

20-20-20 Slough

**An ambitious year-long project
initiated by Slough Museum and
Slough Libraries and Culture Service.**

Made In Slough

**A collection of memoirs of working in Slough
In the 1960s and 1970s
Recorded as audio podcasts
and collected in this booklet**



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The related podcasts can be heard at
www.michaelpearcywriter.co.uk/202020*



20-20-20 Slough

This booklet is a record of all the contributions to *Made In Slough*, a series of audio podcasts created as part of the 20-20-20 Slough project.

20-20-20 Slough is an ambitious year-long project initiated by Slough Museum and Slough Libraries and Culture Service.

Origins of 20-20-20 Slough



The project invites twenty Slough based artists to dive into Slough Museum’s collection of objects and documents and select an item which inspires their creative imagination.

It could be a photograph, a radio receiver, a Mars bar, a jar of Horlicks, a drawing of Herschel’s telescope – any one of over 3000 items in the collection. Each artist will share their selected object with a group of Slough residents and ask them to create works of art inspired by the object.

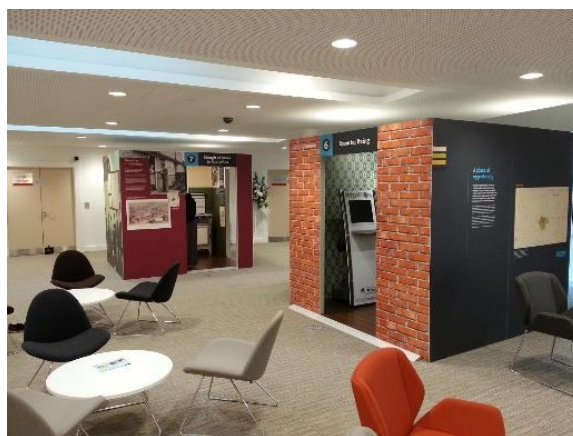
So, there will be 20 artists, 20 objects, and 20 groups of residents from locations across our town. Hence the title: 20-20-20 Slough.

Poetry, photography, performance art, raps, knitting, paintings, film, sculptures, pod casts – art that allows the

people of Slough to express themselves through the arts and the history of Slough.

20-20-20 Slough is supported by Arts Council England, Slough Borough Council, The Curve and Resource Productions.

Slough Museum’s collection covers a period of around 10,000 years - from woolly mammoths to the present day and charts the development of the town of Slough, its public, social and domestic life, developments in science, technology, agriculture and industry and the impact of these on the town in the past, present and the future



Made In Slough



Made In Slough is a collection of memoirs recalling what it was like to work in Slough in the 1960s and 1970s.

As one of the selected artists in the 20-20-20 Slough project, writer Michael Percy chose as his inspirational item a radio receiver that was manufactured in Slough in 1934 by the McMichael company. He was also able to use a portable transistor radio purchased in the Slough Co-op store in the 1960s,

One of the functions of any museum is to make the past feel relevant. Mike saw the radio receiver as a symbol of people from the past talking to the present generation and was confident that this thought would inspire the people of Slough to share their personal histories. Slough thrives on its industry and commerce and Mike decided to celebrate the links between the people and industry, and the way each feeds into the other– the title for this small part of the 20-20-20 Slough project seemed obvious - *Made In Slough*.

Acknowledgements

The covid pandemic had an impact on the 20-20-20 project and social distancing has forced the search for new ways to work together to create this project. It has not been possible to meet and record everybody's memoirs in the way we expected. We have had to work with social media, phone calls and learn new skills to create our own recordings at home – and of course we have all become very familiar with Zoom meetings!

The *Made In Slough* part of the 20-20-20 Slough project was conceived before the Covid epidemic began to affect the way we were able to socialise. It was envisaged that the contributors would be able to meet and discuss and share their experiences before creating pieces of written work, and then making audio recordings. As things worked out none of the existing community groups – groups that would have been a rich source of memoirs – were able to remain active. The only alternative was to turn to social media as a means of contacting individual people who were prepared to share their recollections of working in Slough in the 60s and 70s.

