

Martin Baines - Transcript

Audio Quality: Background noise throughout

Transcript largely focuses on family life

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LMI: Hi, please can I have your name?

MB: Yes, I'm Martin Baines.

LMI: And Martin, what's your... Sorry, I'm recording this information. We'll be using it for the Lost Mills Ghost Mansions project. And we are going to be creating it to use... We're going to be using it to create an archive and to build some educational resources. Is that ok?

MB: Yeah, absolutely fine.

LMI: Brilliant, thank you. Would you kindly tell me your connection to Bradford Mills, please?

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MB: Yeah, I was born and raised in Bradford. And my mother and her sister and *her* mother, and my mother's family, worked in the mills throughout their working lives. My mother brought up four children during World War II. And then went back to the mills when they went to school. And worked from the late '40s right through to the 1960s and '70s. And she only took time out, really, when I was born. In my early years, up until the time I went to school, she just stayed at home. And then she went straight back to the mills. So I had to come home and open up because I got home early. And I had a key around my neck and...

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LMI: How old were you then?

MB: I was about... I stayed with the next-door neighbours for a while, but then I was about seven. I used to come and open the house. Light the fire. I had to light the fire!

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LMI: At seven?

MB: Yeah.

LMI: Right.

MB: You'd never do that these days.

LMI: No, health and safety would go out...

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MB: Oh, my goodness me, we had coal fires.

LMI: Yep.

MB: And you'd put a tin over the front, with a piece of paper...

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LMI: Right.

MB: ...to get the fire going.

LMI: Ok.

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MB: Sometimes, if you weren't paying attention, the paper would catch fire. Oh, God, you know, but anyhow... So, my mother worked really hard. And when I came home from school, you know, she didn't get home till teatime. She made the dinner.

LMI: Yeah.

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MB: And, yeah, she worked... Her family came from Great Horton when she got married. But West Bowling before that.

LMI: Yes.

MB: So she worked in mills all over that part of Bradford.

LMI: Are you able to remember any of their names?

MB: Yeah. She worked in Buttershaw Mill. I think Brighella Mill rings a bell. There was another mill as you come down Great Horton Road... actually not far from where the new Tesco is there. I just can't remember the name of it. I used to visit that mill when I came [home] from school sometimes, when I was older.

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LMI: What was it like visiting the mill?

MB: Well, it was incredible really. There were two things. I mean, it was all about your senses, really. There were two things that were utterly overpowering.

LMI: Right.

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MB: When you walked through the door (and you could just walk in). The noise. The noise was deafening.

LMI: Right.

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MB: You couldn't hear yourself speak. I mean...just machinery... the noise of the machinery was unbelievable. And the second was the smell of wool. You could smell it. A lot of wool in a place like that, you could smell the whole, you know, the wool. And I used to go up to somebody and ask for my mum and where she was. 'Oh, she's down there, kid. Just go down there.' And you'd go down, all this machinery going away, you know. And the women there would be working so fast with their hands. And I used to watch them and think, 'How do you do that?'

LMI: And did they carry on like that like constantly, at that pace?

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MB: At speed.

LMI: At that speed.

MB: At speed. Yeah, just incredible. And so skilled because they did this all the time.

LMI: Yes.

MB: I mean, I remember my mother once...she must have momentarily lost concentration...

LMI: Right.

MB: ... and part of the finger was almost severed...

LMI: Wow.

MB: ... in the middle. Well, she just got it stitched up, put back, went back to work. And that was it. There was no inquiry or health and safety, anything like that. There was nothing done about it. It was just an accident at work, really. And my aunt, she worked in there too. She worked in the same mill. They were all very close sisters. My aunt never married. And during the war she helped my mum bring up my brothers and sisters.

LMI: Yeah.

MB: And I remember she was absolutely deaf when she got older. You know, you really had to shout when you talked to her. Because of the noise in the mill, you know. And I think there's a couple of things that sort of, I remember, really. And I mentioned that my mother used to knit all our clothes from wool.

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LMI: Yes. Were they allowed to buy it? Was it gifted? Was it spares that they were going to bin anyway?

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MB: It was all very official. They were allowed to purchase wool. And obviously with arrangement with the mill. So it was all above board. She used to bring the wool home. And in the evenings she'd read a book, watch TV, and she'd be knitting away. And she'd knit my balaclavas. I had balaclava 'helmets', we used to call them. Scarves, gloves, jumpers.

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MB: And if you look at photographs of kids in the '50s and '60s, a lot of them wear these sort of wool sleeveless tank top pullovers. V necks.

LMI: Yes, they do. Yes.

MB: Yeah, well, a lot of them were knit by women from the mills. My mum knit loads of those. And when my sisters had children, she'd knit all the children's clothes with wool from the mill. She'd produce all this stuff.

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LMI: In terms of reading, your mum was clearly into her reading. And so did she ever want to go and work in the service sector? Or was mills where she was happier?

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MB: No, she never worked in the service sector. I mean, my mother was a shy woman, actually, to be honest.

LMI: Yes.

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MB: You know, she, you know, she used to read Mills and Boons. My goodness me, we had hundreds of these things. And my sister emigrated to Canada years later, and I had to take them to her in a suitcase. And bring them back in a suitcase.

LMI: Really?

MB: And, er, yeah. She...so she used to like to read and relax. But one thing that is significant for me, really...you know, in this day and age, you know, I mean, I'm 68 and I've had a wonderful life, wonderful career. And I've got abundance. Like everybody else, like a lot of people today, we talk about poverty. I don't think we were...we weren't poverty stricken. I mean, my father was a builder, he had a very good job. My mother worked in the mill. But what I do realise is that she struggled to make ends meet by working in the mill.

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LMI: Yes.

MB: And even when she retired...

