

**Name:** Stephen Scott  
**Address:** Furzton  
**Date of Birth:** 1954  
**Place of Birth:** New Bradwell  
**Date of Interview:** 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2018  
**Interviewed by:** Dave Harris  
**Duration:** 00:45:36

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00:00:05

*Today is the 22<sup>nd</sup> March and the interview is being conducted by Dave Harris and I'm interviewing..?*

Stephen Scott, aka Scottie – better known as Scottie to all my friends and family.

*And what year were you born, Steve?*

1954, sir.

*Okay. For the records, when and why did you first move to Milton Keynes, or what brought you to Milton Keynes?*

I was born in New Bradwell at Canal Cottage, which is alongside the canal in New Bradwell. My father being...working on the canals at the time that was the normal thing to do at the time. I was then moved to Southern Way, which is not far from where we're sitting at this moment, at number forty-nine, Southern Way.

*Do you still live in Milton Keynes?*

I do. I live in Furzton now; been there since 2000. Previous to that I was in Windsor Street, Wolverton. (Oh, I'm doing it again... [Laughs]).

*He's a bit of a wiggler.*

I'm sorry.

*If you address your answers to Dave that would be great.*

Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

*That would be great if you just address them to Dave. That's fine, that's lovely. Thank you. Right, go for it Dave.*

*So, what do you associate with Milton Keynes?*

I associate technology, a city of a mixture of people, different cultures. I also see the modern architecture – I see good and bad in there. Also, the shopping centre encourages people to come and visit Milton Keynes. And it's well-known worldwide; doesn't matter where I've travelled, someone will always mention the concrete cows, be assured – roundabouts and concrete cows. So we are pretty famous.

*So what does it mean to you, personally?*

I've brought my family up here. I've got two sons, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, so I think it's a great place. There's so many things within the area. There's parks and all sorts of things for them to go to without the shopping side of it. There's all the lakes, the walks – the local walks. There's redways; you can go all round Milton Keynes without even going on a road. What is there not to like about it, really?

*So, what were your first memories of Milton Keynes, you know, when they said, "We're going to have a new city" and what were your first thoughts on that?*

I think it was a little building in Bletchley, if I remember right – is it Sherwood Drive it started off?

00:02:49

*[Break in interview to discuss technical matters]*

00:03:02

*So when did you first hear about Milton Keynes, you know, there being a new city and what were your thoughts on that at the time?*

When I first heard of it, it was a little bit strange 'cause we'd been made up of a number of villages with obviously Newport Pagnell, Stony Stratford, Wolverton, New Bradwell, and that, basically – and Castlethorpe and places. That was our world here, at the time: Wolverton Works and the print. And suddenly we were going to become this great big city so, bit apprehensive but I grasped it with both hands and I think it's a marvellous place.

*So what special memories do you have of Milton Keynes being built and, you know, of your family maybe growing up? Is there any particular special memories you have and..?*

Well, the construction everywhere, obviously. Roads being built everywhere, all the, you know, disruption. But, you know, you could see it coming from the ground up; it was just magic how it all appears, you know, and you've got all these experts from all over the world, all over the country, coming here to put us up a city. Very grateful to them.

*Could you tell us about the scout hut that you were talking about, the hut that you went to for the first...when you first heard about it?*

The scout hut?

*No, not the scout hut; you said you went to a hut...*

*A building...*

*A building, to hear about the...when Milton Keynes was coming. You were telling us that...*

Oh, when we were younger? I think they took us as children, if I remember right – I can't remember how old I was at the time. I remember somebody giving us a bit of a talk about Milton Keynes and they drew this shape on the wall. Obviously I know it now as Milton Keynes but at the time it just seemed like an abstract shape and now I can see exactly what they were leading up to. So I think it was new to everybody and I don't think we really took in, at that stage, just how big it was going to be, you know.