For the *Made In Slough* podcasts, over thirty contributors have been creating memoirs of what it was like to work in Slough in the post war period, specifically the 1960s and the 1970s. These were often short particular memories, regularly detailed and evocative reminiscences and also revealing pieces covering many months or even years. The contributors have been incredibly generous with their time in sharing their

reminiscences and learning new skills to turn their written memoirs into audio recordings.

Because of the need to observe strict Covid safety rules, it was not always possible for the contributors to record their own memoirs and occasionally, the contributors wanted to remain anonymous. For these reasons it was necessary to recruit a group of readers to make the recordings for the podcasts. This group of readers willingly gave their time and enthusiasm over two months during the summer of 2020.

In particular, five members of the drama group *Winging It* devoted many Zoom hours creating our podcasts. Also, voiceover artist and radio presenter Jonathan Pagden gave a unified feel to the varied mood of the memoirs by being our narrator.



The commitment of all the contributors and readers has been outstanding. Without their dedication, the project would have foundered.

Podcast One

First Rung on the Ladder

Throughout these 60s and 70s, less than ten percent of young people went to university – it's forty percent now. It was common for young people to leave school on a Friday and start a job on the following Monday. In those days there were plenty of jobs to choose from. Our first podcast is a collection of details and memories of the atmosphere of working in Slough in the 60s and 70s. It was a different time: June Calvert summed it up when she said, "In those days if you wanted a pay rise you just found another job."

June Calvert

I left school at 15 without any qualifications. My Dad died when I was 10 and my mum had to go out to work full time to keep the family. There was no life insurance or pension to help her. I promised her I'd give her half my wages when I left school. I actually wanted to be a hairdresser but the pay was only about £3 per week and the

apprenticeship was 3 years. So I went to work at M&S instead because they paid £6 and five shillings a week. But then I did take a college course and got my typing certificate so I could get an office job.

Anonymous

I left aged 15 as well. My first job was office junior at Southern Forge in Langley, for three pounds ten shillings a week. The office was inside the factory with just a glass panel between us and the very noisy machine shop.

Anonymous

I started work in 1963 at the Pest Infestation Laboratory on London Road, Slough. We did research on how to prevent insects and mould attacking dried stored food products. Being under eighteen I got a substantial two-course lunch for, I think, six old pence but the full price was only a few shillings. My wage was about £7 per week and I got about three weeks holiday plus an extra day for the Queen's birthday – that's because we were civil servants.

June Calvert

There was a kind of hierarchy in the office. There were the three of us. An older woman who had been there forever and another girl who was there before me, they did the working out of the wages. I was last in and the youngest so I did the menial tasks. Every week we went to another room, locked the door and made up the pay packets. What a pain it was if we had any money left over at the end, or not enough, because every packet had to be checked.

Anonymous

I left Southern Forge after a few months, and got a job with a small company supplying motor parts. I was going to be paid £4 a week, then there was a misunderstanding and I got the sack after 4 days. But I was lucky after that, and got a job in a drawing office at Jackman and sons, a civil engineering company. The pay was £2 10 shillings, but the job had prospects. I was tracing very detailed engineering drawings and assisting Engineers on site, and went to Slough Technical College every Friday.

June Calvert

In those days if you wanted a pay rise you just found another job. There were plenty of job offers in Slough. I first worked at McMichael in about 1967 but left to go to ICI in the Personnel Department. I didn't stay long. Next I went to Slough Police Station where I worked my way up from typing Cautions to Summonses. We had manual typewriters. It was such a nuisance when you made a mistake, trying to scratch out the ink off the paper without going through it. Then I went back to McMichael. I was earning about £14 per week. It must have been in 1971 when I saw an advert for a Bonus Clerk at the council offices, the wages were £25 per week. I thought I had died and gone to heaven when I got the job.

