

Pam Wilkinson

Key:

I: Interviewer
PW: PW
BW: Bryn Wilkinson

I: **If you could just both start for the record then by stating your names.**

PW: My name is Pamela Wilkinson.

BW: Mine's Bryn Wilkinson.

I: **Pam, obviously we've been in touch because you saw the website and the project that we're trying to do.**

PW: I did.

I: **So you were born and grew up in the area?**

PW: No. That's not quite right. I was born in Yorkshire. At that time that I was born, my father was manager of the Wakefield Opera House. He knew the people that owned the Essoldo Cinema and they approached him and asked him would he be interested in coming to Cheltenham as they were taking over a cinema and completely changing it from what it was, upgrading it and putting in, at the time it was called Cinematograph and Stereophonic Sound. It was the first cinema in Cheltenham to have Stereophonic Sound and these huge wide screens. The first film that was shown when they opened was called The Robe, which was a wonderful film, very well-known and there were queues up and down the high street for about a month to see that film.

I: **How old were you at the time?**

PW: Eight.

I: **So you were born in Yorkshire then and you came down and your father took it over and you were eight years old.**

PW: Yes.

I: **Perhaps we'll concentrate on your life there before we focus on the cinema. So what do you remember from those early years or from those first experiences when you moved down?**

PW: I had a brother, who was two and a half years older than me, and we went to the Dunalley Primary School together.

I: **Which is at St. Paul's, right?**

PW: Yes. The idea was that my brother was supposed to wait outside the gate for me every night to walk home with me, but brothers being brothers, one particular day he thought, 'Blow it. I'm not waiting for her,' so I started to walk home and couldn't remember the way. Ended up in the middle of Cheltenham

and went up to a policeman and said, 'I'm lost.' Told him that I lived at the Essoldo Cinema and he took me home, which was wonderful. That was my first with policemen (Laughter).

I: Not the last, obviously?

PW: No. My two sons are policemen as well, and I worked for the police.

I: There's a connection there, okay.

PW: Yes. I can remember we lived in the flat over the cinema and I can remember the shops that were all around. You've probably heard of Iddel's Fish and Chip shop. We had a bookmaker's shop that was called Cook's, and then we had sweetie shops, flower shops, fish and chip shops, and I remember all those shops as if it was yesterday. Never kept in contact with anybody. After leaving Dunalley Primary school, at the age of 11, I then went to Christchurch School for Girls. I remember walking to school every day and coming home.

I: Did you go to school with people that primarily lived in the same area?

PW: Yes. Unfortunately, not in contact with any of them now, it's so many years ago, but in those days you could actually play out in the streets with your ball and whatever. One of my favourite ones was standing outside stopping traffic and pretending I was a policeman (Laughter). Yes, very fond memories, the cake shop up the road and Boots the chemist up the road. My father was well-known because he was the manager of the cinema and every day he had to go to the bank, and he sort of knew everybody in the shops and they would all say, 'Morning, Mr. Lewis.' I used to walk with him and was very proud of my dad.

I: So you mention that most people knew each other on the high street. That would seem to suggest that it was when you moved there already quite a tight-knit community.

PW: Yes. Everybody was friendly in the shops that we went to, but the one thing we did find was if you were out in the street, people weren't as friendly as they were in Yorkshire where we came from. We did find a difference there with Cheltonians.

I: So the north/south difference perhaps?

PW: Yes.

I: Obviously you went to school with children that also lived in the area. If I ask you the kind of people that lived on the Lower High Street in those days, so we're talking mid-1950s? □

PW: Yes.

I: So how would you describe the people that lived in the area? How would you characterise them?