*So, was there any particular part you played in the development of Milton Keynes, you know?*

00:05:03

Yes. I worked for a construction company and I actually worked on tunnelling of the sewerage from underground. I worked from the Old Wolverton black boards, down the side of the railway works in Wolverton, which went through underneath the grounds of the college and up to the city. So I actually had an active part. I've been underground within the city before it was even built.

*Can you tell us a little bit more about what it was like, you know, doing that type of work?*

Underground?

*Yeah.*

Dark at times, when the generators packed up; wet – sometimes we had to have waders up to our waist in water. And I was then a chain boy. A chain boy was somebody who used to help the engineers and stuff like that. I started off as a young lad on there.

And we would go down the tunnel with a piece of string on a nail, believe it or not, and we would have a, what you would call, like a little micro-pen light at the time, which belonged to the surveyor, and we would hold the pen behind the string and drop it down the line till you were told to stop. Left or right – you would then use your other hand and you would move the string to the left or to the right, wherever he told you, and then you had to stand perfectly still while he knocks a nail in and then he'd check it again. So basically we were lining up the tunnels with a piece of string and a light. I don't know to this day how they did it. So that's how they did it.

*Yeah, so how long did that, sort of, tunnelling progress take?*

Oh, some time, they had...

*And where from and to?*

Well, they actually had three ways of doing these tunnels. The original one started off as an open cut, down...not far from the bridge at Old Wolverton, where you go under the railway now, there was an open trench – a long, oblong trench – dug out and I mean, quite deep, with a concrete base. And what they would do is drop the tubes – or the concrete tubes – down and they would be slowly pushed in with a...rams, hydraulic rams, into the opening that the Irish diggers would dig out. And this worked quite well for a while. They would dig a little bit, push it, dig it. They quickly realised...

00:07:24

*[Break in interview to discuss technical matters]*

00:07:36

The Irish diggers quickly realised that instead of digging slight...a part the way in and then pushing the pipe in, that if they really went to town and dug quite a big bit out they could disappear down the pub or down to the café for their breakfast or...depending on the time of day, while the other guy rammed the pipe in. So that was one way of doing it.

The second way was open trenching which is what it says; self-explanatory. They would dig a trench, lay the pipes in, they would then fill it with shingle – pea shingle – and then backfill the trenches. But the one I was on was the underground piping and what they would do is dig a hole into the ground and from that heading they would take a tunnel in both directions – so, two teams working out of one heading. They would then meet up with another tunnel and, likewise, they'd be digging in two directions. So that's how it was done and that was from the black boards in Old Wolverton, right through...I distinctly remember going under the school, the Radcliffe School end, on the main road through to the tunnels. And that went right through to the city, I believe.

*Could I just ask what implement you used for the digging?*

What did *they* use?

*Well yeah, what did they use?*

Pickaxes, shovels – just normal digging tools. I mean, it was a bit like navvies, I suppose, how they did the canals; it would be reminiscent of that. The only difference being they had a small railway track laid into the pipes and they would push what they called a skip, I believe, straight down and that would be pulled out by a little crane – very small crane, bit of an A-frame crane – and one guy would be there with a stick – he should have been there on the controls but ...– he would get a stick out of the fence and he would just push the levers as he stood there so he could look over the top at you as he pushed the levers. So I distinctly remember that.

*So how long did this take?*

I don't know how long the job took all in all. I was there probably a year or so and then I went on to other things but the job itself was quite a big job. If you can imagine how much work has to go in to supply a city with all electrical cables and piping and all the other things. It's a massive job; massive job.

*Okay, well I've got a good idea on that. So, have there been any other organisations or societies or clubs you've been involved in, within Milton Keynes, on the social side?*

00:10:12

On the social side: Working Men's Clubs. I'm also a keen union leader – I was in SOGAT, which is a printing union. I was in there for about twenty years. I'm now a member of another union, USDAW, which again I'm a representative of, trained representative, so I've always had an active part in that. I also knew Mr. Maxwell – if you know 'Mr. Maxwell for Bucks' – who used to visit on a regular basis to a house opposite to where I bought my first property, long before I was old enough to buy property. Used to visit a railway man and have tea with him and I think that was just prior to the deal that was done to buy some of the land for Pergamon Press – I don't know if you've heard of Pergamon Press. So I think there was a little bit of underhand stuff going on. I'm not sure about that but we always suspected Mr. Maxwell was a little bit underhanded.

