

Interview with Respondent 0795**Date: 16/7/15****Location: Café, Exeter****Interviewer: Emma Pett**

Interviewer: If you could just begin, I know we've got this on your questionnaire, but if you could just begin by saying, where you lived in the Sixties, and kind of roughly how old you were.

Respondent: OK. At the beginning of the Sixties, in 1960 I would have been eight and at that point I was still at boarding school as a little girl. I went when I was six. In Surrey, and then my parents came back from Africa when I was ten, almost eleven, and we lived in ... We lived in Surrey but outside Croydon. I lived there till I was sixteen, then I went and did my A-Levels in Oxford, so I was there. That was ...

Interviewer: Late Sixties?

Respondent: Eighteen, so the late ... Yeah, yeah, and then I stayed there.

Interviewer: I hadn't realised you were at a boarding school when you were a child. So presumably you didn't have any interaction with any film or ... did you?

Respondent: Well, because it was a boarding school that was specially for kids whose parents lived abroad we stayed in the holidays, some of us. So actually, we did get taken to the cinema.

Interviewer: That's interesting! So, as a boarding school trip. Can you remember any of those trips at all? Or where you ...

Respondent: I can remember going to see a Carry On film but I can't remember which one. But I remember thinking it was hysterical. And a St. Trinian's ... yes, it would have been St. Trinian's. I remember thinking that that was absolutely hysterical too.

Interviewer: Where did you go? Into London? Or at Guildford?

Respondent: No, ooh, I don't know, actually.

Interviewer: Don't know. No.

Respondent: When you're eight or nine, that sort of thing doesn't register.

Interviewer: Just the local town.

Respondent: Somewhere we got taken to. It certainly wasn't London, it was a local place. Funny things, not suitable for little children...

Interviewer: Did everyone, was it in the audience, did people react? Was there lots of ... you can't remember anything?

Respondent: I absolutely can't remember, no, I can only remember us enjoying it.

Interviewer: Yes, enjoying it.

Respondent: That was really nice.

Interviewer: So, one of the things that we're interested in is the role that cinema played culturally in society as a kind of social place. And particularly, we've had lots of people taking about going on dates because there weren't as many places to go dating, people didn't go out for meals and so on. So I was wondering, what sort of ... I mean, you've mentioned already going on a date.

Respondent: Absolutely. That's where I had a kiss

Interviewer: And that you did that. Was it in a cinema?

Respondent: Not in a cinema, we'd been to a dance. Cause people used to go to dances. Just another world... And then we had one day after, but that was really boring... so I left it. That was going to the cinema. But I'm really sorry but I can't for the life of me remember what we saw but lots of other subsequent dates involved going to the cinema because it was the only place you could go to be by yourselves really. Films used to be on a loop, so you could sit around and watch the film

Interviewer: Stay there as long as you wanted....

Respondent: Two or three times! Yes.

Interviewer: Or not watch the film.

Respondent: Or not watch it.

Interviewer: Did you ... some people I've talked to have said that they would go to the second run cinemas more on dates because of that.

Respondent: The what?

Interviewer: The cinemas that did the ...

Respondent: Oh, the round and round ones! Yes.

Interviewer: On a continuous programme. Maybe

Respondent: I'm not sure I was ever that organised.

Interviewer: No...

