

JOURNEYS TO CHESHIRE



An oral history of members of Black and Minority Ethnic communities that have made contributions to Cheshire since the Second World War

Introduction

In 2011 Cheshire Halton and Warrington Race and Equality Centre (CHAWREC) obtained funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to engage local people from the Black and Minority Ethnic communities (BME) in an oral history project entitled 'Journeys to Cheshire'. The main aim of this project was to record the oral histories of members of BME communities in Cheshire for future posterity and as a tool for research and educational purposes. The full interviews and their transcripts are kept at the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Centre in Chester where they are carefully stored for future generations.

We were fortunate that we were able to record members from a wide variety of different BME communities. In addition, we were able to record the memories of a wide cross-section of age groups within the Cheshire BME communities and to record the memories of people who arrived in Cheshire in every decade from the 1940's right up to 2011.

We interviewed residents from all four local authorities (Warrington, Halton, Cheshire West & Chester and Cheshire East) and we interviewed residents with roots in the following countries: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, The Philippines, Hong Kong, China, Japan, South Korea, Turkey, Nigeria, Cameroon, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Brazil, Guyana, Jamaica, Dominica, Saint Kitts, Russia, Poland, Serbia, Spain and France. The youngest person we recorded was 17 years old and the oldest was 93. 'Journeys to Cheshire' celebrates the cultural diversity of Cheshire through the many contributions made to our community by members of the BME communities over the last 60 years. Those contributions include helping Britain's war effort in the 1940's,

building up our shattered economy after World War II, playing vital roles in developing our public services, especially the NHS, serving communities through voluntary work, helping to stimulate Cheshire's economy with enterprise and job creation and many other ways in which the BME communities have contributed to Cheshire. In a book of this size we can only show extracts from the some of the interviews conducted for the project. There is also a DVD with the project where you can hear extracts of some interviews. The full interviews, their transcripts and other material kindly lent to us are stored at the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Centre and we hope you will be able to visit the centre to enjoy the full collection.

The stories tell of many different experiences. Some are happy, even amusing and funny. Some are more painful. Some stories tell of living under regimes such as Nazi occupation or Apartheid. Some recount instances of racism experienced in Britain or of experiences of avoiding an arranged marriage. Others tell of more positive experiences and most tell of how attitudes towards BME communities have improved over time.

We hope you enjoy 'Journeys to Cheshire' and that the project gives you a better understanding of our diverse communities in Cheshire and their important contributions to our local life.

Neil Emmott

Project Co-ordinator

April 2012

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped CHAWREC to produce this book and have helped with ‘Journeys to Cheshire’ in general.

In particular, we would like to thank the following people for their help, advice and support during the project:

Paul Newman at Cheshire Archives and Local Studies for his never ending support and guidance.

Helen Neal at Cheshire West and Chester Library Services.

Andrew Schofield at North West Sound Archives.

We would like to thank the following people for being kind enough to volunteer to interview people for the project:

Sue Clarke, Kelvin Garvey, Bhupinder Virdee-Lace, Roy Moore, Tony Parker and Glenroy Reid.

We would like to thank the following voluntary and community organisations from across Cheshire for their help in the project:

Cheshire West and Chester BME Network, Xin Hua Chinese Association, Wah Lei Chinese Association, Japanese Mums and Tots Group, Sanjhi Indian Association, Ellesmere Port Turkish Association, Cheshire Asian and Minority Communities Council, Warrington Ethnic Communities Association, Warrington Ethnic Society

Over 50’s, Russian Society of Warrington, Polonia (Warrington), Warrington Multi Cultural Forum, Multi Ethnic Group (Warrington), O.C.E.A.N (Crewe), Polish Social Centre, Northwich and Umbrella Halton.

We would like to thank the following people who agreed to be interviewed for the project and to tell us their story:

Abdul Jilani, Abdun Noor, Adil Goker, Aihua Zhang, Alift Harewood, Amarjit Crinigan, Ana Arto, Angela Doe, Anna Ponomareva, Asuka Endo, Beryl May Annikey, Bhupinder Virdee-Lace, Doreen Jeffers, Edyta Latala, Emel Huyuk, Germain Nkuinga, Glenroy Reid, Halina Kelly, Hassan Kazi, Islyn Amoono-Neizer, Jelena Zujovic, Jerzy Sczherba, Josef Miodenski, Keiko Gordon, Kelvin Garvey, Kristina Popova, Lucia Lee, Maria Leligdowicz, Marina Smith, Meryanana Huyuk, Mija Yu O’ Brien, Mustafa Kose, Pamela Nsofar, Paritam Singh Tatla, Qi Min Lin, Renato Radomes, Roy Moore, Saleem Khan, Sarikaya Emine, Serkan Huyuk, Shamla Naidu, Shamsuddin Ahmed, Surinder Bhalla, Tatiana Brady, Tony Parker, Xiao Yan Wray, Zdzislaw Labeledz, Zheng Chen. 4 other people that we interviewed were happy to share their stories and experiences with us but they did not wish their names to be known and we respect their wishes. They came from China, Hong Kong, Zimbabwe and Poland and are living in Chester, Warrington and Runcorn.

Journeys from East Asia

Early Memories

Aihua Zhang from Chester was born in Zhengzhou, China in 1963. Aihua remembers there was no uniform at her school.

“Where I did go to school – in my hometown, Zhengzhou and that was from the primary school to college, all in my hometown. When I was young China still was a very poor country, we wore our own clothes, no uniform and when I go to the college, I think that had the uniform. The college gave it us, it’s free.”



Keiko Gordon as a child in Japan in traditional Japanese dress. 1970's.

Keiko Gordon from Chester was born in Nagoya, Japan in 1974. She remembers her schooldays, her school uniform, the lessons she studied and her after-school activities.

“I went to Hirabari primary school and Sugiyama Junior High School and then Sugiyama High School. Junior High School and High School I wore a uniform. It was, how would you call it? Jumper, skirt and had a jacket as well and also a ribbon around my neck as well. We did all sorts. Maths, Japanese, Science, P.E, Music, English, Art. Pretty similar to subjects in this country. After school I was part of the track and field group. So I used to run, do the long jump. So I was enjoying after-school activity. Because I travelled quite a long way about an hour in the subway so just a matter of coming home after school. I just came home and maybe watched television.”

Paritam Singh Tatla from Warrington was born to a Sikh family in Johor Bahru, Malaysia in 1938. He remembers how his family originally came from India to settle in Malaysia before he was born.

“My father came from India originally yes. He came in about 1928 – no sorry – 1907 he came. He came from Punjab and he told me that he paid a rupee fare from Punjab. He had to go down to Calcutta; from there he had to take a boat, a ship down to Kelang, from Kelang the ship went on to Singapore. My father’s brothers were already in Singapore so he joined them in Singapore in 1907, just at the end of 1907. And 1908 I think he started working with the police.”

Mr. Tatla also remembers his schooldays in Johor Bahru.

"I went to school in Johor Bahru. It was called the Government English School Johor Bahru. Yes I did wear a uniform to school. It was a white shirt and blue trousers. Blue shorts. Daily routine, we used to start school at about 7.45. Over there we start really early, quite early and finished about half past twelve. And early morning when we go to school the first thing was the assembly. Anybody who was late we used to try and hide ourselves somewhere back as when the assembly line people are going back to the classes we used to follow them, join the queue and get in. We learnt English. All of our subjects, all were English in the primary classes and not in our language. We had to learn a language when we went up to form 1. We had to do the Malay language, the local language. That was compulsory to pass our tests. You had to pass the language to pass your.....if you don't pass the language test you failed the whole test you see. I learnt both Malay and English. I was 17 when I left school."

Renato Radomes from Runcorn was born in Paranas, Samar, Philippines in 1961. Mr. Radomes told us about his schooling and education in the Philippines in general.

"From the elementary to the secondary I have finished it in my locality which is Paranas. Actually there was no uniform and as I observed the public schools in the Philippines, they don't prescribe uniforms. It's only in some private educational institutions which are run mostly by Sisters. Because as you know, Philippines is a predominately Roman Catholic country, so there are Sisters, there are Jesuits and all these kind of religious organisations."



Aihua Zhang in China, 2002

Aihua Zhang remembers her first job after leaving college in China.

"The government offered you the job; the government gave me a job in a factory as an accountant. I was an accountant yeah. I worked there for 4 years; this was very, very good. Now I realise that in all my life and career it was... is very, very important, the experience and I do any job now they give me to work in. You do your job, you do your best and everything in detail is training. I used to now I do any job I notice the detail. That's from this time I get basically the knowledge. It's a good start I think so."

Mija-Yu O'Brien from Warrington was born in South Korea in 1972. As a child she loved books and carried this on to university.

"I loved to read books, still I like to read books but at the moment I don't have much time, but I've been always reading lots of books, literature and lots of different kinds of books. I then moved to the University in another big city and I studied 4 years Korean language and literature there. This was in Pusan which is the second largest city in Korea."

War Memories

Paritam Singh Tatla from Warrington was in Malaya when the Japanese army invaded in 1941.

“When I was young when Malaysia fell in December 1941, I was only about 4 years old. I remember all that with the Japanese taking over Malaysia. The Japanese used to come round looking for Chinese and we had to run with my father and a few of his friends you see. All the government officials we had to leave our houses and we went into hiding into the jungles. We went to a place called Mersing near Kota way up there.....waterfall and we went into hiding because the Japanese were looking for all the officials that were working for the British Military Administration.”

Mr. Tatla told us more about his time hiding in the jungle with his family after the fall of Malaya.

“Oh we must have been there about 6 or 7 months I think we were down there. We had to plant our own food, everything you see. We had to survive...live, hunting....we used to keep pigs. No there wasn't any danger. It was not that dense jungle, not further down. It was like....people used to be resident there...Chinese farms up that way.”

Mr. Tatla remembers how the local people had to respect Japanese soldiers. He told us about when he used to visit his cousins in Singapore and what happened at sentry posts.

“We used to go down to Singapore to visit our cousins and all. We used go down on a bus from Johor Bahru to Singapore, it's

about 16 miles, and we used to stop about every 3 or 4 miles and everybody used to get down, there used to be a sentry post and we used to bow down to the Japanese soldier and get back on the bus and about another 3 or 4 miles we used to have to disembark from the bus again and bow to the soldier and get on the bus back again. That used to be the normal routine. Anybody who sees a Japanese soldier you just had to bow down to him.”

Mr. Tatla remembers liberation in 1945 and how it was Indian soldiers that liberated Malaya and Singapore.

