

**Jim ball**Key:**I: Interviewer****JB: Jim Ball****F: Female**

**JB:** Okay. So my mum used to help in the shop with my 'gran and because my uncle was out in the bake house doing all the cakes, pies, bread and things like that, which dare I say he had a very good reputation because he got taught by his dad, his grampy. We left there in 1947 because my uncle Jack had come back. They wanted the space. Living there, in the shop, you went into the shop, then you went into a back door and it opened out into a parlour, then you had another door leading off to the right, which led into a kitchen, which was half the size of this and it just had the basic single glass ring cooker and a cold water tap, which then led out another door into the back yard where the stable was for my granddad's horse and cart.

**I: Out the back?**

**JB:** Out the back, yes, which then you had the bake house that my uncle used to work at, where I spent many happy weekends scoffing jam tarts and eating pies. The house itself I would say it was Victorian. You had the ground floor. You had the first floor where my 'Nan slept. Then you had the second floor where mum and I slept. Then you had the top floor where my two uncles slept, plus they had a small attic. Saying that, they also had a very big cellar.

**I: So this was all above the shop?**

**JB:** All above the shop, yes.

**I: So the whole extended family lived together?**

**JB:** Yes, lived together. Dare I say it? I'm not bragging or anything but my gran was very well-known. She was very well-respected.

**I: She must have been because she ran the shop and the bakery as well.**

**JB:** No, my uncle ran the bakery but he used to come round and bring the stuff into the shop to sell, and like I said, they sold... in those days, I was thinking, how did they manage to survive?

**I: So you say your grandmother was very well-known and very well-respected. Had she always lived in that area?**

**JB:** Yes. Well, that's when she was born, date of birth.

**I: That's June Rebecca Tapp, yes?**

**JB:** Yes.

**I: So she was born in 1888.**

JB: Yes, and died in 1969. She would be just over 80, was she?

I: **Yes, she would have been 81.**

JB: Yes, because her birthday was in January. The library gave me that because I went in to find out something about it.

I: **Do you remember obviously loads of people from the neighbourhood and the town were using the shop?**

JB: Yes. There was a shop over the road called Harvey's. They were a massive big ironmonger's shop. This is where the pub is now.

I: **Which pub now?**

JB: The student pub.

I: **Oh, the Frog and Fiddle?**

JB: Yes, the Frog and Fiddle. (Laughter) I'm sorry.

I: **Well, I don't even use it (Laughter).**

JB: That used to be Harvey's ironmongers. On the side of that, you know you've got, like, there's a fenced-off partition and the house goes back?

I: **Normandy House, yes?**

JB: Yes, which was something to do with (unclear 0:05:06). That used to be the labour exchange.

I: **The big house at the back?**

JB: Yes, because there was one there and there was also one in St. Paul's Street North. There was always a gentleman who used to come over every day at ten o'clock precisely, two pies and a currant bun. "Good morning, Mrs. Tapp. Usual, please," and he was as Welsh as you could make him. He would come over every day. I used to bake them. We all could make them. We got the meat from the local butcher's, which was three doors up. Taylor's.

I: **Taylor's butchers?**

JB: No. Taylor; had a son, played water polo for Cheltenham. Next door to my gran's was (ph 0:06:24) *Huelings*, the shoe repairers. Richard Hueling. There was also a used car showroom just because where the butcher's shop is there's an alley which goes into New Street. There was a car show room, (ph 0:06:52) *George Barrett's* show rooms. He was an Arthur Daley. I tell you what. They could make a film of him. He was a typical charmsmith. He didn't do any service during the war. Somehow he managed to... I think he had flat feet or something. My uncle had to go to London for something and he said to me would I like to go? He said, 'Mr Barrett's taking us.' Back in the 40s, they weren't cars, they were like bricks, massive big standards and Vauxhalls and they drove up to London no problem at all on the old A40, come back, done what we had to do, brought us back, 'Thank you very much.' I came back, my uncle said, '(Unclear 0:07:59).' I was only four at the time.

