

Historical Urbanism Oral History Interviews

Interview with Harriet Hipsley on 20 May 2020

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Historical Urbanism Oral History Interviews

Historical Urbanism is an interdisciplinary research project that aims to understand how urban design influenced by historical and heritage data can be used to address issues such as ethnic/religious/class segregation in cities, as well as contributing to environmental sustainability and better public health. The project team is made up of academic researchers from Ulster University with interests in history, policy, architecture and design, planning, psychology, and peace and conflict studies. They are joined by project partners in local government departments of planning, regeneration and the environment; partners in the museums and heritage sector, and creative social entrepreneurs who provide digital fabrication skills to people living in an area of high unemployment and low educational attainment.

The project begins from the premise that good urban design should be cognisant of the needs of the people who live in, and use, the space in question. Therefore, urban design and regeneration projects should build from and be respectful of emotional connections to space and place formation. We explore these connections through a historical prism by focusing on emotional memory and the connections people feel to the spaces in which they have lived, worked and socialised throughout their lives. The resultant research data is then used to facilitate collaborative work between the researchers, case study area residents, local stakeholders, and planners, designers and architects.

Oral history interviewing was central to the project methodology. Interviewees were engaged on the basis of a life story approach and questions focused on human interaction with the built environment over time. This interview forms part of a wider Oral History Archive available to listen to and read on <https://historicalurbanism.space>. This interview can also be listened to as an audio file.

- AG: So Harriet, did you grow up in the Lecky Road area?
- HH: The Lecky Road.
- AG: How many of a family were you?
- HH: I was the eldest of ten.
- AG: The eldest of ten. And what size of a house were you in at that stage?
- HH: Two bedroom, no bathroom, a wee kitchen and a downstairs room too.
- AG: Tight enough squeeze.
- HH: Two brothers and eight sisters, eight girls.
- AG: Would that have been fairly standard at the time?
- HH: Aye, that was what, on a Saturday night the big tin bath was brought in in front of the fire, and we were all threw into the one water.
- AG: That was the way it was and everyone was used to it.
- HH: That's the way it was.
- AG: And back at that time, that would have been before that whole area was redeveloped and all the new houses went in.
- HH: Oh God aye. I can't remember. Well I was married out of the Lecky Road. I was married out of that house. I was 21 and we were still living in the two up, two down. Well one of my brothers, he left to go to Queen's, so there was only one brother and he worked for Canavan's Bookies, the Bookmakers then. Geraldine would have been Adrienne's friend. Think Geraldine worked in some office. And the rest of us all was in the factory. Mary, the sister next to me, she went to the Channel Islands to work.
- AG: What was she doing there?
- HH: Something to do with tomatoes, whether she was picking them or. It was Guernsey aye.
- AG: What made her decide to do that?
- HH: Mary always had a thing about going away. And my father never wanted any of us to leave Derry. So she had this notion. And she would have been a good nurse. And she went away. She was in the factory with my first and she took this notion that she wanted to be a nurse. And she was in a place called Helms

Bay and she was telling us when you're training to be a nurse all the things you have to do. All the wee jobs that nobody wants to do. And when my father heard that he "You're coming home". She came home. Even yet when I listen to her talking, she watches all these television programmes where they're getting operated on and all this. I couldn't sit and look at anything like that, but she could and she's very interested. And I said "You know, she would've been a good nurse". But my father just had this obsession with keeping us all. Even my brother, that's my two brothers there. This is the fellow that went to Queen's, he had quite a good job with the government in Southern Ireland. That's the fellow that worked for the bookies, Canavan's. Then they closed down, they sold over to the Duffy's. They sold it, and he was sort of a boss in Canavan's, but I think Duffy's wanted to keep their bosses in the family. So Jim applied for a job with a bookmakers in England as a head man, as they called it then, and he went to England. And he had five children, and he just upped and went to Doncaster. He was in Doncaster, he worked all his life. Did quite good. And he had six children then. When he retired he loved coming back to Derry. And he bought a wee house, down where his wife lived, down at Lenamore. It was just a wee bungalow down by Vera's people, you know his wife's people were reared. And he thought that she would like this too. He used to just book flights nearly a year in advance to come. And he used to come about ten days every month. And my husband Tom used to say "How can your Jim be bothered doing all that?". And I said "Well Tom, he loves coming home to Derry". And Pilot's Row is the community centre down in the Bogside, and Tom used Pilot's Row when he retired too. And they had great craic in it. The men all met in the mornings at the coffee bar. And they had the newspapers and they read the newspapers. And my husband was what you would call, he loved to wind everybody up and get a row going, and then he walked away and left them all fighting. That was, Pilot's Row is far changed now. They're all gone.

AG: All the older characters?

HH: There was a man, he was a character down in Chamberlain Street, Bertie Barrett. I think Bertie's son lives in Bunrana, Keenan, he's a musician.

AG: I know him, he plays around the pubs.

HH: Aye, Keenan's lovely. And our Jim, once he found Pilot's Row, he just used to say to me, "I wish we had a Pilot's Row in England". And then I had a friend, my school friend, Agnes, her husband, they used to come to Derry too. And we would have took them down to Pilot's Row for wee things that they would have, you know, maybe a wee dance or something, or a wee dinner. And Agnes used to say to me "I wish we had a Pilot's Row in America.

