

TITLE: MKSkate Transcript

Name: Nathan Lindsell
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Place of Birth: Powys, Wales
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Interviewed by: Lindsay Knight
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I'm Lindsay Knight. I'm interviewing Nathan Lindsell. Tell us your name and where you were born.

My name is Nathan Paul Lindsell. I was born in 1985, in Powys, Wales.

Tell us, when was the first time you ever came across skateboarding?

It must have been when I was really young, probably five or six. The first time I encountered skateboarding I was probably about five or six. I was into the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles craze that was taking over the country. I lived in Farnborough at the time and when I was there I remember being on my mother's pushchair and she'd take us to the Farnborough [unclear] ramp, on the way to the shopping centre and we'd obviously watch the skaters there. That's really vague memories I've got of that though. But it, sort of, got me a bug from a young age.

How did you go from seeing it as, basically, a baby in a pushchair, more or less a toddler, to actually getting a skateboard, when you first...

(Brief pause due to external noise).

So, how did you go from seeing it to, actually, you know, having a go?

I think, for the first couple of years, up until I was about seven, I was into the usual BMXing and rollerblades and things like that. Then, I remember, one of my friends bought me, for my birthday party... he bought me one of those pink fish boards and sort of the first... I didn't really know what to do with it. I just did a few Acid Drops off the kerbs outside my house and rolled around.

It wasn't really till... it must have been about '95 or '96... my friend, Chris Chatt, who at school... he's now a professional snowboarder... he bought a new magazine called Sidewalk Surfer, and this was before I'd, obviously, seen any skateboard videos. I was just flicking through that, looking at the pictures and ever since then...

I just got a Double Kickboard and, sort of, never stopped really.

What was it about skateboarding that attracted you then?

I think it was... what captured my imagination was the photos in that magazine. It was the street skating. I had nothing, no reference to go by as to what the tricks were, how they were landed. I was just purely looking at the photographs and it was something that captured my imagination and it sort of... I think there was something about the rebellious sort of nature of skateboarding. It was sort of different. I mean, I did other sports at school like football and, obviously, hockey and stuff like that but there was something about skateboarding that wasn't... it wasn't really a sport. It was something different that, sort of, give me a bug.

Do you remember the first time you went skateboarding in Milton Keynes?

Yeah. It was that kerb outside my house, which... this was when I lived in Loughton and then, about a ten second walk from my front door, there was the Loughton Moguls, which were these little concrete little bumps in the... I don't think it's there anymore but we used to skate those every day. This was before I went to the Buszy. I didn't even know the Buszy existed then.

So I used to skate those every day and troll around. I didn't really get too serious into it and I was still learning to Ollie and stuff. So that must have been about '96. Then, I think, in the back of the Sidewalk magazine, we see an advert for Radlands. And so me and my friend, Chris Chatt, we took a trip up to there.

So you skated Radlands before the Buszy even?

Yeah. It's a weird one, isn't it?

Tell me about the first time you went... how did you find out about the Buszy?

The Buszy was through word of mouthy but, obviously, I was... I must have been about eleven or twelve so I was still a bit too young to go that far on my own I think. I sort of... I knew about it and I started seeing pictures in the magazines. I think I went up there once or twice but then, in 1999, my dad got a job up north so we lived up there for two years.

So, literally, I was stuck up there. The only thing I could do for two years was roll around in my backyard. There was no skate scene up there. There was nothing. The weather was horrible. There was... I literally, pretty much, didn't skate for about two years. I say on and off. I was doing Ollies in the garden and stuff but then we moved back to Milton Keynes in the beginning of 2001. Then I, sort of, got a new board and headed to the Buszy straightaway.

Tell us the story of the first visit to the Buszy. How did it feel? Were you intimidated, were you excited?

0:05:04

There is something I could fit in there actually. I see it in my cousin's house in Reading because I saw 'Toy Machine – Welcome To Hell.' I could mention that. Yeah. How do I put that?

When was this?

This was '98 because I remember... it must have been... I wonder if I can talk about '97.

Were you living up north at this point?

No, this was just before so I could have put that in before actually.

This is a big influence? So if I ask you a question like what were the big influences that got you hooked in those early years, from like '96 onwards? So maybe you can start by saying something like 'I think the big influences to me in the early years were...'

