

Interview with Respondent 0740**Date: 19/02/2015****Location: Public House, Hastings****Interviewer: Emma Pett**

Respondent: [Discussing an interview with another academic] I think I talked about all those, sort of, Fifties films, glamorous actresses. Margaret, Alan and I were just roaring with laughter. It was funny. Just things I said. It was a good session!

Interviewer: When you talk about the musicals, were there stand out ones for you in terms of actresses ...?

Respondent: Well, yes, there were. You see I can't think of the names ... I mean I loved June Allyson ... but listen, I can't think of the names ...

Interviewer: Don't, don't think about the names then. Tell me about the fashions. Did you actually go out and try ... did you see things on the big screen and think 'I want that. I want to look like that.'

Respondent: Yeah, I think the ... it was all those big petticoats. Oh, and there were wonderful shops on like Shaftesbury Avenue and Soho that sold clothes. And, em, I always remember – although this is nothing to do with the Sixties – but where I lived in South East London, there was a shop. I remember it was called Viner's off Hollywood. I have looked, I have googled it and I can't find it anywhere.

Interviewer: Some of these things haven't made it onto the internet.

Respondent: I know. But the window was full, floor to ceiling, of shoes in crocodile leather. Bright red peep-toes and they had wedge heels and I'm about 13 and I'm looking at this window. I just loved it. I wrote a blog a few years ago and I mentioned it there.

Interviewer: You were living in London in the Sixties?

Respondent: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: What part of London were you?

Respondent: I was in South-east London and in the Sixties I was in Central London because I'd been to drama school and when I was working for the NFT I lived just off Tottenham Court Road.

Interviewer: Which drama school did you go to?

Respondent: Rose Bruford.

Interviewer: Was that, sort of, early Sixties?

Respondent: '60-'63.

Interviewer: That must have been amazing. Being in London and being at drama school in that period ...

Respondent: Well, no, drama school was in Sidcup. Rose Bruford was in Sidcup. When I came to London, just off Warren Street and then to Northumberland Avenue the flat was just off the other side of Tottenham Court Road. So, yes it was ...

Interviewer: You were in the thick of it. I can't imagine ... I work just off Gordon Square so that idea of living there seems quite odd actually, because I associate it with a kind of academic hub I suppose ...

Respondent: Well, it was Cleveland Street – which is the Euston Road end of Cleveland Street by Warren Street where it came into Cleveland Street – and it was just an old tenant block ... a friend of mine ... her grandparents had gone into a home so her dad let us live there. It was jolly good.

Interviewer: Yeah, a good deal. So did you go to the cinema much when you were at that age, in the early Sixties?

Respondent: I went to the cinema more at the end of the 1950s. I discovered the National Film Theatre and went to see, sort of, everything, you know. Discovered Bergman, discovered all those American underground films. I still have those very early programmes. It was just fantastic. I just remember it, but it was across the board, it was theatre as well. It was Stratford East, Joan Littlewood. Some of the plays in the West End were fantastic. It was a whole hotbed of culture around about '58/'59. Suddenly this creative, this culture throughout the country and it was fantastic. And part of it ...

Interviewer: It sounds completely ... my mum spent time in London ... she was at the University of Cardiff but she went up to London quite a bit around that period because her cousin was married to Adrian Mitchell ...

Respondent: Oh, really?

Interviewer: Yeah, they divorced after that ... so he took her to see *A Taste of Honey* and all those other things so ... I mean, it just sounds like an extraordinary time. Did you ... was there a sense ... one of the things I find really interesting about that time was that whole kind of movement to capture working-class life and ordinary life. What can you remember about that? Was that exciting? Did that feel different? What did that mean?

Respondent: Well in a way, when you think of it, when you bear in mind that probably I hadn't really been to the theatre before that so I wasn't really aware of what was on and what sort of plays were there. You went from school to sort of Shakespeare and stuff like that ... but I don't think that while I was still at school that I went to the theatre. In the East End, I don't think I did. When I left school, I had a boyfriend who ended up being my first husband, but that's another story ... we did all sorts of things. I mean he was the one who told me about *The Catcher in the Rye*. He'd just read that so I got a copy of that and read that. So that was all new and he actually I think he was the one who introduced me to the Bergman. These amazing Swedish films and we went to go and see *Wild Strawberries*, *The Seventh Seal* and you were agog at this new, sort of, form, it seemed to me.