AG: It sounds like a great atmosphere in it.

- HH: It was brilliant. They were all characters. You know they all had their own ways. You must have heard of John Dunne. John died there, not long ago, a couple of weeks ago. He was a school teacher in Joe's. For thirty years, he was an English teacher. John always come in too to Pilot's Row. And every time you seen John he had a newspaper in front of him. And he walked about doing the crosswords. And he used to say to Tom, my husband, John was very clever, so was Tom but he let on to be stupid. And John would say "What would start with B, and four letter and this". And Tom would've knew what it was, you know the word that he wanted, and Tom used to say something stupid to him. And John used to give him this look as much to say "You think you're smart". Think John was the last of them there, it was just a couple of weeks, he died.
- AG: And those men probably would have been all from those streets, the streets that would have been around Pilot's Row, before the '60s.
- HH: Some of the men would have been bachelors you know, never married. They have a wee cafe and all in it. And they do dinners and breakfasts and all this. Some of the wee men would have come in and stew was their favourite. And that was their ... they didn't have to cook in the house and they were getting a dinner for a couple of pound. And then they had a snooker club in it. They had everything in it.
- AG: Aye, I was down there recently for something. There was a book fair on earlier in the year.
- HH: And they have an art place, where they do art classes. I go to the sewing classes. They have six sewing classes a week. I'm friends with Chris the girl, she's a brilliant dressmaker. She could make you a suit.
- AG: Oh God, I must get in contact with her.
- HH: She's overrun with people coming looking. She'd say "Jeepers, I haven't time to bless myself". She's just after making a wee First Communion dress, you should have seen it. It was something that you would have seen in Ferguson's window, that they're paying £400 or £500 for.
- AG: That's the skill isn't it. So where did you go to school?
- HH: The Longtower.
- AG: You were a stone's throw away from your school.
- HH: A stone's throw aye.
- AG: And where was it the house was that you grew up in?

HH: Just, like I could pick the part of the Lecky Road, and where that housing estate is now, that was Meenan Park. We just used to call that the Field. It was just a big field, and they used to play football in it. It was nothing organised, it was just one of them football games that there was no goals, it was two bricks at each side. And the men had a wee putting green, they made it themselves. Then they started then to build the houses and knock the ones on the Lecky Road down. We lived, there was a chemist facing us, called Quinn's chemist. They used to come far and wide for Quinn's stomach bottle. If you had trouble with your stomach, he had made up this bottle, and everybody used to come for Quinn's stomach bottle.

AG: So you were a walking distance from school then.

HH: Five minutes, just up the chapel steps.

AG: And that would have all been very, very different to the way it is now because you have a big, sort of wide road between those streets now. You know back then, would it have been just, the Lecky Road would have had houses and shops along either side of it would it?

HH: There weren't a lot of shops. The chemist was there and they called it the All-Cash stores. There used to be a lot of them over Derry you know. It was one particular person. Their head office was in the Strand Road, down nearly where Tesco's was now. They called them the All-Cash stores. They were always painted red. There were one in the Bogside and there were one in the Lecky. I don't know where the rest. And there were one in the Strand. It was like, there were other stores too, kind of dotted over Derry called Lipton's. And we went up the chapel steps, they're still there yet, where we went up to school.

AG: You can see them from the flyover?

HH: Aye, aye.

AG: That was an easy enough journey to school for you then?

HH: Aye five minutes took you up. And I watched a wee, on my iPad, the youngsters, it was away back and somebody had, some man he does photos of old Derry, I think you called him Lee McDaid. And you seen the waners all running down the steps. I don't think they'd be let do it now but we would have been jumping down them in twoses. And they were nearly like a cliff coming down them. And they were all coming down one behind one another. Like if one had have got pushed, you could have got bad injuries.

AG: Aye, it's steep. So when you were a wain then, would you have been out playing in the field, was that the main place where you'd have played?

HH: Aye.

- AG: That was a great big space, as far as I can see from maps and stuff.
- HH: It was aye, it was the size of the whole of where Meenan Park is now.
- AG: Where all the houses are now? And do you remember then when that was cleared and getting ready for housing to be built on it?
- HH: Before then we were all delighted at one time then they put swings and slides in it as bit of it as a play park. And we used to be standing at the bottom of the ladder of the slides, there a queue a mile long to get up and down the slide. And then we used to bring then, you know if it had have been a wet day, you know the greaseproof paper that would be around bread. We used to take our piece of greaseproof paper to sit on because you were able to slide right off. I remember there were a thing, it was big, it was a dangerous thing, they called it 'The Shuggley Shoe', it was like a big, and it went like that there. Young fellows coming up to fourteen would have been pushing it. And I mind there were a wee youngster killed, it was hit.
- AG: God, I wouldn't have thought that. Was that taken out then?
- HH: Well they didn't take it out. My uncle was a watchman at it. They used to have a man watching it, but sure you just can't be everywhere at the one time. And before it was a field I just vaguely remember the air raid shelters. There were air raid shelters built on the Lecky. I remember when the sirens used to go off, I used to be in hysterics. I remember my Daddy giving me a slap one night because I was in that bad a fear of these sirens going off, I was nearly going into a fit.
- AG: And whenever the sirens went off did you go into the shelter or did you head up towards the field?
- HH: I never minded leaving the house. And Meenan Park at that time, it's just a vague memory, we called it a tank, but it was a big square with walls, and it was filled with water. The young fellows, you know young fellows would be only fourteen, they'd have been jumping into it to swim because it was filled with water. It must have been something to do with the war. I remember a young fellow being drowned.
- AG: In that?
- HH: Aye. You know you just remember you mother, and all the alarm that was happening, but when you were only a child.
- AG: Aye, these are the things that stick with you then, they stand out when you're that young. There was air raid shelters all over the place, wasn't there? I was trying to figure that out recently because I was doing another project on that

kind of thing. They seem to have been all over the town as well. And did people use them? You might not remember, maybe you were too young.