“Yes I remember liberation; ...On that particular day before the liberation you see, the Indian soldiers came round from the British Indian Army. When the Japanese surrendered, yes it was a big celebration in Singapore...everywhere. We were liberated. The first troops that landed, they came by parachutes and what-not, they were Indian soldiers. They came down because there weren't many British soldiers in Malaya, Johor Bahru itself, they were in Singapore. Most of them were prisoners you see but they were all looked after. The Indian troops were the first to come in, when they liberated everyone you see and there were camps everywhere.”

Coming to Britain

Amarjit Crinigan from Chester was also born to a Sikh family in Malaya in 1952. She moved with her family to India for a few months before coming to Britain in 1955. She remembers the journey by ship.

"It was I think '55, 1955 when I came. I was three years of age. What I can recall I think we came on a ship so it took quite a long time to come over and I can remember having.....I think it must have been Christmas time because of the Christmas presents on the ship and I had a little cooker."

Amarjit also remembers her very first impression of Britain and of a British winter.

"I know we lived in Caldmore with some relatives. Caldmore, Walsall. Cold, very, very cold. Really, really cold it was...we had Christmas presents, but not that many because Mum and Dad didn't celebrate Christmas, but they celebrated it more on the ship as we were travelling"

Keiko Gordon remembers her journey from Japan to Britain in 1996. In contrast to Amarjit's journey by ship in the 1950's, Keiko's journey was a lot quicker.

"It was 1996. I came by aeroplane. It wasn't direct. Which way did I come.....probably I stopped over at Seoul in Korea and then came to Manchester. Door to door about....I would say twenty hours".

However, this was not Keiko's first visit to Britain. She had previously visited Britain when at university.

"I stayed in London for about 3 days. It was part of a university European tour I joined in. So it was only 3 days in London. I went to Switzerland, Austria, Italy, France, Germany and England".



Renato Radomes, Runcorn 2011

Renato Radomes recounted why he and his wife came to Britain from the Philippines in 1999.

"In 1999 the NHS and one of the private companies from this country, which is BUPA went to the Philippines to recruit nurses. So it was that my wife came ahead of me in September 1999 and I was left alone in the Philippines. She was the one who had given me the encouragement. She said "Why don't you practise your nursing?" because by that year I was already a graduate doctor. She said that being a doctor in the Philippines has a low salary and in that year the devalued pound was higher so she said 'Why don't you come to this country now, you'll earn much more than a doctor in the Philippines".

Paritam Singh Tatla came to Britain in 1970. He described his journey from Malaya and his first ever sighting of snow after he arrived in Britain.

"I came to Britain on 4th December 1970. We took a plane. I came with my family. I brought my 3 children, my wife as well. It was a small chartered flight from Kuala Lumpur. That's an interesting flight that came through from Kuala Lumpur; we went up to Ceylon, now it's Sri Lanka. We stopped over there; the plane took some fuel and some provisions from there. From Ceylon we flew up to Pakistan. From Pakistan we flew up to Turkey. By that time there was no milk on the plane you see. My youngest one was one year old; she had nothing to drink all the time. So from Turkey we came up to Luton, that's where I landed. It was December and it was quite cold. It was snowing. That's the first time we saw snow when we got out."

Mr. Tatla told us the reason he came to Britain and how he had to go through a little bit of bureaucracy as a former British soldier to be able to come here.

"Since I was a British subject, I was working on a work permit over there and I had to renew my work permit every three months with the Malaysian government. I did sit for the written examinations for the language to become a citizen. I was born as a British subject, always held a British passport and to become a citizen I had to take this test. I passed all my tests but at that time we had these riots, the Chinese and the Malays, there were riots down there and they froze all the applications. So we knew somebody in the parliament they said it would be a long time before they start looking into the applications so I

decided to leave and come to Britain. Coming here when I first applied to come to the U.K my application was rejected. They told me that I'd not served overseas, so I proved that I did serve overseas. I joined in Singapore and Malaysia. Malaya, it's a different state. So I was posted up to Malaya so I sent them the documents and they agreed and they stamped my passport as 'Exempt. Crown Service', so I could leave for Britain anytime you see."



Keiko Gordon (left) as a young woman in Japan 1990's

Keiko Gordon remembers her typical diet changing in Britain and the practicalities of finding ingredients to cook traditional Japanese food for herself and her British husband.

"I went to the local shops in this village called Irby on the Wirral; it was just a tiny village but there was a greengrocer and everything was there so I used to go shopping with my mother in law. Oh massively different because all the ingredients are so different because in



BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION
BANGUNAN SHARIKAT POLIS
1 JALAN SULEMAN
KUALA LUMPUR

Telephone: 81901/9
Please address any reply to
P.O. BOX 1039
KUALA LUMPUR
and quote: C/S/SIR/V.
Your reference:

31 July 1970

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of the 28th July.

I have only yesterday received a clear ruling from the Home Office on
Crown Service applicants such as yourself.

I can now treat you, I am pleased to say as "except" and will endorse
your passport accordingly if you will arrange to forward it to this Office.

Please complete the enclosed IS 2, and I should appreciate if you would
return it to us the document from your Station Officer.

Yours sincerely,


(G. S. WYSE)
For Passport Officer.

Mr. Farizan Singh,
121 Army Fire Brigade,
Kluang Garrison,
50P KLUANG.

*Received - 10/8/70 - Reported
with report, & certificate*

Document allowing Mr Tatla to come to Britain in 1970

Japan we eat far more seafood, seaweed and raw fish.....mainly I ate fish, seafood in Japan so coming here was a bit of a shock to eat all these meats like lamb, beef....so that was a big difference to me. But nowadays all these big supermarkets stock some Japanese ingredients and also I found the Chinese markets in Liverpool, Manchester, so they have some Japanese ingredients as well and also online...you can buy online from lots of shops in London, they sell Japanese stuff so I can get food off them online as well.”

Mija-Yu O’ Brien left Korea when she was 28 and lived in a number of countries and eventually married a British citizen from Liverpool.

“I applied for a job, a voluntary job which I can teach Korean language to other nationalities, so I applied for that job for government funding and I moved to Sri Lanka and I was a Korean language instructor in the Open University in Colombo in Sri Lanka. So I worked for a two years contract. I was quite excited because I was a very adventurous person, so I tried to mix with the people and I enjoyed living there. Actually, I met my husband there. He’s from England, from Liverpool and he was working for some project in the Ericsson Company. And then when I finished the contract, we got married. So at that time he was working in Sweden. So I moved to Sweden. I loved Sweden, it was cold but it was so organised and very well facilitated.”

Lucia Lee from Chester was born in Hong Kong in 1954. She recalls the journey by air she made to Britain by air when she was 15 and settling at first in the North West of England where her parents had a business.

“I came with my sister. By air direct Hong Kong to London. It was very quiet. I went to school in Britain only for a short time, about six months because at that time they finished education at about 15. That was in Darwen, Lancashire. Well my parents always had a business, a restaurant, so I was always helping them all the time even when I was at school. The restaurant was in Darwen.”



Aihua Zhang and her husband in China before she came to Britain

Aihua Zhang didn’t want to leave China initially but came to Britain because her husband was British.

“I came to England in 2005 by plane on Virgin from Hong Kong to London Heathrow. I didn’t really want to come at first because I had an excellent job with excellent pay in China, but my husband is British and at first he came to China to work but he didn’t want to stay so I came to Britain.”

School/working in Britain

Amarjit Crinigan remembers her schooldays in the West Midlands where she lived in a strict Sikh family. She left home in her teens to work as a nurse to avoid having an arranged marriage.

“...we had to wear Indian clothes, we couldn't wear English clothes. Mum used to make them for us. Very, very, very strict. Yeah, didn't have my hair cut, had to wear long sleeves, trousers, and very strict going to school and very strict coming home. Couldn't be 10 minutes late. When I was a teenager we did go to Sunday school but then when they found out what Sunday school was, we weren't allowed to go anymore. And when I had the opportunity at school to see what I wanted to do... I wanted to do nursing, so I did and it was a way of getting out of living at home, so I lived in the nursing home. In Walsall. General Hospital and the Manor Hospital. If I hadn't have gone to the nursing home doing the nursing I would have had to have an arranged marriage. They did find a partner for me and they tried to get me out the nursing home, but I wouldn't go. He was from India. They tried to bribe me in all sorts. If I went back home they'd get me a car and this and that and the other. So that was a time when I really did break away from them and they chased me in the car and I left Walsall in the end.”

Keiko Gordon was worried she might not be accepted by people in Britain and she also told us about working in Chester.

“I think people are really kind and I was a little bit worried about being a foreigner but soon people are so kind and accepting I felt and yeah that's it. I worked in Queen's Park High School as a kitchen assistant and then I worked in a jewellery shop in the city centre called 'Counter Culture' and then now I'm working for a company called 'In Moderation' for other online moderators.”

Paritam Singh Tatla told us about his first experience of working in Britain and how he was the first Asian person to work in a particular firm in Warrington.

“My first job was with Fords at Halewood and I was putting on about 30 gear boxes an hour and that line never used to break and we used to be on nightshift sometimes about 2 o'clock.....at 2 o'clock in the morning sometimes and some trouble will go on somewhere in the plant and everybody used to walk out. I packed that job over there and I came down to Warrington and then joined wire weaving, Lockers wire weaving. I went on night shifts and I used to get about 30 quid, I stayed there for a year. From there I moved down to Thames Board Mills and I was the first Asian that mill, Thames Board Mill, took in. They wouldn't take in any Asians you see and I was the first one and then we had an African came in after that, after me, then a Pakistani guy came in.”

Life in Cheshire

Lucia Lee told us about her arrival in Chester and her community involvement.



Lucia Lee, Chester 2012

“People are more polite and when you go to the town everyone has more of a happy face and there’s a lot of tourists. Very nice. Very comfortable. I really appreciate the Wah Lei (Chinese association), when I came to Chester I didn’t know anybody and I saw the advertising for the Chinese Lanterns Festival and then I went to see them and joined them and met lots of friends. It keeps me very busy at the moment.”

Aihua Zhang tells us of her first impressions of historical Chester.

“My husband is from Chester and I came straight to Chester when I arrived in Britain. I’ve only ever lived in Chester in Britain. At first everything was new but I

felt England was like the Harry Potter films, everything was magical.”



Mija-Yu O'Brien, Warrington 2012

When Mija-Yu O'Brien arrived in Cheshire she used her love of literature to describe her first impressions of the weather!