PW: People that I became friendly with were okay, but there was an awful lot of what I would say were naughty people that would go into the cinema and sit at the front and make a lot of noise and my father used to have to throw them

out because they were naughty. I have quite a lot of memories of that actually. My father wouldn't stand any nonsense. It was wonderful days. We had big films. At the time it was the (ph 0:06:37) *Gormant* Cinema in the ABC. As we grew older, my brother became a projectionist and I used to serve on the sweet kiosk, so we're talking about now when I was about 12 or 13. At the beginning of every evening show, my father was always there in a dress suit and showing the crowds in.

My husband said about the cat. We had a little black and white cat and the cat was sort of marked like my father's dress suit, the black and the white, and he used to sit at the side of my father and it became quite well-known that, 'Nat Lewis and his cat,' (Laughter) but very happy memories of those days. It did all change when my father was attacked.

I: Okay, so perhaps we'll come on to that in a second because you said there were some kids that liked to make... I suppose that's the same everywhere when there are a lot of kids about. I'm just trying to understand the kind of people that lived in the area in this period. Obviously, you've got very fond memories of being in the area. Obviously one of the things that the area is associated with nowadays is being a bit more run-down, being slightly the shabbier end of town, perhaps a little bit edgier at certain hours of the evening. One of the things we're trying to understand, and this is where you might be helpful, is when that really begins to happen, or when people's perceptions of the area begin to change. □

PW: I think it was always at the time we were there it was, 'Oh, the Lower High Street,' as if people looked down on it then.

I: Why do you think that was? Was it because it was primarily a working class area?

PW: It possibly was, and the type of shops weren't as posh if you like, as the ones up the other end of Cheltenham. Yes, I think it was. Even all those years ago I think it was the shabby part of Cheltenham, which I always thought was very sad really. The people that we knew in the shops were the same as us. There weren't so many foreigners in those days. We were all sort of English people. In fact, I didn't know any foreigners back then.

I: So the area wasn't as mixed in terms of different cultures or ethnic groups?

PW: No. I don't think it was. I can't remember it being.

I: Do you remember there being an Irish population there?

PW: No. Not really. We had a pub just over the road from the Essoldo. I think it was called The Shakespeare.

I: Yes, which I think is The Shamrock now.

PW: Yes. We used to get noisy drunks on a Saturday night, but not like it is today. They were noisy for a bit when the pub shut and then it would all quieten down. I'm going back many years really. I can't remember it being a troublesome area.

I: You mention this idea, this is not the first time I've heard of it, of the fact that other people from outside used to look down on this area. Is there a sense do you get that the people from there also didn't really like people from other areas of Cheltenham, there was an "us and them" mentality perhaps?

PW: I think probably I was too young to notice that. I really don't know whether my parents noticed that.

I: The Essoldo was one cinema among many in Cheltenham, wasn't it?

PW: Yes, it was.

I: So primarily it served people from this part of town?

PW: Except because they put in this Cinematograph widescreen and Stereophonic Sound, and it was the only cinema at that time that had it, we were getting crowds of people from everywhere because to sit in a cinema and have the sound going all the way round back in 1953 was, 'Wow, what's this?' Literally, there were queues up the high street for many years. Then, of course, the other cinemas started to get all this in. It's been referred to as 'the flea pit' that I've seen now. The flea pit was before the Essoldo took it over. It was the Ritz. From what I remember, it was the Ritz that was the flea pit. It was certainly much more upmarket when it was the Essoldo. □

I: That was part of the renovation from your father taking it over?

PW: Yes.

I: Some of the other residents I've spoken to that grew up in the area mentioned this idea that people used to look down on people that lived at that end of town the Lower High Street area, but there was also a bit of an "us and them", 'you don't like us, we don't really like you.' There was a bit of a class divide. The middle high-class Cheltenham and ordinary people Cheltenham down here.

PW: I understand what you're saying but I suppose because I was only quite a young person I didn't notice that.

I: So your father took over in 1953. He ran the cinema for how long?

PW: I think it was about 1960, '61 when he left. I can't be absolutely sure on that.

I: You were there that whole time?