I think the big influences to me, in the early years, were... I went to my cousin's house when he lived in Reading and he had... he knew I was into skateboarding and he let me watch some of his skate videos. There was 'Toy Machine – Welcome To Hell'. I watched that and I think that was the first ever time I ever saw skateboard tricks other than in a magazine, like with my own eyes, in that sort of year. It opened my eyes up to how tricks were done and it blew my mind. Obviously, it's an amazing video even now and I think that was... it must have been about 1998 I think I saw that. So, first skate video.

So then you moved up north.

Yeah.

Frozen out, came back ...

Yep.

Take us through that first visit to the bus station.

The first time I went to the bus station to skate, must have been about 2001. I went down there carrying a board under my arm. I couldn't really do much at that point. I'd only learnt to Ollie and hadn't really... you know, I was really rusty after two years up in the... it was grim up north, as they say.

So I come back down and I just saw every... I just saw, with your own eyes, you're seeing people flying round doing tricks. I'd seen it in the videos but to see that on such a scale, where there's hundreds of skaters because it was ... this must have been like the Tony Hawks boom. Obviously, I didn't play Tony Hawks then. I hadn't... I didn't really have a games console so I missed all that but, obviously, I see... I picked up on that a bit later. I wasn't really into

playing skateboard video games. I was actually really interested in actually doing it and getting out there and...

As I just said... come down to Milton Keynes, I didn't know anyone. I was a bit of a loner, didn't really have any friends at school because... the bit like Chris Chatt, who I grew up with... he went to a different school from me by then. So I was sort of... yeah, just went down there on my own and sort of made friends. Those friends, I'm still friends with now, nearly twenty years later. They're still, like, my best friends. It's a testament to what skateboarding can do.

So we're at the bus station in 2001?

Yeah, that was it.

Takes us through those years. 2001 up to the Buszy, which is 2004/2005... and the Elder Gate Crew and the beginnings of that when you guys were like fourteen and fifteen/sixteen. I know you were a little bit older but those guys... tell us about that scene. Who was skating and what was it like?

So this must have been about 2001 to 2004, that I see a lot of skateboarders, sort of, bloom in that period. There was, obviously, some well-known names like Sean Smith and Joe Nobes and that. Obviously, those guys were in my age group at school. I didn't go to their school but they were my age group so I sort of made a lot of friends with those. Paul Norris, all that would become the EGC crew.

Obviously, I skated with a lot of older people as well. That's the thing about skateboarding. I was skating with Justin Metcalf, Darren, Simon, a few... yeah, a lot of the older guys and it sort of grew from there really.

It's something that was mentioned earlier... the generational thing. There's, like, generations of skateboarders.

Yeah.

There seems to be... obviously there are skateboarders of all ages but there does seem to be these, you know, lines...

Yeah.

... We've seen in this project. How much interaction is there between the different generations? Darren was from, pretty much, from our generation. A bit younger but pretty much there. He was there in '92 and '93 in the old Buszy.

Yeah.

I remember him and you're there with him. How easily did the generations fit together in those years? Is that normal, for people to skate with the older guys?

How do I say that? I'm trying to think.

Let me ask you a better question.

How did the different age groups interact with...?

So my question is did... when you were skating in the early noughties, did skateboarders from different ages mingle and become friends or was it very much different age groups separately?

0:09:48

I think in the early noughties Buszy skate scene, I think there was different age groups... a vast age spectrum of skateboarders but everyone, sort of, interacted quite well together. You know, some of the guys were nearly ten years older than us and we were like sixteen/seventeen but there wasn't that sort of barrier. Everyone just skated and we were there for the same reason and we sort of... we looked up to those older guys, you know.

You'd see Rob Selley skate, you'd see some of the older lot and they were, sort of, your local heroes, especially at that age. You're looking up to people and then you're... and then they're taking you on board as part of something and it makes you feel like you actually are part of something bigger and that's what... yeah.

Is that true of the guys coming up behind as well? Sort of James Bush's of the time... that would have been little kids coming through.

Yeah, definitely. I think that same sort of age-link applies as well because from what some of the younger guys tell me, they were saying they were looking up to our generation as they were growing up so I think it's like a continuation that goes on over the years. It's sort of like a family tree that keeps going and it's still going now. Some of the younger kids now are still, you know, looking up to... I don't even know half these younger kids coming up but they still seem to know us lot so that's a good thing.

We'll talk a little bit about the Buszy process because you were as involved in that as Josh, maybe not quite because you didn't work in the Council but you were at all the meetings...