“It was very gloomy, very like grey and very windy. Actually I commented to my husband and my husband’s brother who picked us up at the airport that it all seemed like ‘Wuthering Heights’, you know that kind of feeling like very gloomy and dark. Very miserable weather. But, I was excited because it was a new country. We chose to settle in Warrington. We don’t regret it because it’s a very good location.”

Paritam Singh Tatla told us how he feels Warrington has become more tolerant and integrated since he arrived in the 1970’s.

“Yes I came in 1970. Things have changed

a lot now, it's not the same. You never get called names when you walk down the street, nobody dare call you. When we first came here seeing skinheads and all with Doc Marten boots and all that, I've seen all that. But we never got in any trouble with them, but you used to hear a lot of people like in London and all that...Warrington has been quiet actually. We've been lucky here; there have been no troubles here. Things have changed for the better yes. It's quite peaceful; Warrington is a nice place to live."



Paritam Singh Tatla, Warrington 2011

Keiko Gordon likes Chester and is trying to bring up her children to appreciate both their British and Japanese heritages.

"Oh I just loved it because it is such a nice city. There's lots of history and I just fell in love with those buildings, so it was a really nice place. I was really glad to find Chester. I have two boys. Yes they're both

at school. They're seven and four years old. So I solely speak to them in Japanese and my husband in English so hopefully I can keep both languages. It is a little bit of hard work because obviously here English is spoken but last summer we went back to Japan, so they picked a lot of Japanese up so I'm trying to keep Japanese up here."

Amarjit Crinigan told us about running a pub in Cheshire with her British husband.

"I did nursing and then I left nursing because we adopted a little girl. Yes and as we got married we had Sonia and then we decided to go in the pub trade, so together he did the bar and I did the food. For 24 years we travelled in the Midlands and then we came to Chester, in Kinnerton. Higher Kinnerton. We had a pub there for eight and a half years."

Journeys from South Asia

Early Memories

Abdul Jilani from Neston was born in Sylhet, Bangladesh in 1955. He remembers his early childhood in Bangladesh and the differences between school in Bangladesh and the UK.

“I went to a school called ‘Badeshahore’ in the village. I did go to the primary school, and then went to the high school ... called Nasruddin Badeshahore High School. ... I can vividly, can see that now it’s completely different than how my children are going to school here. Well the differences are well there they have to be very restricted, they have to be on time table everything and their home works and also they’ve got to be very organised and dedication. And when I was a little boy and we just go to school, whether we did any lesson or not, that wasn’t that important. Now here it’s so important.”

Abdun Noor from Mickle Trafford was also born in Sylhet, Bangladesh in 1957. He remembers the daily routine and the games he played after school in his village.

“Well, after the school and we used to live in a village, so all the village children used

to go to fields outside of the village and we used to play there almost every day ‘til sunset. So all kinds of games, running you know. Well you know in the morning we used to wake up very early before we go to school we used to go to the mosque, to the priest every morning at least for two hours and then we used to come home and have a quick bath and something to eat and then we used to go to school. There are a lot of different memories because I mean especially almost every day when we used to go and play outside in the fields it was really, I mean it was routine to go there and play and see all your friends and everybody. Sadly, you know, there is no more field left, I don’t think so.”

Hassan Kazi from Warrington was born in Dharwar, India in 1937. He remembers his education from primary school right through to university and medical school.

“I went to school in the same place where I was born, and continued my primary, secondary and also university education in the same place. It was a primary school aided by the government, run by the government and the school was meant for not only giving an education, it also used to give a trade. For example I took weaving; cloth weaving. So I was trained in weaving along with my education. After I left university I joined the school of medicine. And I completed my basic degree, medicine and surgery. That was for about 5 years then after one year you have to complete your house surgeoncy to be trained in the various hospitals and then we would be fully qualified.”



Surinder Bhalla in India just before he came to Britain. 1965

Surinder Bhalla from Warrington was born in Punjab, India in 1940. Mr. Bhalla also remembers his education from primary school in Punjab to college in Delhi.

“In winter we go to school 9 o’clock in the morning and finish half past four. In summer we start 8 o’clock finish half past two. At that time because when I was born that time was British rule. It is before the partition of India and Pakistan they used to teach us Urdu language. That’s what I can remember. I stayed at the same school until I was 10 years old then we go, then I joined the high school or something like that you know I can’t remember but there were 5 to 10 then 10 to 14. So it was a different school which was a couple of miles away from where I live. When I left school at 14 my eldest brother was living in Delhi, then leaving at 14 I joined him. Then he advised me instead that I do some casual job to join again, start education again, so I joined the college. In Delhi. I was doing economics and the other language which was Punjabi. I was in the college until 1962.”

Pippa Virdee-Lace was born in Birmingham, England in 1968 but her mother was already pregnant with her before the family left India. Pippa told us about her family roots in both India and Kenya.

“Well, I was born in Birmingham, in the Midlands, as you can tell by my accent but only by default so I’m only British by default ’cause my Mum was actually 7½ months pregnant with me when she had to leave India, so that was in February 1968 and I was born in the April 1968. Well, my Dad was born and brought up in a village not far from Jalandhar, which is in the Punjab region, which is in the northern part of India and my Mum, although her family were originally from the Punjab, she was actually born in Nairobi in Kenya and after she married my Dad they moved to India and that’s where they were at the time.”

Shamsuddin Ahmed from Mickle Trafford near Chester was born in Bangladesh in 1937. Mr Ahmed remembers growing up in a small village and the importance of family ties.

“We used to live in the village. The town was about 15 or 20 miles away from us. Those days and now it’s different. You can’t compare the older days and now you see. My father, there were 6 brothers; my father and 5 other uncles. When I was little they were all in a joint family at the time that my grandfather was alive.”

Coming to Britain

Abdul Jilani told us about his journey to Britain from Bangladesh in 1970 and his first impression of Britain.

“Well I came to Britain with my parents. My father was here before and then he went to Bangladesh and he brought us here. I came with my little brother, my father and mother and we came by British Airways from Dacca to Heathrow Airport. Well my parents wanted to bring us here to have a better prospect of life. I came in this country; I used to live in Birmingham, Mansell Road, Small Heath. Well I did continue education. I went to the language school first to learn English. It was the school called Spark Hill Adult Education. Then obviously I was continue to go to the...After that I went to the college to do my..and then obviously I did my O’ level, then obviously I did my H.N.D (Higher National Diploma) on Business and that completed my education. My first impression was the roads are so big, so nice. The building is very, very tall and the lighting is great in the evening.”



Abdul Jilani shortly after his arrival in the UK 1970

Surinder Bhalla remembers the very long journey he made to Britain in 1965.

“Then end of November, 23rd November 1965 I came to this country. From Delhi I went to Bombay by train, it took me 28 hours, Delhi to Bombay. The distance is approximately a thousand miles. Then from Bombay to Marseille by ship, commercial ship, name Kanbose. Then from Marseille to Calais, Dover. Then from Dover to Victoria, London by train. In total, including Delhi to Bombay and Bombay to Victoria it took me 17 days. I was enjoying the life on the ship and most of my colleagues, passengers they were vomiting all the time but I was the only one keeping fit, drinking whiskey.”

Saleem Khan from Warrington was born in Kashmir, Pakistan in 1958. He told us about the journey he made from Pakistan with his mother and brother to join his father who was already in Britain.

“I came in 1969. I went to live in Coventry near Birmingham. It was cold, it was really cold. And then we moved on to Warrington in 1970 because my Dad had a job here with his friends and I’ve been in Warrington ever since.”

Hassan Kazi left India in the late 1950’s and lived and worked in other countries before coming to Britain in 1993.

“Yes I did go for practise, I worked for two years in the government services and then I moved to Africa. I spent in Africa almost twenty years and then after spending twenty years in Africa then I moved to the Middle East and I was based in Dubai. I spent thirteen years in Dubai. In Africa precisely I was in Zambia which is a

neighbouring....bordering country to South Africa. Before I went to Africa I got married and after six months of my going off to Africa, my wife joined me. And then I had one child, it was a girl, first born was a girl who was born in India. I have three children; the other two children were born in Africa. That was three children. Britain – I came in 1993 from Dubai.”



Shamsuddin Ahmed (centre) with other Bangladeshi friends shortly after he came to Britain in the late 1950's

Shamsuddin Ahmed remembers coming to Manchester in the late 1950's from Bangladesh. He had an uncle in Manchester and many friends already living in the surrounding districts.

“I came to Piccadilly Station, Manchester. The first time I went to the black taxi, I'd never seen the radio taxis. It was the first time when they were talking. That was my first experience of radio taxis. I came to my uncle's flat and a lot of my friends, my uncle's friends came to visit me you see. All of them were here; they used to work in the cotton mills; Rochdale or Manchester or Bolton or Hyde.”

Pippa Virdee-Lace told us of the journey her pregnant mother made from India to Birmingham in 1968 by herself until Pippa's father was able to join them later.

“Well she came on the aeroplane and she arrived, as she always says, with a baby in tow, a bag and £3 in her purse and got off a plane in Heathrow and didn't know anybody and the first thing she noticed was how cold it was compared to the native India that she'd come from. She did come on her own, yes she did. It was all down to the fact that she had a Kenyan/British passport and my Dad's passport wasn't ready at the time and he followed later on, he arrived after I was born, in the June of that year, so she was totally on her own and the only person... family that she did know was my Dad's sister who'd come over after she'd married a British citizen whose family were also from India and they resided in Birmingham, hence the reason why she ended up in Birmingham. She said the journey felt like ages but she knows that it was probably no more than 12 hours, but it just seemed like a long time.”



Surinder Bhalla shortly after his arrival in Britain in 1965

School/working in Britain

Surinder Bhalla told us about his living arrangements and his first job at Pilkington's Glass Works in St. Helens after arriving in Britain.

"Yes but you know after arriving over here before I got married, when I came 1965. I lived with my brother at a rented room, not a house in Rainhill with an old, very, very good old good lady, English lady because my brother was also living there, so I was paying to that lady £2.50 a week bed and breakfast. Then after one week having a rest and everything my brother said to me there is a glass factory in Saint Helens, go and try over there for a job. So I went over there, they said yes, we got the job, you can start tomorrow. So first day when I went over there the manager or foreman he gave me a broom or something. At that time my English was very poor, I can't understand him what he's saying but it was very difficult to, for me to you know. I said 'What's this?' he said 'this is a broom, that's what you're going to do', I said 'No I came over here for the job', he said 'this is a job'; I said 'What to do?' he said 'to clean all the floors'. I start crying. I said 'This is the job'. I went home I said to my brother and sister in law and they said 'that's what you're going to in this country. When you come over here you have to do every job. If you get as a manager's job or whatever it is, they all do every job'. And I was on £13.50 a week."