PW: No. We actually only lived in the cinema for about five years. Then we moved to Coronation Square when that had all just been built. □

I: Right, on the other side of town.

PW: So my father was still manager then but really from when he got attacked was really... he didn't feel he wanted to go back and carry on.

I: Was that the moment after the attack your father moved to Coronation Square?

PW: No. We'd moved just prior to that, but I can't remember dates exactly.

I: That's fine. So you mention this attack on your father which happened outside the cinema. Was this the first instance of its kind on the street that you remember or was it something that had happened previously perhaps?

PW: No. I don't remember there being trouble down that end prior to that. When my father was attacked we were living at Coronation Square and the first we knew of it the police came to the door and sort of said to my mother, 'Your husband's been taken to hospital. He's been attacked.' So I think that must have been about 1959, 1960 the attack. If I dig out that Echo thing, it might have a date on it, it might help.

I: So after it happened there was a court case and the two people were convicted. The result of that was that your father decided that he didn't want to run the cinema.

PW: Yes. He just felt that, 'If this is the way it's going to go,' he didn't want any part of that.

I: What do you think he meant by that? Was it the business or the street itself was changing or the area?

PW: I think he was more worried that, 'I've been attacked once. This could happen every Saturday night when I go out with the takings.' Back in those days, it was a terrible thing to be attacked. It just changed I think his... I'm sat here saying this and if he was here he'd probably say, 'No, it was really starting to go downhill and I didn't want to...' that's probably the truth. I don't know. You say it was 1973 that you policed the area, so that's way after, isn't it? I don't know when crime started to come to the Lower High Street because we'd moved to Hester's Way by then. When I left school, I went to the college in Gloucester. So I didn't really have much to do with that area after that.

I: Did you know what was happening to the cinema after your father left the business?

PW: Yes. Somebody else took it over and kept it running as a cinema, but I can't remember for how long. The next thing I remember it was turned into a bingo hall. Then things started to change with other cinemas in the area as well. I know my brother, who was a projectionist at the Essoldo then went as a projectionist at the ABC. So he'd already left before my father got attacked. I think he wanted a bigger cinema and they were doing over in Gloucester the ABC were doing more stage shows, which my brother was more interested in and doing projectionist. Mum didn't really have anything to do with the running of the cinema at all. She was a typical mum. She was there when we came out of school and the old-fashioned type of mums. I always worked in the cinema with my dad and helped out and loved it.

I: One of the things in the newspaper article that came out recently, which is one of the first times I'd heard it, is that the area was referred to as Lower Dockem.

PW: Yes. I didn't know that.

I: It's not something that you heard or remember?

PW: No. When I read about it, I thought, 'I don't recognise that at all.' Could that have been before my time, do you think?

I: It seems as if it has its origins before that. It seems to have something to do with the old railway station.

PW: And the gas works.

I: Yes, and the way it connected this part of Cheltenham with the docks in Gloucester.

PW: So no, I don't remember anything about it being called Dockem when I was there.

I: It seems like people have different memories about this. Some people seem to think that Lower Dockem wasn't really the Lower High Street; it was a bit further down towards the gas works.

PW: Further down, yes.

I: Obviously the reporter in the Echo who publishes this Nostalgia column decided to call it Memories of Lower Dockem because some people must associate it with that part of town as well. After you left this area, so you lived there for about five or six or seven years?

PW: Probably seven years, yes.

I: You didn't go back much or ever go through again?

PW: Well, only in the normal course of if there was anything I wanted from a shop down there I would come back, but I never went to the bingo hall. I've never been back there. I've got fond memories of when it was the Essoldo, and which was my parents' bedroom and the sitting room and the kitchen and our bedroom was round the back, and out of our window was a fire escape. That was our view.

