

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
02 / 03 / 2010		Sinead	Rodney B Part 1	70-75	17:24
Key timing	Initial of person speaking	Transcription of Interview			
00:00	Rodney	<p>First School I went weren't too bad. They put a boy with me and he was a learning me. I think if I live to be a thousand I never forget it. He took me over to some words with him and I learned it by heart from reading. I never forget he could have passed a career as a comical chap. Since he opened it up, didn't he, I looked at it and what I got me was this when I was a sarring. He thumped me in the ear 'ole. I turned around and punched him. We was a fighting on the floor. Teacher comes up and says 'What's it about?' He says 'He can't read it miss'. I says 'Was I reading it?' He says 'No, he knows it by heart.' See I learned it by heart. I could read a few odd words, not much. A lot of them in the bible. I read bits out of that but not a lot. But the main thing is knowing Jesus. You see 'cos er I was told the disciples, a lot of them, couldn't read. Reading is nice, but reading down there would be a gift for life you see.</p> <p>Them there got me out, got my living. Working hard and when I went to work, my Mrs worked very hard with me and we took, as I say, 'pulled' 2 prams out the field. She's worked very hard, so have I. Come home. She says to me 'What you want to do?' Had to go and get a tub outside and set it on the fire. Put some bricks up to do washing or cook for the children. She said 'What do you want to do? Cook or do the washing?' I said 'I'll do the washing'. Told me not to mix the rags, but I didn't understand, but anyway I started didn't I. I got the rubbing board and I rubbed hard. Them there, all the skin come off. So the next time when it come round to the washing or cooking, I'll tell you I started cooking the tea. It wasn't easier 'cos it broke my back over the tub and all with the rubbing board. Oh yes, I'll have a go at everything, ain't no good at nothing, I don't care what it is.</p> <p>No, the school was all right, but what it was, they never seemed to have the time for me. As I say, there was one teacher and in one classroom and we had 3 groups. If you like 1, 2 and 3. Well I was in the bottom, you can imagine. Then they used to laugh 'cos I was sitting with the little 'uns. But when I got outside, all I was any good for was having a punch up over what they done to me laughing at me. So I got a fighting. I had more fights than Cassias Clay. Bing, Bang, Bang, Bang. Bing, Bang, Bang, then a getting killed. But there you go I didn't realise reading and doing work what I call it with your brains was harder than doing manual work. No, that's hard work. When I start to learn a read a little bit it was hard. I telled I can do words as long as that like Washbrook and different other words see what comes in me head. But I went to school there for a little while, but it was only a couple of hours We got there at 10 Oclock, we had a cup of tea then we done a bit of work then we stopped and then we'd come home. That was good, but the point was I never got enough of it. A lot of them do now, you can write 2 or 3 words to them, you know big words, and I set them up like that, turned the paper over and pen an envelope and write those 6 words out and they reckon if you got a good memory you can read. You could give me 3 or 4 phone numbers, I can keep them in me head, I don't know what it is I must be what ever you call it 'slexic or what ever it is, but when I see it I don't know. I have to go at it again even if its only tee aitch ee 'the'. I got to sound it to meself sometimes and now I ain't got a lot but I would give a lot to read. But I cant. Nobody can get me, but I cant. I get so far reading. I can read a lot of what you got down there and there's some, ya know what I mean? If you missed that word out as your going down and you ain't got a couple or three words right the sentence don't come properly and you got to go over it again, over it again and over it again, 'til you pick it up. Then you get fed up. After you read that twice or three times (sighs) you see</p>			

me go haywire, so I lay the bible down, have two or three minutes and get up make a cup of tea. Come back and I read it better, ya know what I mean? What I can read, not a lot.

