



# how to develop oral history groups

for cross  
community  
dialogue

a **CNet**  
guide for  
community  
groups



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You can also download a copy of this booklet and others in the series by going on our website: [www.cnet.org.uk](http://www.cnet.org.uk)

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## 1. Introduction

**This booklet is supported by an accompanying DVD and other resources hosted on the CNet website. Whilst not essential we would suggest you use this booklet with these resources to structure and prepare any sessions with groups. The purpose behind this booklet and DVD is to help facilitate cross community and intercultural dialogue and group discussion prompting interesting conversations and facilitating understanding between people, communities and groups.**

Central to your activity is creating a non-threatening safe space where people feel comfortable in sharing their own personal stories with other people whom they may not know or may never have met before. In later chapters we'll discuss in more detail how you can achieve this and how you might deal with issues arising.

The DVD is a thirty-minute film exploring the personal journeys of members of an elderly group living in Bradford who all arrived as immigrants from the Asian sub-continent in the late 1950's onwards. This film is in a sense an oral history. Oral history gives value to the lived experience of ordinary people, regardless of their age, background or personal beliefs. It allows everyone to tell their story in their own way. The relevance of oral history to cross community dialogue should be apparent, it is easily adapted. Potential subjects on which to base a dialogue are almost limitless or limited only by the willingness of participants.

Whilst this toolkit is not solely a how-to-do-oral-history, we do put some stock in the value of oral history and reminiscence as a tool for opening dialogue within groups and engaging relative strangers to talk with each other about what they know best through sharing stories of their own personal experience. This approach or method is perfectly suited to all age groups, as well as inter-generational and cross cultural gatherings.

This is not to imply that we should not work with people who share the same cultural background and life experiences. Indeed this may be a necessary first step in bringing different

cultural groups together. The section titled "How to Develop Oral History Groups" is aimed squarely at working with people who share many commonalities yet the ideas and suggestions that are contained in that section are easily adapted to cross community and intercultural work. The short section titled "Dialogue" is pointing directly to a tried and tested approach to intercultural work.

Also included in this booklet is a 'snapshot' overview of the history of migration to Bradford. We found placing individual and group experience into a historical context to be especially beneficial in a number of differing ways. Even well settled communities rarely need to dig too deep before their family roots run out of Bradford. We have produced a Powerpoint to help facilitate a presentation of this topic, available for download on the CNet website. Feel free to edit, remove or change the slides to suit.

There are many approaches to this work and it's largely a case of finding out what works for you and the people you are engaging. We expect you will adapt the ideas in this booklet to suit your own approach. Our experience has been to work in a quite informal way allowing conversations to emerge in a naturally organic and spontaneous way creating a space that allows participants the opportunity to retread topics and themes as they feel inspired.

The concept of interculturalism embraces the idea of a fruitful exchange between different cultural groups. It is this idea of a fruitful exchange that we should hold in mind throughout our activities. This kind of exchange is only possible in a civic culture based on the values of freedom and democracy and respect for human rights. To that end we have included a short chapter on social action.

## 2. How to Develop Oral History Groups

Everyone has a story to tell, reminiscing groups listen to these stories and systematically collect people's memories and experiences. In fact it's now been recognised that the everyday memories of everyday folk have historical importance, so if they are not collected and preserved, then there'll come a day when they've gone forever. These stories are unique, valuable treasures from families and the community and through Reminiscing groups they can be preserved and as the techniques of collecting them can be so flexible, folk of all ages can adapt the ways of collecting them. Over the next pages you'll be given an insight into how to set up such a group.

### 2.1 Reasons for setting up a Reminiscence Group

Reminiscence is the act or the process of recalling and sharing one's memories and is a normal part of everyday life for most people of all ages. There has been a considerable growth over recent years in this sort of activity with older people in particular, as it has proved to be beneficial in terms of their health and social well-being. For example a loss of a partner or close friend can lead to isolation and with-drawal, particularly in later life. A reminiscence group can go a long way to offer a means of inclusion in a group which shares a common life experience. Also such a group can encourage the sharing of memories with others from a similar background and can generate a sense of belonging to a community and thus having a role within it.

Other reasons for setting up such a group can include:

#### ★ **Cultural Integration**

It can be a means of celebrating differences, as well as a way of bringing communities with differing religious, cultural and racial backgrounds together in order to exchange and share life experiences.

#### ★ **Friendship**

Through contact with others sharing common new friendships.

#### ★ **A sense of history**

Sharing stories with people of the same generation or with people of a different generation can help to place individuals as participants in historical events.

#### ★ **Stimulation**

Being part of a group where memories are shared can help to stimulate the recollection of long forgotten experiences of which many can be pleasurable to recount once more.

#### ★ **Creativity**

Using creative and artistic activities to explore people's memories can be pleasurable for those taking part and entertaining for those with whom they may wish to share their results with.

The group leader needs to possess the essential skills listed below and to use them purposely and in a planned way in order to get the most out the group.

★ **Good listening skills:** be very attentive to what every speaker is saying, don't rush to question or prompt

★ **Receptiveness:** relax but show that you are pleased to be listening and that you are interested and value what is being said through your eye contact and body language.

★ **Curiosity:** you need to have a real passion to know more and to learn from the group, especially as they will be very quick to stop reminiscing if they feel you are bored or doing this work out of duty.

★ **Sensitivity:** make yourself receptive to the feelings that the speaker is revealing as well its content, especially where a painful memory may have been triggered.

★ **An accepting attitude:** don't judge the person remembering, instead show that you have listened and understood what they said and respect their point of view.

★ **A reasonable memory:** you must be able to recall what has been said and be able to refer back to it, so you can make the person remembering feel that it is worthwhile talking to you, and so you can make links between the different stories.

★ **A sense of humour:** you need be able to create a relaxed atmosphere. As well as sharing the bizarre and unexpected and the funny side of things remembered.

★ **Adaptability:** you must be willing to change plans quickly and 'go with' the interests of the members of the group without making them feel that you have no sense of direction yourself.

★ **Imagination:** some people find that talking is more difficult than other ways of communication, such as singing, dancing, drawing etc., so you need to provide as many of these alternatives as possible for creative expression of their memories.

The group leader also needs to:

★ **Be Prepared:** work with the group needs forward planning so that appropriate resources are to hand which will stimulate all the senses. This includes having relevant things to have to hand, this could be things to taste, smell, handle, look at, listen to and use in the sessions.

★ **Have Clarity:** be clear about the group's purpose and objectives and purpose make sure the group know and accept them, including practical aspects such as the duration and number of sessions and where they will be held and when.

★ **Have a democratic approach:** everyone's contributions need to be valued and the time available to the group must be shared.

★ **Confidentiality:** it's essential to create a sense of security and confidentiality within the group and to make sure all group members accept this idea.

★ **Confidence:** the group must feel that the leader knows what he or she is doing, and can take control if difficult situations arise between people in the group or around painful or challenging memories.

★ **Courage:** the group leader should be willing to tackle emotional and complex subjects, so long as the group wishes this. He or she mustn't lose confidence if there are moments of sadness. But also bear in mind that the support of other group members who have shared similar experiences is one of the

elements that can make reminiscence such a comforting process.

★ **Caring:** there is a responsibility to take care of the emotional needs of group members, ensuring that each person is welcomed individually and if someone is distressed, time is made for them to talk (if necessary after the session).

★ **Practicality:** the physical needs of the group need to be considered. This would include making sure all participants are able to see and hear everyone else in the session. Arrangements should be made also for people, who are hard of hearing to sit opposite or near the group leader, and the room should be comfortably warm, well lit and be somewhere in the building that isn't disturbed.

## 2.2 Planning a series of reminiscence sessions

Whatever the proposed plan is, it is important for the group members to be part of it by accepting the plans in principle and be able to contribute to shaping it as it develops. There does not need to be any written contract with the group, but there is a need to agree about the objectives and ground rules of the group at the outset, especially concerning mutual respect and confidentiality, listening to one another, and a willingness to share memories in a nonjudgemental setting.

The group leader also needs to agree a framework for sessions, saying how many weeks the group will run and roughly what topic or theme will be discussed in what week. It is though, important to be flexible enough to be able to respond to spontaneous developments within the group. An interest in a particular topic, for example, might emerge and it may therefore need two weeks to itself, or an event in the outside world might stimulate a number of memories which need to be shared in the group.

