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Date of Interview: 12th April 2021
Interviewed by: Roger Kitchen
Duration: 00:32:41

(00:00:09) *Yeah, can you just go back on that about...*

Okay. My, my recollection is that the initial idea for Homeworld came from David Parker. I don't remember where Fred first met David Parker but David Parker was working in the States for a New Town Development Corporation and the New York State Urban Development Corporation and had a lot of experience, more than we had in Milton Keynes, in building new towns with, with private developers, that, that's what he did for a living. And so, Fred recruited him over here and pretty early on in David Parker's stay David said "well why don't you do a major housing exhibition to demonstrate the, the Milton Keynes' willingness to attract private developers and bring a lot of customers up as well?" And he was drawing on his experience in the States where it was much more common practise to provide opportunities for lots of different developers to show, to show, display their wares and have lots of different show houses on one site. And the kind of innovation, the energy efficiency side of the innovation of design was a secondary consideration.

The first consideration was to provide opportunities for developers and then customers to Milton Keynes on their house buying map and that's my recollection. David Parker and his wife and two boys had a house in Great Linford that the Corporation...it was a rented house and it could be that David Parker met Fred in Egypt and I'm pretty vague about where they first met but David Parker very much had Fred's ear at the time. Now the man who would know most of...would have a view about this would be Brian Brookman. David Parker has passed on now. Brian Brookman and David Parker worked very close... together in those early days and, and so...have you asked Brian Brookman?

Well again, in our interview, if you remember, I've gone through...

Yeah.

...references to Homeworld...well there aren't any in Brian's interview at all.

Yeah

[unclear] but, no I haven't, no, no.

Okay, so I guess what I'm saying is it might be worth a phone call briefly, you don't need to do it on video, to Brian Brookman. And if Brian Brookman confirms my recollection we could get in touch with David Parker's wife or son, who currently runs, runs his consultancy business and get some, some photographs of David Parker to put in or possibly even they might have a video or something. And I've got David Parker's wife's address someplace or I could er I could find it for you if, if you want me to do that?

Oh that would be good, oh okay, good stuff.

But it really was, I thought an important idea er to really give a boost, give an American pizzazz to the Corporation's 'housing for sale' programme.

Brilliant. Okay. Excellent.

Alright, sorry about that.

You've just made my life much more complicated [laughs].

Okay.

Just trying to work out how I'm gonna...[laughs]...'cause David Crewe claimed that it was his idea, let me...

(00:04:39)

I'm in no doubt that David Crewe would have been involved in the very early stages of this and so I, I can envisage David Parker mentioning this idea to Fred and then Fred bringing David Parker, David Crewe maybe even Brian Brookman at that point into his office on the first floor of Wavendon Tower breaking out a little whisky and Fred lighting up one of those awful cigars and say "Well David Parker is suggesting this idea what do you guys think?" And so in a sense I would believe David Crewe being involved in the very early stages of this, because he was very much Fred's right hand man in thinking about how best to market and sell Milton Keynes. Okay, but, but you know Brian, Brian would know if anybody knew 'cause, 'cause he was very much of the early stages, he would give an independent view 'cause it wasn't Brian's idea.

No, no, no, okay.

Alright?

Yeah, go on, yeah.

Okay. So it would start...I would start the interview with...and when you set it up I'm quite happy to join it to see if the technology...are you going to try and do via Zoom and then just get Callum to record it?

(00:06:10)

I don't think so um because it was so badly...I don't know whether...I mean the one with Roger Walker which was done in an art gallery actually, he was, he was just about to...he'd just done a load of pictures during lockdown and he was just about to show children around the Gallery. They were based on the designs of his house...

What's that?

That's the Gallery. David was actually at home but he lives outside of Auckland and he doesn't like...I don't know whether the internet connection wasn't that brilliant.

Well he...I thought he lived at the top of the North Island and, and...

Well he's just moved.

Well has he just moved back over there?

Yes, that was why the interview was delayed for a few weeks while he was literally getting a new kitchen and settling into this new place but to be honest the signal was not great and as I say the audio is okay, if you are just doing an audio thing. But um not the video, it just freezes [unclear] I'm going to get a thing, I might do a thing first and then get him to record particular responses.

Okay, fine.

Yeah.

Well if there's a live encounter between you, tell me when you're doing it and I'll join you if you like.