- Respondent: Actually, most of the cinemas I remember seemed to do that. Certainly earlier in the decade, perhaps ...
- Interviewer: I think the culture ...
- Respondent: By the time I was in Oxford, it had stopped.
- Interviewer: The culture of buying a ticket for a film rather than a seat was gradually coming in but it was towards the end of the decade.
- Respondent: Yes, certainly by the time I was sixteen and we were going to the cinema in Oxford I only remember seeing a film once. That was '68.
- Interviewer: You talked a bit about how you felt a part of a kind of counter-cultural group, I really... obviously I've seen Easy Rider cause that was the film you mentioned. But can you remember anything about that feeling? Was it a sort of rejection of the establishment or was it just a sense of the freedom to kind of do what you want? What did that feeling mean to you, in particular, when you went to see Easy Rider, cause you mention that?
- Respondent: Yeah, that was quite an important film. I mean, lots of themes really, but it was very much written about in the alternative press which was very... really establishing itself around the mid/late Sixties and so it was being flagged up as something to do. So I knew it was the right thing to do to ... and there was a small group of us doing A-levels who aspired to be that type of person and so the wider counterculture, a small group of us who were doing A-levels and when I actually... I didn't really know what it was about the film that was... that made it so influential. Then we went to see.... I just remember slightly that feeling of freedom, just going off on a motorbike, the drug counterculture ... The going against authority.
- Interviewer: Was there any sense of rejecting the values of the previous generation?
- Respondent: Oh, totally, totally, yes. Very much so. We know better, like every generation of teenagers!
- Interviewer: The drug culture, was there any of that in Oxford?
- Respondent: Oh, good God! Do you know Oxford? It's horrendous!
- Interviewer: It's funny, because I hear such different things from different people. Some people are like, "oh, it was just in London",
- Respondent: No way!
- Interviewer: But I kind of felt that there must be other places where that was happening ...
- Respondent: No, it was massive. It was, I mean, it was quite an interesting ... because I stayed on and I did my first degree there. There were different drug cultures. There was and still is a very sad, ... dropout group of people in Oxford, that I certainly got involved on the edges of. Those were really damaged people. That was very, very strong there. There were always places you could get things. But then also I had some friends who were students. I can't think of a single student I knew then who wasn't using something.

Interviewer: Was it mainly marihuana?

Respondent: Yes, it was cannabis. And LSD.

Interviewer: Yes, I was going to say, hallucinogenic, because that was quite a big part of the culture.

Respondent: Those were really pretty much all the people used then that I knew. Amongst the other people heroin.

Interviewer: Yes, hard, class A drugs. So the students... there's a lot of recreational drug use.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: I thought there would have been. At most universities....

Respondent: Not just London ... that's rubbish! Total rubbish.

Interviewer: And that was, in a way, your film-going, the film-going practice that you had with your group of friends in sixth form, was kind of linked into that cause you saw that as being part of that culture?

Respondent: Yes, that's very much so. Yes.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. That then really did reflect the time. And I think for a lot of people, they saw that as being something remote. But obviously, I think, perhaps because you were quite young and some other people who I've interviewed were young parents and were a little bit older in the Sixties.

Respondent: No, I could be completely irresponsible.

Interviewer: Did you leave home to do your A-levels then? That's quite unusual.

Respondent: That's another long story.

Interviewer: Yeah, it is quite unusual though, isn't it? Most people wait until they go to university.

Respondent: That's a very long, complicated story, I was sixteen when I left home.

Interviewer: Did you, and you don't have to answer this...

Respondent: No, not a good idea!

Interviewer: Did anybody go to the cinema having taken drugs? Was that like a thing to do as well?

Respondent: I can't remember as a thing. But there used to be these very kind of trippy things. The Walton Street Cinema, which was ... there were to slightly alternative cinemas, one in the centre of Oxford, that we used to go to, it had a light show, which was, again...

Interviewer: A lava lamp, was that what it was? *[the interviewee has mentioned this in her questionnaire].*

Respondent: Yes, it was a projected lava lamp basically, but it was amazing. I don't think I'd ever seen anything like that before, it was amazing! And that was kind of referencing the ...

Interviewer: That's proper hippy culture.

Respondent: Totally!

Interviewer: Watching a lava lamp.

Respondent: Yeah, yeah, yes!

Interviewer: That's brilliant!

Respondent: I was there! I can't believe I've done that.

Interviewer: And you said that you'd picked up in the alternative press that Easy Rider was a film to go and see. Can you be more specific? What was the alternative press for you at that time? Can you remember?

Respondent: There was OZ, International Times, little things that used to be local but I actually can't even remember the names.

Interviewer: I've seen smaller magazines that circulated.

Respondent: Very little, hand-made things... Time Out? Those are probably the ones that I remember the names of.

