

The Ardwick People's History Project



Introduction: In 2006 Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People ran a project to record the experiences and memories of Deaf and Disabled People from Ardwick, Manchester.

The history of people's everyday lives is often overlooked when past experiences are recorded. However, the lives of deaf and disabled people are almost totally ignored and largely undocumented. The Ardwick People's History Project aims to change this and the exhibition is part our contribution to that process. The following panels are selected extracts from the interviews we conducted over the summer.

Acknowledgements:

Brenda , Herbert, Lee, Sheila, Teddy, Des, Kenny, and Audrey

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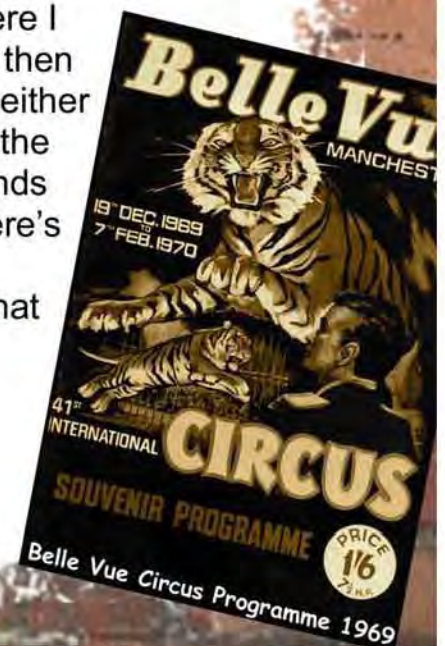


Audrey (Born 1951)

Regeneration: where I was living, where all the houses were pulled down... for regeneration... they built... a block of flats... called Fort Ardwick... it didn't work.... they eventually pulled all those flats down and... built houses there. So really over the last... thirty five years, you'd gone from bringing house down here to putting up flats to taking them down and another regeneration gone on...

Special Schools: when I was at Thomas' Street School... they took us down to Gorton Park.. I can't remember the name of the school now..... it was a special school... just for people who had learning difficulties, and they used to make us cross the road... they didn't want us going past that school.. that was the mind set then... you couldn't even walk past the railings of a school that had lots of kids in with learning difficulties. It, it was horrendous, and it upset me then and even more so now, as I've got older.

Work: I worked at Belle Vue It was an, an amusement place... it were great, it were brass band registry... I remember when I started there I was fifteen, I was doing my... my day job and then you could pick up like, I'd do weekends, work either on the gates or... you know usherette on the, the circus or anything like that... all the sixties bands that you hear of now we saw for nothing... there's only the Beatles that didn't go there but.. the Stones, The Who, all, all memorable bands, that you saw them all.





Audrey (continued)

Job Interviews: when I went for me interview my mum came with me... before my boss got to know everything I could do, my mum was kind of saying well it's going to be difficult for Audrey because she can't see out of her left eye, her right eye's not all that good and she could be banging in to stuff, and she won't be able to pick things up, like lift typewriters or anything because she's had heart surgery... I remember slowly just sliding down me chair because I thought I'm not going to get this... but he did talk to me and he asked me what I was interested in and... you know miraculously yeah I got the job.

Coalition: I have to say, up to say... getting involved in the Coalition, and like me second husband was a disabled man... Ian, and Ian used to work here. And up to meeting Ian.... and getting involved here and seeing the other side of it, a political side of disability, you know the work on a social model. And... that kind of changed it, and it took a long time to get out of that... but coming here nobody questioned you, they don't ask you what's wrong with you, they don't tell you what's wrong with you.



Teddy

Communication: In 1952 my father finished in the Navy and we moved to Manchester, we had a loop system fitted in the sitting room. All my education was oral. My father didn't start to sign with me until I was 18 and my mother after that. I signed from a young age with my sisters, and more regularly with my sister Barbara, but the family was essentially oral, but my sister signs well.

School: ... physical beatings were rife, it happened all over the school. If you were caught in a mix up or in trouble or laughing or whatever, you were beaten. We used to have 10 o'clock prayers every morning. If you were caught laughing or chatting you'd be punched in the kidneys from behind by a teacher. You never knew they were there, you couldn't hear them, it was terrible.... The consequences have been dreadful, pupils have had mental health problems, nervous breakdowns, awful...

