

'Glasgow's Highstreets: An oral history of stores, shopping and spectacles.'
Oral History Questionnaire

- My name: Christine McIntosh
- Date: 18 May 2023
- Born: 1945, Glasgow - Redlands Hospital for Women
- Now live in: Dunoon, Argyll

- **Highstreets in General**
- **Early memory:** end of 1940s, certainly 1950 onwards
- Remember the perceived danger of crossing roads in the city, in particular Sauchiehall Street, crowded with trams, horses pulling carts, fewer cars than now, buses. My father, gripping my small hand very tightly, leading me under the noses of horses and telling me that it was much safer than going behind a horse, though most of them were between the shafts of a cart (coal, rag&bone ...) The horses, mild-eyed with blinkers on, and nosebags in which they snuffled as they waited, presumably for the lights to change. Being sick on the tram if we went any further into town than Sauchiehall Street (travelling in from Hyndland, west end)

- **Properties:** I remember mainly the large stores - Trèrons, Marks & Spencer, Pettigrew and Stephens, Wylie & Lochhead (in Buchanan Street and therefore special!), big cinemas (Green's Playhouse, the Gaumont, the Regent, The Cosmo ... and Wendy's tearoom!

- **Regularly visited:** My mother liked to go to shops like Trèrons and Pettigrew's, not always to shop but sometimes to go to a mannequin parade, which I remember taking place in a tearoom in the shop, and noticing a lady in a hat with a wee veil lifting her veil to drink "Russian Tea" - tea served without milk in a tall glass with lemon and a long spoon, which I thought impossibly glamorous. My father was devoted to Crockett's Ironmonger, which was in one of the streets running down off Sauchiehall Street. We got underwear from M&S and our school uniforms from Paisley's, because the blazers were better quality. Sometimes we went to see a big movie in one of the town centre cinemas (my first adult movie was "The African Queen"; usually my father would take me to the Children's Cosmo on a Saturday morning as a treat (mostly cartoons). We went to tearooms like Wendy's ...

- **High Street processions** - only remember seeing an Orange Walk, and my parents taking care to avoid it once we got off the tram. I once joined a CND march with a friend whose father was the head of Glasgow CID - a spur of the moment thing the day after the St Andrew's Halls burned down. She got a terrific row from her dad ...
- The Carnival to me was always the roundabouts and so on that moved into the Kelvin Hall over Christmas and was a big thrill of the year.
- I remember going into town to see the Christmas lights the first year they were up in the streets - George Square, Buchanan Street and Sauchiehall Street. (We finished up in a Wendy's having High Tea - fish and chips and peas, with bread and butter and a cup of tea!) Before that, the main attraction was the windows of the big stores like Wylie & Lochhead's, which always had amazing scenes taking up the whole window.

Shop names:

- Trèron's in Sauchiehall Street (Gold lettering on a red background) - tearoom, posh clothes, tearoom, mannequin parades, waitresses in black with frilly wee aprons and hats)
- Marks and Spencer (white marble exterior)
- Wylie & Lochhead (sweeping staircase splitting to gallery above; smells of women's perfume)
- Ceylon Tea Centre, Buchanan Street (early 60s, remember strong tea, sophisticated salads, feeling grown up - I was in early teens - foreign smells)
- The Buttercup in Hyndland Road (a local shop where I was sent to buy biscuits and such like, had green tiles in entry with a bas-relief flower, presumably a buttercup; woman behind counter always said "Thank you kindly" ...

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- Pettigrew & Stephen - tearoom, mannequin parades, waitresses in black etc. (see above)
- Byres Road had some bigger shops and was on my way home from school - I really only used the Grosvenor Café and the Grosvenor Cinema, though I once went out with the now-husband and another couple for a meal in The Curlers.
- The Rubaiyat (spelling? Always referred to as "the Rub") was a favourite haunt when I was at university.
- General note: posh tearooms always had cake stands and there was always one cake that I wanted (chocolate case filled with fawn swirl of creamy stuff over a sponge on jam, topped with chocolate button) and French Cakes (coloured icing, always sponge/jam/creamy stuff combo) as well as pancakes and scones.

Mostly don't recall exteriors - I was small!

(Page 2 questions - it's harder to do this written than orally!)

