

Romany Theatre Company

Atching Tan Project

**Reminiscence Interview – Transcription of Edited Interview**

Date of Interview	Interviewer	Interviewee	Age Range of Interviewee	Duration of Edited Recording
1-5-09	Sarah	Dean	30-40	00:26:13

Key timing	Initial of person speaking	Transcription of Interview
00:00	Dean	<p>When I was young I used to move around. Used to do lots of field work, tree work as well plum picking and stuff like that as well. When I was really young before I was 14 I suppose was to do strawberry picking 'tata picking and plum picking and sometimes we used to do onions as well but not very often. But err we started... some of my earliest memories of work are from 7 year old. That was very light work it wasn't hard. The least important work to be done I would do They showed it to me. They showed me how to do it. And then I remember one of my first job was tying bags from 'tata picking they used to have a tie on like a wire and you used to have to wrench it to pull the bag tight and that was my job when I was about 7. It was very difficult to do to start with you know because I was so young I never had no real muscle in me arm and it did take a bit of effort to take it and pull it. It was the most natural thing in the world to me. Erm I bin in the field all the time and I was itching to work anyway I wanted to do something rather than just sit about. Even at 7 years old you know you still get very, very bored if you just have to sit in a car or sit round the car away from the tractors and machinery and stuff like that they... they wouldn't really let you walk up and down the field and you were really bored if you wasn't doing something so it was more of a pleasure to do it. Used to live in trailers or caravans as some people call it they were usually 22 to 24 foot long err sometimes we'd have a tourer. In fact most of the time from when I was about from about 5 upwards we had a tourer as well because I have 3 sisters and they had to have a place of their own err so the rest of the family used to sleep up in the big trailer in different beds and the girls would to sleep in the tourer.</p> <p>Sometimes used to travel right out of East Anglia Used to go to jersey sometimes channel islands err that was every year until I was about 15 with the exception of a couple of years when my dad had an acc... a real bad accident and he had to have a couple of years off from the job Umm but as far back as I can remember In fact before I was born they were going. So it just goes to show that Up until 15 years old I was there almost every year And I went back later when I was 19 Id just got married and it was like going back to me childhood again it really was.</p> <p>I was born in 1971 and I can remember the latter end of the seventies you know 78 79 somewhere around there if I really want to thing back I can go back further but... But my main time I would say was the eighties that's when I was when I started to get my independence and erm and I was growing up then I could go round on me own I used to go up and down town on me own when I was 11 years old and go to the cinema and that and go and watch a film over at Peterborough when I was 11 so, you know, times have changed a lot.</p> <p>It's the difference between black and white from field work where we used to do field work all the time apart from the winter when we would go out me and me dad scrap carting and later on we used to do the trees and things like that but that was only the winter. In the summer time we was always from the April until October November time we used to be solidly in the fields always in the fields doing one thing or another it wasn't very often that we wasn't. But now there's just nothing none of that kind of work at all. It doesn't exist anymore. You've either got emm foreign people you know got in and before that was students that used to go and they do the job cheaper I suppose err or they can get live on their premises and that and they can pay them a lot less. A lot</p>