I: Again, one of the things that's interesting about this is the way that people think or remember the area changing. Obviously, people often move and go and live elsewhere throughout their lives but I'm just wondering if you could notice that the area had changed a bit. Obviously, the cinema itself had changed and become something else, but a lot of the shops there became other businesses. I'm just wondering whether in the years that have gone by, how long did you stay in Cheltenham before leaving? □

PW: I've been in Cheltenham, apart from the odd five years in Bristol, from the age of eight all my life. So I know it fairly well. I noticed when Manor's the butcher's had gone and I read in the Echo that somebody had died. I remember Iddel's fish shop when they closed down, and you thought, 'Oh, well, we won't be going down to Iddel's fish shop,' because they were the

best fish shop in the whole of Cheltenham. After we left, I know my father used to still come to Iddel's to get his fish. Up the road was Mac Fisheries and they were fairly good. The shops did change. I think a couple of antique shops came. Then we had a polish shop. So there was nothing that brought me back to it really. Once I had moved on, I'd moved on. I must admit, nowadays there's never anywhere that I would go and shop now. In fact, we never come down the Lower High Street, do we?

I: Not many people do really.

BW: We just pass through it, don't we?

PW: They're doing all that in the brewery, which is lovely if you want to see a film or eat or whatever, and it's about time they did the Lower High Street. □

I: This is part of the reason that we're involved in this because they are supposed to be doing a lot of different things. They're supposed to be building pocket parks in certain places to spruce the area up a bit. Our objective, essentially, is to try and even though this area is unofficially the shabby end of town, it has a certain history. It has a certain story aside from King George coming to take the water in Cheltenham and then you get the regency and the shopping and the racing and all sorts. There is also a lot of history that happens here and that matters to a lot of people. So because you lived in Cheltenham, you obviously think that... you can perhaps comment on what other people from Cheltenham, what the general perception is of that area.

PW: Yes. Friends of mine said, 'Ooh, you didn't live down that Lower High Street, did you?' 'Yes, I did, but it was okay when I lived there.' Yes, you're quite right. It is looked down upon.

I: Has that been consistently that way that people have always thought of it that way?

PW: I do. Yes. In fact, sometimes there were certain people I wouldn't tell I lived down there.

I: Because you were ashamed?

PW: Yes. I think I was ashamed and that they would think I was not as good as I thought I was. The schools I went to I feel I was well-educated. When we first came to Cheltenham, I had a Yorkshire accent and when I was at school, it was said that they couldn't understand what I was saying. The result of that was my father sent me to elocution lessons, which was in Pittville. I had to go for elocution lessons.

I: Was the area when you were growing up there or perhaps even after you left, was it as poor as other people from Cheltenham believed it was?

PW: I think it probably was, yes.

I: What makes you say that?

PW: Because the kind of shops we had down here weren't as nice then as the shops up the top end of the high street.

BW: Is that because they were privately-owned?

PW: I don't know. I seem to remember it was always a bit cheaper down the Lower High Street.

I: It was all family-run businesses wasn't it?

PW: Yes. We didn't have any big... apart from Boots. We had Garden's cake shop. That was very popular. The cake shop. We had a little post office. We had a dress shop. I think that was privately-owned. When we lived there, my mother took me and we used to buy our dresses in that dress shop. If that dress shop was still there now, I probably wouldn't go to it, I'd probably go to (ph 0:24:47) *Cath House*.

I: So essentially it seems like the shops that were all there catered for the people who lived in that area predominantly?

PW: Yes. I would say they did, which sounds as though I'm saying it was below the rest of Cheltenham, but now at my age now I'm not ashamed to say I spent my childhood down there because they were very happy days and certainly not the trouble that is around now. I wouldn't walk down the Lower High Street on my own now. Then as children, we could go out after dark and we didn't fear for our lives like I think it is now. I don't know if that's any different to being up the top end of the high street at this time. Even back in those days, it was safe to be out in the streets, even though we were classed as the Lower High Street. I don't think we were classed as lower-rate citizens because we lived down there. Maybe some people thought we were but I didn't feel like that.