Employment: Bosses would ask the Welfare officers for Deaf workers because they concentrated on their job, not gossiping like their hearing counterparts. When a factory closed down, the Deaf just got another job, not now, now its different. The Welfare officers had contacts with all the bosses in the area, and so knew who needed labour, I'm talking right up to the 1960,s and 70's. Some bosses of the factories were on the committee of the Deaf Club.





Teddy (continued)

Crime and Punishment: There were no bars in the Deaf clubs, because they were under the jurisdiction of the church, so storytelling was a permitted leisure pursuit. The Deaf would go in the corner pubs afterwards. If the Deaf got into trouble with the police or work or thieving they were not allowed in the Deaf Club, they were ostracised, it was a religion based service, you were 'out', so as not to influence the others. I changed that, it was wrong, people just became worse because abandoned.

Changes: This area used to be all terraced and the Deaf all lived locally... We're talking the 1950's and the Deaf wanted to be close to the Club for help. The problems started here when they demolished the Ardwick area. The Deaf community lost out when we were moved. Hearing people could argue for staying local ...my wife's parents challenged the relocation and were put in new build in Hulme, but the Deaf had no idea about being able to discuss it and challenge. Remember, there were no interpreters, they just had to accept where they were sent ...overspill estates, isolated and separated.



Lee (Born 1985)

Education: I started going to nursery for disabled people and then I went to a school to the age of ten. To a... number of schools for disabled people... So I went there for almost nine years it was. And then I integrated in to a mainstream school, primary. Stayed there for two years. That was a big shock...because like I never integrated....

Staring: when I were young... I... found it hard because like people used to... they used to look at me and stare at me. And I used to say to my mum why? ...me mum came up with the solution, she said, you stare back at people who stare at you. They look away making them feel embarrassed. So I started doing that and it did work.

Access: you got people in the store or in the premises which are not accessible, you corner them and you say, " Look, why are you not accessible? It's against the law." And they say they're working on it. Just to move you on. But they're not, the just don't wanna spend the money, but it is legally against the law.

Independence: I think...when I were young people they didn't really think I would go far because when I was a child I had, I had many difficulties to deal with, and I, I couldn't communicate... I don't think people really thought I would be where I am now... parents of the disabled children are very scared of letting their children go... especially frightened of letting em go in to the big world...





Brenda (Born 1949)

Changing Ardwick: My father was born and grew up in Ardwick and I remember the street, it was number thirty-one Old Elm Street. Now it's changed, it's been pulled down. There's no street there now. I remember that really, really well. Visiting my grandparents in that street in Ardwick... we used to go to the church there, St Thomas' Church... I think it's now become a resource centre. And then the last time I actually visited it I went there for a meeting probably about ten years ago and they've still got the balcony there from the church. I remember being at that church with my parents, because my parents were in the choir and looking down on the balcony.... we used to drive through Ardwick a lot and you can see the changes.

Education: At Old Trafford we weren't allowed to sign... It was part of the policy... it was a very tough school it was very, very strict, no signing allowed at all and I broke the rules one time I was signing. And the teacher I remember was a cookery teacher told me off but I kind of ignored it, I was about sixteen at the time so I was becoming a bit more assertive and a bit more challenging, she shouted at me and she smacked, and I retaliated. They sent me to the headmaster and I got the strap, because I'd signed, all because I had signed.





Brenda (continued)

Job Opportunities: We were restricted to sewing, shoemaking that was it really just those two occupations all working in a factory but most people were directed into sewing. So going back to school, I went to my first school from age three to nine, it was called Clyne House School and at the age of nine I moved to a senior school at Old Trafford and the pupils there when they finished they had to go to... Talbot House to learn a trade like a shoemaker or making cakes in factories and things like that, that was the boys, and then the girls went to Worrall House and that was for sewing and... er laundry.

Campaigning: ...there wasn't a lot of information because there was no minicomms, no computers, no texting, so we didn't really get a lot of information and I think Manchester City Council were the first ones really to do something to promote disability. I think it was Manchester Deaf Centre somebody asked me to be involved, two men asked me to be involved in Manchester Disability Forum. It was the first time I'd been involved in anything like that and I realised that you know when they started telling me their stories that there were similar situations and that we needed to challenge things, people speaking up for themselves and I realised that I had the same sort of feeling so we worked together and then from there it moved on and on and then we realised that deaf people needed to campaign as well. We've campaigned for the acceptance of BSL (British Sign Language) not oral education. And then from there we've now got the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) to make sure that all information's accessible....