more people do that. So yeah it is a very different world now I mean I never dreamed I'd be doing what I'm doing. I'm a lorry driver now and I didn't think I'd ever do that. I just thought that what we doing then we would still be doing basically until the day I died. If you don't know any different I don't think you just don't get something you know you don't expand your mind or anything you don't really it seems you've got no business thinking your anybody else because this is who you are this is what you are accept it or you know be unhappy And you know We was never unhappy we were always happy. I wouldn't change what I am or what I've done for anything I like the experiences I've bin through. There used to be these big get togethers. I mean there's still a few now, there's because of a lot of gypsy people have become Christians and they have conventions and missions and that's replaced them to a certain extent the meeting places and what people who there's still Appleby and the horse fairs there's still that sort of thing and a lot of people still go. But there used to be an even tighter group a way of being and of living because you'd go to one place and you'd work and then you'd go to another place and you'd work. You'd be with different people, you know. This place you'd see these people, this group of people, that time of year. You'd come away and you'd see a different group of people at a different time of year and that's how you'd... that's how it worked you know. We used to go to Wisbech and that was a huge meeting place for travellers and loads of travellers used to go there because of the fruit picking and there used to be lots of mixing and you know you'd have your weddings and things like that going on there because of sheer weight of numbers and that's the time of year when people would get married because there's lots of people about and so they'd have a big wedding or you'd just meet and you'd meet up in town. You'd see hundreds of groups of travellers just meeting up in towns. And, but that's all gone because people now are settled. Some are settled wherever, Norwich or Peterborough Cambridge Bedford all over because people used to come from all over to come to that specific place to work and they'd bring all that experience with them and you'd interchange it you'd learn what they'd been doing and they'd learn what you'd bin doing and it made for a much richer culture to be honest and you had more friends than you'd realise because people were you know children you'd see some children at certain time of year all the year round and even now it still makes a difference now because you still see people now and your still friends and you know you'll still walk up to each other you still shake hands and you still have a good chat But that's slowly going because we're really the last generation this happened with. Now the next generation its not the same. I suppose the only positive is the education. You're far more settle so your children can go to school. We never we went to school err wintertime wed go for perhaps 3 or 4 months if we were lucky. The other 8 months 8 and a half months or whatever it may be you'd be working and you'd loose all that. You know Some children would learn to read, write then they'd do all sorts of things as school and they'd learnt all that but in the 8 9 months that they were away from school they'd lose all that it was gone But on the negative side you've lost half the culture, half the culture just isn't there any more and the children don't meet with the other children anymore you know so they'll not know people from most of the other counties around they just wont know them and if they're going to get know them they're going to have to go to these other sort of meeting places and we don't often go to.

I miss the fieldwork hard though it was err I miss it. It's like a ache inside for me. A lot of people would say you're very you know your very silly because who'd want to keep doing that sort of work well I would to be quite honest with you I dint think I ever would I said If I ever got out of the fields that would be the best day ... thing that would ever happen to me but its not It's the worst thing that ever happened to me and I didn't realise it. It's a job it's some thing that I do erm I don't often get to meet the kind of people that I want to meet the kind of people that I meeting before say that I enjoyed meeting So that way not really but there's a lot of truck drivers now that are gypsy people so I have met a few and its nice to meet your own kind again in a different sort of job so I suppose its evolving in a way maybe that will be the new way of discovering them because I've heard lots of young people say that they want to be truck drivers because they want to be out and about they want to see daylight and the air.

