

Introduction To Digital Sound – DM1006

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Joel David Reed

Interviewee: Frederick “Roger” Carter

Location: Social Club Function Room, St Georges,
Telford

Time: 9.30am

Date: 02/03/08

Subject Matter: What’s it like to be a mechanical
engineer living in St Georges during the past.

Interview Length: 23 minutes 39 seconds

Time	Dialogue	Joel	Roger
Introductions			
0.00	<i>(Beep of mini disc player coming on, microphone distortion)</i>		
0.07	Ok Roger I would firstly like to start the interview by thanking you for giving me your time this morning and um agreeing to answering some questions for me		
	OK		
	OK um what is you full name Roger?		
	My full name is Frederick Roger Carter.		
	So Roger is actually your middle name?		
	Yes		
	So is there any particular reason you don't go by your first name?		
	Yes well my father was George Frederick Carter and my elder brother was christened Christopher George Carter and my Dad thought I would be called Frederick Roger Carter but my Mother didn't like the name Frederick <i>(I laugh)</i> so she said we will have him christened Frederick but we will always call him Roger		
	Okey doke, are you married Roger?		
	Yes		
	Um and where do you currently live at the moment?		
	Hadley in Telford		
	OK		
Work and Employment			
0.58	What is your current profession? Do you have a job?		
	No I am retired.		
	Ok what are the good points of being retired besides not working?		
	<i>(Mic noise)</i> Not a lot, I think it gets very boring at times.		
	It gets very boring?		
	Yes		
	To much free time?		
	Well that's it <i>(Slight mic noise)</i> and I have had my garden landscaped because I have arthritis in my back so I don't have much to do besides clean the car		
1.27	<i>(Laugh)</i> Ok so do you ever miss working then? Do you ever miss that working environment, going to work every day?		
	Yes I do		
	And is there any reason why?		
	<i>(Slight mic noise)</i> Well I have always used my hands because I have always been in engineering, so I miss not doing anything sort of practical		
1.48	OK um could you list me a couple of the jobs that you have done in the past, obviously prior to your retirement? <i>(Slight mic noise)</i>		
	Oh yes, I left school at 15, <i>(I shuffle paper in the background)</i> I got an apprenticeship at the Granville Colliery, which is just on the outskirts of St Georges, but I couldn't start until I was 16 years of age so I worked in the Waybury garage in Wellington for twelve months and er, when I told them I was leaving they didn't particularly like that.		
2.21	<i>(Laugh)</i> So um you said that you were in engineering um so was that the main job that you had throughout your life prior to retirement?		

	Yes
	And how long did you actually work there?
	At the Granville?
	Yes
	I started my apprenticeship at 16, in mechanical engineering and I was 21, well nearly 21 I should say and I was, I passed all my exams but I was getting paid a very low rate of pay and I argued about that because I was doing the work Grade One fitters were doing, (uh-hu from me) so I threw a strop and I left.
	So where did you move to after that?
3.04	Well I got called up as a National Serviceman in the army, (I interrupt saying OK) and when I came out of the army I went to work at Haybridge Steelworks but er, after a while there I decided I wanted to travel for a living so I worked at quite a few firms installing hot-air ovens in the car industry (uh hu from me), pre-treatment plants, conveyors and of course it was all very interesting work and er you got around and saw most of the country.
3.43	OK so you saw a lot of the country, um (Roger says Yes) during that job when you were fitting in the cars, what would be like a typical day? Um You know what would be the tasks that you would be expected to do over a working period?
	Well (<i>Wind</i>) besides er the mechanical aspects of fitting conveyors and er small lifts and things like that, there was all the steel work to be erected and the er oven claddings and all that, that had to be done and put together a bit like a jigsaw really and then of course when you got the ovens built, you then had to install the conveyors and the machinery and er drives and things like that.
4.26	OK and what was it that drove you towards becoming an engineer Roger? What really drove you to be an engineer?
	Well er, as a boy I never had a new bicycle, so I always had to make do with a second-hand one which er, it was usually what somebody had thrown away, so I used to mend them and put them right, and then er I enjoyed that part especially with the gears and things like that (uh hu from me) and getting them to work properly, so I think that is where I started using my hands getting things put together, well stripping them down first and then putting them together
Education and School	
5.11	OK Roger you were saying that you went through a Modern Apprenticeship, um I take it you would obviously gone to secondary school, primary school, whereabouts did you actually attend school?
	Well, I went to St Georges C of E primary school, which was in School St in them days, (yes), and from there I passed the exam to go to the Walker Technical college, which was at the top of Hartshill in Oakengates.
5.32	OK and can you remember any experiences from school which stick out in your mind? Erm you know any sort of mishaps that type of thing?
	There is nothing really except that erm, there was a big difference from the Church of England school to the Technical college (uh hu),