Pippa Virdee-Lace told us about her experiences when she first went to primary school in Britain.

"I did, yes and typically one of the things that when I got to school my Mum obviously didn't speak English because she spoke Punjabi, her native tongue and when I got to school as a 5 year old there was I, faced with people around me that spoke a different language to me because I didn't speak a word of English. However, I had teachers that were very encouraging and very, very supportive and equally so my Mum and Dad as well cost they were very much into education and it was a case of learn, take the opportunities that we've provided for you by coming here and gain the education that you can get and do the best you can and some 6 months later, I was able to communicate quite normally with my peers who were English speaking. So I'd fitted in quickly."



Abdul Jilani in his restaurant in Ellesmere Port with celebrity chef Ainsley Harriott and local MP Andrew Miller

Abdul Jilani remembers a visit to a friendly bank manager in 1975 that put him on the road to his career as a restaurant owner.

"Well. Well, in 1975, 1975, late 1975 I thought: 'I'm going to open my own business'. I went to many of my friends to see whether I could borrow some money,

also I went to many of the banks. Some banks don't want to know me but one bank particularly, Nat West Bank was a very small bank and when I had an interview with the manager he seemed to like me and he said: "Well young man I'm going to help you. Give me all the details. Give me your business plan and everything and cash flow", and I did my own cash flow, I did my own business plan and he liked it. He said "Go ahead. I'm behind you 100%". That's where my career started and I'm very grateful to that bank manager. I did look for him, but he's gone to somewhere in the Arab countries, but he hasn't returned from there. I don't know where he is now. I'm really looking forward to meeting him one day but I don't know where I would find him."



Shamsuddin Ahmed and his wife. 1980's

Shamsuddin Ahmed remembers a good friend that put him in the restaurant business in the early 1960's.

"Another gentleman, I used to call him an uncle, uncle friend, he used to treat me like a son and he insisted I went back to

Blackpool, early '61 and become the first, youngest restaurant owner in the whole of the North West."

Abdun Noor remembers only a slight amount of racism when he came to Britain in 1985 and says things have improved massively on that front.

"Yeah I think it's changed quite a lot because I ran a restaurant and when I started my restaurant I used to occasionally I used to find customers they used to sort of abuse you or something, now we don't get anybody like that probably very, very rarely once a year or something. So you can see really is where everything changed here and in society. In Chester, people have become much more aware of other cultures and so it's changed."



Hassan Kazi, Warrington 2011

Life in Cheshire

Hassan Kazi came to Warrington in 2000.

“Warrington, I came in 2000. Because while I was living in England.....as you know about my background, I was living in a very tranquil atmosphere and England was very much crowded and it was really.....made me think this is not a suitable place for me.....I want to go somewhere where it is tranquil and much more sedate. So I thought of coming down to Warrington. Impression of Warrington was quite...I was quite impressed, especially with the type of people living here and I was welcomed by everybody and it was.....I felt as if it was home. So that impressed me a lot and I preferred to stay here and continue.”



Pippa Virdee-Lace in traditional Indian clothing late 1990's

Pippa Virdee-Lace describes her first impressions of Chester when she arrived to study in 1992 but she met her husband here and has been in Chester ever since, getting married and having a son.

“I was very surprised about how white it was. Back in 1992 when I came to do my teaching degree, the first year, I think I was the only non-white student in that year and that was another thing that really stood out as I’d walk around the shops and I’d walk around the city centre, you’d notice that there weren’t very many people from ethnic minorities. So, that was the first thing that did stand out. I’ve remained in Chester, yeah. One of the key things that made me stay in Chester was the fact my husband, the man that I chose to marry is from Chester, he’s Chester born and bred. Well, I met him in 1994 and we bought our first house together in 1995 and then we got married in 1996 so, we’ve been married 15 years. We have a little 8 year old, coming up for 9 and his name’s Michael and he’s looks absolutely nothing like me, he’s got blonde hair and blue eyes and we go out and about most people say to me, ‘Is he yours?’ – and I say no, he’s the milk lady’s.”

Surinder Bhalla told us about the casual racism he encountered while a bus driver in Warrington in the 1970’s but told us it was much better now.

“In the buses when I was driving the buses in Warrington, passengers, when the time, you know, get off the bus they used to say “Paki” which wasn’t very good but that time you know, I didn’t know anything, what did “Paki” mean. The racism started only late 70s or 80s you know. When, you know, government ministers start to say in the parliament about migrants or other people then the public, you know, follow those things you know. We are Pakistani, Indian or we give you too much, you know, liberty, why you come over here? Because in Warrington there were only few Asian people, well educated, well mannered and

all the community where I live in Warrington. I'm living in Warrington so many years, I have no problem and never seen any problem anywhere according to my experience, my friends like Mr. Kazi, Hansra, other. I've no problem. I've seen golden days."



Abdun Noor, Chester 2012

Abdun Noor told us about his involvement with various community groups in the voluntary sector in Chester.

"The first organisation I got involved with was an organisation called 'Chester Asian Council' and since it's changed its name it's called 'Chester Asian and Minority Community Council'. So I was involved with that. Then I got involved with the Racial Equality Council and then Citizens Advice Bureau. I was involved with other, you know, a lot of community small organisations like Bengali Organisation and so on. Oh yes, yes. I really enjoy, you know, I was involved with 'Crime Stoppers'

as well. I was their board member for quite a while and later I became involved with the Police so I was a Police Authority member, independent member for Police Authority."

Abdul Jilani recalls his career in the restaurant business taking him across Britain and finally coming to Chester.

"My first restaurant was in Bromsgrove, then I went to Birmingham Cities, I opened a restaurant city, then I went to London, after London I came to Ellesmere Port which is...I opened the restaurant called 'Agra Fort'. The Agra Fort was...at the time wasn't as good as I was in London but I opened a quite class Indian restaurant and it did work very well. And from there I went to Tattenhall, and then went to Tarporley, and then I don't know where I would be going next. I used to live in a village called Whitby, in Woodland Road in Whitby. I moved to Neston about 7 years ago. Cheshire is so beautiful, so calm and the people are so nice and very elegant. It's like a picture."

Journeys from the Americas and the Caribbean

Early Memories

Alift Harewood from Macclesfield was born in a suburb of Georgetown, Guyana in 1934. She remembers growing up on a sugar plantation.

“In the village I would say that everyone was in some way connected with sugar. Sugar informed the village. Sugar, even if you did not directly work in sugar, you did all the other things that sugar did. Therefore my grandfather was a punt captain. He was captain of one of those barges that took the sugar from the plantation when it was made and took it across the short path of the Atlantic Ocean to the big wharves where the sugar was then shipped to England. The Demerara sugar was shipped to England. So everybody was either serving that industry in some way or the other in either in working for the people who managed it or being wives of the sailors, all my family were wives of the sailors, or doing

something with sugar. As I said sugar was king in those days and so king sugar ruled everything.”

Doreen Jeffers from Crewe was born in Black Hills, Jamaica in 1942. Doreen told us about her parents working in Jamaica.

“Well my Dad was a double worker. He was at the farm plus he worked on the road.....asphalt.....he was the manager over asphaltting the roads and my Mum was a dress maker.”

Angela Doe from Northwich was born on the outskirts of Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1967. Angela can remember the very conservative school uniform she wore being not too different to traditional British school uniforms.

“It was very conservative and it was quite interesting because I was just thinking about my school days before I started talking to you and it doesn't feel that different from, you know, very similar uniforms to what perhaps some of the children wear here. Perhaps the skirts are a bit longer. But very much conservative; conservative uniforms.”

Angela also remembers her favourite and least favourite subjects at schools:

“I've always loved languages. Nothing to do with sort of exact science. Didn't like maths, but I loved you know all the languages, even the biology I quite liked. Just couldn't, maths wasn't really my forte. I studied Portuguese, English obviously and I did Spanish as well, not a lot but I did a bit of Spanish.”



Islyn Amoono-Neizer, Crewe 2011

Islyn Amoono-Neizer from Crewe was born in Marigot, Dominica in 1947. She told us about her schooling and childhood in a big family.

“My father was a tailor, he was also a fisherman and he worked on the land. My mother was a housewife, she did ordinary things. There were 11 of us; 7 girls and 5 boys. I went to Marigot Government School and then I went Roseau, the Methodist High School and the head teacher was from England.”

Roy Moore from Crewe was born in Hanover, Jamaica in 1953. Roy told us about his early schooling in Jamaica and how that was connected to his coming to Britain.

“Most of my schooling was spent in Jamaica, I came here when I was 12, 12 and a half and I went to a school called Bedford Street that's in Crewe and I went there until I was 15. Basically I myself came to Britain because my parents wanted me to better my education, because a teacher in Jamaica sent them a letter saying that they thought I could better myself if I went to a higher graded school.”

Alift Harewood fondly remembers her schooldays in Guyana and told us how she was fortunate enough to pay a return visit to her old primary school many years later in 2009 where she even met her old teacher again.

“I went to school in Guyana of course and my basic education happened there. Today I marvel at the structure of that education and how good that education had been because I was able, when I came to England, not only to fall into further education but I think I was pretty successful at education and that is because I had this basic knowledge of education I suppose. And in 2009 I was blessed to return to my primary school to tell them so that anything is possible with this basic layer of education. How good it had been for me because I never struggled with further education when I came to England. Yes to my old primary school and was again blessed to see the teacher of my primary school who put me up for the first scholarship. It was such a joy, such a blessing and I went of course to thank the school and everybody there and spoke to the children to tell them that their opportunities were open before them and not to minimise the importance of this education that they are now experiencing.”

When she was older Angela Doe remembers her university days during the transition to democracy in Brazil in the 1980's.

“I went into university. In Brazil, University is quite complicated. It's very competitive because there are very few free university places, so you have to have really high, very good marks to get to a free university. I managed to get that,

which was very fortunate. It's a very competitive exam, entry exam. But, I did that only for a couple of years and then I had to stop for health reasons and then I picked up again later on. It was just in the transition so we as university students we were quite proactive in terms of trying to protest against it and there were difficulties but you know at the time I don't think I was terribly, it was never different for me so I didn't know the difference between, what it could have been and I think I was very naive as well at the time so yes we knew that we wanted something better but we didn't really know what we were in for."

