



Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots

Interview with Gail Hickman

Interviewers: Rose Young & Lawrence ---

Interviewer 00:00:00

[Unintelligible]. So we are now recording, Gail. So if you would just start by saying your full name, date of birth, today's date, well it's the 26th of February. And we are in the library.

Gail 00:00:16

I'm Gail Hickman date of birth is 24th of November 1950. And we are in the library,

Interviewer 00:00:24

Excellent .

Gail 00:00:24

In Bideford.

Interviewer 00:00:25

In Bideford. So, Gail. I'm going to start us off. And I know a little very little about your background. But all I don't really know much about your history, and so on so I'm quite interested to know, how you came to be in Bideford. And in fact, actually going back further, how you came to be living in the UK. So do you want to kind of just let us know how that happened, and whether you in fact came straight to Bideford or whether you went elsewhere and what and then maybe we can go into what your impressions were initially when you arrived here, but just tell us a bit about how you came to, to came to Britain or came to Bideford, whatever was first.

Gail 00:01:17

Okay, well just to - [Gail clears her throat] Sorry. Just to give you a quick overview of my family history, my mother's side is Irish and Scots, mainly made up of remittance men who were sent to South Africa, and by dad's family is all sugar from the Netherlands. So they were given land grants in South Africa to go out and grant true in the 1800s. I'm a fifth generation South African. So that's where we started from. After the apartheid era with all the violence in South Africa, and attached to the work that I was doing as well, which was drug counselling, I needed to get out to stay alive. So I just threw everything in a container my car, 27 drums, my furniture, put it on the ship and jumped on a plane and I came to England.



Why did I come to Bideford? Because I had a son in Swindon, and I had a foster son in Doncaster and they were fighting over me to come and live with them. So I got a map of England up and I went Doncaster, Swindon, triangle, Bideford, perfect, and there's a train. That was literally how I chose it and I've been here ever since. And I'm so glad I did because my son subsequently moved to Cambridge and then to Australia, and the one in Doncaster works overseas so much, I would never have seen him anyway. So I like Bideford. [laughter]

Interviewer 00:02:48

And what was - I mean, had you been to Britain before you came?

Gail 00:02:52

I had my, my ex husband used to travel quite regularly on business to Scotland and England. So I used to come over with him. And then before I came here, I made a final LSD trip: Look, See and Decide. So I came over. And the South Africans all call it the LSD trip, where you come over and you look at everything and think can I live with it? Yes, I can, and it will pass muster. So yeah, I packed and left.

Interviewer 00:03:17

[Yeah]

Gail 00:03:17

[and that -] I had a British passport, fortunately. So I was able to come here. You know, a lot of people in South Africa are passport prisoners. They can't move. But I had a British passport, so I was very lucky.

Interviewer 00:03:28

And Bideford - your initial impressions? And you know, you're you get when you came here, how did it feel to be here?

Gail 00:03:37

It felt just like home, but by the sea. I lived about an hour away from the sea, but in exactly the same environment, and it was like, Oh my gosh, this is home. By The Sea. It was the same people. It was the farmers you talk about combine harvesters and crops. Easygoing people, a band of wealth. Yeah, it was just the same. There was not that much to -

Interviewer 00:04:07

Climate?

Gail 00:04:08



The climate wasn't too bad. Where I lived in South Africa was called underwater world because the rest of the world was dry and [laughter] Hillcrest, because we were so high, it was always under a cloud of mist and rain. So and we used to get temperatures down to minus one, minus two. So

Interviewer 00:04:24

You were quite used to this climate [then?]

Gail 00:04:25

[I was used to it.] And 50 miles up the road used to be heavy snowfall in the winter. So yeah I [was quite used to the temperatures in - in South Africa, yeah].

Interviewer 00:04:26

[Well, that that was in South Africa. Ok. But then]

Gail 00:04:35

[So I was] quite used to that. Well that that wasn't a problem. And that's what conned me into thinking this was going to be easy. [laughter]

Interviewer 00:04:43

Right. And in, and just staying with the early days, and the arrival here, what how did you set up living? I mean, what were your living? What was your living situation and so on. I mean, did you buy something or did you - what happened?

Gail 00:05:01

Well, the exchange rate in South Africa at the time was twenty to one, so you got one pound for 20 rand. So you can imagine any money you had in South Africa was just - - reduced to nothing when you came over. So there was no chance of buying anything. I had the most enormous difficulty trying to rent and trying to set up a bank account because you can't have a bank account unless you've got an address, and you can't get an address unless you've got a bank account, and it was, it was stressful beyond belief. And I just couldn't get a property to rent because I was South African, they will not rent properties just to foreigners. So eventually I found an estate agent just agreed that I could rent this property if I paid six months rent in advance. It was a lot of money -

Interviewer 00:05:10

Yeah, wow that is a lot, yeah.

Gail 00:05:52

- for me who'd come over with virtually nothing, you know. And I paid six months rent in advance. I got somewhere to live. [Gail clears her throat]. I got my bank account through bullying. My son went to the bank and said, Listen, I'm a very wealthy man, you have my account, you have my business account,



just give my mother an account and stop fussing, you know. And that's how I got my account. It was ridiculous. You know, you felt like you were, sort of, being bullied and you felt like you were fighting the law. And you felt like you were breaking the law, but you had to do what you - I can understand why people do what they do when they're on the streets. You got to do what you got to do to survive.

Interviewer 00:06:34

So it was a bit of a struggle even for you?

Gail 00:06:36

Huge. I was 50 years old, on my own, no hand to hold. You know, couple's come over they lie in bed at night, hold each other's hands and say it'll be fine, Doll. We'll be fine. You know? I didn't have that I was just totally on my own. And it was incredibly hard. Trying to get a job was just as hard.

Interviewer 00:06:56

Yep.

Gail 00:06:57

Two hundred applications and I think two replies. Just

Interviewer 00:07:03

It was a real struggle at the beginning?

Gail 00:07:05

Yeah.

Interviewer 00:07:06

And this is back in 2002. [This is - you came -]

Gail 00:07:08

[That was in 2002.]

Interviewer 00:07:10

You came straight to Bideford. And in terms of, again, just staying with the kind of initial days, initial arrival, did you find people around who would help you or you just found that you were very unwelcome? [Interviewer clears his throat].

