

Easton Lives 2001

I lived in Goodhind Street, in this particular corner of Easton, from 1987 to 2002. My children were born here, and they went to school here. Easton was the inspiration for my personal photographic work, as well as the subject of commissioned work. I knew most of my neighbours; shopkeepers, policemen, pastors, villains, druggies, children, parents and pensioners. I got to know people, people whom I never would have met in the normal course of my life. I had some of the best neighbours you could have, and some of the worst. I felt at home in the area, a great place to live.

How did all of us come to be in this place at this time? Where did my neighbours come from? What brought them to this neighbourhood? What were their stories?

These questions led me to create this project, inspired and commissioned by a location brief from Bristol City Museums and Art Gallery to accompany their Braikenridge exhibition. I interviewed six of my neighbours to find out where they had come from, why they had come here, and asked them which Bristol places were important to them, or significant in their history.

I feel privileged to have been able to share their lives and listen to their stories, and I only hope that I have been able to do them justice.





Mrs Brown's Story

My name is Mrs. Hermione Brown and I was born in Clarendon, Jamaica. I came over here in 1959 when I was nearly 28. Mr. Brown was over here and he sent for me. I always pass by his parents' house to go to my uncle. He was chatting to my mother, and he said when he came over he would send for me. I didn't believe he would. I thought, maybe when they go abroad they don't bother with you again. Many did that back home, but he didn't.

Mr. Brown came over because work wasn't so wonderful. He was here

about two years before I came. When I came here first it was different because everything was so nice. You could leave your door open. I used to go out the back weeding, and Mr. Brown would come home from work and say, "Woo ooh, the front door was wide open!" Things change a lot.

When I came first we live at 58 City Road. It was lovely and nice at that time. When I come first I come in the night, and in the morning when I wake up and look out I see a lot of smoke, and I said to the lady downstairs, "What a lot of factories!" and she started laughing, "It's not a factory, it's a house."

Then after a while the landlord sell the house, and some people what he bring in wasn't very nice, so Mr. Brown says we don't want to stay here. So we came and get a house by Thistle Street before they knock it down. We were there 'till we got married, we were married at Trinity Road Church. Then we moved to a little street up the top called Park Street, Easton Road School was over the other side. It was lovely. It's gone now, all turned into motorway. When they did knock down Park Street we came here. At first I didn't like it. We loved it at Park Street, and when we came here we didn't see much people, and they weren't friendly, so we worried about that. But it was alright, there was a lady lived next door was very nice and I get used to everybody on the street.

I worked at Grosvenor Hotel by Temple Meads, Cilla Black and Tom Jones stayed there. I worked there for a long time, about seventeen years. Afterwards the owner, he didn't keep so well, so he sell it. He didn't want to sack us. Then the last owner, when he bought the hotel promised he would keep us on, and he get the whole thing cheaper because of that. Then he just give everybody their notice so we have to leave. Mr. Brown was working on the buildings because he was a carpenter.

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We loved it at Park Street, but they did knock it down. It's all motorway now. *(b,r)*

I love my church, Trinity Pentacostal Church. I've been to the same church all the time I've been here. We went to Trinity Church for a bit when we were married. *(b,l)*



Lyn Barratt's Story



My name is Lyn Barratt and I was born in Southmead Hospital in Bristol. My family was living in Freezewood Rd in Ashton at the time. My Dad was in the Army and my Mum was just a housewife.

I remember my childhood in Eldon Close in Bedminster, just off Parson Street. That was like family, my gran lived next door. From there we went to St. Philips, Chapel Street. That's all been pulled down now, it's all scrapyards where the houses used to be. From there to Shirehampton where I spent up to my teens, and from there to Hartcliffe Estate. I didn't like Hartcliffe Estate. I got married and I lived in Whitchurch then. Then from there to Easton, and I've been here ever since. I've moved about a lot because of divorces.

