

Richard 1, 2, 3

15/04/2015

Interviewer: Katy Wade

Interviewer: I
Respondent: R

Richard 1

00:00 I This is Katy Wade interviewing Richard Trengrouse on, I've forgotten the date... 15th April 2015. Richard can you please tell me about the first family that entered the Sparkbrook/Balsall Heath area.

00:14 R Well the first family that came of my sort of antecedents were the Trengrouse Family, who originally came from Cornwall and worked on the railways. We think that they went to Bristol in the 1850's and then in the 1860's for some reason ended up in Massachusetts, moving back into Birmingham, moving to Birmingham. perhaps in the late 1860's, early 1870's and ending up in Brighton Road in Balsall Heath which at that time obviously was in Worcestershire and was quite an affluent area.

00:47 R The other side of the family we're less certain of, my mother's side they were the Vann family, they owned a pub or an off-licence on Highgate Road, we think from the 1880's onwards up until the second war when they were bombed out. They had, shall I tell you the story about the children because that's quite sad isn't it. Erm when my Nan was born in the off-licence in her Nan's off-licence, sorry the mum's off-licence. She was born on the top floor, the reason she was born on the top floor because her brother and her sister were in coffins on the first floor, and they died of diphtheria the previous day. A shock from Katy! I always think that that's just so tragic but I think it gives an idea flavour of the times, the flavour that, we look back at a rosy glow view on these things, but in fact these were hard and desperate times.

01:48 R The Trengrouse family are quite interesting in that certainly our records show that one of the daughters of Anthony who moved to Brighton Road in Balsall Heath in the 1870's managed to produce two legitimate children, around about fifteen years apart, both of whom died in childhood, very early childhood. Again demonstrating the tragedy of the times, but it's interesting thinking what the impact that was on the family and by the status of the family of that time, again something that probably was in my great grandfather's living memory and would have known about but was never ever talked about which I always find fascinating. But certainly is there on the records that we've got going back to that time.

02:33 R So both families really extend to Balsall Heath and the surrounding area by I

would say about 1880/1890, and if you think about it they were immigrants both in, the Vann's maybe at some stage we think from the Netherlands but the Trengrouse's or Trengroses as they would have been in Cornwall, were internal migrants, and you had huge internal migration to Birmingham, people will say aw you're a Brummie and I would say well what is a brummie because we're all migrants into Birmingham in one way or another, either internal migrants or elsewhere in the UK, or from much further afield as the world gets smaller, as transport grows. So yea we were established by that time and those are the earliest records that we have in Brum. I've got books in my dad's possession actually, family bible which goes back to the 1860's and we also have books from an aunt Emily, was given by Aunt Emily, Uncle Tom's Cabin would you believe, which we think Aunt Emily was one of those that came back from Massachusetts who lived actually in Ladywood, quite near to Balsall Heath.

03:45 I Can you tell me a bit more about the family after the original migrants here?

03:50 R Yes erm the family did what families do, in Birmingham, they moved out with the city. As the city moved out you can trace them moving out. My mother's family, well my grandmother's family, they had a shop in Farm Road, Sparkbrook from, well probably again, the end of the 19th century and quite amazingly through to 1978/79. So they saw a huge transition, and when the pub was bombed and the front was knocked off it in the war, they then moved to the shop and apparently there was initially a florists and then they expanded out into women's lingerie and hardware which is a strange combination but in different shops and my granddad actually had a chip shop as well on Farm Road at the end at one stage, so they occupied three or four shops on Farm Road up until the 1970's, and in that they saw a huge transition of population, and as a child I was very aware of that transition, obviously later as I saw as a geographer, I sort of able to put a bit more context around that. So that was the Vann and later the Trueman family on Farm Road and we can talk a bit more about that in a moment because I think it will be interesting to look at who comes in and what the transitions are and how as a child, that sort of came into my knowledge and only now looking back on it do I realise what I actually was seeing at that time.

05:25 R The Trengrouse family perhaps a little bit more conventionally moved up the Stratford Road as all migrant families do. They started in Balsall Heath, they later moved into Evelyn Road in Sparkhill, we think they spent a time in Sparkbrook, they then moved on to when the Grove Estate was developed on the edge of Sparkbrook and Hall Green in the late 1890's and I think we've seen some pictures of the beautiful Grove Farm that was on the site of that, they moved there. That was developed by a freehold land company who bought the estates off the Taylor family and they lived there until in the 1920's when part of the family moved up into Hall Green as Hall Green developed. Another part of the family married into the Seeley family, who lived on, that was my paternal grandmother's family who lived on Knowle

Road and Solihull Road just off the Stratford Road, and also they did a similar thing, I don't know their movements before that, how they came up the Stratford Road, but they later moved on into Hall Green. But the interesting thing is when they get to Hall Green and what happens to them, and I think it's about growing confidence, growing wealth and education. Is their children didn't follow that trajectory out, what they then did was also I think as I was explaining earlier, rather like a pea, they sort of exploded and the children went all over the place. So you have their children ending up in Solihull, in Sutton, in Rubery and even further afield than that. So there seemed to become a point where the families don't follow that trajectory but just go WOW and move out into other parts. So the family moved in a very traditional migratory route up the Stratford Road and I think sometimes we think of the Irish doing that, we think of people from the Asians subcontinent doing that, what we don't think about is the precursor migrants, these were the Cornish, these were the Scots, Jewish as well migrants coming in at the turn of the century and before, who follow that route before them. So there was a slow movement out to the edge of the city, always following the edge of the city out.

07:50 I Can you tell me a little bit about your parents?

07:53 R Ooh that's a good one. Erm shall I start with my grandparents? My grandparents, I'm not saying my parents aren't interesting, my grandparents were very interesting. If we take the Vann side, that's my maternal grandparents and the shop, they were the Wongas of their day, they lived in some affluence in the Cotswolds up until maybe only five or six years ago on the basis of their wongarish activities in Sparkbrook and Sparkhill from about 1930's onwards and this was that these shops that I've mentioned before, they ran on a system of credit and tick, the famous tick system, and this was that they would give you for a deposit, they would give you a good, let's say lingerie, let's say ironmongery, I don't think they did the fish and chips on tick but you don't know. I wouldn't put it past them, put it like that, and then you charged interest, and fairly high rates of interest on subsequent down payments. As I say Wonga of their day. And as migrants came in, obviously they didn't have much money, they were looking for ready access to goods and these little shops in the area and it wasn't just my grandparents, there were loads of people doing it. They actually had, they actually set up these things called books, and interestingly my grandmother and my mother's house, there is a rather nice, not very special piece of Victorian furniture and it says a bit about poverty in the area and a bit about how things were managed in the early, very early years of last century.