Interviewer: Are there things you can remember? Are there scenes ... is there any overriding kind of ... sort of ... feel or experience they gave you that ... They obviously had a big impact on you, they were different ...

Respondent: It was all part of being that age. You were out and you were in Soho ... I mean, I used to go to Soho on my own when I was still in school in ... sort of 15/16. I used to go up on the train, walk through London and then go to Soho and go to the coffee bars. I'd meet friends there, but I mean I was doing all of that. It was all ... you may go to some clubs ... it was just part of the scene at the time. As I say, I don't know if I really went to the theatre then, but what films did I see. Early on in my teens it was either musicals, but then we got to about 1959 and ... But I remember seeing *The Angry Silence*: black and white, working class. I mean this was new, those black and white films and the subject matter ... there was *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, wasn't there?

Interviewer: *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* ...

Respondent: *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* ... all of those ...

Interviewer: Did you ... How did you feel about ... One of the things that I am always interested in was the way that regional accents were something of a novelty in terms of ... when you listen to news broadcasts everybody is 'Darling', but then Tony Richardson and the new wave of directors really wanted to capture those regional accents. Can you remember that being something you were aware of and thinking this is something a bit different or ...

Respondent: What I remember ... it's the enthusiasm of youth, the enthusiasm of discovering all these new things and I remember – while I was at drama school – there was a small magazine it was called *Encore* and it was about theatre and there was an article in there by a man who was a solicitor ... John Mortimer ... and I wrote to him ... and he phoned me or sent me a letter saying to meet him in a pub behind ... round about Cavendish Square and we met and then much later, years later, he was a bit of a philanderer – nothing happened, I can assure you – we had a nice chat again. The other thing too with film which is interesting, while I was at drama school we'd go to see these amazing Polish films so *Ashes and Diamonds*, unbelievable ... like the Swedish films. I discovered that there was a Polish film school so I sent away for information and I really really wanted to go to Polish film school. I don't know why ...

Interviewer: You were quite taken with them.

Respondent: I'd never picked up a camera in my life. Anyway, so I got all the information, but you had to have two languages and I didn't have another language ... so nothing happened, but that was an interesting. That sort of shows you.

Interviewer: It captured you somehow, yeah.

Respondent: The interest you gained from all these amazing new films. Such a contrast to all these MGM musicals. Then at the NFT we had a season of underground work from America. I'm trying to think of the names of these films ...

Interviewer: Was this pre-Warhol and things, yeah?

- Respondent: Oh, pre. There was a wonderful season called *Beat, Square and Call* at the NFT. I've still got the programme. It was wonderful, just very interesting films and all those alternative underground films. I can't stand them now. But then, because they were new ...
- Interviewer: The aesthetics of them were very different.
- Respondent: They were, they were. So, yeah, I mean going to the cinema we love -- the Curzon in Mayfair. That was amazing .
- Interviewer: Was there like a crowd? I mean, when people talk ... somebody I interviewed was talking about when they went to New York in the Sixties and Andy Warhol would have been hanging out on the corner of the street and it seems very much, from some of these descriptions, that there was kind of less people and there were crowds of people that you would see at the same places. Did you get that sense with the cinema at all? Would you have a sense that there was a particular kind of audience that kept going to see these films or was it more random than that?
- Respondent: I don't think. I don't think so, but when I was working at the NFT at the box office they used to queue opposite the box office for their 2 and 6 penny seats which you couldn't book in advance ... and the same people, absolutely the same people, in the queue the whole time. We had names for them.
- Interviewer: Did you?
- Respondent: We had names for them. There was Miss Whole-nut.
- Interviewer: Miss Whole-nut?
- Respondent: She always bought a bar of whole-nut chocolate. She was a little old lady and we called her 'Whole-nut ... oh, look at Miss Whole-nut' ... and there was a wonderful guy ... I've forgotten his name now – I haven't thought about him for donkey's years – and he had kohl eye makeup and he had a big long black cloak and ... Ian, that was it ... and I've forgotten what happened to him, but he queued everyday and he was very eccentric. So there were ...
- Interviewer: There were regular people that would come ...
- Respondent: Totally, there were regular people who would come to the NFT and when I was an usherette I discovered a few little scams about. Obviously they couldn't afford their 2 and 6, but I wasn't too worried, but this bloke Ian he friended or had a friend, a normal bloke, and they would always have a seat in the front row and I realised after a while that the other bloke was coming out to go to the loo or whatever while they were waiting for the film to start and of course they would exchange tickets because when he came back, you know, you didn't look at his ticket, did you? But he'd obviously passed it off to Ian outside. A lot of things like that. In those days also when I was usheretting there, say in '64/'65, we got a lot of stars coming – I can remember Gregory Peck coming – and they would just sit in the back.
- Interviewer: Regular audience members. They weren't coming to premieres or anything?
- Respondent: Just regular audience members. There was Tru ... I remember sitting next to Truffaut because he was sitting in the back row and it was my seat which I had to sit in so