Lovely, oh okay.

Okay. Right. The first chunk of the interview, if I were doing it, would be about David as, as ultimate editor of the Bletchley Gazette.

Mmm hmm, yeah.

Now I don't know whether David came as a young reporter or whether he was appointed to an editorial job straight away, do you know about that?

I think he was.

Okay.

I think he was.

And I have no idea how long he did that for, okay? But, again, I'm sure as part of an...he was, he was quite a challenging editor and I'm sure and I'm in no doubt about this, Fred would have got to the point "let's get this chap inside the tent rather than outside" [laughs] which is what he did with Peter Waterman as well.

I claim, I claim, I and Sandra Barnes would claim that we got him the job because we went and had a quiet chat with him...and he produced this double page spread in the middle of the Bletchley Gazette which was 'an honest guide for new arrivals in Milton Keynes'.

I remember that.

Which then Fred, give him his due, then printed and gave as part of the information for every new arrival.

Have you got a copy of that?

(00:09:02)

I don't think so, I don't think so. It'll be somewhere, I bet the City Discovery Centre has it, something like that. We might have a copy in the Archive but um yeah and I reckon that's what...that was a key, a key thing in getting him anyway [laughs].

Right, in those days, Fred would have been able to offer David, probably twice as much money, as he was earning at the Bletchley Gazette so I'm sure, and get David to talk about this, I'm sure it was a combination of being able to shape it from the inside and, and money that persuaded him to move, okay. But get the...it would be interesting to...it was the ultimate poacher term 'gamekeeper' kind of, kind of thing and I suspect if I was writing about that, that would be the sub-heading I would, I would use, okay. And I'm sure that David...that Fred would have said to David "it's not just about press or public relations, I'd welcome your wider thoughts about how to market the City." I'm sure Fred would have dangled that opportunity but again get David to say whether he was just brought in for press and PR or whether he was brought in with a wider marketing remit.

Okay and remember David has reinvented himself several times and so you, your career was a pretty straight line career, mine

was even a straighter line career. David started as a journalist, then played quite an important role in marketing Milton Keynes, he then ended up with some even wider responsibilities after I left the Corporation to do with management and stuff like that. And then he...

Well that's right, he was in charge of Buildings I think.

Yeah, something like that.

(00:11:33)

That's he ended up with the Executive role of Homeworld.

Yeah, okay. I think, I think first Homeworld was '79 or something wasn't it?

The launch of it was '79 before...

'79, yeah.

'79 yeah but then it was...it didn't happen till '81 obviously yes.

And then he left the Corporation and set up a Marketing and Public Relations Consultancy which was very successful and then bailed out completely of the UK and did other stuff in New Zealand and he now is a playwright/producer or something. So he hasn't had a straight line career and this was probably the first big jump that he made when he joined Milton Keynes. But you need to put it in that context.

Now two, two other points before I forget them. You don't want to get him to talk about the Habitat show house but if he decides to, to bring that onto the table that's lovely.

This is the blue dress, this is the blue dress?

Was that what it was?

Well that's what they say, it was a blue...and that might have been Sandra Barnes [laughs], I don't know, that's what the rumour was, yes [laughs].

But anyway, so that in terms of, if you were writing the real story of Milton Keynes that, that would, would, would be there. The second thing I'd keep in mind is that when, if he wants to talk about this, if he wants to talk about the American visit...

[Unclear] mentioned this, he did mention this. You went with him didn't you?

Yeah he and I went for the best part of a week to California. My recollection of that, that, and I don't really have much of a recollection...I'll explain why in a minute...is that we weren't

there to look at American new towns we were there to talk to a guy called Paul Shepherd who we hired to do a lot of kind of inward investment target marketing on the West coast, okay but I don't remember visiting any new towns at all. But, you know, I'm happy to be persuaded otherwise. What I do remember is David and I had the most extraordinarily good time that I've ever had in the four or five days. And, and again he won't, he won't want to talk about this but there is a little bit of a story you could use, in that he was very keen on renting a big American car with a, with a very long bonnet and fine...so we rented this big American car with a very long bonnet and David's quite a short man, as you may recall, and so he would be driving up and down the hills of San Francisco and when you're going up a hill you can't see over the bonnet [laughs]. So, I would have to get out on a couple of occasions to wave him through the intersection.