Kelvin Garvey from Crewe was actually born in England, in Woolwich, London in 1973 but at age two his parents took him back to their native Saint Kitts where he started school. Kelvin returned to Britain in 2000 after 25 years in St. Kitts where he worked as a police officer.

"I was born in Woolwich in London. I left here when I was about two years old. My schooling was all in Saint Kitts: Sandy Point Primary School, then I went on to Sandy Point High School and I went on to the West Indies College in Saint Kitts. School uniform was brown khaki trousers, shorts and a white tee-shirt and a long blue tie."

Coming to Britain

Beryl May Annikey from Crewe was born in Jamaica in 1939. She remembers fondly her journey by ship to England in 1957.

"I came to England 1957. And I came on this ship and it took us 21 days to sail on the ship to come to England. Because I knew my husband, we were going to school together and he came over here '56 and he sent for me and I came '57. I just came on my own. I came with some friends you know, other people on the ship, I didn't know them anyway and we come to Southampton. Yes we got off at Southampton and there was you know my husband there to receive me, but it was lovely because I mean in the afternoon, in the night you could have a bath and dressed up and go the pictures or we go to dances, you know, a lot of entertainment on the ship. So you know everybody was up here and we always go up on the deck and have a look you know when the ship's sailing."

Doreen Jeffers from Crewe was born in Black Hills, Jamaica in 1942. She remembers some of the prejudice she faced after arriving in Britain.

"...because it was the first time I heard about prejudice and the first time I couldn't believe what was going on. Anyway I thought "oh bugger you then" you know "your skin colour is different from mine and that's all, we all have blood runs through our veins". So it went on until it got a bit better. It's still there because that will never go away out of life. It's like when the West Indians started coming here it was

a thing like that...just like it's happening now people say 'Oh you come here and take away jobs'. You know so when they say that I laugh and I thought I've been through it, I know what it's like so you know. And I thought well when I came here it was only the Irish and the West Indians and a few Indians and it was the Irish and the West Indians did the donkey work. And the women worked in hospitals, the men worked on the railways."

Glenroy Reid from Crewe was born in Jamaica in 1952. He came to Crewe in 1965 with his brother to join his parents who were already here. Glenroy remembers starting school in Crewe after having been educated previously in Jamaica. When Glenroy left school, like many young men at that time he was apprenticed to one of Crewe's traditional industries.

"When I came to England I was further advanced education-wise because I had to wait for the others to catch up. Whether we were advanced I don't know but I had to wait for the rest of the class to catch up for my year. After school I was an apprentice at British Rail. I was there for 18 years until I decided I'd had enough."

Alift Harewood remembers the exact day she arrived in Britain from Guyana and how she was at work within a few hours of arriving.

"I came in 1965. When I was coming in to Southampton, it was the day I think that it was the funeral of Winston Churchill and I remembered that because we were very British and we knew everything that was British and sometimes even when I don't remember the precise date, I knew it was

that day. So it was probably the end of January, early February of 1965 I came. I landed in England at 10:00 am one morning and it was winter, I remember, in my cotton dress and sandals freezing and by two o'clock I was fitted out in a uniform and was at work. In those days there was no such thing as induction. Induction was what you learned as you went along. So at two o'clock I was at work."



Roy Moore's father with his sisters in Crewe. 1960's

Roy Moore arrived in Britain aged 12 in 1965 from Jamaica to join his parents who were already here. Roy came by himself.

"Well, I came by aeroplane, my parents were here first of all, they came here some years before me, because that's what people from the West Indies did, they came first, found somewhere to live, found work, saved some money and sent for their sons and daughters later. I came by myself; I was solitaire, the only person in the airport looking around for my family. I came first to Manchester Airport, that was a long time ago, as I said I was sitting there waiting around for my parents, luckily they

turned up to claim me. I lived in Crewe and the street was called – Lord Street, No. 2. I will never forget that because I thought that’s fantastic, living in Lord Street. I thought all the houses were factories when I was coming over on the aeroplane all I could see was chimneys with smoke and it was cold too.”

Angela Doe decided to break with the Brazilian tradition of going to North America and decided to come to Europe instead which is where her family’s roots are in Germany and Italy. She first came to Britain as an au pair.

“Yes. Rather than trying to go to North America which would be the natural way to do it because obviously it’s closer and perhaps a bit more similar to the South American way of life. I decided I’ve always wanted to go back to my roots. I’ve always wanted to come to Europe and so I decided to take, well to come here to study for 6 months. So I stayed with an English family and I came to the south of England which is the area of West Wycombe and Bromley and that area. I stayed with a family there and it was a very interesting experience. I came here thinking that I could speak English and I could not understand a word. So it was interesting really because I realised that I could not understand the radio and to me you only understand a language when you are able to understand the radio, you understand the fast language and so it took me a while for my ears to get used to that, so yeah, interesting.”

Alift Harewood, like Mrs. Jeffers, remembers the open racism that black people often faced in Britain in the 1960’s and how in letters written to family and friends back home she and

many other people from the West Indies would hide the pain of racism and let their relatives and friends think all was well in Britain.

“Remember, I came in the days when you could still see on shop fronts ‘rooms to let – no blacks’. And we used to read it and giggle and think ‘is it us?’ – ‘it has to be us’. So, that constraint was still very much in the public space. Well as ifare we the blacks they’re talking about? Are we the people they’re talking about? It has to be. As if it was...it was still unbelievable that we could be so openly towelled and it was kind of amusing and sad at the same time because we knew that people were rejecting us as of right. And we simply could not take it in, we could not take it in because while in the West Indies. I must say, there were class restraints; there were not that much colour restraints. And so we came with these great, grand hopes only to find that..... you couldn’t write home about those things, you never told your family back home. All the letters you sent back were letters of great enthusiasm. Everything’s O.K, you’re doing O.K, you’re happy, because you know that they will show those letters to the neighbours and the friends and they have to say; “Oh! They’re in England and doing well”. And so the people took photographs near to Nelson’s Column. They took photographs near to fire engines. They took photographs near to large monuments to show everybody how happy they were. So that was something.”

Tony Parker from Crewe was born in Jamaica in 1953. He remembers his journey to Britain to join his parents in 1968.

“My parents were in Britain long before I came. They came in the ‘50s and I came in 1968 to join my mum and dad. I travelled on my own from Jamaica to Manchester Airport. I went to live in Crewe, Dorrington Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire. Freezing, it was a snowy day in February. It was all white and damp.”



Kelvin Garvey, Crewe 2011

Kelvin Garvey tells us how he returned to Britain from Saint Kitts in 2000 when he was 27 with his sister.

“In 2000, my sister who I didn’t know came back to Saint Kitts and she asked me: “Why don’t you come to England?” I said no, I’ve got a good job here; I was a police officer back then. She said you might as well come back for a holiday. I said no. But she still bought me a ticket and I was on a flight.”

School/working in Britain



Angela Doe, Chester 2012

Angela Doe met her husband in Britain and starting working here.

“I came to Cheshire in 2002. Yes, I was living in Ealing, I got a job as the customer services manager for the YMCA in Ealing and during this time I already had met my now husband. At the time we were just going out together and he was made redundant. He was working for an engineering company in Croydon and he was made redundant there so and the engineering work really is more in the North now, it’s changed a lot and he got a job here in Cheshire and I think at the time we were sort of going backwards and forwards at the weekend to see each other, it came to a point that we just had to make a decision, you know either we get married or we just go our own ways and then the rest is history.”

Doreen Jeffers remembers her first jobs in Cheshire.

"I got a job first in the sewing factory in Willaston and I didn't like it there, but in them days you could get a job, you could leave one and pick up another, so I went further down and got a job in Huyton's in Nantwich and from there I got married, because I suppose it was the 'in thing' when you come here and you're on your own, you know. And got married and I still went back to my job in Huyton's and after a while I got pregnant, so I had a little boy and I thought "right I have to do something here, I'm going to sit on my laurels". In them days you had people that looked after children and that's what I did and I went to Holmes Chapel at a hospital. Cranage Hall it was called and I worked there thirty odd years and when Leighton opened I applied to go and do training."



Alift Harewood becoming Deputy Mayor of Macclesfield 2008 with her son

Alift Harewood remembers the racism of the 1960's that she faced in her profession as a nurse/midwife and even at church.

"All the configurations of blackness were negative and that to me is a part of the way

they were educated, that is what they knew, they knew no different because I found the church was no different. You couldn't touch their crockery, you couldn't touch them. If you touched them they brushed their sleeves. If they invited you they just kind of.....they looked at you, they kind of put you in a place where they could watch you. They continually asked you if you understood them, they would continually ask if you.....they would bring like ordinary things and say "do you have anything like this where you come from?" And when I was a midwife, of course it happened quite a lot. People would say "I don't want you touching my baby. I don't want you in the room where my child is born. I don't want a black nurse."

Islyn Amoono-Neizer also came to Britain to work in the health service. She remembers living in a very multi-cultural house in Newcastle.

"I came with a family doctor from Stillington and he brought me over because I was working for him because I wanted to do nursing. I was working in the hospital, I was working in the drug dispensing. I went to Newcastle on Elswick Road. I think that's the first place I ever lived here; lots of West Indian people used to come, the teachers and everything from the West Indies and a lot of Asians and I stayed there for a while before I moved to Middlesbrough, well Stockton."

When Roy Moore came to school in Britain he noticed it was a lot less strict than in Jamaica.

"Well the main difference was – school in Jamaica was very hard discipline, if you did anything wrong at all, you were

sweating because the Headmaster would come and see to you with a few straps, having said that, the same thing happened here but not so, what's the word for it, not so hard, not so hard on you, so that was the main difference, apart from that there were more facilities here in Britain like woodwork and metalwork and things like that, that was the main difference."



Glenroy Reid, Crewe 2012

Glenroy Reid looks back fondly on the job opportunities that existed for young people in Crewe in the 1960's and 1970's but laments the lack of opportunity for young people today.

"That there isn't a lot more for the younger ones because of unemployment; you know it's just gone worse now really, just unemployment really. They haven't got the same opportunity. Whereas when we left school we had the opportunity whether you wanted to go to Rolls-Royce, whether you wanted to go to Fodens, whether you wanted to go to ERF, all these companies are all gone now. And there's not a lot out there for them anymore."