Yeah.

You came with us to Scotland. What were your memories of the Buszy process and did it surprise you what we ended up... what did you think we were gonna get and what we ended up with?

Well, I first heard about the... I can't remember how... sorry, I'm trying to think

how I first heard... it was in the paper, I think. That's where... I first heard about the MK Skate Project to get the Buszy built... that must have... obviously, it was early 2003. I saw a few articles in the paper but, you know, like most snotty teenage skaters at that time you just turn your nose up at it because the main thing that put me off was I saw a picture in the MK Citizen, really bad skate photography, of Troy Wilding doing an Ollie off the block and the thing that... that's what put me off. I thought, 'They can't even take a skate photograph. They're not gonna take us seriously. They just want to clear us off the street, make it illegal.'

But then, when I saw you guys, like Lindsay Knight and a few of the older lot on board the project, that's when I started to... because, obviously, I had seen footage of you guys and knew who you were so I sort of... that was when I was on board. When I knew there was actual skateboarders getting involved in the project with the Council, then you start to take it seriously and realise it could be something.

My first, initial thoughts were it's all gonna be transition. There's gonna be no street because it was at that time, early-2000s, when a lot of skate parks were starting to crop up but they were the horrible, sort of, metal... me and Justin used to call them 'Concrete Turds' because they were just terrible. They were like, sort of... made by people who didn't know anything about skateboarding, just to clear skateboarders off the streets and it sort of ... it left you with a lot of doubts and, sort of, insecurities as to what... why are the council on our side? You didn't really know.

And the result... how would you describe the result? Was it unique? Was it real street? Did it feel like you were skating the street when you skated the Buszy? Do you think it did the job, all those sorts of things? How good is the Buszy?

How good is the Buszy?

Let me rephrase that?

I know how to answer it. I'm just trying to think how to get the first question ...

Let me rephrase another question for you there. What was the result of Skate MK and how effective was it?

The result of Skate MK, I think... well, the end result speaks for itself as to what it's become now, with the Buszy as it is. Obviously, when it first opened, I was blown away by it. Obviously, because it was unique street. It was... there was nothing else like it. There was no... you can tell it's been designed by Rob Selley. That's what everyone used to say because people used to moan... a lot of people used to moan to me, 'There's no transition there.' You know, there's no... 'It's not a skatepark. There's no quarter-pipes.' But the real street skateboarders knew what it was and they knew its potential and that's what it... and then you, obviously, started seeing the people using it and what it became.

You saw Sean Smith, you saw young James Bush's growing up, even Giles Brown. You saw the new, younger generation growing up, skating this thing and you just ... it was mind blowing because there was nothing else like it. I remember there was ... parents used to drop their kids off to skate and they would go, "We heard there's a skatepark round here. Do you know where it is?" And we'd point to it but they couldn't get their heads round the fact that there was no ramps. They just couldn't get their heads round it. It's a skatepark but it's just geometrical blocks and shapes and they really... yeah, it took a lot of... until people actually saw it being used people couldn't work out what it was for. I think that's the interesting thing about it. It's open to interpretation.

Was there ever a situation where someone complained that you were skating there? Like they said, 'Get off, get off.' Did that happen?

0:14:54

There was a few... there was a famous time I was actually skating there and I got told not to skate by a police lady. I was doing a Nose Wheelie across the old Buszy block, just a little one mile per hour Nose Wheelie and she come up to me and told me to get off the block, couldn't skate here. I think I had to explain to her, you know, what this... what the Buszy was and I think she must of... she was either new or out of her depth but she didn't really know.

That links in to another famous time when, on the Legal Graffiti wall at the Buszy, some police come down and tried to arrest a few of the painters there and one of the painters happened to be Josh Locke, who made a quick phone call to Richard Ferrington at the council, handed the phone over to the police officer and it was all sort of explained over the phone. I thought that was hilarious because, at the time, a lot of people were... even the police, the people who are supposed to know these things, they didn't have a clue. People don't have a clue what the Buszy is or... you know, it's an actual, legal street skate facility and graffiti wall and people still don't know that. I find that's quite amusing.

The 'No Skateboarding' signs on the walls probably make it harder for them to understand!

Yeah, definitely.

Has anyone got any other questions for Nathan... going to the process?

Have you got anything else you want to talk about that we've not covered?

We could just ask him what his favourite places... don't know whether the Beige or any of those other spots.

