

Linda Ashton Interview A-3757-Z/1/2

Summary

Linda Ashton was born in 1949 at Worsbrough Bridge. Her parents were from Barnsley. In this interview, Linda describes her home and family life. Her father was a coal miner before working as a porter at Mount Vernon Hospital. Linda describes her social life around church and playing with friends within the area. She had a lovely childhood and remembers her mother taking them on day trips and visits to stately homes. They didn't have much, but her mother always managed to save for them. Linda talks about her working life positively. She first worked at the burling and mending factory in Thomas Street when she left school in 1963 at the age of 14. She then moved on to do hand sewing work at West Street, but had to stop at the age of 25 due to poor health. Linda talks about the changes she has seen in Worsbrough. She points out the loss of 'neighbourliness' and the 'closeness' in the area. She describes the Co-op shop as 'magical'. Her family was the first in the street to get a telephone. She ends the interview by mentioning about the first moon landing and the jubilee.

Transcription

KH: There we go then. So it's the 20th July 2018. This is an interview with Kate Harper and...

LA: Linda Ashton.

KH: ... at Worsbrough library for the Worsbrough Oral History Week. Erm, would you start please by just telling us roughly how old you are? You don't have to tell us exactly.

LA: I don't mind. I will be 69 in August.

KH: Thank you. And were you born in Worsbrough?

LA: Yes, I were born in 33 Henry Street, Worsbrough Bridge.

KH: Eh, what sort of house was it? What was it like?

LA: Terrace house.

KH: Yeah. Had you got ... indoor plumbing and electric or...?

LA: Not until... I was... how old would I be? About 12. We had the the council came and modernised all the houses in the street, all at once. And, we had a bathroom built on, on the outside. And at the time we had a toilet at the bottom of the garden, well yard really. And because the door fell off, me dad had to go down to the council and say "Can you hurry up and have this toilet put in." So they did, they hurried up. But it

was really funny because a knock came on the door, this little boy came and he said "Mrs Tasker, they're bringing you a toilet." [KH laugh] And all the children were following this council man down, the street with this toilet on his shoulder. So he put it in, in the bathroom but we didn't have a door on, we had to put a curtain on until they got round to finishing the bathroom. So that were quite amusing really [KH and LA laughter].

KH: Ah, that's lovely.

LA: And the next-door neighbour had an organ and the workman used to play the organ eh and go round with a cap, anybody that were listening [laugh]. It was such fun. And then one day we were washing up in the kitchen and the boy next door said "Linda, I can see you through the wall." Because they'd knocked all the plaster off so they could see straight into our kitchen [KH gasp]. But we had so much fun. We really did, it were fantastic time [KH and LA laugh]. So yeah, so we did have a toilet at the bottom of the yard.

KH: Yeah. Where did your dad work?

LA: Me dad worked, to start with, he worked in the pit.

KH: At-at Barrow?

LA: Eh no he didn't. He worked at Mitchells Main.

KH: Oh alright. Yeah

LA: Hmm, yeah he worked... and Darfield Main and then he had to retire through ill health. So he finished his working life at eh eh Mount Vernon Hospital, as a porter.

KH: All right, yeah yeah.

LA: Hmm. Me mum didn't work.

KH : That I'll- that were going to be my next question.

LA: 'Cause they never did. Well...

KH: Very few did.

LA: Very few did in our street anyway, you know they didn't work...

KH: Yeah, yeah. Are they from- were they from Worsbrough originally as well all your families?

LA: Yes. Me mum was. Me mum were born down Charles Street, the other side of the road from Henry Street. And me dad were born in Stairfoot.

KH: Right, right. Do you remember your grandparents? Were they still alive?

LA: Yes. Me grand- me grandma lived in Charles Street, in the house where mum were born.

KH: Yeah.

LA: Eh and she didn't die while she was 82.

KH: Ah, that's good. Yeah.

LA: So... although she did decide to become old lady at 40.

KH: Oh, did she?