*So, okay then, going back to Milton Keynes, what do you think has made Milton Keynes a particular success or failure?*

Without a doubt, the people – people first; without people the city's nothing. You've got good and bad in everywhere and I've worked at painting and decorating throughout the city – well, all over the country – but, you know, you find good and bad everywhere but I think it's the people; I'd have to say people first.

*So, if you could go back in time, is there anything you would change about Milton Keynes? You know, transport, infrastructure, community...*

Yeah, I would have liked to have seen either an underground rail link throughout the city, or a tram. People, you know, discarded trams in my lifetime and they're coming back. You go abroad and they're in many of the major cities, they use them. So I don't know why we're sort of living in the past. We're telling ourselves we're in the future but, in fact, we're behind the times. We should cut down a hell of a lot of the cars within the city and all the pollution but, you know, I've still got a car so I can't really complain.

*So, what do you think the next fifty years has got in store?*

That's a good question. That's a very good question. If I had a crystal ball, which I haven't, but I would like to think that for, like, my grandchildren and their children, I think it would continue to grow. I'd like to see a better system, the schooling. I don't think at the moment that it's brilliant, I really don't. But that's just my opinion but...and I think there's talk at the moment about either a university or... – I don't mean the MK University – ...opening up a university in Milton Keynes, if that's correct. That would be good. It would be a place of learning. That encourages people to come to the city. You know, I think it's all great; the future's great. I can't see how it could go any worse. It's got to get better than it is now.

*Have you got anything else on Milton Keynes?*

*No, I think the drains bit was really...the drainage...*

The sewage?

*...that was really interesting because we wouldn't...it's something we haven't heard before, so...*

You can still find them if you want to go down to the black boards. As you walk... – you know where the black boards are, don't you Dave? – Yeah, Old Wolverton. If you go along to the end of where, what used to be Wolverton Motor Company, there's a passageway goes down to the Old Wolverton Road.

*Slated Row, yes.*

No, before that. Come back to Wolverton...

*Oh yeah.*

Go over past what used to be McCorquodale's, the two garages, and then you've got...

*Goes down to the canal?*

Yes. That was called the black boards 'cause the fencing was black pitch. I think they were sleepers, railway sleepers, I'm not sure. But they were definitely treated with a black bitumen or something. So it was called the black boards. If you go along there you'll see manholes and that manhole is actually a link of cylinders that was put into the ground which formed the final pattern of the tunnels, but they did it in segments, so... The other way was, they dug a hole in the ground. They didn't dig a hole right down, they dug a hole so-far down and inserted segments of a circle which all bolted together, a bit like a Meccano set. They then laid the next lot on bricks, overlaid the first lot of joints, another circle. Then they would pour quickset cement down the side; big vibrator, looks like a great big pencil with a cable on the end, and that would settle down, they'd leave it to settle. The next day, or a few hours later, they would then dig out below the ring, again, another layer, another two layers, another two layers, and then the segments would go in from below. And once they'd done that they built the tunnel downwards. So that was quite interesting to watch.

00:15:22

*Oh, interesting. Is there anything you'd like to add for the Milton Keynes one? Any questions?*

*No, that's great.*

Are we okay? Sorry if I'm...

00:15:28

*[Break in interview]*

00:16:30

*So, would you like to tell us your name and today's date as well?*

My name's Stephen Scott. It's the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2018.

*And could you tell us how long you've lived in Milton Keynes for?*

I've lived in Milton Keynes for most of my life. I've travelled extensively. I've been round the world. I always end up back in Milton Keynes. And my family are in Milton Keynes so obviously I'm staying.

