



"And there is always a place, somewhere on earth, where you're going to feel at home, regardless of whether you were born there, or you were not born there. You just will come there and you will feel, 'Yes, that's the place'. And that's how I felt about Bideford."

Nataliya Vanstone, oral history participant
To hear more of Nataliya's story, scan here:



Welcome to the Bideford Telling Our Stories walking tour.

Introduction

This tour will take you on a journey through some of the sites and stories of Bideford's multicultural past. It will take about 45 mins to 1 hour to complete.

There is a map on the inside cover. This shows the walking route, and stops. After each stop is a set of written directions in a **blue box**, like the one below. These describe the route to the next stop.

Along the way, you will also uncover the experiences and stories of people living in Bideford today. Look out for their images and quote boxes: they look like the one on the left hand page.

These contain extracts from oral history interviews. Scan the QR code using a smartphone camera to listen to the story.

DIRECTIONS:

Start at The Burton. Standing with The Burton at your back, turn right. Continue along Kingsley Road until you reach a Texaco garage. Cross the road and look for Strand Court (a large white and grey building on the right).

1. Strand Court

1938: Jewish entrepreneur finds cinema

Maurice Myer Greenside Prince, who was of Jewish heritage, moved from West London to North Devon in the 1930s.

His love of the cinema led him to found the Strand Cinema here on the Pill in 1938, a year after he opened the Regal in Barnstaple.

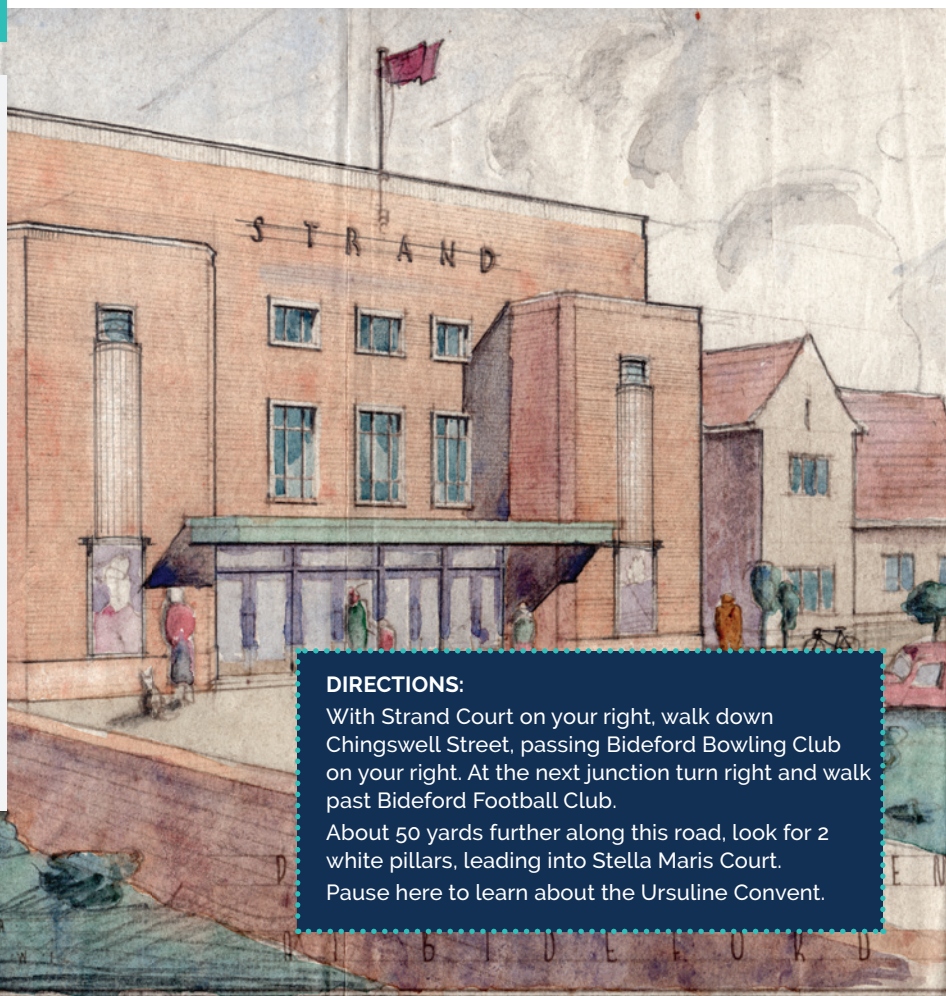
Maurice was also Devon's Information Officer and a civil defence warden during the war.

