Jack Smith interview 1955 - 1957

Date:

Time:

Location:

Present: KV Keith Vernon

JS Jack Smith

MM Maya Mahmood

KV If you don’t mind, would you just let me know your name and if you don't mind your date of birth.

JS My name's Jack Smith, christened John, but everybody calls me Jack . I was born 22nd of the 10th 1941, just at the start of the war.

KV Yep, and when did you come to the Harris?

JS I came to the Harris in September 1955.

KV Yeah and how long did you stay, what course did you do?

JS This was Junior Tech in those days, this was when the Technical College was running as the Harris Institute, and I was one of the 60 pupils a year who passed the exam, Saturday morning exam, and there was only 60 pupils a year allowed in, so there was 120 boys, first and second years, at any one time, but also 120 girls upstairs in the Commercial section.

KV I can never work out whether - girls on top?

JS The girls were upstairs in the Corporation Street building, the Junior Tech lads, all 120 of us, that was three first year forms and three second year forms 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 2C and those were the forms. Upstairs you ’ad a similar arrangement for the girls, with the exception always one or two boys, who wanted to do commercial work, whether it is because they wanted to be near the girls I don’t know [KV and JS chuckle] but there was, I knew a couple of the lads that went upstairs to do commercial work - typing and things, and the technical lads were downstairs.

KV Those were all boys in the Technical School?

JS All boys, all boys. I believe by 1960, I have a friend that was the last pupil, last pupils to be here were in 1960, when it changed to the Polytechnic. Now he said by that time in 1960 they were mixed, but there was no mention of that when we were around in the 50s.

KV And did you live in Preston? Did you have to travel?

JS I was born and brought up within a mile and a half, 2 miles of here. I knew this district round here. My grandmother, my maternal grandmother lived in Haydock St which is now built on. My grandfather, paternal grandfather, and grandmother lived in Barlow St lower down so, I am indigenous to this area .

KV So you would have known about the Harris and what it did… 02: 52

JS I did. All this block, I’m saying the block where the Harris is now, started with St Walburghe’s Institute, which was right on the, I’ve got a picture here, right on the banks of the canal, and then there were two very old Victorian houses, and then the Star Picture Place, and then coming down Corporation Street towards the college, there was Neale's, erm, antique dealers, Coutin, who did complaints for the scalp, alopecia etc, a building - another building, which I can't remember, but after that there was a cafe which we all used to get into, on the corner, and then the Harris, right at the other end of the Harris Institute, there was Crooks wholesale grocers, became Collins and then the Tech, then the polytechnic, UCLan bought it as part of their building.

KV OK, so tell me, tell us little about the course you took, was it two year full time?

JS Two year full time, half past 9 in the morning. We started at half past 9 because the other schools started at 9 and they didn’t want us mixing with those people. This is what it was like in the 50s, they didn’t want any Tech lad getting mixed up in a brawl or, so, and we didn't finish til half past 12, and then we didn’t finish again until half past four, after they’d all gone home.

KV So it was quite a long day?

JS Er, it didn’t feel like it, I mean, you moved from… something totally alien to me, I came from St Walburghe’s [Spire?] I came from Talbot Boys School which was attached to it. One teacher, one class for everything. I came here and had the shock of my life - no more cane, no more being shouted at or anything, treated as a young adult [KV OK], given a locker to put my own personal stuff in, for two years. Shown the quadrangle, which I later, as a builder, converted into a sensory garden I think it was [KV Oh at the back of the Harris?] that was a quadrangle, and later in life I converted it to a, [KV That’s lovely] we used to walk across the quadrangle to the gym. I converted the gym later in life again, into a theatre, a lecture theatre. My memories of this place, I can take you to form rooms even now.

KV So it's quite different from being at school?

JS Totally, we were treated as young men, unless you behaved like a child, you know, but you didn't do, you soon learned how to conform to this new regime. All the teachers were very forthright. I have all the names down here, erm… and they just sort of erm, they didn't rise above you, but they let you know that, that they were a seat of learning, and if you were interested enough, you’d be taught. And by the heck, it was the best, and I've heard every lad since, who I’ve spoken to, I still know many of them, have said the best thing that ever happened to us.

KV So what kind of subjects did you do as part of the Tech course?

JS You have my syllabus somewhere. I handed my cardboard syllabus in that my older sister, my older sister typed out for me, and pasted onto cardboard, and it was this big, can't remember, I can remember all the subjects of course, I can’t remember the times, and all the times were down, and I knew exactly when to leave the form room to go to chemistry or to go to science, and we just moved around quietly in the corridors, and it were pretty quiet.