Life in Cheshire



Roy Moore (left) in Crewe early 1980's

Roy Moore told us about becoming a car mechanic and how Crewe has changed since he arrived here in the 1960's.

"Yes, as soon as I finished school I went to Danebank College in Crewe for one year, Engineering course, after that I found work straight away at a Vauxhall main dealer, I just strolled up, saw the foreman, I asked him if there were any jobs about, he says, looked at me and he says "Fine, I will give you a chance, can you start next week as an apprentice" and I started there and worked there for about 8 years. Crewe has changed a lot, the place is completely changed, all the streets, everything, a lot of diverse, ethnic people are in Crewe now since I first came here, there was only a small black community and a very small Asian community and that was it I think, oh there was a very small Polish community but now it's a real multicultural place."

Alift Harewood described to us how she became a local councillor and eventually became Deputy Mayor of Macclesfield in 2008.

"One day I was in a house and I was told a local councillor has stood down and I said "right, it will be me" and this was a kind of half joke. I don't know if I dared say that and to my surprise a momentum commenced. And then I asked "Why could it not be me?" and I recalled the work I had done locally because I did all kinds of work; reading for people, that sort of thing. And I said "right I will tell you of the apprenticeship I've done within the Labour Party and then I will contrast that with those whom you chose and I will argue the toss here now. And I won and I won for the next three times I think and lost when Cheshire East was formed. By then I had become deputy mayor (of Macclesfield) which is again an initiative of mine, I said, I just went and said "I will be mayor". Don't ask me why, I just thought that."



2008: Councillor Alift Harewood becomes Deputy Mayor of Macclesfield

Angela Doe told us about her job with the local council and why she loves living in Cheshire.

"I'm the Equality and Diversity manager for Cheshire West and Chester Council. I started as Customer Care officer for the Communications Department and I was in a very junior position just almost like helping out with the Communications Department to put in place policies that they needed to do because the department had expanded. Cheshire, you choose this lifestyle, it's a slower pace and for someone that perhaps likes a faster pace or more opportunities for cultural activities and so on then perhaps you need to go a bit further afield but it's not that difficult to get to Manchester or Liverpool. Perhaps the transport links are difficult if you don't have a car, it's very difficult to get from A to B, perhaps that would be one of the downsides to Cheshire for me, apart from that I just love the green. I suppose I had that part as well when I was younger. Now I'm settling I've got a family and if I was given the choice, would you like to live in London or would you like to live in Cheshire. Now I would say Cheshire."

Glenroy Reid compares the more integrated and multi cultural society of today with the earlier times.

"Blacks are more acceptable now, as 20 or 30 years ago they were more frightened of you because they didn't know you. Now you're probably your next door neighbour's best mate or whatever. It has just changed completely, people's attitude once they get to know you plus going to school we sort of mixed, so everyone mixed. You know your friends are white now, you got friends from school which are

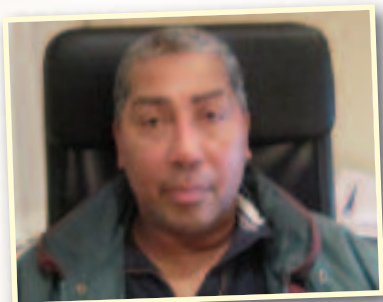
white and you became friends for life. So, it's a lot easier. I think that when our parents arrived they just stuck in their little group, whereas we're more diverse now. We mix with all sorts where they used to just mix with their own socially. Whether it's because of people's attitude, I don't know. Could well be that nowadays, as I said, probably your friends are white and you've got white friends, I've got white friends because we've all grown up together."

However, Doreen Jeffers saw similarities with the hostile reception that West Indians faced in the 1950's and 1960's and the hostile reception that some newly emerging Black and Minority Ethnic Communities face today.

"It's like when the West Indians started coming here it was a thing like that...just like it's happening now people say 'Oh you come here and take away jobs'. You know, so when they say that I laugh and I thought I've been through it, I know what it's like, so you know."

On a final note, Tony Parker remembers more positive experiences as a black teenager growing up in Crewe in the 1960's and 1970's and how he had friends from across different communities.

"In the summer time we played cricket in Westminster Park, West Indies v England because all the lads, we all stuck together. Because we all went to Bedford Street School together, so we all played together. Then in the winter time we used to play football. Obviously it had to be England v Brazil. But, England always won, we only ever beat them when we played cricket. We never had any problem with anybody who said they were going to beat you up because you were black. Not in Crewe not even in Northwich or Winsford. There are some really good things in Cheshire. Some friendly people."



Tony Parker, Crewe 2012

Journeys from Africa and Western Asia

Early Memories

Shamla Naidu from Guilden Sutton near Chester was born in Durban, South Africa in 1957 to a 3rd generation Indian family. Shamla told us about the difficulties of growing up under apartheid in South Africa.

“Well we were very, very protected by our parents. They didn’t expose us to anything that we thought would hurt our feelings or you know stuff like that. We often went, because we lived in a hot country and had the beach and there was like designated areas; whites only and Indians only. They kind of classed us as Indians even though people were from different countries but if we kind of looked like this when we went to go and register a birth kind of thing; they classified you and the black people. So there was all designated recreational areas. We never had anything mixed when we were growing up and you know quite often as a kid you’d say to your dad like

you: “Why can’t we go and play there” and they’d always say: “Oh no next time” or “there’s no time” or “we can’t park here” or some kind of excuse. They never let on that because we were different and we were not allowed until we were really grown up and we kind of, they didn’t want us to get involved in feeling excluded if you like and yeah so we kind of found out a lot more as we got older and wiser just by our own.”



Serkan Hüyük, Ellesmere Port 2012

Serkan Hüyük from Ellesmere Port was born in Aksaray, Turkey in 1983. Serkan remembers the games he used to play as a boy growing up in Turkey in the 1980’s.

“We’d gather on the road with other kids and we’d play hide and seek or in a bigger scale hide in the road and so just the one place. We’d make catapults and go for a bit of bird hunting and hunt birds and mostly play football as well. I didn’t support any team until I was 9 and I started with a team called Trabzonspor which is a Turkish team not known by much people in abroad but it’s like a domestic team plays in the Turkish league. It’s a big team but it’s a domestic team like Chester but playing in the Premier League.”

Germain Nkuinga from Chester was born in New Bell, Douala, Cameroon in 1977. Germain told us about his schooldays and his favourite subjects at school.

"I went to school in Douala in the English speaking side of Cameroon in a suburb called Kumba where my granddad lived 'til now and because for a certain moment he decided to take care of me, so I achieved my primary school with him before coming back to Douala where I started college and my Mum died when I was 11 or 12 years old. I started college, Year 1 in secondary school. And then I carried on with my college 'til A level in Douala. French, English, German because I wanted to become a translator, journalist or translator. So my interest was really focused on objects about literature or French, English, German and history, geography. A bit of science, you know we have a lot of subjects, I never get interest in mathematics, technology – that wasn't my favourite – sometimes I managed to escape from these mathematics lessons. So I was in French, English – French and English yeah."

Germain went on to tell us why it's important to know more than one language in Cameroon due its colonial history.

"Cameroon is a bilingual country due to the past colonial history. It's really a country with much multicultural influence. Starting with the Portuguese by the 15th Century, then comes, after the Portuguese, and then comes Germans – the German colony and then England and French at the end. That's how we found ourselves now bilingual speaking both French and

English. We have 2 regions of The Cameroon. 2 provinces still kept as English spoken part of Cameroon, the North West and the South West and 8 other are French speakers."

Like Serkan Hüyük, Adil Goker from Ellesmere Port originally came from Aksaray in Turkey where he was born in 1986. Adil told us about his parents and how his father drove all over Europe for his job.

"My Dad is a lorry driver and my Mum is a house wife. My Dad drove to different countries. Yeah international. Mostly Europe."

Pamela Nsofor from Ellesmere Port was born in Lagos, Nigeria in 1972. Because her father was an army officer, Pamela lived in a few different places when she was young.

"My mum is an educational officer and my father was an army officer. Yes, well all over – when you are in the army you are all over the world. Well, actually my very first school was in America, I was about 3 years old or whatever, nursery, and I think I was there until I was five and then came back to Nigeria and schooled in Nigeria after that and primary school was just normal, just normal primary school teachers, well it was normal to me so I don't know what else I can tell you about it."

Pamela then told us about her schooling back in Nigeria when she returned there aged 5.

"In Nigeria during my time almost everyone went to boarding school then, everyone went to a boarding school, so we

were all in boarding school and you would come back home for the holidays and it was very regimental, you would wake up at a certain time, get ready for school, go for breakfast, go for classes, come back, you would have labour, PE, prep, where you study, bedtime, games, it was very, very regimental, then back home when you would be on holiday, it's very different from here, you play with your neighbours, you are out on the street all day, you eat at your neighbour's house, it's was very communal back home in Nigeria."

Emel Hüyük from Ellesmere Port was born in Ankara, the capital of Turkey in 1986. Emel remembers her father's shop and her schooldays growing up in Turkey.

"My dad had furniture shops. My mum's a housewife. Yeah in the town. He sold everything: living room furniture, dining room furniture, everything. Uniform was skirt and blouse yes and socks. School name on the blouse. We studied Maths, English, Science, everything. My favourites: history and science."



Shamla Naidu, Chester 2012

Shamla Naidu remembers the apartheid regime bringing in the Group Areas Act and her family had to abandon their home. She also remembers the enforced separation of different racial communities in apartheid South Africa.

"We also lived in areas; we were shunted, moved from beautiful homes that our parents built or grandparents when the Group Areas Act came in. There was a thing called Group Areas, that of likeness so we couldn't mingle with anybody else. So in school we didn't, yet it was South Africa, we didn't have one black child in our school or a white child. We never had, we only had us and they only had them. So there was no integration at all and I think my first exposure or conversation was at my college interview."

Germain Nkuinga left Cameroon in 1999 and embarked on a journey that took him through many different countries in West Africa in pursuit of a career in the Arts, specifically film making. Germain settled in Senegal where he lived for 11 years.

"And then, I was informed as I was trying to do some Arts course to become an artist, to do comedy or films -what's very hard in Cameroon. When a friend from Burkina Faso that I met, he came for a seminar in Cameroon, he said to me if you want to follow Arts you must go to Burkina Faso in West Africa that's where and that's how it came in my mind to leave, to move out of Cameroon and get another life and then in '99 and that's how I leave Cameroon on my own without looking back and keep looking forward until today. I went to Ivory Coast first. Yes Côte d'Ivoire and for two months and it wasn't what I expected. The

condition wasn't nice for me there and then I moved from there to Burkina, Mali, then Mali to Senegal, all this by road and then in Senegal where I lived for 11 years and then I study film making courses with the help of Senegalese people, friends and because the cinema industry is really huge there and people understand what is culture. It's a cultural country, so I really learned a lot on the streets and a bit with the national school of art."