Every session needs to have a shape, with starter activities, a main section for story-telling and creative work, and a conclusion, which should include a summary of what has been covered and a discussion of what will be covered in the following session. It is good practice to build a

break into each session, as this helps to strengthen the group feeling as well as creating a relaxed setting. As the weeks progress, the group leader needs to remind members as to how many sessions remain, and to the approaching end of the project. As well as preparing a final session, which celebrates what they have achieved. If the group members feel they want to continue after the proposed number of sessions have been completed, it's important that the leader renegotiates with the group and they agree a new schedule. It's better for both the leader and the group to commit to a fixed number of sessions and extend them, than start with long-term commitments and have them shortened.

### 2.3 Themes and topics

Listed below are some themes and topics that could be covered by the group;

- ★ Childhood games and pastimes
- ★ School days
- ★ Food and cooking
- ★ Ambitions and dreams
- ★ Courting days
- ★ Entertainment and fashion
- ★ Weddings
- ★ Family life and grandparents
- ★ Having babies and bringing up a family
- ★ Festivals, rituals, special occasions, weekends
- ★ Significant journeys, holidays and travel
- ★ Wartime memories (but this is not appropriate for everyone)
- ★ Work
- ★ Memories of coming to Britain as an immigrant.
- ★ Memories of a significant moment in time e.g. how you celebrated the Queen's coronation/ your memories of the miners' strike.

Whatever the theme is though, it is important to offer different types of sensory stimulation in order to help people remember. Objects familiar to group members from their past are a good starting point and they can stimulate many senses. For example, an old hand-made shopping basket will have a smell, a texture, a design, a

weight when empty and full, a physical association with carrying and shopping, and a taste connection with food purchased in the past in markets and shops. Objects also have different associations for different people, so that comparing one person's memory of going shopping with someone else's will be a way of conjuring up their different backgrounds and communities. Often objects provide a more relaxing starting point than questions, provided they are chosen with care and are culturally appropriate to the group members.

Listed below are some of the sources of stimulation, which can help to make reminiscence sessions varied and enjoyable:

- ★ **Sight:** photos, films, paintings and colours, maps, flags and symbols, diagrams, technical drawings, posters.
- ★ **Sounds:** songs, familiar and unfamiliar music, bird and animal sounds, weather (wind, rain, snow), sounds of trains, machinery noises, babies laughing, children in the playground.
- ★ **Words:** place names, famous people, stories, scandals, poems and proverbs.
- ★ **Tastes:** food, drink, sweets, medicine, cooking and baking, unusual or foreign, old recipes remembered from childhood or passed down from relatives or friends.
- ★ **Smell:** medicine, perfume, make-up, cleaning agents, mothballs, herbs, spices, cooking smells, flowers, trees and countryside smells, coal and wood burning.
- ★ **Touch:** contrasting textures, contrasting temperatures, different fabrics, human touch, food ingredients, animals to stroke, babies to cuddle, clothes to handle and fold.
- ★ **Movement:** games, dance, mime, greetings, gestures, work movements such as typing, sewing, lifting, digging, religious rituals.

### 2.4 Dealing with painful issues

Reminiscence sessions can quite often lead into more wide-ranging discussions, concerning how people's past decisions are now affecting their lives and often in ways they had not wished

or expected. Feelings of pain and loss can surface, as could un-resolved family problems and conflicts. Fear of raising these issues can inhibit those who may wish to undertake reminiscence work. They may feel that they are not adequately prepared to deal with the “fall-out” from such occurrences and that it is safer to steer clear of them.

However, reminiscence sessions can provide a valuable opportunity for group members to share some of these painful feelings with others who are familiar with them and who can empathise. This sharing often helps to reduce the burden for those of coping with such feelings alone and provides much needed support for individuals. In this sense, reminiscence is not just about sharing the past, but very much about coping with the present and facing the future

## 2.5 Recording memories

If a group is being recorded, it is important to ask people to speak one at a time, and to say their names before speaking. This avoids a lot of confusion for the person transcribing the tape. It also allows for the right setting for respectful listening which is essential if the speaker is going to feel that the effort is worthwhile. People must be asked if they are content to have the session recorded, and the reasons for doing so should be explained.

No individual should be obliged to speak or made to feel bad if they decide just to listen. The most common method is to record what people say in the group on to a tape-recorder or minidisk and then write out several of the most interesting stories. Stick closely to the speech patterns of the participants, but always make sure a reader can easily grasp what the speaker meant, tidying and clarifying where necessary and omitting statements which are muddled or confusing.

Transcribing recorded memories is a time-consuming process, but it is a very effective way of showing group members that what they say is valuable and valued. Put in at least a sentence from each person in any such summary, so that no one feels left out. It helps everyone to feel part of the process and starts them imagining

who else might be interested to read these memories.

If the text is typed and enlarged, the story can be exhibited on the walls of the meeting place to show others using the building what is going on in the group, and what interesting stories the group have to tell. Photos of the group at work, perhaps showing some of the objects they have brought into the group, will help to get the message across as well.

Filming sessions have now become much easier than before, since technology has advanced and cameras have become smaller and so less obtrusive that they do not inhibit the speakers, but there's a need to always ask for the group's consent before filming. It's a good medium for capturing and remembering the spirit of a group in action. It can be entertaining for the group to watch themselves on film and remember what fun they had together, and remember some of the tales they may have forgotten from earlier sessions. It is also useful to film people's old photographs and objects. These images can be used with voice-over commentary in any future edited version. However editing the film is skilled work and can be expensive, so unless this element is funded, it may have a limited value, except as a record of the group in action.

## 2.6 Creative development of the memories

A natural development from the sessions is to make a small exhibition which others can enjoy and which will demonstrate the life of the group. The exhibition could include memories, photos (both past and present), drawings produced during the sessions and perhaps some objects that the group have brought in to share with the group. Some people may worry about their more personal experiences being shown publicly and it is important to let them decide on any cuts or edits. It is enjoyable creating an exhibition together and can develop the group's confidence and sense of achievement.

Another means of sharing the reminiscence work with others is to develop a short entertainment of stories and songs recalled by the group during the sessions. The programme may need a compere or

link person to prompt the performers, and this could be the reminiscence group leader or another group member. It can include some solo pieces for confident members and some songs to perform all together. Again, the individual members must feel comfortable with what they are sharing, and must have the right to cut out a story which leaves them feeling exposed in an uncomfortable way. Preparing an event of this kind is another way of strengthening positive feelings about the group and offering an opportunity for sharing with a wider audience.

Some groups enjoy making improvised scenes from the stories they have told, and these can be threaded together into an informal piece of theatre to share with others. This approach is becoming more popular as groups realise what fun this can be, and that no previous acting experience is required. The scenes can remain improvised, so that people do not get nervous about learning lines and so that the spontaneity of the performance is preserved. There is scope for comedy here, and also for moments of sadness as people convey more complex memories. Songs can be interspersed to help the group move easily from one scene and one mood to another.

Working towards a festival for sharing of memories can be an excellent way of galvanising the energy of the groups concerned. It can enable them to focus on what is important to them to transmit to others who may be from different cultures or different generations. The process of preparation must not be too pressured, and it must not become a competition between the groups. As long as the spirit behind the event is one of co-operation and celebration, a festival can be an ideal means of generating creative reminiscence work that will improve the quality of life of all participants.

## 2.7 Reminiscence work across the generations

Sharing stories from different generations and cultures and with children and young people can be a powerful way of creating inter-cultural and inter-generational understanding. It is very important in such meetings that the older person is well prepared and supported, and that the

teacher or youth worker has done some background work with the children and young people and created a respectful atmosphere.

There are many benefits to both generations. Older people enjoy the energy, enthusiasm and playfulness of children and young people and often reconnect with these qualities in themselves. Elders who visit classrooms to talk about when they were young, often find they can remember the songs and dances of their childhood and pass these on to today's children. They are often surprised themselves at how their lives are so interesting to the younger generation especially if their own schooldays were not marked by success, and they become more confident as a result. When teachers and children use these inter-generational encounters as a basis for creative work in the classroom, the resulting displays of art, drama and creative writing are extremely gratifying for the older people involved, who feel that their lives are being recognised and celebrated.

For younger people it often comes as a revelation that the older people in front of them were once young like them, but in a different world. They soon recognise that there is much more to older people than just what you can see in the present and treat them with much more respect as a result. Young people's understanding of life in the past, and the changes that have occurred, can be deepened by listening to the first hand testimony of older people. These accounts can be verified and expanded through curriculum work in geography and history, including information searches through libraries and on the Internet. There can be further educational, social and cultural benefits when the stories of these "time witnesses" are explored in the classroom through drama, art and creative writing. These creative approaches help the children to relate what they have heard to their own experience of life, and make greater sense of it.