Over the road from my gran's shop, on the corner of St. Paul's Street there was a greengrocer shop. They used to come over because we'd go over and get potatoes and stuff like that, because my gran never had a garden because all she had was a flower garden. We had an outdoor privy. It was a flush, mind. It was one of the fairly flush ones.

**I: Did a lot of the stores have outdoor ones there?**

JB: Yes. Dare I say, have you ever heard of a gas mantle one?

**I: No.**

JB: Something for you to check up. So it worked off gas. They hang on the wall and you put like a clipper and it's a cloth which reflects the gas and if you touch it, it goes whoosh like that. You daren't touch it. In my gran's living room, they never had a TV. All my uncle had was a wind-up gramophone, because he was an avid collector of opera. He loved opera for some reason. There was a black range. Have you ever been to (ph 0:09:50) *Beamers* or places like that?

**I: Hmm-hmm.**

JB: Go in the houses there, you'll see the fireplaces which are black. Black and (unclear 0:09:58), open up the ground, put the things in and you'll get a hot plate and put the kettle on. There was always a kettle on the top of the fire with hot water in. We had two or three kettles, have a bath in front of the fire, because there was no such thing as a bath then. To be honest, I still say we didn't get spoiled. Well, I did because my sister came along in 1947, but we sort of moved up to Priors Farm then. It was rationing. Sweet rationing. What did my gran have? A sweet shop. No rationing. She took the coupons but there was no rationing for June (Laughter).

**I: So you didn't have it as bad as a lot of other people then?**

JB: No. I went to school at the parish school, which was round... you know St. Gregory's school?

**I: Yes.**

JB: There used to be a school this side. I went to that one there, sort of like an infant's school. Like a pre-primary school. I went there for a couple of years because it was just round the corner. I made a few mates, then loads of people sort of moved because there were a lot of men coming back from the war and they wanted houses. They were told if they came back they could have houses, which they did do, give them their due. Alright, we moved to Priors Farm.

**I: Priors Farm is up by round here, isn't it, near Sainsbury's?**

JB: Yes, where Sainsbury's is, the other side.

**I: When did you move there?**

JB: 1947.

**I: So that was you and your mother and your father?**

JB: Mother and father and my sister because she was only tiny then. We moved to what people seemed to think was a scourge, prefabs, but people today would love it. People who are homeless would love it because you had a fitted kitchen, you had a bathroom, you had two bedrooms, you had a front garden. You had a back garden.

**I: All luxuries.**

JB: Compared to being down at the lower end of the high street it was luxury. There was about I think 120 prefabs built there. We stopped there until 1950. Somewhere along the line my dad got in touch with the council and we then moved up to Priors Road and had a three-bedroom house up in Priors Road. I stopped there until I got married in 1968. That's not your side of town.

**I: That's alright. You say you used to go back to the shop every week?**

JB: Oh god, yes. My mum would go down on a Saturday to help Nan in the shop because dad would be working. He'd be working at Hillier's. So mum would go down, take the pram down, because in those days you couldn't catch a bus down from where we lived. I could catch a bus from here to say up to (unclear 0:13:54) or somewhere like that. I would go there and I would go straight through, out the back to my uncle and he'd say, 'There you are. I saved you some jam,' because he bought 7lb tins of jam (Laughter). Or he said, 'Do you want to make a meat pie?'

**I: So where was your father from?**

JB: My father was from Birmingham. This is where if you want to go down my ancestry line you can find out more.

**I: So you don't know much more about it?**

JB: I don't know very much about it. To be honest, I don't know very much about all... my mum came from a place just up past Chesil Beach. There was a castle there called Corfe Castle, which is on the western front. My dad always said he came from Birmingham because people would say, 'I can spot a different accent to Gloucestershire.' You're Irish, aren't you?

**I: Of origin. I'm actually Irish half Italian.**

JB: You haven't got an accent.

**I: No, because I grew up in Northampton.**

JB: That's the shoe company.

**I: Yes (Laughter).**

JB: Doc Martens, cheap (Laughter). Here. "Born in Birmingham."

**I: Oh right. It's in there, is it?**

JB: Yes.

**I: There's an obituary to him.**

JB: I did that. That was the first bit of what I call reporting. I did some prior to doing English at school.

