

Visit our website
www.lbea.co.uk

Here to Stay

Trains, Boats and Planes...

Our memories of coming to Leeds

When our elders arrived to the shores of England as young men and women they had a five year plan in which they would acquire education or just enough to build a house 'back home'.

However, circumstances took over and inevitably they are now 'here to stay'

The Leeds Black Elders Association has been established since 1991 and provides much need services to the Black Elderly (but not exclusively) throughout Leeds and operates covering mainly the Harehills and Chapel Allerton and University wards.



The LBE would like to thank Leodis.net for allowing the use of their images, and thank you to all the staff and those who have participated in the 'Here to Stay project'.



Welcome

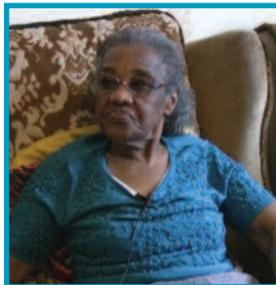
The 'Here To Stay' project was born out of the lack of information available regarding the histories of our Afro Caribbean people in Leeds.

Various organisations and groups in Leeds, including Leeds Black Elders Association, have over the years organised events, produced books and articles pertaining to this field of work. The project aims to undertake a strategic process of documenting this legacy through the provision of services which make available avenues to collect, promote and access the history for the local community and wider community..



Our memories

Mrs Elaine Davis



Birth place:
Caribbean islands,
Barbados

When and how did you get to England?

"It was 1960 and it was by Boat, the SS Auriantha. It took two weeks and docked at Liverpool".

Why did you come to England?

"I really don't know why I came to England. I think I left because my best cousin Olga who passed away about five years ago. I had another cousin, he's still alive... he used to send money for me sometimes. He kept forcing me to come, and you know Olga, used to say why don't you come? and in the end I came. I ended up in Leeds because my husband lived here".

Where did you work?

"A fur factory, then a skirt factory then in the laundrette at St. James' Hospital, and finally on the Geriatric Ward at the hospital".

Do you like Leeds?

"Well, it's funny because I don't know whether I like it, I just came and I just accept things as they are unless something else happens to me".

Why did you stay in Leeds?

"I'm quite happy, you know, I'm quite happy and comfortable really because the kids are near, you know and if I want anything, I ask them to get it for me".

Here to Stay!

"...everything looked so confusing, so many people and you're trying to look for your suitcase and from one thing to the other and then I find mine."

Mrs Davis

Mrs Frances Cambell



Birth place:
St. Kitts, West Indies

When and how did you get to England?

"I Came to England when I was twenty four. The boat was called The Begonia and docked at Southampton. I then got a train to Leeds".

Why did you come to England?

"My foster parents came to England when I was about twenty. They sent for me. I was overjoyed to come to this place, although in the beginning I didn't really want to come, as I say, I wanted to go with my mates that were going to St Thomas, St Vincent's, all these places nearer home. I wanted to go, but I had no say in the matter. They send the money so I had to travel".

What were your first impressions of Leeds?

"When I see the houses I thought they were factories, some people told me that they were not factories but their houses".

Where did you work?

"A clothing factory and then cleaner at Leeds University".

How did you fit into the Leeds community?

"I never had come up against prejudice. It seems to me everybody took me for what I am. I would go places and I ask for things, I would get it with no problem. Although I did hear people say they were not being not served...that was not my experience".

Mrs Saddler



Birth place:
St. Kitts, West Indies

When and how did you get to England?

"I came by boat in 1960. I think it was called the Sorriento and docked at Southampton. It took 28 days. I was very sick. We stepped off this great ship not knowing where we were going...we had to make our own way towards our destination. My journey to England, was not a very happy one!"

Why did you come to England?

"My oldest sister, she came to England and trained as a nurse, and then she wrote and said, "I'm sending for you, it's good here, come!" She paid my passage and I came. And I love it!"

What work did you do before you came to England?

"After school, needlework was a must. I went to learn dressmaking".

Why did you come to Leeds?

"I did not like London. There wasn't much of a black community at the time. It was too big and fast, I didn't stay long. I had relatives in Leeds. I like Leeds. I have no regrets".

Where did you work?

"I can't remember what my first job was, I think it was working in a sardine factory...I didn't like it, so I worked at Kingfisher on Meanwood Road...I liked that job but after 9 years I got fed up and wanted to be a social worker. I did a course and got a job straight away as a residential social worker. I worked for 25 years until I retired - a fantastic job, working with children".

Here to Stay!



Mrs Beryl Juma



Birth place:
Freetown, Sierra Leone

When and how did you get to England?

"I came by boat. It was the Mail Vessel Accra. The journey was about 10 days, it was lovely. I travelled 1st class because my mother didn't want me to miss the start of my nursing training. I arrived in Liverpool and got a train from Liverpool Lyme street to London. I couldn't believe that I was in the UK, because it had been a dream of mine to come".

Why did you come to England?

"My parents came to the UK when I was 14. I was then 21 when I came to the UK. I came straight to a nursing school, and it happened to be the nursing school that my mother had been to, in Halifax".

What were your first impressions of England?

"We arrived in Bradford in a very grey, foggy September morning and I thought what have I come to...I burst into tears because I thought, Oh my God, I didn't expect it to be like this".

Where did you work and what were people's reaction towards you?

"I worked as a qualified nurse. Most of the patients were nice".

What is your life like now as a result of coming to England?

"I'm semi-retired. I have worked in the NHS now for the last 43 years. I was fortunate in the sense that in 2006, I was recognised for my work within our Health Care and was awarded the MBE by the Queen".