09:37 R My nan was part of something which I think was called a thing me or a jig me or something like this, and a group of young women would get together and they'd put a penny or twopence in a week, and over a year they'd draw lots and so every week you would get the sum of all the money that had been put in, and my nan before she married actually got to her period where she got

all the money and she went and bought this little piece of furniture, it was a little display cabinet which still exists and was bought through this rather strange saving system, a bit like a primitive credit union. But going back to the wongerish activities of the family, they collected money, and they were as far as I can see, the system was if you bought it in and you paid it off fine over a period of time, if not granddad was sent in and granddad was a Trueman originally from Tamworth, and he would go and collect the debts and when I worked for the Credit Union in Sparkbrook I remember talking to somebody and I said oh my family had shops on Farm Road and she said oh what shops were those? I said well there was the lingerie and the ironmongers and there was there was a chip shop as well and she said REALLY who were they? And I said well it was Bill Trueman and she said that old so and so, I'll take the expletive out we'll delete that there. She said he could have got money out of anyone and he was famous apparently, a little old man even in his seventies and eighties for knocking on doors with large sticks and extracting money out of people. But it was the system that operated at the time and in many ways the migrant populations as they had been migrants in their own time, actually were where they made their money from and looking back on it it's quite funny really (*laughing*). I always remember walking up Sparkhill with granddad who at that time was a little old guy with a mop of white hair and his stick and people would walk across the road and as a child I didn't quite understand this, but I think I probably understand it now. So fascinating in many ways. He was interesting in his own right, he was a merchant sailor in the first war, managed to keep on the East Coast of Africa for the whole of the war so avoiding any action whatsoever and ended up in Australia for a while and then came back and helped run the shops on Farm Road. But I think what they saw was that progression of migration.

12:21 R The other side of the family worked again on the railway and just moved, this is my paternal side and just moved up. Some sad stories about the paternal side of the family, my grandmother Elsie who was known as Dolly, she had a brother, a favourite brother that was called Dick, his real name was Arthur, heavens knows why these names got changed, but their dad was a drinker, quite a heavy drinker, and they had to really scrape and save and in those pictures the corner of Showell Lane where Dick and Dolly used to sell papers, selling papers on the corner of the street was not as it is now where you can take the papers back, you had to buy them upfront and stories are told in the family of Dick and Dolly having to be there til ten o'clock, nine/ten o'clock at night until all the papers had gone in the rain, otherwise their dad would have not been well pleased, to put it mildly. So I think we forget these were extremely hard times. So both sides of the family followed that trajectory, one working predominantly in the rail industry, the other having their famous shops and their wonga activities (*laughing*).

13:46 R It's really funny, you look at these things and you think, it's only really when I

went back, we lived in Rubery and my parents actually moved, one part of the family, their parents, my dad's parents had moved to Acocks Green coming out of Sparkhill, again you've got the roads moving apart like that, Warwick Road, Stratford Road, one went that way, one went the other way, and it was only when I actually believe it or not, how I got to know all this was that I used to work for Friends of the Earth in Allison Street in Birmingham and before Friends of the Earth had the Allison Street building, they were in a little terraced house at the bottom of Moseley and I got very involved and I moved into this terraced house and then realised in fact it's on the edge of Sparkhill and then talked to my dad and realised there was a whole family history around it and so not really research it, I just sort of absorbed all this stuff from people from different parts of the family then traced the family back, I'd known the Farm Road shop really well as a child and then started to realise how all this fitted together which is quite fascinating, I find it quite fascinating. But it was just happen stance that I worked for Friends of the Earth and the house that they started at was there, and then I discovered all these things fitted around it which was rather nice really. The story of Dick and Dolly is rather sad really, it was a big family, there were eight children in the family living in a tiny terraced house in Knowle of Solihull, it was Solihull Road actually sleeping tip to toe in double beds. You didn't realise that? No it was quite common, so one would sleep up the bed, the other, so there were pillows at either end and you slept end to end in a bed, yea.

15:33 R And Dick was the oldest of eight children ranging actually from him at the beginning of the First World War at twenty one to a baby of two months. So it was a huge gap, huge breadth in the family. They started really young, she was eighteen when she had her first child. Dick couldn't sign up and he couldn't sign up because he was a reserved occupation, he was a very skilled toolmaker and was moved around the country actually making the tools to make the munitions and obviously you always forget that these very skilled people like Dick couldn't be called up because they were essential to produce the armaments.

16:15 R The end of the first war in the end of seventeen, beginning of eighteen, they decided to do away with it and call up all those, and this is quite brutal stuff, call up all those young men who are on reserve occupation including Dick. And Dick, there is in the family, there's a picture of my great grandmother Seeley, that is my father's maternal grandmother, with the whole family and Dick in the middle in uniform, Arthur was his real name. My uncle Arthur who died at the weekend was named after him. Anyway it's the look on the faces that always gets me about this. The lads looked very proud, here's our brother you know and they were eight, nine, ten these were and he was twenty three at that time, looking very proud. But the older daughters and the mother and the father looks worried, he's a drunkard, he looks quite worried, but the look on my great grandmother's face, well I knew my great grandmother, was absolutely is terror. On my view is a face that looks absolutely horrified and she's scared stiff about what's going to happen to

Dick. He goes to and we've been there, we've been there to his grave, and he goes to northern France and this is the brutal bit, he's there for a couple of days, there's an incident, we know exactly where it was, his legs were blown off, he died two days later. If he'd died immediately it wouldn't be sort of a thing that grates and hurts so badly even now, almost a hundred years on. But he died two days later which means he died in agony and I think that's something that was tried to be protected from my great grandmother.