**I: So Hillier's was also on the high street, wasn't it?**

JB: Yes. Talking about Hillier's, when my dad came back, he went to work there, and they'd get German prisoners of war, because you had (unclear 0:16:32), camp on the hill where the prisoners of war were kept, and they came into town selling or bartering models which they made. I had, if I sold them today I'd make a small fortune, two German war-time planes. A Dornier and a (unclear 0:16:56) made by a German prisoner of war. If I had those today, they'd make a fortune on eBay.

**I: So this was..?**

JB: 2000-and-something.

**I: 2004.**

JB: Yes. My mum died four years before my dad. I had to see my sister to find out what did dad do and, 'Have I got this right?' I phoned through to the (ph 0:17:39) echo office and the woman came back and said that...

F: (Unclear 0:17:46). That's all he can do is yak, yak, yak.

**I: (Laughter) It's alright. It's all good.**

JB: I phoned through to there and she read it back word-for-word. That's what we put in.

**I: So was your father working in the bakery?**

JB: No, my uncle was working in the bakery. My father was working at Hillier's, which was just up the road.

**I: Everyone was working on the high street pretty much?**

JB: Yes.

**I: Your mum used to go and help out on a Saturday?**

JB: Yes. We did a bit of bartering with the local chip shop, which was just up the road. Paul's Chip Shop. They had two chip shops in town. You had Upper Paul's and Lower Paul's. Lower Paul's was down by the cinema.

**I: And the bingo hall was, right?**

JB: Yes. It used to be a hall now it's a cinema. The one which we used was sort of off on an angle, straight across the road. We'd go in there and most of the time take a few hot cross buns over and we'd come back out with a massive big portion of chips with sauce and Nan would shut the shop. We'd just get in

there and we'd have chips and corned beef and fresh bread baked from the bakers.

**I: So those early years when you were a kid and used to go back there and obviously your dad and your uncle and your grandmother all worked in this area, how would you describe what that area was like back then?**

JB: Very affluent.

**I: So this was immediately after the war?**

JB: After the war, yes.

**I: It was after it?**

JB: Mmm because you never had takeaways. There were hardly any takeaways. The pubs were a roaring trade. See what you think of this. Starting from where the high street begins on the corner of Dixies Corner, right? You go down on the left-hand side. You had (ph 0:20:15) *Shenton's*, which was a clothes shop. You had (ph 0:20:19) *Harry Agin's*, which was a second-hand shop. You had George Barrett's, the car dealers. Then you had Jack Taylor's, the butcher. Huelins, the shoe people. Post office. Gardener. Another cake firm. You had (ph 0:20:39) *Ian's Cafe*, which was a very nice cafe. Then you had a paper shop. Then you had another shop, which I can't remember what his name was. Then you had the pub, which was in those days called The Royal Oak.

**I: Oh right. That's the one they're doing up now, isn't it?**

JB: I don't know. It's the one which is...

**I: It's closed down now.**

JB: Oh, has it closed down now? Then you had just past that a little entrance where they took all the beer in. Then you had another butcher's shop. Then you had a hairdresser's. Then you came down to a small shop called United Yeast Company, where my uncle used to get his yeast for the bread. Then you had (ph 0:21:22) *Dimree's* fruit and veg shop. Then you had another street which went out into New Street. I can't remember the name of the street. Coming down you had little smaller shops and all these shops were busy. Coming down the other side of the road you had Harvey's. You had the greengrocers. You had a gentleman who did radio repairs. Then you had a chap, Harding's, which is still there now, which sells all little bits and bobs, you know, screws and that. Then you had (ph 0:22:07) *Miss Neelon's*, the wool people, which if you've been reading Facebook you'd have seen people have registered her on it.

**I: Yes.**

JB: Then you had Boots the chemist. Double-fronted shop, which is now... I don't know because I don't go there often, a big chemist called Boots, but then after a while it got turned into a restaurant. Then it became a cheap breakfast place. Then you had a yacht chandler with all his stuff down there. Then you had Hamlin's, which was a bicycle repair shop. Coming past that, you had a couple more little small haberdashery-type shops. Then you had Lower Paul's

Chip Shop, which was very handy for when you came out of (ph 0:23:23) *the pictures*. You had a car showroom.