(00:15:25)

Now you might find a way of asking him about you know, Lee tells the story of when you were driving around in this American rented car with a long bonnet, up and down the hills of San Francisco, and how you would struggle to see over the end of it. And, and that kind, that end of the trip would be appropriate to put, put on video, the rest of the trip will have to remain because I'm sure he won't have even told Helen about some of the things we got up to at the time. But, in those days Fred would send his favoured directors on kind of R & R trips where we...there was some story about what we were supposed to be doing but it was actually just to reward, to go out and have a good time for, you know, for several days. And David and I we did have some very good times [laughs].

Right, the main bits...if I were doing the interview I would then get him to talk about the different change of his responsibilities at Milton Keynes because he probably pretty early on my recollection would be he would have been part of DPSDI Don Ritson's empire; Planning Information and Social Development. But that was very, that, he quickly built up his own independent position as a Director and my view is that he was very much one of Fred's confidantes all the way through. And, because his kind of versatile, creative mind, he...off the back of his work if you like in advertising, he ended up playing an even stronger role both on marketing generally on Milton Keynes and kind of political strategy. And so I actually think his real value was not writing press releases, his real value was in helping to formulate the City's marketing program for several years. And, and Bob Hill and Alan Duff were young enough to, to, to accord him pay...they didn't feel all that offended by his involvement because they actually thought he added real value to the process. But you know the whole...so, so I would try and get him to talk about the...to identify the different phases of his career.

Yeah, okay.

And, and...you know, he more than anybody else, was the man that marketed Central Milton Keynes and that, and got it on the map big time. He was the guy that worked side by side with Cogent Elliot, he may have helped to replace the original advertising agencies that were with Jock, with Cogent Elliot, I don't know. I don't know whether he, David, was responsible for Cogent Elliot or whether they, they he inherited them when he stood. But that was quite an important decision as well. If you can imagine...how well did you know Alan Ashton? Probably not very well.

(00:19:54)

I don't think I ever...I think...I heard of him but I don't think I ever met him.

He was an extremely strong-willed, opinionated Chartered Surveyor. It's worth checking out whether, what David's position was when Alan Ashton was still alive, okay because there might be some really interesting stories there, if they did work together. My sense is David joined pretty much after Ashton died, but in terms of understanding where David added real value, in terms of those phases of his relationship, he would have added real value in ramping up the Corporation's marketing activities for sale of housing. He would have added real value in marketing Central Milton Keynes and, in my view, he would have added real value in formulating the, the political strategy. So I...and I think I gave credit to David in, in, in the draft of 'Here comes Maggie'. I wrote it, but David helped me structure the arguments and probably contributed the odd sentence or thought into it. The, the legend of, you know the urban legend of Milton Keynes, that was very much my work, I, I would take 70% of the credit for it but I think David should have 30% of the credit for it. And he was very, very politically shrewd and he...and that was both advising Fred and Jock nationally, on national politics, and then working very closely with Fred and Jerry Neal on the local politics. And he just had a really good commercial nose in terms of what the messages were we should sell to the rest of the...you know, to investors. And he had a good political nose as well. I'm happy for you to quote me on any of this sort of stuff if it gets, gets to that. Is that helpful?

Yeah, very good, very good. Were there any...I mean obviously there were things like Homeworld which was a particular project, were there any other particular projects that he had seen?

'CMK!' You know, marketing 'CMK'. Okay, big, big, very expensive, okay. My recollection is that he, he never really falls in configuring, designing, briefing stuff, he was more of a strategic level but I'm happy to be persuaded otherwise if that was...so when, when we were, you know sitting round the EMC

table he would not bring projects to the table and, and just like I would, I wouldn't comment very much on him...popular man. Now...

Sorry, as you said that it froze slightly. He was...?

Okay. He was not a popular man, okay. He, while...the sense that I have is that the, the...my peers, you know I was the young man round the table, but people see me for what I did. I don't know whether you picked that up or not. But people did not like David, I liked David a lot, but, you know, when we had that 'old persons dinner', the 'directors dinner', okay and I was quite proud that I was able with Bob Hill to organise David into that, there was not a lot of empathy for him okay. And I was surprised by that and, and you know there would be...so Bob...you know I don't think, I think that Bob Pilling and David worked well together but even Bob wouldn't give David a lot of credit. So, Pete, Stuart Mosscrop was a real pain in the ass to work with but you know he had unrivalled respect from his colleagues, David was at the opposite end of that process.