## 2.8 Putting the Cultural message across generations

One of the main motivators for ethnic minority elders in participating in reminiscence sessions and oral history recordings is the desire to pass

on their own culture and life experience to younger people from their own background. It is therefore important to offer this possibility to elders who express an interest in reminiscence, as well as providing them with the pleasurable opportunity of talking to others of their own generation. For children and grandchildren of immigrants, a sense of personal and community history is especially important in building self esteem.

Older people have a very positive role to play here, re-enforcing a cultural legacy, passing on personal stories and customs, and stimulating children in their communities to be interested in their own families' histories. By making bridges between generations and cultures in the classroom, ethnic minority elders can play their part in increasing social cohesion and understanding. It is important that all our children have some understanding of why Britain is a multicultural society today.

When older people from the Caribbean, for example, explain to children how they came in the post-war years to work in nursing or public transport or heavy industry when the 'mother country' was crying out for help, it assists children to understand the bigger changes in society and how they are affected by them. They can see history as something that happens to 'ordinary' people as well as great leaders, and indeed that it is 'ordinary' people who can make change and change history. Other countries' recent histories are different from ours, but are significant for us, and need to be reflected in curriculum work.

Much has changed in the way schools study history, geography, society and religions, especially in urban multicultural classrooms and the richness and variety of the pupils' family backgrounds are increasingly being recognised as a resource that cannot be over-looked. The grandparents and great-grandparents of the children have important stories to tell.

## 2.9 Finishing the session

At the end of a session of exchanging memories, people should feel that they have expressed what they have in common and acknowledged each individual in the group. "What an interesting bunch of people we are!" is often the response to

an active session, and that is why such a group can develop people's personal confidence and increase their sense of belonging.

## 2.10 Inter-cultural work

Not all members of the community you work with find themselves spending their later years in the company of people who share their language and culture, especially if their work or their family attachments have involved them in moving away from Bradford. They could well be sharing a room in a community centre with old people born in Britain, or coming from many different parts of the world. Reminiscence can be very beneficial as a means of bringing out the things these people have in common with their neighbours, and enjoying some of the special and different stories of their own lives. Group sessions can be a means of opening up communication, creating understanding between people from different cultures in the present and stimulating all concerned.

## 2.11 Working through interpreters

When members of the group who have little English, or it is not their first language, can lead to feelings of isolation and alienation. In this situation, the group leader should allow for this and even consider making special arrangements for translation, so that they can be included and there can be an inter-cultural exchange in the group. This can be done in the following ways:

- ★ Involve a relative in these sessions, If the group is an elderly group maybe a younger relative, this has the great benefit of enabling this relative to discover more about their own history and to be of service in helping the older person settle into the group and find their place.
- ★ An advertisement in the local press may attract someone in the area who speaks the relevant language and who would be willing to help on a voluntary basis or for a small fee.
- ★ Social services departments and health authorities offer translation services and may be able to help as an extension to their existing services or know of a volunteer or family member they have called on in the past.

- ★ The local college or university may have students with the relevant language who may be pleased to offer a couple of hours a week. A small payment may be necessary, but the benefits would be considerable to the older person, the group leader and particularly to the student.

Make sure that any interpreter involved in sessions has an idea of the purpose of the group, and really translates everything the older person actually says. This may sound obvious, but some interpreters are more used to obtaining factual information, and may not be clear about the need to translate the feelings, doubts, regrets and joys which are linked to those facts. If they become part of the session and see how the group leader is offering openings for self expression and creativity to the group, they will want to give much fuller translations.

## 2.12 Preparation and background reading

In order to give a professional touch to the sessions, the group leader should prepare a little. It is not necessary to spend a great deal of time doing this, but it is helpful to have some background to draw on to encourage conversation if the group needs prompting.

It is reassuring too for the group if they gather that the group leader is genuinely interested in them and their background. Given this support and encouragement, the group themselves can be the guides to their own country, its recent history and its culture. Here are some practical ways for group leaders to prepare:

- ★ Find a map (through the local library or off the Internet) which locates the home countries of the members in relation to the rest of the world. What is the nearest big city or landmark which some of the rest of the group might know?
- ★ If possible find images of the home countries, again either through the local library or on the Internet, so the members have a starting point and the others in the group can form a clearer picture of their homeland and their journey to Britain.

- ★ Find out a little about the history of these countries. Does it have historical ties with Britain through a colonial past? Or was there a conflict in the home country that led to group members seeking refuge in Britain? This does not need to be very detailed information, but enough for the group leader to be able to deal sensitively with issues which may crop up in the group.

- ★ Check the religious background of the individuals involved, and find out the key beliefs, observances and festivals of that religion. When discussing childhood and marriage in reminiscence groups, these subjects are likely to arise, they could also offer a starting point for a reminiscence session. Again, this knowledge will be helpful in finding common threads, such as festivals of light in the winter months and harvest festivals when the crops are ready.

- ★ Try to find a couple of objects which are specific to the culture of the person you wish to introduce to the group, so there is a starting point. This could be through a local market or museum, or through a cultural centre in the area. It could even be a fruit or vegetable which is grown and cooked in that country. Maybe group members will have something themselves, an object or photo from their homeland or from their early days in Britain, which has a story attached to it. Singing and dancing together to the music of the home country is another bonding activity, just as it is in any other reminiscence group, but it has the added power of keeping memories of the homeland alive.

## 2.13 Same language groups

Even in a group where all the members share a faith or a language, it is likely that they will come from many different regions and very varied social and educational backgrounds. They will have many stories to tell one another about their lives back home and their experience of settling in Britain. The reminiscence process highlights the uniqueness of each member's experience and generates mutual interest and appreciation. There will also be knowledge and experience in common.

## 2.14 Useful Links

Local and Family History:

[www.bradlibs.com/localstudies/vtc/destinationbradford/oral\\_history/index.htm](http://www.bradlibs.com/localstudies/vtc/destinationbradford/oral_history/index.htm)

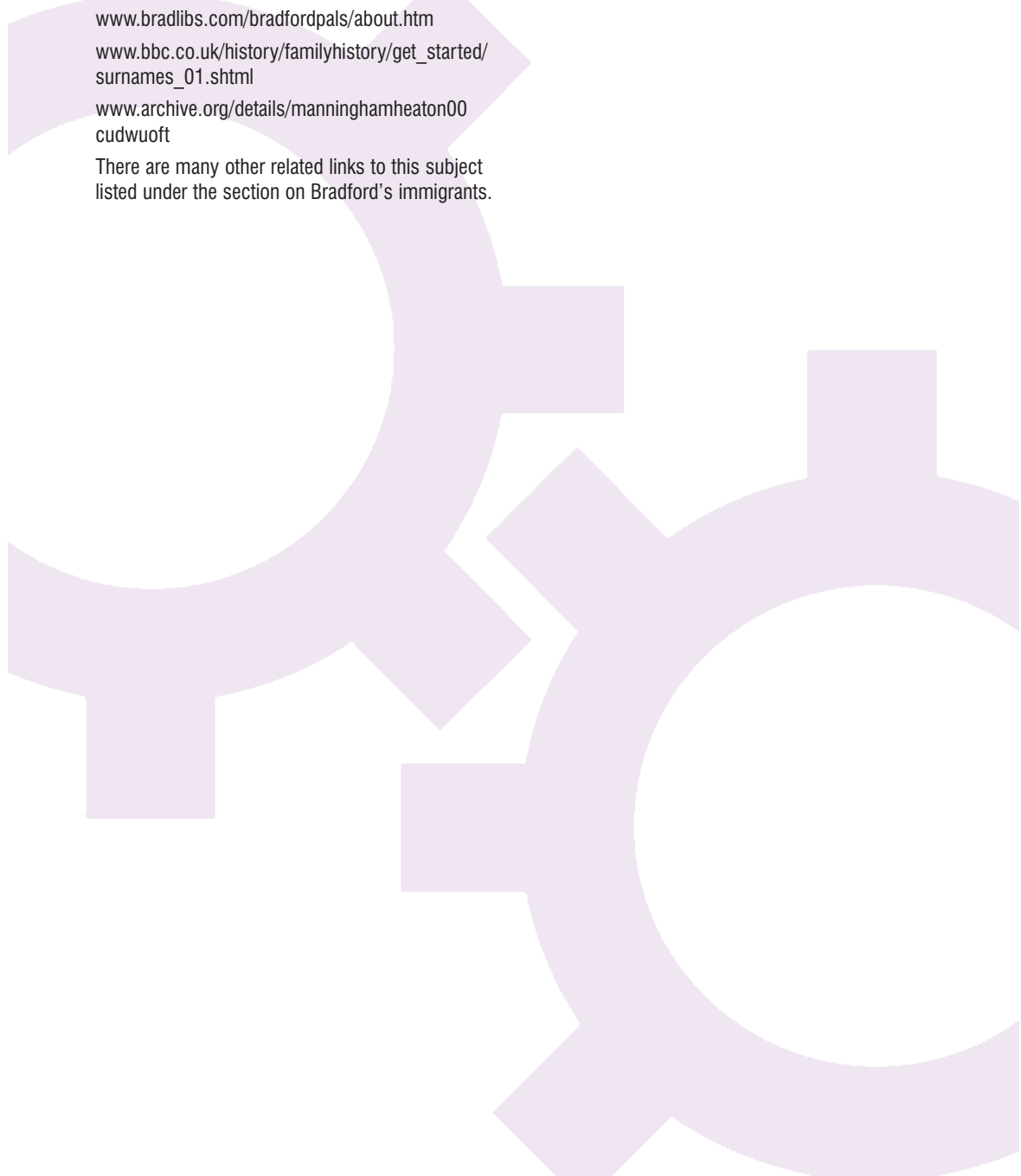
[www.schoolshistory.org.uk/yorkshire/index.htm](http://www.schoolshistory.org.uk/yorkshire/index.htm)