Maurice was amongst a number of local people who helped Jewish refugees escaping from Nazi persecution. He gave them money and sheltered them in the dressing rooms of his cinemas until they could find somewhere to live. However, beyond his family, it seems that only two people were told: the chief projectionist at the Regal, and his doctor, likely due to concerns about public opposition.¹

Maurice also befriended and supported the multicultural United States armed forces who were stationed at Bowden Green during the war.

¹ H. Fry, *Jews in North Devon during the Second World War* (Halsgrove, 2005), 149-151.

Image: Illustration of the Strand, from *Secret Bideford*, by Peter Christie (15 June 2015, Amberley Publishing Limited). © Torridge District Council



DIRECTIONS:

With Strand Court on your right, walk down Chingswell Street, passing Bideford Bowling Club on your right. At the next junction turn right and walk past Bideford Football Club.

About 50 yards further along this road, look for 2 white pillars, leading into Stella Maris Court. Pause here to learn about the Ursuline Convent.

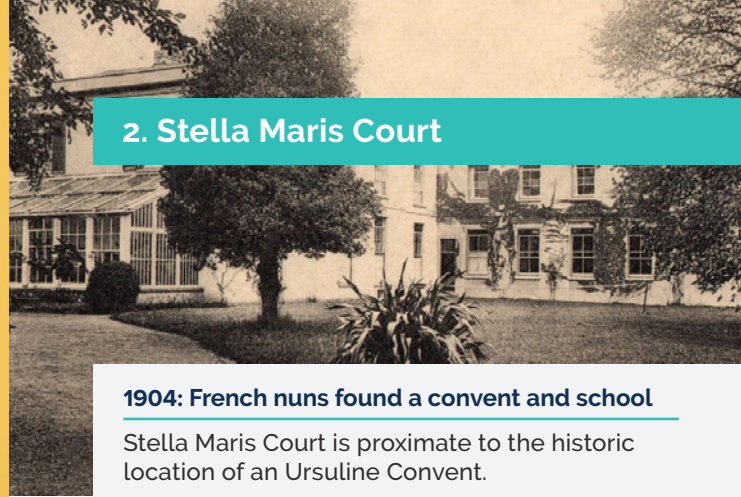


“I come from a different country. A very different culture, a different life. I was scared when first I came, but all I can say is where I live now, I feel very lucky. I hope whoever wants to come to a different country and feels worried and scared - do not [worry]. You don't need to - if you don't try, you don't know.”

Emily Linh Hamilton, oral history participant
To hear more of Emily's story, scan here:



2. Stella Maris Court



1904: French nuns found a convent and school

Stella Maris Court is proximate to the historic location of an Ursuline Convent.

30 nuns of French origin lived in the convent in Northdown Hall. This was also where Charles Kingsley wrote part of *Westward Ho!*.

The nuns arrived in England in 1904, and founded a school, which in 1927 became the Stella Maris Convent School.

At least one of the nuns, Amelie Kieffer, is buried in Bideford Higher Cemetery.

DIRECTIONS:

Retrace your steps back along The Strand. At the junction, cross straight over, continuing along The Strand.

As you continue, the road will begin to narrow. After a slight bend you will enter Rope Walk, a long, winding alleyway.

3. Rope Walk



1900's: Home to Italian ice-cream vendors

There were a number of Italian families living in Bideford in the early twentieth century.

One of these, the Dimeo family, were recorded as living in Rope Street (probably another name for Rope Walk).

The Dimeos were icecream vendors. The Pelosis were a further icecream family, with whom the Dimeos maintained business links. Pelosi is recorded in the 1901 census as an ice cream maker, and the employer of Cairo, another worker. Other Italians worked as travelling musicians.

Photo (main): Rope Walk (exact date unknown).