LMI: Yes.

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MB: ...when I left school and I got a job, she stopped working in the mill, she retired. And I realised she worked there to keep me.

LMI: Yeah.

MB: I'm getting a bit emotional here. But, you know, she struggled to get everything that I needed as a child.

LMI: Yeah.

MB: You know, and make ends meet. And that's how she did it.

LMI: The salaries weren't brilliant, were they?

MB: No, no, no.

LMI: The hours were long though. Are you able to remember the shifts that she did?

MB: Yeah. She'd go out the door at 7 in the morning, she wouldn't come back till after 5 o'clock. So she worked long days, you know.

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LMI: So now we complain that we work long days, but it doesn't... you struggle to make ends meet. There's not so much different in that sense, then?

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MB: It's never been different. It's never been, it's not changed. Nothing's changed, you know. We didn't have things that other people had. We didn't get a car till I was nearly 10. And that's because my father was a bit of a whiz with these things and bought a used car. And, er...but all my things that I got as presents, and at school, if she couldn't afford them, my aunt (she was like a mother as well), she'd buy them. And, you know, I mean, now that I've got children and grandchildren, I'm very comfortable, I think [?]

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LMI: Yeah.

MB: You know.

LMI: You're grateful for all the effort and love that they showed you.

MB: Yes.

LMI: In terms of your job, where did you retire?

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MB: Oh, well, I became a policeman. I was a policeman in Bradford for 32 years.

LMI: Right.

MB: I was a police inspector when I retired. And I've been in these rooms where we are now many times. So I retired and then I went into business with a colleague. We went abroad, we went to India and Pakistan. I've been there in the jungle. I went to South America, working on government programs. And Middle East, went to Yemen. Doing all kinds of things.

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LMI: I'm being nosy now. How did you find Pakistan and India?

MB: Fantastic.

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LMI: What was fantastic?

MB: If you said to me, can you go back there tomorrow, I'd go in a heartbeat.

LMI: Why?

MB: I'll tell you why, because I spent 40 years in Bradford working with minority communities. Interestingly, when my mother was working in the mill, we lived in Bradford 7. We lived on Ivor Noah Road, off Thornton Grange Road.

LMI: Yep.

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MB: Ok. And I became a community liaison officer there, as a constable. And I worked in that community where I was born and raised.

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LMI: Yep.

MB: And I knew it. And I got to know all the people there. And then as a sergeant, I worked in community and race relations for the whole of Bradford West. And then I was an inspector in Bradford for 10 years. And one of the things that I found really wonderful is that, er... I don't think you ever understand people unless you really get to know them. And I met a lot of guys who've worked in the mills.

LMI: Yes.

MB: They were a common thing, you know. I mean, communities there that worked in the mills, just like my mother did. And so, yeah. So I have a big love of the culture and communities.

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LMI: In terms of India and Pakistan, do you think that people should have tried to go back? Like, for somebody who used to say, 'I visited and I would go back.' Do you think we've kind of, at some point, got it wrong by thinking that everybody should move here and stay? Should people have continued with the initial dream of whether to earn and go back?

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MB: It's an interesting question that, because I know quite a lot about why people came here. I spent a lot of time in Mirpur in Kashmir. The diaspora and all of that. And the first generation came as economic migrants intending to return. This myth of return. You see, my brother and sisters went to Canada in the '60s. And my brother there still lives like he did in Yorkshire. He's 80 odd now. He's been there since 1966. He wears a flat cap. He drinks out of a pint pot and has roast beef at the weekends. So he hasn't changed a bit. And my wife's family were first generation Polish here. Quite interesting, because they look like they would have done in Poland in the 1930s. So, it's like a time slip really. But the point I was going to make is, it's quite... I think, you know, as first and second generations are brought up here, then clearly this is people's home. And the myth of return disappears.

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MB: And I'll tell you the other thing, I think sometimes when you live in a different country, maybe you look at your historical home in a different way.

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LMI: With rose tinted glasses.

MB: Yeah. I mean, my father-in-law, I'll give you an example, he used to say to me, if he didn't like anything about being here, he'd say, 'Well, you won't see that in Poland. You won't see that in Poland. You'll never see that.'

LMI: Unless you've been there.

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MB: Well, I've been to Poland lots of times. The first time I went back there I said to him, 'Actually, you told me that I wouldn't find that in Poland. Of course, Poland's a modern 21st century country. Of course these things exist.' And, oh my goodness me, yeah, it was quite funny. So, I often think back about my mother's generation and the generation from Kashmir who came over. And my wife's generation. And Bradford was a different place then. But in

many ways it was the same. You know, financial pressures were still the same. And er... my only regret is that I wasn't able to give back [?]. You know, that's really upsetting, actually.

LMI: What would you have liked to have done?

MB: Well, I'd like to have made sure my mother didn't work in the mill half of her life. And my father. You know, how many cars have I been through? She used to say to me...it was quite interesting...she used to enter all these competitions. Spot the ball. She never won a thing. She was very unlucky, she never won. I says, 'Mother why...?' And you could usually win a car. I said, 'Mother, why are you entering these competitions?' 'Well, your father's never had a new car.'

LMI: Yeah.

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MB: 'And I'd like him to have a good car.' Because he always had second-hand cars.

LMI: Yes.

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MB: And, you know, if one thing I could have done for my parents, they'd have had a brand-new car like that.

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LMI: Yeah.

MB: But, you know, circumstances were against that, really. Life didn't turn out that way.

LMI: Often are, aren't they?

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MB: Yeah, but it's a shame. I often think about that.

LMI: I think from the soul you were, they would have known that you would have done anything. That's what matters.

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MB: Yeah, I think so.

LMI: Thank you very much.

MB: Yeah, no, you're welcome.