[www.bradlibs.com/bradfordpals/about.htm](http://www.bradlibs.com/bradfordpals/about.htm)

[www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory/get\\_started/surnames\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory/get_started/surnames_01.shtml)

[www.archive.org/details/manninghamheaton00cudwuoft](http://www.archive.org/details/manninghamheaton00cudwuoft)

There are many other related links to this subject listed under the section on Bradford's immigrants.



## 3. Dialogue

### 3.1 Why Dialogue?

We are challenged by difference (of class, wealth, religion, language, for example) whilst also separating or defining ourselves from others by our difference (eg, regional accents and dialect, age, gender, ethnicity, culture, social activities and so on). And where we perceive little sign of outward difference we find vast gulfs in our difference of opinion! Difference is a fact of life.

We have a right to declare our difference but perhaps in claiming these differences we do well to better understand one another and the things we have in common as well as the things that make us different. Dialogue offers an opportunity:

- ★ To bring people together
- ★ To promote mutual understanding
- ★ To share experiences and identify commonalities
- ★ To increase appreciation of different cultures
- ★ To develop respect for human dignity
- ★ To promote the values of freedom and democracy
- ★ To reduce racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

### 3.2 What is Dialogue?

Dialogue is not a discussion and certainly not a debate. The distinction is important. A discussion is a decision making process. The Latin origin of discuss is “discutere” - to dash or shake apart. Discussion analyzes, breaks down and prepares counter arguments to close off alternatives, with an aim to win, to persuade and to convince. In this sense discussion is competitive.

Fundamentally dialogue is playful and curious. It is an active inquiry involving all participants working together to discover and explore new possibilities. A dialogue is a communication and relational process that aims to keep conversation open and creative... to uncover something *interesting*.

A competitive discussion may assume your idea is better than mine or your knowledge and experience is greater than mine, hence more valuable. This silences any further contributions

I might wish to make. By contrast dialogue is a learning conversation where we explore our assumptions and prejudices to perceive things in a different light, making new connections by attempting to understand the other person from their point of view.

Dialogue is about understanding and learning.

### 3.3 General Guidelines

Regardless of the method, all dialogue conforms to certain broad guidelines.

*For the group:*

- ★ Explore what is important to the group
- ★ Respect the other as valuable
- ★ Meet the other where she/he is
- ★ Allow everyone the chance to speak
- ★ Learn together by exploring together
- ★ Value collective intelligence
- ★ Avoid exclusively looking for commonalities
- ★ Don't trivialize difference
- ★ Develop shared understanding
- ★ Do not drive toward solutions or actions.

*For the individual:*

- ★ Listen to each other
- ★ Listen to yourself
- ★ Reacts less, think more
- ★ Be aware of thought and personal attitudes
- ★ Observe the observer
- ★ Suspend assumptions
- ★ Welcome uncertainty
- ★ Avoid monopolizing the conversation
- ★ Do not formulate thought while listening.

### 3.4 Approaches and History

The topic of dialogue is extremely broad, there are countless approaches and no one-size fits all. Dialogue is very much an approach that requires you understand the purpose and the context as well as the participants. Where time permits you would very likely choose to use several different dialogue tools with a group. Think of the tools you use as a lens affecting perceptions and having their own inherent

distortions. Different tools will yield different perspectives.

The concept of dialogue pre-dates the philosophy of Plato, adopting numerous forms and guises through the centuries. For our purposes, the kind of dialogue we are interested in arose through the work of cultural critics, theologians, scientists, researchers, tribal groups and countless individuals from different backgrounds and cultures, often attempting to address social ills. Famous physicists Werner Heisenberg, Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr changed traditional physics through the dialogues they developed. Another famous physicist, David Bohm, attempting to address societal problems developed a free flowing conversational method for large groups (Bohmian Dialogue) with the aim of overcoming the isolation and fragmentation he observed inherent in society. Educational theorist, Paolo Freire developed the idea of dialogue as a type of pedagogy. And so it goes, thinkers exploring different ways of communicating and interacting with each other turn to the concept of dialogue. Though barely scratching the surface these references should indicate that dialogue has been with us for a long time.

### 3.5 Tools

There is little space here to present the many different tools and approaches to dialogue and as already suggested such recipes cannot be adhered to in any strict sense. We have already drawn attention to 'story-telling' through exploring oral history. Another method, 'open space' we detail below. A thorough resource of dialogue tools and case studies is available as a free download here:

<http://portals.wi.wur.nl/files/docs/msp/Mapping%20Dialogue.pdf>

If you have problems with the link try searching for 'Mapping Dialogue'. This document produced by Pioneers of Change Associates and commissioned by The German Technical Co-Operation (GTZ) profiles dialogue tools and resources used across the globe and is by far the best single resource we have found on the subject. It is teeming with ideas and practices and is essential reading.

As an addendum, you do not need to over-complicate your approach to dialogue. In all

instances it should be relevant and meaningful to all participants. The GTZ resource could appear overwhelming. Don't be put off, remember the Golden Rule:

#### ***Keep It Simple***

### 3.6 Open Space Workshops

This approach aims to avoid dull speeches, formal discussion groups on predetermined subjects, questions at the end of meetings, and obligatory preparations. Open Space Workshops tend to cut across various artistic disciplines, aiming to create an "optimal atmosphere in which the participants are given all the space they need to rediscover themselves and others in an informal situation." Within the context of cross community and intercultural dialogue Open Space workshops offer participants total ownership of the structure and process.

The method is simple:

*There is no agenda.*

The facilitator briefly presents the theme of the gathering and invites participants to suggest issues related to the theme. For example, the theme is 'intercultural dialogue', an issue might be 'how the media depict different cultural groups' or 'how to encourage intercultural dialogue among young people'. Anyone is free to suggest an issue. Participants then join the group exploring the issue that interests them most. If they find they have nothing to contribute or the issue fails to hold their interest, they use their feet and go somewhere else.

Unstructured and chaotic as this may appear, the process works surprisingly well.

The Open Space framework is based on seven basic principles:

1. Whoever comes are always the right people
2. Whatever happens is for the good
3. Conditions should be taken for what they are
4. The composition of the groups is determined by chance
5. Everyone may start whenever they feel like it
6. Everyone may stop whenever they think it is time to
7. Everyone is free to move around as they like.

*“Open Space Workshops are a lively refuge where people are invited in a safe setting to share ideas, opinions, talents, views and experiences. This leads to inspiring forms of communication in which the enthusiasm, talent, know-how, perception and insight of all participants are the ingredients of personal commitment toward reaching a higher level collectively.”*

### 3.7 Reflecting On Your Sessions

We would recommend you include some collective reflection at the end of a session to further facilitate learning and understanding. You could ask each individual in the group to recount a key learning point of the session, any assumptions that have been challenged, any connections that have been made or critical questions formulated. This is all rich material for further dialogue and exploration and should be noted for use in future sessions. Taking the outcome of this short reflective session into future sessions allows the group to form its own ‘learning edge’ where the sessions you prepare are in response to need.

