybody to dance. I’m only seventeen. Whoa, never been to the dancing. And it so happened that my pal said-‘We’ll go up there on Boxing Day.’ A few days later and the rest is history. And I’d still…I’d still not asked anybody to dance. And I’m standing beside girls. And my pal came up and said-‘There’s three lassies here. I’ll get the one on the far away and you get the one in the middle. Now I could only see the one that was next to me, that just happened to be my wife’s twin sister. So, I’m going up. This girl could have been like somebody out of Still Game. Edna, for all I knew. And I asked her to dance. She looked me up and down. So, she’s checking for the collar and tie. The hankie in the pocket and the clean shoes she told me later on. And the rest is history. So we’ve been together ever since.” | | 7.08-8.16 |
|  | “Daly’s was a department store. Quality…quality…I think I was buying something for my wife’s Christmas. And I thought…It’s still the days before tights. So they wore stockings. So, I’ll buy her suspenders. A set of suspenders. And I went up there. Told the lady what I want and she put them round herself. I think she was yanking my chain, you know. She knew I was uncomfortable. I bought them anyway.” | | 10.34-11.06 |
| 11.34 | Bought G Plan furniture in a quality furniture shop. Mentions What Every Woman Wants. Merchant city changed now. Student accommodation etc. | |  |
|  | “The other thing…I was a cyclist as well. So, cycle shops were very popular to go and visit. To get your spare parts and things like that. But, the only two cycle shops that were near town were Dale’s and Forest’s [?] where I got…My dad bought my first bike. I was starting work and I had a Flying Scot which was a good make but it was an old one. And he bought me a brand new Claud Butler. With the five speed [?] gears. Top of the range. Twenty eight pound., 1960. Twenty pound was a lot of money…He died when he was forty eight. 1965 I think. I was twenty. He was only earning…He was a foreman in a distiller’s company and he was earning seventeen pound a week. He was a foreman. So, he bought this bike and paid it up for me. Because I was going to work.” | | 13.15-14.17 |
| 15.46 | Interviewer asks the respondent if his experience with Glasgow’s high streets changed in any way when he became a teenager. | |  |
|  | “Esquires. That’s where they sold the casual shirts and things like that. That was a place. You saved your money up and bought a shirt. You’ve got to keep yourself smart. No tee shirts or anything like that in those days.” | | 16.05-16.40 |
| 17.43 | Interviewer asks the respondent when he started to experience the night life. | |  |
|  | “I don’t think I experienced it until I met my wife. So, she would want to go to…Not nightclubs but a dancing club. Cause there was one down on the Clydeside. It’s demolished now. The Elizabethan. We went to that. They brought in local groups. Some of them went on to do some good for themselves. The Beatstalkers and I’m sure Alex Harvey was in this club as well….I don’t think I was married so you’re still talking about in the sixties. In the sixties. But, nightlife no. Didn’t go to fancy restaurants or anything like that. We didn’t have the money.” | | 17.50-18.59 |
| 19.33 | Cafes that didn’t serve drink. Orange juice and Bovril served. You’d have that and a biscuit and nurse it all night. No coffee shops. There was a Wimpy. Only likes the coffee in a café in Princes Square now .Mentions Jackson’s Doghouse as a good pub. | |  |
|  | “I mean Sunday. Sunday Glasgow was dead. There was nothing to do. The pubs weren’t open. The picture halls if they were opened would show old films. So, Glasgow…It’s more lively now than what it’s ever been. I mean the pubs…When I first started working the pubs shut at nine o clock.” | | 20.47-21.11 |
| 22.30 | Talks about going out for New Year and having first illegal drink when his dad gave him a bottle of whisky to take to the party. Some pubs were dumps. A pint of light or a pint of music. No music. | |  |
| 23.43 | Interviewer asks the respondent if pubs then were a lot different to what they are now. | |  |
|  | “Oh aye. Some of them were dumps. It would be nothing… you know…A pint of heavy or a pint of light. Maybe a lager. Not the same selection you’ve got now. No music…No music until…maybe into the sixties it started. Cause we…My wife Ann told us to go to Duke Street. The Overdale Bar. And there was two guys called The Halos playing music there. So, we went Friday night or a Saturday night. And they were really good. And it was great music in a pub. So, before that there was nothing. In many ways it’s changed for the better. You’ve got music. Other pubs have big bands and things like that. It’s livened up. It’s a great place. Seen better days. But it’s changing all the time.” | | 23.47-24.52 |
| 24.53 | Interviewer asks the respondent if it was a nice environment in pubs at that time or not. | |  |
| 24.58 | Mentions gangs. The Milton tongs. He didn’t have anything to do with them. Night buses could be a bit hairy. Thinks Glasgow is a better place now. Likes Wetherspoon’s now as it has real ales. | |  |
| 26.17 | Interviewer asks about the respondent’s job as a template maker and structural engineer. | |  |
