

MR KOBIR MIAH

What's your full name?

Mohammed Kobir Miah

When did you first come to this country?

I came in 1968

Why did you come?

I came because England was well renowned, it was an educated country and I knew I could improve my life by coming here

Where did you settle first?

Burnley

When did you move to Westminster?

I moved to Westminster in 1969

Did you come by yourself or did you bring anybody else with you?

I came with my father

When you first came to the UK what was your initial thoughts, where you excited?

Yes I was very excited, many of my friends told me this was a great country.

What was your first impression as soon as you landed?

This country felt very strange the people functioned in a different way to what I was used to, people were driving cars and wore different clothes which I was not used to. Also the weather was very cold, really cold. I came in February and I can remember it being very windy and cold, it took a while from get from London Euston to Manchester and the journey was very cold.

When you arrived did you bring any belongings with you from Bangladesh that you still have today?

Yes I still have pens and pencils, they are somewhere in the house but I couldn't tell you where

If you find them could you please show them so we can get a few photos

Sure no problem

What were your expectations of the UK and what did you think you would do when you arrived

I thought I would study get an education and find a good job

When did you arrive in Westminster?

I first arrived in Westminster in 1961 and I stayed in **Barwick Street** my uncle lived there

At that time what did you think of Westminster?

Westminster was not what it was today, I can't describe it but it was much different from what we see today. Today Westminster is much better than it was

When you arrived in Westminster where there many Bengalis?

Very little, very little

Where they with their families or did they arrive alone?

There were very little families. Very little.

When you arrived did you know how to speak English?

In primary school I studied English grammar. When I went to the airport the immigration officer asked "can you speak English" and I did not understand, then he asked me "do you know English" and I said no. With the very little English I knew I understood when he said "do you English" because I studied English a little.

How did you communicate with the non-Bengalis?

First it was a little difficult but when I went to school it got easier. Within three months I picked up the language. To communicate and get around wasn't an issue because there were some Pakistani **brothers** around. In that school it was only two of us Bengali brothers, although there was no issue with communication because we had a Pakistani teacher named Sir Yaqub who taught us how to conduct ourselves and communicate and we also had an English teacher called Mrs **Bartson** she was very good I still remember her today.

Did your neighbours help you at all?

We had English neighbours who were very friendly, some of them had families with children my age and we would play, they were very friendly. Although there was one person who stands out, on the road which would take me to school there was a woman who would always say good boy nice boy to me, they used to say it every day and it used to make me very happy.

When you came here what sort of clothes did you wear?

Of course it was different clothes. At that time people used to wear ties and suits. When people used to go outside they used to wear smart clothes

Did you face any difficulties?

Yes once I arrived at London there was an issue with accommodation, not for myself but for everyone. I found a place at **(Insert name)** street, I stayed there for a many days. First there were many problems. When I first came I stayed there for a week and then I moved to my uncle's house.

Was it easy to find Halal Food?

This was very difficult, we used to go to Aldgate to get halal food.

What did you eat?

Chicken, cow

You're first Eid in this country, what do you remember? Did you cook any special food?

Yes, the first Eid we all bought food together, we went outside and eat together. We had a lot of fun.

The food you eat was it like that of what the family would cook on Eid in Bangladesh?

Yes food was made like that

Did you fasting that time?

No, we did not fasting at the beginning. Once we became a little organised in this country and a mosque was built then we fasted and prayed.

While fasting did you realise any change of your way of life?

No it was OK

Upon arrival did you receive any help from any agencies?

No not at all, but at the same time we did not go to seek them out, we didn't really need their help

How did you spend your days off?

I used to travel from one town to another on my weekends.

Your first child where they born at home or at the hospital?

No they were born in Bangladesh.

The first time you sent your child to school in this country how did it feel and did you get assistance from teachers?

I took my child to the school, the teachers and receptionist where very friendly.

Did you get any help from the health authority, school or the local community in regards to helping your child's studies and wellbeing.

We didn't join any organisations.

Did your children mix well with other children in school? Do you remember their first friend?

Yes it was a English girl, they used to come to my house

What where your biggest fears for your children?

My biggest fear was that my children will follow the wrong crowd, and I instilled it into them to hang around with the right groups. I also advise them it's very important to exercise

religion. That was my biggest fears and I still fear it today. It didn't matter if my children had English friends as long as they were good children. It didn't matter what race my children would hang around with, there are great children in every group.

Of course if they were born in this country, they will follow this countries culture. My only specification is they have to be Muslim.

I didn't really face any difficulty, I just took notice of who my children where affiliated with around.

What roll did you play in your children's life?

Well my role was to make sure my children went to school and came back. I would time the journey from school to home and if it took ten minutes and my children took longer I would question them why. I always took notice of their attendance to see if they were going school and also school reports.

Yes my children took part in multiple events regardless of cultures, they went to birthday parties and functions.

Where you able to raise your children the way you wanted?

Alhamdulillah yes, today they are all good.

Do you see a difference between Westminster now and then in terms of development?

To be honest I don't know how Westminster functioned back then but what I can say is today is its functioning well, I keep up to date with what is happening within the community.