

# MEMORY LANE PROJECT- TRANSCRIPT

## INTRODUCTION

B' Active 'N' B' Fit, a not-for-profit community interest company based in Barley Mow Park in Sunderland presents the Memory Lane project. Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Hendon and the Eastend, the historical hub of what was later to become the biggest town in Europe before in 1992 as part of her 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the throne, Queen Elizabeth II bestowed city status on Sunderland.

But it all began here in the Eastend and neighbouring borough of Hendon, an area forged in the blood, sweat and toil of a proud and resilient, mostly working-class population.

But what makes this place so special, that it gave birth to the vibrant city we know today? As part of the Memory Lane Project, we've spoken with those who were born and bred in the area and asked them to recollect what life was like growing up here, before, during and after WWII. This is their story...

**Brian:** The main thing was to make sure that the family had a roof over their head, they had food on the table, and they had heat.

**Iris:** There was just the radio, there was no television. The radio, and we just watched that.

**Robbie:** I'm the second youngest, so I had like, six above me. And my oldest sister was 18 and that. So, that was when we lost my mam. So, she more or less become a mam kind of thing, if you understand what I mean, you know.

**Fiona:** Hendon, you know, it is a marvellous community. People look out for each other, they know each other. And a lot of people can go back over years and years of how it used to be. And it's nice to listen to them talk, some of the tenants here, about you know, going down that memory lane.

**Val:** My husband was one of 15 kids, so you can imagine how many relations I have. I've got nieces and nephews I barely know, have barely met.

## THEME - FAMILY

Many households were full of large families during this time, living in close quarters, some sharing one house, with one family upstairs and another down. The area was redeveloped from the slums of the '30s, and in the '50s prefabs were introduced post-war. As a cost-effective building process to housing planning, and 'The Garths' were built. The skyline changed forever in the '60s and further development with the introduction of high rise living. With 11 storey blocks built in the area.

**Moi:** There was six of us. It was all big families. There wasn't much tele to watch, that's all they done, made babies.

**Val:** There was three rooms on the upstairs of the house we lived in, and they had the front room, her and her husband. They were in their '80s, then. And we had the back room.

## THEME – GENDER ROLES

Many see this time with the perception of defined gender roles with the man of the house, the breadwinner and the woman, a homemaker. But for some in Hendon and the Eastend, this was not a financial option as both adults out of necessity had to work to make ends meet.

**Geoff:** A lot of the women from the Eastend, the younger ones went into the rope factories because there were a lot of rope factories made here with the hemp and the sisal. And then, in sort of the '60s and that, there was Jackson's the tailors had big factories in, just on the end of Hendon. And a lot of them worked in there.

**Wendy:** Dad was at work. We lived in a maisonette, in Norman Court. My Dad was at work, he worked full time, and my mam had to see to all of us. Basically, trying to catch up on the washing because you didn't have automatic washers then.

**Brian:** My mam worked in a few different fish shops and that. One, just over the road in Tatham Street. Clarke's, Clarke's fish shop it was there.

**Lily:** You know, but the man was the boss in them days. I had a lovely upbringing mind, I couldn't complain. But the man was, you know, the earner.

## THEME - SPORTS

Hendon was the birthplace of perhaps the area's most famous sporting son, Raich Carter, who represented England as a footballer and was also a first-class cricketer. To this day his image adorns the wall in the area and his name is honoured at the sports centre. But for children in the past, there wasn't the safe play areas that young people have today. They made their own sport, and the streets and abandoned warehouses is where they foraged and found their fun.

**Moi:** We used to get all the thick rope off the fishermen, and we used to wrap them round the top of the lamp, and we used to swing all the way round.

**Kevin:** You just did what you wanted to do and when you went out you knew you had to be in at a certain time. You had to be in at a certain time, otherwise you would be getting wrong.

**Geoff:** The docks, you know, we went climbing on the docks, that was our big playground. The docks and the railway, we'd get a little ride on the back of a train.

**Ron:** There was plenty entertainment, when you were young, you know. The houses were in a big back lane were massive. That's where the lads and lasses used to play. Sometimes we used to be out till 10 o'clock, and we used to play 'Catchy Kiss'.

**Geoff:** We had a huge amount of old industry, old factories, old buildings, housing, and stuff like that still left in the Eastend, and we used to just go and climb about and make gang huts and just be kids really. Get old prams and make Bogies.