07:26

KV Was it all science and tech?

JS No, we did metalwork, woodwork, there was a weaving shed downstairs with looms and spinning and weaving, but that finished after the first year, because it was obvious in Preston that the spinning and weaving was going. The cotton industry was dying, so those few boys that were down to take the spinning and weaving, came across to woodwork and metalwork. [Pauses] We’d a proper chemistry lab, proper science lab, proper woodworking machines, everything was totally alien to what, you know, we didn’t have these things at St Walburghe’s.

KV So the facilities were quite good, you think.

JS For the day, very good. Two Myford lathes in the metalwork, two in the woodwork. I can remember turning a fruit bowl to take home to my mum, making a poker and stand in metal work with Mr Bell, you know, to take home, great place, absolutely great place.

KV Did you, erm, was it quite a general course or did you have the opportunity to specialise or did you have roots through it for different kinds of…

JS The syllabus was structured in such a way as it would suit every technical- or practical- minded lad. Erm, I can’t say what the Commercial did because it wasn’t part of it, erm, though I believe they did shorthand typing, as one of the subjects, but we had history, geography, maths, you now, all the… [paper rustling], I’ll get me bit of paper out and then… [pauses, while paper rustles] Well, for instance Headmaster Richard Birkett, Dickie Birkett, a good bloke, he took us for English. Erm history Mr O’Donoghue, two periods a week; geography two periods a week, Mr Topping; science Mr Worthington, Ted Worthington as we called him; chemistry Mr Tookey; gym Mr Tookey; maths Benny Guy; woodwork Mr Jimmy Cross; metalwork Mr Bell; art Miss Mellor; algebra Mr Jock Hulse; so it was a very… 10:20

KV Yes, so you…

JS We also did [syphics?] as well [KV ah ok]. I never fully understood that…

KV So there was some kind of, so it was really quite broad wasn’t it?

JS It was, but, you sort of, you were given an hour one day of history, but during the week you would move on with that master, probably Tuesday and Thursday for instance, but you were always sort of adding to your knowledge all the time. Because it was broken up and not done in one big block, you were given sort of an hour’s history, and a couple of days after, you’d move on on that with another hour’s history, so you had time to, to soak it in, you also had homework to do on the first hour, and they were quite strict on homework, we got homework on every subject. [Pauses] Other than that, I just felt that we had a very broad spectrum in education. 11:23

KV Yeah, a general kind of, good solid groundings.

JS Well, I was always architecturally and constructionally minded, indeed I went on to run my own construction company later on, and I tended to go, this guy called Mr Crisp, who took us for technical drawing, and you could opt to spend more time with him if that's what you wanted to do, which I did, and so I did quite a bit of technical drawing with Mr Crisp. Er, also engineering drawing as well, so I had a good grounding in that background. 12:06

KV So you could specialise to an extent, perhaps?

JS If they thought that you were leaning towards something, they would encourage. If lads didn’t show any leaning towards anything, they just let them take the curriculum, which was a broad one anyway.

KV And were there exams to do, you talked about homework, were there exams?

JS Twice a year. We got erm, examined at Christmas and at end of term, and you were measured in height, weighed, each term, and they give a [inaudible] reports, one or two not too good…

KV [chuckles] Could do better perhaps…

MM Why did they measure your height and weight?

JS Well, boys in those days were pretty small, I know you’re not tall [MM chuckles: No!] but believe it, when I came to the Tech from St Walburghe’s, I was 5 foot and half an inch, that’s the first thing they did was measure you, and I was six stone 6. Time I left, when I was 16, I was five foot one and a half, [KV and MM laugh] and seven stone. So I hadn’t changed very much, at least I hadn’t shrunk! By the time I was 17 and a half, I was 6 foot one, which I am now, well I was, I don’t know if I still am…erm

KV Were there any kind of extracurricular activities or…

JS Yeah we’ve er, football was taken on a Wednesday and you could stop behind in the gym for extra gym, they were very keen on keeping you fit. We used to have a game, which I don't know whether Mr Tookey invented, it was called squat soccer. Squat soccer was played on your backside, on the gym floor, and the ball was kicked around off your *bum* [KV and MM laugh] and everybody loved doing that, they loved that game, and so sometimes we’d stop behind at night and have a game of squat soccer.

KV And Mr Tookey was the chemistry master as well?