I: What was the big difference from other parts of Cheltenham? When you're from the Lower High Street and you're growing up there, what are the other parts of Cheltenham? What are you thinking about? Are you thinking about Pittville or the Suffolks?

PW: I'm probably thinking about the promenade and places like that, and yes, in time I remember I was 15 when I left school. I went and due to my father got me into be a secretarial trainee at The Doughty Group. I wanted to be a policewoman at the time but I had to be 19 so I had those years to fill in. I went to be one of the trainees at Doughty. This will probably make you laugh but the people that got to be a trainee at Doughty were usually doctors' daughters or solicitors' daughters, but my father was a cinema manager. What influence he used but he got me an interview. I went for the interview and I was accepted. That probably tells you that maybe I thought I was a little bit better than my friends that went to work in Woolworths and things like that. So maybe there is that little bit of divide coming out in me. You're making me feel like that now, you see? Just talking about it, that's what happened.

I: There's no getting away from it. British culture, there is this class hierarchy. We have it. So it's finding out what people's experiences are of it as they grow up.

PW: I think from the age of 15 I probably felt that you see. Because when I moved on to be a secretarial trainee at Doughty, I tended to mix then with the girls that I met then and not the girls I used to go to school with that were still living down here. So I did move on. So perhaps I became a snob as well (Laughter).

I: It's the way you remember your experiences I suppose. I just wonder because all the shops and the businesses that were on there, and obviously your father running a cinema. Obviously, you must have been fairly comfortable?□

PW: Yes. I was comfortable until the attack on my father. The people that owned the cinema somehow arranged, or my father arranged I'm not sure who, but every night we had a police escort up to the bank with our money. You wouldn't get it nowadays. As I got older, I was the one that used to go with the policeman to put the money in the bank. So there became that element of even back then that you didn't feel safe after my father had been attacked. That's when it changed.

I: Some of the other interviewees have said that it was some time in the 1960s that once the big supermarket stores started opening in other parts of the town that these small family-run businesses started to close down and you started to get either empty shops or other kinds of businesses coming in.

PW: Yes. I think that's when the big change did come about, and it became more 'The Lower High Street' stigma about it was when those big shops opened. I can remember when we had the Tesco store, I stood and watched it burn down. That's only just a bit out from Lower High Street. We all stood and watched it burn down.

I: You must also remember when they had the old grammar school where the brewery is now.

PW: Yes. I remember the old grammar school. I remember it all really.

BW: It's just putting it together.

PW: It's putting it together but I also have seen how everything's changed. Yesterday I think we drove up the Lower High Street and I looked up and I thought, 'Ooh, all the windows are boarded up now in the bingo hall.' I think I read somewhere it's all going to be pulled down or whatever.

I: I'm not sure what's going to happen there. I know they're building one of the pocket parks around it.

PW: There was a car park area behind it so maybe, and it looks like it all needs to be pulled down now.

I: It certainly needs something. It's interesting that some of the oldest buildings in the town are on or around that street. The small buildings at the back and the back streets have very medieval origins.

PW: Yes, they do.

I: Also because the street lines take the lines of the old plots that they used to have.

PW: The allotments, yes.

I: So that's the shape they take. Bryn, I'm asking you, so your memories of the area are a bit later.

BW: Mid '70s, yes.

I: So you were a police officer in Cheltenham, and then you obviously had experiences of working.

BW: Just the usual drunkenness really.

I: Was it any different there from any other part of the town?

BW: The high street and the promenade and Winchcombe Street and all that sort of area we got occasionally out for the night clubs, very occasionally. If there was going to be any trouble it would be the Lower High Street, Hester's Way, Whaddon. Those were the three main places for trouble. Of course, when I started, I started foot beat for the first two years. Occasionally you'd be in the van or the black (unclear 0:32:52) or whatever you want to call it. We used to call it the van and you just got sent to your jobs. Most of the time you were doing a thing that a policeman never does nowadays and that's shake hands with a door handle. You used to go round checking the shops, checking the back of the shops, all the windows.