Michael Jones

I worked at Tesco's & Fine Fare on the Farnham Road, the Co-Op in Baylis parade as a butcher's boy and delivered meat on their bike - small wheel at front large wheel on the rear with wicker basket on front. The Co-Op used a money cable system that ran from the counter to the office at the rear of the shop, no till with money in it.

Richard Canavan

We used to make boats among many other things at Armshire Reinforced Plastics, two types designed by Ian Proctor, the Jiffy Dinghy and the Sailorski. I've still got a photo of a Jiffy with my old workmate Marcus. At 6'8" with a big beard he was a hard man to forget!

Cheryl Rowlands

I worked at Westons making mainly Wagon Wheels. They were very much bigger then. Noisy and smelt awful but I got used to it. Didn't notice it after a while.

Muriel Marchant

I remember that smell. My father worked there too. He was one of their drivers, his regular run was from Slough to Norwich.....sometimes I went with him in the cab.

June Redford

My Dad used to drive for Westons biscuits as well. Mid to late 60s. He did the Oxford area. I used to go out with him on occasions too. So exciting, climbing up into the cab. Makes me hungry now, thinking about all those biscuits.

Jackie Green

My first job at 15 was near Slough in the old Manor House in Langley park. It was a lovely place, everyone was so kind. Fifteen was young back – they grow up so fast these days. My boss gave me ice cream money when I went on holiday, he actually said 'here is some ice cream money'. Can't imagine a boss doing that these days.

The readers in episode one were: Liz Cochrane, Piers Gledhill, Jude Talbot, Jivan Tung, and Vishal Gupta.

Podcast Two

Ethnic Barriers and Industrial Relations

Sixties teenagers were the first who didn't have to join the forces at eighteen – conscription – but they had to come to terms with the possibility of nuclear war and the four-minute warning. There were numerous social changes taking place in Britain in the 60s and 70s and many of these are still unwinding in the present day.

Gilroy Coleman went to university in Manchester to study geography but returned to Slough in the vacations where he took a summer job that brought him face to face with ethnic barriers at work.

Gilroy Coleman

I was a student at Manchester University from 1964 to 1967 studying geography, BA in 1967 and MA in 1968. My research was focused on the geographic distribution of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) immigrants.

During Christmas, Easter and Summer vacations I worked in a packing shed filling tins with products and loading them onto pallets for distribution.

Most of the workers in the packing shed at that time were foreign. The more skilled jobs of driving the filling machines were done by Germans (ex-prisoners of war who married locally and stayed on) and the less skilled by Poles. The Germans hated the Poles and vice versa. There were also French and Spanish workers, plus the odd Brit.

The work was dull and repetitive and I hated the shifts (6am till 2pm, 2pm till 10pm, 10pm till 6am). Making up cardboard boxes, alone, at four in the morning, in a cold shed was no fun.

The filling machines were powered by compressed air because of the fire risk associated with electricity. The rest of the work was done manually, including hauling huge tanks from the mixing plant to the filling machines. There were experiments taking place with more automated machinery (still air-driven) but these were generally not successful (lots of spilled product) and were still in development when I left.

There was a canteen on site which was open all day and, also at 2am to feed the night shift. The man who operated the canteen at night was an Italian who was often drunk and his cigarette ash would sometimes fall into the fat frier. Once he failed to turn up at all, and when we turned on the lights in the canteen the whole place was covered in cockroaches.

At that time there were many people of colour (West Indians, Indians and Pakistanis) in Slough but none working anywhere in the company that employed me. I did my undergraduate dissertation on these immigrant groups (which was more focused on the geographic distribution of immigrants). As part of the research I interviewed the personnel officer at the company and asked him why there were no workers from the communities I was studying on the site. His reply boiled down to “the Unions won't have it”. I then interviewed the various Union heads at the factory and their replies boiled down to “the men won't have it”. I don't know when this colour bar was broken.