Gail 00:07:23

No. No. Not at all. They were very kind about the fact that I'd immigrated here I was the one that sat in a pub and said, I can't believe this country's just letting all these people in. They just let them in, they don't X ray them at the airport. I come from a country full of disease. Nobody even asked me if I've got



hepatitis, you know. And I was shouted down by the locals. They said that's so unkind people need to come to this country for safety and - which is why I was here. And I say kick them all out, don't let them in. [laughter]. And I was right. Of course. You know, they shouldn't have been letting in the people that did lead let in. They should have been health testing people that were coming in with their AIDS and TB and hepatitis and all the other diseases. It was just wrong. I could see where it was going. They were letting in unskilled people so the crime rate was raised. All the fantastic crime they'd learned to do in South Africa just came straight over here with the with the unskilled South Africans [Interviewer hums] and it was very scary.

Interviewer 00:08:32

Hmm. Rose, I'm going to hand over to you because you're going to ask something about Bideford, aren't you? [Gail coughs].

Interviewer 2 00:08:40

Yeah.

Interviewer 00:08:40

Shall we just.

Speaker Four 00:08:42

We'll just check this is working. It looks as though it's working, so we'll carry on.

Interviewer 2 00:08:47

Okay, so, it's great hearing your, you know, your first accounts, Gail. Absolutely amazing. So in terms of when you landed here in Bideford, how would you describe to someone who had never been here, the people and the place when you've arrived in Bideford.

Gail 00:09:09

Accepting as long as you fit all their criteria. So, you know, I was a white British-speaking, raised in a British colony, person, so I'd like 90% there. So that it was reasonably easy until you got to the crunch of well you're not actually British. [laughter]. Now I am British, got a passport. Yes but you're not actually English. [laughter] So I had to learn all the divides of I'm British, but I'm not English and, you know, it was quite difficult and people will find they all sort of bugged up one space to make you room for you to come into the country. But they didn't really want to know anything about you. Didn't want to know anything and my life started here at 50. They didn't ask me if I was married, divorced if I had children, grandchildren, what did we eat in South Africa? Nothing. I couldn't talk about the crime because the crime in South Africa was so horrific, and trying to talk to people who would get hysterical when the petunias were stolen off the porch, about people being murdered, you just couldn't do that. So that was a taboo subject. Do you know what I mean? People here have not experienced ugliness and violence, or what - I'd had 30 years of really the most awful violence. But I couldn't talk about it because



it wouldn't be right to offend people's sensibilities with that stuff. They'd ask the question, but I'd refused to answer it. [laughter]

Interviewer 2 00:10:50

And what did you like most about the town once you've sorted settled a little bit.

Gail 00:10:56

Just everything. The the river, the beach, the the bush, just on the other side, you know, you had river this side and the bush that side. Just everything, the ambience, the people generally were lovely. And when I say they were lovely, they were lovely on a level. [Did I --]

00:11:24

[Several overlapping voices, all unintelligible].

Gail 00:11:27

Yeah, on the surface of it, you know, at sort of level one, we didn't go down because that was not the right thing to do, you know. I wouldn't say that people were xenophobic, they would just either too lazy or scared to learn about you. So if you could just be like them and make good Yorkshire pudding, you were okay. But they didn't want to have to go with you. In South Africa, we have 11 official languages and 23 black languages, right? And then we have English and Afrikaans. That's a lot of languages. So you're never stuck for a word or a situation. It's, South African English is so colourful, because you just draw from all these languages. And I knew the moment I arrived here, as I stepped off the plane, I knew I had to speak English only, and not draw all these words. Because if people couldn't understand me, it would be even worse. So I spoke pure English. I struggled with words every now and then. But I did make a point of speaking pure English. So that that was a one hurdle that was overcome. They weren't struggling to understand me as if I'd been Croatian for instance, you know, or Nigerian.

Interviewer 2 00:12:51

So, once you'd settled in, what would you say was your favourite place in the town and why?

Gail 00:12:58

The beach because the first time I walked on a beach here, I cried. Because I hadn't been able to walk on a beach on my own for years because of safety. And I could go down at sunset and walk the length of the beach and I was safe. I just cried, I can't believe that I can - My sons used to come and fetch me to take you for a walk in the bush like they were walking the dog. Come on, Mum, we've got an hour, do you want to go to the bush? [laughter] Because it wasn't safe. So can you imagine, you know, being walked like the dog? So to be able to just get out and walk on the beach or sit on the river and eat fish and chips or -- that for me was the most mind blowing thing, I'll never forget that feeling of safety and thinking, this is the most important thing ever. Doesn't matter about money or where you live or what



goes on. Safety. And it was also a place of no people, so when everybody had been ugly to me all day I would just go to the beach. [laughter] That was very, very healing and soothing.

Interviewer 2 00:14:04

Ok. And what do you think - you've been here for a number of years - What do you think of the shops and the amenities here?

Gail 00:14:14

Backwater that's the only word that describes it. Backwater. You've only got to go to Exeter to see, Oh my god, there's life out there. Look at that. You know there's labels I haven't seen and look at those dress and those boots. Oh my God. [laughter] And then you come back here to nine charity shops, you think, I can, I can do this. I can do this. I can live out of charity shops. [laughter]

Interviewer 00:14:40

We're all sitting here laughing.

Interviewer 2 00:14:42

We are, actually.

Gail 00:14:43

It is. It is a total backwater. Barnstaple is one step up, but it's still backwater, you know. Absolute backwater. But countries have backwaters. You know, there's places in South Africa you've got to wind your clock back 20 years to visit there. You know, so. Yeah, it's my choice to live in a backwater.

Interviewer 2 00:15:05

Okay. And do you spend much time outside of sort of the Bideford Barnstaple area? Do you sort of travel about North Devon a little bit?

Gail 00:15:13

Yes, yes. Yes. All the time. I spend as much time outside as possible. Beaches, bush rivers, you know, whatever. But I travel around, yes. And the other day I just jumped on a train and went to Exeter so I could have a Nando's for lunch. [laughter] But I do, I jump on the train, I go to Exeter, then I walk around and have a Nando's for lunch, and I come home and I've had a great day, you know. [laughter] Go to the cathedral, whatever.

Interviewer 2 00:15:42

And is there anything - as you've been here now for a number of years - Is there anything that you miss, living in South Africa?