<p>10.24</p>	<p>Sarah Dean Sarah</p>	<p>Did you and your family face racism when you were growing up? Yeah, Yeah Phwer Yeah, quite a lot What form did it take? Oh Phwer um You'd be called dirty gypsies or we don't want you 'ere you know even if you went to school you'd have the older children picking on you maybe sort of trying if you're on your own though you didn't stand a chance and I was on me own quite a bit err so yeah we did suffer a lot through racism. Err They didn't want us in the pubs well when I got a bit older I didn't realise that when I was younger but when I got a little bit older I was so shocked to see some of the things that I ... that... that... that come my way I suppose when I first... I suppose you have kind of a knowledge from a very young age really because people treat you different Its jus the way it is but I would say the first real shocking racist thing that I saw was when I was 12 or 13 well I was with some boys and we wasn't allowed to go in the pub but on the door... on the door and Ill never forget it on the door it was written 'No dogs, No gypsies. You know and that stuck in my mind for quite a long time and I said they cant do that surely it happens everywhere, this happens everywhere Do you still face racism you and your family? Erm sometimes its rarer now for us err but yeah we're always, we'll never not her but.... where we live now we'll never be nothing but the gypsies in the village you know They know what I am because I won't hide what I am you know some people will try and blend with the background I wont do that I'm proud of what I am that's who I am that's what runs through my veins that's what I was when I was a child that's what Ill be when I die. So I will always be that person and I wont hide it I'm not ashamed of it. Now it's a bit more subtle now because the law does protect you a bit but your still mainly shunned I would say you get ignored or you don't... you know there's are people in the village which do talk to me they're nice people but they'll never be the kind of people who'll invite you round for a cup of tea or something like that there you know there's a few like that there. Theyre nice people but theres always that barrier. Theres always gonna be that barrier. I mean its not always their fault, I suppose its partly my fault as well because its just the culture we are in. Its just the way be are the way we live. They don't discriminate with the children which is good. Err I mean when I was a child they wouldn't let their children play with us. It was just not going to happen and in some places it still happens where's theres big groups of travellers and gypsies and that. It still happens because people are a bit frightened of travellers. Theres no real reason to be, its just the way it is. But no for my children theres none of that at all. None at all and they do know what they are and other people know what they are as well. I think some of the stereo types are being broken down slowly. I mean things like theres more gypsies and travellers on television a bit more there was the radio programme that used to come out. That opens up a little bit. You don't realise how much that helps. Err and people start to understand you're not all ogres, not all out for a fight and not all out to take somebodys property of them and theres a few but theres a few in everywhere. Because the children are growing up more in touch with the other side sort of thing; I say the other side it's the wrong thing to say I suppose but it's the only way to explain it. We lived in a culture of them and us so the them and us culture is dissolving a bit with the younger generation. Because some are still not let to go to school that still exists there buts its slowly being broken down and that can only be a good thing, but theres also negatives with that as well, because they mingle with a culture that sometimes we disapprove with. A lot of gypsy people disapprove of some of the practices of non gypsies err you know particularly the children. W like very structured lived with our children, Theres boundaries, children know when they can say some things and when they cant it seems I am not entirely disparaging it its just a difference of culture. My daughter Ill take for instance my daughter she's 17 shes got friends in the village who are gorger people (she's got some traveller people but mostly gorger people) and its some of the things they get up to theyre allowed out until all hours. We wont allow that we wont allow our children out that late. They cheek their parents something incredible we wont allow that in fact that's really a big no no theres got to be respect and respect is what we teach and respect is not what other people teach. Sometimes even the</p>
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16:52	<p>shouldnt even teach that. They try to discipline and bring discipline where they cant because theyre not doing it theyre not in breeding the discipline in the first place you know. I've had people comment that weve got incredibly polite children, well sometimes I don't think that's the case because I see it differently you know, but I know theyre more polite and more respectful than other peoples.</p> <p>When I was about 15 or 16 I began to look at it. I wanted to know what things meant and I couldnt read a word, I honestly couldn't. I mean there was times when I had a job to read 3 letter words at the time. I went to school, so I know what some of them were and then I had to build on that and I ended up getting these little books that you get with the cassette that used to come with them and I used to listen to the cassette because I was so bored where I lived I used to have nothing so I used to have these tapes and for about a year I just listened to them. I just listened to the stories and then when I was about 16 I looked at it and I thought and I started counting how many words there were on the page to how many words that were being said you know by the speaker and I realised that they were the same amount so the conclusion was he was saying word for work and then you turn the page and hes saying word for word again so I could learn the bigger words because he was saying the bigger words and I could recognise them. That's how I started to read and just one leap after another after that until I got to about 17 18 and then I started reading bits and bobs in the paper erm certain passaged in the bible, my mothers bible, so I read a few passages in that and when I was 19 when I got married, I only just got married I was I read my furst book it was a Stephn King novel, The Tommyknockers and that took me 10 weeks to do, but I did it. I enjoyed that so much I never stopped reading. Although it was tough and hard work to do sometimes and some of the words you just really had to piece them together really slowly but once I got there and I got the gist of what a word should be or what was following then I could practically anticipate what was going to be said, so yeah I started doing that and now often read and I can write so yeah its been a really hard experience but a good experience. Wish Id have went to school now think educations probably the best thing for any child any young adult yeah. I just didn't see it as relevant. I didn't see it as a need. At the time we were still working in the fields and to be quite honest people used to say and I used to believe it and I used to think it myself is what do I need to read and write for when all I do is pick up potatoes, what education do I need to put a potato in a basket and put it in a box. You only need to be able to count, which we did. We knew how to count, we knew how to count since we was 2 I should think, but that would be about it, but reading and writing was just didn't see the need.</p>
20:07	<p>Like every other time for gypsies and travellers weve had some pretty tough times in the past, some very very nasty times but weve evolved were the kind of people that gypsy people are even though we lost some of the culture some years back because the younger generations not been doing gthe work and not mixing the gypsy culture will live on because theres still all this in built stuff. Theres in built survival we are survivors that's what we are that is what weve done for hundreds of years and I should say is what we will continue to do a hundred years into the future. It might not be the same as it was, but then what is. Cultures always change and that's and the gypsy culture is no exception to that rule. Id like to see, Id like to see certain preservations on it err the language which I don't speak much of which I wish I did. The traditions you know people meeting the kind of weddings people they pair up fairly young you don't get quite the divorce rate amongst the gypsies and travellers as what you do in the general. It happens of course it does it happens everywhere but it seems like people are more content you know it seems like out there theres nobody that's content enough to stick with something long enough to make it work and I think that's a shame. A lot of people do of course they do but theres a lot of people that don't and I think theres less of that happen in the gypsy culture than in the general culture. Id also like to see the respect of elders not changed and I think that is something that is changing now a little bit. Id like to see that. The community people seeing each other and being with each other and even now gypsies are tight knit they like to stick together and be in like groups or on site they feel safest that way and more at home theyre accepted there and Id also like to see the a bit more cross ove you know so as you can get some good things from other</p>