Many people will be familiar with reflective learning, reflective practice and reflective analysis. There are several basic reflective models each being influenced by the other. Many different professions, notably health and education, have adopted some form of reflective practice into their work. The primary purpose of reflective practice is to create a space in which we can learn from our actions and experience. It’s really answering the question, “How could I have done that better?”

The following model has the advantage of being simple, memorable and perfectly serviceable.

### 3.8 What - So what - Now what

You immerse yourself in the planned experience/activity. Afterwards take time to reflect on the following broad questions – you will adapt the slant of the questions to suit the nature of the activity/experience.

### 3.9 What

Ask yourself:

*What was I trying to achieve? What was the response of the participants? What went well?*

*What didn’t go well? What was difficult? What did we miss?*

### 3.10 So what

Ask yourself:

*So what other knowledge, experience or resources can I or others bring to the session? So what was I thinking when we did that session/activity? So what could I have done to make it better? So what is my understanding now that we have done that session/activity? So what issues have arisen from the session/activity?*

### 3.11 Now what?

Ask yourself:

*Now what can I do to improve the session next time? Now what can I do to deepen the dialogue? Now what can I do to explore a particular issue more comprehensively? Now what can I do to make the session more interesting for participants? Now what would be a good way to engage participants on that particular topic?*

And finally, you immerse yourself in the planned experience/activity and the cycle repeats.

If you would like more details on this model, Google will help if you do a search for: ‘what so what now what model of reflection’.

### 3.12 Useful Links

*Dialogue:*

<http://portals.wi.wur.nl/files/docs/msp/Mapping%20Dialogue.pdf>

<http://laetusinpraesens.org/links/webdial.php>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohm\\_Dialogue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohm_Dialogue)

<http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-dialogue.html>

*Open Space:*

<http://www.openspaceworkshop.com/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_Space\\_Technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology)

*European Year of Intercultural Dialogue:*

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/publ/pdf/culture/eyid-highlights\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/culture/eyid-highlights_en.pdf)

*Reflective Practise:*

<http://www.reflect-action.org/>

<http://firstclass.ultraversity.net/~ian.tindal/rm/modeloverview.html>

## 4. Social Action

### 4.1 How does social action emerge from group dialogue?

We can come together and talk with one another about our childhood experiences, memorable tv programmes that influenced our development, youth cultures that impressed ideas upon us, our grandparents and the kind of lives they lived, of wars and migrations, international politics, the uprooting of communities, the migration of languages. We can reflect on historical events such as those European sailors who in the eighteenth century complained that Asian seamen were taking work away from them. We can share different cultural foods and discuss how our diets have changed, how fashions and trends have influenced us, and how the places we used to visit have changed. We can reminisce about the past and our experiences along the way. By and large people are talking about all these things and are often doing this quite unconsciously a lot of the time.

Our role as facilitators must be to harness this energy and the good will of participants and take everyone, ourselves included, on a shared learning journey. What emerges on that journey may be the basis for social action relevant to those people in that community.

If we should have rules they might look like:

- ★ be adaptable
- ★ be flexible
- ★ respond to need
- ★ be prepared to change course
- ★ be open to opportunity.

Will that result in all this talk becoming a social action project? We do not know, but these are the grounds out of which such projects have the potential to germinate. It's obvious to say but social action arises out of identifying a need and having the inspiration and aspiration to pursue it.

### 4.2 What is social action?

Perhaps the simplest way to think of social action is to consider it as problem solving in cooperation with other people. It is generally

wrapped up with issues of power, who holds power, what is our relationship to the power holder, how can we have our voice heard and influence decision makers to implement actions and policies to improve lives? The basis of social action usually assumes an oppressor/oppressed type relationship where one group of people, often a minority with subordinate status feel disadvantaged, disenfranchised, even powerless. Whilst in many instances this description may be over stating the dynamics it serves to suggest that often the solution to a problem requires interaction and communication leading to some sort of partnership/relationship between a community and the numerous authorities, agencies, organisations and businesses who impact upon that community. This gets at another facet of social action, individuals who feel marginalized (for whatever reason) begin to feel empowered through participating with others in social action – there is a transformational power in social action.

### 4.3 A Five Step Process

When developing social action projects with your community aim to keep it simple. Don't lose people in complexity. The issues may already be complex but the process can be kept quite simple.

Follow this five step guide to success:

1. **What** - are the issues, problems, concerns? You need to find ways for people to express this to develop a comprehensive picture of what is going on.
2. **Why** - do these issues exist? In what context? The community needs to analyse the issue to understand the problem. This is an important stage. If you do not analyse the issue it will be difficult to discover *effective points of intervention*.
3. **How** - does the community effect change? Before taking action examine the ideas for change. Only move forward with viable ideas. Think of objectives and outcomes that are Specific, Measurable and Achievable. *The effective points of intervention* will to some extent relate to *points of leverage* - events, opportunities, other projects and

organisations/people, legislation, policy, strategies that directly link to your aim. Develop a clear task list with timescales, know what you will do. Develop a realistic sense of the possible outcomes. Don't set yourself up for failure. If the chances of success are slim, accept this as a possible outcome. Use the SOAR or SWOT template to assess your ideas.

4. **Action** – the community puts their ideas to the test. There may be set backs and disappointments, expect this. Be organised but more importantly coordinate your actions for maximum impact.
5. **Reflection** – What happened? Focus on what the community is learning through their action experience – allow it to inform future actions and next steps.

At this stage, the process cycles ...

#### 4.4 SOAR Template:

**S**trengths, of the project, the participants/ team/group

**O**pportunities, for leverage, internal and external to the participants/team/group

**A**spirations, of the community and of the participants/team/group

**R**isks, to be considered, assumptions to be aware of, etc.

#### 4.5 What does social action look like?

Literally however you imagine! There are so many people doing social action that it is best illustrated by example:

'This is NOT a Suitcase' campaign was launched to put an end to the practice of placing children's and young people's possessions in bin bags when moving between care placements. As part of this campaign children and young people staged a catwalk fashion show protest called the 'The Refuse Collection' - all of the outfits were made from bin bags. They attracted support from designers, celebrities and MP's, created a media publicity event, and called on organisations and local authorities to adopt a "no bin bag policy" by signing a Charter to commit to provide suitable luggage when moving Looked-After Children's

belongings. Several years into the campaign around two thirds of all local authorities in England have now signed the 'No Bin Bag Charter'.

Residents' Associations run the length and breadth of the country and represent an effective form of organising people to campaign for improvements to a particular neighbourhood.

There are examples of:

- ★ residents joining forces with Councilors and MP's to campaign against unwanted planning re-developments in a London borough
- ★ service providers, police and health professionals coming together through a Residents' Association in Manchester to resolve anti-social crime in a deprived neighbourhood
- ★ no-go areas in North London being transformed after residents using an internet weblog listed all the issues in their area: broken street lighting, burnt out cars, kids throwing fireworks, dog fouling. The weblog spurred the Local Authority into action and inspired many others around the country to take advantage of new media for similar purposes.
- ★ residents on a Bradford estate campaigned and worked with Metro to keep a local bus service running that was facing the chop.

#### 4.6 Influence

An excellent resource and toolkit for exploring with a group their issues around Influence is the Voice Facilitators toolkit. A portion of this is available on line for free and can be found in the Handy Guide. It is important to realise that Voice is developed for work with groups seeking to influence Local Strategic Partnerships. It's not designed for work with individuals but rather for helping groups understand what they need to do to become more influential to affect real change in their communities. All this said, there is a lot of material here that can give grounds for some interesting exploratory discussions with individuals.

In the final analysis, any form of conversational group where the focus is to share personal stories with others is going to need to shift gear considerably if it is to move into the sphere of social action.

Be open to the organic nature of group development and be ready to allow conversations and dialogue to inspire individuals to tackle an issue of concern.