JS Yeah Mr Tookey took us for chemistry as well. 14:32

KV So can we go back a bit Jack, did you… so you came straight from school into the Harris?

JS I came here as a 13 year old, nearly 14 year old, when I first came [KV OK] because you were school boys and you stopped until normal leaving time, which was 16. I was just short of being 16 when I left, and then I went to work for my father, and I came back the couple weeks after on part time day release. 15:13.

KV OK, so this was after your two year course, so what did you do as the…

JS Oh part time day release - it was purely construction. I met up with Mr Crisp again, the guy who had taken me for 2 years in tech drawing. But because I’d been a Tech boy, I was mixing with all these other guys that were older than me, I was allowed to skip a year, because of me background, my education at the Harris, and move into with the 17 year olds, so I gained that way, and then I did years 1, 2, 3, City and Guilds, National, Higher National, Full Technological Certificate, which I passed, I was the youngest person in Lancashire to get the City and Guilds, and then it came time for me to do a LIOB, Licentiate Institute of Builders, and unfortunately the Harris weren’t running the course, so I finished up at Blackburn Technology and Design, and I did the course there and whilst I was in the second year at that course, I got a telephone call from Mr Crisp and he said to me ‘Jack, I'm going away on holiday, will you come down and step in for me, as a part time teacher?’ I didn’t speak for a bit, I couldn’t do.. [KV laughs] I said whoa, I was 25, just married, bit daunting, I said ‘Who’m I teaching?’ he said ‘Oh they’re only 18 year old lads’, I thought ‘Yeah - I know 18 year old lads’ [KV and MM chuckle] Anyway I came down, I said ‘I'll do it for a week,’ he said ‘No it’ll be two weeks, I’m away for two weeks in Scotland’ so I said ‘Right, okay’ so I came down and I took Building Technology One. He said, ‘You'll still have all your notes won’t you, from when you did it’ so I had to go through all my work and me notes, he said ‘By way, by the way, the pay’s pretty good,’ I said well that will be a help. So I came down and I met the class full of young lads, who were intent on making my life hell… but I made sure they didn't, I gave them a rough time for the first couple of weeks, and they soon knuckled down, and I got on, and those two weeks went on for 10 years. I stayed for 10 years and I taught Technology 1, 2 and 3, for 10 years, and I finished when I was 36.

KV Brilliant. So just back tracking a bit if you don’t mind. So when you finished your course you went to work with your dad, [JS yeah] erm, was it… did your class mates did they find work ok? Erm presumably your dad was quite…

JS My dad was by this time 50 odd, 60 odd? I think he was 60. He wanted me to go in Cassidy and Ashtons who he was friends with, office, as a trainee architect that's what he wanted for me, and I wouldn't hear of it. I said ‘Dad I want to come, and go through the trade, learn the trade through the trade, and then I’ll know what I’m talking about’, and he said ‘Well I won't disagree with you,’ he said ‘it's probably the best way if you’re ever gonna be working with workmen, to know what you’re talking about,’ and so I did, and then when he retired, I took the business over and expanded it and we had a successful business for many years. We built Booths shops up and down Lancashire - Sharoe Green Lane that’s one of ours, one at Blackpool, one at Lancaster, about six altogether besides doing the smaller shops, but that was all… that all stemmed from my background at the Tech, Junior Tech. 19:39

KV And so it was obviously OK for you come on the day release…

JS Day release, yeah

KV And so when er…

JS That was a day and three nights. One full day and three nights a week, half past seven til half past 9.

KV That's quite a lot to do. 19:58

JS Yeah, we hadn’t got time to mess around. This stuff was put in front of you, you either learnt it or you got out. They weren't bothered. By that time, if you weren’t mature enough to be able to, to know why you were there, what you were there for, and by the time you were 18 or 19, you weren't going because you were being forced to do, you were usually going because you wanted to do, and you wanted to do well, and that's what I did.

KV And so when you did the teaching, was that a part time role or full time? 20:33

JS Yes, No it was part time. Nights, over three nights a week. By that time I’d finished my own studies.

KV And you were running a business?

JS I was running a business, yes, and I was married and had two children. I had a good wife. And Harry Crisp was right, it was good money. I could make almost as much in three nights a week as I could as a builder working for me father. I didn’t hold that against him, it was just how the pay was structured.

KV Do you think the college was, do you think they were keen to get people who were doing the job to teach the lads?

