

Sheena and Les Moore

Interview: 7.12.16

Interview by Garry Lyons, Last Seam play

Minutes	
Track One	Boynos – when they were dressed up, tracky bottoms, white socks. Big gold chain on. Anyone with a gold chain on got mugged. 1980s. After the strike. They decided to accelerate the pit closure programme.
1.30	Sheena – they'd not employed anybody at the pit for 6 years prior to the strike. They employed the strike breakers from other mines, when young lads couldn't get a job.
2.30	Les – I think they were men who were specially planted. Like Telephone Tommy, nobody knew him, worked on his own, didn't have a clue about telephones. Now and then he was spotted in a different district, wouldn't talk to you. He was a plant.
3.15	Sheena – they had to feed the media that the strike was breaking. They were just tactics. Thatcher and cronies had planned it. I think before the strike there was an unemployment problem, youth unemployment, there was an attempted strike in 1982. That was when all the planning was going on.
4.00	<i>Thatcher said 'sort it'.</i> Sheena - 1984, Corton Wood was the war cry to us. We had no option but to fight that. The hostility towards the police was very high. They could not be trusted. It wasn't the fault of the police officers today, but they're still not trusted.
5.15	Les – some of them are still around, the senior ones. Sheena – but not these ones on the beat now. After that nobody got a job. Then we had talk of EU money coming to the area. A few training schemes set up in Kirk Sandall, for jobs that didn't exist. Then Tony Blair got in, and he grew the public sector and created jobs. That did help a little bit. But the loss of the industries and factories – if you close a mine, it's not just those jobs, it's the jobs that are feeding it in different ways. Then there's nothing.
6.00	Les – all the shops are gone. <i>Gradual decline or real moments of change?</i> Les – 1989. Sheena – it was a gradual decline in the early 1980s, prior to the strike. The lads had started gathering outside shops because there were no jobs. They were a bit of a nuisance, they had a few dogs and some drugs coming in.

7.00	Les – Es coming in. Late 1980s. Sheena – after the strike you had some still working at the pit. There were marriages falling apart within 2 years of the strike ending. Family breakdown. Poor employment opportunities, poor educational attainment. Steady slide down. Chicken factory went.
8.00	Les – I was production supervisor there for a while. Sheena – they had comradeship with others who worked there. Had sewing factory, all friends together, whose husbands would have been miners. When those 2 places went it was a big smack. You'd lost all your wages. The kids were hanging about the streets. Now you don't even see them on the streets. Since this last austerity kicked in, they've disappeared off the streets. It's weird.
9.00	<i>What do you think has happened to them?</i> I think they're depressed. Absolutely depressed.
10.00	Les – they get themselves in little gangs and they go to somebody's house, drink and drugs. Some of the smarter ones play computer games. Might be 10 of them in a game, they go in their bedroom. One of my lads did it. Couldn't go in the pub.
11.00	<i>Specific events or stories?</i> Sheena – my boys are older, 31 and 34. One is an electrician and DJ. His work as a DJ dried up when the nightclubs closed. Now he gets bits of work all over the country. Other son is a rigging technician, no security of work. Has to travel to London. No money for digs.
13.00	Les – need to be able to drive. My sons didn't bother with school, they went to work.
14.30	<i>That's what it used to be, you got a job with one of your relations. Small businesses have been ruined.</i> Sheena – my son is 31 and he's travelling to London to work. The company knows he lives in the north. Can't afford to live in London. His working day is very, very long. He's got no life whatsoever. It's killing people. What quality of life is that. Got your loans to pay. Mick Lanaghan's lad has had £15,000 of tools taken. It's like homelessness in town, Tent City in Doncaster.
15.00	Sleeping in doorways. Nobody should be allowed to fall that low. Where's the humanity in all of this? Les – it's banned, and it's going to get worse. They're going to remove more support. The hole gets wider and more drop