**I: Another one?**

JB: Another one, yes. Then you had the cinema. It started off as The Ritz. Then it became the Essoldo. The Essoldo was the first cinema in Cheltenham to have CinemaScope.

**I: At that time where was the other cinema in Cheltenham?**

JB: Oh, there were cinemas.

**I: Yes, there were quite a few, right?**

JB: Yes.

**I: You had them all around the town?**

JB: You had The Regal, which is in the promenade, which is the big office block as you come down, turn in, where the fountain is, (unclear 0:24:20) Scott House. That was The Regal. You then had a small cinema, which was next to what they call The Drill or the (ph 0:24:37) *TA centre*, which is on the side of Primark. You came round on the ring road and you came to the Coliseum, which is now office blocks. Then about 100 yards from there you had The Gorman/Odeon.

**I: God, there were so many then?**

JB: Yes. Then you had one in the high street called The Palace, which was by the side of Marks & Spencer as it was. Then you had (ph 0:25:16) *The Lovers* Cinema, the Daffodil.

**I: Okay, in the Suffolks, right?**

JB: In the Suffolks, yes. That was it. Then they all gradually shut. One by one they de-materialised.

**I: So you said this area was really affluent. So who were the people that used all these shops? Were they people just from that area or from around the town that used to come and use the shops in that area, do you think?**

JB: It expanded. You had the high street here and you had the shops but you also had houses by your place. You had houses in Swindon Street. You had Hudson Street, Granville Street.

**I: Yes, St. Paul's.**

JB: All around that area and at the other side were New Street and Ambrose Street and places like that.

**I: Who were the people living there?**

JB: Just normal people. Some of them had their own businesses, like Nan and Jack Taylor. They all were family names.

I: **Obviously, the names of the shop you say all sound like family names.**

JB: There was no sort of corporate names like McDonald's or places like that. Neelon's, right, Miss Neelon looked after the wool side of their shop and toys but down the road, there was a coal merchants. All part of the same family, which was a couple of doors down from the cinema. It's amazing because people go, 'I know Miss Neelon. My grandparents used to work with them,' and things like that. On this Cheltenham Facebook thing you'd be surprised how many people can relate. "Where were you born and what road did you live in?" It says about 200 people all over town.

I: **That's one of the good things about all this social media stuff that it allows people to do that more easily. You do get a lot of rubbish out of it.**

JB: I've got one here now. (Unclear 0:27:56) Street, the woman here.

[Respondent opens up his computer/tablet]

JB: It says I have to start something now.

I: **So when you were a kid down there, do you remember, obviously you used to go down every Saturday. Were there a lot of other children as well round there that used to play in the streets?**

JB: No. They weren't allowed to play in the streets.

I: **The road was really busy?**

JB: The road was very busy. Saying that, mind you, the (ph 0:28:47) *Alston* swimming baths, you weren't too far from (unclear 0:28:52). You just went up one road and straight through and you'd come up to Pittville Park. Children of my age there would sort of go to the railway station to see the trains.

I: **That was round the back near the school, right?**

JB: Yes. I can remember my uncle Edgar when he came home after being de-mobbed, the first thing he did when he had a bit of spare time was take me to what we called the Paddy Gates in Alston Lane to watch the steam trains.

I: **Those gates that are kind of still there, aren't they?**

JB: Yes, the gates are still there. Because the sweets were still rationed, he brought me back a big bag of sugared almonds from Egypt and he said, 'Here, I bought you some sweets.' I scoffed the lot and I've never had sugared almonds since. They made me that bad. He sat me on top of the (unclear 0:30:10) and we watched the trains coming up from (ph 0:30:14) *Amsden* Station to go up further up the road.

I: **When was it that they took that train station away? Was it not long after that?**



JB: St. James's?

I: **Yes.**

JB: It was still there in '56, because we used the railway station, we went up to Schoolboy Internationals, up to Wembley.

I: **Football?**

JB: Football, every year.