Interviewer: I find those fascinating. Somebody was showing me one of those the other day from London. The sorts of things that just disappear or end up in the bottom of somebody's drawer. You can't go into the library and look them up because they weren't official, they were just something...

Respondent: Spare Rib.

Interviewer: Spare Rib and various others.

Respondent: That started around '68 or somewhere round there?

Interviewer: What about ... you've mentioned people hissing when you didn't start to sing the national anthem, which I think is brilliant. Who was that? Older people?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Who just felt it was ...

Respondent: It was disrespectful.

Interviewer: Did you feel, kind of, a little bit of a clash with the post-war patriotic, kind of, fake sentiment?

Respondent: I was very anti-patriotism and certainly massively anti-royalty. I wasn't going to stand up for anybody, ever! Yes.

- Interviewer: Was that when you were in Oxford or before then?
- Respondent: It started before, probably when I was about 15, I think.
- Interviewer: Cause I think the national anthem, people stopped standing up for it towards the end of the Sixties in general.
- Respondent: Yes, that's right.
- Interviewer: For it to have been noticeable, it must have been earlier than that.
- Respondent: Probably about three years of it. We wouldn't do it when we went to my aunt's for Christmas and the Queen's speech came on. She always used to stand up! The world has changed. People got very angry about it.
- Interviewer: Was there ... did you ever pick up on any other ways in which that generation showed disapproval to your generation? So, for example, in terms of what you wore, maybe, or other elements of your behaviour? Somebody who I interviewed in Brighton told me that people used to tut when she wore a mini-skirt, which I was surprised at.
- Respondent: Oh gosh, yes! That was very ... yes, yes, I remember that. I also had this thing about not wearing shoes. I remember, if you've heard of the [Rolling] Stones concert in Hyde Park?
- Interviewer: Yes.
- Respondent: I went to that dressed up in long skirts and things. People didn't wear flowers. The flowers is a wrong thing. But I wasn't wearing shoes and this very nice lady on the Tube offered to buy me some, I can remember that, bless her! That was so kind. And actually underneath I was still a nice little middle-class girl. "Oh, thank you ever so much, but I'm all right, really." Cause, I don't remember that much in this country, perhaps because moving mainly between London and Oxford where there quite a lot of people who were dressed alternatively. But I do remember.
- Interviewer: Student centres, aren't they?
- Respondent: Yes... very much so. My boyfriend, this was when I was eighteen, lived in Paris. And I remember wearing these sorts of clothes in Paris and really being abused.
- Interviewer: Wow!
- Respondent: Yes, people were very cross with me.
- Interviewer: Verbal abuse?
- Respondent: Yes, "we don't wear this here!" Somebody said: "Long skirts aren't in fashion this year".
- Interviewer: How did that make you feel? Did that kind of embolden you or were you a bit ...

Respondent: Not in Paris, it didn't. Because I was out of my comfort zone. I can still remember feeling a bit ashamed. Not changing but ... it was bit difficult. I can't particularly remember any things ... no... nothing springs to mind ...

Interviewer: This is all really fascinating stuff. Particularly linking fashion and lifestyle and cinema, I think, is really interesting. What about the actual films that you preferred watching? Obviously you liked anything that was countercultural. But what about things like the "Kitchen Sink" films and things that were very...

Respondent: A lot of those were when I was a bit younger. So I kind of missed out on them and watched them later. I'm just trying to think. I kind of got into arthousy things, Warhol and stuff, I remember having been endlessly bored going to Warhol things thinking, "I should do this, it's good for me".

Interviewer: Where did they screen Warhol films, was that at the university?

Respondent: At the university.

Interviewer: Was it a convention or set-up with chairs, yeah, it was. Because somebody was telling me that they went to a screening and people just wandered around. They didn't sit down.

Respondent: No, I didn't see that. French New Vague, the Nouvelle Vague stuff. Lots of that.

Interviewer: When you were a student?

Respondent: Sixth form. I tended to avoid the more mainstream. I was so pretentious, honestly, it's really embarrassing.