Pamela Nsofor remembers living in Lagos after she graduated in Law from Lagos State University and gave us an insight into life in urban West Africa.

"It's hot, it's very busy, it's very communal, the difference between there and here is that you interact with your neighbours, it's erm, not as personal and secluded and isolated as it is here, you can if your, even I remember even when I wasn't working you get on somehow because you'd have uncles and aunties that would look after you that realise you are not working and give you money without you asking, you didn't have to pay for rent, because I was living at home, but there wasn't pressure from my mum to contribute to the rent and its different, it's also different because here you see the younger people moving out of home but back home you didn't leave home until you were actually getting married, it was unthinkable and so life was easier and less complicated I would say, but the financial constraints were there."

Finally, before her family left South Africa for Britain, Shamla Naidu was fortunate to see the end of apartheid and South Africa's first full and fair democratic elections in 1994, which saw the election of Nelson Mandela as South Africa's first non-white president and the first government of the ANC.

"Oh absolutely I voted and everything yeah. Absolutely and my mum died in '95 and she in '94 she said "I never thought I'd see the day." But she, we all queued up and it was brilliant. It was such a fantastic day; it was beautiful sunshine then, no trouble. Everybody queued up for hours and nice banter in the queue and I was well grown up, I had 4 kids by then so we kind of understood and we felt really happy when it happened."

Coming to Britain

Unfortunately, Germain Nkuinga did not have a good first impression of Britain at Heathrow Airport in 2008.

“My first impression was with immigration at Heathrow it was really, really, I was shocked because it was quite, for me it was, it wasn’t fair at all. When I asked to the guy, I don’t understand the meaning of the questions and that my visa is not correct or whatever. They detained me for more than, nearly 4 hours and then I really feel it, I feel bad and they asked me a lot of questions and I say it really is not fair and I think if there is a flight going back I prefer to go because I’d never think of doing illegal immigration and I’ve never thought because I believe that in this world you don’t have to stop anyone to go anywhere.”

Serkan Hüyük told us about his journey from Turkey in 1992 and his first impressions of ‘green’ Britain.

“We transferred from Aksaray. We travelled to Ankara from where we lived, about 3 hours drive, then we went from Ankara to Istanbul and that was about an hour flight and from Istanbul to Manchester. Well we didn’t know it was Manchester we just knew it was an airport. Before I came here, all I’d seen was just the one photo of England that my dad was in and it was in the alley way, like behind the shops and it was just like rows of houses on that photo. And when we came here my mum didn’t come because she had visa problems. We just travelled from Manchester to Denbigh and we just travelled and travelled and I thought this is a big country and

everywhere was big and it was like winterish, spring time. It was like wintertime and it was just green everywhere, I thought it was like a nice, big country, like loads of trees. There are trees in Turkey but it’s mostly a dry place in Turkey. There was not much impression; it was more of a shock than an impression.”

Pamela Nsofor describes coming to Britain in 1996 before moving to Ireland and then returning to Britain.

“I first of all came to Britain in 1996 I came with my husband in 1996 and we lived here I think for 2 years then we were living in London, but then he had to move to Ireland and I moved to Ireland with him and we were in Ireland for over 10 years, I came back to Britain again in 2006 and came to Cheshire then.”



Emel Hüyük, Ellesmere Port 2012

Emel Hüyük told us of her first impressions of Britain after arriving from Turkey in 2003.

“I came in 2003. September. On the plane. First Istanbul and straight on to Manchester. Much more different houses,

different form. Every day it was raining, everyday it's raining. My husband goes to work 2 o'clock in the afternoon and comes back at 2 o'clock in the night."

Shamla Naidu came to Cheshire from South Africa in 1999.

"Well fortunately we had been on holiday twice before and my husband travelled a lot with work around the globe quite a bit. So he had a fair idea but we never came to Manchester or the North-West. When we were on holiday you go to all the holiday kind of places. So before we came, we came in February I think, no sorry we came in the March and then end of January we were invited to come and meet the company and people and schools. They paid for us to come on a fact-finding mission before we, you know, came. So it was quite nice we like a relocation advisor helping us and you know took the kids report and said which schools they could go to. And my husband was working with a company called Nalco in Northwich. The chemical industry and they're all kind of based at I.C.I and all of that based in the North-West. So that's why we ended up in Chester."

School/working in Britain

Serkan Hüyük remembers the support he received from the education services after he arrived in Britain from Turkey.

"The people were very good when we started school here the teachers and the council was quite good because when we first came they came to our house. My sister called Fatima but we called her Sarah because they said they might call her 'fatty man' and because we didn't know what it meant, they told us it was like a fat person and then we change her name to Sarah. They helped us with everything from that to our learning English. They gave us a special teacher, English teacher, and she would teach me and my brother and my sister just English in school."

Pamela Nsofor told us about a number of jobs she took after arriving in Britain.

"Well back home, it wasn't my first time in Britain, I had been to Britain a couple of times on holiday, so it wasn't a first impression, but the idea back home is that if you are going to Britain you are lucky, you are favoured, the streets are lined with gold and generally maybe it had to do with my age I really didn't mind what job you got there just something to survive on and I remember my first job when I came to Britain when I re-located I think I was working in the Tesco Express, was that my first job or working on the trains one of the two it was either Tesco or working on the trains, but I really didn't mind, I enjoyed it because I was young."

Shamla Naidu remembers she stayed at home for the first year she was in Cheshire but then decided she wanted to work again.

"I didn't work for the first 14, 15 months. And then a year later I got a job with Shell which I'm still with them. Because my previous job in South Africa, I worked in a refinery as well. So I just was by chance in Chester and I was on my own of course and I saw this Office Angels in Frodsham Street and there were all these jobs, there were so many I recall and I just stood and looked and I said "I could do this, this, this, this, this." The office manager was there and she was a really lovely person and she said to me "Have you got time now I'll have a chat with you" and she called me in and I had a chat and she said "Oh there are a couple of jobs here." She said: "It's Shell in Thornton" and I said "I really don't want a job anywhere else apart from Chester" because I knew only how to get to Chester really and Thornton was like on the back road and "No that's really far" she said "Are really living at this address?" I said "Yeah" and she said "It's only 8 minutes from where you are, 10 minutes down the back road" I said "OK when my husband comes this evening we're going to have a look" and it was literally down the road and I went for the interview and I got the job and I'm still there."

Germain Nkuinga is working on film projects but felt the need to find work in order to pay his way and not be reliant on his wife.

"In terms of film making it's hard. It's really hard and sometimes I just say "Oh I love Chester" but living in Chester they won't help me to progress in film making

and I am sort of tempted to go to Manchester or London because of what I'm doing. Then I was in an obligation to get at least something because I spend a lot of my time on writing, working on my project. But then I said 'no I need to do something to help me if I need to buy a pint of beer so I won't be asking my wife. We are paying the house, we have bills and we can't only live on one salary so I managed to get a job in a restaurant and as a barman and this has helped me to be independent. So I work in a restaurant though the hours are not really suitable, at least it helps me to manage my living and I'm not really depending on my wife's salary here."



German Nkuinga, Chester 2012

Life in Cheshire

Serkan Hüyük told us about his first day in Ellesmere Port and the friendly welcome he got from local boys his age.

“The day we moved we were carrying stuff from the lorry to the house and someone came and asked me if I’d play football with them, so I thought they’re friendly people and ever since I’ve not had any major problem with any other community. Mainly they’re all friendly and nice people in Ellesmere Port. You get the odd one out but you get that everywhere and I think Ellesmere Port is a quite nice place to live in and I wouldn’t change it to anywhere but Turkey. I would only move to Turkey from here.”

Pamela Nsofor told us about her experiences of living in Ellesmere Port.

“No I haven’t personally experienced racism, but it’s difficult if you are foreign because there is no denying that you are different and I think either without people meaning to isolate you, there is this feeling of isolation and sometimes I think you have to bend over backwards to try and reach out to people who don’t understand you, there is the language barrier, even though I’m English speaking, but I appreciate that people might find that the way I talk is different and struggle to understand me. That was actually one thing when I first came to Ellesmere Port, even though they were English speaking, I did struggle to understand them a bit, so that language barrier is there and because I’m African the way even though African, Nigeria is English speaking, maybe it’s the.....or the way we arrange the word it’s a bit different

so in talking to an English person I’m kind of trying to arrange my words in a proper sequence, but if it was back home and I’m speaking English it would be slightly different and maybe it would roll off my tongue faster.”

Shamla Naidu told us how she likes the relaxed way of life in Cheshire.

“I like the quiet, quieter pace. You know I couldn’t, I don’t think I could live in London and I’ve kind of made this my home now and it’s the only place I kind of know to live in. So and you know I’ve got such fantastic work colleagues and CHAWREC and a couple of good friends and you know we’re quite integrated now and I’m quite happy really.”

Germain Nkuinga told us he preferred living in Chester to the bigger cities of the UK.

“So in London you can be really in trouble and nobody will help you because people just walk past. So I feel like there’s no assistance in London really but in Chester really it’s quiet and I like it when even we go to Ireland, I really like the countryside and big cities. So really Chester has more things and really if you’re looking to buy a house and I’m really happy to get a house and be living in Chester because it’s quiet and I really feel I have confidence. I don’t have the same feeling like in London and Manchester. In Chester I’m just free, I can walk home at any time and yeah, yeah it’s really a nice place to be and I really love it here.”

Journeys from Europe

Early Memories



**Zdzislaw Labedz Polish Commando
in Italy 1945**

Zdzislaw Labedz from Middlewich was born in Poznan, Poland in 1922. Mr. Labedz remembers his parents work and his schooldays in 1920's and 1930's Poland.

"My father was a postmaster. That's it. My mother, when Poland was reborn after the First World War she also worked in the post office. I went to school in Jaroczyn place, no, no not Jaroczyn in Czarnkow.

Czarnkow that is a town on the pre-war border between Germany and Poland. I reached third year of gymnasium. That means you have the ordinary school six years and then three, college."

Ana Arto from Chester was born in Valladolid, Spain in 1971. Ana remembers her childhood in Spain and moving to another region of the country when she young.