[KH and LA laugh]

LA: Oh, yes... oh yeah she did. And so people had to run round- I suppose though in those days they were elderly in their 50s. Weren't they? And not like now, is it? So of course, me mum had to go and do all her housework and me aunty used to go down. But yeah, she gave up at 40 she wanted looking after [KH: Goodness me]. Mind she did have about... how many children did she have? Oh about 16.

KH: Did- she would have been worn out then wouldn't she?

LA: She was, she was actually. Yeah. They didn't all live. But eh... 'cause I can remember me mum saying, erm following her walking up, cutting you know towards the church with her little coffin and that's what they used to do apparently, you know then. But eh yeah, I had a lovely, lovely childhood in Worsbrough. It were really good.

KH: Yeah, what sort of things ... did you do in your pastim- in your spare times? You know what you...

LA: Well I used to belong to the church on, down the main road you know the eh Wesleyan Reform Chapel.

KH: Oh, right. Yeah

LA: I went there from being three.

KH: Yeah.

LA: And then I taught at the Sunday school. And erm ... yeah we used to have eh you know sort of clubs for children and things like that so...

KH: Yeah.

LA: ...I went there until they pulled it down actually.

KH: Hmm, what year was that? Do you remember?

LA: I can't remember, Kate. Erm no, I can't remember. I'm not good at remembering dates.

LA: But yeah, it were a sad time when that had to be knocked down but... subsidence.

KH: Oh right.

LA: Yeah so we had to pull it down.

[00:05:00]

LA: But eh yeah and I had a lot of friends. I used- I went to the eh school, the church school, you know, on the top road there. What it used to be a window centre but it's been pulled down now ain't it?

KH: Yeah, across from Saint Thomas'.

LA: Yeah, that's the one yeah.

KH: Hmm, hmm.

LA: And we used to walk there and back. No cars [laugh]. I had to walk.

KH: Whatever the weather.

LA: Yeah, that's right. Erm yeah again it were a lovely eh a lovely school. Erm but first of all, I went to the primary school, of course, on the main road. That is the dance centre now.

KH: Oh right. Yeah.

LA: Yeah, I could remember that. Could remember in the winter when they used to put the milk bottles beside the radiator.

KH: [gasp] Oh!

LA: It was horrible and I would give any- I would give my milk away to anybody [KH and LA laugh]

KH: And it had gone warm.

LA: It was horrible. Yeah, but again we had a happy time. I can remember getting the beds out on a Friday afternoon, and eh while- we had to go to sleep. Well every day actually. We all had a little blanket. I never went to sleep b'cause I didn't like to sleep in the day. I just thought it was a waste of time [KH laugh]. But that meant that we used to have a swing on a Friday, in the top class and I never got a swing. I think it were because I never went to sleep [LA and KH laugh]. And then, when we were in the top class we had to listen to the little ones reading.

KH: Oh, right.

LA: For the teachers. Yes.

KH: Yeah.

LH: 'Cause I could read when I went to school 'cause me mum made sure that we could all read when we went. And eh yes so we used to listen to them read.

KH: Yeah.

LA: And eh it were a lovely time actually. It were really nice. Except I remember starting school when I were five, I didn't like it. So I think I'd only been there a week and at dinner time I came home. And I said I weren't going back anymore [LA and KH laugh].

LA: Somebody watched me across the road.

KH: Yeah.

LA: I mean in those days it weren't as busy obviously as it is now. But yeah so I came home. 'Cause I wanted to come home. But after that I once so settled in, I loved it. You know I did. Yeah. I'm- trying to think the names of the teachers.

KH: I were say were there any particular teacher that stood out?

LA: Oh Mrs Younger. She was lovely. She were the baby teacher, Mrs Younger. She were really nice. Eh and she were so gentle you know, she were so kind. You know.

LA: And eh I can always remember... can't remember the name of the headmistress. She always- they always used to wear nylon overalls.

KH: Oh.

LA: And eh yeah I could remember that. Erm I can't [fly buzzing in background] remember her her name now, But she- the headmistress was very nice. The middle teacher was Mrs Brown, didn't like her. She was very strict; she wasn't a nice lady. [KH and LA laugh] Nobody liked Mrs Brown very much.