18:03 R My uncle Frank became a very strong pacifist after this, he was very close, he was about twelve when Dick died and he wouldn't let his mum go to the Somme and he said, you don't want to go mother because and another thing people forget, there were coach tours to the Somme that went from the Hall of Memory in Birmingham every couple of weeks. There were always coach tours going out with families going out to the Somme to see the graves up until well even into the 50's. Again that level of grief is forgotten, just go to the Hall of Memory and look at it, I mean it's an incredible, it shows the outpouring of grief that occurred. And Frank, my uncle Frank said to my great grandmother, he said you can't go mother, it's going to be a huge cemetery, miles and miles of these graves, you really don't want to go and so she never went. She'd always wanted to go but she never went. Anyway when she got to go about fifteen years ago, we really ought to go this year to his grave, it was a tiny little cemetery right by the banks of Somme inwards with a whole melee of people in the cemetery ranging from Sikhs, Germans, Irish, Canadians in one cemetery and it really is tear jerking when you go because it is exactly what my great grandmother would have wanted and when my gran and Dolly his older sister, they were really close, she died quite young, she died in 1967 and I always remember my dad coming back from telling her mother, this was Dick's mother you know all those years on, that Dolly had died and my great grandmother's response was "*well what's it mean to me? My children have been dying since 1918.*" Yea and I think that is the sort of poignancy that sometimes we forget, that the horror of this, it's very easy to look on these wars as sort of something that was that is not relevant to us or as vain glorious, and even I can't be doing with vain glory, I can't be doing with the pomposity, and even I can't be doing with these things because I just have to think about Dick and what happened to Dick and it shows me what did he die for, sorry I'm going to go off on one. What did he die for? He died for vain glorious monarchies for pompous politicians. The Second War was very different, but this war was the last of the real horror of dynastic wars in Europe and was totally irrelevant to anything that ever happened, bit of bitterness there.

20:41 R Right so I think it's worth saying about Dick and Dolly because it's just so worth saying because you know, when you look back on it, how I found out about Dick and Dolly, well Dick, was no one mentioned these people. The problem with the first war was they were not mentioned. When they're gone, they're gone, it was held inside and dangerously held inside, and I found out about it because when Dolly died and my grandfather, this is my

dad's dad, who had not been well for most of his life, some of that brought on by his experiences in the first war. We actually had a bonfire of stuff at their house and out of the flames came a little medallion like that, a little locket that's right, and I opened the little locket and the picture was a soldier and that was how I found out about Dick. I said "*well who's this?*" Someone said it must have been Dick and I went "*you're gonna burn this?*" And so that's how we found out about Dick and then loads of stuff, we've got his will, we've got pictures of him, pictures of him and his girlfriend, all sorts of things like that which is rather nice, but it doesn't take away from the horror, the absolute horror of what happened to him.

22:04 R One of the things I haven't mentioned is my nan and my nan's recollection of the Lloyd family, which, I think when you look at Sparkbrook, one thing that really comes out to you is the topography of it and the urban form that it actually encompasses, and I think we discussed earlier the issues of the Calthorpe family and how they managed to keep Edgbaston which was a very prosperous suburb. The Lloyd family moved into Sparkbrook from North Wales, they were Quaker bankers and ironmasters in the 1760's/1770's buying a farm, when obviously the main house is still there, I actually still remember the farm, I can remember the farm buildings and going to the farm buildings, which were only demolished twenty years ago and actually the person who demolished them is a friend of mine which find a bit sort of ironic, but they were in an appalling condition. They bought the farm, they bought the house and they built the house you currently see in Sparkbrook Park and their estate about 70/80 acres was around it, including Fairhill which was where Dr Priestley lived. In the 1880's as the city was moving out, pressure came on them to actually develop that land, but as far as I can see, they sold it as freehold plots and a very large house and very beautiful large houses which you now see on Dolobran Road, parts of Sampson Road, Osborne Road were built. But this only lasted a very short time, these were affluent and my nan could remember the Miss Lloyds actually coming down Farm Road which is the avenue to their house in their carriages which I always find quite touching and in fact the Lloyds lived there until quite late, I think until the 1920's when they moved over to Edgbaston, so there's that great link to the Lloyd family, but I think when we discussed Rex and Moore earlier, it rapidly became a zone of transition and you rapidly saw a huge change and you saw those houses as the wealthy people moved out, probably to Edgbaston, not up the Stratford Road as my family moved up, but probably to Edgbaston and other wealthier areas of the city. It became lodging houses, it became flop houses, all the things you'd expect to see and we talk about Burgess and the Chicago School of Urban Development and it became a zone of transition really from probably before the First World War, you started to get that development, at that time we'd got the internal migration, Jewish migration coming in from the Pogroms in Russia and the pressure in Russia particularly, and also surprisingly Italian migration, there was some Italian migration into Birmingham.

24:48 R A lot of these early migrations are forgotten because they just dissipated out through the community, but there were people coming in at that time and so that became sort of the zone of the main zone of transition and zones of transition were very much the dynamic parts of the city. I always think it in terms of the mid-Atlantic trench or something a bit complex here, but the mid-Atlantic trench you have all the, of everything going down into the earth and then suddenly coming up again and it pushes everything out so on plate tectonics the world is being pushed out from these plates, I think very similarly with these zones of transition, what you've got is the churn of people coming in and then they move out as they get more prosperous up the road. So in Sparkbrook itself you had this area of very wealthy housing at one time but briefly wealthy housing, quite rapidly turning into this zone of transition where you've got lots of people coming in, predominantly men at that time.

25:52 R The one thing that perhaps I haven't mentioned which is an embarrassing part but has been in the area, there's a huge sex trade in the area and I remember Claremont Road which actually there is pictures of in Rex & Moore sort of quite early pictures of it in there which have become one of the famous red light areas, Varner Road was another one which I remember and I didn't quite know what these things were at the time, good and innocent, and obviously that attracted all these single men, attracted that sort of activity, and I always remember at the shop there was a lady of the night by the name of Sadie who my grandparents and my aunts were extremely fond of and it's quite interesting isn't it, they were quite fond of her and they extended her an easier form of credit from what I recollect. So there was, so you had this quite big red light area, particularly around Claremont Road, it was all the early clearances of the area, which when you look at pictures of it, it was particularly squalid if you look at those pictures and I remember looking out at Claremont Road from the upstairs storage rooms in the shops quite early, I remember it really well, so you've got all those sort of things come in with at the zone of transition and people coming through and then as they got more affluent, moving out and later you got the Irish people moving in, there was a lot about that in Rex & Moore as well. Big Irish migrations, probably of the 1940's/50's, very much around the construction industry and so the development of Birmingham and the sort of stuff we're knocking down now is built in the 50's and 60's, particularly the 60's, huge growth of Irish migration to pick up the jobs created by that and followed by new commonwealth migration and the transitions through there and as those people became more affluent, they moved out.