Gail 00:15:53



The Bush is the only thing that I miss, but I know that it's no longer there for me. I was a Bushmen in South Africa, you know, I lived in the bush. And it's one of those things I was blessed to have had 50 years of bush life. And I don't have that here. But it's okay. I don't —

Interviewer 00:16:15

Do you wanna say - what when you say I experienced that, 50 years of bush life, what does that mean? Because I'm as an. I've never lived in the bush so I've no idea what [that means. So tell me tell me something -]

Gail 00:16:25

[Oh ok well]. Firstly, I've always lived on farms. So I lived, you know, outside of the main urban areas. And then just down the road for me was a reserve. And I was one of the wardens of that reserve, so I would take people walking through the bush and I would teach them the animals and the the small stuff and everything else. So I'd spend a lot of time there watching eagles nest, recording the eagles nesting and that type of thing. And then of course, the big five, you know, the rhino, elephants, lion, all that lot. I would escape to the bush as often as I could, which is deep bush, you know, with the big five, and I was very fortunate to be able to live in a house in a place called Marlow's [?] Park, which had no fences so you just lived with the animals. You come home at night and there was a herd of buffalo outside your front door and you have to like wait for the buffalo to go so you could get inside. And and again I would teach the bush, I would take people out there, teaching to bush teaching to track. I knew all the plants by their botanical names. I came to England and realised I knew nothing. I said to somebody that bird's gorgeous, what is it? And they went 'blackbird'. And I went 'oh okay, thank you, oh I do love them'. [laughing] But people don't know how knowledge and how important knowledge is until you don't have it. I was like a newborn baby. I didn't know the grasses, the trees, the flowers. I recognised the odd pansy, but other than that, I had to start learning. I looked up in the sky, I didn't recognise anything up there either so I had to learn the sky, the vegetation, the animals, you know. The there's always a huge experience, which you don't talk about, it's just something you do, you know?

Interviewer 2 00:16:38

And would you say, you know, we we laughed earlier about it being a bit of a backwards town, is there anything that you would change about the town?

Gail 00:18:45

I think what I'd like to see changed is for the place to become more socially aware. And not have a reason to have drinkers in the park and heroin addicts using the toilets on the riverbank and that type of thing, for for the social aspect to be more all-encompassing. I feel that there are people out there drinking in the park, who are socially excluded, I could have gone there. You know what I mean? Just the sheer loneliness of living somewhere all by yourself, where you're not accepted. You're not part of it. Nobody wants to know who you are. Nobody wants to know your culture. Go and drink with the guys



in the park, they're very accepting. [laughter] I know that sounds funny, but it's actually true. And I would really like to see social upliftment in this area more than anything.

Interviewer 2 00:19:44

So does this town, do you think, have its, have a particular identity? I think you you kind of touched on that before. Is there sort of a particular ident, something that you identify with the town. You said you know that as long as you're, you know, you don't talk about yourself too much and you, you kind of play the game - do you think it's got its own particular identity? And if you feel that way about it, can you tell me a bit about that?

Gail 00:20:13

I don't really know how to answer that. Rephrase the question.

Interviewer 2 00:20:22

Has it got a - the town in itself - has it got a uniqueness about it, do you think?

Gail 00:20:28

Okay, the town doesn't have a uniqueness, the area does because it has this amazing 21 foot tug of war, has a seven knot tidal race that goes on every day, which is just phenomenal. It that is a typical West Coast thing. But it's lovely to be living here with it again, I did live on the West Coast in South Africa for a while. So that's nice and familiar. And the sunsets, the West Coast sunsets you can't beat them.

Interviewer 2 00:20:57

But going back [to community. Yeah?]

Gail 00:20:58

[All that's all that is] there, that that magnificence is there and people trade on that rather than the community. They just say well, it's beautiful. We've got sunsets, we've got rivers, we've got tidal races. No there's not. If you go into the clubs and pubs in the area, they're either got old men that have been sitting on the same barstool for 50 years, who are lovely, I've met a couple of really lovely walking historians amongst them, or a surreal wild drinking brigade. There's no sort of civilised, go out and talk and socialise and drink and, you know, you get one or two. But again, they are rooted to the locals. There's a lovely one in my area, but it's really focused on the hunting brigade and that's who they, you know, so you're on the on the periphery of everything all the time, and

Interviewer 00:21:58

Shall we just have a couple of minutes' break. I'm just gonna [Chair scraping].

🎧 - Interview continues in a second recording



Interviewer 00:00:05

So, Gail, you've talked about your arrival in Bideford and you talked a little bit about town. But now we're going to start exploring a little bit about some things that you've touched on, about how you are different you feel different from people in Bideford and, and interestingly, you're saying that people so far have not, or haven't really expressed an interest in that. So how would you describe yourself if you were to actually talk about yourself culturally who you are? What would you Who would you say you are as a as a person in terms of your culture, your heritage, and your nationality and so on?

Gail 00:00:53

Okay, well, I am British, I've been British for more than 40 odd years. I was raised in a British colony, we were raised on roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, and my grandmother made a great Lancashire hotpot and stovies. So I know all about that culture. But I'm a fifth generation South African, raised in the most amazing, rich cultural country, anywhere in the world, I think, because we've got all the black tribes of which, so many of them as I said there's, you know, 23 languages. And the tribes vary greatly. I'm very affiliated to the Zulus, I'm an honorary Zulu. It's where I grew up with the Zulus it's the culture I know the best. South Africa has the largest Indian population outside of India. So being sugar farmers, which is where the Indians were concentrated, because they were brought out as labour for the sugar farmers, and settled, and so there's a huge Indian environment. So we have all the Indian food and the Indian parties and cultures and, and Divali, and, you know, all those sort of things.

We had all the Zulu things with the drums and the, the wonderful stories, the bush stories, I wish I could tell you some of the bush stories from South Africa, they are just so fabulous. And everybody should know, at least one bush story, you know. And those are the things that you had to just sort of [whipping noise vocalised] out of your life, you know. Because people think that my life started at 50. My life didn't start at 50. There's so much richness in my life, up to 50. And I had to decide [banging on the table] okay, sorry, I'm bashing the table. [Interviewer laughs] But I had to do this little sort of wrap it around, tuck it away, because that's over now I'm going to be British. [laughter]

And I've worked really hard. I know so much of the local history, more than most of the people that live here. Really gone into it. I'm a royalist, I can answer questions on the royal family that most people can't. People are always amazed at quiz nights. The answers that I have for all these questions, for history and, and knowledge all over England, Scotland, not only here, that I've done my bit. I'm waiting for the English to do their bit. That's what I would love. I would love them to say, Gail, come and cook us a South African meal. Tell us a bush story, light a fire. That's all you've got to do to please a South African is light a fire. [laughter] And, you know, I wish I had that. But I think maybe I'm too English to bring that out in the English. I think maybe if I was a black South African, or if I was an Eskimo, I might be interesting. So they just maybe see me as too British and nothing to ask. I don't know.

Interviewer 00:04:05



Okay, so and what I'm sensing is that you - that's a really strong identity that you that you feel you've had, but there's almost like you have to hide or cover up?

Gail 00:04:18

Yeah.

Interviewer 00:04:19

Do you do anything to keep it alive? I mean, do you keep any? Are there any ways that you can find that you can?