Truffaut. I worked with Truffaut because I was in a film that he was in and I can't remember what that was called ... Oskar Werner was in it [Fahrenheit 451]... Anyway, just a little bit of filming. Truffaut. I remember Lindsay Anderson was extremely rude when he came to the NFT

Interviewer: In what way? How was he rude?

Respondent: Well, the four back rows were expensive seats. They were tenant seats. The front row was 2 and 6, the rest were 7 and 6, I think, and it was the four back rows AA, BB, CC and DD ... and he came in late one day with a woman. He came in late and the film had started and I went down in the dark and I didn't know who it was. I didn't know it was Lindsay Anderson because it was dark. I went up and shone my torch and I said 'could I see your tickets please?' and he was so rude to me ... and I went to my manager and said 'I am not going to be spoken to like that, there's this bloke in with a woman' and it turned out it was Lindsay Anderson and my boss had let him in ...

Interviewer: ... without a ticket because it was Lindsay Anderson? It's funny how that happens. I had this experience when I was a teacher and I didn't know I taught the son of someone who was in Duran Duran ... because the surname was Taylor and I didn't recognise him either and his son wasn't that good in the lesson so I used to try and cheer him along a bit but he was ... yeah ... When it came to parents' evening his dad came and kicked up a fuss and said I hadn't given him enough individual attention and I said 'well, he's part of a class and I'm teaching everyone at the same time'... and I went downstairs to the staffroom afterwards and I said 'James Taylor's dad is a pain in the neck isn't he?'

Respondent: He shouldn't behave like that.

Interviewer: Well no it's funny isn't it when people get special treatment and they expect and when they don't get it because whoever is serving them or interacting with them doesn't actually know who they are then they feel somehow aggrieved because they have got used to it. Peculiar thing really. Anyway, it was a bit of an aside, but yeah.

Respondent: Attenborough was always really polite when he came in and wanted tickets. He would always pay for them. They didn't expect special treatment or freebies, but there were some who would ... you know, come and demand their tickets and ... interesting. So, yes, stars, who else did we get? I always remember Gregory Peck and I know Truffaut and I think there were others who came. So, yeah ... but the NFT then was, I think (although I've not been to the NFT for donkey's years) was completely different to what it is now.

Interviewer: In what way?

Respondent: Well, it was a club. You had to be a member.

Interviewer: Yeah, I was going to say, was it an annual membership? How did it work?

Respondent: Yes, it was an annual membership, but you couldn't get in without being a member whereas now – and I think for years now – you can do a day membership or something, but then ... it was very ... it was part of the London cultural scene to be a member of the NFT. It was where all the amazing films were shown from all around

the world. So it was the place to be seen, but it was, you know, part of the culture. You belonged to the NFT and if you didn't you were just ... a nobody. So working there, you got to know the members, you got to know people ... I'm just trying to think really.

Interviewer: Do you know roughly how big the membership was?

Respondent: I haven't the faintest idea. I haven't the faintest idea.

Interviewer: ... and how many screens were there then?

Respondent: When I started to work there they were just starting to build NFT2 so it was just NFT1 and because they had to close, they moved the NFT to Milbank and there's a building down there – I can't tell you what it is – but it's before you get to the Tate ... It was at Milbank and it was ... I think it was the building ... it belongs to the government I think and there is a theatre in there or a cinema

Interviewer: Past the Tate?

Respondent: No before you get to the Tate, from this end.

Interviewer: Coming to the Southbank?

Respondent: Yeah, Yeah. So when I first worked there I had to walk to Milbank. But I can't remember anything about that. It couldn't have been for very long and then when we went back to the Southbank the NFT2 had been built so we then had two cinemas.

Interviewer: When they were screening films in the building at Milbank, was it just a projector on a wall or was there a cinema in the building?

Respondent: Yeah, I think so. There must have been a cinema. There must have been a cinema. I can't remember anything about it. It's totally ... I've totally blanked.