JS There were one or two good teachers and there were one or two, I won’t mention names, but there were one or two that I wouldn’t have paid them with washers. They weren’t up to the job. Erm, Mr Proudman was head of the Building Department, Harry Crisp was below him. Harry Crisp certainly knew what he was doing. Mr Proudman probably had done in his day, but he was, he’d gone more onto admin by that time. When Harry Crisp retired, a chap called Bailey took over from him, and I never thought that he was up to, to what he was supposed to be doing.

KV But they were quite keen to get someone like you who was doing the work to come and teach.

JS They were keen to have an ex-builder, or a builder, who knew what he was talking about and could sort of… The lads knew right away, my background - within half an hour of me standing in front of that class, there was no good trying to pull the wool over me eyes, cos I’d been there and done that, so they really started to listen, and I used to tell them., I said, if you want to learn listen and everything was done – there weren’t white boards then, it was blackboards and chalk, and so I used to get there quarter of an hour, 20 minutes early, and put everything on the balckboard that I wanted to talk about that day and then just refer to it, and I used to say to them, if you're not interested, don’t let me keep you, but your bosses will find out you'd not stayed.

KV Let's backtrack to this café you used to go to. So when you were at the Harris, was it all studying or, did you have some pals that you…? 23: 12

JS Oh, there was good, erm.. [papers rustling] These were taken on the canal bank… [pause] that was taken on the canal bank – buildings are built on it now of course, erm but that was what we used to call Topkills land, Topkills were a commercial bodybuilders, and…

KV Do you mind if we take some pictures of these?

JS No, do what you like. I mean you did these for me. [MM oh that’s lovely] I gave you the small [brown prints?] and you blew them up for me, 10 years ago. That was, that guy’s name is Derek Brown. We called him Brush because of his haircut [KV & MM laugh]. The girl is from the Commercial but I don't know her name. I thought of putting these in the Post.

MM Is she now his wife, or is it…?

JS I wouldn’t know… Well I’ve always been a bit…I thought, if I put that in the paper [chuckles] his wife might… [all chuckle] 24:16

KV I’m sorry Jack, I haven't looked at the specific stuff so erm… [JS Well yes, it’s fine, it won’t… take pictures, yes] So I’m sorry I haven’t seen this one. This one’s you…

JS I’ve taken the picture! Dave Kirk, Derek Hobson… I suspect that girl is on the picture there. Brian Walsh a magician of Longton who belonged to the magic circle [KV okay] John Salisbury, Mick Donoghue, who became school captain. Noblett, I can’t remember his first name, Derek Brown is on that picture, I don't know the young lady. [pause while moving photographs around] Brian Walsh and his guitar on the canal bank, also was er, belonged to the magic circle of course. [Pause, more rustling] This was a bit later, erm, this was in the Trinity [annex?] where I taught actually.

KV Where was that?

JS Bottom of Walker St was a Trinity school [KV oh okay] It was pulled down and there’s new build along there now, but that was the classroom I later taught in but not at that time. Derek Lester a friend of mine… that's me… the other three lads I can’t recall their names. I thought - if I put these in the, how do you get things in the Post? Every night in Lancashire Evening Post there are pictures, aren’t there, you know, all our memories or something, and I thought, but there's never an address to sort of…

KV Maybe we’ll…I’m sure we’ve got some contacts at the Post, maybe we’ll make some enquiries about that. [Paper rustling]

JS Those are all my classmates and the rows that we sat in.

KV Oh wow, Ta ha, good heavens.

MM Which one was you, again?

JS That's me…

MM Oh, I had a feeling actually.

JS You can’t see me?

MM No I had a feeling this one was you, this one here, right?

JS [pauses] Oh well, I must still look something like I did.

KV So they are your class.

JS There’s one name on there that you might… Whitlock…course I think you probably know Arthur Whitlock do you?

KV ….Might do.

JS Well he belongs to the Alumni and he also does a lot within the college, but he's very sick at the moment, cancer. [KV oh] Well his cousin was in the same class as me, Fred Whitlock. He's dead now. There are three or four of those lads on there that are no longer with us.

KV And were people in demand, having done the course? With, you know, get employment ok?

JS Oh every, at the end of every term, I was one of the… you can photograph those if you wish…

MM Thank you.

JS That's erm 1955 to 57, Form 2B.

MM Form 2B?

JS Yes. [Pauses] Where were we up to then?

KV Erm I’ve forgotten now. Your mates were… got jobs ok?