Our young lad he's down on Whitehouse, he said he'd help me, but God love him that didn't work, ya know? I can't rely on a little boy. You see you need somebody really and truly to do 4 days or 5 days a week to read. Its lovely ya see. You see the paper up on the wall you look at it like that and I remember when we was back at home as I call it. Back home was at Wisbech. We always used to go up to the pub called the Shoulder of Mutton. Well after we all left school, we used to go to the youth club and then we'd have a couple of pints in the Shoulder of Mutton, catch a bus into Ely, go in the pictures, come out to the Corn Exchange in the dance, then you come out for a fish supper, fish and chip supper and come home. We were altogether ya see. It was the way we used to pass in the towns, in the native of the views, been there for 22 years. Anyway one night goes up the pub Friday night. Mr Newman a very good educated man, he'd bin to work, he was caretaker for the school and when he got up there, all of them in there, all the young girls and boys like riled up. I don't know what he was doing 'cos there was young girls and boys and he didn't want to be put down. So I was there like, that meant to go to the counter to get a couple of pints of beer. So 'I feel sorry for you Rodney'. I said 'I'm pleased somebody do Mr Newman'. He said 'I feel sorry for you, you cant read'. Well all the boys and girls know what I was like, so they all looking at me and I was feeling about that big. So I thought to myself 'Well I got to tell you Mr Newman' I said 'Mr Newman your boy John he used to go down the grammar school din't he?' 'That's right' he says 'He got a very, very good education. So 'ave you ain't ya? Got a good education, but John he's got a better one.' I said 'Where does John work now?' Well as you go into Ely there's a farmer called Arthur Parkinson, the man's name was. He said 'Well on Arthur Parkinson's'. And I said 'What do you do?' He says 'I'm caretaker of the school, you know I am'. I said 'How many times a week do you come in this pub?' He said 'I come in Friday night and Sunday lunch-time.' So like that the landlord his name was Jim Coulson. I said 'Mr Coulson how many nights Im in the pub?' 'Every night' he said 'Fust one in and he's the last one to kick out.' He says. So I says 'reading and writing never done the effect' (muffled). Not bad and all of them, when they was going in there and they was playing darts 'Get Rod', they wouldn't say 'get Rod' they'd say 'get Raad', 'get Raad'. Well now I wouldn't takes on one o'clock you can throw the darts in and I can throw the darts for their lives. It's easy. So they always starting from the back and take one off. No. If you got 2 hundred and you got 57 instead of coming out the back just make it even, say 60. Two, four. Four at the back 'cos you carried the one. It was likely. Now my father in law he couldn't do nothing. He got a field running that shape hundred rows that one would be about 500 yards and this one would be two. He'd measure it up and go straight to the middle of it. And whatever that was what you lost on the little 'uns you made on the big 'uns. It all come out even. He could measure up by row. So can I awkward teurv and all he used to measure up. Now you see its marvellous how God chose me them things. But yet to do reading and writing I've tried bashed me head against a wall why cant I? Ya see me Mrs she cant read and write got love her Shes a hard worker. She even goes around to these council places that have the fairs and that. She makes wooden flowers from a bit of wood. Show little ones how to make wooden flowers, make paper flowers, dye with the paper flowers and that. Make pegs, you see that's what they was brought up to. When never anything else to do we had well we had to do it to get food on the table, we all help one another. For a gypsy they say traveller, prefer traveller but never mind well stick as you want to be. The gypsy you see I think God give them the gift. I get up tomorrow morning, but I can't work if you know what I mean. I can work, but it will take me half an hour to bend over gonna say (muffled). But I can go tomorrow morning no money or nothing and I wont go thieving or nothing and I can go and get money. Ill go around the house and Ill ask anything doing? And Ill do it. And mind you I wont bodge you. I don't say Im the best, but Ill make a very very good second hand job. Ill Put a fence up and youll look at it and say that's first class and Ill say that's not first class but its very good. Ill rotovate the ground up and level it all out with me naked eye and lay the turf down. Now my boy one day said come with me dad and hes a putting a 15 foot long