HH: I don't ever remember people having to go into them.

AG: I remember hearing that people were afraid to use them, that they thought that maybe they weren't fit for purpose, if something did fall on them you'd be better off in the house. But I remember hearing people, after the bombs did land down at Pennyburn there.

HH: I remember there was a girl at school with me. And I think some of her family were killed in the bomb at Mezzine Park. That was just a vague memory too to me you know, I don't know what age I might have been, maybe seven or eight.

AG: I remember after hearing people saying, after that happened that people in the Bogside would go up this way, up to the fields up around here, because they thought you'd nearly be better off on open ground, cause if you were on open ground you wouldn't have something fallen in on top of you. So that was all cleared off then to make way for the houses. And would you have been probably finished school by that stage? Would you have been at the age where you were starting work?

HH: Aye. I was married, and I don't think they were started to build. Because when I went then to live in the Bogside, I must have been there, I was at the bottom of the Bogside and I just had two rooms. And then they were starting to knock down. And then there was a fish and chip shop up at the top of the Bogside, it was PJ Kelly's, and you know the way the people in Derry, everybody came, I remember one of my bosses in the Star Factory, he lived away out somewhere nice in the Waterside. And I remember him coming in his car to PJ Kelly's for his fish and chips on a Friday night. We knew then, the people that was living in one of the houses, was a good house, they were knocking down our wee ones down at the bottom of the Bog, and we got offered a house up beside PJ Kelly's fish and chip shop. And we were there then for about two years. They gradually moved up. My daughter Maria's now in her fifties and she would have been the last wain born in the Bog, the old Bog.

AG: Before it was knocked?

HH: Aye. I used to say to her, you're the last of the Bogside-rs, we moved up then to Meenan Park.

AG: So you told me there a wee while ago that that was two rooms you were in in the Bogside is that right?

HH: Aye two rooms. The only reason it was two rooms, we had our own door, we didn't live with anybody, there was a big gateway and that took away the downstairs of the house. It was a big gate, a big double gate. We just had the

front door and we went up the stairs, and then I had the two, the front room was your living room. And the back room was your bedroom. There was a sink and a cooker on the wee landing on the top of the stairs.

AG: And did you have any wains at that stage?

HH: Aye, I had two of them. My son and daughter, when I was in the two rooms. When I moved up then to the house at the top, it was two bedrooms too. Two bedrooms they had, and just a downstairs kitchen and wee living room. And I had my third, my son, he was born up at the top house. One was 85, Bogside and the other was 127, Bogside. That was the difference in the number of the houses.

AG: Were you working at the factory at that stage?

HH: No I wasn't working when the youngsters were just toddlers.

AG: So your husband was working?

HH: Aye.

AG: And when then did you move into Meenan Park?

HH: Moved into Meenan Park then. And you called the part of the houses, my mammy lived in Drumcliff Avenue, and the house that I moved into was in Meenan Square. It was down beside the shops. Maria was just about a year and a half, she was the youngest. So I had four, and Maria was the youngest. And Maria now's fifty. And she was the youngest when I moved over to Meenan Park. And I think I stayed in Meenan Park for about a year and a half.

AG: What was it like then moving into a brand new house with all the modern facilities?

HH: It was great. It was great.

AG: Was it something that you were looking forward to whenever you were in the old house?

HH: Well you had the central heating, you had the bathroom, you had a big enormous kitchen, there bedrooms. The two boys was in one bedroom and the two girls were in the other bedroom and Tom and me had the other one. It was great. The way they had it built, you were able to let them out to the street and there were no cars, no traffic, the way they had it built. So you were able to let them out to play in a scooter or a wee bicycle or things like that.

- AG: Did that make you feel a bit more relaxed then about letting them out, compared to when you were living in the Bogside?
- HH: Oh God aye, surely. Because even when I come up here. Did you come down the steps?
- AG: I parked up and came down the steps aye.
- HH: Well, I was the last house here on this street for about three years, when they were building. And when I came up to pick the house, Tom never came to look at it, didn't know what it was like, what shape it was or nothing else, just you sort the house out. And I came up and I said "Well there'll be no traffic coming down this street, and I'll be able to let them out to play. And they can have their scooters and their tricycles and they can play their wee football, and they'll not get hit with a car".
- AG: Is this the street out the front here?
- HH: This is out here. So now that I'm eighty...
- AG: You've to go up and down those steps.
- HH: I've to go up and down them steps a hundred times a day.
- AG: They're fairly steep as well, bad in the winter time too.
- HH: I knew, I used to say, "Well we don't have a car", and you never thought in them days you were going to have a car cause Tom didn't drive and I didn't drive. And then when you got a car then and you had to go up and down with the groceries and up down and up and down. But at the same time, it was good when they were young, and you were able to let them out.
- AG: So when you were down in Meenan Square, it was probably mostly young, people with families, was it at that time?
- HH: Aye.
- AG: And was everyone letting their wains run around?
- HH: Oh aye, no bother. They had backs. Everybody that was coming in cars or coal men, or bread men, they came down the backs, but the streets were pedestrianised. They didn't come down the streets. Where you never down in Meenan Park?
- AG: No I know it, I know it well. I know what you're saying. Where most people happy enough with that sort of layout?