27:49 R You had other housing up there, you had the Barber Trust Housing further up which we've spoken about, which was originally sort of high status working class housing, but also declined dramatically as again people moved out to the suburbs. I think the interesting thing is that people move and what tends to happen is the men come in, they've followed late when they've got a bit more money by their wives or their girlfriends, the rest of their family, and as

they settle down they want to move out to better pastures and again you see this movement up the Stratford Road, very much as internal migrants, people who had moved from different parts of Britain did in the years perhaps up to the 1920's, so they all follow this route and the tradition of it, and my family saw most of this moving out, the Irish particularly in the 30's, 40's & 50's and then the new commonwealth migrants coming in and that actually was more of although, they got on very well, they had some very sort of, I say they were great fans of Enoch Powell at the time, not that I ever was, I have to say that, but they were.

29:04 R But they were interesting because they were very friendly with a lot of people from those communities, even though, yes they exploited them quite badly, and so when the South Asian population came in, that was quite a culture shock for them and I remember, again I remember my granddad saying *"I go round these houses to get the money, they're all eating out of big pots with pancakes."* And now I know of course that these are rotis and I eat this most of my time. You know I have done since I was a youth but it was that shock of the new and once you get over that shock of the new, things become, you know you realise yea we're just people. People to work with, people to intermix with, probably also I have to say on the wonga front, people to exploit, and so they saw these transitions coming in, big African-Caribbean population in the area. Oh one thing I did forget to mention which is bizarre is Oswald Moseley, do you know about Oswald Moseley? Oswald Moseley was the leader of the British Union of Fascists, he was very active and ended up in term during the war because he's married to the Mitford sisters, I can't think which one it was now, the older one Debbo has just died, Unity was the communist, I forget which one was the fascist, there were two fascists, the one shot herself, I forget which one that was. Jessica was the communist. Anyway by the by, but he had his national headquarters on the Stratford Road just opposite what is now what's left of I think the Congregational Church and there are a row of houses there where Oswald Moseley had his national headquarters, yea.

31:04 R So you understand why, because even at that time in the thirties this was an area of change transition, trying to build on those prejudices, those pretty awful feelings that often are there to migrants at any time. You know people always have this view of migrants that they are there to take their jobs, take their houses, it's there throughout history and throughout history it's nonsense (*laughing*).

31:33 R We were talking about pubs and I was mentioning... let's talk about the Bulls Head and then we can go on from there. The Bulls Head is quite an interesting pub, it was again on the main coaching road down to Oxford from Birmingham, but that junction is quite interesting. Yardley as a Worcestershire parish up until 1880 was actually part of Pershore which seems bizarre because Pershore is in South Worcestershire, looking at the Hundred Maps which I was at the weekend, Pershore Hundred had two

sections, the bit around Pershore and then everything really from Yardley Wood up to Stechford was in Pershore Hundred of Worcestershire. The church obviously was at Yardley, now it was one of the biggest parishes in the country and obviously you had to get to the church to be buried, and so there was a funeral route and the funeral route ran from Yardley Wood over to Yardley Church, which was about three to four miles, and it followed the line of Highfield Road and it followed through down Fox Hollies Road which wasn't called that at the time, passed Fox Hollies Hall, down Stockfield Road to the Swan, then up what was then called the Causeway which is now Church Road up to Yardley Church, and obviously the place they would have stopped off for a drink was the Bulls Head and so you would have had a lot of funerals going across the parish until the outline churches were built, the Job Marston's chapel which is Hall Green Church, have you seen that? That was built in probably the mid eighteenth century, it's about two hundred years old, so probably about 1740's 1750's I think, that was built and then Yardley Wood Chapel was much later in the 1890's, but that was the original route that they would take across the parish to take the coffins to the church, which is a bit interesting, it's fascinating really and these routes apparently are all over the country you get these routes and that's one particular.

33:33 R The Mermaid again is the site of another coaching inn, do you want me to tell you a story about The Mermaid? Alright let's tell you a story about The Mermaid. The Mermaid has had various incarnations, there was an early coach inn on the site, some nice pictures of that, probably built in the early 19th, late 18th century and there was a very ornate Victorian building which was built on the site which was bombed and the front was knocked off in the first war. It became a very popular Irish pub and really good music pub. Anyway I will tell you this story, my partner gets bored sick of this story. But we used to go there before I lived with Jo, we used to go there for Irish nights and I was very into Irish music. Late one night, this is many many years ago probably in the early 80's, I'd just moved back to England at the time and into the area, yes that's about right. I went to an Irish night there and it was fantastic, this band were amazing.

34:39 R As the night went on, they got more drunk and the music had got better and better, lots of republican songs, Full Green Fields, Soldiers Song came up and it went on and on and on. Anyway at about half eleven there was a power cut and when the power cut went on, this may not be for you so have a think about this, there was a stamping of feet. What on earths going on? And there was a stamping of feet, came passed us, it was pitch black in this room. Anyway it went passed us, went towards the stage and about a minute later the lights went on again and standing on the stage, the band had gone, disappeared into the night, and on the stage were four men in military uniforms, with stocking masks, hats and armour like rifles and they moved aside like this and a man with an officers uniform came out with a revolver, and he stood there and he said I've got a bucket and he produced a bucket and he said *"we're now having a collection, it will be a nice quiet collection, I*

will not hear the chinking of any change.” So the bucket went round the pub, there were ten bob notes in those days thank god, so it shows how long ago it was, with these ten bob notes. Anyway pound notes, they were pound notes, pound notes were quite a lot in those days but you weren’t going to ask any questions were you and then he went back of the stage, he comes out again, they walked along side, he comes out and he said *“thank you for the quiet collection.”* Then there was another power cut, they disappeared into the night, the band reappeared and the music started again. And we were just like *“WHAT WAS THAT?”* I've never seen anything since, never seen anything like it since, it was unbelievable. It was an IRA active service unit in Birmingham and we’d never seen anything like it, it was incredible and very strange experience indeed. I bet you didn’t think you were gonna get that one did you?