*Voice Toolkit:*

<http://changesuk.net/resources/axis-of-influence-series-voice-and-echo/>

*Social action:*

[http://www.infed.org/socialaction/introducing\\_social\\_action.htm](http://www.infed.org/socialaction/introducing_social_action.htm)



## 5. History of Bradford's Immigrants through the Ages

### 5.1 Introduction

The impact of immigration to Britain has been felt at a national level and is a staple of the tabloid press. It is a perennially hot political topic argued by pundits, politicians and people on the street. Curiously this is really nothing new. Communities across the globe express anxiety whenever outsiders arrive. And outsiders have been arriving for a long time. The fears and passions people have today are echoed down through history. Even the USA, commonly perceived as a 'melting-pot' with its heritage as a nation of immigrants experienced widespread anxiety in the 19th century when non-protestant émigrés began to enter from Italy, Germany, Ireland, and other European states. Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers, worried that German immigrants were taking over his home state said *"Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglicizing them."*

In our own time and on our side of the pond we observe increasingly diverse communities emerging at a neighbourhood level. This in itself is the result of a series of historical factors. The decline of the British Empire, growth of the Commonwealth, demands of the post war labour market, numerous regional conflicts, the impact over recent years of the right to migrate within the EU and perhaps of increasing significance, Globalisation. This short chapter attempts to give an overview of the different migrant populations coming to Bradford over an extended historical period, their experience and their contributions to the development of the city.

### 5.2 The Early Days – From the Saxons to the Industrial Revolution: 1080's – 1830's

Bradford came into being way back in the Saxon times; it was a village by a ford, centred around the bottom of where Church Bank is now. By the

time the Domesday Book was compiled in 1086 the village by the Broad Ford had grown to a population of 300 to 500 people, though it still only had 3 streets, Kirkgate, Westgate and Ivegate.

The village grew further when it was allowed to hold a weekly market. Having a market was important in the development of Bradford as there were no shops and anyone who wanted to buy or sell anything had to go to a market. So when Bradford gained one people from the surrounding areas would come to it and many would set up their homes there and so the long History of people migrating to Bradford began.

The village continued to grow over the following centuries and in 1461 it was granted the right to hold two fairs a year. Fairs like markets would attract people from out of town and again many of them would settle there bringing their crafts and small industries were soon set up. These included tanning (leather) and wool.

Over the following years the woollen industry began to thrive and rival that of Norwich, East Anglia and the West Country, where the industry was well established, particularly in the production of Worsted. The reasons behind were many fold and included that; several of the Wool Merchants from East Anglia moved up to Bradford or the surrounding towns of Halifax and Leeds as land and labour were cheaper and there were less regulations and restrictions regarding the workforce, thus less disputes between the workforce and the owners. Also until then Norfolk and West Country Merchants and Manufacturers had bought wool spun in Bradford and then taken the yarn back to Norwich and the West Country for further treatment, so why not have the whole of the industry in Bradford (and other towns in Yorkshire) in other words have all the processes of combing, spinning and weaving carried out by North country labour, for reasons explained earlier.

At the same time the Bradford Clothiers and Merchants began to look at ways expanding their businesses as places such as Bradford and Halifax had suffered from their trade in cheap cloth, due to the Civil war and the fact that other countries had begun to produce their own cheap cloth and so were not buying it from Bradford, so

they decided to abandon the manufacture of such cloth and start to produce other forms of textiles that other countries were still not producing, i.e. worsted and so going into direct opposition with the Merchants and manufacturers of Norwich, East Anglia and the West Country. This started in the latter end of the 17th century and the early part of the 18th century and resulted in mills and factories shooting up in Bradford and an ever growing population moving into the town from the surrounding countryside and from across the country.

This migration speeded up even more so with the dawning of the Industrial revolution and Bradford became one of the fastest growing towns in the country. In 1780 it had a population of around 4,500; by 1801 it had risen to over 6,000 and by 1851 it shot up to 103,000.

### 5.3 The Irish Migrants and the German Wool Merchants: 1820's – 1870's

Meanwhile over in Ireland, the country lost more than two million people, around 1.5 million died from the effects of the potato famine and the rest fled overseas to escape the poverty imposed on them by a system of land ownership that exploited them, the crops failing and the demise of the Irish textile industry. As well as fleeing to America, many came to parts of the UK, including Yorkshire and Bradford; In fact it was a lot easier to reach Bradford from Ireland than places like East Anglia or the West Country due to the transport system of the time as the roads were few in numbers and those that were, were in bad state of repair and the railways were only just being built, this left the systems of canals as the main way moving about the country or by sea. So labourers coming up to the North from places like Norfolk or Dorset would have to make their way to London then travel up North on the boats which would take 4 or 5 days at a cost of 14 shillings, where as Irish Labourers could cross the Irish Sea to Liverpool in 14 hours for 2 shillings and then move onto Yorkshire via the pack horse trails or the new canals.

A large proportion of them came from the Countryside of the counties of Mayo and Sligo on the West coast of Ireland and 75% of those coming from these areas could not read or write

English and a third of them couldn't speak the language.

In 1851 Bradford had the highest proportion of Irish born people in Yorkshire, around 10%. They were poorly paid working as hand weavers and combers or as labourers and peddlers and were housed mainly in the inner city areas in poor conditions and often very overcrowded. In some places this resulted in very high infant death rates and TB was rife. Large families occupied single rooms. Very often they also shared these with adult lodgers who weren't members of the same family. Sub-letting of beds on a shift basis was also common practice.

The Catholic Church played had a strong influence in the lives of these immigrants. This caused even more problems and prejudices as at the time Bradford was a Protestant town and they were considered to be a financial burden on ratepayers and feared as disease carriers. The forerunner to the Bradford Telegraph and Argus, the Bradford Observer, reflected public opinion of the time and would often use Irish Jokes as space fillers and there often reports in its pages of incidents of fighting and disorderly conduct of the Irish.

A Doctor Arnold also made the following comments; *"The tremendous influx of Irish labourers..... Tainting the whole population with a worse than barbarian element."*

He like many others at the time suggested that the high rates of drunkenness and violence were down to the cultural inferiority of the Irish and totally ignored that the degradation and squalor in which they lived could be a contributory factor to their behaviour.

The extent of anti-Irish feeling was shown in August 1848 with what might have been Bradford's first race riot. It happened on Manchester Road, when a large body of English navvies confronted Irish reapers returning from seasonal work in Lincolnshire.

Around the same time European Textile Merchants mainly Jewish also came and settled in the town, attracted by Bradford's booming Textile industry and escaping oppression and anti-Semitism in their own countries. They came over in the 1820's and 30's from Germany and Denmark and in the

1880's and 90's from Russia and Poland and in contrast to the reception the Irish immigrants received they were looked upon more favourably and they were soon to make a mark in the development of Bradford both economically and politically.

Jacob Behrens was the first foreign merchant to export goods from Bradford, the business he founded grew into a multimillion Pound Empire and when he died in 1889 it had branches in London, Glasgow, Calcutta and Shanghai. He was involved in the formation of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce in 1851 and he was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1882. He wrote the following in his memoirs; *"Who would have thought it possible that now just fifty years after I stepped on English soil in Hull, a foreigner and Jew, I should be deemed worthy of the offer of a knighthood by the Queen's government?"*

He also campaigned with other textile businessmen for more training in the industry and helped set up Bradford's Technical College.

Other notable merchants of the time included:

Charles Semon, who became Bradford's first foreign born and Jewish mayor in 1864; Jacob Unna, co-founder of the Chamber of Commerce, the Bradford District bank and of the Bradford Eye and Ear Hospital; Jacob Moser, co-founder of the Bradford Synagogue, was on the board of the Bradford Royal Infirmary and contributed £5,000 to the building of a new hospital. He donated 12,000 books to the Bradford Central library, in 1910 he became Lord Mayor and in his obituary it suggested that he gave away around £750,000 in his lifetime to charities for all races and creeds, in modern day terms this would equate to millions.

## **5.4 The First European Influx: 1870's – 1940's**

From the 1870's up to the beginning of the Second World War a number of people from several European Countries settled in Bradford. This included the Italians who came as a result of lack of employment opportunities back home. A small community was established at the bottom of Otley Road. and several of them made a living as street entertainers, tinkers or street vendors.

Refugees from Belgium settled in Bradford during the First World War, when Germany invaded the country and in between the two world wars Jews fleeing persecution in Poland and Russia came as did Jews from Germany and Austria finding sanctuary from the Nazis.

After the Second World War a number of migrants came over from several European Countries. These included 'Ostarbeiters' (German for Eastern Workers) who had been forcibly removed from their countries to work on German farms and factories as slave labour as part of the German war effort. The majority of these people came from the territory of Reichskommissariat Ukraine (Eastern Ukraine); they also included many Belarusians, Russians, Poles and Tartars. It has been estimated there were as many as 8.5 million. This represented roughly a quarter of all registered workers in the entire economy of the German Reich at that time.