This company was a good place to work in the sixties. The money was OK for unskilled work, there was plenty of overtime available, the canteen food was cheap and filling, the foreman was a kindly soul, and I received only moderate mockery for being (a) a bloody student and (b) the son of a more senior employee in the company, which is how I got the job in the first place.

In many ways the dissertation was basic to my later career. It established my research credentials, which led to a research grant when I graduated (but on an entirely different topic), which then led to a career as an academic at the University of East Anglia.

My father was not surprised by my findings - indeed he predicted the reactions of both the HR people and the Union people. He set up the meeting with the Chief Personnel Officer (as they were then) who was a friend and had to buy him a drink afterwards because he said I asked too many awkward questions. It is perhaps worth noting that this discriminatory employment policy was peripheral to my research, which, as I said, was more focused on the geographic distribution of immigrant communities.

My father also had an interest in the subject because - despite being pure-blood Welsh - he was naturally quite dark skinned (especially after a holiday in the sun) and Indians/Pakistanis would sometimes approach him the street and address him in Hindi/Urdu.

I am not sure when it happened, but I recall my father telling me that the “no blacks” policy fell away soon after - perhaps in the early seventies. I am sure that this had nothing to do with me, and was more to do with the decreasing acceptance of discriminatory policies more widely in the UK.

Many of the rights and privileges we take for granted today were hard won. Theresa Clews remembers her father who worked hard to represent his fellow workers as a trade union official.

Theresa Clews

My dad Jimmy Ryan worked at Slough Estates from the mid 60s as a Fitter's Mate for about 25yrs. He also became a Union Steward of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. That's part of the Unite Union these days. The main thing that always sticks in my mind is his sense of fairness, his need to help others. In particular health and safety at work for employees. There were also quite a lot of companies that were 'sweat shops' and would take in migrant workers and only give a pittance of a wage. Some workers slept on the floors just to have a few hours' sleep, then start a cruel day's work over again. I remember my dad and another union steward bringing everyone out to go on strike for better conditions and pay. I have a picture of him on the strike line.

Back then you could *secondary-picket* and so union members could support other members at companies that treated their staff poorly. One time he threw a bag of flour on purpose to cause a scene so that it would get into the paper, and it worked. He drew

attention to the problem but also got arrested. The strike where he was arrested was at a company who mainly employed migrant workers. When the workers went on strike, the company attempted to break the strike by bringing in South African students.

My dad was in meetings with the employers on behalf of the workers. He told them they condoned what was going on by turning a blind eye to it all. It took a few strikes, but then the employers decided they would change things and make Slough a better place. Look at it today. It's got the best trading estate in the country, well that's my view anyway.

[Newspaper cuttings courtesy of Theresa Clews.]



The readers in episode two were Gilroy Coleman and Jude Talbot

Podcast Three

A New Start at Slough Training Centre

Towards the end of the sixties Richard Tyner was given a place at Slough Training Centre after moving to England from Ireland with his family.

Richard Tyner

In Oct 1967 my mother uprooted her 9 children from the town of Westport County Mayo in Ireland and took us to Peterborough to live. I am the eldest son and was told that it would be necessary for the three eldest to find employment.

Within days of arrival in England I attended the DHSS offices to seek work, but I had by then made a mess of my education and my qualifications were not considered to be acceptable to UK employers. I took a job as an Aerial erector and was lucky to have survived the trail of mayhem strewn in my wake.

Little did I know but the DHSS had taken an interest in our family. One of the officials arranged an appointment for me to come into his office for a further chat.

I don't know if he had a target or why, but it was a true act of kindness. At our meeting he told me about a project from the Government to give people a better chance

of a career. This must have had Harold Wilson's stamp of approval because the next I knew I was receiving a travel voucher and directions to the Government Training Centre in Slough.

I was to attend classes five days a week and live in an old Army billet in Cippenham. I well remember the acrid smell of cooking chocolate as we traipsed our way between the billets and the classrooms.