Gail 00:04:28

What I did, what I vowed and declared I wouldn't do and that was I looked for South African groups. And I vowed I wouldn't do that because I don't think you can integrate if you stay, and I know that a lot of foreigners that come in live within their groups, the Portuguese, the Americans, whatever, you know, and I vowed I wouldn't do but I was so desperate that I did. I found them and just spent an afternoon talking Afrikaans, cooking South African food, speaking Zulu, hugging black people. Just doing what I did in South Africa, do you know what I mean? Going going to my tribe. Because I couldn't build a tribe here, and I needed a tribe.

Interviewer 00:05:11

So does that carry on now? Are you still sort of in touch with these people?

Gail 00:05:16

I'm still in touch with them. I don't see them very often.

Interviewer 00:05:18

Right.

Gail 00:05:19

Just every now and then I have to go to be South African. [laughter]

Interviewer 00:05:24

And I'm just interested, you're talking about having two sons or one?

Gail 00:05:29

Yeah, two sons.

Interviewer 00:05:30

Yeah, are they South African, or?



Gail 00:05:33

Yeah, they are South African, but one's in Australia and one's in New Zealand.

Interviewer 00:05:36

Ah so, [so not here?]

Gail 00:05:37

[So they're not, no.] I must just say something quickly, while I remember. One of the problems I have had in England, not only a bit of it, but throughout England, is being personally held to account for apartheid in South Africa. They see a South African and it's all your fault that apartheid happened. And people think that I had slaves. I didn't, I had paid staff who worked as housekeepers or gardeners, or whatever, and I'm still in touch with them. And we talk and email and WhatsApp and.. fabulous people who earned good money, they lived on my property. I took them to hospital at three o'clock in the morning to have babies. I looked after ill babies. Do you know what I mean? They we were all just family together. And people think that I instituted apartheid in South Africa, and I'm responsible for all the evil, and people really go at me. And I have to say, mate, I didn't put this in, you know, it was there. And I just lived my way as best as I could. With that, I mean, we broke the law all the time, we had Indian friends, we had black friends, I used to go to clubs that had coloured bands, and, and we used to get raided by the security police. The fact that I never ended up in jail was nothing short of a miracle. That is how I lived in an apartheid country. So I wasn't responsible for apartheid. No. Not at all. But -

Interviewer 00:06:46

And you still do you still get that?

Gail 00:07:15

I still get it. I still get it. People just want to attack me about apartheid. And I said no, don't go there, you know. It's not my problem. I did everything I could. Sitting on a piece of pavement outside South Africa house like so many people did, the paid sitters. They did nothing. I did far more. I did far more my country to do than sitting on a piece of pavement outside there, you know. It's always the people that know the least that attacked me the most. [Interviewer hums] That's what goes on, you know, but it is a it's just another divider. It's things that cause a divide.

Interviewer 00:07:54

Just interested, because you you obviously speak Afrikaans. Is that your first language [or is it-]?

Gail 00:08:01

[No first language] is English.

Interviewer 00:08:03

Yeah. Right. Okay. But But you are fluent in Afrikaans?



Gail 00:08:06

Yeah, yeah. And I speak Fanakalo Zulu, which is Fanakalo was a language that was made up of the 23 black languages for the mines, so that they had a common language because the mine workers were made up of people from 23 language groups, and they had to be able to understand instruction on the mine. So they made up this language called Fanakalo, which is something that we all speak, everyone understands it. And and as part of your everyday language, you know.

Interviewer 00:08:38

Do you go back to South Africa?

Gail 00:08:40

No. I went back when my dad was ill, and again when he died, but that's - I don't I don't go to visit, no.

Interviewer 00:08:46

Is - may I ask - is there a reason?

Gail 00:08:48

'Cause there's nothing there. There's my mother's there. My aged mother is there, s he's 86. But there's nothing for me there. It's not safe. I can't go to the bush. When my dad was ill, I spent quite a bit of time there, I think it was about six weeks. And a friend of mine said come on, you need a break, we're going to the bush. And we went to the bush, and the one morning everybody got up and said right, we will go for a game drive. It was five o'clock in the morning and I said no, I don't want to go. I'm going to just go and sit in the bush with the animals, read my book and just do my own thing. And three days later, the woman in the house behind me was murdered. [Interviewer hums]

And I realised it's over. You can't go to the bush. You know, there was me all by myself sitting in the bush, worrying about elephants and I should have been worried about immigrants. [laughter] So, you know, it's finished South Africa is finished as it was. And I'm just so blessed to have had what I had out of it. So I've got to make this work and make it special and get out of it what I got out of South Africa: the joy the joire de vivre, the happy to be here. I can't spend the next thirty years going oh I hate England.

Interviewer 00:10:05

So that's an interesting [unintelligible]. In a sense you're saying that South Africa was your home for 50 years.

Gail 00:10:12

Mmhmm.

Interviewer 00:10:12



But now you've kind of almost said I can't go back there.

Gail 00:10:17

I, well it's finished. It's no longer there.

Interviewer 00:10:18

Right. Is your home here?

Gail 00:10:21

Yes, very much so. From the day I got off the plane, this was my home.

Interviewer 00:10:25

Does it feel like home?

Gail 00:10:26

Yes, yes, it does. Yes, because I made it my home, right? And then nothing makes me crosser than South Africans who talk about home. And I say to them, no. Where's your toothbrush? They say it's here. I say well this is your home. [laughter]

Interviewer 00:10:42

So how do you identify then? In a sense, if you were asked by an outsider like myself because I'm a Londoner [Gail hums] - okay? - With Jewish background.

Gail 00:10:57

Right.

Interviewer 00:10:58

If I asked you, how do you identify yourself, here in Bideford?

Gail 00:11:03

Well, British. British, with an interesting flavour. [laughter] You see, I have no markers. I don't have an accent. I don't have a skin colour. I have nothing that says I'm foreign. And sometimes I just wish, I wish I could have an accent or I could be black or something that says, I'm different. I'm not. I am British. And so I will be British. But I want everybody else to say she's British. Nobody does. Everyone sees me as South African.

Interviewer 00:11:40

And what how does that, I mean, in your daily life here, is there any element of South Africa that still - I know that you've said you occasionally meet South Africans, [Gail hums] but in your actual daily life, does that still play any role or have you become English? [laughter]



Gail 00:12:02

I light a fire every time the sun shines. [laughter] I cook outdoors, I can't help myself. I go outside, I cook, I cook South African food, but I make a great roast beef. So I do do it all, you know. Yeah, just like I'm sure you do Jamaican cooking from time to time, but you also do a good recipe for if you ate meat, you know, whatever.