JS At the end of each term, summer term, er, we got English Electric as it was then - BAE now, Leyland Motors, all the big firms in Preston area would descend on the Tech. The first port of call for all these firms was the Tech, not the Catholic College or the Grammar School - the Tech. They wanted practical lads. They came down there and they took their pick. Every lad left there with a job. The ones that weren’t going to [industry?] like myself, we were going to work for our fathers, Fred Whitlock went to work for Whitlock Heating Company, I went to Jack Smith Builders, several lads in our...had parents, Bill [Hilton?] went to work for his father an electrician, the rest of them went into engineering, most of them, but they did think, they came down, and nobody left the Tech without a job. [KV Excellent]

JS [Pauses] Look you might think I'm singing it’s praises too hard but that's how I feel about it. [29:00]

KV So it really made a difference?

JS Really made a difference, really made a difference to me.

KV So if you don’t mind me sort of backtrack a bit further? So your dad was a builder and had he done, I don’t know, had he done an apprenticeship? Or had he done further education?

JS Yes, he did an apprenticeship in the…I have his indentures from 19… he was born in 1906 and he came out of his time in 1927. It was a seven-year, sorry, he came out when he was 21, so it was 1927 and he got married in 1933. Erm he served his time with a Preston firm called Charles Cox Limited which is no longer there. He came to the Tech and did similar courses to what I did. I never knew whether he got his City and Guilds or not. I suspect not because he never mentioned it to me but he was terribly proud of the fact I had. I’m sure that if he had got his City and Guilds he would have told me. [30:08]

KV And at the school you went to, did they um, [pause] So why did you decide to do the exam? Or were you encouraged to do it, or at the school, or did your dad say why don’t you do this..?

JS All way through St Walburghes, from 5 year old to leaving there when I was 13, I was always in the top two or three in the class. And I sat the 11 plus, and failed miserably. I was expected to walk it. There were lads in the class who passed it, I think about 11 passed from the Catholic College from St Walburghes who were well below me in the class, but I was just a bag of nerves. I just couldn't concentrate in the class, and in those days you could pay to go to the college, if there was room, and my dad knew I was so upset that I’d failed, and I felt that I’d failed him in a way, and he said ‘Well look, we’ll scrape some money together, we’ll pay for you to go.’ I said ‘No you won’t.’ I had enough sense at that age, I said ‘No, if I can't get through on my own merit, I don't want to go,’ and he said ‘Well you can take the exam again next year, as an older student,’ I said ‘No,’ I said ‘I’ll wait a good twelve months and I’ll go to the Tech.’ I said ‘I’ll take the Tech examination, cause that’s really what I want to do anyway.’ 31:56

KV so did… did you mean that? Or was it a bit of a kind of…

JS No that was just to appease my dad. He was upset, and disappointed, so was me mum. And I just felt I’d let them down. But I wasn’t going to have them scraping money together, I mean they weren’t that well off by that time. Later on in life they became all right, but they weren’t that well off, and I knew that erm, it’d only make it tight for my three sisters, I’d three sisters besides, so I just said, ‘No. I’ll take the Tech examination.’

KV Do you ever wish you had passed the 11 plus?

JS No, not afterwards. I’d two cousins of similar age to me who went to the Catholic College and to quote a Lancashire phrase, ‘made nowt.’ [MM chuckles]

KV What did your sisters do?

JS Me sisters, my eldest sister worked as a comptometer at English Electric…

KV What’s a comptometer?

JS Comptometer operator, adding machines, early adding machines, weren’t they.

KV Okay, right, ah okay yeah, yeah.

JS Erm, my middle sister, Barbara was a tailoress. Worked on Tulketh Brow for James Taylor the tailor, bespoke tailor. And my younger sister, who sadly passed away a few years ago erm, was an ‘airdresser.

KV So all kind of skills, [JS yeah] All did some further training.

JS Yeah. Er, even me mother had a City and Guilds Certificate, for dressmaking, which she got that in Glovers Court which was part of the Harris.

KV Oh yes, ah okay…can you remember, do you know when she would have done that?

JS Er, she was born in 1908 – er, [pauses] 1920s, 1920s.

KV So it’d be fair to say…

JS By the time she got married in 1933, she was a very skilled dressmaker. She made, I mean during the war, you couldn’t buy clothes anyway, but she made all my clothes, my trousers, my little jackets, my sisters dresses, she made everything, out of remnants. She used to go on the market and buy pieces of cloth, and she had a Singer sewing machine, treadle sewing machine and she used to make all the clothes. She’d work every night making clothes.