*So you've told us a little bit about your family and their roots and their connections to Milton Keynes. Could you first of all tell us about your mother's side of the family and their connection to Milton Keynes and the area?*

Yes, certainly. My mother, the Hammond family, lived in the place called the Bottledump on the A421, which is the Buckingham Road. It's still there to this day, however, the new road is moved over. The original road's still there which is where a lot of gypsies used to stay over. There's a lay-by there and everything's still there as it was. She was brought up there but that started with my grandfather, and Jack Hammond actually bought that piece of land after coming back from the First World War. He was a bit of a horse-whisperer and he was very handy with the horses during the war, keeping them calm, etc. When he came back he bought the land with intentions of setting up a knacker's yard. For those who are not sure what a knacker's yard is, it's where horses and cattle were slaughtered. They used the hoofs for making glue in them days and the local farmers would use him to slaughter their cattle for them 'cause you had to be registered. And, on that note, my mother's sister, Dolly, was the only female ever registered as a slaughter woman in this country that I'm aware of. That's the story we're told.

So they lived in the Bottledump in caravans. They bred horses and I believe the horses were used in circuses and fairgrounds and farmers bought them; and also for pulling the canal barges at that time. This is where the connection, I think, came in with my father whose father was a lock keeper who used horses and I think this is where the...the two brothers, my father and his brother, met my mother and her sister and that's where our family all started off. At the time, the Bottledump went over to scrap metal. I remember as a child playing inside the wrecked cars. We used to pull the seats out of the back seats and we slept in those sheds that you see from the road, on the Bottledump. It's now a waste paper...I think it's Pearce waste paper. However at that time it was nothing but a big, wooden shed that they used for chopping up logs, woollens, etc.

My grandfather started off with recycling – one of the earliest recyclers. He recycled jam jars, bottles, pickle jars. Anything made of glass was reused in them days. He would then give them...go round the streets 'hawking' for these jars, as he called it, giving away silly trinkets or fish, or... – I don't know, goldfish, maybe, I don't know – and he would then wash them out – and when I say 'he', the whole family was involved – in the brook, which is still there to this day. Wash the jars out. They would then be dried and they would go back to manufacturers. All the pickle jars and all the things that people used in them days was recycled



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many, many times. So that's why, to this day, it's called the Bottledump.

It was taken over by my mother's brother, Stan Hammond who, unfortunately, he died of cancer some years later. But he run it successfully with scrap metal, logs. He would bring in trees; cut them down into manageable sizes; chop them up all by hand; deliver them out to the villages, towns, within quite a large area of around the area. So that was my mother's side of the family: the Hammonds.

My grandmother Hammond actually left there and was taken to our house, which is in Southern Way, not far from where I'm sitting now, number forty-nine, where unfortunately that's where she actually died and when...after my grandmother died, Stan Hammond still lived for quite some time after before dying, but his wife, Freda, was a proper gypsy. And when I say proper, I mean thorough gypsy, and I think she took it on for a while but I think it was too much for her and, with her sons, I think she then sold the property to the waste paper management company.

*Thank you very much,*

Is that any good?

*It's brilliant. So you mentioned that you have travellers and gypsies in your family.*

Yeah.

*Can you talk a bit more about that connection as well?*

I don't....

*What you know about that.*

The only thing I really know about it is...

*Can I stop you, so can you repeat that..?*

Oh right, about the gypsy side of the family.

*Yeah, yeah.*

Sorry.