Interviewer: There must be a record of it somewhere.

Respondent: I think ... we couldn't have been there very long. But all the usherettes who worked there were all actors or artists.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: No. Lesley Hardcastle was the ... what do you call it? The director of the Southbank and that included the NFT, obviously, and he's still around. I spoke to him the other day.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Respondent: He lives in Soho and he's amazing. I mean, he's ... late eighties, but he's fantastic and he's still very busy. That was his whole life, the NFT. His whole life and back then he and David Godwinson and ... David – we were going to see them in Deal – David Francis (he was his head of the archive then) they thought of MOMI [Museum of the Moving Image, 1988-1999] the museum and they got it built. So that was his baby, Lesley's baby. You talk to Lesley, he's incredible. I think he's in there as well. So where was I going with that ...? What were we talking about?

Interviewer: We were talking about the kind of ... well I was asking you about how many screens there were and you were telling me about how it moved out for NFT2 to be built and that's kind of the mid-'60s, was it?

Respondent: Yes. It was mid-'60s. I was talking about the usherettes. OK. Lesley absolutely knew he wanted ... not glamour girls, but attractive people as usherettes. They weren't going to be old ladies with pinnies and so that's why most of the usherettes were, you know, artists or actors.

While you eat I will go on and ramble. So in those days there were two houses in NFT1... there was 6.30 and 8.30 something like that ...and in those days there was usually a different film so as an usherette I saw millions of films because as an usherette you had to stay in there and I just remember seeing the most incredible films . So we were very, very lucky to work in an arts cinema like that.

Interviewer: When you say, you said earlier you thought you could see films there that you couldn't really see anywhere else ...

Respondent: No, no absolutely not.

Third party (to Interviewer): Have you got those forms?

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. I don't know your name but you can come to the screening ... Yeah, please take one. Thank you very much. Anything you can remember is really helpful for us so ... I'm glad you enjoyed it. I really enjoyed watching it.

Third party: I seen cinema '65-'68, forget '61 when I was 13 you forget that lots of stuff actually happened then. You start off with cowboy films and then all your friends taking a bucket of LSD to go and watch Stanley Kubrick's 2001 every week 'You'll understand it this time' ... 'no you won't.'

Interviewer: Anyway, carry on...

Respondent: So when I was an usherette I was still supposedly an actress and I got a job on a film shooting at Pinewood and we were all allowed to go off; as long as, you know, you got another usherette to do your job for you. So there was a period of ten days where I had to get up very early – this is when I was living near Tottenham Court Road – go all the way to Pinewood, get made up, we were made up with very dark brown makeup. This was called A Million Years BC. It was a Hammer Film. Anyway, wearing fur bikinis. Anyway, and then I would get back and if I was in time for the 8.30, I would go to the 8.30. I would wash all this off and then underneath I would still be brown and then it was when I went home that I had to have a bath and wash. So that went on where people were ... there was one usherette and she was a dancer and she got a gig at the Moulin Rouge in Paris and I went over to see her. There was a very well-known composer called Howard Blake, do you know him?

Interviewer: Yeah, I've heard of him, yeah.

Respondent: OK. He was a projectionist at that time.

Interviewer: Oh really? So basically a lot of the regular staff were jobbing actors, artists, drama school, whatever ...