- HH: Well this here layout now, I don't think it would have ever happened if they were building.
- AG: Aye they'd have to put in disabled access and all.
- HH: It wouldn't happen now. As I say to myself now how many more years have I to go. There's times I say to myself, maybe you'd be as well with a wee bungalow, but I don't want to leave here. This is the area that I was born.
- AG: And you probably know everyone around you too.
- HH: Well you're near everywhere. You're near the Creggan Chapel, near the Cathedral Chapel, you're near the Longtower Chapel. There's the supermarket up there. There's a chemist up there.
- AG: You're close to things you need.
- HH: The things that you need.
- AG: Rathmore there?
- HH: Aye. I say to myself well my days could be numbered driving. So I wouldn't have far to walk if I did need a message or things that you need day to day.
- AG: Aye, that's true. You were saying that your mother lived nearby or next door?
- HH: They took my house as a shortcut, because my mammy's house was here and mine's was here. So they came out of my mammy's back gate and in my back gate and out to the Lecky Road, which was still there, it was a short cut through my house.
- AG: Your mother would their house then have been demolished to make way for the newer houses?
- HH: This was when they were in the new house.
- AG: Aye but I'm just saying the house that they were in before, would that have been gone at that stage?
- HH: Aye.
- AG: So that whole area was just completely changed. Can you remember how your mother felt, having the house that they were in changed, and into a new house.
- HH: Well I think it was great, because there was still a big family in my mammy's house. She had a four bedroom house. Most of my sisters other than Mary

and my brother Paddy, they were the only two, Paddy was away to university, I was left the house, I was moving into my own house. She still had six or something in the house with her and my father.

AG: And did she settle in well?

HH: Oh aye, surely.

AG: Did she stay there then?

HH: She stayed. And when The Troubles started to get bad, my sister Mary, she was married then, the girl that went to Guernsey. She met her husband in Guernsey, and he was English. She had got a house in Belmont which is down in Pennyburn area. It was wile funny, whenever there were bombs going off or shooting happened, first of all, my mammy emigrated up to me out of down there. Sometimes there were all sleeping here in this house because of what was happening. There was a gun battle one night in Stanley's Walk and it was terrible, the young fellow Keenan. I can't remember the other Keenan, I'm not sure anyway. But they were shot that night. It was really terrible. All the shooting that night, it was terrible. My mammy was up here with all her team, and then when our Mary got the house in Belmont, when things got bad then, the army had moved in over here to where that wee housing estate is now. That used to be a factory Riccola, it was the BSR before that. So the army had moved in to the factory. So the bullets used to be flying over here too. We used to all evacuate then down to Belmont. And I mind I was learning to drive and I used to get into the car. You know pack them all in and drive and I didn't pass my test. I used to be shaking driving the car. My mammy then started to get, well she was getting older too, and she applied to get moved to Belmont. And she moved to Belmont too. So all my family are all down that area. I'm the only one now stayed in the Bogside. I've a sister in Carnhill, three in Belmont, my younger sister now is in the family home. And Mary's there and Bernadette's there. and my brother who actually lived in Skerries in Dublin, he has bought a house just around where the Superfair is, you know down that plain. What do you call it, it's just off the Culmore Road.

AG: I know it.

HH: So he comes home quite often too since he retired. His family uses the house too. It's their wee holiday house now.

AG: Very good. So everybody ended up over there.

HH: Aye, I'm the only one that stayed here.

AG: Do they still feel some connection to this area, do they still feel like they're from here?

- HH: Aye, they do.
- AG: And would they come over and back here?
- HH: Aye, we all visit one another. We're one of these clannish families. Me and five of my sisters and my daughter we're all heading now to Spain next week.
- AG: Good on you. That'll be great.
- HH: Seven of us.
- AG: Get a bit of heat.
- HH: Me and my friend started doing it over twenty years. She used to have the shop in Culmore Road, Myra's. Her and me worked in the Star factory so we always kept in touch. She says to me one time "Will me and you go on a holiday". I says "Aye". I think we went to Tenerife. And then every year from that somebody added on every time. And about twenty years ago, we were in the beach on Benidorm and we met these Scotch people. They just started to chat to us on the beach. So we meet up with them now every year in Benidorm at the same time. We've great fun. And we don't do anything. The three, me and Myra and my sister Mary, we don't drink. So the drinkers are in their apartment and we're in ours. We meet up with the Scotch people, they book in. We're going to the same apartments, we just ring the apartments and say we're coming. And they know us. And we're there now for the last over twenty years.
- AG: It's great to have that to go for isn't it. So you moved up here then, you were telling me a wee while ago, up to this area when you sort of realised that the rent wouldn't be too much dearer to have your own place. So that would have been early in The Troubles would it?
- HH: It was 1969. The Troubles just started. I'm trying to think. I remember anyway us going up to the top of the street and seeing the shirt factory in William Street at that time. I remember standing at the top of the street and they had set fire to Richie's factory. And I seen the blazes and I said "Isn't this terrible". When The Troubles were going, Tom had a bad back, and he was sitting kind of in that chair and couldn't hardly move. And Thomas, one of the young ones, you know the way they lie on their mouth and nose looking at the TV. He was watching the funnies, and I was down there vacuuming down the bottom of the room. And once you heard shots you run out to the street, if the wains were out playing and everybody pulled everybody's wains in. If yours was up the street they pulled yours in. So I dropped the hoover and run. The street was cleared so I came back in again. And I could see all this fuzzy stuff flowing down from down there, and I said "What's that?". I don't know whether you would understand them, we called it Pampas grass, it was big fluffy things that you would put into a vase. It was down there at the table, and I had a big