*That's all right.*

With regards to the gypsy side of the family, I'm not a hundred per cent convinced that we are 'gypsy' gypsy. I think we were

travellers. It started out as travelling because of my grandmother was not expected to live after a certain age and I've got this documented that her husband, my grandad, decided, "Then, in that case, I'm going to take you and see some of the country." And he travelled throughout this country for many, many years, and she actually lived for a good old age. I mean, I think she was over ninety. I'm not a hundred per cent certain without checking the records but she lived to a ripe old age. So whatever he did done her good, so get yourself a horse and cart and get around the country, that's my advice. I think where it came in was that travellers would overwinter at the Bottledump end and so there was a quite a big connection with the Smith family. Now, the Smith family's a massive gypsy family. It's a common name, we know, but it was a well-known gypsy family and I know for a fact they used to winter over with my grandparents and they used to winter over in a pub down in Surrey. I think it was Godalming Again, I've got this documented. So I think there is a connection but I don't think true...I wouldn't say we were true gypsy. I think we're more travellers.

*So when you are talking about the community here and people...travellers and gypsies came to Milton Keynes, how...you know, do you know anything more about the travelling community or the gypsy community in this area before it was Milton Keynes, apart from just your family?*

No. Because I moved to this road here, Southern Way, number forty-nine, at an early age, although we had connections with these people, we never...I never lived with them. However, they used to visit us on a regular basis and I remember quite vividly that a horse and cart came down to visit us and the horse bolted. It actually leapt a large hedge – it was the Murgatroyd family. I do believe they still live there to this day – and my mother, who was a very small woman, got hold of this horse by the reins – I mean, I was terrified, I was only a midget...I'm still small but I was only a midget at the time – and she got hold of this horse and she took lead of this horse and the horse done what she wanted and I was...even at that age, I thought, 'This is something special, to be able to...to get a horse that big to do what you want'. So I think that run through the family. She was used to dealing with horses and that's how I like to think of ourselves, as horse breeders, really.

00:25:24

*That's lovely. That's a lovely story. Because I don't think we've talked about horse whispering or basically travellers and the travelling community here. I mean, just out of interest, is there a traveller community, still, here?*

If you go to Calverton.

*Right, okay, so is there still...do you know if there's still a travelling community here in Milton Keynes?*

They're there. They're there now, to this day...

*Do you want to look into the camera?*

Oh sorry, I didn't realise you were still filming. Yeah, I've not had any connection there. I have spoken to people in there, in Calverton, which is just up the road on the old V4 Watling Street – the A5 as it was originally, which is the Roman road. I think they'd come and go on a regular basis when I was younger although I think it's more static now. There's another one near Newport Pagnell, I believe, and that's been there some years. I'd never, ever had any dealings with anybody at Newport Pagnell. I have met them out once in a pub and got talking about my family and they seemed to know the Hammonds but other than that I wouldn't know them...if I saw them now I wouldn't know who they were. So I don't think there's any other travellers, apart from the ones that just set up, pitch up, somewhere on a regular basis and get turfed off by the local police or council. I'm not really familiar with them.

*Okay, thank you very much. So we've talked about one side of your family.*

Yeah, the Hammonds.

*Now will you tell us a bit more about the other side of the family?*

So do you want to start again... 'I'm Stephen Scott...'?

*No, just repeat the question about, you know, this is your father's side now you're talking about.*

Yes. Okay. My father's side of the family, the Scott family. I was born in New Bradwell in 1954 and he was, at that time, working for the canal. He worked extensively on the canals at that time. Because of his father having connections with the canals, I think it was a natural thing for him to do. So he got a canal cottage down at New Bradwell and I was born actually along the side of the canal in '54. Some years later, I'm not sure exactly when, Southern Way was a new-build in Wolverton and my mother and father was lucky enough to actually get accepted for one of these properties and I remember distinctly my mother telling me, some years later, that when they first moved in they'd got electric cooker and she was frightened of the electrics. She wouldn't turn electricity on, none of the light switches. She wouldn't touch a kettle. She boiled eggs in a kettle on the fire. She lit a fire in the open fireplace because she was frightened to death of electricity.

Sounds strange now but I suppose, if you've never had it, it's something new.