With regards to the location of the barracks I have no proof but feel that it was converted into the small shopping centre where DFS and The Range are located. Where the Workshop was, I have no idea at all.

I seem to recall taking an examination which would be used to select a career path. I did rather well due to the fact that the top requirements for the better courses were my two favourite subjects in school, Maths and English.

If we stayed in Slough for the weekend we would congregate at a pub which I think was called the Pied Horse. It was full of Mods, music and fun. The latter was not easy as £3 a week did not go far. Having said that I also recall seeing the Tamla Roadshow one Saturday matinee, Martha and the Vandellas and Stevie Wonder, and believe it or not this was at the Bingo Hall. I thought my numbers had come up!

I returned to Peterborough after the ten months in Slough. I had learned a lot about myself and felt I had other attributes that would lend themselves to finding gainful employment. This confidence led me to find employment with National companies, William Cory, Shell UK Oil, East Midland Allied Press and Lloyds TSB. After a number of years I became an IFA (Independent Financial Advisor).

Remember, in those days graduates were few and people who interviewed well got the job. I ended with a thirty-year career in Sales. So I feel ever grateful to that chap from the DHSS and to Slough.

I returned to set up home in Slough in 2011. [I had been diagnosed with Parkinson's In 2007 and my daughters felt the need to assist their mother with care for me. I chose the Slough area because my daughter had married a boy from Windsor and I had an affinity due to my experience of this town in 1968.

I look back on those 10 months in the sixties with great fondness and curse my stupidity for not putting a value on keeping in touch with Jim, Gary, John Joe and Al. Those guys looked after me just like my DHSS benefactor.

Memories are very happy ones tinged with a modicum of sadness. We made our own fun, there were acts of generosity. Guys who would take me to their homes at the weekend. Tramp (that was the nickname for Alistair D W Barclay) took me to Bristol, and Bronco (nickname for Alan Lane) took me to Oxford. These acts of kindness stay with me because they broadened both my horizons and appreciation of people in general. The sadness comes with the realisation that I failed to maintain the friendship of those warm-hearted generous guys.

More information about the Slough Government Training Centre and where it was situated came from Jaye Isherwood, SEGRO historian & researcher. She also spread light on the site of the 'barracks' that Richard lived in.

Jaye Isherwood

The Government Training centre was located on Slough Trading Estate at the Eastern end of Buckingham Ave. It was set up in the early 30s as Slough had a large intake of Welsh miners looking for new employment. I have an image showing that they built houses on the land as part of their training building skills, the houses being demolished ready for the next intake.

The accommodation mentioned is probably the Canadian Army barracks then on Twinches Lane.

During the war, the Training Centre switched to training women to cover the skilled jobs left by men going to war. The Imperial War museum has some amazing images of women being trained to build aircraft parts, service boats and to operate large machinery.

I am not surprised that some of the women stayed on in the Canadian Army camp on Twinches Lane, housing was really in short supply at that time due to bombing during the blitz – particularly in the big cities. The camp was marked on a secret report showing the wartime vulnerabilities of Slough Trading Estate.

The readers in episode three were Richard Tyner and Jivan Tung.

Podcast Four

McMichaels, Clock cards, Mods, official Secrets and wedding photography.

Throughout the 60s and 70s, there were plenty of jobs, but the average weekly wage was £10 – that's £150 in today's money. To earn £1000 per year was a common goal. In the 70s a gallon of petrol cost six shillings and eight pence – that's about thirty-three pence today. We saw the first Boeing 747 passenger plane and The Beatles broke up...

Peter MacDonald

My father was chauffeur to Sir Michael Sobell who owned McMichael. They had an electronics factory in Wexham road adjacent to the bridge and the railway line, and another factory in Buckingham Avenue.

Dave Williams

I worked there in the late 60s. I did the final test of the radiograms at the end of the production line. Fun days listening to pirate radio. Great memories.

Peter Canavan

I worked there for a while in the 60s, I had to sign the official secrets act before I started. I was involved in making lots of components in very small batches, often one or two off. We never knew what they were for but assumed it was mostly for MOD prototype and development work.