**Iris:** We used to go out to play, we played 'Itchy Coite', you know, with 'Itchies' or whatever there was to do. Chalking on the pavement and things.

**Kevin:** We would go out on a Saturday morning and be out all day, whatever you were doing. We weren't doing anything wrong or anything, and then you would go back and take your time.

## THEME - ECONOMY

The Eastend and Hendon has always been an area of deprivation, despite it being where most of the Sunderland economy was made in the bygone years.

**Val:** I think my mam only earned £1 a week, you know. I mean she went every morning, all morning to clean at Mrs Denton's, and she got £1 on a Friday.

**Iris:** We never went with bare feet like some did down the Eastend but we never did that.

**Robbie:** I think I left school on the Friday, and I started work on the Monday.

**Val:** My dad, he said he was over the moon when he got a rise when he went to work in the shipyards, and he had £5 something for his pay.

**Fiona:** The shipyards, the coal mines, you know, my brother-in-law worked at one of the coal mines in Seaham.

**Robbie:** Pits and the shipyards and that closed down, there was less money going about.

## THEME - COMMUNITY

Despite having very little, the people of the area were generous with what they did have, and were quick to share with others less fortunate.

**Iris:** People of the Eastend were so kind, and let's put it this way, you baked your own bread, you made your own soup, and things like that. You'd say well there's a flat cake and when you bake yours can you give me one of your flat cakes; and that is how it worked, you see. And if there was washing, you would say have you got a bit washing to do? And they would do the washing.

**Brian:** Good community, people looked after each other. My mam came from the same as my grandma. She lived upstairs, and the first thing you would do as a kid, is that the kettle was put on and the front door was opened, and it was like that all day, people coming and going.

**Les:** You used to go down the trucks and get the coal for us to keep the fire going to keep us all warm. Go down and get a bit scrap because in those days the men would go down and get the scraps on the beach.

**Lily:** You might not have a lot of money but everybody seemed friendlier.

**Iris:** There was a shop on the corner, when we come out of the cars opening it was. There was a big shop there. And of course, we didn't have much money, and we used to stand and look in the window and say, 'oh, I could eat that sweet, I could eat that sweet'. We couldn't afford to buy them.

**Geoff:** Social care was with your community. People looked after people, so you could live in your own home, and you had your next-door neighbours that would pop in, drop a meal in, make sure you were alright.

## THEME – WORK

In the past, the population of the Eastend and Hendon could rely on heavy industry to maintain a local workforce before factories closed and commerce changed. Ending the likes of shipbuilding and coal mining, the mainstay of the area's economy.

**Val:** My mother cleaned, my dad worked in the mines and then he went into the shipyards just before he had to give up altogether because of his ill health. But my mam cleaned for a dentist's family in Tatham Street.

**Robbie:** Work, it's got to be work in this area; there's no work now. Shipyards, builders, I went into building. I had an uncle who was in the pits. When they closed it was just completely finished down here.

**Brian:** My dad went down into the mines. He went into the mines when he was a young man. His stepfather, and he was in the mines, a young man until 1939, it'll have been about the second world war. And he left the mines, he met my mam and joined the army.

**Iris:** Well, my mam worked at the ropery where they made ropes, you know, for the boats and that, that's where my mam worked. My dad was a cabinet maker.

**Lily:** See my father worked on the railway driving.

**Geoff:** My first job was working on the tugboats, and I was the seventh generation of tugboat people from the Moon's. We'd all worked, our family, my dad's dad, you know, all the way down had been either foy boatman, tug boatman; worked on trawlers, fishermen; a lot of the relatives were all sea-based if you like.

**Kevin:** It was massively industrial because you had the shipyards. You had people working in the shipyards and a lot of industries that were linked to shipyards like the ropery, and places like that.

**Moi:** My mam used to work in a sandwich bar, but my dad wouldn't let her work. Like, clocking in and clocking out.

**Wendy:** My dad was a roofer; he had his own business eventually. He used to work for firms; well, I wasn't born then. But apparently, he used to work for

firms when he was younger and then it turned out that he ended up just making his own business doing things.

## THEME – HEALTH

Despite there being little money and many households on a tight budget, food could be fresh, as produce was sourced more locally than today. People were also more active both in their manual work life and at home.