So we moved in there – I'm not quite sure the exact date – and I spent many years there. We played in fields behind where we are at this moment, in Stacey Hill, and the farm, I think, was Gurney at the time, or Lucketts. I'm not sure; one of the two. I always remember Gurney because he used to chase us off with a shotgun for playing in his fields and some outbuildings which are not far from where we are now. It was a great place for kids and he couldn't keep us out; we loved it. We didn't do any damage but I just don't think he liked us on that land. And he also had a very nice daughter that, when we visited the farm, she would throw us apples and stuff that we couldn't get hold of here and they had them in abundance. They also had horses and she used to ride the horse within the confines of the wall which goes on to Southern Way, and I think the wall continues down through what used to be the main entrance to the farm. So we...us kids, we would be on the wall giving a lot of chat, and throwing us apples and...us commoners, you know, because we were a little bit common. So I've got fond memories of the place.

Unfortunately life was a little bit tough in them days – you know, if you didn't work you didn't have anything – so I tended to jump school quite a lot – in fact, very much. I was working on a farm before I left school age. I was sleeping in a tent during the lambing season – which is not the warmest time of the year – for some local farmers. I also went haymaking on equipment that, quite honestly now, you wouldn't be allowed to ride on. I remember, when we were making hay bales, straw's heavy, hay's light, but the hay bales would drop out of this machine, it would drop onto this chains on the floor and I would be standing on a plank that was being dragged along the field with these chains. And you would pile the hay or straw bales up, two one way, two the other, as you've probably seen them in the fields, and then, at a set shout by the guy on the front who would holler his head off at you, you would pull a lever and these bales magically dropped off the back and you had to step aside before it knocked you off.

00:30:44

I remember doing that and then, the next stage to that, we would go round with an old trailer and you'd have a guy with a pitchfork literally stick the fork in the bale, he wouldn't look at you, he would turn and over his head and it would land on the trailer, square on the trailer. My job was to square them up and stack them up. You started off on the bottom, obviously, and worked up until you're working right up in the air. It felt like a hundred feet at the time, as a child. It was probably only about twenty foot but, at the time, it felt like you was on top of the world. We would then sit on that trailer, all along the roads, wherever it took us, to this farm – health and safety, again, didn't kick in in them days – he would

reverse it into this barn and, again, it went into reverse: the guy with the pitchfork would stand on top of this bales and he would pitch it over to you and we started at the bottom again, obviously, and worked our way up, into step formation – a bit like you'd see in the pyramids – until we'd got a nice base and then it was a case of literally bales tossed to you, lift them. When you'd been pulling straw about all day it's not too bad but hay, being grass with moisture in it, twice as heavy, I believe. But enjoyable, absolutely loved it. And lambing, I would go back to it tomorrow, you know. There's no money in it unfortunately.

But I was doing that before I left school. I also used to go to the local market in Wolverton – it's now used as something else – but the old gas lighting in there and we would go in and there was a guy from Northampton, where they make all the shoes and boots, and he would come there early morning. I would help unload his little van and we would set it all up on these little boards, like you'd see in a market today more or less. And then, when we'd done that, I would leave him and I would go to the wet fish market stall and there was a very kind old gentleman there. He knew I was hard up, he knew I was hungry, and he would get me to stand and wait till he'd served somebody and he'd go, "Right, give that to the lady," and I would go up and: "There you are madam," or "There you are, sir," and would give him the wet fish, which everyone seemed to eat on Fridays 'cause of the...in those days. So Friday was a very busy day for that guy. And then, midday, he would send me round to a little caff in Church Street with an enamel... – it looks like a jug with a mug on top. The younger people probably wouldn't know what I was talking about – and I would have to go and get that filled with tea and two, I believe, bacon sandwiches – egg and bacon, if I remember right – and he very kindly gave me one of those. Well, it didn't touch the sides. I was that hungry I could have eat the plate. And a pot of tea that was hot when I left it, it was just lukewarm, but, oh, it tasted so good, sweet. And then, at the end of that shift with him, which seemed some days to just fly by, I would then go back to the original stall and help the gentleman load his stall up back into the van. And for that I probably got a couple of shillings or...not a great deal of money. That's the old money which would be five pence now, for a shilling – five new pence. And then I would take that and give it straight to my mother 'cause that's what we needed: we needed money. Would I do it again? Certainly; the happiest times of my life. I had nothing, but I had everything. Sometimes when you've got everything you don't appreciate; when you've got nothing, you do. So that's my part of the life.