Peter MacDonald

Interesting, adds a little more to the conspiracy theories of the time. I do remember on one occasion my mate said the boffins had blown some 400Kva fuses demolishing a wall in the process. They must have been playing a '78' at the time.

Anonymous

I used to love the smell of the machine shop there. It was kind of manly.

June Calvert

I worked in the wages office at McMichael on Wexham Road in the late 60s. I had to write out 400 clock cards with the name and number of each employee every week. The total wages for all employees in those days was less than £5000 per week. I'd daydream about everyone giving me their wages for one week so I could buy a house. Well, I was engaged at the time and you could buy a three bedroomed house for about £4000.

All the wages were paid in cash but I wasn't worried about being robbed, too young for that to cross my mind, and anyway it was not my money! The only security was the locked door.

We didn't need to think about violent crime in those days. If it wasn't on the news or in the papers we knew nothing about it. No social media then! I used to walk home at 11pm after a night out at the Adelphi disco in Slough town back to Upton Lea (40 minutes walk) I felt quite safe. Later when I was 'courting', my boyfriend had a scooter so he picked me up. He was a Mod, parka with the fur around the hood, no crash helmet in those days. It was freezing on the back of that bike in the winter.

That reminds me. When I was 14 years old in 1965 my best friend lived an hour's walk away in Chalvey. So, having walked all that way to ask if she was coming out, only to find she was not in, I would walk all the way home again. We did not have a house phone until the 70s.

I walked to school too 1962 -66. 20 minutes from home. That was secondary school. Loved school dinners. Hated school. Left at 15 years old and started work the next week at M&S.

Michael David

I moved to Slough in about 1966 with my Mum and Dad. The whole family were moving out to Slough from Acton when we got a nice council house on the Britwell Estate which was much better than where we came from in Acton, west London - the

bottom half of a house and it was a bit cramped, bathroom shared upstairs. So that was a step in right direction for us. And for me as well it was good because I wanted to make a start in photography and in London it was difficult.

In Slough I saw a job advertised by Peter Sandilands, a photographer at number 9 High Street Slough. That's all gone now. He was looking for a printer to work in the darkroom so I applied for the job and got it. I'd done some photographic printing at home, quite a lot in fact and I kind of knew what to do so he was quite happy. He trained me as well.

The thing they did mainly there was wedding photography and he wanted me to learn that. So I was attached to a guy called Harold Tompkins and we would go out to weddings. He didn't have any transport. At the time I had a motor scooter so I used to take Harold on my motor scooter to the weddings and he would do the photography and I would watch. By then I'd got myself a camera, a two and a quarter square twin lens reflex. I used to practise taking pictures over his shoulder and then after a while he let me do the arrival pictures, people walking up the path to the church. And then I did the bridesmaids and then he let me do the bride and her father arriving but he did all the tricky stuff.

We used to do a very fixed set of photographs in those days, all in black and white. You got 60 pictures and I remember it costs 3 Guineas - I don't know what that is worth nowadays - but you got 60 photographs and then they had to buy an album and stuff like that. So we went on like that for maybe six months and then he started let me do more and more. After about a year I was actually ready to photograph weddings on my own. I had watched what to do every Saturday for a year so I kind of got the hang of it. And I got a tip on my first wedding and that's the only tip I remember getting. There must be lots of people out there now whose weddings I photographed all those years ago - it's a long time ago and they'll be really old, probably on their third or fourth marriages by now.

A funny thing used to happen in those days with tax. If you got married, I think it was just before the 5th of April, the man would get all his tax, his single man tax back, for the previous year and it could be quite a lot of money. They would apply the married man's tax to his wages for the previous year. So there always used to be a big bulge of weddings just before the 5th of April, the end of the tax year. So we used to get very busy and I think the record for the studio taking wedding pictures was something like 14 weddings in one day.