So we were mainly looking for burglars because at that time it was quite prominent, especially commercial shop burglaries. Just foot patrolling and if there was a bit of noise going on you'd keep an eye on it.

I: Presumably, if you were on the beat a lot, you met a lot of people as well and they knew you?

BW: Yes. The thing is, the foot beats used to stop by the bowling green. So the Lower High Street was actually policed by a local Bobbie, St. Paul's I think it was then. It might even have been Swindon Road. So Swindon Road officers would patrol the Lower High Street and of course we had (ph 0:34:09) *panners* in those days. Little Vauxhall (ph 0:34:12) *Veebers*. So they covered the Lower High Street and we only came down to this part of town with the van if there was a punch-up. My only dealing in the Lower High Street was punch-ups and helping throw bodies in the back of the van and taking them to the police station. The rest of the time, from the bowling green up towards Boots corner, black and white coach station when that was going, all the way up to Montpellier Gardens, round by the road just before the hospital, Bath Road.

You'd go then back up to the Strand and that was basically the foot beat areas. The quietest one of the lot was Montpellier because all you had to do was walk round the... because there weren't the wine bars then back in the '70s.

I: Was it just mainly retail shops?

BW: Mainly retail shops and Montpellier Gardens. So you were looking for people sleeping in the gardens basically.

I: You said that normally the dominant areas for any kind of trouble Lower High Street was one of them.

BW: Lower High Street, part of Hester's Way and part of Whaddon. They were the main problems, like drunkenness and fighting. Yes, you'd get one or two incidents coming out of the night clubs in the high street because there were a couple of night clubs then in the high street.

PW: Why do you think the trouble was always down the Lower High Street end and the punch-ups? Is that going back to what we were saying just now?

BW: You had more spit and sawdust pubs down that way than you did in the town centre. The town centre where you saw bigger bars and restaurants catering for the racecourse and stuff like that. So that's for those sort of people, so therefore, people like you and I, back in those days, would spend most of our time in the ordinary pubs on the estates, bottom end of the high street, and that's why you had the...

I: Would you call them more working class pubs?

BW: Working to middle, yes. That side of society, whereas (ph 0:37:03) *Cab House*, on a policeman's pay you never went anywhere near Cab House.

PW: That was the posh part, wasn't it?

BW: It was the posh part, yes.

PW: It was always called 'the posh part'.

BW: I recall reading somewhere, I know it's going off the Lower High Street, but back in the early 1900s you used to have a police officer at one end of the promenade and a police officer at the other end of the promenade and if you didn't fit into what they considered suitable people to be on the promenade, you were turned away.

I: The class divide with iron bars, not just ideas of, 'they're higher, we're lower.'

PW: It's a pity they didn't have that in the Lower High Street then and maybe we wouldn't have come like, 'you're lower than the low because you come from the Lower High Street,' because that's the truth.

I: I've heard stories, and again I'll have to try and find out if that's true, but on the other side of this campus, St. Paul's Road, that goes on the other side, then it goes up to Clarence Square, there's a big difference there when you get to the end of that road and there used to be a gate there apparently between Clarence Square and St. Paul's Road.

BW: That wouldn't surprise me.

PW: St. Paul's, when I lived in the Lower High Street, was always like, there was always trouble. It was always at St. Paul's. That's going back to when I lived

in the Lower High Street. There was always trouble at St. Pauls. There was always trouble in Folly Lane.

BW: I'm trying to think what one of my instructors said about Cheltenham.

PW: About the ladies?

BW: "The colonels and their ladies is from the promenade and the rest of Cheltenham is the colonels and their ladies with dirty underwear."

PW: (Laughter) They did used to say that. That was Cheltenham.

BW: That was back in the '70s.

