

TELLING OUR STORIES, FINDING OUR ROOTS ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW SUMMARY FORM

Date of interview	22 nd September 2020
Location of interview	Ockment Centre, Okehampton, Devon
Name of interviewee	Daniel Leite
Name of interviewer	Nicole Redfern
Length of interview	01:17:00
File format, storage format	WAV, hosted on Soundcloud. Digital copy obtainable from DDE.

Tags:

Portugal; Okehampton; Family; Community ; First Generation Story

Interviewee's wishes regarding use of interview

None.

Interviewer's notes / any issues on recording

None.

Linked objects/photographs.

None.

Key themes and topics covered in the interview

Theme / topic	Timecode on recording
Background to arrival in Okehampton	[01:45-02:47], [05:17-06:12], [10:10-10:53]
Arrival in and Perceptions of Okehampton	[17:15-22:40], [23:18-24:28], [25:02-26:05], [29:13-30:01]
Family Background	[34:51-35:29], [40:32-40:51], [44:30-45:00], [48:57-51:02]
Impressions of British People	[27:22-28:53], [31:00-32:10], [35:48-47:17]
Thoughts on Portugal and comparison with England	[30:22-30:34], [44:08-44:31], [48:01--50:24], [57:58-59:57]
Thoughts on walking and countryside	[04:15-05:16], [06:27-07:10], [08:31-09:23], [12:04-16:27]
Interest in history and prehistory	[51:05-01:04:29], [01:12:08-01:14:10]
Pubs and Community	[03:24-04:09], [10:53-11:40], [23:55-28:54]
Reflections on personal experiences in Devon	[22:27-28:21], [37:57-39:32], [43:00-43:56], [01:04:42-01:10:16]

Interview highlights

“I never felt an outsider in this in this town or even in the small villages around. If, I think it’s very much, if you have a good heart and you are a good person, you are welcome to go and follow the rules.” [00:27:23]

“When my Portuguese side has to interact on a more personal level with people from Devon is that it gives them a different perspective. It is lovely, Devon, but that distance between places makes things, like I said, makes things slower and sometimes that slow movement makes things harder. It is actually quite contradictory because they will welcome you, but then they don’t understand why you’re coming here. That’s my experience. That’s how I see it.” [00:39:22]

Interview summary

Daniel starts by explaining that he is 35 and has been living in Devon for about five years [00:23-00:35]. He finds it a very calming place. He finds it easy to live in Devon and doesn't think you have to prove anything to anyone [00:53-01:34]. Daniel goes on to say that before coming to Devon he had worked in London. Before that he had worked in Paris and that experience made it easy for him to get a job in London [01:50-02:37]. He mentions that he also worked in Somerset and Swanage before coming to Devon. He likes Devon because of the security it gives him [03:12-03:26].

Daniel explains that, until two years ago, all his moves had been related to his work as a chef [05:30-05:42]. His move from Swanage to Honiton was for work. He recalls travelling on the A303 to Honiton and seeing Honiton in the valley. He says that, although Swanage is a rural area, Devon felt different [06:13-07:00]. Once he had moved he started noticing the lanes, the hills and the hedges around Honiton, which made him think of the film, Lord of the Rings [07:45-08:42]. Daniel explains that at first he was living in Ottery St. Mary, where he stayed for three years. Using Ottery as a base Daniel recalls that he extended his reach by driving and walking. Although he had walked in Swanage he feels that Devon is different. He explains that you can walk for a long time without leaving the area [11:48-12:35]. He describes why the East Strip Hills in Ottery as probably his favourite place in Devon [14:15-17:15].

Daniel goes on to describe his memories of his first day in Okehampton. He says it was a Sunday and the town was deserted. It made him feel quite sad because he feels the town is not offering anything to people [17:29-18:55]. He feels the town's claim to be the gateway to Dartmoor is not beneficial because it does not encourage people to stay. He compares Okehampton to Tavistock, which he perceives as a more vibrant town [19:29-19:50]. When asked if his perceptions of the town have changed Daniel says he finds that difficult to answer. He says he is not a very sociable person so, even if more were offered, he probably wouldn't go [21:22-22:26]. When he is in Okehampton he feels comfortable. He describes himself as a very anxious person [22:28-22:41]. He mentions the time he spent at the library and his surprise at how many people use it. He says that the proximity of Dartmoor is a big plus for him [22:58-23:45].