37:14 I No.

37:16 R So yes there was obviously a lot of Irish republicanism in the area and it manifested itself in pubs and they were pubs that were very sympathetic to the IRA and to Irish nationalism, very interesting, and of course you’ve got the churches who in many ways the Catholic church was very enlightened in the area, suddenly you know the catholic priests I knew in area were great great people and you still get this residual people would come back into the area, if you look at the English Martyrs, you look at St Annes, people come back in to those churches very much they did, we discussed the pollicised churches before which are St Albans, St Agatha’s and St Barnabas’s on Ladypool Road, these are very Anglo Catholic churches, the Pollock brothers were Anglian priests in the 1870’s/1880’s. They were very close to Cardinal Newman, but they didn’t go to Rome, so you’ve got this very strange brew of Anglo Catholicism, I’ve been to services there, I've never been to an eastern orthodox service but they’re what I'd imagine an eastern orthodox service would be like and people from there come in from long distances away and we’re talking about migration again, people come in to those places, to those places of worship from as far as Henley, Stratford and even further afield than that will come there because of this particular form of worship.

38:55 R Again that’s residual attraction to the area because of certain things, these people, it maybe because grandparents, great grandparents lived in the area and I think you will see similar things, I think there are a lot of Sikh and Hindu temples in the area and Gurdwaras and temples and those people now predominantly have moved out, they’re predominantly in Hall Green, they're predominantly in Solihull, but they come back in to worship, so you get this sort of residue coming back in and so things change over time. I suspect eventually those will close at some stage, but there is a long historic attraction to area and suddenly the English Martyrs there is a huge attraction of people coming back to English Martyrs. I think that story’s worth preserving somewhere but where it needs preserving I don’t know because it's interesting isn’t it. Have you heard anything like that before?

- 39:52 I No.
- 39:55 R It's amazing, we were just like "*OH WHAT, I DON'T BELIEVE THIS*" and I literally shook as I came out of the building and I've worked in Northern Ireland so I know a fair bit and it's probably the most scariest thing I've come across. They never did anything, obviously there were pub bombings, but apart from that there was very little active service what I would call military IRA operations in Birmingham but I think it's worth keeping somewhere isn't it.
- 40:27 I Yea.
- 40:28 R It's worth keeping somewhere because who knows, who records that? So there we are. What else would you like to go on to? You can see, we're talking about shops, obviously my family were shopkeepers in Sparkbrook for a long period of time, and I think they adapted very much to change but they saw things going through and they saw the transition of shops up the road and you can see it in banks in many ways. I think banks are a good measure of how people move. You had all the English banks obviously, the traditional English banks, Barclays, Lloyds, NatWest, going up there, most of them, I think all of those have gone now and you don't really get those banks up until really when you get to Hall Green, but you did have a lot of Irish banks, you had the AIB, Bank of Ireland, very big branches and these now you will find those now in Shirley which charts a move of that population up the road, and now you've got Asian banks who are coming in behind, Bank of **(inaudible)** Bank of India, Bank of Pakistan, who are quite big in that area but I suspect in time will move on themselves up to higher up the road, but I suspect eventually people will just start using just conventional banks and people are tied to banks in their homeland for a shortish period, but you can see it in banks. You can also see it in and again going back to Rex & Moore, there's quite a big bit in there about it and certainly you will see still in Sparkbrook Bourke Stores on the corner of Ladypool Road, which is a residual Irish store and there were numbers of stores set up to support the Irish, that sold particularly Irish things, you know Mikado biscuits always reminds me with something that's very Irish, Barmbraks, potato farls, things like this, people who were yearning for their home would want.
- 42:20 R You know if you were yearning for home, you would want that and so these local businesses set up often by migrants themselves. Migrants tend to when they initially move in, actually set up businesses which were around memories of home. So restaurants, grocers selling things that people would want who are feeling particularly homesick, so with the Irish it very much was around selling those sort of items which reminded them of home and I remember those really well and Bourke Store is perhaps the other thing, there were things like bacon shops, there were lots of bacon shops up the Stratford Road, because obviously on Sunday you boiled your bacon and had

cabbage with it, that was a traditional Irish fair on a Sunday and I remember cooking it myself when I lived in Ireland. So there were those and as they moved up wards, other ones came in and you can see that transition now. So you had the Kashmiri shops coming in, the first one in fact that I recollect was Uncles on Ladypool Road which is actually Sikh, but very much serves an Asian clientele, South Asian clientele. You had things like the Gohil Emporium which I always used to go in because of the huge variety of different odd things which I could buy quite cheaply and they did a very good line in joss sticks, I used to like that. So you had these stores developing, obviously Halal butchers came in and they would again move up the street. You had the start of new vegetables, the sort of muli, things like this coming in, a lot more peppers, a lot more aubergines.

43:56 R You have to remember that really until the late 80's aubergines were a rarity, peppers were a rarity, things that we look at now as being staple fair were very rare. I always remember when we used to go to Rackhams to look at aubergines, you never knew quite what to do with them but you went to have a look. Avocados which again is something which my mother tried to eat as a pear because she thought it was a pear, a sort of pear which was most disgusted when she put her jaws into the thing. So obviously the homesick feelings of that population, it sort of fed to so they could get the foods they liked, there were restaurants obviously, pubs, Irish pubs from serving food and then with the Kashmiri population coming in and the Mipuri population.

