

Stuart Milby: 00:06 The people that are coming in today are people who live here. They've grown up here, their grandparents are here, great grandparents, so they've got a real history in Birmingham. So for me, I'm curating their heritage. We're privileged to be able to work with and to see, and to interact with the things that we find, whether that's the skeletal remains, or whether that's the buttons that we find, or the coins, or the bits of pottery, or lower down underneath the barrier ground, potentially the medieval archaeology, whatever that is, we're the first people to see that for potentially hundreds of years. Well that's what gets you out of bed in the morning. That's the pleasure you get from being an archaeologist.

My name is Stuart Milby and I am the senior archaeologist for Molar Hellen Infrastructure. I have a real interest in where people came from, and that's not just far back in the origins of humans, but actually in more recent history, how we developed at different times. And it can give you a real understanding of the hardships of life that people went through. Fazeley Street initially was left open for the evaluation phase and a couple of these guys would walk past the site every day and would stop and talk and they weren't asking us questions. They were giving us more information about the site because they've lived here, they've grown up here and they know so much more about the living history of this site than we can read in any of the history books. So to meet with them again, and to talk to them and to reconnect with them. It's been brilliant. They just expand our knowledge of the site.

Shirley Norton: 01:41 My name is Shirley Norton, it was Shirley Colbert, when I worked here 56 years ago and I loved it and I always will love it.

Brenda Smith: 01:51 I'm Brenda Smith or Brenda Phillips, I got married. Yeah, we all worked together, didn't we? Happily.

Shirley Norton: 01:58 Yes.

Brenda Smith: 02:00 And it was nice to come to work.

Shirley Norton: 02:02 I had various jobs and my father found mine, he worked for Lawley Street, which was just down the road, actually. Goods department and he found his jobs going so he pushed me to apply for it.

Brenda Smith: 02:16 And my father worked on the railway and he sorted it for me as well.

Shirley Norton: 02:20 It was very common. If you got fathers, they pushed it, you know, to get on the railway. Yes, yes, yes.

Brenda Smith: 02:26 My Dad did and most of my family worked on the railway.

Shirley Norton: 02:29 My sister followed me here as well, and my father used to ring up weekly or fortnightly some time to see how I was getting on with my job.

He was most interested, my Dad was, that I was doing alright and I was behaving myself. I started in the cashier's office, 15 year old, very raw and then I moved on to the personnel section. Microfilm photo gathering yes, yes. I had to do that. And then some sorting, and sorting office and that. Yes. I've had quite a few jobs, you know, carrying on until the time we left from here.

Brenda Smith: 03:07 I was in the sorting office.

Shirley Norton: 03:09 Every load had consignment note, which tells you where it was destined to go to. They must've had duplicates, so we had them in into our offices and we have to sort them up where they were going.

Brenda Smith: 03:22 They went to Ireland and everywhere.

Shirley Norton: 03:24 And then we even had an international section as well. The goods were hit on the lower parts of this Curzon Street,

Brenda Smith: 03:30 When I first started, you'd learn to do the post. Your first thing opening all of England. Sending them back out again. I never got on to that. That was my first little job.

Shirley Norton: 03:44 Yeah, every, every office was packed and there were so many different departments. I'd say there was a 200 and something. It must have been.

Brenda Smith: 03:51 Re starting at central station. I actually worked there. There was a bond up there. I don't know where the bond moved to.

Shirley Norton: 03:58 Well, it tested whiskey and the older whiskey came in. You had to go underground. I never went down there, not the opportunity but. I didn't go and then go up the spiral stairs

and I was a floor above Brenda. I did have a session in the attic

Brenda Smith: 04:15 Yeah, there was.

Shirley Norton: 04:15 Yes. Because why not? That's where the machine was,

Brenda Smith: 04:15 Yeah, yeah.

Shirley Norton: 04:20 the filming machine was. Because it was darker in there.

Brenda Smith: 04:26 Yeah, it was. Bit frightening.