Interviewer 00:12:25

So the culture is still there with you?

Gail 00:12:27

You'll never wipe that out. But I don't promote it - not promote it - I don't.. make it stronger, if you know what I'm saying. I'm not - these people who go Oh, I can't eat that miss, it's got this in it, or I can only eat South African biscuits, they all go to the South African shop and they want food from the South African shop that we never ate in South Africa anyway, horrible biscuits and ghastly juice. Because they've just gotta have this thing. I'm not. I practice detachment in my life. I'm not attached to anything. So it was easy for me to shrug it off. No, it was easy for me to make the decision to shrug off South Africa and be British and not miss cream soda. [laughter]

Interviewer 00:13:16

Yep.

Gail 00:13:17

I just tend to allow myself, you know. But then I cook from all over the world. I'll have a Portuguese lunch and have a Jamaican supper, I'll have an American breakfast. I like food. And I like cultures.

Interviewer 00:13:30

Yeah.

Gail 00:13:31

So yeah, I'm not stuck in South African culture.

Interviewer 00:13:35

Can I just ask one question which may not go anywhere because I know a little bit about South African history and you said that one side of your family were Dutch, and obviously the Dutch were Calvinists, strong Protestants. Is that is that anywhere in the does, you know religion play any? It doesn't?

Gail 00:13:54

[No. No that's not really -]



Interviewer 00:13:55

[That's fine. Well, I just wanted] to kind of see if that was gonna open up anything.

Gail 00:13:59

No.

Interviewer 00:14:03

Okay, you've talked a bit about adopting British traditions. Yeah, I mean, you say you cook roast beef and whatever, any other things that you would say specifically you have adopted as, you know, coming here and that you would say are specifically British or even English that you'd say that you do now that you didn't have when you were in South Africa?

Gail 00:14:34

I've adopted at all I throw my toys out the cot because nobody celebrated the Queen's Birthday down here. I get fed up because the rugby's not celebrated here. Yeah, I've adopted it all and Saint David's day, where's the flags? And I get fed up with things are not celebrated here because they should be. You know, they should be and by the same token, other cultures here, we should love and enjoy their

Interviewer 00:15:03

Yeah

Gail 00:15:03

Celebration whatever it is. To have the streets a bit of a taken over because it's Portuguese day whatever. Come and eat Portuguese rolls or, you know, things like that it's just things that - I think culture, generally, is very repressed in this area. And in London so much more accepting then love, but they've got all these different restaurants and and you can walk around in your cultural clothes and people think you're fabulous. And whereas here it's a no, no we're from Bideford, you know. And I keep saying to people have you got lots of people in the graveyard? They say yes, I said lend me a few and I can be a local. [laughter]

Interviewer 00:15:47

Okay, there's one one other thing which you've already hinted at. And it's it's interesting, because we have an ish -, you know, a question that we want to ask is about discrimination. And you've already hinted at this, that you felt that people accept you if you behave like someone who's English, but they haven't accepted you for who you are as a South African. Do you want to say a bit more on that?

Gail 00:16:15

Yeah, I'm trying to think of an analogy that would sort of - it's like, you've been married to your wife for 50 years. And the family keeps saying this conversation doesn't concern you because you're not of our family. Well I've been here 50 years, and we've got four kids and 10 grandchildren, and no, but you still



not part of this family. So we this is a talk for our family. That that's kind of how it feels, if that makes sense. You know, that you, as I say, it's all at this level. And and if you do get into things then people say oh well you probably do it differently in South Africa. We talk differently in South Africa. And somebody said to me when I first arrived here, South Africans are a nation of tellers, the English are a nation of suggestions, suggesters. And my gosh, weren't that the truth? [Interviewer hums] You know, because South Africans are so direct, right? If I want this table over there, it would be like do me a favour, pick the table up and put it over there, please. The English will say do you think this table would look better over there? I say yes, it probably would and I walk off, and then they want me to move it and I didn't know that. [laughter]

So I had to reprogram my language. I had to be gentler, softer. Ask rather than tell because we are a nation of tellers, you know. Violence is part of our lives. So a standard response is, oh just give them a slap they'll be fine. [laughter] Because that, you know. So yeah, so I had to to learn to speak differently. I still get it wrong, blurt out South Africanisms every now and then. But South Africans are just very straightforward and direct, you know.

Interviewer 00:18:07

And just one last thing because I think - how does it feel? How's that? How does it feel for you? Being...

Gail 00:18:19

Marginalised. [laughter]

Interviewer 00:18:20

Yeah, yeah, you've put the you've said that. How does it feel?

Gail 00:18:24

One word, lonely. Lonely. People need tribes. Tribes have been going on since time immemorial. Women washing the clothes on the riverbank together. Men fighting wars together. People need tribes and to not have a tribe is lonely. I have a mini tribe at the moment, but it's not. It's not a full tribe, you know. [Interviewer hums] But, but that's not England's fault. Because my family is all fractured to start with, you know, a mother in South Africa, a son in Aus- you know, if my children were all here, we could all get together and have Sunday lunch that would be part of the tribe. So you know, I have absolutely no tribe, tribal base to begin with. I have to create a completely new tribe, you know. I used to have a lovely tribe when I was involved with Tapeley. I used to live in Wesley. I spent a lot of time at Tapeley. And I had a tribe there, we all used to get together. We'd light fires, and we'd cook and we'd play music and it really was my tribe, but then they all moved away and it dissolved, you know. So trying to find a tribe is really hard.

Interviewer 00:19:36

Rose is there anything you want to come in on that? I'll hand this over to you but is there anything you want to ask because



Interviewer 2 00:19:43

No, just that. I don't think so, just really fascinating - I suppose, if it's okay with you, maybe wanted to talk a little bit more about that loneliness and how that kind of feels for you.

Gail 00:19:59

That loneliness. Is - it's killing. It's killing. People are jumping off bridges and drowning themselves and all sorts of things because it is lonely beyond belief, in as much as - If I was sick, there's nobody to bring me chicken soup. Do you know what I mean, it's just as bad as that it's, you know, everyone will be around if you're fit and well and healthy and mostly if you can help them, but if you said look I'm really sick. Trying to move this fridge today was an example. Gee, I have to just get my wits about me and find somebody to just take fridge out the back of my car. I but coal and drive around with it my car for three days 'til somebody comes past, I say while you're there could you just unload the coal. But I don't have my tribe that could do that: hey, come on we're unloading coal tomorrow, if you come round I'll give you soup.