KH: Yeah. Did you stay for school dinners?

LA: No, I didn't because I only lived across the road you see and I came home. And... I did sometimes stay when I was at the Juniors.

KH: Yeah.

LA: But erm when me dad were out of work a lot, used to have a lot of accidents and he were, he were out of work and that- then they got free dinners. But I didn't like free dinners because we had to sit on what they called the "brown table". And everybody knew that you were having free dinners.

KH: Oh right.

LA: So, I didn't like to stay for school dinners. I didn't as a rule, but me mum thought it would be a good idea if I did. So I did, but I didn't like it, like a stigma because- I mean it wasn't, was it? 'Cause I meant there are other children that were very, very poor and I suppose we were poor. Erm well we were- we didn't have a lot of money at all.

KH: But m- everybody were the same wouldn't they....

LA: Everyone were the same but we had a lot of love. But now I think that makes a lot of difference, you know. And again, everybody in the street they weren't well off anyway. And we used to go and play out at you know these games, they used to play 'kick-our-cans', skipping and marbles and things like that which they don't seem to play now do they? You know, we had lots of fun and of course we could roam, you know we used to go down to the cricket field, down the bottom of Worsbrough. Stay there all day and just come back at teatime. No watches, you know we just went and again we felt safe, and eh it were just a happy time. We weren't ever on us own you know I had three sisters, older than me. So and I had a lot of friends. And it were a lovely, lovely time. It was... yeah, really nice. So...

KH: Did- as you got older did you go to youth clubs or dances or pictures or?

LA: No I didn't because we were involved with church mainly, really.

KH: So that took a lot of time?

LH: So that took a lot of time. Yes, yes it did.
[00:10:00]

LH: Erm so we were in a group, you see. And we used to go to the- this man and woman used to go to church, Mr and Mrs Rose. They- we used to go to their house a lot for the youth- we had a youth club but went there and we used to there go after church on a Sunday.

KH: Right.

LA: So I never really got into dances or anything like that you know, not that I thought there anything wrong with them, but it just weren't my thing you know. We just didn't do it so... but again, we had a lot of fun you know, 'cause I think you do when you've a group of friends, dun't you think of you'd a lovely time, yeah you do.

KH: So you- where did you work when you first left school?

LA: I started work in Thomas Street, at the burling and mending factory. And it used to be the old club, working men's club. We were upstairs and again that was an experience because we had... because it was a a beer cellar, we had blacklocks and they used to- we used the clo- the cloth was very, very long, metres and metres long and very wide and we used to have to fold them up on the tables when we came home because if we didn't there have might be blacklocks in among when we

came the next morning [laugh].

KH: Ah right.

LA: Yeah and then when that closed, we went on to West Street which is now... it used to be the bike shop last thing. Yeah, so we we I worked there yeah. And eh it was all hand sewing you know and eh yeah that were really good time but sadly I had to leave I only 'bout there 12 years. I had to finish work at 25 because I started being ill. So...

KH: Right.

LA: ... I couldn't work after that. But it was a very good job and- again, we had a good crowd you know. We had some experiences there, it was really funny.

KH: Yeah.

LA: And there were a lady called erm... I can't remember her name now. She used to do the dinners and erm she used to come round you know getting what you wanted for your dinner and things- oh Mrs Clarkson they called her. And eh she used to put everything in one pot and I remember one day this girl brought some Heinz beans and she said "I want those Heinz beans". She said "Alright I will put them on top" [LA laugh]. So... she mixed them up with everything else [KH laugh]. But erm yeah again we used to walk then, I used to come home for lunch, had half an hour and I used to come home every day. But then me mum and dad weren't well so we used to come home and check on them you know so to see if they were alright. So... yeah so actually that were my working life, I only worked while I were 20 but I started when I were 14. I-I were 14 in the August and I started straight away s-school. So that were my working life, but it was a happy one.

KH: Yeah. Do you remember outings, any special outings or holidays or club trips or...?