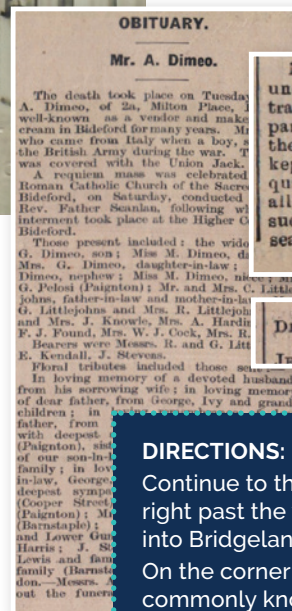
Clippings (clockwise, from left): A.Dimeo's obituary (Bideford and North Devon Gazette 24.1.1939) ; article on a business handover between the Pelosi & Dimeo families (Bideford Weekly Gazette, 3.11.1903) ; notification of A.Dimeo's death (Bideford and North Devon Gazette 24.1.1939). All images Bideford and District Community archive

1939: 2 Rope Walk

Home to Indian travelling Drapers

The 1939 Register records Pullman and Chensil Singh, from India, as living at 2 Rope Walk, and working as travelling Drapers.

There were other Singhs living in Barnstaple at this time too. Their descendants have become prominent members of North Devon society.



OBITUARY.

Mr. A. Dimeo.

The death took place on Tuesday A. Dimeo, of 2a, Milton Place, a well-known as a vendor and maker of cream in Bideford for many years. Mr. who came from Italy when a boy, and the British Army during the war. He was covered with the Union Jack. A requiem mass was celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Bideford, on Saturday, conducted by Rev. Father Scanlan, following which interment took place at the Higher G Bideford.

Those present included: the widow G. Dimeo, son; Miss M. Dimeo, daughter; Mrs. G. Dimeo, daughter-in-law; Dimeo, nephew; Miss M. Dimeo, niece; G. Pelosi (Paignton); Mr. and Mrs. G. Littlejohns, father-in-law and mother-in-law; G. Littlejohns and Mrs. R. Littlejohns and Mrs. J. Knowle, Mrs. A. Hardin; F. J. Found, Mrs. W. J. Cook, Mrs. R. Bearers were Messrs. R. and G. Littlejohns, E. Kendall, J. Stevens.

Floral tributes included those sent from his loving memory of a devoted husband, from his sorrowing wife; in loving memory of dear father, from George, Ivy and grandchildren; in loving memory of father, from with deepest sympathy (Paignton), sister of our son-in-law, in love in-law, George, deepest sympathy (Cooper Street, Paignton); Mr. (Barnstaple); and Leavey G. Harris; J. St. Lewis and family (Barnstaple); Messrs. A. out the funeral.

Mr. PELOSI, who is leaving Bideford to undertake a more extensive business, has transferred his Business to Mr D Meo, his partner. The business will be carried on at the same address, and the Ice Cream will be kept up to the same standard of purity quality, and excellence. Mr Pelosi hopes that all his former customers will support his successor with their respectful custom next season.

4504

Church at 2 p.m.
DIMEO.—On Jan. 17, at Milton Place, Bideford, Mr. A. Dimeo, aged 63.

LENNINGS.—On January 21, at Hawley House,

DIRECTIONS:

Continue to the end of Rope Walk. At the end, turn right past the wishing well, and then right again into Bridgeland Street.

On the corner is the Old Custom House, commonly known as the Pannier Pantry.

4. Bridgeland Street

1939: 1 Bridgeland Street Czechoslovakian glove-makers flee to Bideford

In 1939, No. 1 was the residence of Fritz Egon Fischer and his wife Olga.

The Fischers were prominent glove makers in Czechoslovakia. Along with other refugees, they came to Bideford to escape the Nazi advance.

The Fischer family became well-known glove manufacturers in Bideford. They set up a small glove factory, WE Gloves, which also provided work for other refugees.

1964: 22 Bridgeland Street The Capital Chinese restaurant opens

There has been a Chinese presence in Bideford since the 1960's.

The Capital Chinese restaurant was opened at No. 22 Bridgeland Street in 1964. It was run by the proprietor of The Great Wall Chinese restaurant in Barnstaple.

Today (in 2021), No. 22 is still a Chinese restaurant, but it is now called The Paramount.



Photo (main): Bridgeland Street (Peter Christie). Above image: Paul and Fritz Fischer opened their factory in a section of the old Laundry building in March 1939 (Peter Christie). Above left: Newspaper articles reporting on the opening of the Capital (public domain)

DIRECTIONS:

First continue up the street, to find number 22 on the left-hand side of the road.

DIRECTIONS:

Now continue to the top of the street. Turn left into Mill Street.



"By the time I went to secondary school I started to realise I was living side-by-side in 2 different cultures. Everything English was outside my front door, and at home everything else had my strong Jamaican heritage running through it."