Yeah, there just isn't anybody that close that you can share things with and I want to sit at a table and peel vegetables with people. I used to go to Tapeley and prepare all the vegetables for the freezer for the winter. Just to sit around a table with a bunch of women and peel vegetables. Loved it, it was my favourite thing. Yeah, it's just difficult. I don't know it's -- After 20 years, I feel people should know me. But they don't because they've never asked. Anything they know about me, I force fed them. I sort of right here is what goes on in South Africa. And here's a story and here's a bush story or whatever. I'm a diver. I'm a trained scuba diving instructor. I've dived Caribbean, South Africa, Mozambique. What a wonderful experience, you know, and I can't talk to anybody about it. I don't dive here. Nobody really cares that I'm a diving instructor or that I dived or -- I was an international yachtsman. Did yachting from - somebody at front there. No?

Interviewer 00:22:11

Don't worry about it.

Gail 00:22:11

No. Oh. And yeah, I used to sail on ocean-going yachts and here. And not here in South Africa. Done so that I've sailed the South African coast, which requires a badge. Sailed the Caribbean. Yeah, you know, I've had such a full rewarding and interesting life, which is why it's not too difficult to wrap up South Africa and and put it away, but I'm not quite ready for the crochet blanket brigade, you know, so. I don't have children, which makes it difficult to meet people. On the beach I know all the dogs, I don't know the people's names. I greet all the dogs on the beach and they all know me, but I don't know the people there. Because people don't reach out. People don't say, Hey, you know, we meet on this beach three times, come over to my place and have coffee. And if I say that, they go 'why'? [laughter] So I don't know how one gets over this. I don't know, you know.



Interviewer 2 00:23:12

And [Interviewer 2 clears her throat] and that's seeming to be an important aspect of, you know, as you the time goes on living here. You know, that's how, how do you do that? You know, how do you start to make that kind of connection with people and then have a wider tribe that's really important to you?

Gail 00:23:30

It is, but it's never gonna happen unless people ask you who you were before you came here. [Interviewer hums] You know, nobody starts their life at 50. So I let them all think I did and every now and then I just drop a little clanger. And just to stir the pool. You know. [laughter]

Interviewer 2 00:23:49

Okay, [Interviewer 2 clears her throat] that's fantastic. So I just want to touch a little bit on your home life, if that's so ok.

Gail 00:23:54

Yeah.

Interviewer 2 00:23:57

So, where do you live at the moment?

Gail 00:23:59

I live in Eastleigh.

Interviewer 2 00:24:01

Okay. And can tell me a bit about Eastleigh, what it's like?

Gail 00:24:04

It's a village that does not talk to each other at all. It's owned by two farmers. One of the farmers own that, one of the farmers own that. And there's a few odd people like myself dotted around. Nobody talks, it's impossible to walk around the village because it's just manic traffic, you step out your front door, you could be killed. So nobody walks, so you're not going to meet everybody walking the dogs or whatever. There's no community halls, no community space. The farmers talk to each other. But there's just nothing, nobody's made any effort to find out who's the lady in the white house. It's just what they see. They see a woman of this age getting into that car and that's what they know. That's the woman that drives that car and she has a little white Dog and nobody knocks on my door and said here is an apple pie.

South Africans Do. They wanna learn who you are. Where are you? Where did you come from? Oh you're from Italy? Oh, that's interesting. You know, and they'll bring you an apple pie to say hello and welcome you and - no know, nothing, nobody. Also the whispers they know who's there but no approach whatsoever. My next door neighbours were in their 90s. She was three years older than him.



He died and she died during his funeral. But they were just there. They were in the house next to me. And now they're gone and I never got to meet them, which is so sad because I think they would have been wonderful stories of the area. No.

My next door neighbour had a heart attack two months ago, I didn't even know. Except I spoke to his wife and she said, Oh, Norman had a heart attack. I said, Well, why didn't somebody tell me, bang on my door, ask for some help. No, I have a very good family, thank you, they all helped. Ok. Fine.

[laughter]

Interviewer 2 00:26:08

So I'm guessing that's it's hard to feel inclusive in that.

Gail 00:26:13

Yeah. I was very interested when I lived in Westleigh for a short while. They made me a daughter. And they actually told me I was a daughter of Westleigh. And it was wonderful and I baked cakes and help re-roof the church and I think I re-leaded the windows and I was involved and people bang on my window and say come to the pub, I'd say I've just got back I said don't worry, come again, let's go.

[laughter] I was very included. But there's not a local person in that village. Last one died, which was Bill Cloak, I think. They're all incomers in there so they were fine with it, you know?

Interviewer 2 00:26:51

So I think you touched on it earlier about the sort of foods you like to eat. So just to sort of go back to that point as we'll revisit do what do you like to eat?

Gail 00:27:04

Good food. I don't mind what nationality it comes from. It curries stews roasts, just as long as it's good food well cooked. And and if it's got a history to it, you know, this is our traditional Christmas Devonshire or Easter thing or whatever. You know, we did Pancake Day the other day because it was Tuesday. And yeah and that's what I like.

Interviewer 2 00:27:30

And do you usually eat at home or?

Gail 00:27:32

Usually, yeah, I eat at home a lot. Yeah.

Interviewer 2 00:27:35

And about going out eating out.

Gail 00:27:37



I do go out but there's nothing International. Nothing good International, that requires my presence. There's no great Caribbean restaurant or great South African restaurant or Chinese restaurants are all dodgy. It's just nothing amazing, you know? [laughter]

Interviewer 2 00:27:56

And where do you do your shopping, is there anything that you'd like to buy that you can't find?

Gail 00:28:02

No, no. And I found lots of things that I never had before. Parsnips never knew parsnips in South Africa. Red cabbage, never knew red cabbage in South Africa. And red cabbage cooked properly is one of my favourite foods. Love parsnips. Yeah, the Samphire I, go out and forage for samphire, which I love. Lava, I don't have a relationship with lava at all. But yeah, all these things that I've never met before that I've now met and incorporated in my diet and really love them, you know? I love saffron cakes and - what else can I think of? I don't know. All local stuff. I really enjoy it, you know? And I look for it when I shop, you know, to find local stuff.

Interviewer 2 00:28:51

And what about your leisure activities? Do you want to tell us a little bit about what you do as leisure? Hobbies and pursuits?

Gail 00:28:59

Well, yeah, I used to do a lot of photography when I first came here because that used to get me out. And I used to go out and look for things to photograph. And so that would make me travel, you know, to get out go up on the mountains or on the moors and get down to the beach and whatever. And I had this wonderful friend that used to go, with me, we used to go and - what do you call it? - do photography together. And, and I called him one Saturday night and said you want to do photographs tomorrow and he was really grumpy. And he said, Yes, I suppose so. And I said, What do you want to photograph? He said mud. I said fine, we'll photograph mud. So we went out we went out to that place on the Braunton Road, Heanton Court, I think it's called. And we climb down onto the bank and the tide was out, we photographed mud and we got some beautiful photographs.