Mr Grantley Bovell



Birth place:
Barbados

When and how did you get to England?

"I came to England when I was between 18 and 19. I came by ship. And it was heartwrenching, heart breaking...I can't describe the bad feelings I had because it wasn't something that I wanted to do. We docked at Liverpool".

Why did you come to England?

"Fortunately my mother came to England and settled in Liverpool, and my sister came to do nursing. I was reluctant to come to England. At that time there was conscription in England where you had to go into the Army at a certain age".

What were your first impressions of England?

"Amazement. Gobsnacked! At a loss for words! It was dark, it was grey, cold and bleak, and all the houses with smoke going through the top, which I had never seen before...it was something that will live with me forever, not in a bad way. The whole scene of England, was not like we had been told, or what we envisaged".

Where did you work?

"I was fortunate because I had a job lined up already on British Rail. I left within three weeks because that was not the job I wanted and I wanted to go back to my carpentry. I went to a big firm in Liverpool called Costain, that was a big construction firm. The job I got was an outside job... the cold was against me...and I left that. I went into Engineering".

Why did you come to Leeds?

"Liverpool was not a bad place, the only thing was the unemployment started to rise viciously later on...I had an Aunt that lived over here, they said how nice Leeds was...my mother came over to see her and she decided that's where she wanted to go...so I came here".

Here to Stay!

"It was dark, it was grey, cold and bleak, and all the houses with smoke going through the top, which I had never seen before...it was something that will live with me forever, not in a bad way."

Mr Bovell

Mr Ian Charles



Birth place:
Trinidad, West Indies

When did you come to England?

"I came here in 1954"

Why did you come to England?

"I had an uncle here who was a Land Surveyor...he advised me to come here. My father came to England on holiday and was very much in love with England and thought that we should come and study here. So one by one my family came over to study".

What work did you do before you came to England?

"When I left college with my certificate, my first job I got was just as a teacher, at an elementary school in Arima".

What were your first impressions of Leeds?

"In Leeds we had so much going for us there. We're talking about the '60s aren't we...so many things happened in those days with the economy and things".

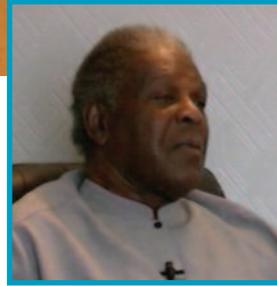
Where did you work?

"I came here and then got a job as a land surveyor with the Coal Board. I have been an active member of the community. I was involved in the Princess trust for 25 years".

Why did you stay in Leeds?

"Just everybody took to me, I took to them. It was really, really family and that is why I stayed on, because I got used to the life here which has become a home from home to be honest. I just seemed to lose touch with my friends at home. I'm glad I stayed to be honest, everything has worked out".

Mr English



Birth place:
Cuba

Parents: Both Jamaican

Why did you come to England?

"I was at college doing an engineering course when the advertisement asking for personnel to come to England and be in the Air Force because they had a shortage of manpower. I was stationed for a while in Cambridge and then I came up to Dishforth in Yorkshire".

When did you come to England?

"The time was about 1944 and the Atlantic Ocean was crawling with German U-boats and they were picking off all the shipping and passenger vehicles that were on the sea".

What were your first impressions of England?

"It was cold. That was the main thing that stuck in my mind. I don't know whether I can manage this".

Where did you work after the RAF and what were peoples reactions towards you?

"When I'd finished, I got nominated for my MBE, I realised that somebody, somewhere had recognised what I was doing, and that I was doing a reasonably good job and that was their way of saying thank you.

I went to Baird Television in Bradford after, I was apart of the team that was producing 4,000 sets a week. After that I joined the civil service as a lecturer in engineering and design. I did that right until retirement".



Here to Stay!

Mrs Odessa Stoute



Birth place:
Barbados

When and how did you get to England?

"In 1961 I came by plane. It took 2 days. It was one of these little two engine planes. The airport must have been Heathrow".

Why did you come to England?

"My husband had a brother that were here. Everybody were coming to England and I wanted to come to England as well, you know England the mother country as they say".

What were your first impressions of Leeds?

"I remember saying to my husband, "oh there must be plenty work here with all these chimneys"...we thought the houses were factories".

Where did you work in Leeds?

"I stayed at Montague Burton for 12 years. After I had to go down Whitehall Road to learn catering...I got a job at Meanwood Park Hospital doing catering. I'm a school governor at Bankside School. Plus the Here to Stay project takes me into schools...to talk to the children. I talk to them about my livelihood, my growing up and..their behaviour and things, like that"

Why did you stay in Leeds?

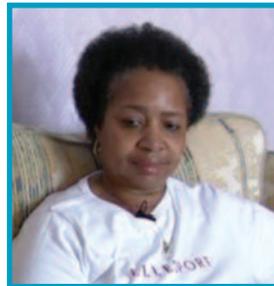
"I wanted my children to have an academic standard education, the kind that I wanted for myself".

Mrs Hilton



"We all heard about England, the streets were paved with gold...and we were going to find the money so easily... the biggest shock that hit me, because it was nothing compared to what I thought it would be.

Ms James



"When I came and I saw the smoke, I said to my sister, 'Oh the house is on fire!' and she explained to me what the smoke was all about. It was cold, foggy...it was really cold".

Mr Rowe



"...why is there no leaves on the trees, everything had dropped off. Then after I came and settled down here I noticed that when it comes to winter all leaves fell off".



Here to Stay!