| 26.30 | Respondent describes how he got his job and his job at A. & J. Mains. Talks a bit about the Catholic/Protestant divide at work. Went to Baird’s of Anniesland. Was a carpenter. Went to Lambhill engineering. Went to Babcock’s in Renfrew. Then was a concierge in The Gorbals. Lived in Scotston. Talks about moving to East Kilbride. Then to King’s Park. | |  |
| 45.00 | Interviewer asks the respondent if he remembers any key events happening on the streets of Glasgow. | |  |
| 45.13 | Remembers a charity event for the homeless in the 1980s. On Glasgow Green where he took photos .He’d started taking photos then. Sheena Easton was there and was booed. Thinks things are better for events now there is The Concert Hall and The SEC etc. mentions the Apollo but never went. | |  |
| 48.38 | Interviewer asks the respondent if the high streets have changed. | |  |
| 48.47 | Thinks the quality shops have gone. Thinks that some things have changed for the good and others haven’t. Some shops in the Trongate he doesn’t remember being open. Thinks The Trongate is getting the facelift it needed. Likes The Merchant City. Doesn’t think it’s changed much. Was the old Fruitmarket with a few pubs around. Not really a place to go at night. Mentions the Merchant City Festival. | |  |
| 55.20 | Interviewer asks the respondent what he thinks caused the changes in the high streets. | |  |
| 55.32 | Thinks maybe not from the beginning but buying from Amazon and online is a factor. Covid doesn’t help. Did get a camera that was cheaper at the camera shop than on Amazon. Rates too high but councils have to get money somehow. | |  |
| 59.10 | Interviewer asks the respondent when and why he started taking photos of Glasgow. | |  |
| 59.15 | Got a Halina Camera in the 1980s point and shoot. Took some shots going home. Was getting black and white shots blown up and was told that he’d need to get a better camera. Got an Olympus OM10 at Merchant City Cameras (was Quiggs) and never looked back. Talks about his camera journey. | |  |
|  | “But the thing is good… If I need to answer a question. Help with my camera. I’ve bought it from them. ‘Come back here anytime. We’ll help you with your camera.’ Cause I bought it from them. And I’ve been going to them for years. The shop’s still there. It was called Quigg’s at the time. It’s in Parnie Street. Just off The Trongate. It’s Merchant City Cameras now. And they’ve been there for years under two names, So, I’ve been going there for a long time It was a wee guy that was a photographer. He used to develop my stuff…I had an Olympus….It was when we went digital. He said-‘Photograph the street names. It will cost you nothing.’ It’s been a godsend. Aye, so, that’s Glasgow for you.” | | 1.01.50-1.02.52 |
| 1.02.54 | Says every town in the UK has the same problem with shops closing. Talks about BHS building and how that is still empty. Mentions church and low level shop that used to be there. | |  |
| 1.03.56 | Interviewer asks the respondent what changes if any he’d like to see to the high streets. | |  |
|  | “Getting rid of the empty shops. Getting them full, you know. And if the rates are too dear it’s not going to happen. But, ehm, pull things down and put things up. I’m quite happy to take…Keeps me busy. I’ll follow it from it from demolish…demolition to completion. So, that’s kept me. I’ve got thousands of photographs. So that’s kept me…I’ve got thousands of photographs. As I say. I photographed the tenements while they were still standing….And then I done…I done all the areas that had red sandstone tenements or old tenements or old buildings. And what I should of concentrated on, which I didn’t was the factories that were there. I went no, no. missed a lot. And now if I see it. If I think about taking it. Take it. Cause it’ll not be there. So, I’ve missed a few things. So, what’s coming down and what’s going up. That’s my theme now. Some folk don’t like it. Hey ho. That’s the way Glasgow’s going.” | | 1.04.05-1.05.08 |
| 1.06.50 | “I’d a wee part time job there as a lift boy. In The Christian Institute (Bothwell Street). Well, the Christian Institute. Christian things. And they’d halls to let out for other things. Chess clubs etc etc etc. So, I’d to take the people up and down in the lift. Hand operated.” | |  |
| 1.09.50 | Went to a wedding that didn’t happen in a big church on West Nile Street. There were good restaurants there. Sauchiehall St not the same. Buchanan Street just about the same apart from the building they pulled down to build the underground station. Photographed theatres and cinemas. | |  |
| 1.13.10 | Interviewer asks the respondent about Glasgow’s cinemas. | |  |
| 1.13.15 | He liked the old cinemas as they were ornate. Likes the new ones too as more space. | |  |
|  | “I’ve not been there for years. We used to go there when we were younger to see Monsieur Hulot’s Holiday. All in French and in subtitles. It was only the one screen then. Now it’s three. I still like the GFT. But I never think to say-What’s on at The GFT? It’s got a bar as well now. Which is very civilised. I like the GFT.” | | 1.16.14-1.16.33 |
|  | Interviewer thanks the respondent very much for his contribution to the project. | |  |
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