Interviewer: Was that your culture in Oxford, your group of friends, was that a thing, generally? That you didn't go and see Bond or anything that was very populist.

Respondent: In the Sixties I didn't go to any Bond, but I remember later on, when I probably had more confidence in myself, going with a boyfriend to a Bond film or two and actually quite enjoyed it. Have I mentioned other films I saw? I'm not sure. I didn't go to the main cinemas that often.

Interviewer: You mention The Graduate.

Respondent: Oh, yes!

Interviewer: Butch Cassidy [and the Sundance Kid], Bonnie and Clyde, Midnight Cowboy. They're films that are a little bit ...

Respondent: Oh, that's right. More mainstream those, aren't they.

Interviewer: Blow Up, I suppose, is kind of arty.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you remember how people responded when you went to see ... The Graduate is one that people have talked about quite a lot. That they would come out of the cinema and sit around talking about it. You didn't ...

- Respondent: I don't remember that. No. Blow Up I remember talking about. Working out what it was about. Still don't know. What was that Rolling Stones film? I saw the Beatles films.
- Interviewer: When you were a bit younger?
- Respondent: Yes, I liked those.
- Interviewer: Were you a Beatles fan?
- Respondent: So so, but that was quite fun, going with a bunch of friends. Did I put about trying to get into overage things? I'm jumping around ...
- Interviewer: You didn't, but did you do that?
- Respondent: The X-rated films. I remember Tom Jones, trying to get into Tom Jones.
- Interviewer: And did you get into Tom Jones?
- Respondent: I did but one of the friends I was with didn't because they did that classic thing of asking what year were you born? And she hadn't worked it out. But I got in. I remember there was a food scene in Tom Jones.
- Interviewer: When you wanted to go into an X-certificate. Was it still 16 then in the Sixties? It wasn't 18?
- Respondent: It probably was.
- Interviewer: I think it changed to 18 in 1970. It wasn't, people think, oh, the X-certificate, like it was something really daring, but actually, no.
- Respondent: So innocuous. So innocuous, yeah.
- Interviewer: And once you were 16 you could go into an X film anyway so it's quite young. People would consider a 16 year-old still a child. Can you remember trying to go into films where you were supposed to go with an adult when you were younger? It sounds like you went a lot with friends anyway?
- Respondent: Do you know, I'm not sure I can ever remember going with my parents to the cinema. Not in the Sixties. Perhaps as a very young child but I can't ever remember it.
- Interviewer: Did you have a television at home?
- Respondent: I can't really remember watching films with them. I was usually up in my bedroom reading. No. I can't remember that.
- Interviewer: And did you ever go to the cinemas that showed older films, the Classic Chain and that sort of thing?
- Respondent: I'd forgotten about those! ... It's not coming to mind. But I do remember the name so perhaps ...

- Interviewer: There was ... I find this really interesting because the exhibition has changed so much from today. There were some cinema chains that weren't the mainstream ones, not ABC and Rank. So things like Classic or Jacey and they would show quite odd combinations of films. And sometimes when they showed European arthouse films they would put them, because there was more nudity and sex scenes, they would put them with a film that was semi-pornographic. And those were kind of rolled out nationally, and I was quite surprised at this cause I just assumed that only happened in Soho.
- Respondent: Oh no, because from about '68 onwards the whole sexual liberation thing was ... massively more explicit than I think most people now realise and probably very abusive to women, now on reflection. But ... so ... sorry, I've just seen someone ... so ... going to the cinema and seeing a lot of very full frontal nudity and explicit sex scenes was actually not unusual at all, at all, at all. So... well, in the cinemas I went to.
- Interviewer: Yeah, in the arts cinemas, the Cameo and they would, from looking at the programmes, they would quite often put two films together so they could have something that was by a sort of alternative director alongside quite a low-budget sex film or a nudist film. And that seemed to be quite a common programming across the country, it wasn't just London.
- Respondent: No, not at all. You know, I'm talking limited ...
- Interviewer: Yeah, certain towns and cities so you can remember that and it would have seemed quite ordinary?
- Respondent: Yes.
- Interviewer: You mentioned Spare Rib and obviously things changed a lot for women. Now, when people look back at some of those things they seem really exploitative but at the time, how did you ... can you remember ... did you have a sense of your sort of agency? Your sexual agency?
- Respondent: Yes, totally.
- Interviewer: Was that how you felt? Did you just sort of turn a blind eye or not even recognise anything that seemed vaguely kind of patriarchal?
- Respondent: I can't remember really recognising it. No.
- Interviewer: So the sense of your own individual agency as a woman was a much more overwhelming kind of feeling that you had at the time when that was happening? That was the more important thing, I suppose is, what I'm saying?
- Respondent: Sexual agency? Yes ... but misinterpreted often.
- Interviewer: Yeah!
- Respondent: We were both young and ... ways of thinking and articulating feminism to do with sexuality had not really been explored and written about that much. You know, we're talking the beginning of ...
- Interviewer: It's pre-Seventies, I mean it's pre feminism going mainstream.