When the war finished many of these unfortunate people were given 'European Volunteer Worker' status and were recruited to cover labour shortages in the UK's and Bradford's industries. Many of them thought this was a better option for them rather than going back to their homeland which was now under Russian occupation. They were taken from the Displaced Persons camp, which had become cattle markets for countries desperate for them to work in their industries, this included America, Australia, Canada, France and Brazil.

Many chose to come to the UK and Bradford because it was nearer to their homeland to which they hoped to return one day. The numbers were as high as 1000,000, in fact they were the largest number of refugees ever to come to the UK. The living and working conditions varied for these 'volunteer workers' and many lived in hostels provided by their employers and many of them married other European immigrants to the city and they remained here.

## **5.5 The Commonwealth Migrants: 1940's – 1970's**

The mass migration into the UK (and Bradford) of the 'volunteer workers' was agreeable as opposed to when the Irish came over in the

opposed to when the Irish came over in the previous century because of allegiances formed with the UK either before the war or during its closing stages. However this influx still didn't fill the labour shortage the country had. So this led to an advertisement appearing in a Jamaican newspaper, the Daily Gleaner on April 13th 1948. The article stated that there were cheap tickets available on the SS Windrush for anyone who wanted to come and work in the UK. The fare for a place on the troop deck was a cut price £28, 10shillings. When it departed from Kingston, Jamaica on May 24th, it had 300 passengers below deck and 192 above. It took a month to reach the UK, eventually docking at Tilbury on June 22nd.

Whilst the Windrush was crossing the Atlantic there was some debate in Parliament as to whether its passengers had any right to come to the UK. Some argued they ought to be turned away on arrival, however it was pointed out that they had British passports and had 'served King and Country', as many of the passengers had fought on the British side during the war. They were promised jobs and some looked forward to joining or re-joining the RAF, whilst others were just curious to see what they thought of 'The Mother Land' at first hand. Although the atmosphere was to be far from welcoming when they first arrived, 202 of the passengers found work straight away. The NHS (newly formed) was a major source of employment, others found work in the mills and factories, but London Transport was the largest employers.

After the initial influx from the Windrush, several thousands of people from the Caribbean settled in the towns and cities of the UK, including Bradford. In fact by 1955 18,000 Jamaicans had moved to the UK, this represented a high proportion of the island's population and between 1961 and the middle of 1962, 98,000 migrated from the various British West Indian Islands. The majority of those that settled in Bradford were from Jamaica and Dominica.

Around the same time another wave of migrants started settling in the UK. They were from the Indian Sub- Continent and the vast majority of those that settled in the UK came from the

Mirpur District of Southern Azad Kashmir. Many men from this area served in the British Army and so after the war a number of them brought their families to the UK and Bradford to settle. Also in the early 60's, the Mangla Dam project resulted in the displacement of large numbers of people, who under an agreement between the Pakistan and UK Government, were allowed to settle in the UK.

A large number of these migrants came to work in Bradford's textiles mills, as in the mid 1950's these mills upgraded their machinery and so changed their shift patterns from day and occasional evening shifts (often worked by women) to a 24 hour continental shift system. Legislation banning women from working nights, together with labour shortages meant that many migrants were recruited to staff the new night shifts.

Initially many of these migrants came as short term workers intending to work and save money so they could enjoy a better standard of life when they went back to their country of origin, as wages in Bradford seemed a fortune compared to earnings at home. However in the 1960's new immigration laws (the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act) and an economic downturn in the textile industry meant that many of these workers did not go home but settled in Bradford.

Many of these workers and their families that settled in Bradford also provided the origins of what is now a fast growing industry in Asian cuisine and has enabled Bradford to go from being a wool capital to be a curry capital, with an annual turnover in the region of £3 billion and as wool created it's wool barons, so this industry has produced it's entrepreneurs. These have included the Akbar Family. They were responsible for the formation of Mumtaz food industries. The group has grown from a single restaurant founded in 1980. It is now (2011) one of the biggest Asian restaurants in Europe. In 1995 the group then ventured into the manufacturing and disruption of ready meals. The Coop was the first supermarket to sell their products, but Morrison's, Tesco and Booths soon started selling them as well and now so does Harrods. Mumtaz Khan Akbar the organisation's founder has since become one of

the richest men in Yorkshire, with an estimated personal wealth of £25 million.

Other notable businessmen in this area include: Shabir Hussain, in 1995 he open a small restaurant on Leeds Road only seating 28. He named it after his father Akbar. Today he is now Chief Executive of over 10 Akbar's restaurants across the country and employs 400 or so staff. Mohammed Saleem, in 1966 whilst also working nights in a mill and as a driver at the Commonwealth Restaurant, along with a friend rented a shop on Leeds Road. He ran the shop for about three years as a greengrocers. Eventually he bought out the Asian sweet side of the Commonwealth restaurant business when the owner sold up and started selling the sweets in his shop. In 1970 he bought his first shop in Carrington Street off Killinghall Road and was given a two week crash course in baking by the then proprietors Mr and Mrs Whitehead. He then employed Mr Prescott a traditional baker, bought a mixing machine for £3 from a secondhand shop and together they experimented in making cake rusks. It was during that time he stumbled on the recipe for the bestselling and prize winning Crown Cake Rusk. The product is still made according to the original secret recipe. The Asian sweet business also continued to flourish and a second shop was opened called the Crown Bakery. In the first year of trading it made £8,000 However, now Kashmir Crown Bakery is a multi-million pound business.

Another person originally from Mirpur who made it in Bradford was Mohammed Ajeeb. He moved to the UK in 1957 and settled in Nottingham. In 1973 he moved to Bradford where he worked for a sheltered housing project. In 1974 he joined the Labour Party and was elected to the local Council in 1979. In 1985 he became the first Asian Lord Mayor of Bradford and 2001 he was awarded the CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

In 1947 India gained independence from British rule. At this time, it was divided along religious lines. As part of that division, the two largest Muslim majority provinces, Bengal in the East and the Punjab in the West were also divided and so East Bengal became East Pakistan and West Punjab became West Pakistan. This process was

known as Partition. It led to horrific violence and the largest recorded mass migration in history; over 25 million people are thought to have crossed the new borders. In 1971, civil war in Pakistan caused a further partition and created the country of Bangladesh.

Migration to the UK from this part of the world had been happening for over 400 years. The movement happened because of the trade in spices between the UK and India through the East India Company. In 1757 after the battle of Plassey, which was fought between the East India Company and the Nawab of Bengal, the company ruled Bengal and employed Bengali seamen known as Lascars on their trading routes between Calcutta and London. However the introduction of the Navigation Acts a few years later meant that once many of these sailors had arrived in London they could not be re-employed on the return journey and so were abandoned, often poverty stricken. This was a similar case in many other ports around the country.

As far as Bradford's link with this part of the world, it was the creation of the country of Bangladesh and the Civil war in 1971 that saw a number of people settling in the city and as with the previous post war migrants, they came to work in the mills and factories.

## 5.6 The African Asians Migrants: 1960's – 1970's

Asians, mainly of Indian origin had also been migrating to African countries for generations as well. This included Kenya and over the 70 years prior to their independence more than a quarter million Indians settled in Kenya. Things were to change though in 1963, when Kenya gained it's independence from Britain. Indian citizens were offered the choice of obtaining either British or Kenyan citizenship. Those who chose British citizenship were to find it very difficult to continue to work and live in Kenya and this came to a head in 1968 and resulted in thousands fleeing to the UK and making a new life in cities like Bradford.

Uganda was another African country that had a large Indian population that had grown over the years. Migrants originally went to Uganda in the late 19th century at the request of both the Indian

and British governments to build the country's rail network. When the network was built many stayed on and became important to the Ugandan economy, making the country one of the richest in Africa. However in August 1972, the then president of the country, Idi Amin condemned the entire Ugandan Asian population as 'bloodsuckers' and issued a decree of expulsion for all 60,000 Asians regardless if they held Ugandan passports or not. A second decree was then issued and this stated that all the professionals, such as doctors' lawyers and teachers should not leave the country. This was done to stop a brain-drain of the country. It was also stated that if they attempted to leave it would be considered treason.