Kenny (Born 1949)

Education: I hated, I hated schooling cos I'm Dyslexic. And what happened there is like the teachers, they sort of like, you know they call you stupid or thick and they put you in the back of the room...and you know just let you do what you want a do... anything else I was fine on, but when reading come up, I just backed away from it because I couldn't do it. I, I couldn't explain you know how frustrated you get... teachers stood over you and slapping you across your head, that's how it used to be. You know, so, erm....I think...I left school about when I was thirteen?

Growing Up: it was terraced house erm... whitewashed back yard, used to do that every summer. Lime and a bit of dolly blue. Yeah, I used to go round getting jobs off other people and that.... used to have a wood round. Sell the wood, make all, all the paper what I had, I used to just roll up and tie em in to knots and sell them. You know, six for a penny and things like that. But there was hard days, like with me mum and dad you know there was hard days, like with people scrimping and scraping.

Speedway: you know you hear the noise in a Saturday night and me uncle used to take me yeah and when you get the smell you never forget it. You never, you know when you smell the Castor oil you, you know you never forget it. And it was big thing...speedway on a Saturday night.... Stockport Road or Skyways in.....Kingsway.





view from Stockport Rd, Ardwick - 1969

Kenny (continued)

Changing Ardwick: the seventies.....up to like er late nineties....they'd built the flats and round here and Hulme, places like that... even though they knocked em down round here, we got a lot of people, what come from Moss Side and Hulme and there was some really nice people. Some really, really lovely people but...with the good you get the bad... You know it's....its been hard for some people round here.. its probably been very, very hard for the elderly people. You know with no shops.. I don't know how they survived, these people who haven't got anyone, really don't.

Community Policing: They used to have a local and he used to get a lot of villains, and the villains used to know him, but he kept em off the streets. He did. But there's no community policing now you see the police round here, they're lost. You know, one of em actually asked us where Langport Avenue was. And I said, I said to him, "Are you serious?" He said, "Yeah"... it's only on the next block and he didn't even know where it was.



Shopshire Square, Ardwick - 1972



Stockport Rd, Ardwick - 1971



Cresswell St, Ardwick - 1959

Sheila

Family: My mother used to work in the salt factory, there used to be a big factory in Longsight. Then after a while she gave up the job to work as a cleaner in a bed and breakfast in Ardwick Road, and my father worked on street lights for the City Council.

Language: Now, parents can sign. Long time ago, parents were not allowed to sign. It is much better now. I didn't know. I thought every family were like that. When I left school, had to see the outside world and knew there was a Deaf Club. I first went to the deaf club when I was 14 years old. I used to play hockey and was asked to play for the Deaf Club. I met many other Deaf families who could do sign language. So when I left school I had to join the Deaf Club. I did more sign language communication in the deaf club than with family.

Work: My mother said I should find a job working in the office as typist or secretary but I wanted to work in a factory. This is because my friend that I visited regularly every weekend worked in that factory. It was a printing factory in Ardwick Green. Lots deaf people used to work in central Ardwick, doing factory work, sewing and other things. In the evenings, Deaf people used to meet in Ardwick park. There were lots of trees and open space where you could see deaf people signing when you travel past in a bus or car. Now, it is all gone. There is not much for people to do. All there trees have gone. It's very sad.



Grey St, Ardwick - 1968



The Apollo, Stockport Rd - 1969



Sheila (continued)

Cinema: I used to go to Apollo. When I was small, there were special films for children which started 10am till 12 noon – my sisters and I used to arrive there to watch the films. They were special films for children – such as cowboy films – every week, the films used to be stopped when it was getting very excited. For example, there were good cowboys and bad ones. When the bad cowboy's been shot, then the good one was about to be shot, we all panicked and thought it would be awful for the good cowboy to be shot, but that is when the film was stopped. We had to wait till the following week to know what the outcome would be from where last week's scene was stopped. We were always excited to come back again the following week. There was always a large crowd.

Changing Ardwick: You know the McDonalds on Stockport Road? It used to be a pub called Devonshire, but became McDonalds. Around there, there used to be nice houses, but they're all gone now and the area has become an eyesore. Very sad now, compared to my time there. I did some extra jobs. I used to clean buses and collect stuff in the local pub. They used to give me money for doing that cleaning and collecting glasses.



