

Transcript for **The 'Stute**

Voiceover 1: There was always a lot of men outside the Institute, always. Penniless corner, my father always called it. They used to look so important and yet they were poor. It was all, all attached, you know, everything was attached, as you go in through the front door, there was a little office, always a noticeboard inside for things that was going on. Then on that side, on the right-hand side would be the big reading room that was the lightest room in the place. Then on the left-hand side then was another big room and they'd be playing dominoes or cards and there was all men I think that's what they lived for was their game of cards and reading the papers in the reading room. I mean, our dad never bought a paper, he'd always go up the 'Stute and read the paper. And then there'd be the library next door.

Voiceover 2: The first time I ever really became aware of books was through the Institute. I remember discovering the library. I was fascinated by it. I suddenly walked in and there were all these books and I was told I could have any book I wanted, any time, free of charge because my father paid for it through the pit. But our families always were insistent that we better ourselves, education was very important. We bettered ourselves and we moved out.

Voiceover 1: And you go down the stairs then and you'd be in the billiard hall. They were beautiful tables, the six tables that were there.

Voiceover 2: And I remember how thrilled I was to have my own cue hanging up in the billiard room and they used to take an interest in the youngsters coming up.

Voiceover 1: I know my son he was small, very small, he couldn't reach the table 'cause his nose wouldn't come level so Mr Howells used to stand him on a pop case and he cut down a billiard cue, didn't he, and made him a little one. Do you know, that's all we used to get out of him, can I go up and play snooker. And when there was a snooker match there, you could hear a pin drop.

Voiceover 2: But it was a great cultural place to be 'cause the discussions raised about the table of course, I mean, weren't always about snooker. Not all about snooker, you remember listening in awe to these men, learned men discuss the affairs of the day but that's what the snooker hall was all about, yes.

Voiceover 1: Then you go through there then into the toilet and you'd be in the picture house. It was beautiful, it had all the cherubs over the top, all the blue velvet curtains, oh it was lovely. We had a pianist in the picture house, oh yes, old Mrs Templeman used to wobble on the piano, playing you know, and there was no speaking, it would just come up from underneath like Pobla Condu, you know she'd make this rattling noise going along the piano, that was like the horses coming. Roy Rogers and all those pictures.

Here comes then Phantom of the Opera and I thought the picture house was on fire. I did, and I shouted out 'The picture house is on fire', within five minutes the picture house was emptied! Our dad said 'Trust you!'

Frederic March! If Frederic Marsh was there, my mother would be there. My step-sister was all James Mason. Oh, I used to like all the ugly ones, George Raft and James

Cagney, and the rougher the better. I didn't like love stories. Oh no, as long as it was blood and thunder, I was right.

You know, everything went at once, they closed the pit and we thought the end of the world had come. And then they took the 'Stute. And I can hear old Harry Chapman shouting up in there, I can hear them arguing over the ... somebody had put a wrong domino down and I said, do you know, I said, I can stand here now and I can see every one of those men sitting in their seats. And you know, I was crying, I was crying like the rain. I said it's just like coming in with a load of ghosts, just as if those old people have come back to walk this place.