I: This is a town where class is really apparent, isn't it?

PW: Yes.

I: It's not a huge place but you've got big differences between the people.

BW: You've got Lansdown with all the Georgian buildings there.

PW: The regency.

BW: And what they used to be like. Then you've got Battledown and right next to Battledown you've got Whaddon.

I: I live on Prestbury Road.

BW: The reputation that Whaddon used to have because it was a council estate. When they built Hester's Way, initially Hester's Way had a good reputation but of course, when the youngsters from Whaddon grew up they went down to Hester's Way, so Hester's Way got a bad reputation. Whaddon calmed down and their youngsters grew up and they went back to Whaddon, so it just seesaws like that.

PW: When you think about it, all those people that we used to get trouble with because I used to work for the police as well for many years, they were all from Whaddon or Hester's Way. They weren't Lower High Street. Then I suppose Lower High Street wasn't that residential then.

I: Also, Hester's Way are a lot more residential. Whaddon are huge residential areas whereas the Lower High Street is actually quite a small area. There are a lot of houses coming off it but still...

PW: It wasn't really known as a big trouble quarter, was it?

BW: No. One of the things, going back years, when you had flats above the shops, the shopkeepers living above the shops, so you always had somebody living on the street. When they did away with the flats over the shops and people moved out to the new estates and new houses and things, so, therefore, the high street, or whichever street, the retail shops streets became empty, so all you had then was the thin blue line patrolling it and people who were out for a night out using it and that was it. You didn't have anybody looking out the window listening out the window to see what was going on. When you had

that, the police force then had eyes and ears from the public on the main streets. Nowadays you haven't got it. So they're depending on close circuit TV but all you can do is see things with that if the camera's pointing in the right direction. If you've got a person there they can hear it, look for it, find it, tell you about it.

PW: You're quite right there because all the shops like the Iddel's and the sweet shop and the bookies, we did all live above the shops and we all got to know each other in that little area. I can't say we all socialised with each other but everybody was friendly. So yes, you're quite right. Back in the middle '50s to maybe the beginning of '60s, it was a nice area. It wasn't an unsafe area then, which I feel it is now.

I: I think that's the general perception now, that it's more unsafe than other parts of the town.

PW: Yes, but then I don't think I'd feel safe in any part of the town, when I know what goes on. As I say, my two sons are both policemen still, so we're still in the know of what is going on. The eldest lad, he's the main trainer for the police dogs. He was a dog handler for most of his career. Our young son has been in 11 years now. He's stationed at Bamfurlong on what they call the Instant Response Unit. Every job he goes to it's blue lights because it's Grade 1 jobs all the time. It seems to be trouble and nutters and Facebook people and rubbish. I don't know if we've been very helpful really.

I: No, you have. Thank you very much. I think that's been really interesting. I know it must seem strange because you're just talking about what you know so you don't know if what you're telling me is what I need but it is. You lived and you have a perception of the area. You've had working experiences there. Also, the area may have changed so also how it relates to other parts of the town. Some of the things you've talked about have been very evident in other people's recollections, that this was an area where a lot of people perceived it to be the lower part of the high street, so there was a sense of difference. So that's been really useful.

PW: I know one of the things I did when I lived here, I played cello at school and I was put into the Cheltenham Youth Orchestra. That was held at Northlands in Pittville. So I had to walk from the Essoldo cinema to Northlands, and I'm going back to now when I was 15, 16, 17, it was quite safe to walk. Me on my own with my cello, and back in those days, yes it was safe to walk. I don't think it would be now for a girl of that age on her own to walk that area. I feel that's how the Lower High Street... it really does need bringing up or knocking down (Laughter).

I: I think they have got this regeneration and hopefully it will... I'm talking to people in their late 80s who still live there and some other people who have moved to other parts of the town. Thank you for coming in and sharing your stories.

PW: If it's been of any help that's really good.

(End of recording)