So my father, still living in Southern Way, he was working for a railway company called [Meakins? 00:34:43] Engineering. They laid sleepers, took down bridges, pulled down empty stations: everything to do with the railway, he did. Sometimes he was there

at night so I never saw him. I never saw my mother: she worked nights. So I could get up, I could go to the farm, and I could be gone two, three days, four days; perhaps pop home, nick a bit of bread or a bit of sugar, whatever they had; back out to the farm – all by bike or foot by the way – and... So they didn't see a lot of me at that time, but it was still a good life. I enjoyed it.

00:35:21

My father's father, my granddad, William, he lived in the locks at Fenny Stratford. The cottages are still there. He actually was a lockkeeper for many, many years – twenty years, I believe. Unfortunately, after a long illness, he died. I think he was sixty-two at the time. He died at night, or during the night, and my father was there. He was home on leave from the war – that's George Scott. I think one of his other brothers was there as well and his mother was busy doing what most women are doing when the guys are there smoking and playing cards: "Do you want anything from the shop?" sort of thing. The shops in them days were not like we know it today. It was just a little hatch in the side of the pub opposite the locks. It's still there to this day. And I think they asked for some matches or something along that line. And off she trot and, men being men, playing cards, time went by and they suddenly realised, "Where's Mum?" Where's my grandmother gone? So they went out and straight away went looking for her and, to this day, there is a swing bridge there and this swing bridge is designed just literally as it says, to swing across – don't confuse it with the canal locks; this is a separate metal bridge for taking equipment and stuff over to the other side – apparently it had been greased up some days earlier and what they believe – and, again, this is all documented, the coroner and doctors and things like that – was that the bridge somehow had moved with the breeze or the wind or whatever and unfortunately my grandmother went down between that and the lock and drowned. And, as I say, this is all documented so I know when all this happened, in 1940. I don't know exactly what happened to the lock after that – the lock house or anything like that – they didn't really talk too much about it. I think it was very sore still, you know. So, even as a child, never really spoke much about that side of it. I've done research since and found out why...and why and I understand why it wasn't talked about. And I think that more or less weighs up my dad's side.

*Great. So moving onto your working life, can you talk a bit about how, you know, you say the unions were something that you've been very much involved in here. Can you talk a little bit about that as well?*

Yes certainly. I mean, after several jobs when I was a youngster, I went into the printing trade and, in there, I met a gentleman named Mr. [Bowers? 00:38:33], Tony Bowers who lived down, locally, near the square in Wolverton. Unfortunately he's passed

now but he was a great influence on me. He was a very educated man, although you wouldn't think so looking at him, he would...he'd come across as a normal bloke, a normal working man, the same as myself – Labour man. I'm a Labour man, I always have been. I've worked all my life and so Labour's played a part in my life. And one of those things, to put a bit back, was to join...not only join the union but take an active part within the union. In McCorquodale Printers at Wolverton – it's now gone. They've kept some of the building there at the front of it just to show you what was there originally – but when I was there I was a union rep there and, within the printing trade, you have what you call a 'father of the chapel' or a 'deputy father of the chapel' and this stems from the monks when the monks used to do the writing. So, the father of the chapel, deputy, that's...deputy FoC, father of the chapel. And for some years Tony really took me by the hand and led me through law and bits and pieces that I never even knew happened within the union. Years later I went to [Allan Denver Web Offset? 00:39:52] which, again, is a printing firm. It's now gone bust unfortunately. It was one of the best paid jobs I ever had. I never will get another job like it. And, in 1982, I believe we was on around about thirty-two to thirty-eight thousand pounds a year. London rates; we talked briefly about London and London rates was something that they did to encourage staff to Milton Keynes. So again, this is a very important link with Milton Keynes and London. To encourage the staff to come here and to take jobs here rather than in London, they had to pay the rate they got in London or they just couldn't get the skilled staff.