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

- Interviewer: So that made for ...
- Respondent: Very interesting work colleagues, yeah. There's a couple of people who live nearby. Hastings and St Leonards who I worked with, are now here. There was also a manager who subsequently became a TV Producer, went to Australia for donkey's years. He's now come back, he lives just here. He's been all around the world and couldn't live anywhere else, but Hastings. Isn't that amazing? Just shows you.
- Interviewer: It's a lovely place. The Old Town ... when I was a student, I did my first degree at Kent. I did drama at Kent in the early '90s and I lived in Whitstable and old Hastings reminds me of Whitstable. There's something ... I really like it.
- Respondent: Just the old town is just amazing. It's very ... community ... there's a good community. Just terrific.
- Interviewer: There's a great cinema as well. I really like it.
- Respondent: The other thing I remember about film is that because we spent all those years watching alternative film, films from all around the world, suddenly they started to be screened on BBC2 and all of a sudden, it opened out those kind of films to the general public. The person who ran that was a guy called Brian Baxter, do you know him? Well he used to work at the NFT ... or the BFI. Perhaps he was at the BFI, but anyway, he had a partner, a Danish boy, I remember going to his funeral because he died years ago. Anyway, so that's Brian Baxter. So gradually, things changed, but things changed in that sort of culture of alternative film or foreign film because suddenly they were opened out to the general public by them being shown on BBC2. In a way, that's probably why they opened out the NFT, I suppose. I don't know.
- Interviewer: Well the audience for them must have grown. I've had people who were students in, say, Cardiff in 1960, that talked about going to see Bergman films and then talking about seeing them at film societies at university. Initially, I guess it was a select very small range of places where you could see those films, and then gradually ... I mean now world cinema is a genre isn't it?
- Respondent: Because you didn't see them at your local Odeon, you know. You never saw those films. You had to go to the Curzon at Mayfair, you had to go to the ... what's the one on Oxford Street, you had to go to all the comic cameo polys ... what was the one in the corner on Oxford Street ... I can't remember its name, but they used to do foreign films. But after a while being an usherette there, I became deputy box office manager because again I could go off to auditions and things and when the box office manager left, I became box office manager. So I was box office manager there for two or three years which was great and, as I say, I was still able to go off and do auditions and things and then in the '70s I did a lot of commentaries for foreign films because ... well, actually I asked if I could do it because being an actor I wanted to be able to do it. Some of the commentators weren't very good. So I did that for many years.
- Interviewer: You say commentator. This is like pre-video. How do you ... in what respect?
- Respondent: OK. Remember the NFT used to have earphones in the seats? ... and they were for foreign films that didn't have subtitles because bear in mind in those days they were

showing ... most films didn't have subtitles because they weren't shown in mainstream cinemas so why would they subtitle them? It was only, perhaps French films and stuff which had ... Chinese films, Polish films, didn't have subtitles.

Interviewer: So what would you ... would you be given the English ...

Respondent: Script. I'd have a script. Then I'd rehearse it and then mark up the script to where the pauses were, etc., etc., or who indeed was speaking because sometimes the scripts weren't terribly good and then I would be in the booth ...

Interviewer: Throughout the film?

Respondent: Yeah, with my earphones on and the microphone and people had their earphones on and they could hear me with the ... so it wasn't a simultaneous translation because they didn't have the translators, it was a simultaneous English script which I thoroughly enjoyed doing. I did it for about twelve years actually. Even when I'd left the NFT completely. So that was good. Yes.

Interviewer: That's like a completely different culture. For someone of my generation, when I started going to see foreign films there was always subtitles. I knew that they had screened them before from talking to people, but I hadn't really thought about those commentaries and how that would work. That's really interesting.

Respondent: Well, because bear in mind that the NFT would do all these amazing seasons so there might be a Greek silent film season – they were so boring, I tell you – and they would do a season from Bulgaria, or something like that ... and what they were is they were reciprocal so if that archive in that particular country sent their films we, the BFI, would send British films over there. So that was going on all the time whereas I don't think that happens now, at all, but that was the way we saw those foreign films as a, sort of, negotiation between the archives.

Interviewer: Really fascinating.

Respondent: ... and they wouldn't have subtitles, would they?

Interviewer: So it was like an individual exchange system between different arts communities.

Respondent: ... and the only ones that could be shown in, let's say the Curzon Mayfair and the one in Oxford Street I keep thinking about, they only way those foreign films could be shown were the mainstays like Swedish, French, German that had subtitles ...

Interviewer: I was going to say, those are the only ones – I'm thinking now about other people that have responded to the project who have talked about European cinema or continental cinema as a lot of people... – they have tended to talk about Godard, Truffaut, Bergman. Very much European cinema, Italian cinema, but I haven't really ... I mean even Japanese cinema ... haven't really featured that much. You'd have thought people would have talked a bit more ... Akira Kurosawa, or some of the big names. It's interesting because I think that reflects the distribution patterns in the Sixties.

Respondent: Have you actually discovered ... been to the BFI or emailed them or something to give you a list of the seasons throughout the Sixties?

Interviewer: I've been to their archives, but I haven't actually requested that ...