So yeah, photography was big in my life. I don't do it so much now. Rick died so we don't I don't really have anyone to do photographs with. Music, music is big in my life. I'm a percussionist. I'm an African drummer, actually. But I taught African drumming here, I bought 27 drums with me and I taught African drumming for three years when I arrived here.

It was hard getting the English to understand the joy of the drum. And when you try to explain that it's your heartbeat and it goes faster and slower depending on what's going on. I couldn't get them to take their shoes off. I said, Take your shoes off and be in touch with the ground and just love it. No we weren't weren't having that. So everyone sat down very politely. Did the drum thing. Very good. Nice. [laughter] Anyway, after three years, my hands were so bad I couldn't teach anymore anyway. It's probably just as well. [laughter] And I used to teach in what is now the Pannier pantry. That room



upstairs to the side? That was where I taught all the three years that I was here. Yeah, I loved it. And I cook a lot. Yeah, just socialise. That's it.

Interviewer 2 00:31:19

And so in terms of TV shows, and newspaper, radio and music, what do you like to watch or listen to?

Gail 00:31:29

If somebody stole my TV it would probably take me a week to notice. [laughter]

Interviewer 2 00:31:35

Brilliant.

Gail 00:31:36

I like I love the Smithsonian channel. I was watching a programme yesterday on the presidential women, the Presidents' wives through the ages. Oh it was so interesting. I never knew Abraham Lincoln had polio. Did you? No I discovered that yesterday. I like things like - I'm not into Love Island and Big Brother and that sort of thing. And I've got a Netflix contract, never watched it. No, it's not a great source of entertainment. Unless it's educational.

Interviewer 2 00:32:08

And can we just touch a little bit on your social life?

Gail 00:32:14

Well, my social life is I go out to my social life, my social life doesn't come to me. I have had endless dinner parties and whatnot, and everyone comes and joins. I never get invited back. And I don't want to be invited back to a great buffet, just invite me home for a cheese sandwich. I think I've been in three homes for a meal since I've been in England. So I don't go to anybody's home. So we all meet in the pub. But Rose, will tell you, when I walk into a pub, I'm hugged from one end of the pub to the other. If I don't pitch up in that pub for a month, nobody asks where I am, nobody phones me. Nobody comes to visit. Nobody says are you alright. And you come back and it's like, There you are, wonderful. And they throw their arms around you but it's like, guys I've been gone a month, didn't somebody want to know why I'm not there? No, not really, there's other people here [laughter] So that and that adds to the loneliness thing, you know. [Interviewers hum]

Interviewer 2 00:33:20

In terms of I just want to ask about your children their education.

Gail 00:33:26

Yes.



Interviewer 00:33:27

Did they come to English schools? Are they were they educated in South Africa?

Gail 00:33:30

Educated in private schools in South Africa,

Interviewer 00:33:32

Okay.

Gail 00:33:33

Multiracial, private schools --

Interviewer 00:33:35

Yeah.

Gail 00:33:35

-- Please note. Yeah, no they were educated in private schools and did University there. And my son was lucky he just managed to scrape in with his South African university degree being recognised here.

Interviewer 00:33:53

Okay.

Gail 00:33:53

Because the universities have gone to pot and the degrees are just tiny bits of paper now. So they don't recognise them anymore, you know.

Interviewer 00:34:00

And just, this is purely question from me, really. They - have they got children?

Gail 00:34:07

My oldest son's got two daughters,

Interviewer 00:34:09

And how did they identify as?

Gail 00:34:12

What I don't know because I haven't been in touch with them for quite a long time. They were born in England. So they're England versus New Zealand. But being so young, they've got New Zealand accents. And they're living a life there. They could never lived here. My son lives on the Margaret's



River, which is the wine countries. He owns a hotel there, and they're always on the beach and they do stand up paddling and oh, it's just live the bronzed outdoor life out there.

Interviewer 00:34:43

I suppose this is - I mean, this is my comment. It's interesting. They've gone to an English colony as was.

Gail 00:34:49

[Yes. Yes. Yeah. Yeah.]

Interviewer 00:34:50

[They came from South Africa.] And

Gail 00:34:53

So they've gone from one colony [to another] Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer 00:34:54

[That's just a kind of observation.]

Gail 00:34:57

I think it's more than hemisphere. I think they've gone back to the southern hemisphere. That's more what they've done. It was interesting because when I came here, I realised I'm actually a northern hemisphere person. It's interesting. When I was a child, my hair was blonde, blonde, blonde. As I got older in South Africa, my hair got darker and darker. So it was really dark brown. The moment I came to England my hair went back to blonde, [Interviewer hums] it was just so strange, you know, because you think that the sun would make you blonde, but I came over here - And then I did a DNA test, I said I'm proudly fifth generation South African, I didn't need DNA test to discover that there are no white South Africans. Right. So all the white South Africans came from somewhere.

So I am Irish viking on one side. And I am the the Dutch side, of course, you know. But yeah, my - that was another thing was my whole South African identity was genetically ripped from me. If you know what I mean, you know. No, I'm not a South African. I am an Irish import with a bit of Jewish history and load of Viking and so that really, it threw me more than you could believe. Because that was always my anchor was I am South Africa, and I'm honorary Zulu. And I daren't go back and tell my Zulus that I'm actually a Viking and I'm imposter South African. [laughter]

Interviewer 00:35:00

That's that's interesting, isn't it? Because again, it touches on the theme of what is your, what is one's identity? But I mean [he continues to talk under Gail, but it is unintelligible] [That's interesting. Quite interesting.]



Gail 00:36:37

I have no idea I just, whatever is good for the moment.

Interviewer 00:36:41

I'm just gonna ask one. You've talked about looking for work did you find work in the end?

Gail 00:36:49

I did. And it was a nightmare.

Interviewer 00:36:53

Was it? To can you just say a little bit about it. As much as you want to say about it.

Gail 00:36:57

There was a woman that worked with me who just hated the fact that I was South African, hated the fact that I was at a job that an English person could have been in. And I said, well if an English person wants this job, where are they? Why are they not here? Tell them, get out of bed and come over and get it, you know? She was just rude, obnoxious. Terrible.

Interviewer 00:37:20

What was the work?