	in terms of the teachers really, some of them were very strict and you had to be in class on time or else you were in trouble and you were sent to down to see the Principal, who was a Mr Bailey (laugh) then you had to accept his punishment.
6.20	So what were the punishments given out, was the cane used on a regular basis?
	No it was a big slipper
	A big slipper, and did you er, ever come across the slipper in your time at school?
	No I didn't
	So you managed to keep a good lad (<i>Roger interrupts</i> , I did) and keep your head down, right OK
6.35	What sort of subjects did you have to study Roger?
	There was um, obviously maths, english, geography, history, metal work, wood work, science, mechanics and then there was algebra, geometry, things like that and of course we had to read on a regular basis, in the one class a 'Tale of Two Cities' and in the second year it was er, 'Macbeth' (laugh), but don't ask me anything about Macbeth as I can't remember a thing (He laughs).
7.15	OK Roger, you said you went to your modern Apprenticeship when you left school (yes), was there any reason you didn't take up any further education, sort of move on to sort of University, that type of thing?
	I could have gone to er, er, what is the name of it? At Stoke-on-Trent? There was a big University there, I could have gone there, the manager at the colliery when I said I wasn't going to stay there, he offered me a place there, said he could get me in, but I really didn't want to go, which I regret now
7.47	You do regret not going to University?
	I do yes
	And is there any particular reason why?
	I think it would have been better for me in the long run but of course when your young you don't think of things like that (ok from me), well at least I didn't
Living In St Georges, Past Changes, Characters, Landscapes, Areas	
8.03	OK Roger, you say you now live in Hadley (yes), is there any other places that you have sort of lived in Telford throughout the past?
	No only St Georges
8.11	Only St Georges? (Yes) now personally I have lived in St Georges most of my life, erm, did you enjoy living in St Georges? What were the elements that made it an enjoyable place to live for you?
	(<i>Rubbing on clothes</i>) I like St Georges, my Mother came from School St originally, then she went in to service at Wolverhampton where she met my Father, I was born in Wolverhampton in 1939, but my Father had to go to the war, and so my Mother brought me and my brother back to St Georges in 1942, so St Georges has actually been where I have lived most of my life,
8.57	OK Roger, you say you lived there quite a lot of your life, erm you must have seen a lot of changes over the years, from what it is today,