Shirley Norton: 04:26 Yes it was. Yes.

Brenda Smith: 04:27 When you first introduced to the office. Wasn't it?

Shirley Norton: 04:31 It was so big. To me it was so big. You know, it was a big place.

Brenda Smith: 04:34 Looked big when you were 15, these big rooms.

Shirley Norton: 04:37 Yes. And the lots of the supervisors. We weren't married

Brenda Smith: 04:44 No. Very strict.

Shirley Norton: 04:45 Older, you know your place with them.

Brenda Smith: 04:49 Oh yeah.

Shirley Norton: 04:50 Every job I did on the railway I love, I did really.

Brenda Smith: 04:53 We enjoyed it because

Shirley Norton: 04:54 You didn't have to force me to come to work because we had a nice comradery and it was nice. The jobs were nice. I was always laughing and happy and so, yes.

Brenda Smith: 05:05 I went out with a couple of blokes. We used to go dancing, didn't we up in Corporation St?

Shirley Norton: 05:10 Oh Yes. At dinner times. We used to have an hour dinner, so we used to go up to the Percano I think it was. And used to get, have a quick shuffle round and a boogie. Lunch time and then it wasn't too far away and then we'd have to run back and get back in time.

Brenda Smith: 05:27 Yeah, yeah.

Shirley Norton: 05:29 That was great. Yeah, didn't do it every day. But so - Going from here up by where the Park Street is now, whichever way we are. Yes, there was a beehive shops and Henry stores. There was proper stores all up that way, whereas there's nothing there, no stores up there. But when we go in and have a look.

Brenda Smith: 05:51 Especially when she was getting the shoes from Darcy's. Always. And C&A.

Shirley Norton: 05:59 Birmingham is a lot different than it was. A lot of nice clothes shops, dress shops and shoe shops and all that. They were nice, just all of the sudden we were being transferred. I was transferred to Snow Hill, you see? So it was from one, actually one run down building to the next run down building as it happened. I was devastated. I really was. I was very upset about it. Yeah, we lost touch then. Yeah.

Brenda Smith: 06:29 Yeah.

Shirley Norton: 06:29 I think I met you one day on a bus or something didn't I?

Brenda Smith: 06:31 That's right. Yeah, you were going on holidays with your sister I think. Yeah.

Shirley Norton: 06:36 And then we sort of just met at odd times and since, well definitely not socially, have we since?

Brenda Smith: 06:38 I've seen you in The Swan, having a meal.

Shirley Norton: 06:44 Yes.

Brian Clayton: 06:52 My name is Brian Clayton. I live in Stratford upon Avon now. I was born about 50 yards away from here. At one back of 28 House Street. Ive been past there many times. The Eagle and Ball used to be my families drinking place. I stood outside there many times with a bottle of Vimto and a packet of crisps waiting for my dad to come out. We've come across to look at the station Ive brought my grandson Joey with me and my mother used to do office cleaning in that building, you see? So inside that place there, the first time I ever went in there was about 70 years ago. She used to go in there with a couple of other ladies and used to clean the place up. You know the big columns that's outside? Well we used to play on

them, as kids, you see, chasing one and other round them, they're up here off the ground the base of them.

Yeah. It was a poor area and it's quite a bit of, it was what used to be called bomb pecks where they'd been bombed in the war, and I was born in the war. You see I was born in 1943 so I grew up with all the, the bomb pecks. We were kids, we all used to play. We had a good house actually because we had a three bedroom house with a, we had a kitchen, a lounge. which was a big house around here. And so, yeah, in that respect it was okay but didn't change much around here, streetwise, the location of the streets. I know Birmingham like the back of me hand, there used to be the good yards today. Just a bad way. We are now used to be this stables for the, for the big shire horses that carried all the parcels around. Used to come by train.

It all belonged to the British rail and those stables with backs onto our house. And I can remember the first bananas being delivered there when the horses had moved out, they used stables to store bananas.

