

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

Date of interview	26/02/2020
Location of interview	Bideford Library
Name of interviewee	Gail Hickman
Name of interviewer	Rose Young & Lawrence -
Length of interview	01:08:23
File format, storage format	WAV, hosted on Soundcloud. Digital copy obtainable from DDE.

Tags:

South Africa ; Bush Life ; Discrimination ; Cultural Tradition ; Apartheid ; Community ; Bideford

Interviewee's wishes regarding use of interview

None.

Interviewer's notes / any issues on recording

The interview is in two parts.

Several overlapping voices render the end of Gail's thought unintelligible - Part One [00:11:24 - 00:11:27]. There are also many moments of overlapping speech, marked in the transcript text with [].

Linked objects/photographs.

Key themes and topics covered in the interview

Theme / topic	Timecode on recording
Coming to Bideford and settling in the UK	Part One [00:02:10 - 00:07:05]
Life in, and the people of, Bideford	Part One [00:07:23 - 00:16:38]
Bush Life	Part One [00:15:53 - 00:16:38]
South African culture	Part Two [00:00:53 - 00:05:18] and [00:07:54 - 00:08:38]
Life in apartheid and British responses to it	Part Two [00:05:37 - 00:07:54]
South African and British traditions	Part Two [00:10:21 - 00:15:47]
Cultural differences in South Africa and Britain	Part Two [00:15:47 - 00:18:07]
Marginalisation and Discrimination	Part Two [00:18:07 - 00:26:51] and [00:36:41 - 00:39:25].
Hopes for the future and the project	Part Two [00:40:12 - 00:46:06].

Interview highlights

Interview summary

Gail Hickman moved to Bideford from South Africa at the age of 50. Gail begins this interview by talking briefly about her family history and how her family came to be in South Africa [00:01:17 - 00:01:47]. She then details why she left South Africa ("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") [00:01:47 - 00:02:10] and how she came to be in Bideford [00:02:10 - 00:03:27].

She moves on to relate her first impressions of Bideford [00:03:37 - 00:04:07], reporting that "It felt just like home, but by the sea." She also discusses the climate and its similarities to that in her home in South Africa, stating that "that's what conked me into thinking this was going to be easy." [00:04:04 - 00:04:35].

She follows by relaying the initial struggles she had with setting up a new life in Britain, talking in-depth about the difficulty she found in getting a bank account when she arrived in the UK [00:05:01 - 00:07:05].

She then goes on to discuss the response and attitudes of the local people to her arrival in Bideford, as well as her own thoughts about immigration, stating that "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." [00:07:23 - 00:12:51]. Within this, she mentions briefly the things she most enjoys about Bideford, which include the natural surroundings and the people [00:10:56 - 00:11:24]. She goes on to talk about her favourite place (the beach) and the feeling of safety that she has found in Bideford, and how that differs from her life in South Africa [00:12:58 - 00:14:04].

She then talks briefly about the amenities around Bideford [00:14:14 - 00:15:05] in comparison to Exeter, which she visits often [00:15:13 - 00:16:38]. Gail then mentions missing the South African Bush and describes the lifestyle she calls "bush life" [00:15:53 - 00:16:38]. She closes part one of the interview in talking about some of the changes she would like to see in Bideford, noting that "I think what I'd like to see changed is for the place to become more socially aware." [00:18:45 - 00:19:44], and the particular West Coast lifestyle [00:20:28 - 00:21:58].

Part Two of the interview opens with Gail discussing the tension between being raised in a British Colony, identifying herself as both British and fifth generation South African, and being "raised in the most amazing, rich cultural country, anywhere in the world, I think" [00:00:53 - 00:04:18]. Here she mentions the different ethnic groups and many languages spoken in South Africa, as well as the perceived lack of interest of her neighbours in this cultural heritage. Gail then touches on finding South African groups in the UK to socialise with [00:04:28 - 00:05:18].

Gail talks very briefly about her sons [00:05:24 - 00:05:37], before moving on to talking about her life during apartheid in South Africa and how people in the UK respond to this [00:05:37 - 00:07:54]. She then returns to talking about the different languages spoken throughout South Africa (mentioned previously at the beginning of Part Two), and her own experience with Zulu dialect Fanakolo [00:07:54 - 00:08:38].

She notes that she does not regularly return to South Africa, feeling that "there's nothing for me there. It's not safe." [00:08:48 - 00:10:21], and goes on to talk about considering Bideford her home now [00:10:21 - 00:10:42]. Gail relates that she identifies as "British, with an interesting flavour" [00:10:42 - 00:11:40], before talking about aspects of her life in South Africa that she has tried to retain in the UK [00:12:02 - 00:13:15]. This leads on to a discussion of British traditions that she has adopted since moving to Bideford [00:14:03 - 00:15:47].

Interview summary

Gail then relates feeling only partly accepted in England and highlights some of the cultural difference that she see in British-born and South African-born people [00:15:47 - 00:18:07]. She continues to discuss the loneliness of feeling marginalised and that people have no interest in her life before she arrived in Bideford "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" [00:18:07 - 00:23:49]. This continues into her thoughts on her life in Eastleigh, where she lives at the time of recording [00:24:04 - 00:26:51].

Next, Gail talks about what she likes to eat and cook [00:26:51 - 00:28:51], and her hobbies, which include photography and African drumming [00:28:51 - 00:32:08]. Next she talks briefly about her social life [00:32:08 - 00:33:20].

She then moves on to talk about her children and grandchildren [00:33:20 - 00:35:01]. Gail then mentions some of her genetic heritage, which she discovered after taking a DNA test [00:35:01 - 00:35:00]. Following this, Gail details some of the discrimination she encountered while working and living in the UK [00:36:41 - 00:39:25].

To close the interview, Gail notes her hope for the future ("I just hope to find a tribe somewhere, that's really all I want. It's not a lot.") [00:40:12 - 00:42:29], and her message to those listening to the oral histories: "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" [Part Two 00:42:48 - 00:43:09].

Finally, she tells the story of the day she left South Africa and her plane journey to the UK [00:43:42 - 00:45:11], and wraps up her thoughts on the oral history project, noting particularly that "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" [00:45:22 - 00:46:06].