

Transcript of interview with Malcolm Batten, 21 June 2018

[00:00]

Sixty-six years old, lived in East London for sixty-three and a half years; Parents used to live in Leytonstone before moving to Manor Park; Started primary school in 1957 at Salisbury Primary School; "At that time, I'm not sure how many people were in the classes, but virtually all children in the class would be white English" [01:47]; School meals and free school milk; Winter of 1962-63

[03:00]

Playground of primary school was next to a cinema called the Coronation; Saturday Morning Matinees; "We didn't get to go very often but most of the other people went quite regularly" [04:11]; Lots of large families with seven, eight or more children; Left primary school for East Ham Grammar School for Boys; Three schools built on the same site; "There was one big central block that had a clock tower...and that had the dining blocks and kitchens" [05:12]

[06:00]

A traditional grammar school system; "You have a common first year...but at the end of the first year, we were then divided into streams" [06:25]; O-Levels had restricted subject choices focused on the academic; Leaving age was at 15 or 16, but most people stayed on until sixth form to do A-Levels; A-Levels opened more subject choices; "I did Economics, Economic History and what was called British Constitution" [08:04]; Some teachers were more qualified than others

[09:00]

Some children transferred into grammar school from secondary modern; Immigrant families, such as Ugandan Asians, coming into East London; "Gradually, sort of through the mid-60s, we got some others coming in [to classes]" [10:06]; Looking at career choices during A-Levels; Transport Administration; Invited to run the school library; "It inspired quite a few of us to get interested in that as a career" [12:01]

[12:00]

Mobile libraries; "Mobiles were basically, other than the driver and attender, entirely staffed by seventeen-year-olds until we left for university" [12:57]; Went to University of Southampton to study Economics but switched to Politics and Sociology

[15:00]

During his time at university, he decided he enjoyed working in libraries and shortly got a job working in libraries in London after he graduated; “But Westminster had vacancies and they were also sponsoring people through their library course, so I went with them and ended up staying for the rest of my career” [16:18]; Changes in East London with the migration of people mainly from India and Bangladesh

[18:00]

“Probably I would say about 80% of the people down in Manor Park are now probably Muslim, and of course that affects the types of shops and amenities in the area” [18:04]; Jewish community; Closing of big bank branches; Long standing shops like HM James and Sons closing down

[21:00]

Development in Newham and Stratford leading up to the Olympics; “Not so much down our area, because it was already built up anyway...but you see odd gaps in places” [21:19]; Stratford station and trainspotting as a child; Memorable places from childhood like parks, and places that no longer exist like bowling alleys and cinemas; Going to Woolwich docks to watch the ships and ferries as children

[24:00]

Area from East Ham to Woolwich was undeveloped until the 1980s; Beckton Gas Works and the Clean Air Act; “We had a lot of heavy industry and stuff in the East End, and most of that disappeared” [25:12]; His father’s career in Stratford Works, the printing trade, photographic trade and motor insurance; His uncle’s career in a metal company; “Which the site I think where that [the metal company] was later became where the O2 is now” [26:30]; A lot of people had jobs around the docks or industries related to it

[27:00]

Redevelopment of the area after the docks closed in the late 1980s; Development of transport links in the Docklands; “The second stage was the Docklands Light Railway” [28:06]; London Docklands Development Corporation; Travelling around using season tickets before the Oyster card; Community culture

[30:00]

New Works Programme in the 1930s; One area of focus was the development of transport; “The uncompleted tunnels sections were used as a munitions factory for a firm called Plessey’s and the uncompleted stations became bomb shelters during the air raids” [31:58]; Development of housing

around new stations

[33:00]

Interest in transport came from father; "He was always a railway enthusiast as well" [33:01]; Was always looking out for transport wherever he went; Council steam roller; "You'd see that trundling on the road and I always remember a rag on the front wheel" [34:06];

[36:00]

Industrial archaeology; "There's places you've seen before but never really had the chance to know the significance of" [35:57]; Books on London's power station and gas works, railway walks and canal walks; Not much offered in groceries shops in the area; "If you want any decent shopping, we basically go Tesco's in Ilford" [37:10]; Parking restrictions introduced during the Olympics

[39:00]

The Olympics; "I thought it would actually be pretty chaotic but it actually worked quite well" [39:08]; Comparison of transportation during the Olympics to the contingency plans in place for transport for the opening of the Millennium Dome in 2002

[42:00]

Community in Newham; "The neighbours are okay...but people tend to keep themselves to themselves or to their own racial communities" [42:20]; Future developments in London with the Cross Rail and more high-rise buildings; "There's so much of a demand for housing now, there isn't much land capacity so the only way they can build is up" [44:06]

[45:00]

Overcapacity of London without the social services to support it properly; "Some have more pressure these days and everything is so uncoordinated" [46:10]; Local council services, such as library services, in Newham; "Newham has been the more successful councils through the years...we've had stability" [46:51]

[48:00]

Shift from East Ham and West Ham into Newham, and the merging of different Boroughs into one; "We were still seeing the effects of the fact that the City of Westminster that I was working for had been the merger of three separate Boroughs" [49:53]; Computers and the People's Network

52:06 audio ends