	to erm what it was like back then? Erm what major changes stick out for you really?
	Well the first one is the old school that I went too, it was knocked down and it is now an old folk's home, erm also St Georges Recreational Ground, which when I was a boy, there was a cricket pitch if you look at it from the front, the cricket pitch was on the right-hand-side and on the left hand side nearest the church was the football pitch and there was er, a big race track all the way around it, and there was a small one, not actually in the middle but to the one side, where they would run the 100 and 200 yards, but also the racetrack from what I was told, or what I have been told, used to be used as a cycle track for a lot of the 'big' cyclists of the day.
10.12	OK Roger, you have obviously been around St Georges most of your life, you obviously came across a lot of residents I would have thought? Is there any characters that stick out over the years?
	Yes there used to be quite a few in St Georges, there was one, his name was Jimmy Canny, and he lived opposite a public house in Church St, there used to be some little cottages and he lived in one of these cottages and he used to say "I am the only person with a natural green carpet in my living room" and of course people used to laugh because the grass was growing up between the quarry tiles (both laugh) and there was another one, he was the local gravedigger and he used to live rough in a shed in what used to be called Gripton's Yard down West St and then eventually that got knocked down and there were a couple of public toilets lower in to St Georges on the opposite side of the road, he used to bed down in there, but then somebody, the vicar, took pity on him and he let him use the back of the church where the boiler house is, he let him use that for his abode (I laugh)
11.39	So obviously you have been around St Georges a lot, I would have thought the landscape has changed a lot over the years? Maybe some of the buildings that used to be around are not now? Can you think of any?
	Yes well if you went along School St, along to Grove St, well on the corner is a public house called The Turf, well just opposite is what was called 'The Grove' and there was an old pit shaft in the one corner and it had a huge great wall around it and there were all old lorries and things there which belonged to a local transport owner called Frank Rawson and we used to climb over the wall and play in them (I laugh), well eventually that all disappeared and they build houses on there. Then on St Georges corner itself (<i>he violently coughs</i>) the council decided they wanted to widen the junction, well on the one corner was the old butcher's shop, which was knocked down and two or three cottages, this is going in to Gower St, they were also knocked down and on the opposite corner there was Rigby's sort of Drapery and Millinery, with a shop and that was knocked down, then the junction itself was widened, then as you go down, further down, on the right-hand-side is the Barley Mow public house and there were some cottages next to that, a row of cottages and another public house called The Bell, they were knocked down and also the pub. Then you had Granville Buildings the further you went

	down, they were back-to-back houses they were knocked down and new houses were built there. And if you go further on down still on the opposite side of the road, it is still standing, is what was called the Board School, but that is now boarded up, then further down was the Lilleshall Company Works, which was called the new yard and most of that has now gone and houses were built on there and on the opposite side of the road, which was used as a car park for the works, there are houses now all over there.
14.11	And on the other side, we have been moving down St Georges, towards the recreational fields that you mentioned, was there any types of buildings that have been knocked down or existed?
	Well actually on the Recreation Ground itself there used to be a big grandstand, I don't know what happened to that, it was just demolished, scrapped I believe, well at the back of what is now the cricket pitch, there used to be gardens and a band stand and the band stand is now up at Blists Hill Museum (I interrupt, oh right okay) and at the back of there was tennis courts which are no longer in existence, but they build an all weather pitch over at the back which originally started out as Shifnal Hockey Club, but in later years even that went and they built a big modern one where they play hockey and other various sports I believe they are allowed to play on there, also there are two bowling greens now, there used to be one, and where the small one is which used to be the original at the front there used to be a big bank, a big pit mound and there was a pit shaft just at the top and so where the second green was built that is where the pit shaft was, of course they were only clay mines, they weren't very deep mines (uh hu from me) and that is about..... er the original cricket pitch they couldn't play on it on a Sunday, that was something to do with the church, the Vicar (yes), he wouldn't allow sports to be played on there on a Sunday and the original cricket pavilion which used to be there, I believe somebody set that on fire and that was destroyed. And now you have the St Georges club and when the club started first there was a small pavilion through the memorial gates on the right-hand-side, they started using that as a social club, which was first started by St Georges Football Club, but then they decided to expand it and have this bigger club built, and now its er not so much run by the football club but by the cricket and bowling clubs.
Changes On The Outskirts Of St Georges	
16.52	And er we have been talking about changes in St Georges, what about around the outskirts, do you know of anything that was er originally there in the past that er was taken away?
	Erm.... I erm.....I am just trying to think, erm as a boy at the top of Church St where the road met the old A5, there was a Prisoner of War (POW) Camp on the left...
	There was a Prisoner of War Camp?
	Yes and that was er Italians, er they were Prisoner of War there, that was their camp, but there was hardly any security, just a bar across the entrance, no particular high fences or anything like that.
17.36	So escapes must have been pretty rife then you would have thought?
	I don't think anybody escaped, I can't remember anybody escaping, I