- Respondent: That would be quite interesting to see which countries were sending their films through the ... certainly through the early Sixties. Probably '60 ... or even '58-'66 or something to see what those seasons were. I did have all the programmes, but I got rid of a lot of them. I just kept the very early ones. When you look at very early London film festival programmes they're about eight pages and they're normal size, but eight pages ... and the thing about the festival then, I've always thought this, is that we were seeing the crème de la crème from continental wherever. Whereas now, you know what the LFF programme is, it's huge, it's thick, it's like you look at it and you think ... 'I can't be bothered to have a look through this' and it's anything that filmmakers want to put their funds into. Whereas the LFF in the late '50s/the early '60s was just such a select group of films that you were being shown and that was the highlight of the year, the LFF.
- Interviewer: What can you remember about the early days then ... from when you went. Was it all held at the ...
- Respondent: The NFT? It wasn't held anywhere else.
- Interviewer: There weren't other venues and were there significant ... I mean now they're all massive media circuses ... was there anything at all comparable to that or was it just a programme ...
- Respondent: No.
- Interviewer: No. That's really interesting. Much more like a small film festival is now. When you go to a small independent film festival.
- Respondent: Yes, yes, but I don't think ... it wasn't the sort of festival where films were in competition. It was nothing like that. It was just...
- Interviewer: A programme
- Respondent: A programme. Yeah. Yes, it was.
- Interviewer: There was no prize ... because there was ... I'm really ... one of the things I'm really interested in academically is the way in which film festivals function in terms of developing reputations for filmmakers from parts of the world where you don't normally see films. So that's really interesting that in your memory the London Festival didn't have that prize culture.
- Respondent: I'm sure it didn't.
- Interviewer: Because Cannes did then, obviously. I mean Cannes did right from the post-war period, but the London Film Festival didn't.
- Respondent: No. No. I'm sure it didn't. I do not remember it being ... I don't know where my old programmes are, but I'm sure if you went to the archive and looked at the programmes, you'd notice. There might be something in there about things being in competition, but they weren't. They were just the best films that were around at the time ... and then subsequently, of course, these films are shown in arts cinemas and film societies. But that's about it. Now of course, with DVDs and everything, people see everything.

- Interviewer: One of the other things that emerged that I hadn't realised before I did this project was the way that in some of the arthouse cinemas, because of the content of the films, there was a crossover with, sort of, erotica so the same cinemas would show soft porn that would show arthouse cinemas and I had no idea because these days you wouldn't get that. An arthouse cinema is quite a proper institution whereas it seems to me in the Sixties, because of perhaps what people were and weren't used to in the UK, they became cinemas for grownups, basically.
- Respondent: Well, it was the cameo chain that did that. There was a cameo in Charing Cross Road at the bottom ... and a friend of mine (who was a friend of mine then, I haven't seen them in ages, he's become a very well-known Hollywood cinematographer), but he was a projectionist at this cameo ... cameo poly ... cameo ... anyway, the cameo in ... and that was showing Swedish soft porn, but that was at an arthouse.
- Interviewer: A chain?
- Respondent: ... and then the University of Westminster now, which is going to open a new cinema, that housed the cameo poly and we used to go there as well. But they, again, they were arthouse cinemas ... films ... but you're absolutely right, they also showed the Swedish Fanny Hill and all that business.
- Interviewer: So when you were a cinephile, in your younger days, that was just a normal thing that those kinds of cinemas would be showing those films and you were just 'that's on here as well' sort of thing?
- Respondent: Yeah.
- Interviewer: Because that's quite a key way film exhibitions changed, in the way that cinemas really, kind of, target a particular type of audience now. So that an arthouse cinema is almost like a, kind of, highbrow venue now ... whereas there was a crossover really between that kind of B-Movie exploitation thing and European arthouse, which seems really bizarre, but that's how it played out, you know ...
- Respondent: I don't know how people knew which films were showing at these cinemas. It must have just been either passing trade or putting ads in the Evening Standard or something, but when you think the NFT was a club therefore people got their programmes so you looked at your programmes and you knew what was on so you could book ... but when you think about the other arthouse cinemas, they didn't have programmes.
- Interviewer: No, I can remember in my youth going to the cinema and looking in newspapers. That's how I used to find out ... pre-internet age ... either you phoned up and listened to a message, a recorded message that would play at the cinema or you would look in your local newspaper and that's how you knew what was on that week.
- Respondent: I don't know how we knew what was on a the cameo poly. I'm thinking late-'50s here. I don't know how we knew what was on. Did we just walk past? Did we look in the paper? I don't know because there was no What's On or anything like that.
- Interviewer: No Time Out or anything?
- Respondent: No. So ...

