

Duckering

Well, what they do ... all my father's people have the duckering shops down at Blackpool now. Right, they used to be on the Golden Mile there before they changed it and it wasn't a golden mile. They have like a little kiosk and they put a sign outside: Palmist; Fortune Telling, and people come in and in the old days they charged them half a crown, five shilling, ten shilling, up to five pounds maximum and then the prices gradually went up as the years went on.

And as you get better singers, or better dancers or someone who's better at being an historian taking recordings, so you get better fortune telling. Some are more professional and are better than others, like going to a doctor or a specialist. Really they come across to me when I was about thirteen or fourteen, when I used to go and listen to my Grandmother, more like psychiatrists, sitting and listening to people's problems. I'm sure they must have felt very weighed down with the problems of the world, listening to everyone. You know it's a very heavy going thing. You've got to have a listening ear.

Extract from oral history interview with Clarice Evon, June 2007.



South Beach seashore, Blackpool,
from Clarice Evon's family photographs.



Granny Nellie when young, telling fortunes on the Isle of Man. Note her charm bracelet.
From Clarice Evon's family photographs



Clarice's mother sits on the steps of her trailer where she reads palms. This trailer was pulled by a car, not a horse. At Severn Beach, Weston Super Mare, 1937

My mother told me she had a duckering shop or fortune telling shop on the way that used to be called The Walk. It was just off the fairground at Rhyl. My grandmother was by her. As the war had not long been over, things were hard. So she worked very hard and went down to the shop every day, right up until I was born. As soon as she felt well enough, she went straight back to open up, taking me with her as it was the height of season. My dad worked a stall.

As I said, things were hard and it saved having to buy a motor trailer and stock to go to work with.

Another summer, I recall we were at Weston Super Mare. My mum had a shop on the Grand Pier with her sister-in-law. I would play on the sands. I had a pet rabbit in a doll's pram. I would keep it under mum's duckering table. One day a gorgio was being duckered and the rabbit jumped out of the pram up her legs. She was frightened to death. I laughed so much.

The Salvation Army would hold meetings and play the band and sing. I would love to clap and dance with them. I wasn't quite five years old and they asked mum, Could I go to meetings with them?, but mum wouldn't let me out of her sight.

I loved dinner time as mum would take me to Bernie's cafe and we would have a quick lunch. That was my quality time with my mum. On Saturdays dad would come too. Saturdays and Sundays we were a family. After that it was flat out earning money.

Extract from Clarice's personal writing