Out of all the places I've lived in Bristol, I feel most attached to this one. What I like about here is that everybody knows me, black, white, Asian, I don't feel threatened in any way cause they know me. If they don't know me, they know my kids. Even people I don't know say, "All right, Lyn? How's Tommy?" so I feel safe. I like the house, I like this street, and I like the district. I'm not against this district. People are, but I'm not. I've been here for so long. I've done a lot to the house, so it's nice. I shall prob-ably stay here 'till I die, more than likely.



Shirehampton was special to me. I used to go up to the woods and Lawrence Weston fishing out of the ponds. It's all built up now, but in them days it were country. I used to climb the rocks, I loved that. *(t, l)*

I used to have a canteen while they were building Maytrees Home for the Blind *(t, r)*. That was good memories there because I was earning some bucks. I lived in Robertson Road. That was the first house I ever owned with my husband, and it was a nice house.

I used to live in Walton Street. I loved it there. Music going and drinking out on the wall in the summer. *(b, l)*

Mrs Reenie's Story



My name is Mrs. Irene Hawthorne and I was born in Jamaica, in the country, in a small place called Mount Peace. I came here in 1954 when I was 21. They started inviting us here in the 1950's and we came over one after the other. The invitation was to work, we wouldn't leave our country just to come here to walk about. I was a nurse, so I came straight to Dudley Road Hospital in Birmingham. I wish I had stayed now. It was really eye opening for us. We didn't know anything like what we see here. People in my country is very, very loving. It was living like pigs here, they treat you like pigs.

At the hospital it was really horrible treatment, I was the only black face. The nurses was ok, but the patients, the old people, you couldn't think that old people could be so horrible. I went to give one her tablet, and she said, "I don't want your black hands touching me", and just push it out of my hands! I just walked out. They had the police out all over the place to search for me but I wouldn't go back. I walked the streets looking for work, and I find it. Then jobs was quite easy to find. You could just walk into one in the morning, and if you didn't like it you could find another.

When I got married, my husband had family in Bristol so we came here in 1960. We were living in Kingsdown up on that hill (*t,l*). There was a lot of black people living up there. That hill! That was fun. If you're coming down when it's snowing and you fall at the top, you find yourself at the bottom. I liked Bristol better. There wasn't so much smoke.

After a couple of months we moved onto City Road (*t,r*). Of course then it was lovely and clean and pretty. We heard it was a very rich place, it was all rich people, very posh. You had to walk to find some black people, but we had a room in a black person's house. It was harder to find jobs down here, but I was offered two jobs in one week. Will's and Fry's. Tobacco and cocoa from the West Indies, both connected with my country. I heard it wasn't very good to work in Wills, you had to inhale the smoke, so I went off to Fry's and stayed there for five years. Then I went to Mardons making boxes (*b,l*). I get on lovely with everyone at Mardons. I worked there for twenty years 'till it closed in the recession in about 1984. Then I went to Carsons, I think it was called Famous Names then.

My church is very important to me, it's a place where I can find peace. I love the pastor at Kensington Baptist Church (*b,r*). I've been to different churches. In those days some of the vicars was quite horrible as well. My husband and I went to one church and we were the only black faces, and the vicar said in his sermon, "We've got the heathen coming to church." My husband got up and walked out. I waited to shake his hand because I wanted to look him in the eye.





Sue and Joe Little

Sue's Story

My name is Sue Little and I was born on Ashley Hill at the Mount Hope Maternity Hospital, run by nuns.

My grandfather lived on Ashley Road and was one of the founders of Muller's orphanage. He married a Miss King of Kings Square. We lived in Chew Valley at the time.

I came to Bristol at 16 when my father bought an antique shop on the Wells Road. I went a bit wild really, running away from home, rebelling, just the same way children get into trouble these days. I did hairdressing, I worked in a shop, I worked in a kennels. I was quite mixed up and never really knew what I wanted. It wasn't till I got married and started a family that I thought, 'this is what life is all about.'