KV And, sorry I'm jumping around a bit here [JS Doesn’t matter] So when you went to the Harris, was there a uniform?

JS Yes [takes a breath]. It was a nice uniform. It was blue, er royal blue, happen just a little bit lighter than royal blue, bit darker than that, with a nice posh badge on, IHS on, and the school motto underneath ‘Ad Solo Ad Solem,’ ‘From the earth to the sun.’ Erm, very proud of that uniform, and we had a school cap, but it had a large peak. All the other school caps that College and Grammar School lads had just had short peaks. For some reason, just to be different, the Tech had a large peak on the caps. I was once called, I came out of the Corporation Street exit at night, to catch me bus at the bottom of Friargate. I walked down Edward Street, took me cap off and I put it in my pocket, and as I got round to the bus stop Jock Hulse, Mr Hulse, was still there [KV and MM chuckle]. He said [softly] ‘Where’s your cap?’ [KV and MM chuckle] ‘It’s in me pocket,’ he said [softly] ‘Put it on, keep it on’ [KV and MM laughing] I were going home! [KV and MM laugh] 36:06

MM After that did you always keep your cap on?

JS Ooh yeah – I didn’t want to stop behind for detention, because that was the only punishment he ever gave you, was detention and lines…which we used to copy out and then erm, we used to get lads to copy ‘em for us, [laughs] for a tenner [chuckles].

KV So you got erm, so passing the exam got you a place in college, did you have to… did you get a maintenance grant for the uniform? or did you have equipment or anything that you had to buy?

JS No. It was quite a complete uniform as well. We had to have a white smock for chemistry, which I burnt with nitric acid, had a little hole all the way down the front within the first two weeks – I’d never done chemistry before [KV and MM chuckle]. A brown smock for woodwork and metalwork. Gym equipment - tee shirt, shorts, [pauses] galoshes as we called them then - plimsolls, which were kept in a wire locker in the entrance to what’s now the lecture – is it still the lecture theatre?

37:28

KV erm [pause] I’m not sure…

JS If you walked across the quadrangle, there was a pair of doors right opposite.

KV Yes it is still, yeah yeah.

JS Right, well as you went through those doors, that's where you got changed in there. [pauses] Er, football kit - you had to have a football kit and erm, they weren’t too bothered about the cricket kit because they weren’t too keen on cricket for whatever reason. We played football, we’d play football against Bolton Tech, Southport Tech, and Blackburn Tech.

KV Oh ok, was there a bit of a league or something?

JS Well it was sort of closed shop between about four to five teams but probably all we could muster up, but it was alright. Er…

KV Would you play that as part of your PE or was that on a…?

JS That was on Wednesday afternoon that, and we went down to the Harris Art College, which you would probably know where that was, and we used to get changed in the big lecture theatre there, which was a huge lecture theatre, and then when we came back from… all pitches were across tram bridge. Trambridge is now out of use, and our pitches, we went over of tram bridge on the right, but the only thing was that during the week the farmer kept his cows on it [KV laughs] so sometimes we had to, we took a shovel with [coats?] and we’d to remove the cowpies [KV and MM chuckle], before we could play football. And Tookey used to say [harshly] ‘don't be soft, come on’ [KV and MM laugh] and then after when we got back at night, the second year lads - they got in the bath first it was a bath probably 12 foot by 6 by about 18 inches deep, second year lads got in first and washed off, and got out. Time we got in, there was about that much slutch in the bottom. It was like getting washed in the canal [KV laughs] in fact I’d’ve been better off in the canal…

KV [laughs] now that is it's quite a lot though isn’t it having all that kit that your family had to pay for that… 39:46