00:40:34

So we, the commoners, the SOGAT, not the National Graphical Association (the NGA), we were just the commoners but very important to the job, the same as they were; we were a team. I took up our...that position in there and we had branch meetings outside, we used to be...we used to have a branch secretary, we would go through the chairman and we would have meetings, regular basis, I learnt an awful lot.

During the – and I hate to say this word – Maggie Thatcher, or Margaret Thatcher, period – for whatever you think about Margaret Thatcher, my own opinions I'll keep to myself, however several people I know, including sister, brother-in-law, lost businesses at that time 'cause of the banks foreclosing on loans and different things within the businesses – we took an active part in a place in London called Wapping. Wapping was run by The Sun. Robert [sic] Murdoch. An Australian, believe it or not, not even English; caused a right stink. And he was getting the backing from the government. And several of our people went on the picket lines in London on a regular basis. They would charge with the horses, with the police, and it was a very messy affair. We didn't come out of it too well. I don't think anyone can win. If you're not working, you're on strike, you're not earning money, you'll

never get it back. I know that. So Wapping played...it played on my mind for a long time that, you know, you can't carry on like this, you need to co-operate with people and try and stop banging your fists on the table and get your heads together. So I've taken that as a philosophy.

We were also with the miners. The miners were on strike, the Welsh miners, and some of them people were starving, there's no doubt about it. In that time, I can't believe, in the eighties, in this country, adults and children were starving because they weren't working to stand up for their rights, whether you believe that's right or not. I'm a firm believer that they had the right to do that. And so we...our part of that was to supply vanloads – transit vans or anything we could get our hands on – with food. We would go to stores and we would collect food. We would take money out of our own banks and buy food or whatever we could, clothing, blankets, anything that would help them. So we did play an active part; I'd like to think we did and I hope it helped.

However, putting that in the past, I think there's still a place for unions within this country. There is a feeling amongst the Eastern European people that have come into the country – and I'll touch on that for a moment. I personally get on well with most people and I haven't got anyone that I could say, you know, shouldn't be here. I think there was too many people allowed in at one time but, putting that aside, they play an active part in this country. The Polish people helped us during the Second World War. I've got nothing but respect for the Polish. They never got the credit they were entitled to and I think, even to this day, they're just starting to realise how many, during the Battle of Britain for instance, the amount of Polish pilots that took part in there, they never get a mention, hardly. I think they're just starting to recognise that with one of our own places – Bletchley Park. I think they've just recognised it and I think they've got some sort of memorial up there. So, as far as...getting back to the original question of unions, I'm still a very firm believer. I'm a representative now. I go to London. I'm on courses. I'm getting certificated for, so...as an official trainer. I'm sixty-four years old but I honestly believe that I'd make a difference to my colleagues, you know, they can come to me. If I can help them, I'll always help them and that's what they need. That's what a union means: a 'union'. A union's only as strong as its members and if the members are not going to stick together then you haven't got a union, you've just got a body of people. So yes, I'm a firm believer in it and I think I will be till the day I pass on but who knows what the future brings, you know. Let's just hope that it continues the way it is and that people realise they need support and the unions are there for them if they want them. And I think that's about it for unions.

00:45:22

*Thank you very much.*



Any good?

*Yeah, very good; very, very good, yes. Is there anything else that you want to ask, Victoria?*

*No, no. I'm sure you've got what you wanted for the museum and...*

*Yeah, yeah, we've got loads.*

Well I hope its some help to you.

*We could talk all day... [Laughs].*

00:45:36

END OF INTERVIEW