Respondent: Yes. Second wave just coming in. So, yes.

Interviewer: I find it really fascinating because there were so many changes that were positive for women like the introduction of the contraceptive pill and so much of the legislation seemed to be taking the country in a more liberal direction. But ...

Respondent: Our individual lives didn't...

Interviewer: ... didn't change that much, like the culture. So when you ... showed, you physically manifested that you were a part of that culture by not wearing shoes or something, the actual mainstream culture around you was still quite conservative and quite disapproving?

Respondent: Oh, yes! This whole thing about the Sixties is a fabrication in many ways for most people. You know, I picked up even though I was in very student-centred "progressive" cities that was still quite prevalent. What it must've been like in other places...

Interviewer: Yeah, where there was none of that. People say it was just like the Fifties, they left school, they got married, they had children and their lives were like their mothers'. That's what a lot of people have said. But obviously ...

Respondent: I just missed that, cause of where I lived and things.

Interviewer: Where you lived and the fact that you were just becoming a student at the end of the Sixties. You were just that little bit younger.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's really fascinating.

Respondent: It is. I was really at the cusp of it. Interesting times!

Interviewer: And you did – and this isn't really the project, but – you stayed in Oxford then in the early Seventies, you were an undergraduate?

Respondent: I stayed until '74.

Interviewer: And did that, now when people talk about, you know, the Swinging Sixties and kind of social change, do your memories of the early Seventies feel more like what people said was the Sixties?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: When the Sixties is kind of more like the Fifties.

Respondent: Probably the last two years of the Sixties were just getting there but before that, we wouldn't have ... at all ... you know, back in '61, '62, '63 total 1950s. It really was. I mean, just talking about clothing, I mean, I remember things like, my mother was an old mother, she was 43 when she had me so she was going back, you know, two generations almost. And things like when I started secondary school, you know, eleven, twelve, we still wore white gloves in the summer, white cotton gloves, you know? My children can't believe things like that! And hats for going out and stuff like that. You had to be proper, let the

gentleman walk on the outside and things like that. I remember those blasted white cotton gloves. So between the beginning of the Sixties and the end of the Sixties ...

Interviewer: ... there was a huge change. You were the right age to kind of follow that through.

Respondent: Yes, quite interesting. Yes.

Interviewer: That's great, thank you very much! Are there any other things that you want to add? As any kind of stand-out moments in terms of you cinema-going?

Respondent: ...

Interviewer: Did you go to the cinema for special occasions, for birthdays and things or not? Doesn't sound you kind of went with your family at all?

Respondent: No, not at all, no. Don't remember that at all. I think we probably covered most of it, most of the significant things. We didn't eat at the cinema as much.

Interviewer: No, that's become a much bigger culture.

Respondent: Just in the interval.

Interviewer: Not even popcorn?

Respondent: No, at the interval, you'd go and get the choc ice.

Interviewer: And that was it?

Respondent: That was a treat! Yes. I think that's it, if I think of anything else when you send me the things and I'll have perfect timing.

Interviewer: And you can add it.