

Spinning Lifestyles – Ismir

Good Morning

Good morning

Can we just start by saying for the tape your name.

Ismir

Ismir. I hope I've pronounced that correctly.

I came in 1961.

When you first came where did you first come to?

In London. Savoy Hotel at the beginning. After that I went to Birmingham for factory work for 2 years. Then I worked for a shipping company and they were making stainless steel plates for the bodies of ships.

And how long did you work there?

About 2 ½ years. Only 2 years in Birmingham. London, 1 year.

How did you get the job in Birmingham?

My brother was there and called me and said there is a job here and I should go there.

What did you do in Birmingham? You worked in a factory. What did you do in the factory?

The steel plates for rolling I used to press things. Tap, water tap and those things.

How long did you work there for?

2 years in Birmingham.

And did you stay in Birmingham or did you go back to London?

From Birmingham I went to Scunthorpe. After 2 ½ years I went back to Bangladesh. I stayed there one year and then went back to my country again. I went to Sheffield and worked in a steel factory.

What did you do in the steel factory?

Loading and unloading with a crane and after 3 months I went back to London, because it was hard for me and I started in a glass factory in Stratford. 9 months I worked there.

Did you find that Brick Lane had changed a lot when you came back?

I used to live here when I worked in Stratford, just opposite the offices in 1967/8. Brick Lane had changed. At that time there were a lot of fish and chicken shops. That time people liked me. The officers in the factories were kind. That time was better, now it has changed.

How long did you work in the glass factory?

9 months. After that I went back to Bangladesh.

Why did you go back to Bangladesh?

My wife was there. Then revolutionary War began in 1970-1971. I could not come back. After the revolutionary War I was in a village so they survived and was able to return. In 1971 and began working in a garment factory.

In Brick Lane?

Yes, Brick Lane.

What was it like working in the tailoring factory?

Callender's was the name of the factory. There were a lot of garment factories. Every where. Now they import these things.

Was it easy to get a job then?

I used to work only as a presser. They were requesting them to work because there were so many jobs.

What was it like pressing, how many hours did you spend pressing?

Six days I worked.

Hour much did you earn?

£11-12 after tax, 6 days per week, 45 hours per week. If I worked Saturday I would get £14. Saturdays were only 4 hour days.

And you were living in Dean Street.

3 penny bus fare to Charing Cross. My uncle sold flowers there and used to work on a ship. My uncle came in 1928 with the first settlers.

Did your uncle ever tell stories of working on the ships?

No he died. He was always telling stories.

Do you remember any?

How the German War was and how he fought against them. Then they were stuck in Poland without food for a few days. Another uncle worked in

the ship and the Germans bombed the ship and his uncle and a few other crew members survived. After 2 days they were floating on a piece of wood. A helicopter saved them. Then they sent them to England. A lot of Bangladeshis used to work. A lot of people from their village died on the ship. They were recruited from Calcutta. They were cheap labour.

In 1941 some of the village neighbours and countrymen were sitting in the city area at a cafe and they were bombed and died.

How long did you work in the garment trade?

12 years. I used to travel to Bangladesh to see my family. In 1988 I brought them here.

How many children?

Five

So they were all grown up in Bangladesh?

All born in Bangladesh. My two daughters got married and I have a few grandchildren.

Are they all over here now?

Yes

Have you been back to Bangladesh since the...?

Yes. 2 daughters married here and I have grandchildren from them. They are 25 years.

Is there a lot of difference from his generation and his children's generation?

Nowadays it is bad. Earlier youngsters were better. His son is doing OK

Do you find that they lead a different lifestyle from Bangladesh?

In 1988 when I brought them they were in their early teens and had some education, such as culture.

For a lot of the younger generation now they have lost their...?

Lost their identity, yes!

How do you feel that Brick Lane has changed now since 1969?

The day and night difference.

Can you say more? What is the day and night difference?

There was a lot of fighting there. Racist parties there. A lot of fights were over women. It was difficult to go to a public baths, now it is better.

Was the fighting very bad, the racism?

Not regular, now and then, every couple of weeks. There were no restaurants there then. Now there are coffee shops and restaurants. There were a lot of horse drawn carts pulling coal. I got my heating and lighting from paraffin. In Bangladesh I saw this in the villages. The poor people use paraffin. The West thinks of the well for its supply. John Profumo was Secretary of State.

What did you do after the garment factory?

I worked in a factory, but then it closed down when I wanted to go back. I made jackets and scarves etc. Clothes pressing.

It must have been really hard work? Over the last few years Brick Lane has made a name for itself and has changed dramatically. How do you feel it has changed?

It is as it was, but people's attitudes have changed. There is no fighting.

Thank you very, very much. Do you mind if we take a photograph?

No, thank you.