16.00	through. <i>Sheena- [Redacted]</i>
18.30	I now work at Barnsley. We are single staffed, I'll be on my own tonight, covering 3 disciplines. The suicide rate has gone up 30%. (Discussion around suicide rates, regionally).
Track Two	Everybody is run ragged. Les – I took my daughter to hospital and I stopped with her and then got fined for parking. <i>A parking scandal.</i>
1.00	Sheena – they're hitting everybody in every direction. The middle class are starting to feel it. But it's nothing new to these areas. They've had it all the time, for probably 30 plus, 40 years. I haven't got a racist bone in my body, my partner is black but what I do care about is working class people. We voted out in these areas, the black working class voted out too, because they lost their jobs too. They haven't got a clue (conversation regarding internet/social media).
2.00	Brexit has exposed huge divisions. Les – the divisions were surfacing, you've seen it with Corbyn. But the EU situation has definitely put a spoonful of sugar in.
3.00	Sheena – I'm not turning my back on my class of people to be a European. How much worse can it get? They're eating at food banks and living on the streets. We never see our MPs in Doncaster do we. Les – Ed (Miliband) is from Camden. He went to a Socialist comprehensive where the parents pay. It's not really a comprehensive.
4.45	Sheena – they don't realise they're middle class some of them. Compared to this, it's a world apart. I made a little film after Brexit, I was sick to death of people calling us racists. I don't like racists, I don't like bigots, I don't like homophobics. I believe live and let live. I got comments saying we'd benefited from the EU, how have we benefited from the EU round here? The training schemes looked good on paper, but they're still unemployed or doing zero hours contracts, with no employment rights.
5.30	
6.30	Les – we're importing electricity from Europe. <i>Sheena- [redacted]</i>

11.15	There were people in the meeting last night. We couldn't put one in a flat because his needs were so complex he'd get chucked out. He's on Meth and Spice.
12.15	Les – our Assoc - we've given some vulnerable people in Ashford the deposit for a flat. A social worker said they would have died on the streets. We shouldn't be having to do this. That's what we pay taxes for.
Track Three	<i>[First part redacted]</i>
7.00	The lack of employment and money is creating great stress and pressure for these families. They have children young, they turn to drugs, children can be born drugs dependent. All of them are
8.00	vulnerable. Social cohesion has broken down. I put it all down to lack of jobs. A lack of hope, and poor education. It's deliberate. They're impoverished. Unfortunately some of them lose their
9.30	children.
	<i>There must be some families who break out of it?</i>
10.00	20 years ago it felt as a social worker that we had more resources to offer. We had inhouse carers. A group trained to work with child protection. I would set up a care plan to work with the mum or the main care giver. It would take 12 weeks. We could move them on.
12.00	Neglecting cases where children are not getting to school. A typical example is where main care giver takes drugs or alcohol and can't get out of bed. In the past we would have had a home care giver knocking on the door at 8am, making them get out of bed. If children don't get to school, the parents are fined. The children may eventually come into care. And the outcomes in care
13.30	are not great. Better to support them at home.
15.00	Kids in the care system in the past would go down the mines. The miners would take them under their wings and become part of their families. Nobody's doing that, they are lost souls. No structure or order. We had St John, the brass bands, painting, poets, some went to college. All that's gone.

16.30	The opportunities were provided by the mining industry, not the education system. The areas are depressed. Les – they’ve been abandoned. Sheena – there’s nowhere to go in this area. We haven’t even got a library in this village. As a single mum I couldn’t have done my degree without that library. I go to Sheffield Uni and the library got my books. There was internet access in the library. It’s normal
18.00	to have a computer in the house but there are some who can’t afford that. It’s been a gradual decline but it’s increasingly stark these last 8 years and the last 2 years have been shocking, the
19.30	homelessness. I think it’s a direct result of benefits sanctions and the bedroom tax. How do you get out of it? Les – there are a lot of decent, hard working people who daren’t leave their homes. There is a sub-culture. They can get through your door in 10 seconds. They shatter a lock in seconds. Sheena – it’s a very dangerous situation when people have got nothing to lose.
Track Four	
1.00	Sheena - I was 24 years old during the miners’ strike and I was expecting a second child who was born in Feb and they went back to work in March. I had no education, I left school at 13, but I read plenty of books, I lived over the road from the library and a wool
2.30	shop. When my boys were little I was either knitting or reading. After the strike my marriage broke down. He’d been a miner on strike. It was hard. We got married when I was 21. He was from a farming family in Norfolk. He joined the Royal Navy and moved
3.45	here to be with me and got a job in the pits on the ropes, a skilled job. He was a novelty down the pits, they called him ‘pig farmer’ and they were good with him. He was at Hatfield Main. We did a
4.30	year on the strike. He was well involved with the union, the union was our friends. They had a shop at the pit where you could buy electrical items and you could take it off your wages. You could buy a kettle, toaster. So we never worried too much because we
5.30	could buy it on tick. I did a lot of picketing, street collection for money, started speaking at meetings to raise money. The Welfare was a hub of activity. We knew what to expect. Our pit had taken in miners from the north east and Kent and we’d heard the horror stories from those areas. We still had community then. We had no