McDonalds, Stockport Rd - 2006

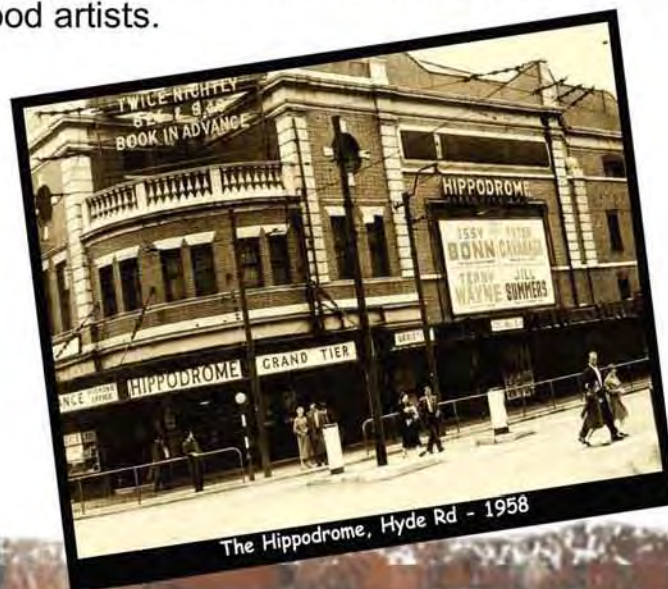


Herbert (Born 1923):

Early Years: I was born in a little street called Tower Street, which is just an offshoot from the street where I lived until I got married.

Home: Yes it was a terraced house... You mounted two steps and walked along the hall. On the left hand side was a little used room, which was called the parlour. And then entered, next on the left was the living room. Erm, which I guess was fairly dark, and then beyond that a flagged kitchen. Flagged floors, in which there was a gas stove, washing facilities and a copper boiler, and a big hand mangle machine for wringing out clothing. Beyond that there was a yard. Where one kept coals in a coal bunker and there would be room to put a line out to hang washing.

The Ardwick Empire: ...changed its name several times... it was the Ardwick Empire, became the hippodrome. Then it started showing films, did all sorts of things. Nearly every artist, old time artist you know performed there. The Ardwick Empire, very good artists.



Herbert(continued)

Parents: He served 25 years in the police... my mother ...she was a erm a homemaker. She worked until she was married of course, a French polisher, but my mother was nearly totally blind... she had German Measles when she was a girl this caused the onset of her troubles... Grandma had sugar diabetes. And one of the contributions was...for my mother to pay for the insulin. She used to give me the money and I used to walk up to Boots chemist and for half a crown...I'll have a job converting that now.. What's that? Ten pence? Half crown. That was a lot of money in those days...

Work: I left school before my fourteenth birthday... I started to work into in a ford agent garage. But... almost immediately I started evening schools. It was called then Ardwick Central School. And it was on Devonshire Street, ...it was from seven o'clock until nine. Those were the hours. At nine o'clock I would rush out and run all the way to St Thomas's where there was a young men's church club to play billiards.., Then ...I went to a company and became an indentured apprentice.

Regeneration: Mistakenly.... the reigning council at that time believed that the properties should be renewed. Grave mistake. A lot of jolly good property was knocked down. And new property erected ...it wasn't long before the new property was just as bad if not worse than the old property. There's one remaining street there... Polygon Avenue, and the brickwork in that, walk along it, look at the quality of the brickwork, its Accrington Brick. Jolly good houses.





Des (Born 1960)

Family: Well me father was a labourer, a very good labourer, and me mother was a part-time cleaner. I'm from Irish parents... with a name like Monahan I've got to be... me childhood wasn't all that good really, me parents used to argue a lot and that used to frighten me...

Education: I went to St Josephs Junior then I went infants, junior then I went to St Priors... I was a good pupil I never wagged it. I really enjoyed school and there was one teacher I can remember very well called Mr Clancey, he, he was a science teacher and he was, he was a brill, even the bullies liked him, he was one of these teachers you could er what's the word? Communicate with.

Dignity: in my mind it you got to give people respect and dignity. You know cos you don't know what background they're from. You know, you got like disabled people that can't speak... but some people you wouldn't know because it's a hidden illness. Hidden disability.

Ardwick Now: there used be five parks round here, there's not even one now. There's only one I can think of, you gotta cross a major road to get to it well that's miles out. There's nothing for the children, nothing round here. It's terrible, it's gone right down... I've been burgled three times.



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