copper vase and this fluffy stuff. And it was all floating over the room. The shooting was happening down here, so the army must have been down there, and wherever the lads were shooting at them. The army must have thought that the shots were coming from this area, so they fired back. So the bullets come in my window and shot my feathers to pieces, went out through that door behind you, and out through the front door and into the wall across the street. I think the door's up in the roof space yet with the bullets in it. I just had moved seconds. I had just run to get the wains when them bullets came right through this house.

AG: It was bad enough down there in Meenan Square, then you were up here and the same thing started happening.

HH: And inside of seconds the soldiers were in here, up the stairs, all over the house. They were able to pinpoint the house where the bullets came through.

AG: So what were they coming in for then, just to see what happened?

HH: They must have been coming in to see was the shooting coming out of here.

AG: Ah right.

HH: They seen then that the bullets came in this way.

AG: Out of the frying pan into the fire nearly. And see when you moved up here, you were telling me earlier that the reason you did it was you wanted your own, not that you wanted your own, you realised you could get your own place.

HH: If I had have been buying a wee terraced house, like the ones that we lived in, I could have been getting a mortgage for maybe two or three pound. So I was giving the Housing Executive £3 and three shillings, we called that three Guineas. And then when I came up here I said for another pound and so many shillings I can own this. It was, my income then would have been ten to fifteen pound a week, from Tom working in a building site. So I was kind of working it out, this is five pound out of my house keeping.

AG: And this is a bigger house, I'm guessing, than the one you were in?

HH: Oh aye.

AG: Did you like the other house? Were you happy enough in it, or were you looking to move anyway?

HH: I used to think, I loved living beside my mammy, because me and her was like pals. We used to get wee holiday houses in Buncrana, we would have got a house for a month for sixteen pound. The plan was, when I started to work in

the factory I used to say to her, "I'll go into the factory for so many weeks, you watch the wains, I'll save the money for the house", where we were going, the holiday house. So we all went together, so we all went together, me and mine and her and hers, my sisters. We had a wee house out the Cockhill Road, the Red Row. It was a wee Scottish woman Annie Campbell, she had the house. She gave us the house and we used to go down to her and stay the month. It was great when The Troubles was on. We used to just love getting out. We used to stay there for maybe three or four years and we moved then to Culdaff. Then we used to get a house in Culdaff. And that was the plan, I did the, I didn't go into the factory to stay for a year, I just went in to stay to get the money for the house to pay the rent and enough for the food, and that was us.

AG: That was a great wee plan, wasn't it? So did you miss being beside your mother then whenever you did move out.

HH: I did, aye I did. When I moved here, and then when I moved up here, but they were here most of those times because every time the trouble was bad down there they evacuated up here, or else I would have went down. I would have got the wains into the pram and went away down. I used to leave them with my mammy and away up the town.

AG: You had that bit of support. It's nice to have that.

HH: I did miss them then when they went to Belmont because at that stage we didn't have the car, but then when we got the car it was alright.

AG: Having a car, I suppose, allowed you to still have that connection that you wouldn't have had otherwise. Cause there was people moving all over the place at that stage wasn't there?

HH: Oh aye, surely, people was moving in and out.

AG: Because of what was going on? There's probably people in there now that was in there the whole time?

HH: Ah there's, I don't really know whether there's any neighbours that we would know, you know old neighbours. I don't know if you'd know, well maybe you'd have read about it, the McGavigan's lived above us, three doors. And they had been old neighbours in the Lecky. And my sister Geraldine and Annette McGavigan, whose photo's down in the murals in the Bogside. Annette was shot by the army and my sister Geraldine and her was chums. And at that time all the wee McGavigans was up here with me, because during the wake and all, they had youngsters too. Because my mammy and we were all great neighbours on the Lecky Road, so they came up here to me to stay till all the fuss was over.