Rose Young-French, oral history participant
To hear more of Rose's story, scan here:



"We have 11 official languages and 23 Black languages, right? South African English is so colourful, because you draw from all these languages. And I knew the moment I arrived here I had to speak English only. Because if people couldn't understand me, it would be even worse. So I spoke pure English."

Gail Hickman, oral history participant
To hear more of Gail's story, scan here:

5. Mill Street

19th century: An Italian Tobacconists in Mill Street

Another family of Italian origin, Bernini, ran a tobacconists (also described as a 'Perfumery') in Mill Street in the mid 19th century.

White's Directory of 1878 includes a "Bernini James, Tobacconist, Mill street". The tobacconist is also recorded in both the 1871 and 1881 censuses, and is mentioned in numerous articles in the local paper, the Bideford Weekly Gazette. One, from 1859, describes the enterprising Mr Bernini as "the only importer of the Italian olive oil, for promoting and beautifying the growth of Hair".

In his 1887 obituary, Bernini is described as "an old and respected inhabitant of the town... His shop was as well known as the largest establishment in the town".

DIRECTIONS:

Continue along Mill Street until you come to the High Street. You will be opposite Lloyds Bank.

Turn right and walk up the hill to find number 80 (now, in 2021, an opticians - Vision Express).

Image: James Bernini's will (North Devon Record Office: B127/8/31. Image shared courtesy of © Bazeley Barnes and Bazeley and Andrew Charles)



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"If I get bigger like I'm gonna like move house, like just travelling. Like go just travel and like see everything and come back. Yeah."

Khaled Alomar (left), oral history participant

To hear more of Khaled's story, scan here:

6. High Street

Late 1800s: 80 High Street A German Tailors and Outfitters

Bideford's population expanded in the nineteenth century (from around 12,000 to approaching 21,000). New arrivals included migrants from several European countries.

Some of these were from Germany, as surnames such as Koeller, Klein, Schmidt, Weiss and Gruber suggest. Some married Bideford-born partners and became permanent residents. Others were part of an itinerant workforce, working as musicians, labourers and in domestic service. Shipbuilding also appears to have been a common source of employment.

Frederick (F.R.) Schmidt ran a prominent Tailors and Outfitters. He is recorded in the 1881 census, and in Kelly's trade directory for 1889, as a "Tailor" at "80 High Street". Three children were born in Bideford in the 1880s.

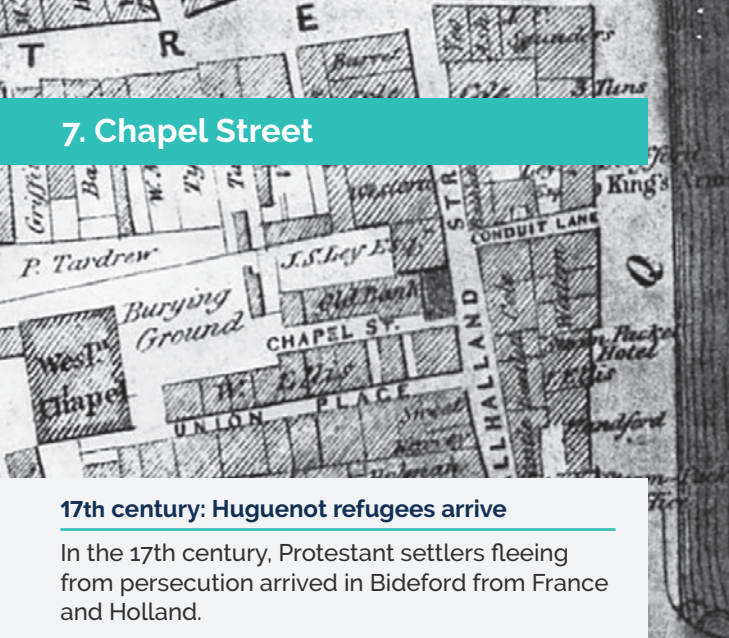


DIRECTIONS:

Turn around and retrace your steps back down the High Street. When you reach Lloyds Bank, turn right into Allhalland Street. About 100 yards along the street on your right is the entrance to a small mews filled with cottages called Chapel Street.

Please note: The lane is private. Please observe from Allhalland Street.

7. Chapel Street



17th century: Huguenot refugees arrive

In the 17th century, Protestant settlers fleeing from persecution arrived in Bideford from France and Holland.

A French Huguenot congregation was set up in 1695 in Chapel Lane, off from Allhalland Street.