- Don't recall **music** other than at a mannequin parade.
- Don't remember **changing rooms**, though they must've been some.
- I had my first ever hair cut in a **department store hairdresser** in Buchanan Street, I think - don't recall which. I was 10 and had pigtails, so it was a bit of a shock.
- Don't remember much about **staff** except that they were mostly female and wore black dresses and were uniformly polite. (But maybe that was my mother's effect ...)
- **Home delivery**: our grocer's delivered via a boy on a bike with a big basket - to a top flat, without bringing the bike ... Father's stiff collars were delivered in a stiff cardboard box from Collars Ltd., to whom they were returned for laundering.
- **Cash carriers**: The city centre big shops already mentioned had these - brass cylinders with rubber (?) round the top and bottom and a sliding door in the middle, whizzing above counters in 'hydraulically?' powered tubes.
- **Shoe fitters** measured your feet AND looked at them in X-Ray machines which had three eyepieces to look through - one for the fitter, one for mum, one for me! I remember the look of the skeletal feet and the dark lines of the stitching on a pair of school shoes - they looked like wee nails.
- **Christmas** especially in the big shops - window displays, huge sleighs and trees indoors. I think we once went to see Santa - there was a photo in the Bulletin (newspaper) of my sister sitting on Santa's knee and me standing in my school uniform beside him. Associate these memories only with, I think, Wyllie & Lochhead.
- **Working**
 - I never worked in the high street, not even as a teenager (early 60s) as my parents thought teenagers needed time rather than money. I became a teacher, taught for 6 years in Woodside Secondary and Hillhead High (my old school) and then had to stop as jobs weren't kept while you went on maternity leave. Moved to Dunoon 1974. My first year's pay as a teacher of English was £965.00.
 - I worked for Glasgow Corporation Education Department.
 - I had a year's post-graduate teacher training at Jordanhill College after an MA degree at Glasgow University.
 - I enjoyed my work in an initially anxious sort of way and got much better at it as I went on.
 - I didn't enjoy belting miscreants, but it was accepted as a means of discipline, so I did it well and infrequently.
 - The only person I've had any contact with from my first job is Johann Lamont, the former leader of the Labour Party in the Scottish Parliament. I taught her English and Latin.
 - I joined the EIS (teaching union) and later the SSTA.
 - When I look back after many more years as a teacher, I think I became a very much better teacher with age and children of my own.
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- **Night-time**

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- I wasn't allowed to go into the city centre at night alone until my mid-teens, and then usually to a cinema in a main thoroughfare like Sauchiehall Street. (My first parent-free movie was when I was 12 and went with my school pals to see Elvis in King Creole at the Grosvenor in Byres Road)
- When I was at school, I had to be home by 10pm. I went to a few dances at the Roger McEwan school of dancing, where I attended ballroom dancing classes after school on a Wednesday all through my third year (aged 15).
- Went to the odd youth-club dance with friends (wasn't in a youth club myself)
- When the Blue trains (electric suburban) came in I was 15 and they were considered a good, safe way to travel in the evening, as the nearest station was 5 minutes' walk from our house.
- I remember waiting for a bus after a concert in the St Andrew's Halls with friends (aged c 16) and being approached by some US Navy ratings (in uniform) to see if we "knew any hotspots in this town" and did we want to join them.... We said no, our parents wouldn't approve!
- After the St Andrew's Halls burned down, I had to go to concerts in the Anderston Concert Hall which meant walking down from the station at Charing Cross to Anderston Cross, alone, about 6.45pm, to meet friends there. I found that scary. I always had people with me on the way home (about 10pm)
- I hated being accosted by drunks in the station at Queen Street when I was going home after coming back from Edinburgh - I was older, had a boyfriend in Edinburgh who is still my husband.

Changes over time

- I'm not often in Glasgow these days but have suddenly become aware of the post-pandemic closure of shops that has accelerated the decline since the heyday of in-person shopping of my youth.
- Sauchiehall Street has become very much downgraded as a shopping street.
- Even Buchanan Street has fewer shops, and some have moved to smaller premises.
- Cinemas have vanished - the one at Anniesland Cross is now apartments.
- There is a far greater variety of eating places.
- Changes brought about by:
 - growth of out-of-town shopping centres with massive car parks
 - Mail-order shopping (a 70s phenomenon?)
 - Online shopping
 - Inadequate car parking
 - Cars themselves.
- I find most urban environments quite depressing these days - Edinburgh is redeemed only up to a point by tourism, but apart from restaurants the shopping experience isn't what it was.
- I hear Buchanan Galleries is too close - I can't imagine what will happen to that area it used to enliven.
- To be fair, even small town shopping streets are depressingly vacated by all but supermarkets.