Yeah, I could go into a bit about... I don't know. This is going to sound really sad but, like, for me Milton Keynes... I was reading a lot of comics and Sci-Fi

films growing up and that links into me as to what I saw Milton Keynes as. Like, to me, Robocop and a lot of the futuristic comics I read, I was looking up to Milton Keynes and that was going to my skateboarding as well because skateboarding to me, when I was a kid, it was like a futuristic sport and I don't know... it just... I don't know if that's worth mentioning.

No, that sounds really good.

I spoke to someone about this before. I said something about all those eighties Sci-Fi films that I grew up watching, I could see that in Milton Keynes. I don't know why.

Because that was an exciting basically?

Yeah, it was new then and I obviously see that and that was ...

I think I know what you're talking about actually. So I think for a question for that then... let's say... is this a bit pretentious but, like for you, how did you see Milton Keynes when you were skating it at that time? Because it's an unusual place, right?

Yeah.

How did it feel to skate here?

Yeah, ok. Right. For me, I interpreted Milton Keynes... you know, I saw a lot of... this is going to sound really cheesy... but I used to watch and read a lot of dystopian, science-fiction comics, films and books and to me, when I first moved to Milton Keynes as a kid that was... Milton Keynes was a futuristic city. Skateboarding was a modern, futuristic sport. The two for me, they sort of merged together.

Milton Keynes was like a vision of the future that was... you know, there was nowhere else in the country like it. It reminded me of an American city. That's why in my head it sort of ... the architecture... it was like a big adventure for me when I was a kid. Just on a Saturday morning, just skating all over the city and just getting up to mischief and the skateboarding being the centre of that. It was sort of... yeah. I know it's a bit different now. As you grow up you see it differently but when you're a kid you sort of... it's just one big adventure and I just thought Milton Keynes was... there was nowhere else like it.

I felt exactly the same way when I moved here actually. It felt like it was this big, open science-fiction city to explore.

Yeah, that's what a lot... people said... comments like Blade Runner and Robocop. I probably could go into... that's probably not related to the skateboarding side but...

Did you have a favourite spot?

Yeah, favourite spot.

So tell us your favourite spots around the city then?

My favourite skate spot in the city is definitely... was definitely... the train station. 100%. I know it's not so skateable now but... well, saying that I did skate it the other week and it's awful now because the slabs and the surfaces are terrible. But the thing I loved about the train station was the open space and it's sort of... it's open to all levels of skateboarders. There's the kerbs for the beginners. There's the blocks, the ledges, manual pads but it's just the open space. I think that, for me, is... you can compare it to Love Park but it's... I think it's more spacious than Love Park. I think it's got its own... yeah, I don't know how to phrase that. Can I say...? I'm trying to think of some other spots as well. My spots aren't the ones everyone else likes though.

That's alright.

Tell us.

My other favourite skate spots are the ones that no one else likes because my... I used to skate with some of the older guys like Justin Metcalf and I remember him driving us round in his... I think it was a banged up Ford. I can't remember what car it was but he used to take me to some really horrible, crusty skate spots, like there was obviously the Loughton Moguls we always used to go back to those. There was little banks and ledges on industrial estates.

0:20:03

There was so many things we skated that's all captured on film but they were the crusty, terrible spots on the outskirts of the city but they were so much fun to skate and sometimes there was the potential ... like he would take me to a spot and I'd think, 'How am I gonna skate this?' But we'd end up having the most amazing sessions because you use your imagination and then that's what... I learnt a lot from that. It's how to use your imagination because that's what skateboarding is. It's making something from nothing and, yeah, just throwing the boat out there and just... yeah, get on with it. I'm trying to think of some other spots off the top of my head. Do we have to keep it city-centric, like the centre?

No, I don't think so.

Yeah, I'm trying to think how to word that. Obviously we skated a lot in the... at Central Milton Keynes but it was also the ... that was where all the smooth surfaces and the marble was and, you know, the edgy ... sort of cutting edge, American-type spots but it was those little spots on the industrial estates and even the old... crusty old skate parks... satellite parks, dotted around the city. We used to skate those as well.

There was the Loughton Moguls. There was the... I think it's called the 'Kidney' in Downhead Park... we used to call it. It was like another concrete turd (as we called it). We used to skate that a lot. There was also Old Stratford Mini Ramp. Rubbish at Mini Ramp, I couldn't skate that. We used to go there quite a lot. There was also the Bletchley skate parks coming up at the time.