(00:25:19)

Well, when did he actually leave?

Don't know. My guess would have been around '83, '84, okay. So it would be interesting...but I don't know that...it would be interesting...he was on the different regime, under Frank and then Frank and Chilver.

Yeah.

Okay, that would be really interesting material and you know I'd really like to see that as well. And he would have some real insights to that, he'd be able to crystallise that quite well.

Okay.

And, and you know, he, in a sense, you know if you were looking to describe the different contributions that different people brought to the, to the EMC and the Board table, David's contribution would be thinking about how the Corporation needs to navigate the difficult politics, locally and, and nationally. And so in current language David was always thinking about the optics and, and, and did that very well.

I mean in the, I mean if you think that the first part of the film went up to kind of like 1979, then I mean he should have a lot...you know this thing about the change in the politics, the national politics, and the Corporation's adaptation to it, and also the change in the leadership of the Corporation...

Yeah.

...that's where he had particularly good...

And my sense is, but I can't really remember this, he would have been very helpful in the '76, '77 Shaw review, Peter Shaw review. And he'd be very helpful in the [unclear]. Now, in terms of configuring, I don't know, you may have sent me the treatment for the second film.

Yes I did.

Yeah. Can...have you done any more work on it?

No, no, no, no. I've got, I mean I've, I've been, as I say, I've been doing several films for other people and now I'm doing this Homeworld thing. But this, if you like, this has given me the impetus now to get on and...

Okay, right. I'll dig out the treatment you sent me and if I can't find it I'll...

I only did it...I did it fairly recently because what I did...

Yeah I know.

...Is I've, I've, I've got so far in it um you know and I'm still sort of re-ordering things but, you know.

Yeah, yeah, I'll have a look at what you sent me, if I can't find it I'll ask you to send it again.

Yeah.

I, it...looked at it to begin with...I've realised you can't impose a kind of chronological breakdown, there's a lot to be said in terms of marketing, in terms of the politics of Milton Keynes in the late '70's the early '80's that we didn't get covered in the film. And I'll talk to you about that.

(00:29:08)

Well to be honest I had envisaged the chronological bits would have been things like the opening of the station or...you know that kind...you know they'd be events like that...

Yeah.

...rather than, you know just running....you know I agree with you that I think you know the... in a sense the politics, the whole bit, thank you very much for the book. What's his name, I've forgotten his name. Theo...?

Ortelundo.

Ortelundo or whatever, yes, yeah.

An American guy.

Yeah, I mean that was quite useful, I didn't agree with all that he said but it was a useful kind of look at it.

Yeah but it was very, very partial.

Yeah.

I mean it was about Thatcher and as I'm trying to nail down what I want to say in my book, by the time Thatcher got her hands on it or the Tories got their hands on it there was a whole bunch of other stuff that it already...which Ortelundo doesn't really give proper respect to, at all. And we'll have that discussion another time.

But, but there is...Thatcher was a turning point in terms of basically, even though Milton Keynes was established to help meet London's housing needs, from Thatcher onwards, that agenda got kicked out, got cancelled. And Milton Keynes wasn't about London's housing needs any more at all, the whole social development agenda actually just got killed, you know regardless of what Peter Waterman feels. And, and...there's, there's some themes that Ortelundo didn't pick up on in terms of the '70's and then what happened after the '70's and in terms of the basic structure of Milton Keynes the kind of underlying mobility challenge.

So, it completely changed its housing role, it, it got completely dominated...development and the City centre. The original plan was one third of the jobs would be manufacturing [laughs]. And the mobility challenge for low and moderate income people which Pooley had looked to address is still with us today! And those big themes, which I think are the most important things, Ortelundo just didn't really...at all, is really what I'm saying, in terms of the way the place is. And then when you look at it from a Covid point of view, if you were looking to design a city for the post-Covid world it would be Milton Keynes!

You know, and, you know to be fair to Ortelundo, there was no Covid when he was working on his, his, text. But that's really a very important...anyway, don't get me started on that, I'm trying to write that chapter as we speak.

(00:32:41)

[Interview Ends]