Gail 00:37:21

I was receptionist, telephonist, receptionist. I worked for Peugeot at Brownsell. And it was it was a living nightmare, living nightmare. It was just horrible. I'm very physically limited. And I asked one of the men I said, Please, it was my job to look after the coffee machine. And there were these big boxes and stuff upstairs. And I said, Could you please do me a favour? Could you get those boxes down to the kitchen? And he said, you really struggle without slaves, don't you? And I went no, it's nothing to do with it. Not that I don't want to do it. I physically am not able to do that. You know. I said, I'll scrub toilets. I'll scrub floors, I don't have a problem, but I can't lift the boxes. And it was the things like that. And I've had some terrible racist things.

There was a man on a train that was shouting and swearing on the phone using foul languages. It was men all around. I thought somebody's going to stand up just now and say something. Nobody ever did. And eventually I leaned forward. I said, excuse me. Would you mind just holding the language because there are children in the carriage? That was it. Heard the South African accent and he just let the - I almost wanted to hold up my passport say hold on mate, I'm British. His own - he was a naval man and his fellow naval people actually calmed him down in the end and said listen, you just can't do that. You know, just - but it was so racist, it was just terrible. But anyway, what can you do? That's the way it is. You know. And I don't judge people for - they have their own insecurities. I'm sad for them they won't open up and embrace all the diversity that's around because they miss so much. But I've tried and I just watched their eyes glaze over, you know. [laughter]



Interviewer 00:39:25

I think Rose is going to draw this interview to an end, but she's going to ask you some final reflections.

Gail 00:39:32

Okay.

Interviewer 00:39:33

Alright.

Interviewer 2 00:39:34

Well, Gail. I can honestly say it's been for a first interview. It's been absolutely fascinating. I've enjoyed it. And I wish

Gail 00:39:41

[Thank you [laughter]]

Interviewer 2 00:39:41

[we could talk longer and more.] And I'm fascinated to hear at some point about your bush stories. I think that's something that I'd like to include in the project. That's just amazing that this hasn't been long enough for me. I could certainly go on. And Lawrence is nodding so I'm sure he could too. And your expression and clarification - clarity of your journey has been just stunning.

Gail 00:40:07

Thank you. [Interviewer hums]

Interviewer 2 00:40:08

Stunning, really stunning. I hope that you've enjoyed it.

Gail 00:40:11

Yes, I have. Yeah.

Interviewer 2 00:40:12

Good. Yeah, I think I'd like to conclude by some a little bit of reflection, and a little bit of a bit of a conclusion. I'll ask you a question. And then you just sort of expand or not as you like. Do you have any hopes or fears for the next 10, 20 or 50 years?

Gail 00:40:38

I just hope to find a tribe somewhere, that's really all I want. It's not a lot. It's not a big ask is it, you know? Just have a tribe. [laughter]



Interviewer 2 00:40:51

And in finding that tribe, can you sort of explain some of the things that will be helpful for you, how that will support you, what that will do for you finding your tribe?

Gail 00:41:03

Well, having a tribe is immediately sharing. At the moment, I do an awful lot of giving and very little receiving. It's amazing how people will contact you when they want something, and I just want a phone call that doesn't want anything, you know. So would be nice to just share, to have people come and have a meal and invite you back to a meal at their place, even if it's dry bread and cheese or whatever, say, you know, just just to share, be part of.

And I'd like to just see... an opening up and acceptance. Because it's not only South Africans that are a problem. Here, he's from London, here from Jamaica. She's from somewhere. And I mean, he didn't have to be from outside this country, you've just got to be over the border and your foreign, you know. So. I have been asked, I hear people all the time, they never just get on with it, they're always, Oh, yeah, Well, actually, I'm from London. Yeah well, you know, I'm from north country or black country or whatever. So they're almost apologising all the time for not being in the Black Country and for being here, you know. We're such a melting pot of all sorts, we need to just get over ourselves and just see people rather than countries and clans. And.

Interviewer 2 00:42:29

So [Interviewer 2 clears her throat] just a couple of other questions that seem sort of quite poignant to me and quite fitting to to end. This oral history will be kept for people to listen to in the future. Do you have a message you'd like to leave for people listening?

Gail 00:42:48

Just accept the differences. That is just the big thing. Accept it. And go with it and learn from it and love it and embrace it. That's that's the message that I have really.

Interviewer 2 00:43:09

And sort of one last question. If you could talk to yourself, your family member, the day you or they arrived in the UK, left your country of origin, what would you say?

Gail 00:43:25

Sorry, if I could talk to myself?

Interviewer 2 00:43:26

If you could talk to yourself the day you left your country of origin. What would you say today?

Interviewer 2 00:43:36



Going back?

Interviewer 2 00:43:37

Yeah, going back.

Gail 00:43:42

Oh, I can tell you a funny story about leaving. My plane from Durban to Johannesburg was delayed, so by the time I got to Johannesburg where I planned this whole ceremony of leaving my country, saying goodbye to it, all the rest of it. Just went out the window and I screamed out of one plane down the concourse into the other plane, flopped into a seat and the plane took off and I was like, Huh, I think I just left South Africa. Ok, goodbye. I thought I know what I'll do, I'll cry. So I cried all the way. All night I sat next to this man. He says to me, you're having a really bad time of it, aren't you? I said no, I'm having a great time. I'm just crying because I've left my country and I'm getting ready to, new wor- He said, where are you going? I said I don't know somewhere between Bidy something and Bar something and I don't know where it is. He said Bideford and Barnstaple? I said yeah, he said well, that's where I'm from. He said I live between he lives up Eastleigh way somewhere, he's an oil man. Do you know I have looked for this man.

I've never been able to find this poor man sat next to me sniffing and snorting all night. And we chatted a bit and laughed and I wanted to meet him and say I'm here and I met - you probably thought I was going to be back in South Africa in a month, you know. But I wanted to say to him, Man I made it and I made a life and check me, I'm English, you know. [laughter] So that's when I left South Africa.

Interviewer 00:45:11

Excellent

Interviewer 2 00:45:12

And [Interviewer 2 clears her throat] just to conclude now, is there anything else that you would like to share with the project or just to conclude the interview?

Gail 00:45:22

I would just like to say that I think this is fantastic to highlight this. For those that that are different that are living here and for for those that live here and need to know that there are people that of different for for both sides, I think it's a fantastic thing. And I think the history that's going to come out is going to be absolutely mind blowing. Everyone thinks they all just grew up together. And there's so much to learn, you know, of where they came from, and I'd like to see people exploring their own history. You know, oh my gosh, I've got 10% Indian in me, well let's find out what the Indians do. You know, or whatever. That would be lovely.

Interviewer 2 00:46:06

telling our stories
finding our roots

I'd just like to say on behalf of the project, thank you and behalf of myself and Lawrence, [amazing, amazing interview.]

Gail 00:46:10

[Thank you both. Thank you. You made it easy.]