

**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
14-4-10	Sinead	Patricia	60-70	00:07:27

Key timing	Initial of person speaking	Transcription of Interview
00:00	Patricia	<p>My names Patricia Keegan. I come from a long line of Romanies. Got Romany History. I have been discovering my ancestors for quite a long time now and we come from Hedges, a long line of Hedges family right back to 1700's, so were Romany through and through.</p> <p>When I was growing up we had a lot of laughs but we also had some tough times as well. I remember every single year we used to go hop picking. Oh, I loved it; I really loved it. I was a baby you know and from 6 months old id be going out there and my used to say to me she used to take a kettle whistle and Id sit out there all day with, you know, this. But every year we used to go and I loved it. Mum used to be frantically picking off the leaves off the top of the bin after she'd ... wed all emptied our bushels into there and shed be frantically picking all the leaves off the top before the tally man came out you see wed have to dive into and fluff them up you know to make them look more, and god knows why she always used to do that nearly dive right into it you know and fluff all the hops up so and along would come the tally man he'd get hold of the end of the bin, you know, and he'd bang it ever so hard and they all used to go down to the bottom and if you could have seen mums face, honestly if looks could kill he would be dead on the spot. I used to love all that; going out with my Nan, an' all, and it was like one bug reunion, you know, and we used to have our fire out there to cook our meals and that on and a cup of tea and there was always be a kettle on the go. Those sort of times I do remember. But life at home wasn't so good. Mum was always fiery, she come from a fiery background. Mum and dad used to fight a lot my dad liked a pint and he'd come home and my mum would demand where he'd been. Us kids used to hide away up in the bedrooms because we was frightened we was terrified and yet me dads not a bad bloke, I mean he ain't here now bless him but he wasn't that bad a bloke but you know he liked a drink I think they all did then they all liked a drink liked a laugh liked a drink, but I think the trouble was he was having without mum but also you know he could get quite violent, he wasn't he never hit any of us girls and I ain't never, to be truthful I never ever seen him lay a hand on my mum. But she used to panic quite a bit and she used to come up the stairs and shed pile all the furniture in the room you know up against the doors so that he couldn't get in. He was ever so quite he'd come up the stairs and we could here him coming up and it quite it was horrifying because wed hold our breaths and I was the youngest as I say and there was 5 of us girls and I was the youngest and there was about 11 months between the others I can particularly remember my eldest sister she used to stuff the blankets in her mouth as she heard my dad creeping up the stairs you know to stop herself from screaming. Id hold my breath and was frightened to breath and all of a sudden he'd knock on the door and he'd say (knocks) "Mary what are you going to do, what are you going to do Mary" she wouldn't answer you'd see shed just sh, sh. This went on for about hour. We was all absolutely terrified and then all of a sudden he'd give her one more warning what are you going to do and if she didn't open the door he'd barge through you see well us kids we scattered. Mum was very sort of highly strung you know so shed run outside help hep please, please you know and us kids all just huddled together and that went on and off for some time really mum would chuck him out a while shed always have him back still it always seemed up to her. We spent some time away when my dad had been a bit of a naughty boy I think I don't think it was much but they put him in inside and we all went off to Granny Ambrose. Granny</p>

		<p>Ambrose was a lovely old lady well she looked it on the surface, but unfortunately she wasn't. And we all lived out in Granny Ambrose's not in the house wasn't allowed in the house I suppose what they call it is a marquee now a days but it was just a big tent and we lived out there nearly all day long. After about 3 weeks, we realised that there was another person there. Not just Shelia, the girl we had met, but there was another person in the house and it was a boy and it was Shelia's little brother How we found out was we heard noises coming from the wash house so of course being kids we wanted to know what was going on didn't we. We thought, 'Is that the dog'. They had a dog and it was tied up and I thought it was a funny noise, so we went down there and we peeked through the crack in the door and we see Granny Ambrose and she'd got a little boy, I suppose about 8 years old, by the scruff of the neck and she was whipping the top of his legs with stinging nettles because he'd wet his-self, used to wet his-self. And witnessed quite a few things whilst we was there, but that's how our life was and the thing was you never really thought about it. You got on with it Mum never had a very good time I don't blame mum nor dad because they never had a very good time. They was on the road all the time and they had it hard. My Nan had 11 of them you see and of course their father Bill, known as Winkle Bill, because he used to get the winkles from the sump here and sell them he'd have a drink an' all and it goes back and back and he'd sing and dance in the pubs and they'd ply in with drinks and then my Nan had a terrible hard life. I think what really done her was when her sister in law Moomi Boswell died. They was out fruit picking. They'd gone away fruit picking and Moomi, well her real name was Margaret, she was heavy, you know, about to have her little chavvi. So what happened then was, she must have got into a bit of a pickle because she went back to Best Street, Chatham. They had a place back in Best Street, as well. In the winter they'd go and stay in Best Street, opposite each other, brother and sister. So, err anyway, unfortunately she walked all that way home while they was still out in the fields working. See it wasn't until they got home, they realised shed gone home. When they got ... but unfortunately, umm, she'd died in ... it was just a pool of blood; she was lying in a pool of blood. She died in childbirth. Ooh the gypsies come from all over. It seemed they'd come from all over the country. They were hordes and hordes of them, you know, my Nan was the only one with an house. Don't know whether it was a two up, two down or a one up, one down. Anyway, they all clambered into the little front room. My mum, she shot under the table because she was frightened stiff coz they made such a row. You could hear them coming for miles. Like banshees up the street "oooooh mooomie, Kaaaah mooomie" and they was all swaying to and fro like. They worked themselves up into such a frenzy, my mum, she was terrified under this table, watching them. She wondered what was going to happen next, you know, but it was a very traumatic time for my Nan coz that was her friend; that wasn't just her sister in law that was her friend. The baby survived and my Nan virtually brought up the children on her own. Apart from, I mean her brother, Henry but he couldn't bring up the kids you know. My Nan had 11 kids of her own and then she had, I believe there was 9 of them. So they just got on with it, you know, and I think that's a traveller thing. You just get on with it, get on with what life deals you.</p>
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