At first we lived in a caravan in Patchway, and then we came here just after it was first built. Things started to go wrong, so we separated. A year after, I met Joe, and we've been here ever since. Lots and lots of children we've had because we do fostering. I worked for eight years at Stoke Park Hospital. I did love that.

This is my home and I love it here because I'm facing where my grandmother lived. Her family had the Coach and Horses in Braggs Lane. It is so strange that I live on the same road as she was born. When we came here 30 years ago the flats were just going up. I love my home. It was my first real home. It's lovely here for the children, they can go and play and you don't have to worry about them too much. People talk about Easton, it's got such a bad name, but everybody speaks to you. My neighbour next door, we've never had a cross word in 27 years. When the children were small we were all into each other's houses for cups of tea.



The house on Ashley Road where my grandfather lived, with a photograph of my grandfather's family. *(t,l)*

Our family now on the same steps as my grandfather's picture. *(t,r)*

The old Mount Hope Maternity Hospital where I was born. *(b,r)*



Joe Little's Story

My name is Joe Little and I was born in St. Thomas, Jamaica in the West Indies. I was there until 19 years of age. I came to this country in 1962. I was an apprentice electrician and wanted to take the exams, but my dad was strapped for cash. So I asked my brother who had been here some years before me, 'Can I come to England and go to college?'

He had a grocery business on the Grosvenor Rd. I came over and helped him during the day and went to college at night. I would help him make syrup, bottle syrup, and take it to Birmingham and Peterborough. I was studying at St. George Central Institute and living with my brother above the shop at 78 Grosvenor Rd. I passed my exams, but my brother's business folded.

I went to the Government training centre in Fishponds for six months, and then got a job with Drakes and Skull in Bedminster. I wired those flats over there (Rawnsley House). We had a recession and I was made redundant. I went to work for a scaffolding company, and I was there for about two years, then that firm shut. Then I moved to another engineering firm in Bedminster, then that shut and I was out of a job again.

Finally I got a job as an electrician based in Yate, and worked there for eighteen years. I had to travel a lot to Scotland and Wales, sometimes for months at a time. I always came home at the weekends. Then the man who owned the business died, and my world fell apart. I thought, 'What do I do now?'

I saw this ad in the paper, Brunel Care, at the time, so I applied. My mother died at the same time. As soon as I came back from her funeral in Jamaica they rang and said, 'You'd better come in for an interview.' There were a lot of people going for the job, so it must have been a blessing from God. They said, 'You was the last application and you was the best.' I've been there eleven years now working for them, I do all the electrical for their care homes.



Grosvenor Road was the first place I came. It was different then. I had friends I could go and talk to, friends I could relate to. I can't talk to younger people now. All they want to do is get drugs up them and drunk and I'm not into that, never was into that. *(t,l)*

When the council did compulsorily purchase Grosvenor Road I was re-housed in Gloucester House. I was lucky to get it because you could not get a council house for love nor money if you was a single man. There was a woman who lived above, and it ended up that she is the grandmother of the children we are fostering now. People say your life is like a circle. *(b,l)*

Snuff Mills is a special place for me. I take the kids there on a Sunday. You can walk right through, we've done it over and over again. *(b,r)*



Karan Jit Babbar's Story



I'm from India, near Delhi. When I came to this country my in-laws were already in Bristol, and that's the reason why we came here, to join them. We came here in 1977, to the same street where we live now.

I'm from a Hindu family. I'm not a fundamentalist person. I respect every religion: Muslim, Sikh, Christian. I respect every religion, but obey always my Hindu religion. Hindus are very rare in Bristol, so we have got only one temple, in Redfield. *(b,r)*

Because I live in this area in Easton for last twenty two years, I should say I love it. I have met so many different cultures, different communities, it's nice. Everybody treat me, and I treat them like my family. I love it. People understand each other.