7.00	money for that year but we still had comradeship and cared about each other. It was a wonderful place to live. John's mother came and said he should go back to work, she didn't understand. We had no heating and it was cold. I said if he crossed the picket line I wouldn't be able to hold my head up in this community. We
8.00	needed to save our community. No dad really wants his kids down the pit but it's a stepping stone, some people did their degrees while in the pit. It put food on the table and people were happy with their lifestyle. You didn't hear of suicides like you hear of it now. You didn't hear of people going to food banks. I 100%
9.15	supported the strike, as did John. Went back to work when Steven was a tiny baby. Tony decided to take his picket off, the lads were defeated. They battled into the 1990s. After that my marriage broke up, like a lot of people. I think it was the pressure. I would do the strike again if I thought it would save the community. If they'd won I don't think those marriages would have broken down, because we knew we were defeated and we knew what was coming. I was then a single mother with 2 kids and a mortgage. I did a succession of difficult jobs, I was politicised. I
10.30	had an understanding of how biased the media is. I didn't really know what a social worker did. I did a degree at Sheffield Uni and got a 2:1. I was working part time at the same time. The hardest part of the degree was the travelling and not having the money to buy the books. There were about 3 of us who were working class on that course. There was a guy who was a painter and decorator and he had to give the course up which was sad because he was the most intelligent person on the course. There were no others from the mining community. I understood social policy and I qualified in 1996. I'd been heavily involved in getting signatures against VAT on fuel. I thought going to Uni on a social work was going to help people, how silly of me. I suppose I have helped in some cases.
12.00	
13.30	
15.00	<i>I'm sure you have. But why do you say that now?</i> I think it's changed so much because of the decimation of these areas. The social problems are massive. To deal with whole areas that are on their knees. As a social worker, what can you do? Makes you feel helpless and hopeless.
17.00	<i>You feel demoralised?</i> People saying 'do more, with less'. That's management speak. You can't do that, when demand is greater and greater. Like a barrage

	now. And to be paid less and less money to do it. You've still got to pay your bills. Nothing can prepare you for all that. <i>[Redacted]</i>
17.20	<i>Are they deliberately destroying a set of vested interests?</i> It's all part and parcel of getting rid of the Welfare State. <i>So they get rid of the social workers, to get rid of social work.</i>
19.30	They're going to do it. When I spoke to the union man at Doncaster, the union membership had fallen. Have got agency workers who are not unionised. They won't go on strike. They will hang onto those jobs. <i>Those people don't cost you anything in benefits and employment rights.</i> Agency workers won't work for what we get paid. A vicious cycle. The good agency workers don't stay very long. So a child in care doesn't get continuity. What does that teach that child? <i>[Redacted]</i>
21.00	<i>Let me take you back to Brexit. It hasn't really given people any hope.</i> It was an 82% turnout in this village, which is amazing. They don't turn out for a General Election any more. They are disenfranchised. Politics is nothing to do with them. Middle class
22.00	in Labour Party who don't like the working class voice. Have pushed everyone away. There will have been some racists among the 82%, but when you talk to them, it's about, they've got no
23.00	hope. These politicians are guilty of leaving these areas like this. There're no real jobs. <i>But Brexit hasn't given them any real hope.</i> No. It was anger at the govt, anger at the EU. They would have voted the opposite of what they were told to do. <i>That's even scarier.</i>
24.30	Look what's happened to Trump! If we remain in the EU what we've got is going to continue. If we get out, we might have a chance of smashing the EU and fighting the govts. We might get a chance of getting Corbyn in, and shaping our society differently. <i>So a certain amount of respect for Corbyn.</i> They've got some work to do, because the media have done a job on the man. Media has done so much damage. The papers are telling people he's not voteable. Corbyn is being ignored. <i>So a big fight to be had the next time there is a General Election.</i>
25.30	<i>To mobilise people to vote for Labour.</i>

26.45	I have strong arguments with people in these areas. In some of the houses they have nothing. I've never seen our MP. I've seen him turn up to the miners' 30 th anniversary. He wanted to be first speaker on, they said he'd be the last speaker, because they wanted him to listen to what had happened here. [Redacted]
27.30	Caroline Flint is just arrogant. I wrote to all the MPs about Syria. I got a response from Ed Miliband, no response from Caroline Flint or Rosie Winterton. Ed Miliband contacted me again, he voted against, and explained the reason why. Caroline Flint voted with Cameron, Rosie Winterton abstained. [Redacted]
28.30	