- Interviewer: Interesting.
- Respondent: It is interesting, but I cannot remember how we knew.
- Interviewer: Somebody must have ... there must have been somebody in your circle that knew how to find out or asked around...
- Respondent: Yeah. But that's interesting isn't it that the NFT was so well ... people went to the NFT ...
- Interviewer: Culturally prestigious?
- Respondent: They had a programme. That's interesting that no other cinemas probably did. I don't think they did ... although, did I buy it on ebay? I have a little cardboard programme, a foldout, for the Gaumont at Lewisham. It's where I grew up. I remember the Gaumont cinema ... and that's a little foldout programme it's for 1940 ... 1940... a date in the 1940s anyway. So it's got the films that they are showing the following week so that is a little card programme. That's interesting actually.
- Interviewer: So there were little ...
- Respondent: Little programmes, but, yeah. That's back in the '40s, but ...
- Interviewer: There were little things in the foyer that people could pick ...
- Respondent: I don't remember as a child ever seeing them, but this is something ... and I bought it because it was the Gaumont, Lewisham. So, anyway, yes.
- Interviewer: Lots of interesting things. Thank you.
- Respondent: It's one's past. Yes, misspent youth or whatever. You should also, not that he is particularly interested in talking about it, but my partner Steven, he's a film historian and ...
- Interviewer: Is there a particular period he's interested in?
- Respondent: Just very early, but he started out as a film projectionist. At a fleapit cinema at Clapham Junction. Then he went to ... he was a projectionist at the Windmill ... he showed films there. So he's got lots of stories about that ... and the fleapit cinema in Clapham, when he first went there he was shown by this guy who had one leg, he was a projectionist and his girlfriend was also in the projection box and there was a dog so if any oily film would go on the floor, it would go through the gate with all these dog hairs on it. But when he arrived, he said to Steven 'go down to the stores and bring up a seat' and he had to saw a seat off from the stalls to take up to the projection box. It's just funny stories ... and it was a fleapit, anyway ...
- Interviewer: Yeah, it would be fascinating to talk to him. I mean, only if he wanted to.
- Respondent: He ended up being a projectionist at the NFT for quite a short while ... various other things... and then he got the job as technical manager at MOMI [Museum of the Moving Image] So basically all his experience ... so he's managing the projectionist (although he had been a projectionist himself). All his expertise in film history and film projectors and all of that is based on experience. He knows how projectors work

and cameras work and he's done a lot of work. He actually was a consultant on *Hugo* because they had all these old machines and stuff.

Interviewer: OK.

Respondent: So he works on that so he's quite interesting to talk about.

Interviewer: It would be great to talk to him. Only if he had time. Maybe I can come back another time?

Respondent: But he is interesting talking about projections and when things go wrong.

Interviewer: I can remember things going wrong in the '80s with the film going off. You know what I mean.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah. Of course now it's all DVD and if you talk to kids now they don't know what film means. What does film mean? What is a film? They don't know.

Interviewer: Whereas I can see watching a film on the big screen, this is a film. But I don't know how much of that is just to do with growing up? To me it's a film and they just put a DVD on.

Respondent: But all films are being made aren't they in digital format and so ...

Interviewer: At the NFT in the 1960s, did they have ... I mean, I can remember it in my student days that wasn't that long ago ... the early '90s so ... did they have a bar, did they have refreshments? So how much of it was like a cinema?

Respondent: When you went in that was underneath the bridge. That was the entrance. I've got a photograph of it under the bridge. One car is parked against the railings by the Thames.

Interviewer: Wow. That's amazing.

Respondent: There was no path up there really and the National Theatre was being built at that time and the Queen Elizabeth Hall was being built.

Interviewer: So the film theatre was before those two?

Respondent: Oh yes. The film theatre ... they had a film theatre during the Festival of Britain and then it was moved. Did they call it the fest ... it had a different name ... and then it was moved under the bridge so Lesley Hardcastle was involved in that right from the beginning. It moved under the bridge and that had its special problems. I mean, the bridge ... every time a lorry went over this certain part of the bridge you could hear the bump in the NFT. I mean, terrible. OK, so you went in the main doors, the glass doors. I remember Judy Garland coming, going up those steps ... and then you bought your ticket and next to it was a box, a big box that was locked at night. That lid was taken off and there was somebody who sold chocolate bars and stuff so that was next to the box office. The box office that I worked in was this side and that's where you bought your tickets in advance. OK and we just had books, great big books of tickets. Whereas now it's all on the stream. They take ten times longer issuing a ticket on the stream than we did with these books. We were so quick with them. Take the tickets out and we'd point to where the seats were and that was