44:47 R You've got restaurants opening up because obviously they wouldn't have the alcohol contents, so you've got lots of restaurants. The first one I went to was Saleems on Ladypool Road which was probably about 1977/78, I don't know when you were born Katy but it doesn't seem a long time ago, it's probably when your mum and dad were born then. But yea and again it's interesting isn't it because people, the population then, I'm not going to use the word indigenous because there isn't such a word for Birmingham as an indigenous population, that does not exist, but the population that was there previously actually started to absorb those food tastes, so our food tastes changed dramatically, we started using these new strange vegetables that were coming in and we started, you know chicken tikka masala, I'm a vegetarian but for a vegetarian, South Asian cuisine is lovely and you've got a lot of interest in cuisines and I think from the problems with South Asian cuisine is we tend to view it as "Indian" and it isn't, there's Gujarati, there's Kashmiri, there's a whole range of different cuisines. I particularly like Gujarati cuisine and Kerelan cuisine because that's kind to vegetarians and the Jyoti's interesting, actually the Jyoti particularly, let's look at the Jyoti because the Jyoti has a very interesting in terms of their migration route out and the Joshi family who I am very fond of and are very good cooks, but they started off on Ladypool Road and we're talking again look at my family back in the 1880's the Joshi's started on Ladypool Road in the Janahma and on every Sunday they would do masala dosas and they did this wonderful

masala dosas and you would go and every hippy in Moseley would track down to the Ladypool Road to get their masala dosas and the wonderful samosas were out of this world. From there they moved out to Sparkhill and they moved into a shop in Sparkhill, were there for about fifteen years, they are now in Hall Green, but it's very interesting if you talk to the Joshi brothers and it's a very popular restaurant, people come from all over from the Welsh borders people come to go it, oh yea it's that popular, the quality of food is really really high and it's the best Gujarati cooking probably in the city and you go there and the food's wonderful and you talk to the brothers and you say well what happens? What's next? What is the transition? Where are we going with this? And they say well unless one of the kids actually wants to take it on, it collapses and it's very simple, their kids are dentists, doctors, accountants, they are middle class, they are increasingly living further and further out of the city.

47:31 R Do they want to be working in an industry which is low waged, even on a restaurant which is exceptionally popular, low waged, having to work every hour god gives, do you want to do that? And the answer is once you've got past the second generation you don't, so the shopkeeping, the restaurants, the food, I think relate back to your place of origin, but eventually peter out and you can talk about, when I used to go with my granddad going back to my granddad and the shop, we used to go into Birmingham to buy clothes, for the lingerie shop, we used to go to these places and they were predominantly at that stage run by people with a Jewish background, they aren't doing that now, they've again have moved on and become more prosperous and I think you can see that transition, you start with things around clothing, around food, cafes, restaurants, and as the community gets more prosperous, as that group gets more prosperous they move out and they drop away from that because these are hard things, you don't want to be doing that, folding samosas for the rest of your life. So when you talk to the Joshi brothers, they will say they're all doctors now, they're all architects, are they going to carry on?

48:47 R And tragically we could lose large parts of our South Asian cuisine which to me is one of the great joys of Birmingham. Some will survive I'm certain, but certainly not the balance of them, and it's no longer aspirational within that community. With the aspirations of that community, first, second generation yes we will do that but we don't really want to be doing it, the third generation's aspiration, they want to be doctors, they want to be professionals, they don't want to be doing that and hence if we're not careful we lose a lot of that variety of cuisine and again a variety of shop because Aldi will undercut anybody and eventually you go and shop at Aldi or if you get posh you will go to Hall Green Waitrose, so you know it's that sort of transition, shopping is shopping, food, clothing, other things which define immigrant communities, as they sort of become more prosperous as they become more part of society, they then drop that.

Richard 2

00:00 I Could you tell me a little bit about politics in the area?

00:03 R Yes Sparkbrook is quite interesting. Sparkbrook was predominantly conservative during its more wealthy periods and went over to being liberal and labour, obviously it was a great liberal city at one time under Joe Chamberlain, then went quite conservative and then in the 40's and 50's became more and more labour and I think what's more interesting, well that's interesting, is just the progression of councillors through the area, watching how each group moving in, part of it sort of settling down in Birmingham, was talking on roles and responsibilities within the city and becoming councillors and you see the local councillors becoming predominantly Irish in the 40's and 50's, people like Barney Downey I remember well, was one of the first Irish Councillors, he died on the 70's, it's quite scary isn't it. But there was a group of Irish councillors and then that obviously as they moved out you got Kashmiri councillors coming in, people like the current MP for Perry Barr, Khalid Mahmood was a councillor in that area for a while, and sort of cutting their teeth in the social and the sort of civic life of the city, you obviously had magistrates being appointed from those communities as well. So as people got more confidence, as their wealth grew, so they started to take on these responsibilities within the city and you can see that when you look at the composition of the council today, or in my case, the composition of the magistracy where we are about 30% minority I think communities which I think is great.

01:45 R The thing that's interesting is the sort of minority politics of the area and the quite frightening minority politics of the area, and in the back of my head the name Oswald Moseley kept on ringing a bell and I thought to myself, there's something about Oswald Moseley in this area isn't there, so I thought back and somebody spoke to me that Moseley had a headquarters actually in Sparkbrook in the 1920's and 30's when it was a new party sort of merging into the British Union of Fascists and so I thought let's go and see if I can find something to confirm that, so I did find an article on the web from some years ago now through Fircroft College talking about Mosley having a headquarters and pictures I've seen a very elegant Georgian house, just next to St Agatha's Church in a row of elegant Georgian houses which was very palatially set out and obviously with Moseley always done for a reason, done there because you had that juxtaposition of the Irish as it then was population of Sparkbrook and what was I suppose English although as I said earlier I think everybody in the city is migrant, English population and capitalising on that, that seemed to be there through the 30's, probably until the new party started to collapse and the internment of Moseley through the war period. Then much to my surprise, Moseley re-emerges in Sparkbrook in the 50's, I think 55, when he tries to set up a meeting to discuss well, with his view "combat" African Caribbean immigration and I have to say having read it, read the bits on it on the web, some of the things that were said were

alarming and scary in terms of his attitude and the attitude of his followers, to African Caribbean people coming into the city. I mean almost Nazi in their approach and tried to capitalise on, now fortunately he didn't and from what I recollect, the performance in the elections of those years was really weak.

04:10 R But then you get this follow on in the mid 60's when you had the election of Smethwick and in Stechford, where some very, one particular party said very unpleasant things about migrants coming in, I don't know how much you want me to go into this Katy but I don't think I will go into the full depth of what was said, you can read it, but it was quite unpleasant. So politics, yes we had the normal trajectory, we had a move from liberal, conservative, labour, different councillors changing from different backgrounds and people getting that confidence but then you had this quite unpleasant attempt on a couple of occasions to implant some severely extremist right wing views into the area which thank goodness, good old Brum failed.