I: **To watch them?**

JB: Watch the football, yes. You've never seen so many school kids in your life. Parents were allowed to go if they look after us. They put on specials. You'd have four or five specials and they'd all sort of disappear up to god knows where. We'd all go to Wembley. The old Wembley, by the way.

I: **I went to that a few years before it was knocked down. What was I going to ask you, Jim, again about your grandma? You said that she was really well-respected.**

JB: Yes. I've got to mention my mate on Facebook. There was a lady who knows my daughter. I happened to mention that my gran... I think I mentioned it to you, about what she wore. She went into mourning after my grandpa...

I: **Oh right yes. I remember you saying that.**

JB: After my gramp died she went into mourning. She would always wear this black velvet dress and a Camille choker, which my granddad gave her. The lady who knows my daughter remembered that and she said, "I was scared to go in the shop but she had a lovely smile," she said. She had a gorgeous smile. You couldn't do no wrong. Well, I couldn't because I was the first grandson (Laughter).

I: **You had a special place.**

JB: Yes. When she died, when she had the funeral, the high street from the shop down to (ph 0:32:48) *Gas Green*, do you know where that is?

I: **Hmm-hmm.**

JB: Was more or less shut.

I: **So they other shop owners..?**

JB: Yes.

I: **When was that?**

JB: 1970. There was a copper outside the shop, saluted her.

I: **So that was when your grandfather..?**

JB: No, my grandmother.

**I: When your gran died?**

JB: Yes. I don't know very much about my gramp because I was only tiny.

**I: So when your gran died, a lot of the other shops paid their respects by closing for the day?**

JB: Yes.

**I: Wow.**

JB: You wouldn't see that today.

**I: No. Well, this is what I was going to ask you. There are two things I want to ask you. We'll do the first one first. Concentrating on that early period when you were younger on the high street, you said it was really affluent, it was really busy. Do you have a sense of how different that area was from other parts of the town? Did people consider that a different part of town?**

JB: It was like a "them and us". It was always, 'Oh, you lived in Lower High Street.' Or there was Lower Dockem, which is down past the (ph 0:34:12) *Gas Breaks*, which I termed as Lower Dockem. You had the top end of the high street, which was, how can you put it? Building societies and banks and (ph 0:34:27) *duns*, clothes people. You had (ph 0:34:32) *camder* shows on the promenade. You had (ph 0:34:37) *showers and lanances*. Then you had wards. What we had down the bottom end of the high street was Dixie's, which was, how can you put it? It would be like Primark is to Marks & Spencer today.

**I: So that was the 'them', the kind of bankers, the lawyers and that.**

JB: You know Lloyds Bank in town?

**I: Yes.**

JB: That's been there yonks. There were banks all over the place. Where Lloyds Bank is there was Barclays Bank, which is I think still Barclays. On the corner, (ph 0:35:16) *Cambury*, where the (unclear 0:35:18) was, there was a National Westminster Bank. Then on the corner of Winston Street you had Martin's, family bankers. That's like Coutts of London that was.

**I: So why was there this "them and us"? Was it a class thing, like working-class?**

JB: Yes. I think it was a class distinction. You get it now. 'Oh, where do you live?' '(Unclear 0:35:54) Road.'

**I: Even back then, even though the lower high street was very affluent and busy, you still think there was this class divide?**

JB: Yes. You could go up so far because you had the grammar school in the high street. You had the brewery, which sounds daft. You had the brewery right next door to the grammar school. They've knocked it down now.

**I: It was a beautiful building, right?**

JB: Yes. Victorian. It was built on the same lines as Cheltenham College. I don't know if you ever go round to... if you look at the churches, they're all gothic-styled. St. Phillips, except the one behind the library, because that's the oldest one in town.

**I: Yes, the medieval one.**

JB: Yes, that's medieval that is. You look at St. Phillips.

**I: Even the Catholic Church.**

JB: They are works of art. You think, 'How did they manage to do that?' Christ Church. They used to build churches which were built in the 1800s, except the one behind the library. Today you wouldn't see it. And people who worked on churches got paid, and St. Gregory's. Remember St. Gregory's?