The community survived throughout much of the 18th century. Several of the families became prominent in the local silk and cotton industries.

DIRECTIONS:

Leaving Chapel Street on your right, continue walking down Allhalland Street until you reach the junction with Bridge Street. Cross the road. Pause to read the plaque on the house on the corner.

Image: Map showing Chapel Street (Peter Christie)



“

Only recently have I been able to make the area work for me. Before, I wanted to move to a bigger area, somewhere like London. But over the past 2 or 3 years, I have been working with the Council, creating outlets for people like me, for things that I am into: graffiti and street art. Now, I am a key factor. I am helping the area.”

Jaz Rogers, oral history participant

To hear more of Jaz's story, scan here:



8. Bridge Street



1542: Birthplace of Sir Richard Grenville

Sir Richard Grenville was born in this house in 1542.

In 1585, Grenville led an expedition to present-day North Carolina, establishing the first English military colony at Roanoke Island. Whilst there, Grenville sacked and burned Aquascogoc, a village belonging to the Algonquin people, to punish them for the suspected theft of a silver cup.

The Roanoke colony marked the beginning of the English mission to colonise the 'New World', which resulted in irreparable damage to the population, lands and culture of the indigenous peoples living there.



DIRECTIONS:

Continue down the lane to St Mary's Church.

Look for a plaque to the left of the doorway recognising 'Raleigh, an Algonquin Indian.'

Image: 1585 map of the east coast of North America from the Chesapeake Bay to Cape Lookout by John White. Image (inset): 1620 portrait of Grenville from Henry Holland's *Heroologia Anglica* (both public domain)

9. St Mary's Church



1580's: First Native American brought to Bideford

'Raleigh' (whose real name is unknown) is thought to be the first indigenous person to come to Britain from what is now America. He was brought to Bideford by Grenville after a raid on his homeland in 1586.

He was baptized in March 1588, and recorded as 'Raleigh, a Wynganditoian'.

Little is known about Raleigh, or why Grenville brought him back to Bideford with him. He may have intended to use him for interpretation or as a local guide during future trips to Roanoke.

His death, from influenza, is recorded in the parish register in April 1589.



DIRECTIONS:

Retrace your steps back to Grenville's house. Turn right, and continue until you reach the quayside.

Main image: Raleigh's baptism record (North Devon Record Office: 799A/PR/1/1. Image by kind permission of Bideford Parish Church). Image (inset): 17th c. North Devon earthenware plaque thought to depict Raleigh (© Burton at Bideford)

10. Bideford Quay

17th and 18th centuries:

Bideford merchants profit from the slave trade

Bideford was not a slave port. However, there were established trade links between Bideford and plantations in the Americas, especially Carolina and Virginia. Ships would export a range of items, including Bideford pottery, before returning with goods produced by enslaved people, such as tobacco.

Those profiting included the Parminter family, who originally came from Bideford.

As well as trading in goods produced by enslaved people, John Parminter helped to finance a slave ship called Elizabeth. Elizabeth sailed from Bristol in 1700 to Old Calabar, a major slave-trading depot on the coastline of the Gulf of Guinea (in present-day Nigeria). The ship was wrecked shortly after departing Old Calabar, taking with her all the captive people on board.

The Parminters also had connections by marriage with the Rolle, Walrond and Baring families, all of which were involved with enslavement.¹

There is evidence in many local parish records that merchants also brought Black servants to live in Britain.