It was very good training. These days people seem to pick up a digital camera and think that they can go off and be a photographer with no training. I often see that, and I think it took me years to learn the necessary skills and there is quite a lot to it.

Peter Sandilands was quite a good employer for the time, especially for a small business. He believed in training his staff properly. It was a good start for me and I was able to build on those skills in later jobs. I've had a good career in photography including a spell at the Royal College of Art as a technical instructor working with post graduate art students, and about 35 years ago I started my own corporate photography business and I've just retired from that - well I retired a few years ago in fact. It's been a good career.

The readers in episode four were: Liz Cochrane, Piers Gledhill, Jude Talbot, Jivan Tung, Vishal Gupta and Michael David.

Podcast Five

New Country, New opportunities

New experiences are always challenging, sometimes frightening. This next memoir was sent by someone who wants to remain anonymous, so we are going to call him Darpan. When Darpan was in his early teens he made the journey to England from Uganda with his brother. The two boys travelled alone to join their father in Slough.

Darpan

My dad decided to come to the UK because he had a British passport and because of the poor economic situation in India. He came on his own at first to establish himself here before we followed. While he did this, he sent me and my brother to live with an uncle in Uganda. My mother stayed in India with family.

We stayed with our uncle just to preserve our right of abode in Uganda because we were born there. If our passports ran out, we could renew them in Uganda.

My dad had some friends who were travelling from Mumbai to Mombasa by boat so he said could you take my two my sons with you and be a guardian initially. Look after them. Somebody will come to fetch them at the other end. We had to travel with strangers - myself and my older brother - and it was really difficult. I think I was around ten and a half.

These days I keep reflecting on this because my grandson now is about ten and a half and I keep looking at him and thinking I could not let my two sons go and travel alone to a strange country. But times were hard for us then.

We spent from 1963 until 1966 in Uganda. Our uncle was like a plantation manager. That plantation was nearly 20 miles away from the nearest town. There was no school - it was like in the middle of nowhere. We just sort of hung around and there was no schooling.

When we lived in India we had lived in a village and we were studying at a very primitive village school. The education standard was like a village school for local people and we lost out there. Then we went to Uganda and during that three years we had no schooling at all.

When we came to the UK we were put in a class based on our age. They asked me "What do you know about trigonometry?" I just answered, "What is trigonometry?" They said "What do you know about the right angle?" I knew nothing about it and they asked about quadratic equations and I hadn't even heard the phrase.

We were bullied at school - terrible because in those days there were only about four of us who were like of Indian origin and one of them was a sort of biggish lad and

he was even bullied more than me. Other boys - English boys who were local people - they used to really beat him up. I used to try to stay away from all the problems and fights then, just to avoid being beaten up.

I used to dread going to school because, you know, you feel that you're likely to get beaten up by bigger boys and you are struggling to adjust and you're struggling to learn and on top of that – it seems you're going there as a - as a punishment, never mind bloody learning anything, you know? So by hook or by crook you try to learn what you can but more than anything else you just want to make sure that you don't get beaten. That was the biggest problem.

Bullying was accepted. Nowadays you know there's a lot of awareness and everything else and they will try to do something about it but it's a situation nobody is going to confess to and say that, "Look I was bullied".

I vividly remember the biggest bully – even his name – I could never forget even after all these years. Nearly 50 years, more than that now. He used to come to our shop in Cippenham but I never kind of raised the past with him, you know? He used to come to my shop and used to laugh and joke and things like that. That's all history now.

In those days there were not many foreigners here. They just didn't like people with brown skin. They used to call them – well, they used really unpleasant names, you know?

Later on – after school was ended – I discovered I was actually extremely bright as it turned out. When I went to work at ICI this man called Richard Ainsworth - I will never forget his name - he was a training officer and he said, "Would you like to learn because you left school with no qualifications?" He arranged to put me into a technicians' course which, after one year, I passed really well. Then he said would you like to do O levels? I did those as well and then I started doing A levels. Altogether I was at ICI for nearly five years and during that time I managed to pick up chemistry and physics and I was almost top of the class all the time because once I started reading a subject my comprehension was quite good. I ended up with three O levels and two A levels.