Richard 3

00:00 R Hall Green College on the corner of Cole Bank and Stratford Road in Hall Green, erm building was first built in about 1960, the first part, and added to subsequently over the years and interestingly my cousin was one of the first set of students through the doors of the college in 1960 doing French and she later went to live in France. The original buildings were in fact in Sparkhill which was the institute on the corner of not Durham, the next one up road which was built in the 1920's and that was Sparkhill Commercial School, and then it moved out when they were expanding further education in the 1960's and built a very modern building. On that site originally being a house called Kyotts Lake which in fact was a family who had moved up from Sparkbrook would you believe? They'd had a house called Kyotts Lake in Sparkbrook on Kyotts Lake Road and they obviously moved up to Hall Green when that was developed and built another house called Kyotts Lake, and there were two big houses on this site. Predominantly sixth form activity if there wasn't a sixth form in the area, a lot of construction activity around the college and that developed really through the 60's and lead to students actually building one of the blocks.

01:23 R Not the best built of blocks but one of the blocks which is against the railway line, which is now used for health and care, but originally was and parts of it still are, set out as brick laying booths and plastering booths and it became the main construction college for Birmingham, eventually taking up occupation of the old Umbrella Works on Welby Road in the late 1980's, and subsequently the whole provision moved out to Bordesley Green about ten years ago, but the college has developed subsequently. Hall Green College became South Birmingham College in 1991, started to take a much bigger involvement in the inner city and in a place that we've just been talking about Sparkbrook and Sparkhill and doing lots of outreach work in there.

- 02:15 R It set up a number of centres, unfortunately most of which were closed, and I just went past the Cannon Hill Centre which is now up for sale because of budget cuts, but there was a lot of work done, particularly with women in that area from the Kashmiri community and getting them education, many of them haven't been to school, English and people actually moving on to higher education and eventually moving on and becoming teachers, so some phenomenal success in this work and getting people used to the idea of all members of the family working, not just the men working, if you're going to have enough of an income to actually set your children up and be prosperous, everybody has to be economically engaged, and I think one of the things that I found interesting thinking about this was the attitude of many of the people who were involved in this education because they'd see a young woman come in with no qualifications with very poor English, work her way through up to teaching, and then you'd say well where have they gone? Where are they? They're not where they were and they'd find eventually they'd moved to Shirley because of cause as you increased your wealth, you looked where was the next stage on to go to and they moved to Hall Green and Shirley, so again I think a lot of people thought this would build the community in Sparkhill, Sparkbrook.
- 03:41 R What they forgot was a lot of people wanted to escape from Sparkhill and Sparkbrook, and the majority of these young women and these families, their partners, their husbands and their kids, often mum and dad as well traipsed off and got themselves a house in Shirley based on the economic capacity that they had, their increased earning power through getting education. So I think Hall Green College has had a major effect on the dynamism of the road and that sort of push factor as you get your education, as you get your confidence, you move up the road and you go to Hall Green, you go to Shirley, maybe you went up in Stratford-upon-Avon, but this is what's been happening and so it's had a big part in that, it's done some very pioneering work, working in schools with young women, particularly around sort of the late 90's, early years of the last decade, some very innovative work.
- 04:38 R So I think a major part in this, but there's interesting thing that actually education and confidence actually fuels the dynamism, it doesn't make people stay where they are, they want to get to where they're going and most of these young women I used to meet were extremely ambitious about where they wanted their family to be and it was usually Solihull. **(Unknown)** she lived in Sparkhill and so up they went, up the road they went. She didn't get to Shirley unfortunately, things went wrong and you see this, so why do we expect people to stay where they are and we expect them to actually be there in a hundred, but they're not going to be there, it's a dynamic and our city works on dynamism. So you know it's interesting stuff.
- 05:31 I Do you know much about the Newey Goodman factory and the BSA factory at all?

05:38 R Newey Goodman not so much, BSA a little. My dad did some work for BSA in the 1960's and it says a lot about BSA, come across Lady Docker? Mmm, Lady Docker and her pink Rolls Royce, I forget what it was, something like that, but we often talk about union militancy causing problems, we often talk about the workers causing problems. BSA as with most of the major industrial plants in Birmingham, the problem really was the management. The unions were peripheral to the problems and certainly BSA was a major issue and in the late 60's my dad and a friend of his, a colleague of his at University were called in to BSA and my dad's friend had been to Japan, he'd worked in Japan and he'd seen the bikes the Japanese were producing and they went into BSA and his friend said look he said *"I've been to Japan, I've seen what's happening there. Unless you change, you're going to last five years and you will be gone, blown away"* and they said *"don't be silly, little yellow men are never going to replace us."* You go WHAT? And this was the level of insularity, racism, obviously we'd fought the Japs in the war, they weren't going to beat us and this total dismissal of the Japanese as an economic force. Sure enough five years' time, no BSA, attempts to revive it on various occasions and the product was very good, it was very expensive, it was beautiful, they still are collectors' items. In terms of mass market motor cycles, no they haven't got a clue and his friend came back to say well that's the end of them, and of course at that time nobody would have believed him. So BSA was a huge employer, thousands of people, there was also the Hillman Car Plant on the same site and I remember it well as a kid and there's one building left and it's tragic isn't it that thousands of people who worked on that site, there's now one building which stores old tyres, that's all that's left of the complex. Badly bombed in the war but, certainly just didn't move with the times, and that is the problem with that level of insularity is quite shocking and it's true, a lot of the heavy industry in Birmingham, the management were just complacent beyond the bounds of belief. Mum and dad said he said *"they're finished, BSA finished?"* You know, so BSA, that's a bit about BSA. Was that any use to you?

08:39 I Yes.

08:40 R And it's disappeared, BSA just went and now it's a collector's item, that's all it is, which is very sad. Newey Works I know very little about, it used to have a very nice playing field at the top of Hall Green, it was a very attractive factory and I got the impression that they may have been a bit philanthropic I don't know, because they seemed to be very nicely set out unlike a lot of the factories, but I don't know very much about them. Have you found out much about them?

09:10 I No, not much no. I think I need to do a bit more research.

09:12 R Well BSA are Birmingham Small Arms, because they originally made guns,

that's what they originally did. They must have come out of the Jewellery Quarter, no sorry the Gunnery Quarter not the Jewellery Quarter, the Gunnery Quarter at some stage. So yes.

09:31 I Could you tell me a little bit about the Quakers in the area?