- AG: Would the people who moved in to the new houses then mainly be from those streets anyway? Would they have been the people that were living there?
- HH: Aye they weren't spread out a lot. There would have been some of them from Rossville Street but the way the people were then, everybody knew everybody.
- AG: No matter if you were from Lecky Road or Rossville Street.
- HH: The people next door to my mammy was Lecky Road neighbours, my mammy, Patsy Morrison, the McGavigans, they were all Lecky Road neighbours. And then some of the people then would have been older, they mightn't have been on the same street as my mammy but they would have been, they had flats, they called them Dove Gardens, I think it's still called Dove Gardens yet. But they knocked the flats down, and then they built the newer houses that's down there now, I don't know whether you've been down there.
- AG: Oh aye, it goes around the corner a wee bit.
- HH: Well all them new houses, that wasn't the old Meenan Park, they had three storey flats. They knocked them down. And then they built the houses, they built bungalows, you know for older people.
- AG: That was recently enough. So you were working in the factory to get your few pound together to get your house in Buncrana.
- HH: To get money for the holidays aye.
- AG: Did you start working, did you keep working there then as time went on?
- HH: As it got then they were all at school, all to three or half three so that was my hours then, from 9-12 and back again at 1.30 or 2-3 or 4. And then as they got bigger then, I don't think I worked, I never did work full time. They also did kind of accommodate women with families, especially the Star. There were ones come in and went out at 2. And worked to 4, and some people worked to 5.30. But I never did work then when the young ones were here. I never did work. Especially when The Troubles was on, you always wanted to be home. Cause I remember one day, me and the girl up the street were coming up Stanley's Walk and a soldier had been shot, and they had the whole place sealed off and they weren't gonna let us up. We had a whole argument, I said "We live up there, and our youngsters are home from school, we have to get up". So they let us up.
- AG: So that would have been your normal way of going to and from the factory, down Stanley's Walk and through, past the chapel, Longtower Chapel and down that way?

HH: Aye.

AG: So stuff like that would have gotten in your way I suppose would it?

HH: Aye, you know, when you went out in the morning you never knew what you were coming back to. Places sealed off, or if there was a parcel, or a bag or something sitting then nobody was allowed to go past it. And then there were the times then when you were driving, and you were stopped and they said "We want your car". I remember it was my mammy's birthday, and we were having a wee get together down in the house in Belmont. And Tom had come in from his work, and when Tom got his dinner, Tom's head just went down in the chair, he was having his wee nap. I said to him "We're going now down to my mammy's", and he wasn't for getting up. "No go you on". So I went out in a kind of a tantrum because he wasn't going down. And I got into the car and I was driving over the Moor and I was stopped by the lads. They said "We need petrol", and I said "Well you're not getting it". "Aye but we need it", and there were certain people lived along there, and I said to them "But them's your friends, gone take his petrol". And there were a whole argument with me and them, so I just reached for the boy, he had a mask on. I just reached out. I was noted for fighting everywhere, I was called a Peace Woman.

AG: Aye I heard that.

HH: I just reached for him, I says "I'm gonna run over you now if you don't get out of my road". And I mind saying to one of the priests, when you went to confession, I says "There's some day I'm gonna get stopped, and I'm gonna commit murder". And he said to me "Well what are you gonna do?". I says "Whoever stops me to take my car, I'm gonna run over them, and then I'm gonna reverse back over them". And he says "You wouldn't do that". I says "Well if you hear it happening you'll know it was me".

AG: You can see the headline in the newspaper, the Peace Woman who ran over somebody.

HH: One time, I was down in the town doing my bit of shopping and had one of these wee string bags, and I had it full of apples and oranges and all. I had two of the girls with me, Suzanne and Maria, and I think one of my sisters was with me. And just there at William Street where they've that wee roundabout, well that used to be the Sorting Office, the Post Office vans and all. So there were a van hijacked just at the roundabout, although there weren't a roundabout there, it was just the sort of... They were going to set fire to it. It was a wee red post van and they were gonna set fire to it. The men was all standing and I said "Are yous gonna let this happen?". They said "We're not gonna get shot". So I got into the van, and the wanes was in hysterics. Suzanne was saying "Get out Mammy, get out". They were putting a rag into the petrol, you know where they put the petrol in. They were gonna burn it. And I was calling "This

is people's giro money, and people's pension money that's gonna be delivered and yous are gonna burn it, and peoples gonna have no money, we're own people". And they had a wee debate about it. And I still was in the van, and I wasn't for getting out. So they says "Let her sit there, we'll go and get another one". And you see when I came home and the two wanes says to Tom, told him what I'd done, he said "You were saving the Post Office van, and where was the army? That would have been their job. But you were sitting, a woman with her wanes, and you were gonna sit, while they were gonna burn you in the van". Well I wouldn't have sit if they had burned it, but I was pushing my luck saying are yous gonna do it or are yous not. But they changed their mind.

AG: You got yourself into a few corners then?

HH: I did. Hundreds of them.

AG: But that must have been annoying though at the same time, you're trying to get somewhere and there's something in their way, whether it's the army or something else.

HH: Aye, but you just lived with it, it was just a way of life then.

AG: So you were walking down to the factory from here, that was a long enough walk. And you did that every day.

HH: I did walk or run, because I had to be in here and there were seven coming in for their dinner.

AG: It's a lot of moving about isn't it?

HH: It's funny wee simple things happen and during The Troubles my views weren't the same as a lot of people. I didn't believe in the destruction, or the killing going on. And if you didn't believe the same as the fighters, you were a kind of blamed for agreeing with the enemy. You know, they would have called after you and all the rest of it, I got a bit of abuse. At the end of the day I just had my beliefs but I would have been as Irish as the next.

AG: I know what you mean.

HH: But I didn't believe in the violence.