**I: Yes.**

JB: Down the bottom end of town. You had St. Peter's Church, which was down by the bottom of Tesco, which is now I think a rock climbing centre or something.

**I: It's next to it, yes.**

JB: That was built. There you are. So people had money and also you had the gas works, which was at the very end of the high street, which lots of people worked in because you had all the coal coming in from all over the place being dropped off into the coal alliance. Like I said, you had Miss Neelon's coal. They all picked the coal up, coal wharfs and everything. Plus you had the market every Thursday. Then you had the abattoir where they killed them and stuck them in the market, which is now all gone. Then schools started to come in.

**I: So you know there was this class divide, which is pretty much still there now, you say. So the people that lived on all the streets off the high street then, the ones that didn't have their businesses, do you remember what they did?**

JB: General labourers. They were labourers and shop assistants and things like that. Bearing in mind that more or less opposite the cinema there was what they called (ph 0:39:53) *Rotan House*. That was what they would call a doss house where all the drunkards and all went. By The Shakespeare, the road by The Shakespeare. There's something that used to be there called Rotan House. You'd always see them hanging around just on the street, outside (ph 0:40:18) *Heddle's* Chip Shop, because you had the shops down there but you also had people who were working in the shops. (Unclear 0:40:30). There was about six or seven people working in a shop then. Harry Higgins, he was a second-hand dealer. There were always four or five people in the shop. You go to the newspaper shop. There wasn't one person in the shop. There were four or five people. It was like my first job. It wasn't just me. There was four people on the provisions side and there was three ladies doing the grocery side, because I worked for a big firm called (ph 0:41:10) *George Mason's*.

So there were seven people with jobs, and jobs then were easier to have than what they are today. Everybody was working. Alright, the wages, but you could go down and see... you asked what people did. On the Saturday morning, the kids would go to the cinema. Either to the Gorman's or the Regal for a Saturday morning serial, things like that. That was their main day. Six pence or nine pence. A thousand kids off the streets in two cinemas. 12 o'clock they'd come out down the town, that was it. I used to make things. My father would make me a soap box trolley just to push in the back yard. He'd make it. I couldn't take it down the high street because it was too narrow to do. It still is now actually.

**I: Yes, there isn't much space.**

JB: There's not much space there now, but saying that, mind, you never had problems with parking because there was no traffic on the road.

**I: It was just people walking, right?**

JB: It was people walking, yes. I suppose you had what I would class as a post-war feeling. We'd won the war, but can we put it right? How long will it take to put right? If you'd been in London it would have been completely different, but dare I say Cheltenham they got bombed twice, further on down Stoneville Street I think it was? That was only done because the German bomber planes were going up to Coventry and they were following The Severn up and probably jettisoned their load coming back. Saying that, mind, you had (unclear 0:43:55) and they were war manufacturers making stuff. A lot of the Cheltenham firms, Martin's, (ph 0:44:06) *Tally Ho's*, and things like that, they were all making war equipment, so fair enough, they can do it. I'd be in the bakers. I'd come out of the shop with my mum, sit on a massive big (unclear 0:44:32) in the shop and it was all, "Hello, is that your son? Isn't he cute? I haven't seen you for ages. The last time I saw you, you had a shawl on and you had curls."

**I: So one of the things you said at the beginning earlier as well was that you saw the area changed a lot. So obviously you moved away but you kept going back there and your dad and your uncles all worked in the area and your grandma was there until 1970. What did you mean how it changed over the years?**

JB: Shops were shutting. The businesses were supermarkets and bigger shops. Supermarkets had opened up.

**I: When was this?**

JB: The 1960s the early supermarkets would open up. Then you started getting the major supermarkets like Sainsbury's, Tesco. I remember when Tesco opened at the bottom of the high street, the shops started to shut. Moore's moved as well, because that moved up to just past the now defunct Beechwood Place, the Woolworths, because it was two doors up from where I worked. That moved from more or less the middle of town up to that end. The trade started to... the footfall slowed down.

**I: Nothing replaced it? So shops just closed?**

JB: No.