Daniel goes on to talk about people in the Okehampton area. He gets the impression that they really like where they live and that they make you welcome. He mentions that people ask him questions about himself but that he has never felt like an outsider in the area. He believes that if you are a good person and follow the rules you are welcome [24:07-25:17]. He expresses the opinion that if there is a pub you become part of the community but that, more importantly, you have to be a nice person [26:45-27:06]. He reflects on his visits to the library and, although he isn't a sociable person, he says he has experienced a level of familiarity here that he hasn't felt in other places he has lived. His impression is that if you are here to be part of the community you are welcome to stay [27:23-28:57]. Daniel talks about local people's curiosity and why he has come here. He feels this curiosity is natural as Okehampton is not a place with a big immigrant community. He feels that in conversations he can offer a different experience and change people's perceptions [29:05-31:00]. He refers to Brexit and expresses the opinion that most English people don't see themselves as European. He feels that when immigrants are part of a community it makes conversation more interesting, gives a different perspective and helps people understand why immigrants come here [31:02-35:00]. He says he tells people what life was like for himself and his parents in Portugal [35:11-35:27]. He expresses his opinion that this country wants to go back to a past that no longer exists [37:42-37:55].

Interview summary

Daniel reflects on the contrasts between himself and an English person of the same age and background. He refers to what he sees as the ritual of students going travelling after finishing exams. He says he didn't go to University and had to become economically independent. He talks about the idea of entitlement that he has been confronted by in this country and questions what is being given in return [39:22-41:26]. He talks about why the EU doesn't work for British people and says that he believes this to be because their feeling of entitlement means they don't have to co-operate. He feels that entitlement comes with a certain level of arrogance [41:30-42:54]. He goes on to say that, for the first time, he was dealing with people of a lighter skin tone. He still feels it is easier to live and work in this country than in Portugal [43:02-44:16]. His own background was comfortable but not wealthy enough to give him a sense of entitlement [44:32-44:44]. He returns to the subject of young people going abroad to find themselves and feels they are doing it because it is easy. [46:00-47:02]

When asked about the values he inherited from his parents that he had brought with him from Portugal Daniel gives some historical background to Portugal [47:55-48:39]. He talks about his parents and how they left school very young. He feels that Portugal cannot compete with other countries, even poorer countries, because those countries have a higher level of education. He says that very few of his family went to University and that his parents brought him up to believe work was important [48:57-51:02].

Daniel moves on to talk about his interest in history. He talks about visiting monuments in London, particularly Tower Bridge and his thoughts when he was there. He talks about the TV programme 'Time Team' which he thinks is great because it involves ordinary people and is on a mainstream channel [51:04-53:04]. When he was in Swanage he developed an interest in pre-history and brought this interest to Okehampton with him. He is fascinated by ancient mounds which make him wonder, 'who did this?' 'why?' When he sees stones or inscriptions he always wonders about the person who created them. He feels that the history is why Devon is so important to him [53:05-57:48]. He goes on to say that in Portugal the focus is still on maritime and colonial history and that mounds and complexes as important as Stonehenge are neglected. In England he feels that such places are better preserved because of the National Trust and English Heritage. Daniel shows the interviewer a stone that he picked up at Woodbury Hillfort. For him the stone represents something static in a fast moving age [01:00:09-01:04:26].

Daniel reflects on what he would say to himself if he could go back to the day he arrived in the UK. He says that he was scared but that it was a calculated risk and he knew that family and working values would help. He now feels he's entitled to disagree with this country because he has contributed to it. He feels that today's Daniel has more luggage both physically and mentally [01:04:53-01:09:03].

Daniel is asked what he would say to anyone listening to his oral history in the future. He says that a smile makes things easier and that connections are important. He advises that you should not expect anything and should put yourself in other people's shoes. He recalls a picture he saw of soldiers going off to war and how he could understand what they were thinking [01:10:34-01:13:21]. He suggests that anyone reading his account should carry something of value and move it forward [01:14:28-01:14:38].