LA: Oh yes. Oh yes, I can remember going down and getting on the train at the bottom you know where the track used to be. And eh we used get eh... they used to give us a little envelope with some money in. And me mum always managed to save for us to go away. She used to pay into a a club scheme, so much a week. And then we used to eh used to go away to Scarborough. And I were always away for my birthday and we used j- every year she managed but she scrimped and she saved and she went out without a lot for us you know. There only two of us then at that time. So yes we went away and she used to take us to all the stately homes. In fact, the other day I were cleaning the loft out and I found the books what she used to buy, every time she went she bought a book. And eh yeah we used to go to the stately homes. And we used to have day trips, used to go to eh Cawthorne a lot. 'Cause we catch the- caught the bus you see and Newmillerdam. We used to go, eh yeah she made sure we went somewhere. She was eh... didn't cost a lot or we just used to pack a picnic up and go down to playing field. You know we had lots of outings. She were very good like that me mum. She always made sure that we were you know we had a good time. Wouldn't a lot of money, but we had a lot of love and she took us places. It was lovely, really was. Yeah.

KH: Yeah. What about Christmases there anything special about Christmas? Do you remember?

LA: Oh yeah we always had a lovely Christmas. We didn't have a lot but what we had was special. You know and she always made it special for us. We always had a stocking, we always had the obligatory tangerine and the shiny coin in the toes [LA laugh] so you know....

KH: Ah that's lovely.

LA: ... she used to knit so if we got a doll, it wasn't a new doll but she always used to knit us new clothes for the doll. And we used to have a new doll thing every year. And eh she used to buy things second hand and and do them up. You know. Erm me dad wasn't very handy so he didn't... [KH and LA laugh] he weren't a handy man. But she used to you know make the best of what we got. Eh but yeah she used to make it very special and birthdays were special as well even though I we're away. We always made it special, always had a party, always used to made a cake. So yes so I were very very fortunate really in my childhood. Erm it were- it were a lovely time. Yeah, yeah.

KH: Yeah. What's changed most about Worsbrough do you think over years?

LA: I think the 'neighbourliness', it's just not there anymore.

KH: Everybody said that.

LA: It's not. I mean when we were in Henry Street, everybody were there for one another. They always used to come to me mum if they wanted anything. And... but whatever, you know, they were always there. Erm they were a lot poorer than us in that street. And I could remember one year, I got this beautiful dolls pram and there were a a family across and there's- he had had a really bad accident at work and their children did not have much at Christmas. So me mum says to me I want you to give that pram to your- to that little girl across the road. She were very social minded me mum. You know and eh of course I didn't want to do it did I, but I did it and she knitted clothes and even then, erm when I gave that pram away they were so pleased, they just didn't have anything. We didn't have a lot but they didn't have anything. And that's what it was like, we just shared, you know and if somebody didn't have something they needed it, well that were fine. Me dad used to have coal delivered when he were at pit. He used to give it away or somebody could come and say "Can we have some coal?" and he used to give them some coal. We shared but these days it is not there anymore is it? You know erm people are sort of tied up with themselves and they work too much don't they you know. They're never there but that is the sad thing that's gone, is the 'closeness' and the 'neighbourliness' and I think that's why so many elderly people now are so lonely. It wouldn't be heard of then [clears throat] for an elderly person to be lonely.

KH: No.

LA: Because somebody would watch out for them. And that's what it were like.

KH: Yeah. Yeah. Eh what about the actual erm village itself you know like the-the new estates being built and- or things that have disappeared, buildings that have disappeared...

LA: Oh yeah there's so much gone. I mean down the main road really erm the Police Station went and erm the shops at the bottom they they more or less all there in fact the shops are still there but they've changed so much. Erm but there were a lot more grocers shops of course, I mean they've all gone now which again is a sad thing 'cause I think corner shops are a good thing but eh they've all disappeared.

KH: Yeah.

LA: And there's nothing left really what were there when I were younger. Erm same shops but so different now to what they were you know. Erm butcher shop at the bottom, I mean I can remember going there for me mum and the Co-op that was magical 'cause we go there and erm we used to go in and you know they used to roll potatoes down a shoot to bag up and of course when I were little I was scared and eh when it were thundering me mum used to say "Oh it's only potatoes rolling down the shoot at Co-op" [LA and KH laugh] ... when I was scared of thunder. And you know they used to cut all the butter in pats and weigh up like that. And eh I can still remember me mum's divy (dividend) number

KH: Most people can.