09:34 R Yes there's Quaker Meeting House on the corner of Hamlet Road which is a lovely little building, locally listed, but also Hamlet Road says a lot. One of the major land owners in the area, his name has just escaped me, the initials were on the outside of the Meeting House and on the houses in Hamlet Road. He was a follower of John Ruskin and he decided he was going to build himself an artist colony in Hall Green, Yeeea! And he built a hamlet which are these houses, beautiful little houses some of them rather debased now. But some in beautiful condition and well kept on Hamlet Road, and he built them a school room and meeting room which is the Quaker Meeting House, and I don't think it lasted very long, there are a number of these Ruskin Colonies around the country and some in Wales I've been to see. And in the 1930's if I recollect rightly, the Society of Friends actually bought the place as a meeting house as Hall Green expanded.

10:38 R That time they hadn't got a meeting house in Solihull, hadn't got a meeting house in the immediate area, I think the nearest one was Stechford at that time which has long gone, but it's still quite a thriving community, a Quaker community around that meeting house, but again interesting diaspora again when we talked about St Agatha's, people come in, people come in from quite a way to go to that particular meeting house. People come from Moseley, people come from Solihull, people come from Henley-in-Arden, further afield just to go to that particular meeting house. Lovely building, originally had a caretaker's house at one end and then the school room for the hamlet on the other side.

11:18 R The guy whose name just escapes me, lived in a beautiful house on the corner of Fox Hollies and Stratford Road opposite the pub, and it will come to me at some stage but I can just remember the house as a child being really really beautiful and it was demolished, and some modern day houses built on the site. So that's the history of the Meeting House and to think there was a Ruskinite like colony in Hall Green is just bizarre isn't it, it really is odd, but did you know that before?

11:49 I No.

11:50 R Yes that's where it comes from, there we are. There a number of these around, there's one actually, have you been to Barmouth in Wales? Lovely journey by train and there's a Ruskin colony there, beautiful, built by another, all built by philanthropists on the side of the hill and she shacked up with a refugee from the Paris Commune and he's buried at a French man's grave and it's in this beautiful position looking down on history, absolutely superb

and then there are quite a few around here, Chartist Villages, have you come across those?

12:26 I No.

12:27 R Stunning. The Chartist Land Plan of the 1840's Feargus O'Connor, people like this, they decided to go back to the land movements and the idea was you had a cottage with an acre of land in which you grow your produce and again there would be sort of communal like activities going on. There's one at Dodford near Bromsgrove which there's a National Trust now got cottages and there's a huge one just outside Gloucester and there's also one near Burford and they bought this land, split it up and for a while these were run on a communal basis and they really are worth going to see, totally stunning, it's something that's totally by the by, nothing to do with the Ruskin colony of Hall Green, but there was a Ruskin colony in Hall Green.

13:12 I Could you tell me a bit about the cooperative's that used to live in the area.

13:16 R Well the co-ops in the area quite interesting. I've got a friend who knows a lot about them but they used to come in threes predominantly and you'd have a grocery in the middle, which would do the dry groceries with your tinned goods and cooked meats and things like that. On one side you'd have a butchers and on the other side you'd have a greengrocers and they came in threes and above, quite often there was a Co-op hall where the Co-op Societies would meet and so there was a Co-op Women's Guild, wood craft folk. Things like this would meet in the room above. Now along the Stratford Road, I'm working my way up and I can't think of one that was actually designed in that way. There was one in Yardley on Stoney Lane which is par example, it's got the three and I remember the greengrocers was always open at the front, so it had shutters, but it was open in all weathers and then they had stalls that came down into the street with the veggies on, and the halls above were quite nice rooms and they were designed because obviously the Co-op had quite an educational ethos that went with it and supported this range of different societies.

14:35 R The Co-ops Women Guild was still going in the 80's and early 90's and wood craft folk in one form another survives until this day as an alternative to the boys and the scouts and guides. But probably not so much attached to the shops as it was in the past. The ones at the Stratford Road were predominantly conversions of an earlier property that the Co-op bought, there was a large blocks of shops opposite The Mermaid, another block opposite the Lloyds TSB, what's Lloyds now on the corner of Springfield Road, the whole of that block opposite there was Co-op and then there was one other Co-op because there wasn't that much shopping in Hall Green itself and there certainly wasn't a Co-op then until you got to Shirley. Most people would go either to Shirley or to Sparkhill, Springfield which was the main shopping centre for Hall Green up until the 1980's, late 80's, early 90's was

the main shopping area for Hall Green. My aunt of ill repute, never shopped in Hall Green, she always went either to Shirley or to Sparkhill, to Springfield, so the Co-op runs, yea, actually they still own the property, they never sell a property the Co-op don't, they always keep property, so they've got a huge property portfolio along the Stratford Road.

16:07 I Could you tell me a bit about how transport in the area has changed?

16:10 R Well obviously there were trams going up and down the Stratford Road and we always think of electric trams but before that, I don't think there were horse trams on the Stratford Road but there certainly were steam trams and my grandfather actually travelled on a steam trams up and down the Stratford Road. I'm sorry about this but he travelled on steam trams and he told me about these hissing monsters that used to go up and down, they had like a traction unit like the engine at the front and they pulled the tram behind and there are some very nice pictures somewhere, which I don't know where they are at the moment, of steam trams on the corner, going past the corner at Farm Road. Now when the trams ended in the 1950's, well that generation of trams ended and rather tragically, they were all broken up. The tram depot on Kyotts Road in Sparkbrook which is just behind the row of shops and they were all taken there and broken up. So that was the end of them was there and obviously now we're putting them all back, and then sixty years later they come back, but tram was the major route in and out of the city, very rickety and my dad was always really worried about when he cycled into Birmingham about getting his bike stuck in the tram tracks and it being crushed, but yea and we talked about the railways before didn't we.

17:33 R We talked about the North Warwickshire line, the opening of the North Warwickshire line, it was the main route of transport into Birmingham, but the other thing is that's quite interesting is that the Corporation buses, these sort of predecessors of the West Midlands buses stopped at the boundary, so you had to change buses at the boundary and only certain buses were allowed to go through, but predominantly all the Birmingham buses finished at the top of Hall Green and then you had to get Midland Reds beyond there. By the time I was around, the buses, the Midland Reds went through, Corporation buses tended to stop, one or two went on, but previously you actually had to physically change onto a different bus at the junction of the boundary. Didn't know that did you?