

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
June 2009	I and I2	M and RF1 and RF2		08:31

Key timing	Initial of person speaking	Transcription of Interview
00:00	I	Have you had much contact with gypsy people in the past?
	M	Yeah I have way back in the seventies when I was a little old boy running around the streets and whatever, never had a problem just mixed in, blend in and that's just what we done just had good fun playing with all the other children.
	I	What part of the world are you from? Where did you grow up?
	M	Well I grew up around this area, East Anglia, very local, very fen-ish. A lot of the old dyke.
	I	From your stand point what do you think is the main differences between the gypsy community and the non gypsy community, from what you see, observational?
	M	I know they used to work hard years ago on the land mostly because that was part of the culture I think that they used to have years ago, earning their money through the agricultural side of things, they sort of did their things they used to do in them days.
	I2	The things that you'd do and the things that you'd see travellers do, what do you think is different?
	M	Well there ain't no difference is there cos I used to work in there when I was on school holidays.
	I2	See there's the difference you see, you worked in the school holidays.
	M	Well yeah I had to, I had no choice, had to work on the land just like the travellers or gypsies, had to do the same as then if I wanted some pocket money or whatever so I didn't have no problems what so ever in those days just did what we had to do and that was it.
	I	Did you have any problems with gypsy people?
	M	No I never had any problems, even in this day and age today. Apart from one but I'm mentioning no names.
	I	It's difficult to ask because I get set on a certain type of interview because I've interviewed gypsy people and I'm curious about them. What was it like re-interacting with gypsy people, how did you feel about that?
	M	I don't know really cause when I was younger around teenager age, you do like everyone else and wonder in a different direction you sort of lose contact with people and then later in life you might meet up with that person later on in life and go out and probably have a regular drink and mingle in like you used to years ago, which is pretty good cause you can learn what they've done in the past up to the present.
	RF1	But I didn't know you when I was a teenager

M	I know that but I'm just on about what things were then to the day.
I	I don't know if it happened, it usually happens, you'll have an encounter with gypsies coming in and pull somewhere, what was the reaction of the village say to that?
M	Well I mean you get the odd one or two people in the village who would have something to say about it 'we don't want them here, we want them out' sort of thing but my character side I wouldn't bother, id just get on with my life and not worry about what's happening down the road, and just let things flow as it used to, but you always get the one or two that are going to kick things up and cause mayhem but to me it didn't bother me one bit.
I	You've lived in the fens all your life, there are a lot of gypsy people that live around the fens and so you've got a low level relationship with gypsies anyway, you meet them now and again, but its when a lot of people get together, a big wedding or a funeral, are there any curiosities about that sort of thing.
M	Well no I've never bothered
RF1	Well he did ask me if I went to a funeral and I didn't deny it; there was loads of us outside the church.
M	Yeah, my mate was more or less...
RF1	Terrified
M	Terrified of what was across the road more than what I was, it didn't bother me, I just done what I had to do on the day and just let things flow, but he was more terrified than I was. I don't know why, it made me laugh.
I	Do you think then now you know a few gypsy, do you think gypsy people are misunderstood?
RF1	Can you see both sides of an argument, that's what it means ain't it?
I	More or less
RF1	It's like someone being down the road in the trailer pulling up on the lay-by or Ealing business park with the trailers. It's the thing with somebody in the village saying 'oh we don't want them there' but they're not doing no wrong, so that's the misunderstanding. People don't want you there although you're not doing anything wrong, so why don't they want you there, innit? That's it innit? That's being misunderstood because she's not doing no wrong, in nobodies way, not making a mess but people in the village still don't want you there.
M	Yeah, well that's like when I went down to where was it, Swaffham, and I cant remember the name of the family but anyway I was working in a dustcart and they asked me if they could throw some general rubbish in which I let them do just to make sure that everything was tidy before I left. Which is not very often you should be doing but I just stopped and they asked me the question and I helped them out and just carried.
RF2	But when we were in Cambridge that time with all my nephews and people kept giving their opinion on travellers and we turned around and say to them have you met any travellers and they say 'no' so they've got this great big opinion on travellers which they aint even met or had any interaction with and yet they've got this great big bad opinion