AG: Was that hard to take, having to deal with that?

HH: No, it didn't bother me. I just had that anger in me that nobody was going to change me. Like the like of that van gonna be burned with people's money that they were waiting on and needed. I went to Dublin and met the leaders, all the big wigs and all, and aired my views.

- AG: And how did that go?
- HH: It was alright. They were alright.
- AG: You weren't afraid no?
- HH: No. There were one time, there was five of us then. I don't know whether you would have, see I forget you're not my generation, but it's part of Derry's history.
- AG: I read a lot about this kind of stuff.
- HH: The wee Ranger Best. I was one of the ones that went over the Moore that day because I was really sick. I says "This is a wee young fellow that joined the army because he had no work and he was a Derry fella, and they shot him, and dumped his body in William Street. And they didn't do that in my name, and I'm going down to tell them". They had a centre down in Meenan Park in the shops. And me and another two women went over the Moore. And the word, see once something's says in Derry, it's round Derry inside of half an hour. Essex Factory was over there at the time, and we were going over the Moore, four or five women, down to walk down the new road to the shops to tell them, "Not in our name". When we got over to the new road, you know Wesleyan Street. Essex Factory was coming out. And we went down the new road and the whole factory was behind us. And I said "Well that's grand". It's letting them know now that it's more than us. And the wee young fellas in the street was called after us "The whole town's behind you". And there was nobody there only the three of us. "The whole town's behind you". And I said well I'm just going to air my views I don't care who's behind me.
- AG: That put a big change in things didn't it?
- HH: Aye.
- AG: So it was a tough time to live through, I'm sure as well.
- HH: It was. One's says to me know, ones always like you coming up to interview me and would you do it again and all this. I say "No, I wouldn't. I know I put my husband and my baby children, because they were known, I was known as their mother, so I suppose they were getting it, but they didn't say to me. I know Tom used to say to me "Sit down and shut up and let the politicians do what you're doing for them". And when I look back on it now I see there were tonnes of reporters coming up here and saying "Would you do it again?". And I says "Well it was worthwhile if it saved a live, but I'm older and wiser now, and I wouldn't do it".
- AG: I know what you mean, when you think back on the positives and the negatives of it. See the other stuff that we wanted to talk about with people in

this project was sort of stuff that would have been around Derry that maybe's gone now, or things that ... you know you talk about heritage, parts of the city that people would feel a connection with or something like that. Is there any parts like down around the Bogside where you lived before, or in Meenan Park/Square and up around here that you sort of feel are really important to people that live here. You know parks or buildings or just anything at all that comes to mind.

HH: Well I always remember the Gasyard. And the people coming up and down the Lecky, there'd have been woman with prams coming going up for the coke, it was stuff that they burned instead of coal, it was cheaper. You think on Phil Coulter's song, and that is just the story of Derry. Over just where the Gasyard is now. And I always remember that wee row of houses, up Stanley's Walk and there was always a smell, it must have been the fumes with whatever they were doing in the Gasyard with the coal and this coke. Because the coke was like cinders. I used to say, and we were only a stone's throw from the Gasyard or two, but we didn't get the smell as much as the people in Stanley's Walk. And I used to say "When they open their windows", as Phil Coulter did say, the smoke and the smell, it sticks in your mind, even you were only a wane.

AG: If you smelled something like that now would that bring you right back?

HH: They would be out protesting, the Gasyard would be flattened.

AG: Aye talk about pollution.

HH: They've a photo in Pilot's Row, up on the wall, of all the people queued up. And you had to have a ticket and all to get in and get the coke. And there were youngsters this size, all different sizes. There were woman with prams, you know maybe a pram with no hood on it to get the coke. The whole crowd of them is all standing outside the Gasyard waiting to get in queued up for the coke.

AG: You've a good memory of that obviously.

HH: Aye you should go into Pilot's Row, it's up on the wall.

AG: Aye I must look the next time I'm in.

HH: They've all the street names around it.

AG: That's right. It's nicely done. I suppose, and whenever you were working in the factory would there have been different shifts coming out and people moving around and that as well. You were talking about when you marched down to the headquarters or whatever it was, when the women came out of the

factory and they came in behind you. Was there a lot of groups of women coming out of the factories and moving around at different times? Going home or to and from home.

HH: In the factories in them days, most of the women did go home at lunch time, because they had children coming in. The women were the mainstay of Derry. All them factories, there was factories in every street nearly. When you look on it now it's wile sad.

AG: Aye, I know. Did that mean there was more people about all the time, because there was people working in the streets? You know the way like now there's still obviously loads of people living in these streets but the work's somewhere else, they're not working in the same streets.

HH: I always remember, I was only a school girl, the Lecky Road would have been a main thoroughfare from the people from the Brandywell and heading down to the town. We used to sit out on the windowsills after school and maybe six o'clock all the factory girls would have been coming up from Richie's and Hogg and Mitchells and all the factories all down that way. At that time the Navy was coming into Derry, all the boats and they used to be Portuguese and Norwegians and the British sailors. And whenever the boats would have come in, I think because this Lecky Road and Rossville Street was a big main street that that's the way they used to walk. If they were trying to see a bit of the town when the boats came in, and the sailors used to a come up, and we sued to sit on the windowsills watching them all. And the girls all were going out with them. We were only at school, we would've been seeing them all, Norwegians, and I suppose they couldn't even communicate with them, they couldn't speak the language. And I think the Derry men at that time was all raging.