**I: Did your grandma's place also start struggling or was it okay?**

JB: It was okay because, like I said, my uncle, he was a one-off. It's like if you wanted something, if you wanted a cake or bread, if we went shopping, I'd go down on a Saturday and we'd have cakes for Sunday tea especially made, especially prepared. Those cakes would be in the shop. "Alright, we'll have a couple of those, a couple of those, a couple of those." It was one-to-one, which you don't get these days. You can go round a supermarket with a shopping trolley and there's people, "Are you alright?"

**I: So it was a more personal service?**

JB: It was a personal touch. Some people got to know you. You'd go into a shop and especially if you went into Shenton's, which was the gent's outfitters, this is when I was in my mid teens, we'd go into Shenton's and get the latest fashion. We'd go to the sales person, which we knew, and he knew down to a T your measurements.

**I: Your tastes and what you wanted, what you were looking for.**

JB: Yes, and dare I say it, in the mid 60s, well, late 50s, mid 60s, the fashion for lads changed drastically. Shoes. Just round the corner from my gran's shop there was a shoe shop called Adcock's, which is now the (ph 0:49:06) *balloon and balour* shop. You could go in there, buy Cuban shoes, pointed toes, two-inch heels. These were men's shoes. You'd go in there every three months and the fashion would change, but you go in, a new pair of shoes. You had to stick tissue in the bottom to stop them... with the heel it was like doing the Spanish dancing in the town hall, but that was personal service. You go across to Harvey's. "Can we have some nails?" "Certainly. I'll go to the back," and scoop, oh, the smell. It was, oh. It was like the smell from the bakery was good enough but you go into Harvey's and you'd have linseed oil, the smell of the... it's like have you ever smelt a steam train?

**I: Yes.**

JB: It was like that. The smell of a steam train when it's going away. Oh, you can't beat it. If they could sell it in bottles they'd make a fortune. That's what all the old people said.

**I: So your grandma's business was okay but others started closing down?**

JB: Yes.

**I: So, as that started happening, did the area become a bit more kind of... like that idea that this part of town was a bit more run-down than others?**

JB: Yes, because you started to then get a lot of second-hand shops, especially halfway down there was a massive big second-hand shop, and I mean massive. Jack Browning's it was called. You could buy anything. All sorts. Stuff which people didn't want, people were selling, because austerity started happening at Cheltenham. It took a while, mind, but it was starting to reflect the bottom end, because once the pubs started to shut, you could see it

coming from the bottom end of town, the pubs would gradually shut. Of course, once the pubs shut, there was no trade. People weren't spending their money in the pubs, so they weren't getting rat-assed at night. Dare we say we got attacked by students from St. Paul's and St. Mary's?

**I: Really?**

JB: Yes. That's when the college opened down the bottom.

**I: So when was that?**

JB: You know where St. Francis Hall is?

**I: Yes. That was a teaching college, right?**

JB: Yes. It was physical training, because when it was a school we used to have the students teach us PE from there. Of course, the student influx started. I don't have to tell you because you've probably done it.

**I: Okay, so that's in about the mid 60s or late 60s?**

JB: My gran's shop was still going in 1970 because when she died my uncle took it over. Then it was only him and my mum. We'd go down to see him but then he shut it. I think he sold it, to be honest, and made some money because he sold it not as a business, but as the whole building. It was three storeys, plus a cellar. I went to the shop a while ago and I said, 'Do you know what was here before you?' he said, 'Yeah, a (ph 0:54:31) *student net base*.' I said, 'No, before that?' 'Nope.' I said, 'I used to live here.' 'Hey?' 'I used to live here.' I said, 'Have you still got the back yard?' 'Yep.' 'Have you still got the old bakers at the back?' 'There's a big black oven.'

**I: So the oven's still in there?**

JB: It was. That oven was not steam. It was a coal oven. It was quite a big thing. You could stick in at least eight layers or trays in the oven at the same time. Here's a bit of socialism. Easter time. Hot cross buns. There was me, my mum, my cousin Gordon, my cousin Elizabeth and my uncle, and my gran, making hot cross buns.

**I: The whole family?**

JB: Yes.

**I: The demand was that high?**

JB: We sold over 4,000 because as soon as we were sandling them in into the shop, people were buying them and people had orders for nearly two dozen hot cross buns. My job was to put the cross on and put the egg yolk across the top.