		but with Mervin as he knows travellers, do you share the same opinion as them that have this opinion of travellers when they aint had nothing to do with them?
	RF1	What it is isn't it is people say 'oh you don't look like a traveller' so I don't know what I'm supposed to do, go around with a staff and pennies hanging down with a crystal ball in my hand? Is that how people see a traveller? Cause it aint is it! People say to me you don't seem like a traveller it's only when you open your mouth.
	RF2	Yeah that's what I get yeah, you look half educated till you open your mouth.
	RF1	Then you give yourself away, I think that's really what you mean the misunderstanding thing is that it's a thing handed down through the generation.
	I	What I mean is if you didn't know gypsy people, which you do know a few.
	RF1	You know the dad used to go about with old Charlie Carman; George's dad, old Charlie. So there's travellers in their family and they've got the same relations. Practically related to Charlie Carm.
	I	From what you generally hear about gypsy people and travelling people, if you didn't know about them you wouldn't approach them a gypsy person, particularly if there were 4 or 5 of them pulled in a place and it would be considered dangerous.
	RF1	Just because of what you heard that's what that is
	I	The kind of persona that comes across at times.
	RF1	Yeah I've had that
	M	Mmm I suppose it would be terrifying wouldn't it with 4 blokes approaching who you didn't even know.
	I	I wouldn't say approaching because gypsy people don't generally do that, but if you were taking your dog for a walk.
	RF1	Would you be frightened to walk that path? Would you say 'oh I can't go down there'
	M	Well I don't know really cause when I was younger I always used to walk past them, even when they used to have their dogs tied up on chains and that I used to just walk by, no point taking much notice, when I was younger just carried on and minded my own business really whether there was a caravan parked on the side of the road or children running around or not, I just used to carry on but not everyone's got the same opinion as me, I'm quite open really.
	RF1	I think it comes from the fens.
	M	Well its not that, I'm just more open compared to some.
	RF1	But it's like you said especially round where we are there are travellers all around us.
	M	Well yeah so I've been brought up more or less with them compared to what some people have.
	RF1	It's not exactly a novel thing.
	M	That's what I mean it doesn't bother me because I've been brought up with that sort of

RF1	No, but you've still got your gorgiary ways, there's no other way of saying it, you've still got your very gorgia things that you do, say.
M	I speak my own opinions?
RF1	No, its not that is it? You've still got your ways, like I've got still got my ways. I'm not being funny or nothing. Its just you've got your gorgia way, while I've got my traveller ways, innit. Even though you know a lot of travellers you've still got your very gorgia ways.
M	Didn't my dad marry?
RF1	Yeah your dad's cousin is married to old Charlie's cousin or something, but you still have you ways but I think sometimes you've got very posh ways.
M	What's that word mean? Don't ask me I'd have to look in the dictionary. I haven't got a clue myself.
I	What I'm saying is that there are some very poignant differences, just inherited differences in things that you do, you probably do even realise but we notice and you probably notice the things we do without realising. I just wanted to get Mervs opinion, would you ever like to experience that life?
M	You mean what travellers and gypsies does? Yeah, it'd probably be intriguing to find out.
RF1	That's another one of them posh words, what does intriguing mean?
I	Intriguing is interesting
M	I'm intrigued, I'm interested in the culture, I'd like to know what the culture side would be like if I was to swap places for a year, travelling around like you did now in them days.
RF1	Well that's it you've got to go back in time to experience it and there's no way you can do that now.
M	Yeah, cause in them days when they used to travel around it was different, everyone used to keep pushing them around moving them on and they don't do that now cause everyone is settled in bricks and mortar.
I	That way was a lot more, in my opinion a lot better because you got to see more of your family and different people.
RF1	We always stopped with granny and granddad we always did, me dads, not me mums.

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