LA: Yeah and I don't know why because I mean I find it hard to remember telephone numbers now but it's just imprinted on your mind you know. You used to go and tell her the number and erm I used to be fascinated with the shop assistant 'cause he used to add it up in their head [KH said "oh yeah"]. Amazing you know they used to move things and just [tap table] I couldn't- how they did it. Erm and again you know and there were- went in the butcher's and there were sawdust on the floor and things like that you know and eh... yeah but things have changed, changed so much it's hardly recognisable really I don't suppose now?

KH: No, no.

LA: Because there's a new estate up where William Street used to be of course that's been built you know. Erm so yeah there's so many different things that's that's happened.

[00:20:06]

KH: Hmm. Yeah. Do you remember people starting to get cars and televisions and...?

LA: Oh, we were the first in the street to get a telephone.

KH: Were you?

LA: We were yes. Only because me mum were ill [KH laugh]. And the Social Services had it put in for us because we worked and they said they got to be in contact with somebody and so erm yeah we had the first and we were on a party line. And the

elderly lady that who were- u- who used to share with she used to sometimes leave the phone off the hook so we had to go and knock on her door and say "Will you put the phone on because we couldn't use our phone" [LA and KH laugh]. So we were the 'go to' for the telephone in the street. So we were like a telephone exchange [LA and KH laugh] so... and I can't remember anybody in our street that had a car eh when I were younger when I were little. Can't remember at all. So eh...

KH: And you can't move for 'em now, can you?

LA: Oh no, no you can't park anywhere can you?

KH: No, no.

LA: No but eh and I can remember going to the allotments, which have gone now.

KH: Hmm. Where were they?

LA: They were round the back as you went erm how can I say now... where the playing field is now as you go up the cutting, it were round back of there.

KH: Ah, right.

LA: And I used to go up me friend's erm dad had an allotment so we used to go up there, but they've gone now as far as I know. So eh yeah, but things have changed a lot so it's only while you've been talking that you think about it int'it you know brings things back. Yeah so eh...

KH: Yeah. Do you remember any sort of national events, big events that impacted you know obviously you weren't... eh you'll not remember Coronation wouldn't you....

LA: Oh no no, I can't remember that.

KH : Eh what about say landing on moon or... that sort of thing?

LA: Oh yes, I can remember watching that.

KH: Yeah.

LA: Yes. Erm it were a very very exciting that. Me mum she were... very erm forward thinking me mum she were really into history and stuff you know, and she just really wanted to be there when that happened you know. So she made sure that we were there and we saw that you know. So I don't know if I were have been bothered or not [LA and KH laugh]. But we all wanted to be together when it happened. So yeah we- yeah it- yeah remember that. But apart from that really, I can remember seeing photographs of the Coronation in fact I've got one at home I think. Erm they had a party in the club where we went to work, in Thomas Street yeah but eh I were too, I weren't there then so but I can remember that. But eh other things I can't really remember- oh I remember the Jubilee 'cause we just moved into the new house after they knocked houses down.

KH: Right, yeah.

LA: And we went to live on Oakdale then, where I am now and I remember the Jubilee. Yeah because erm me and my next-door neighbour put some bunting up. We hadn't been there very long. And eh yeah so erm we did that. But sadly, we'd moved into that house and me mum only lived there a year before she died and she loved the house. 'Cause we got it special for 'em so they could have a room downstairs as a bedroom you see. Erm but yes she had a heart attack and she died so... that were sad.

KH: Oh dear. Yeah, yeah.

LA: But eh yes we were fortunate to move into a nice house after we'd lived there it were very inconvenient for them really. But it was very very good time... it was. Yeah.

KH: That's lovely, thank you very much Linda. I will just finish that now unless there is anything you want to add.

LA: I don't think so. Have I rambled on too much?

KH: No...

(End of interview)
[00.24.02]