Britain tried to compromise with Amin, but he insisted that if the Asians did not leave within 90 days they would be imprisoned. Britain then attempted to resettle these people in other places other than the UK but failed. Only the Falkland Islands responded positively. However no one took up the offer and so thousands of Ugandan Asians flew into Britain only in the clothes they stood in and what they managed to pack in a bag and those who had businesses were left largely penniless. They were housed in an ex RAF camp in Stradishall near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk for several months, before going to live mainly in the communities of Leicester, Corby and Bradford.

## 5.7 The Present Day

The latest wave of migrants that have made Bradford their home are from the countries that make up the European Union. This has come about as a direct result of the freedom of movement between EU states for workers. The majority of these migrants are from Poland, the Czech Republic and East Slovakia. This has been fuelled primarily by the high unemployment rates in their home countries, Bradford's history of migrant settlement, availability of cheap accommodation and low skilled work.

In addition to the new wave of European migrants, Bradford is also host to a large number of refugees seeking sanctuary from persecution in their own country. These countries include; Burma, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, The Democratic

Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kenya, South Africa, Liberia and Rwanda.

So Bradford has become one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the country and this was recently illustrated by a survey conducted in Bradford schools that showed that 30% of the children regularly use a language, other than English at home and as many as 68 languages were cited. Of these 68 languages, the most commonly spoken are Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, Pashto (Indo-Iranian), Hindi, Italian, Polish and Cantonese.

However, as with many of the migrants from all the other countries that have settled in Bradford (and elsewhere) in the past hundreds of years, they are having to deal with the hardships and prejudices that have been presented to them.

## 5.8 The Future?

So for over a thousand years now, folk from West Bowling, West Bengal, The West Indies and almost everywhere else from the planet, have been making the village by the Broad Ford their home or as it's now locally known 'Bratfud' and will probably will do for another thousand years. If we were to travel forward in time to the year 2211 for instance, would we find that the city had become hosts to migrants from the USA, who settled in the city after their country suffered an economic downturn once oil ran out. Who knows?

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## 5.10 Additional References

The following links have useful information about Bradford's history.

In 1958 *J. B. Priestley*, a Bradford born author revisited the city for the first time in 40 years. The BBC made a film of this visit, called "Bradford; a lost City," in which he visited his old haunts. The film can be viewed on the following link;  
[www.bbc.co.uk/bradford/content/articles/2008/09/02/lost\\_city\\_jb\\_priestley\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bradford/content/articles/2008/09/02/lost_city_jb_priestley_feature.shtml)

*The National Anglo - Jewish Heritage Trail* have a website with a Bradford link which has a time line detailing the Jewish contribution to Bradford's development over the years.  
[www.jtrails.org.uk/trails/bradford/keydates](http://www.jtrails.org.uk/trails/bradford/keydates)

*The Yorkshire Film Archive* online has film footage of Yorkshire (and Bradford) heritage, covering a whole host of topics.  
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*All about Bradford* is a website which has a whole host of historical information about Bradford, there are many links as well.

<http://sites.google.com/site/allaboutbradford/>

*My Yorkshire* is a website celebrating all that is best about the county, it has a Bradford section.

[www.my-yorkshire.co.uk](http://www.my-yorkshire.co.uk)

*West Yorkshire Archaeology Joint Service* has a website with a Bradford section.

[www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/wyjsarchaeology.asp](http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/wyjsarchaeology.asp)

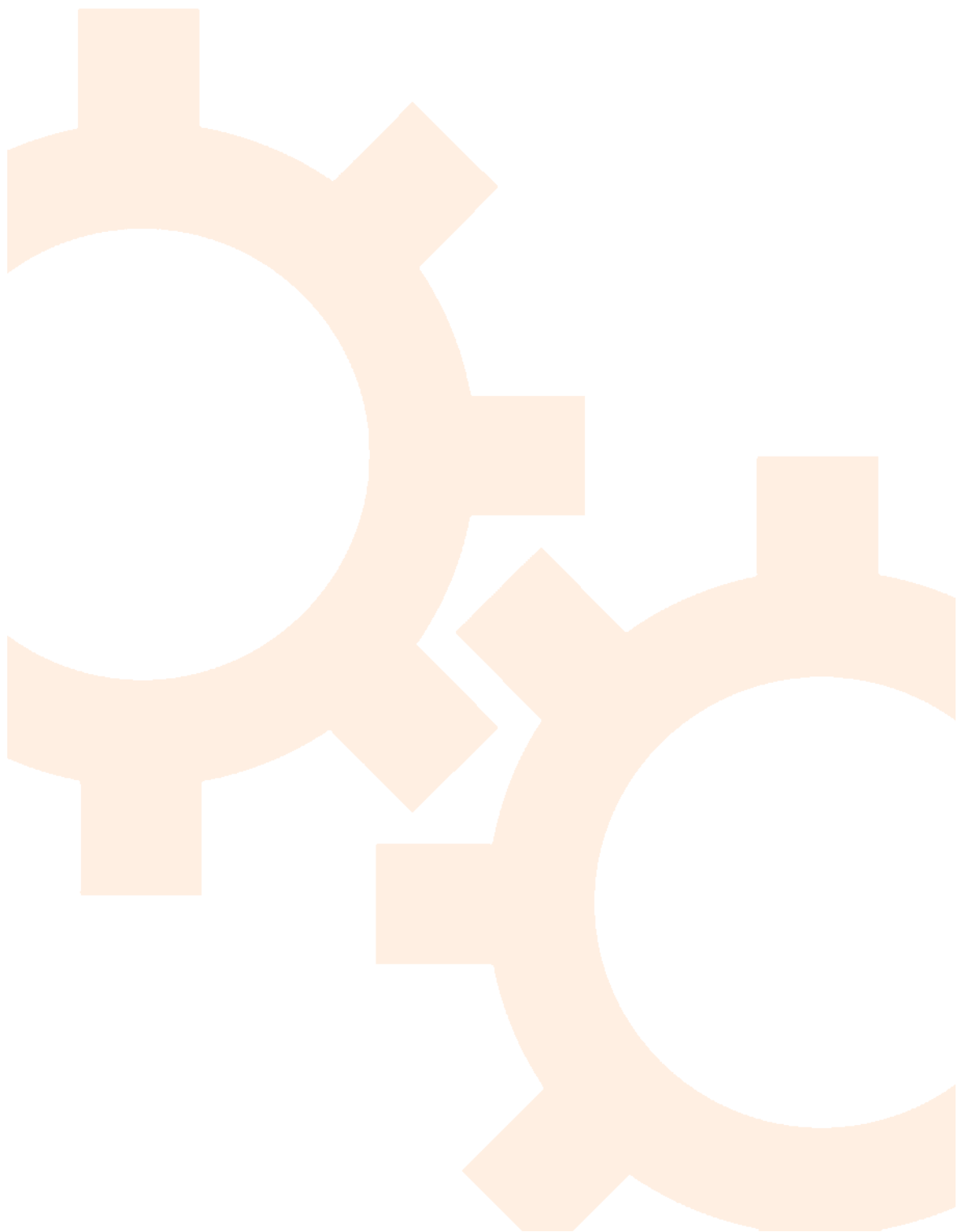


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**Bradford District Council**

[www.bradford.gov.uk](http://www.bradford.gov.uk)







## **CNet: Bradford and District Community Empowerment Network - *what we do:***

CNet is a Community Empowerment Network. We work with agencies across Bradford to ensure that the views of voluntary and community groups and individual advocates are heard on key decision- making partnerships.

### **Partners**

We work with a number of partners across the District to help plan and improve the delivery of services.

### **Individuals**

- ★ We offer support and training for individuals who want to engage in community advocacy and public decision making.
- ★ We promote the benefits of getting involved in groups and networks.

### **Groups**

- ★ We support groups by providing small grants to enable them to fund an idea or project which will benefit the community.
- ★ We link groups to networks and encourage them to share information and good practice.

### **Networks**

- ★ We work with existing networks and get actively involved in the development of new ones.
- ★ We distribute a wide range of information for networks to share with their members.
- ★ We provide meeting facilities and resources.

### **How to find us**

CNet, Centre For Enterprise,  
114-116 Manningham Lane, Bradford,  
West Yorkshire BD8 7JF.  
Tel: 01274 714144 Fax: 01274 714140  
Email: [contact@cnet.org.uk](mailto:contact@cnet.org.uk)  
Website: [www.cnet.org.uk](http://www.cnet.org.uk)

You can also download a copy of this booklet and others in the series by going on our website.



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