

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
Summer 09	Sarah	Linda	40 - 50	14.28

Key timing	Initial of person speaking	Transcription of Interview
0.00	LG	<p>We used to live in, it was a caravan, it was about 22ft long, it had an end bedroom, a lot of them have got fire places in, so you got a coal fire, cooker, and mum and dad used to live in the end and us four used to live in the other part.</p> <p>Sometimes if there was boys, they used to live in the back of the van outside, so they would be made a bed out there.</p> <p>We used to live in Chelmsford to do all the all the winter work, then travel round to Wisbeach to do all the summer work. So we had certain regions where we did work each year. So we had to travel around to where ever the work was.</p> <p>How have things changed for being a traveller over the years? I've gone from, well you know, as a family being all together, everyone helping one another, all together all the time. And we never had the racial so much then, cos we was all in fields all working together so we never mixed very much with the settled community. But as life progressed and things change in your life, then you get catapulted into the normal world, I would say. And yeah, a lot of racial discrimination, a lot of name calling, when your aside the road now. You could pull on farm land years ago and so you were off the road, but now the farm work has stopped and so you have to stop aside the roads and so you get the abuse of people chucking things at you.</p>
1.35		<p>Went from living in a trailer to a house, because of personal circumstances with a disabled daughter. To make it better for her, but it was awful, I hated it, I really hated it. It was a three bedroom house, and we used to lay all downstairs on the floor because it seemed all to big and too bricked in. I hated the bricks and the building feeling and we never had no family and I felt totally alone. Ostracised I would say.</p> <p>Why do I think this change has taken place? Because of the work. All the, all the farm work now is done by machines. So they don't need travellers anymore, cos that what they done, they always worked the land. And now things have changed where there isn't no land work anymore. There isn't so you cant pull on farmers fields. So you are pushed out onto the side of the road to camp illegally cos there's no site provision for travellers so they've got no-where to live. So you are constantly moved on all the time. And its dangerous aside the roads now. Very dangerous and that's how things have changed for the travellers and the community I think, because before it was, travellers always stopped together and looked out for one other. And the children used to go an play out and round in the field and everyone looked after each others children, to being on roadside where everyone is chucking things at you and screaming abuse and the children being really scared. Or police coming to move you on, or the council saying you cant stop here, and its changed big time.</p> <p>I think for the better its kids going to school and getting educated, I think that's the way forward. And I, I know there's no field work out there any more, so they need to get into education to change society as it is of the day, so that they can see that traveller people are just as the same as anybody else. They've just got a different culture. They are not an alien people, they've just got a different culture. And I think its positive that</p>

3.50		<p>they actually now, can stop in a place long enough to send their children to school.</p> <p>What changes do I think are for the worst? I think we've been catapulted more into, catapulted more into, how can I explain it. With the media I would say. Because before, people would see this, oh lovely gypsy wagon, and we stopped, and they'd have romantic thoughts and things like that and so you didn't get so much racial discrimination then. But now, you're in the public eye a lot more. People see you, you're not so much invisible. Cos travelling people used to be invisible. So now you get a lot more racial discrimination. Some travellers, even, a young boy got killed and that, so that's how society has changed.</p>
4.37		<p>The biggest change for me as a traveller is, I suppose from being just a mum and working in the fields as I'd been brought up, to doing different sorts of work with people from the settled community. And that's changed my views and I think that's opened my eyes a lot to a lot of different things, for the good, for the good. And you know, for me it's opened my eyes and that's why I'd like to change things. And have other travelling people open their eyes up to the settled community to mend bridges.</p> <p>I miss family, I miss the closeness, I miss being free, being free to just travel around the roads and just meet up with friends and family. I don't know, all that, it's the closeness its not there as much as it used to be. Everyone is stressed and worried, its not as free as it used to be. I don't think it will ever come back, that's my personal opinion. I would love it to come back, but I think society at the moment, its changed so much. There's so much racial discrimination out there that I don't think at the moment it'll come back.</p>
5.58		<p>Did we face racism? Not so much because we worked on the land and we only stopped away from anybody. We only stopped with family so it wasn't like in the public eye as such. My dad brought me up to say, be invisible. If you're invisible then people don't pick on you. So that's how we were. Where ever we move, we never left any rubbish, we never, we left everything as it was when we left it, we left it the same. So, and I always had family, we always had thinks around us to look after us. But as times have changed, the racial, I think has got worse. I mean now its terrible, like, we were stopped aside the road a few years ago and some one tried to shoot the windows out the caravan. And I remember my little girl screaming and crying on the floor, and, you got it all the time. You got people coming out the pubs chucking bottles at the caravan, shouting abuse, swearing, even chucking porno books at your caravan and things like that, treating you like a piece of dirt. Even to get a doctors appointment, you can't do that because the receptionist, you need an address and you haven't got an address. It went from the highest high like the council, to the lowest like I said, people coming out of the pubs. You get it every single day. There's not a day in my life where I couldn't think of some sort of racial remarks made, only the times when I pretended I'm not a traveller. And because I never went to school and couldn't read and write, you get that when you go into doctors surgeries. As soon as you say where you live, there's this barrier put up. Oh the gypsies are coming into the surgery, and you probably can't get an appointment when you need it. Or when you're in hospital, the same sort of thing really, they don't understand who you are. So you get this, I don't know, treat you like a piece of dirt really. When you get it all the time, its hard to pin-point one certain thing. So it's just a part, especially in schools, children get it in schools. If you, like my daughters they got racial, they got called dirty gypsy, you all stink, you're all thieves.</p>
8.38		<p>Do me and my family face racism now? Yes, we do. Not every day, as when we were living on roadside, cos you can't pretend you're something else then. But because I am living in a house... I was doing some cultural awareness training to some under 5's play group in Luton and we was talking about the traveller children and what they are like when they come into nursery and explaining that they are used to being outdoors, and one of the ladies there said that the travellers in my country should be all burnt. And this was going back about 6 months ago, and when the story of the travelling boy who</p>