	mean they probably did, I was only a boy at the time, but you would see them walking up and down in their special uniforms, with big different colour diamonds on their backs of their jackets as they were walking around and sometimes they would have a Corporal or Sergeant from the British Army with them, as far as I know they could have been the Home Guard, I don't really know and erm all the way down what we used to call the St Georges Bypass, there were AA guns on each side of the road and there were barriers at each end and my Grandmother would take me for a walk down there, we were allowed to walk down there, a lot of people weren't allowed and further over at the back, well they call it Priorslee now, well that was the old Woodhouse Pit. And er when I was an apprentice at the Granville Colliery, which was about a mile across the other side of the road we used to have to go up there because there was a pump lowered in to the shaft because it used to get full of water the pit, the old pit workings, so we had to go to the pump and make sure it kept working
19.05	What were conditions in the pit like; would you say they were safe by today's sort of standards?
	Well it was undergoing a modernisation scheme and the main road for fetching the coal out was under construction, well the road itself was probably about 12 or 14 foot high and had diesel locomotives driving up and down (uh hu from me) there were parts of the Colliery, of the old workings that had to be kept clean and tidy and make sure it didn't collapse because of getting air around to the Colliery itself, but the working conditions for a coal mine were I suppose pretty good.
General Questions – Drifting Back To St Georges – The Accident – The 12 Feet Snow Fall	
19.57	OK Roger I am going to ask you a few more general questions really now, moving away from St Georges, have you er, if you had a time-machine, ok, er whereabouts would you go to if you had the time-machine? What period might you go back to perhaps?
	I think I would go back to when I was about 7-12 I would think.
	Was that you most enjoyable period?
	Yes, because actually we moved out of School St and moved to not to far away, a place called Snedshill and er of course there were different boys, the people there went to Priorslee school, I still went to St Georges school and er there were different places to play there were all these banks and we used to go and play all over there and actually at times we were a bit mischievous, because there were all old pit shafts all over there, some had been filled in and some hadn't and we would go and we would peer down and throw bricks down there (I laugh), there was one pit shaft behind Priorslee Church, where a little boy, his name was Alan Onions and he was picking flowers for his Mother and I think that was probably on a Mother's Day and er as he leaned over the stone he was leaning on moved and he fell down the pit shaft (I interrupt – Oh Dear) he was never found, I didn't know him that well, I just knew of him, but the other lads from up there knew him, so it was a sad time, he was an only child and his Mum and Dad were quite elderly people (um from me), it was a big shock

	to them, but all in all we had a very enjoyable time, especially in 1947, because that was when we had the worst snow fall that I have ever experienced (laugh from me) and the teachers, the Headmaster and two of the male teachers lived in Wellington and they used to come to school on their bikes, but of course in the snow, they couldn't get the bikes out it was that deep.
22.29	How deep was it Roger do you recall?
	Well around by The Grove, in St Georges, what they call the 'Racehorse' it was level with the top of the wall, (uh hu from me) it was probably 10 or 12 feet deep in a lot of places (wow from me) and of course we couldn't get coke to school, so what coke we had we kept going because there were only big coke stoves, no central heating and we just had to go to school and we would sit in the class with a coat and scarf on and then every so often the teacher would say come and stand at the front and he would call so many out and you would stand at the front and stand around the coke stove and warm your hands, then you would sit down and somebody else would get a go, not like today with central heating and when there is a sniff of snow they shut the schools, they didn't those days
23.18	OK Roger I am going to ask you my last question now, erm if you were to be granted a wish, one wish, what would it be?
 That I could be younger (we both laugh)
23.30	OK Roger thanks very much for your time once again, I am going to wrap up the interview now, erm and once again erm thank you very much
	OK thank you.
Interview Ends	