**Kevin:** It was all home-cooked stuff, everything.

**Robbie:** Panacalty, panac? You must have heard everybody talking about panac. I mean people still do it now. You know, I mean, that was a big one. Soup, because as I say we had a lot of people who, relations who had pigeons. You had a lot of allotments around the pigeon lofts.

**Fiona:** People worked hard. People worked and grafted hard. Their life expectancy wasn't as long as people are living now. I think people are living a lot better and healthier lives.

**Lily:** 2 brothers and a sister, but unfortunately, he died at 60. He was a heavy smoker and my father and other brother died at 52, and they had heart attacks.

## THEME – RELIGION

In Hendon and the Eastend, they also had more religious institutions in the past. Synagogues and churches, some of which have now gone as a place of worship. Religion played a bigger role in the lives of those in the area.

**Brian:** You had protestant, you had catholic, you had atheist, the whole lot.

**Lily:** We had to go down to the gospel hall. You know, it was only a little chapel. It was the only time you had your best coat on.

**Val:** We had to go to Sunday school on a Sunday afternoon. We had to go to church on a Sunday morning, and we had religion in school then.

**Geoff:** We used to have a catholic priest then, Father Stack and he used to wander the community and go in anybody's house, and he could go in anybody's house. He would just knock on and walk in, and they were terrified of him.

**Fiona:** I had a very strict upbringing where we were taken to church and our Sunday school teacher lived opposite to us. So, she used to knock on the door and escort us.

**Robbie:** We had like, we had Sunday schools which a lot of the bairns liked because you got on a lot of little trips out off the Sunday school, you know, with collections and stuff, like.

**Val:** It was a big thing to have your first Holy Communion because you got a new dress and new shoes, you know. Dressed up to the nines.

## THEME - TRANSPORT

The roads and streets of Hendon and the Eastend were a safer place with less traffic. Cars were not yet so commonplace and trams, buses and bikes were the usual form of transport, which meant for many venturing outside their local area was rare.

**Robbie:** Trams, that used to be at the top of this street, outside the gate. That used to be where a tram turned round. You know, it used to come up Vilette Road, turn round, go right along to the end, and then you had to get off and get on another one.

**Val:** Cambridge Terrace was that side of the road, and Tatham Street was that side, and the tram ran down. I could get on the tram at the bottom of Tatham Street, and it would take me to the terminus, it was the Southwick Green.

**Geoff:** The railway was the main part for the coal, and it was obviously, mainly exported from Sunderland down to the South Coast. But the roads did get busier as certain cargoes came on.

**Brian:** There were very few vehicles, mainly bus services, well, what you had then. Your delivery people. Go to the shops and things like that.

## THEME - POLITICS

Despite having a strong labour workforce and later unions. For most, politics was a thing for other people, but even without the interest, it touched and shaped the local community.

**Kevin:** It's the acceptance of who you are, and none of the discrimination type of things that go on or as many. I think because Hendon has always

been probably socially deprived, people have always been welcome to come in because nothing was expected of anybody.

**Brian:** A mixed marriage, black and white wasn't good, but George and his wife, George Cole and his wife Betty, they were accepted by the street. And he turned into a great man.

**Iris:** My dad was part German, and obviously, years ago they used to jump boats and things like that and of course that's probably how he got here. The Jews, he always worked for the Jews. It was always Jews who had the businesses in Sunderland at the time.

**Fiona:** They talk about the shipyards, the coal mines, and it was a shame that things got closed down because it left a lot of people, you know, devastated.

**Moi:** They need a medal down there, because if anybody mentions the Eastend that's the best place ever to be born, there. Because you felt safe, class, and all the old women used to love it because they felt safe.

**Wendy:** It always has been a deprived area, Hendon, but it's been a nice place to grow up. I've loved living in Hendon all my life, it's somewhere that I really like. People are nice and friendly; they always were and they always are.

**Ron:** The community and all from the edges around that live there are all a lot of happy social people, you know. It's a good community, everybody was friends with everybody.

**Iris:** The people was everything about the Eastend, it's just one of those places you would just love to live.

**Fiona:** I think I am proud to say that this is my heritage now and I have made a mark here. You know, my children love it, my husband, and so do I. I wouldn't move anywhere else to be quite honest.

**Brian:** Hendon holds a big place in my heart.

## **ENDING:**

So, what is it that makes Hendon and the Eastend so special, it's special people.