9.48	<p>got beat up and killed for who he was, they laughed. So I kept my temper cos I thought, I'm better than they are. And that's just recently. And I don't think it'll change, not until society see us as the people we are and understand our culture a bit more.</p> <p>I never went to school, I worked in the fields. I can read but I can't write very well. And how I learnt to read was, my brother could read a little bit, so I would sit in the Landrover while they were working, and I'd have the Peter and Jane books, and my brother would read them and I'd repeat them, and study the words. So I learnt myself how to read, I never went to school. I went one day, and that was at Wisbeach, and I got picked on so badly that my parents never sent me back anymore. A boy held my down and wanted to rip my teeth out, I was about 7, 6 or 7. So after that I hid under the table in my mums caravan, and she asked me what was wrong and I told her and she said I didn't have to go anymore.</p> <p>I would have loved to have gone to school to read and write, I hate it now I really do. So I encourage my children to go to school. But I didn't want them to face the kind of bullying I faced so I never told anybody who they were. So I said hide your culture. I think education is the way forward for travelling people. Cos things have changed, and we need to get more young people into the media, because I think that has a big impact on travellers lives. And I think it should be taught in schools, and then I think if it's taught to the young, about the culture, then they'll understand. And it won't be so alien to them. I think non-travelling children should be taught more about the travelling culture. Once they, once they young understand, when you're little you just accept things. And its only when you get older and you get somebody else telling you stuff that you get these preconceptions of how these people live. But you know, when you are little, when I went to school, I just wanted to play and, oh it's great, little children, somebody to play with, you know. I didn't expect it to be such hardness.</p> <p>I sent my children to school yes. The oldest ones went till they were about 13, but they went to a lot of different schools cos everywhere I went, they went to school, and like different schools, and it was difficult for them cos I couldn't hide their identity cos we were roadside. So they got bullied quite badly in school. But my youngest one, we were settled in a house then, and she went to school, and I told her, don't hide, don't hide your identity, you tell them. Don't be ashamed of who you are. You tell them. And she did and she was fine, she never faced the same. But I think that was because she lived in a house and they couldn't really understand, this little girl coming to school saying she's this, they couldn't, you know, see the difference. I wanted them to have an education and a future. I wanted them to be different than I was. Because, I never had an education and I wanted them to have a better life.</p>
12.50	<p>How to I see life changing for travellers in the future? Oh god, I hope it's positive. I hope it gets better, because I don't know if it will. And that's sad. I want to try and get them into more education and into better jobs, cos I think that's the only way forward, but sometimes it seems such a hard battle. I can't answer that question at the moment. We had racial discrimination since the 16th century, and that's not changed, so you know, you go back that far and you don't see a change, you think, it's never going to change. And so at the moment, I can't see a lot of change.</p>
13.38	<p>What would I like to see happen to travellers in the future? I'd like to see them have better jobs. I'd like to see them be accepted more. I'd like to see the bridges gap between the settled and the traveller community. I'd like to see them all get on better and work together as I think everybody should be in this world. They are building more sites for the travellers now so they don't have to be on roadside, so that's positive. Children are getting into more education and getting qualifications and even that's positive. And hopefully in the future they might teach some sort of cultural awareness in schools and that's positive.</p>
14.28	

Key Timing Index

Time	Topic
0.00	Accommodation
1.34	Moving from a trailer to a house
3.50	What changes do I think are for the worst?
4.37	The biggest change for me as a traveller
5.58	Do we face racism?
8.38	Do me and my family face racism now?
9.48	I never went to school
12.50	How to I see life changing for travellers in the future?
13.38	What would I like to see happen to travellers in the future?
14.28	End