**I: To give them the shine?**

JB: Yes, to give them the shine. My mum would be in the shop with Elizabeth and Gordon would be out the back. Would you believe it, he was a doctor at one of the hospitals in London. He came down especially to help with the hot

cross buns and the best thing about it was there was another baker that sold out of hot cross buns. The manager from there came to see Nan and said could he buy a tray of hot cross buns off us because he never had enough to offer his own. You can go to Asda now and buy hot cross buns but they're not as nice as they used to be. You'd get the old mixer, currants in, on the tray. I can still do them now.

**I: So this is a broader question. I get the sense that when you were a kid, and you were growing up when you were there you moved over here in this area but you used to go back there a lot. Everyone respected each other; there were all these shops that were kind of connected. There was quite a big sense of community there?**

JB: Yes. We knew the people at Huelings. I used to hang around with Mr. Hueling's two sons. Jack Taylor, I was always in his shop. Go across to the chip shop, Paul's. Miss Neelon, my mum used to always get her knitting wool from there. Of course, she was also a toy shop as well. So I'd be in my element. They didn't mind. You could sit down on the floor playing with Jacks. You went into the paper shop or you had six pence and you'd go and buy a Beano or go and buy the Dandy, and they'd all talk to you.

**I: Did that aspect of life there change when it started to..?**

JB: Yes. People didn't want to know things.

**I: Did a lot of people move out of the area?**

JB: I wouldn't say move out, no. I think jobs were harder to come by. You kept your jobs and you could see the degeneration of the shops shutting. You had the supermarkets. Then the railway station shut. The nearest station then was (ph 0:59:59) *Lansdown*, which was the other side of town. The job centre shut. Dixie's shut. So all the shops which people knew were all closing, so we had to go further up into town.

**I: So it meant people didn't go to this area as much anymore?**

JB: No, people never did, the footfall was getting lower and lower.

**I: Do you think it never really recovered from that?**

JB: It never recovered, no. Unless you call fast food.

**I: That's all it's ever been ever since then?**

JB: Yes, ever since then. You know yourself, have you seen a new shop opening on the high street?

**I: Well, no. I used to go to a barber down there but I... Bramwells. You don't like them?**

JB: (Unclear 1:00:56).

**I: (Laughter).**

JB: I don't like them.

**I: Why not?**

JB: I walked past there a couple of times and they had all these funny fashion magazines.

**I: They're a barbers, you know.**

JB: The barbers I went to had no magazines to read, because I went to the barbers, there was a barbers shop just the other side of the pub. I'd always go down there in the barbers, go down and have my haircut with my dad and I'd sit in the barber's chair on top of a bench and have my hair done. You'd go in there and sit there. 'Who's going to win the match today?' You'd get that.

**I: One last question. Speaking to other people about the area and looking at its history, we talked about the Shamrock pub, the Irish pub that used to be called something else before.**

JB: The Royal Oak. There was always a picture of a Royal Oak tree.

**I: Do you remember people that were not English or immigrants or people from other areas from other parts of the world coming to that part of town?**

JB: Not until the mid 70s. Then you started getting the Chinese with the takeaways. Then you'd get towards the railway bridge you'd get a couple of Asians, small shops. They'd be open. Then of course, in the late 90s you'd then got the Polish people coming.

**I: Before that, wasn't there a big Irish community?**

JB: There was a very big Irish community, yes. They loved The Shakespeare and they loved the Royal Oak. You've just got to see, they've got the tricolour outside there (Laughter).

**I: So how did people get on? Did they mix very well?**

JB: They did yes because you worked with them. Regardless of whether they pounded the shit out of you on the weekend, you still worked with them on the Monday and everything was forgotten. If there was ever a collection wanted, they were the first ones to put the money in or if people were down and outs. I tell you what you never saw. You never saw anybody like you do in the high street today. You know what I'm going to say? People begging. You never saw that.

**I: You never would have seen that back then?**

JB: No. That's one thing you'd never see. How are we doing?

**I: We're doing very good. I'm going to stop it there.**

(End of recording)