I'm trying to think. We used to go to random car parks. I think car parks were the big thing for me because I've always been into manuals and we used to wax just random, horrible kerbs, really crusty ones but we'd just spend ages waxing it and skate those. Then, obviously, the underpasses. That's another thing because I spent a lot of my youth in underpasses. You know, it'd be skating horrible, crusty kerbs. You could skate them in the rain. You can just... all you need is your wax and your skateboard. You'd sit there, have a few joints, have a few beers and just skate there all day. I remember doing that.

There's a kerb in an underpass in Great Linford and we used to go there. We used to put a Grind Box under there, wax the kerbs and we'd spend... if it was raining you could spend all day there, just learning tricks and messing round. Just doing... yeah.

I think that's enough on that. Most of your tricks are under underpasses out...

Great Linford underpasses.

Also the [unclear] you did last... that was on the thing last week... a block, block and a down then... I was just watching that.

I still need to learn to come back up after that.

That is everything.

Did you want to [unclear] the project?

Your experience of the Heritage Lottery Project. You've obviously done the training. How you found interviewing people?

Yeah, ok.

How have you found the process of interviewing people for this project?

Do we want to know exactly what the project is? Or do we just want to know how he feels about it, do you think?

A quick intro for that maybe.

If you can explain to us what is... what's this Heritage Project been? What is it and what's your role in it been? Start with what it is first.

What do you say... interview... I don't know, what would you say?

Oral History Project.

Oral History Project, yeah.

I found it quite hard to explain to people without... what I'm doing because I'm doing a Heritage Project in Milton Keynes. It's about skateboarding.

Shall I start...? I can start from the beginning. I first heard about this Heritage... I first heard about this Heritage Lottery-funded Skateboard Project through social media. Like everyone else in MK Skate Scene, I was intrigued but, because it's something I'm passionate about, I thought I'd jump on board. Went to the meeting. Didn't know what I was signing up for at all. I didn't know what oral history was.

As soon as I learnt about it I, sort of, did a few mock interviews and I took it from there really. I got a bit more confident because I'd never interviewed anyone in my life before. So, I... yeah, I took the opportunity of... a lot of the guys I already knew so I knew what to ask and what angle to approach it from.

So I got on the project, did some oral histories and, hopefully ... this is something I'm passionate about is documenting the history of skateboarding in Milton Keynes. So, yeah...

What are the key things you've learnt? Is anything blowing your mind that you've heard because you've interviewed... you've done most of the interviews I think.

Yeah.

Or a lot of them at least. Is there anything that you've heard that ... because I've heard like two or three things that have blown my mind? I thought I knew quite a lot about early Milton Keynes history, but I didn't.

Yeah. On this project I've learnt quite a few things even from people I've known for a long time. I've learn about Will Tricks. I've obviously known him for a few years and some of the stories he's told have, like, blown me away because I can't even comprehend the idea of going to the bus station and being, like, the first person to Ollie on to a block. That's... that to me... that's time machine that is.

0:25:13

I want to learn about this stuff because when you're sixteen you don't really think in hindsight. You're just taking everything at face value. You don't realise how important this stuff is. It's only as you get older you sort of start to listen more to the stories people have got to tell. I'm trying to think of some of the stories.

That's great. What about some of the other people? You said you knew some of them. What about the people you didn't know like... you didn't know Pritchard or people like that personally.

There's that funny story someone told. Yeah, I'll say that. One of the unique opportunities I've had on this project is to interview Matt Pritchard, who I've been a fan of for a long time. Not just in his TV show 'Dirty Sanchez' but from his old skate videos. Pritchard versus Dainton, I grew up watching that. He was sort of a little... a role model for us because he mixed the skateboarding with the partying and he's just a really funny, down-to-earth guy to me. I was a bit nervous interviewing him but this project... because I'd done a few interviews, I sort of... I went in and managed to... think I managed to do a good job of it. So I'm pretty chuffed with myself for that.

So I've learnt a new skill. How to interview someone. I'm not really a chatty person but I think... I hope I've sort of got a life skill from this to put on my CV.

Perfect.

Really good.

I was stage-struck by Pritchard.

Really clear, thank you.

I couldn't believe when Dan turned up. I was like ... I thought he was gonna, sort of ... yeah.

0:26:43

End of Interview

Transcribed by Stephen Flinn (August, 2019)