Brian Clayton: 08:49 Well this area was always near the city. It was always busy. It always had a stream of activity going, on. Retail, mainly shops and Birmingham was always a thriving city. There was always lots to do here. Coffee shops, theaters, it was always a thriving area. The city is the second city. That's what's great about Birmingham. It's just a good city. The people are generally honest here. If you want to know a little bit of background, some of my earliest memories is the bull ring. When my mother, rationing was on in those days when I was a child, still going to school and my mother used to take me to the bull ring as it was in those days. And one interesting character that stuck in my mind is a boy that we used to be a strong man that used to break out of chains every Saturday in the bull ring. Of course, as a little boy looking up at this giant of a man doing these feats of strength was amazing. And these are some, you know, childhood memories of Birmingham?

Mike Jee: 10:10 Well, I can remember it from the late sixties, early seventies in fact, even earlier than that. That just down the road from here used to be rubbers and pines, which was a big timber yard. I remember coming down with my dad and ordering the timber to do the loft conversion in our house. I was always doing bits of metal work and school didn't have the materials

that I needed. So on my way home from school, I'd leave school, half past three and I'd get into Birmingham what about four o'clock and I'd be wandering around Park Street and all around that area around Curzon Street, lots of little workshops. And you'd go into one of them and say "I'm looking for a bit of temporing steel or something like about this by that. Where can I get it from? Ooh, Ooh, oh that's the sort of thing that Joe does, go three doors down and then ask for Joe, see if he's got anything. And there I'd be in my school blazer, school uniform and everything. Walking down all these little back street places trying to find Joe, or Fred and "Oh yeah, I've got a bit of that leftover somewhere. Be in the back. Hang on a minute."

Tony Hanna: 11:23 My name's Tony Hanna. My role is historic environment manager for area north and HS2. I was born in Birmingham but I moved from Birmingham as a child and I lived in Birmingham seven years. I went to the University of Birmingham to do my Masters in Archaeology and then lived here in Birmingham for seven years. Moved away in 2000 and I've come back here for the HS2 project two years ago. My ambition for Birmingham is to be one of the great cities of Europe, like Barcelona is for Spain. It's the second city in Spain but it's also a great city in its own right. Europe-wide.

I could see that happening for Birmingham both economically and culturally. There's a diverse culture here. There's great network for music, for the arts, theater. It's all here. It just needs the chance and the investment to bring it out. it is really a fantastic city to live and work in.

Brian Clayton: 12:28 It's a fantastic achievement. I'm hoping I'm still here when it's practically finished. I've got two grandchildren here with me today that are going to see something and read about something that they can follow the progress of all their lives, so by the time they're 70 they'll have seen it come, they'll have seen the achievements more than I will.

Jonathan Karkut: 12:52 My Name's Jonathan Karkut and I'm a heritage consultant.

One of the things that it's been crossing my mind is particularly when looking at this archaeological aspect and the history and the oral histories is for instance, just in this particular section, how the significance of change of entrepreneurship, innovation has been at the heart of Birmingham since before the industrial revolution. And I think

if anything, if we can allow that to continue and to get a way of sparking new ideas rather than people feeling that they've got to wait to be led or to have things explained to them, I think it's important to sort of like have that embedded right at the beginning. And then ideas and networks, concepts can emerge much more effectively and fruitfully.

Mary Roddy:

13:47

My name is Mary Roddy and I'm an archeological consultant. Uncovering those stories, learning about the social history and just today talking to the people who are inspired to come to this sort of event. It's really interesting to - personal connection to that, to the areas. I'm a Londoner, so I wasn't familiar with Birmingham before starting this job, but I'm possibly evangelical about it now. So interesting. The 19th Century, the municipal revolution, George Joseph Civic Gospel, I'm a total convert. My husband thinks I've been brainwashed. I just think we've got an awful lot to learn from the 19th Century and those characters in particular, they formed the modern world. Their ideas have created us and radiated across the world. It sounds cheesy, but it's actually true. The political system, the welfare state, education, you name it, it came from here.