		<p>peoples cultures and you can also teach people culture as well and theres also some things that have been lost that Id like to see come back. One is language the other is how gypsies and travellers used to live with the land. They didn't used to just live off the land. They used to live with the land you know pegs, you cut because of what you needed to make pegs and flowers it was like pruning youd be helping the trees rather than cutting them down. Youd just be helping them sort of thing and you knew how much to take, because you needed to leave some for another time and that sort of thing it wasn't greed they didn't have a lot back in the olden days, I've been told loads but what they did have they didn't abuse they just used it and went back to it later on and could use it again. Theres changes and theres some pretty tough changes that's happened over the years and a lot of people mourn that but the long term future the gypsies are just going to get tighter I think theyre going to... in the groups that theyre in now before it was a looser kind of culture where you were spread out and you were all spread around a lot now it getting more tighter and closer. I mean you still know all the other people and children probably go to the discos and things like that and mix or sometimes youll just move away for a few weeks and youll get that kind of interaction But I think that's the way its heading that you're only going to have a few weeks here where people go to Appleby and the horse fairs and the Christian meetings and things like that there. That's about what it will be that's what I can see happening anyway. That's already happening, but I think that will happen in a bigger way. The cross over happening in my family is, particularly my daughter and my oldest son that's happening and I do get alarmed with that sometimes but erm weve taught them well I think I hope and she seems to be content with how things are and what her place is and I can only hope for that for her to realise that she represe...she doesn't just represent herself not like a lot of people, no they don't they represent their family and she represents us and we in turn represent her and the same goes with my son we represent him he represents us. It's a family interaction in that way. You don't want to be doing stuff that's going to harm the family. I do feel hopeful and I think it all depends on how you bring them up again. Its where you lay the routes. You can only explain to the children where theyre from and what kind of people they are and what cultures they come from. You cant make them do anything that they don't want to do. Its just that if you teach them in the right way they'll do it by choice and then they'll carry the culture on with them and it wont never die out.</p>
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<b>Key Timing Index</b>	
Time	Topic
00:00	Past Times
10:24	Racism
16:52	Education
20:07	Changing Times & The Future