The reader in episode five was Vinay Vyas.

Podcast Six

Securing the Family's Future

In episode five we travelled across the oceans with Darpan and his brother and shared the pain of their early days in an English school. With a little support Darpan discovered his full educational potential. Now it's time for him to join the workforce and begin to build his future. We are using the name Darpan because the contributor of this memoir wants to remain anonymous.

All that time we were living in the one room - terrible you know. Me, my dad and my brothers. My initial wage was very low so I used to supplement that by working part-time serving in a petrol station on Farnham Road. We used to save every penny we could you know? Subsequently we ended up buying a house in Cippenham.

I wanted to learn how to run a shop because I got on well with a shopkeeper who ran a small shop near my home and I said one day, "Would you ever consider retiring and let me buy the shop?"

With this in mind, I told a friend who had a shop that I wanted to learn how to run the shop. Initially I swept the floors, filled the shelves and then eventually started to learn how to use the till. After a few months I went with him to cash and carry as well.

So I worked with him for almost a year for three evenings for three hours every evening for nothing. But during that time, I learned enough so I knew how to run the shop.

When the man who had the shop near my home was ready to retire, he made me an offer to buy the lease of his shop.

That is where the whole thing began. I kind of struggled. But you're not sort of working under somebody, this is your business and if something goes wrong you lose your house, you know, so I was a bit nervous. But there was a lorry drivers' strike so there was a bit of panic buying and within the first two or three weeks all the stock was cleared by people panic buying. So we were selling everything we were buying so that kind of helped. And then I kind of - my confidence picked up quite well.

In those days you know there were no Asda or Sainsburys in the same format as today, so people were doing their weekly shopping with the little shops.

My wife has always supported the family business but from the beginning we were fighting poverty and we were determined to get out of that poverty - you know? Just getting by day by day. We didn't want our kids to go through what we went through, we wanted a decent standard of living and I thought we will never prosper working for somebody else - we had to break free from that shackle so we worked for ourselves and started improving our standard of living and, you know, do better. My wife was all for it you know, she supported me second to none.

It was really, really a struggle just to get on that business step ladder due to a lack of experience. I wanted to move on and the guy who did help me do it was my shopkeeper friend.

And I am grateful to the man who sold me the lease to my shop. He supported me you know. And I will always remember Richard Ainsworth the man at ICI who helped me finish my education.

One other thing is, before my father died, he said one of us should have become a doctor. My younger brother was living with me and he wanted to support the family but I was supporting him so he basically went to Slough college and eventually he became a GP at a UK medical school.

Later in life we as a family were the main sponsor contributing towards construction of a High School in a village in India, as the old building was a shed and not suitable as a place where children can learn.

When I was a child in 1960 or 62, I went to our village school in India. I refused to sit on a concrete floor which I hated and used to run away from school.

In 2002 myself and my older brother visited the same school. Although 40 years had passed it was still in the same situation – no desks and concrete floors. To help the children we had 1000 school study desks made specially, and with the approval of the education Dept, distributed to 16 village schools in the locality, so that kids don't have to sit on the floor, where I refused to sit.

We sold the shop, it must be sixteen years ago - but no regrets - I mean had it not been for the shop I don't know what I would have done but it gave me a platform to do better and you know I did quite well after all that.

Our boys are doing really well in their own fields, professionally, so you know, I am thankful to God. I say as long as we have our health, we have everything.

The reader in episode six was Vinay Vyas.

Production Credits

The narrator of Made In Slough was Jonathan Pagden, the producer was Michael Percy.

All the contributions to Made In Slough were created in writing during the summer of 2020. In order to observe strict Covid safety procedures it was not possible to arrange recording sessions for all the individual contributors. Where necessary we have used actors to voice the reminiscences.

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