

Name: Louise Roche

Date of Birth: 1961

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Duration: 00:12:47

(00:00:00) *So when and why did you first move in Milton Keynes?*

I first moved in in Milton Keynes in 1970. I was about ten, nine or ten years old. I got here because my dad got the job of General Manager of Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

So what impact did that have on your life?

It completely changed it. At the time it completely changed my life. Cos I was settled up North, in a place called Runcorn, where he was Chief Architect. And I went to school, so I left all my friends, we moved to a completely new place, I did not know anybody, I was very, very cross

So what were your first impressions of Milton Keynes?

When I first came to Milton Keynes, it was just green fields. We lived in a tiny little village, no building had begun at all, so it was a very much a rural, agricultural sort of setting,

So from a teenager's perspective, you said you felt unhappy about that?

Well, I came when I was ten years old, so I had to go to the local primary school, and I was not very popular, because people knew my dad had come to do and most of them were farmer's children and they weren't very happy with this new addition.

So obviously, what were your feelings? Can you elaborate any more about that?

I felt very much an outsider, because it was not like in 1972, 73, when people had started to come. Literally, we were the first ones there. And, so I was quite picked on at school. People have since apologised. But, yes, they weren't very friendly at all.

So, what does Milton Keynes mean to you now, compared to then?

Well Milton Keynes did not exist when I first came here, but now Milton Keynes means home.

So, what special memories did you have for Milton Keynes throughout the years growing up here?

I've got so many memories of Milton Keynes, growing up. I think one of my earliest memories is lying on my bed in our house, and at the bottom of our garden, they were laying the foundation stones of the H9, which I think was the first road to be built in Milton Keynes, and it was just pile drivers from morning till night, it was so loud, the house just shook and the story goes that they built the H9 first because that was the

route from my house to the office where my dad worked in Wavendon. So he could just have a straight road to go down.

So obviously you were Tinker's Bridge?

Yeah, we were Simpson. And there was nothing, I mean to do then, nothing. This was before, before Bletchley Leisure Centre was built, before... the hub was Bletchley, that's where kind of people went, and there were two buses a day, one at 10 o'clock and one at three o'clock, and then you came back by 5 o'clock. And that's what you did on Saturday, you went to Bletchley, and you went to a café and, eventually, when the Leisure Centre was built, you went to the Leisure Centre. There was literally nothing to do. So our socialisation, if you like was all the youths of the villages, the surrounding villages, would meet on a place called Bowlers Bridge... and we would just hang out there. Yes there was not much to do. Early memories, I remember mud; a lot of mud. Walking to school we would end up with sort of platforms of mud on our feet. Of course, I spent a lot of time on building sites, because I would follow my dad on building sites, cos I'd follow my dad when he perused what was going on. Lots of meetings at our house, with, you know, all the architects, and all these young things used to come and talk about what they were gonna do and all their kind of ideas and stuff; and I used to sit very quietly and listen to it all.

Were you really aware of the impact of what your dad was doing, making history in Milton Keynes?

(00:05:00) No, not really, when I was that age. I was not really aware just what a big project it was. But I think, when I was older... you know he was always in the paper and obviously, I used to go to Wavendon Tower where he worked, and there would a sort of strange silence when he walked in, and I began to realise he was quite important. He was just my dad, really.

So, you yourself, what part have you played in the development of Milton Keynes? How do you feel about your role in the development of Milton Keynes? Is there anything in particular you've been involved in?

Personally, I suppose, I've been involved in developing arts; I've been involved in the arts quite a lot in Milton Keynes.

Can you elaborate on that?

OK, so I left Milton Keynes when I was eighteen, and went to university, and then I came back for just very, very short periods of time. And then I went off to Leeds and stayed there for about twelve years and worked in television up there. And then, when I came back to Milton Keynes, when I had my children, I started to write plays, and my first play was on in about 2000, and we did that at Madcap, in Wolverton. And that play, now, has been touring in America for about ten years, so, and I have since written about sixteen or seventeen other plays, which get performed all over the country and all over the world as well. So...

How much has Milton Keynes changed from when you left to when you came back? Did you come back and visit?

Yes, my mum always lived here. And my dad as well, until he died. He died in 92, so I'd always come back and I had a lot of friends here as well.

Were you seeing changes happening in Milton Keynes then, and what were your opinions of those changes?

I think, I think nobody can really match the changes that happened from say when I was ten to probably when dad left the Development Corporation in, I think it was around about 1980 or something like that. The changes then were just massive, and

of course I always got to go along to every event that there was, cos of who my dad was, so I went to the opening of the city centre, the, you know, the opening of Energy World, you know, anything that was you know that there was to go to, I went to. But I mean, the changes between you know coming to just green fields and absolutely nothing to then seeing the infrastructure starting to be built cos I believe they built the roads first and then they kind of filled in. I mean that was incredible, you know, to see that growth was just breath-taking and we had a lot of fun as well on the building sites when we were teenagers, doing all sorts of naughty things.

So what do you think has made Milton Keynes a success, or a failure? What's your opinion on that one?

This quite a... Dad always used to say... well that was attributed to him that, he said in interviews that if the people forgot about the people that built it, and then it would become their city. That's what he hoped would happen. And I think that's what's happened, and that, I think that one of the best things about Milton Keynes is people's ownership of it. The people that live here really have a very fond affection for it and that may be true of any place, I don't know, cos I've, there's nowhere else I've grown up and I've lived in so long but I do think there is a real sense of pride about it, and I think it's partly because we are such a mixed bag of people, and really, apart from the original people that lived in all the villages, everybody is still new, really relatively speaking. So, yes I think, I think that's a huge success. I love the transport system, I mean I love the roads, you go and drive anywhere else and it's awful. I think that on the whole, with the exception of some estates, the quality of the housing is fairly good. And of course, the landscaping, which I think is unique. And I think that's probably one of the most successful things about the city. It's just so, so green, and now that it's maturing, it's just turning into a very beautiful place. Whereas I can remember when they were all planted and you know they were tiny little things, and everybody was given a tree one year, I think. I can't remember what year that was,

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but yeah, that was really important and then that was important to all the planners as well.

Plant a tree in 83...

That's right yeah.

So, if you could go back in time, is there anything you think you would change in Milton Keynes? What do you think they could have done better?

I think public transport is rubbish, and I think that's always been a bugbear, so that could be improved. I think it's also pretty poor for young people. Just like going out at night and stuff, there're very few clubs and stuff to go to. But that, we used to complain about that when we were teenagers as well. Yeah, I think that's pretty poor. Yeah, and of course I think the homelessness problem we have got is dreadful, and I think we need to create more affordable housing, both for young people and for those people on a very low income, which was part of the original plan that all the estates would have mixed housing on them, and that's not quite worked, I don't think.

So there's a last finishing question here. What do you think the next 50 years has got in store for Milton Keynes? What do you see happening in the city in the next 50 years?

Well knowing a lot of our young people, I think it's got a very bright future. I hope the arts will continue to grow and become richer, both financially and in content. I would love, love to see a small-scale theatre created somewhere, cos I think we're desperate for it, to create new work, and get it out there, cos that's important to me. I can't wait, obviously I'm not gonna be around, I can't wait to see the landscaping really mature, as well. I think that's gonna be really exciting. Yeah, I think that's about it.