base in and 8 foot wide. You know you put shuffling around don't ya. He's put it around like that and I looked and went like that pack that corner on down with that one round here like that. That's about right I said. He says Dad? Now goes in with a spirit level. So where's your spirit level. He says I forgot it. chap comes out the next time and I says excuse me mate I says you wouldn't lend me a spirit level for about 10 minutes and he says yeah. We went all the way around that and above all was smack on apart from one corner was out (muffled) Well Ive levelled out as much in my time ya see you will you'll (muffled) your work, cut people's grass what cant cut it, watering peoples hose, you patch a fence up you trim a tree up for them. That's all there, Im no good at laying bricks mind you there aint much that I cant, well in the past that I wont have a go at. You see once you see it a lot of people like what I would call these like gorgias, the house dwellers they wont do, so if they haven't got a job he sits about hell either on on the dole until he gets a job or they find him a job, but a traeller if he had to wy back not now way back when the work was about he could try and find hiself what I would say a days pay. You've got to be willing to have a go at anything. Tata picking up which aint so very nice they say it's a women's job Womens got to bend over you've got to bend over theres no difference. Well that's what God wanted of me. Its like yourself your irish and youll never change that. Its like people says to me in this down here I think your mum was a gypsy and my dad wasn't. He says I used to be a gypsy. What do you mean you used to be a gypsy, a leopard cant change its spots ya know. If your half gypsy your half gypsy and youll be that until the day you die, but you do as I say get the odd person I suppose what don't know even so if they said it behind me back it ud just be water run off me shoulders cos I know different now. As soon I say a traveller, a gypsy cant read and whatever he goes to do now he has to have a liscence which you know he has to have a scrap liscence you cant get no scrap. You have to have a carriers liscence and you've got to have a liscence even if you gonna use a chainsaw you have to have a liscence and they was talking yesterday about getting licences for dogs and goodness knows what. Its getting so not just for a gypsy its for everybody and now people leave school in this day and age he has nto got the qualifications to do the work you see. You have to tell them to go and get the qualifications before you can do it. You know that better than I do, before you can do your job, you've got to have qualifications and if you aint got them in this day and age they don't want ya because theres so many of them out there to chose from. You see all the young uns are starting to get an education and they need it both as meself as the sun is. Its too late for me and anyway as far as I come this last little bit I can roll down the hill until its time for me to die that's plain speaking but you see the young uns they got to have the education don't they. If you aint got it cos today whatever your doing if you get a drivers job you got to go and know where to drop the load off where if theres tools or whatever your doing ya see you got to read in this day and age when you get on the motorways wherever your going wherever you aim they need education that's what the gypsies need they need places like this to stay on and look after them aswell and let the children go to school which they are and get a good education. That's what travellers need ecuation.

All our lives path never took no My mum was a good scolar so was me eldest brother but th rest of us no. Without the education you miss out. You have to go over to me brother which I have done get a couple of three cowboy books I got here somewhere picked them up Hes looked at one he aint sin it he flopped back in the armchair make a cup of tea he says to Jed and he started to read this cowboy book and he wont put it down till hes finished it. Hes as quick as that and now theyre realising because the gypsy played a big part to the farmers Ill tell you done a lot of field work. You only need to see only fools and horses and by hard work a break up tractors and Ive seen the m work very very hard and I mean very hard People say to you this and this and that and that happened. I say one day like I had me looking out the door with a big field of tatas infront of me. Christine as big as this and the eldest boy was about that size. She was out in the field any day looking to go to bed picking potatoes up as hard as she could go. I went out with empty baskets out on me hands and knees back went again bad and dragged me with me arms to children and herd up back across to the motor she never had a liscence said you've got to drive She driv the lorry down to Dunbar took me to the doctors, he

		<p>squared me up. I say mind I barely drive any more. You get a licence She say I cant read and write I say youll learn, youll learn, she passed her test. I got her brother God love him aint much he cant do turn a motor inside out as fixing it, but you ask him letters. If its got that letter on it, look a G hell do you Ill tell you one with three legs on it that's E one with 2 legs that's F, now he don't know his alphabet, but Ill tell you the truth you go and try and loose him round the door keeping his living, hell come back with as much money as you and that's straight. He knows what hes doing. You see Gods given gypsy people gifts. They give them the gift of the gab and the gift of the door to talk to people. I know you get some people as is wrong with people going round the door, but talk to people after. I had more freedom as a called it when I was home I was tied down but I never been. My Mrs was up and down me she stopped home when I went to the pub with me dad. Id have loved it (muffled) Going earning the money, going down the pub like, not picking everything up, but having a good drink. That was a lovely life. The best thing Ive ever done is found Jesus, everybody needs you. You see you all look at this way say different religions they is I agree, but there's only one Lord, one baptised, one doctrine. Read the bible he said if anybody else come to you with any other doctrine then what you receive then you shall end. Even them angels can never be can never be bad. See a lot of people don't realise</p>
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