AG: I'm sure they were.

HH: Because like there's a lot of Derry girls all married sailors and yanks and I suppose I think it was like a fairy tale, "Oh God I'm getting married to an American, and I'm going to America". And I think some of them was lucky, and some of them wasn't.

AG: Like everything else.

HH: My school friend met one, met an American, I'm still in touch with him yet. She knew him six weeks and she went out to America and she knew him over Christmas time, she went to America in April and she got married on the 5th October and she was married to him fifty odd years when she died. And me and her kept in touch, a phone call then was costing a five pound, it was too dear, so you didn't make a lot of phone calls. We wrote an odd letter, but then as time went on and we got a wee bit, with a wee roughness of money, we

started an odd phone call, and there were one time I got a phone call, it was her husband ... does this mean anything to you, me telling you these things?

AG: Aye, aye, go on ahead.

HH: So phone call came and it was her husband rang, and it was Tom took the call, to say that it was her 60th birthday, and he was bringing all her friends out to America for her birthday. But she wasn't to know. Would we do a wee story about what we were like when we were young and all, and our memories and things like that to give her on her birthday. I was a sewer so I made her a patchwork quilt. When he made the phone call, when I got the message from my husband who was very vague he said "Some American phoned looking for you to go to America, and I don't know what he's talking about, but he says he'll ring you back". So I was saying "What is he talking about". When I finally got the phone call it was my friend's husband telling me about her party. And he paid me and her other friend's fare out, and he booked us into the hotel that was quite near them. He was bringing all her friends from all over, her brothers and she'd only one sister out to America for her 60th party. And I remember when he met us at Boston airport, and he says "I'll be dropping you off at the hotel". And the girl along with me says "Have you enough money for a hotel?", and here was I "No". We were just going out with a ween a pound, but we didn't think we were going to be getting staying in hotels in them days. He must have been reading our mind and he said "Don't worry about it, it's all taken care of". So from that on I was taken out to America for the next ten years. And they had a beautiful summer house in Long Island, it was gorgeous. It was like something out of a film. And she just loved, the more she had everything, she still said "I wish I was you in Derry".

AG: She still had that connection.

HH: And the last year I was out my sister went with me, and I knew she wasn't good. When we came home, I remember, you know the way something sticks in your mind and you'll never forget it, I was in Asda shopping and I got a phone call from him on the 1st October to say she had died. And he said to me "Are you coming out?" And here was I, I don't like flying. And here was I, "Ah Richard, you know, you don't need visitors on a death". "Aye, he says, she would want you here". So I said "Right". So he sent two tickets for me and my sister and it was always first class. And I used to say to him "I don't need to sit in a two thousand pound seat." He said "You'll sit in whatever seat I book you". He was a bit of a dictator, and I was a dictator too, so me and him kind of clashed. But anyway we went back out. But before I went back out that morning, I went out to the garden and I dug clay and put it into a wee plastic bag and here was Tom "Where you going with that?". And I said "I'm going to America with this". He says "Well they'll take it off you". And I says "Well I'm gonna have a go". And I got by with the bag of clay, and the bit of Ireland's over the top of Agnes.

- AG: Ah that's lovely. That was a nice thing to do, she would have liked that.
- HH: About three or four months after, when I came home, we still phone one another yet, he says to me, I was always saying I was gonna ask him for some wee keepsake belonging to her, and I said I'll wait until he's over his bad time. So one day the phone rang and he said, Tom was sitting there, and he said "Harriet, would Tom be mad if I bought you a car?", and I was looking over at him and here was I "It's no odds whether he is or not". He didn't know what I was saying, and I just said "No odds whether he is or not, you go ahead". And the money was sent for me for a brand new car.
- AG: God, he was a generous man. That was a good connection to have wasn't it.
- HH: But she was one of the lucky ones. But he said to me that day at the funeral "She was homesick for Ireland and Derry all her life". And he said "When you used to say you were coming, you were a part of Derry", and he says "the minute I booked your flight, she turned into a different person, because she was getting ready for you to come, for her to listen to all the stories about Derry and what you were doing, and all this". And I said to myself what they had out there was just unbelievable, like they had a boat to go out fishing, they could have slept in the boat. And at the same time it wasn't Derry.
- AG: Aye she still missed it.
- HH: Aye it wasn't Derry.
- AG: There you go, it shows you the strength a place can have or a hold a place can have on people.
- HH: He says "She turned into a different person when she knew you were coming. It was "We'll get this, and we'll do that, and we'll go here and we'll do that. And when you go she just sits there watching stocks and shares".
- AG: It shows you that there's more to life isn't there than money. I'm sure she knew rightly what you were going through over here before that too and she still wanted to be here.
- HH: They bought a beautiful house here too. Me and her was out shopping for furniture and money was no object and I was saying "Do you like that there". We were in Coleraine and in Belfast and in every place to furnish the house. And then she knew then she was sick, she had it four or five years and it was beautiful. I thought I was furnishing my house when I was doing it. I was saying to her "Oh I would love that". "Aye well we'll take that then".
- AG: It felt like you were down shopping. There's your phone ringing, here we can finish up here now, that's grand.

ENDS