JS Yeah and we’d one or two lads, in fact one of the lads on there, Dennis Beech, he was an orphan, and he came from St Vincent’s, but the St Vincent’s paid for all his stuff. The rest of us just had to, parents had to buy the stuff, you know. In the second year, you were allowed to, if you didn’t want to wear a blazer, I suspect so that you didn't need to… you’d grown a bit by then, though I hadn’t grown so much, erm, you could wear a twee.. a jacket, a sports jacket, they allowed second year lads if they wanted… but most lads opted to keep the uniform [KV interesting]. I had one, I had a, a boy was courtin’ my middle sister and he’d been to the Tech three or four years before, and his mother worked at Simpsons Goldthread Works, in town. And they, in gold thread, they had made a Tech badge, and absolutely like the badge. Wish I could find it now, it was perfect and he gave it to me, and me mother stitched it on the jacket [KV chuckles] and when I got to the Tech, Mr Tookey came along, he said, ‘I have seen that before, 2 or 3 years back, Riley his name was, John Riley had that top.’ I said ‘Yes, he’s courting my sister.’ [KV & MM laugh] They were some happy times. We went to erm, the first year we went away to Braithwaite in Keswick. Hope, Hope Memorial Camp. We slept on straw palliasses and Mr O'Donoghue and one other teacher, I don’t remember the other teacher, went with us, and we just had a fun week in the wilderness as it were, damming streams and just messing around, you know about 20 lads of us. Yeah, it wasn't all working, I mean there was some fun. Dinner times, usually if you stayed behind, you would go in the refectory. I don’t suppose the refectory is there now, but there was a good refectory. They had their own cooks up there, everything was cooked on the premises and then we’d go back to the form and play push ha’penny. We all played push ha’penny then. Yeah, happy days… Really.

KV And is it true, that the boys and the girls never met?

JS Well, I think I put that one to bed haven’t I? [KV and MM laugh] Derek Brown obviously liked girls anyway, well we all liked girls [sound of papers rustling] erm, but Derek… I don't know who that girl is. I don’t know whether he married her or not. He lives at Grimsargh now. I offered to invite him across to the alumni, and he said he was going to come, this was be.. pre pandemic, and he didn’t do. And I had his name badge, which I still have, and I kept it, I thought well he might show one time and erm…But that was Derek, and he was a good friend of mine as well. But I thought it’d be nice to put these in the paper, wouldn’t it, and just let… I mean, of interest to some… I'm sure those three lads on there… Derek Lester and I see each other regularly, you know er, in fact I'll see him on Saturday in Miller Park. I have a classic car, and I take me classic car down, there’s a classic car event, and he has motorbikes.

KV We were hoping to have another reunion in… [JS October] September… right ok…

JS Well I think in the letter from Jodi…

MM Yeah

KV Um right ok so that’s…And one of the things we are hoping to do, is maybe do, erm might not be ready in time for the reunion, is do a little bit of a publication or something with some of the stories that we got and certainly keen to make contact with, to re-establish contact with people that might not have…

JS Yeah I mean I’ve two or three, some people that aren’t just interested, they’re not nostalgic. Some people have no nostalgia in ‘em at all, you know, ‘That’s a thing of the past,’ as they say. Many of us are, you know.

KV So just er, I think we’ve covered most of the things we wanted to talk about Jack, but is there anything that you'd like to talk about that I haven't mentioned?

JS Harry Crisp became a friend, besides being a teacher of technical drawing for us, and he was a good teacher. He built himself a house at Southport, at Blackpool sorry, just past the windmill on the left hand side, he is dead and gone now. He was married, he never had any children but he asked one or two of us, he was putting garage floors down and things, and he asked one or two of us, would we, could he pick us up in Preston, and take us down on Sundays and help him to put his garage floor down and he’d pay us [KV yeah] and we were pleased to do that for him, but he picked out the lads he wanted, Derek Lester was one, there was another lad called Peter Parker, another lad – He picked lads he could trust, and so I remember going down and doing that for him probably three or four weekends, and he gave us were money.

KV And the trip up to the Lake District, that was just a kind of a…

JS I don’t know if it was something they did regularly or whether it was just, I got the idea that Mr Donoghue, who was the geography guy, he was keen on outdoors, and I think he used to do quite a bit of walking anyway, and whether it was his idea or not but, erm, it didn't take long when he put the word out to get the [quota?] of 20, and I put my name down right away, I thought it was great, I really enjoyed it, and whether he did it after we left or not I don’t know. How many of these interviews have you done?

KV Actually you’re the second one, [JS oh ok] It’s interesting, I was talking to a lady this morning who also went on a walking holiday, I can’t remember what the name of the teacher…

JS What years was she here?

KV I think a year not long before you [JS right] Obviously she was in the Commercial School but I think she might have been maybe just two or three years before you in the mid 50s.

JS Yes…of course, you'll get… if you pick… or if you get somebody at my era, you'll get a lot of the same stories again because in doing the same curriculum… and they’ll have different aspects won’t they?