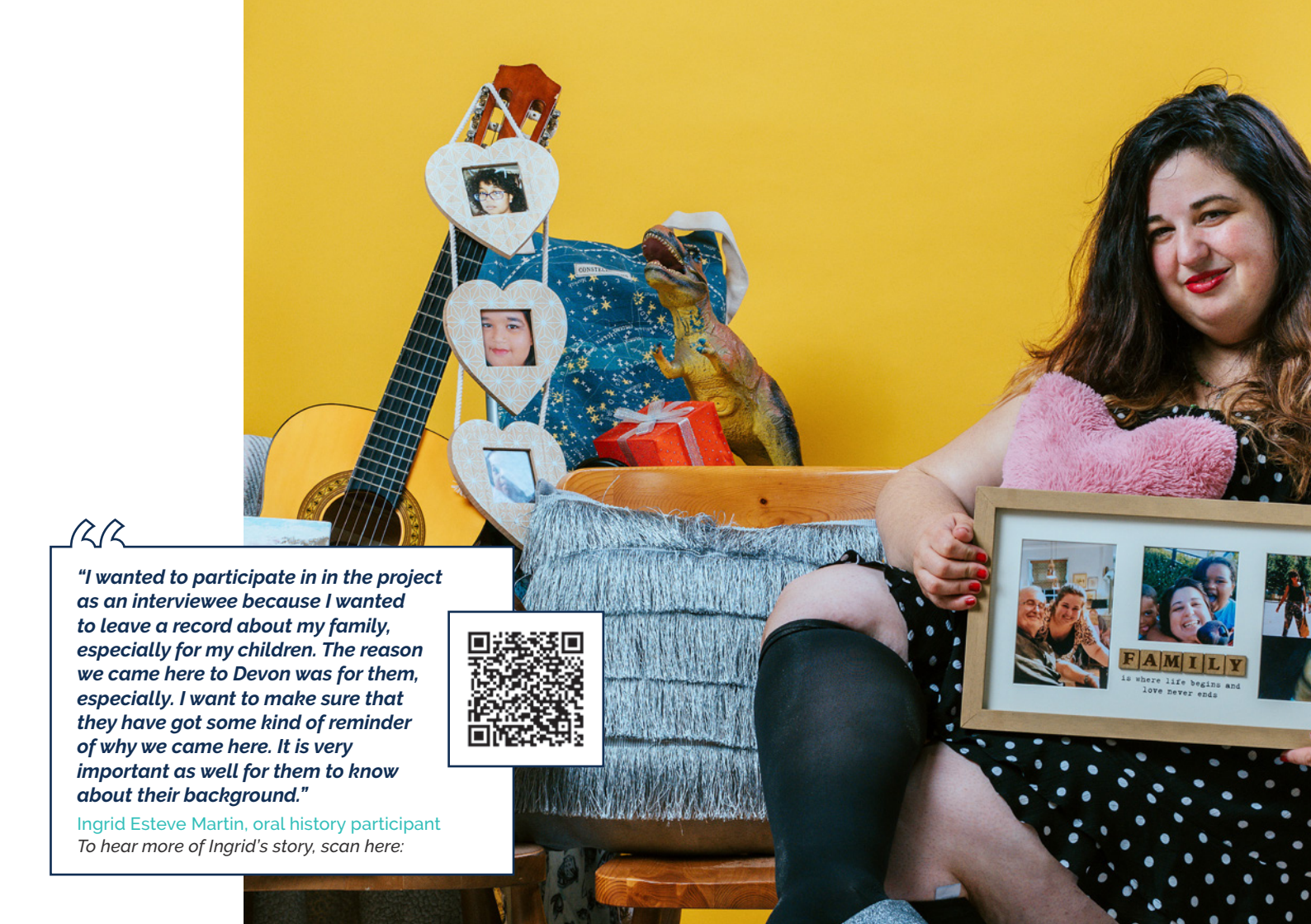
¹ L. Mackeith, 'Unravelling Devon involvement in Slave-Ownership' (UCL, Legacies of British Slave-ownership)

Image (main): 1614 map of what was known at the time as the African 'Gold Coast' (public domain).
Image (top right): Bideford Quay, date unknown (Bideford and District Community Archive)



DIRECTIONS:

Turn left and continue walking along the water's edge until the road bends to the left. Follow the road back to the Burton Art Gallery and Museum. This is the end of the tour.



"I wanted to participate in in the project as an interviewee because I wanted to leave a record about my family, especially for my children. The reason we came here to Devon was for them, especially. I want to make sure that they have got some kind of reminder of why we came here. It is very important as well for them to know about their background."

Ingrid Esteve Martin, oral history participant
To hear more of Ingrid's story, scan here:





Walk with us to discover Bideford's hidden histories: important stories of diversity, multiculturalism, and global connections.

Along the way, you will also uncover the stories of local people living in Bideford today, recorded through oral history interviews.

Telling Our Stories is a community-led oral history and heritage project. Our aim is to find, share and celebrate the hidden histories of Devon's diverse and multicultural communities – past and present.

Visit our website for a full historical timeline and to listen to the oral history archive.

www.tellingourstoriesdevon.org.uk

Cover Image: Burial record for 'Rawly', a Native American brought to Bideford in the 16th c. (by kind permission of Bideford Parish Church). Graffiti letter art (front cover): Jaz Rogers, Bideford-based artist. Portraits: Dom Moore Photography.