fine. But then opposite was where the queue formed for the 2 and 6 pence. So that box office was only open every evening just before the showing to sell the little automatic tickets. 2 and 6. Or there were envelopes I think. Envelopes where people had booked in advance could get their tickets up there. Can't remember ... and then there was the sweet box. OK, you went through and if you went to the right, it would lead you round to a bar ... very small and it was alcoholic bar and when I was there there was a man called John Ransell – I remember his name – some old geezer who made cheese and pickle sandwiches on white bread ... and there they were. You could have a glass of beer and a cheese and pickle sandwich. I loved those cheese and pickle sandwiches. I thought they were really good so we were able to go in there and get stuff. Can you visualise the NFT now? Can you visualise going in? Can you visualise going to the left?

Interviewer: Riverside or from the ...

Respondent: From the Southbank side, the main entry to the Southbank.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Can you visualise? You go to the left, you go up some steps and you end up going towards the restaurant

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: Well that bit wasn't there. There was no foyer where it is now. It was all rubble. So that bit where those steps are, was where the bar was.

Interviewer: A small bar then?

Respondent: Oh yes, just had a few seats. So that was the bar. Otherwise no, there was nothing else.

Interviewer: So there was the bar that sold cheese and pickle sandwiches and there was a little box with chocolate bars in it?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Brilliant. There wasn't any soft drinks?

Respondent: Oh no, you couldn't go in there ... I don't think they would have allowed drinks in there anyway. But that was the other thing with the NFT: you went in, you sat down, the lights went out and in the early days you always had a short film which they don't now.

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: ... and the short film was either a documentary or an animation ... something interesting.

Interviewer: ... documentary ...

Respondent: It was always an interesting short film.

Interviewer: I know they had those in the major, chain cinemas -- documentaries about 'here's a lollipop factory' that kind of thing. It wasn't like that?

- Respondent: We did have short films. Whoever programmed, whoever was the programmer at that time, they programmed that in which was great ... and I think they must have been from the archive. They must have been films that they just called up ... and then you had the nature film ... or sometimes if there wasn't a short film it just went straight in so there was never any ... there were no advertisements. Nothing like that at all. Just, they'd come to see the film. So that was the programme.
- Interviewer: In other cinemas, you bought a ticket for a seat and you could stay in and watch it come around again. Did the National Film Theatre work like that?
- Respondent: No, no, no.
- Interviewer: It was more like a cinema now in that you bought a ticket for a film.
- Respondent: You bought a ticket for a time. 6.15, you saw the film, you came out and then for 8.30, if you wanted to go in again, you had to buy another ticket. OK.
- Interviewer: I can see why the scams developed because in other cinemas at the time you bought a ticket for a seat, didn't you? And then you could stay so I guess it was different so maybe that's why people were ... didn't want to buy a second ticket.
- Respondent: Yeah, yeah. I was going to say something about that. Buy a ticket ... I don't know what I was going to say ...
- Interviewer: What you got with the ticket? So you got a short film at the beginning. An interval?
- Respondent: I know what I was going to tell you! All night film shows.
- Interviewer: Ooh.
- Respondent: Yes, that was in the Sixties, I think. The late-Sixties we had all-night film shows. Not every week I don't think, but they were on a theme so it might be a horror night. I mean, lots of cinemas do this now. We did at the NFT and there was bound to be baked potatoes because we would have all these intervals and people could go out and eat their baked potatoes or whatever ...
- Interviewer: And so they'd get people in to do refreshments for the all-nighter?
- Respondent: No, it would be the usherettes doing it.
- Interviewer: Oh, I see.
- Respondent: So you had to put your name forward if – I mean, I never did!
- Interviewer: So one of the usherettes was doing baked potatoes?
- Respondent: Yeah, or whatever, yeah.
- Interviewer: Where would they bake them?
- Respondent: I don't know, I can't remember.
- Interviewer: This is really peculiar. We've gone from cheese and pickle sandwiches to baked potatoes.
- Respondent: What I could do is go and get my phone and phone my friend Audrey. She was an usherette and she's in St. Helens. She's in her eighties but she's very compos mentis

and she worked at the NFT before I did. I could sit here and ask her about all-night films if you like? That would be good fun, wouldn't it?

Interviewer: That would, yeah. I'd like to know about all-night films.

Respondent: Do you know what? I've come out without my keys. That's appalling.

Interviewer: Shall I stay here?