KV And that's… as a historian, that's something I'm interested in, in that if you talk to, if you’re doing this kind of interviews, if the same things coming up then, you know it [works?] everybody’s memory can vary, but if the same things are coming through…what I find really fascinating by this is the stuff that you can’t read on the paper, so it’s things like - you sound really quite proud of the Harris, and it meant a lot to you and it made a difference 47:43

JS It isn’t only me… there's, I’ve a lot of friends who came here before and after, one guy who will be coming to the show with me, Peter Baldwin, he was in the last batch before it packed up and he just said, I said, ‘I'm going down to see Keith the historian tomorrow’ I went down to his place yesterday. He said ‘Oh it’d be interesting to see what he knows about when it packed up.’ I said ‘Well I don't know what he’ll know about that,’ but have you any knowledge of… there was never any mention when I was here, and it was only three years after I finished here, that it became Polytechnic, but there was no mention. The staff never said to us ‘Oh by the way this won’t carry on for much longer.’

KV In truth I know more about the earlier period but I'm finding out more about it, so I think it was, I think it might have been when…when it became the Harris College rather than the Institute [JS yeah] and I think part of that new organisation was separating out the junior work from the adult work, and I think that's when Tuson College was set up that became Preston college so…

JS Of which I was Vice-Chairman - Preston College, later on.

KV So just - I know a little bit about it, but I’m hoping to find out a lot more.

JS How far do you go back then, are you going back to the 30s and 40s?

KV Not with interviews I’m afraid…

JS No, well no, because I mean, I'm 81 so they won't be… [chuckles]

KV I did some work on the Institute during the First World War, and erm 49:49

JS Right, that’s when my mother would be here, wouldn’t it….

KV Yeah yes it would be…

JS We can’t call on her now, she’s gone!

KV What was her name, what was her maiden name? 50:00

JS Waddington, Helena Waddington.

KV Because I've got… a student of mine, who will be helping with this project, she can’t make it today, she did a study of women at the Harris during the First World War, so I'm going to ask her whether she's come across her.

JS Her address then will be Haydock Street, can’t remember the number.

KV We’ll see what we can find about that.

JS That would be nice that, it really would yeah.

KV She just looked at 1914 to 18 but…

JS Well me mother was born in 1908, so she would be, when she was going to night school she’d be 15, so 1923 just after the First World War, wouldn’t it?

KV I'll see what I can find out [JS aye, aye…]

MM That’s a nice name Helena.

JS Helena. I've got a daughter, my youngest daughter is a solicitor, she was christened Christina Helena Alice after another grandma [MM oh nice] Christine Helena.

MM What origin is that name, do you know?

JS Pardon?

MM What’s the name origin?

JS It's a Catholic name and my mother was named after Saint Helena of the True Cross, which has something to do with Christ’s crucifixion, erm, apart from that, but it is a very Catholic name. But I see it cropping up now, some people are calling themselves Eleanor, spelt the same, but ‘elena. 51:58

KV [inaudible] When did you meet your wife, had she done any education?

JS My wife went into insurance when she left, she went to St Walburghe’s. I met my wife in 1962 at Preston Public Hall, dance hall, the old Public Hall. Erm, we got married in 1966. We’ve four children… We’re still together.

KV What did your children do? 52:32

JS The eldest son ran the business for a while, but then he went into partnership with somebody and the business founded. He went into partnership with somebody and it became - Jack Smith’s became Blue, ‘Ice Blue Development.’ Ice Blue Development went bust, and took Jack Smith Builders with it, much to my… Anyway he’s picked himself up, and he has a good job, he’s a surveyor. He has Licentiate of Builders, he has a degree, gained from here, from UCLan. The eldest daughter Andrea lives at Lancaster. She went to Brackenhurst College, can’t remember where it is now, it’s in Surrey, I think…she has an AI in horses…she’s teaching horse riding. My youngest son, he’s an entrepreneur. He really has all sorts of businesses going. But these kids are now in their 50s. Steven’s… he’s done alright for himself. Christina is a solicitor and partner in Birchall Blackburn’s, in town. She runs the Morcambe branch. They’ve all done alright for themselves. My wife went to work - after she finished with the insurance game, which she didn’t really like anyway, she went to work for Preston Borough Fire Brigade, and I used to pull her leg and say you know they’ll give you your own hose pipe and fire engine [when I’m there?] and she became leading firewoman and she did that until she stopped work after we, after I got the business going on its feet and make a little bit of money, she brought the family up.

KV I think that's all we wanted to talk about Jack. Thank you so much for your time, it’s been fascinating.

JS I hope it’s what you wanted, that’s the main thing, you know [KV it's absolutely…] How you’ll go through that lot, I don’t know. Or if it’s even legible, it should be. Can you just play a little bit back?

KV ok.

54:57