"My mother was a housewife and my father was first a miner and then he work as a 'Guardia Civil'. (N.B the 'Guardia Civil' (Civil Guard) is a form of police force in Spain that operates mainly in rural areas and on the main highways). I went to a school, first to a state school and then I went to a religious school. I moved to Logroño when I was four. So I consider myself from La Rioja really."

Edyta Latala from Warrington was born in Bodzentyn, south-east Poland in 1981. Edyta told us about her parents and her schooldays in 1980's and 1990's Poland during a time of change.

"I was born in a small town in Poland. It's called Bodzentyn. It's the south east part of Poland. Well my mum used to work in a TV station and my dad; he was more of a physical worker picking up different jobs, a bit in plumbing and construction as well. I started school at 6 years old in the same town where I was born, Bodzentyn. It's a small place. Well the system in Poland when I was going to school was 8 years primary school and then college/high school 4 years altogether, so that's how it used to be. It's changed a bit now. It's more of a western style of education."

Marina Smith from Warrington was born in Orenburg, Russia in 1968. She remembers travelling around the Soviet Union as a child due to her father working for Aeroflot as a pilot.

"My father was a pilot; he was just for working for Aeroflot. Yes flying these planes, Tupolev 154 and its very safe and my mum she's an engineer and she's like a drawing engineer. I go to school in the Far East of Russia, in town called Khabarovsk. It's very near to China and Japan and Vladivostok. I was born in the Urals and one year old because father is a pilot I moved to Vilnius to Latvia for two years and then from Vilnius we moved to Khabarovsk. It's about nine hours flying and then when I was about nine, we moved to Moscow and then from nine years old I was living in Moscow and went to school there."



Sarikaya Emine, Ellesmere Port 2012

Sarikaya Emine from Ellesmere Port was born in Lyon, France in 1980. She told us about her family and education in France.

"My dad was a builder. He had his own business. My mum was a housewife. At school we studied English, French, Maths, Sciences and my favourites were Maths and Medical Sciences. I studied Medicine at Lyon University. Then I married and I stayed at home as I had a baby. But after 5 years I worked in a company for two years."

Halina Kelly from Warrington was born in Zamosc, Poland in 1946. Halina told us about growing up on her family's farm.

"My parents were farmers. We had a very big farm and grandparents lived with us and grandparents were running this farm and my father was helping. We produced milk, cheese, we had a lot of chickens, pigs, and everything really we had on the farm. The farm was really nice and quite big."

Jelena Zujovic from Warrington was born in a small town 50 miles from Belgrade, Serbia in 1980. Jelena told us about moving to Belgrade to study in her late teens.

"I went to university after school to do Business Information. I had to study in Belgrade because my home town doesn't have a university; it's a very small town so I actually moved. My university was for two years. It's not a bachelor's degree it's one level under that. After that, I worked for some time in a T.V station as I.T support and then after that I came here in 2006."

War Memories



Zdzislaw Labedz with his friend in Rome.
The day after the war ended in 1945

Zdzislaw Labedz told us what happened after the Germans invaded Poland in 1939.

"On 3rd November 1939 I was taken by the Germans for slave labour to Germany. I was caught by the German Wehrmacht and sent to labour in a place called Grolz-Errechen that's the shire was called Niederlausitz and I worked in a glass factory, 12 hours a day which I was not used to it and so it was not too hard but it was hard. The food, we had to provide ourselves that means we had the coupons but there was no way of cooking because we were all young lads."

Maria Leligdowicz from Northwich was born in Poland in 1932 and found herself in the part of Poland invaded by the Russians in 1939. Her journey to Cheshire was a difficult one.

"When we were arrested they took our parents away and took me to the children's home and I stayed there with Russian

children. I didn't have any parents for 8 years. We were taken to Russia for over 2 years. I lost 2 sisters in Russia and 2 brothers, they died of starvation. And after I think it was Sikorski that brought us out of Russia. My other brother was in the army and that's when they gave us transport. We were packed like herrings on the floor of the ship and we came to Persia like that. First we came to Pahlevi and from Pahlevi they took me to Tehran to hospital for 7 months because I was so ill and from Tehran I went to Isfahan. From Isfahan we were moved to Karachi, I was there over 2 years and from there they moved us to Africa, Rhodesia. I was there 5, 6 years and then I came to England. I found my mum in Africa and after she came here she married a bloke because my dad was killed in Russia. I came to Delamere in 1948."

Forced to join the German Army, Zdzislaw Labedz escaped in 1943 and joined the French Resistance and came to Britain to join the Free Polish Army.

"And so after 6 or 7 months, I can't really remember, I found myself in France. There I escaped during a battle with the French Underground Army. I joined the French Underground Army only for about 3 weeks and there at nights the Dakotas, English planes had been landing in the valleys, here there and everywhere bringing ammunition and taking volunteers to the Polish Army and so in 1943 I found myself in Eastbourne. After interrogation one thing with another, it was very, very strict I got released and could join the Polish Army and I joined the Polish Commando. After a period of time I found myself in Italy and did the campaign in Italy and finished in Bologna."

Coming to Britain

Ana Arto remembers the reason she came to Britain.

“I had been in England for a couple of weeks as a holiday or so but then when I finished university I thought....in Spain the language then that was more demanded at the time, it was English and people assumed if you spoke German and French then you spoke English as well. And I thought...I certainly give English.....I did speak a bit of English but I thought....not a lot...and I thought I should really get a better knowledge of English. So I applied for a grant with ECTARC (European Centre for Training and Regional Co-operation) and I got a grant working in Deeside College in Connah’s Quay for three months. That was the plan, to learn English for three months and then maybe I was to come back really to Spain.”

Halina Kelly recalls coming to Warrington in 1967.

“I came to England 1967. I came because I found my uncle. My uncle paid for my ticket, he invited me and this was an army base somewhere near Warrington and he stayed in Warrington. I came by train. I went by bus to Warsaw where I took a train for Dover and my uncle came to Dover to meet me and he came with a friend in a car and he brought me to Warrington. From Poland to Warrington took me about two days. The train passed through Germany and Belgium to Ostend. From Dover my uncle picked me up and I’ve been in Warrington ever since.”

Zdzislaw Labedz told us how he was demobbed after the war and came to live in Cheshire.

“In 1946 we’ve been all evacuated to England. I found myself in Beverley near Hull. There I went to school in Scotland, forestry school. I finished that school and come back to my unit to Alton Park and I was demobbed there and I got a job in I.C.I at Lostock where I spent 33 years. I got married, married an English girl. Had 4 children and that’s my story. I live in Middlewich. I.C.I had 2 or 3 places where they had hostels. One was in Middlewich, the nicest one and there were only 60 people there and in Marbury here and from there I got married and lived in Middlewich all the time. I’ve been in Middlewich since 1948.”

Marina Smith told us about coming to Britain in 1991 and her first impressions.

“I came to England in 1991. I married an Englishman. My husband is from Coventry and I lived there for a year, year and a half. First impressions: very expensive, everything very expensive compared to Russia and then I found out that the English are more friendly than what we learned about them. They smile more and I didn’t know that double-decker buses were real, I thought they were all in the past!”

School/working in Britain



Jelena Zujovic, Warrington 2012

In total contrast to the experience of Alift Harewood in the 1960's, Jelena Zujovic was given plenty of support and training when she went to work in the NHS in 2009.

"I didn't have any experience so they organised training for me. That's when I changed job and started working in Warrington Hospital, it's been maybe two years ago, 2009. What I do, it's exactly I'm a care assistant or nursing assistant, but I work with patients, help with patients. It's basic care for patients."

Ana Arto described her first experiences of working in the UK and her work today.

"I decided to stay and I applied for a couple of jobs, so I was preparing breakfast in a hotel and I was working for Tesco in the check outs and I think because of the shifts I had I was.....I found it a little difficult to get used to the lack of light. I've worked in sales and marketing and for

several years and then I decided to turn into teaching. So I've been teaching Spanish for the last nine years at the moment at West Cheshire College."



Marina Smith, Warrington 2012

Marina Smith described how she was helped by the local authority to improve her English so she could go into teaching both Engineering and Russian.

"At the time it was a very nice because I did speak English and it was very good, lots of classes I went to improve my English and I did certificate of education straight away because this is the year when they start to do it actually and Town Hall pay for me, it was even free and two years and I am a qualified teacher and then I straight away was teaching Engineering in St. Helens two years – I did HND electronics in St. Helen's college and then I was teaching Russian in St. Helens and Priestley College here in Warrington."



Halina Kelly, Warrington 2012

Halina Kelly described her first job in Warrington in a carpet factory where she worked for a year until the factory closed.

“When I came here I had a Polish friend and she worked in Warrington weaving carpets and she found me this job. I went with her and I’d never seen inside a factory before in my life and I asked her what I would be doing there and she said “Well you see that big machine” and I saw all the cotton weaving from one to another and there were about 200 of them and she told me to just walk round the machine and if I saw any broken cotton that there was glue on the top of the machine and I had to just grab them, join them and carry on.”

Life in Cheshire

Ana Arto compares day to day life in Chester with life in her native Spain.

“I like living in Chester because it’s a very pretty city. I enjoy living in a house with not much noise, in a way it’s like you are living in a village but you’ve got everything. It has lovely shops, it has nice parks, nice rivers. It’s a pretty city. I think it’s great when you’ve got children and in Spain when I go out of my house you know sometimes I meet so many people on the way and it’s nice, but at the same time you have to talk to everybody and here you can do whatever you want because your neighbours are not really interested in what you are doing. It can sometimes have its advantages because you have more freedom.”

Marina Smith told us how the small Russian community in Warrington has been a help to her since she arrived.

“Because it’s just like more and more girls coming and we need something to share the experience or to help or just to speak Russian and children going and all this and we decided that we have to you know get together and celebrate different things helping each other really.”

In 2011 and 2012 Cheshire Halton & Warrington Race & Equality Centre interviewed a number of people from the Black and Minority Ethnic communities across Cheshire as part of 'Journeys to Cheshire', an oral history project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

In this book there are extracts of some of those interviews conducted with Cheshire residents from all over the county and with roots in five continents who have contributed to life in Cheshire over seven decades.

There is also a DVD which accompanies this booklet.

For further copies please contact

**Cheshire Halton & Warrington Race
and Equality Centre.**

01244 400730

The Unity Centre
17 Cuppin Street
Chester CH1 2BN

www.chawrec.org.uk

Follow us on

facebook



www.journeystocheshire.org.uk