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Stories Of Gorton



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Gorton



The Stories of a Neighbourhood

We make, and understand, our neighbourhoods through stories; stories that are held in buildings, shops, workplaces, public spaces, neglected corners and overlooked ruins.

Stories of Gorton brought together a group of local residents, along with Manchester-based writer, Sarah Butler, to explore and share some of Gorton's stories. The project involved monthly walks, each led by a member of the group, each exploring a particular aspect of Gorton: green spaces; industrial heritage; community and connection; perceptions of Gorton, and Gorton's future.

Through walking, talking and writing, the group delved into Gorton's past, present and future, building a picture of a unique area of Manchester.

A big thank you to every member of the group for bringing their stories, ideas, energy and enthusiasm to the project.

My Forever Home

It was in the August of 1964 when I started work at Beyer Peacock's factory on Gorton Lane, about a quarter mile stroll from our home in the flats. My brother Robert, who was 3 years older, was already working there. He decided we would make our way together that first morning, but firstly wait on the lane for a couple of fellow employees who lived nearby.

I remember my feeling of pride whilst stood outside the Gorton Monastery, staring intently upwards at that same oxidised green steeple more friend now than sniffy foe, haughtily guarding its district surroundings like an obedient sheepdog its flock. My antipathy was diminished by the knowledge that we were now all as one, working class and mighty.

For the first time in my young life, I was expected to clock in for work before Peacock's blaring factory buzzer sounded, a comforting and familiar sound for those neighbourhood housewives who would be preparing children for school, safe in the knowledge time was on their side; it was reliable and steadfast. We walked and talked, the men about their weekend, me about leaving school, us imperceptibly joined from local side streets by others in overalls and flat caps, all heading to the same place; soon, I thought to myself, we would have enough for a posse. The jokes flew thick and fast, many over my head, but all to help ease any nerves on what was to be the next big step on my journey through life.

Soon enough we were outside Gate number 9, clock-cards were plucked from their holsters, and each subconsciously checked to ensure the ink hadn't smudged, nobody could afford to lose money for lateness. I reported for duty in the nearby Time Office to many cheery waves and shouts of good luck; I felt 10 feet tall. I couldn't wait to complete my initial 6 months as office boy before

I could begin accumulating tools, wearing overalls and donning heavy boots.

My manager would send me delivering messages where I would need to run the gauntlet of rolled paper balls, aimless epithets and clanging anvils to signal my presence. I'd get countless offers to meet in the nearest public house at lunchtime and asked to fetch copious buckets of 'Blue Steam.' The mickey taking seemed endless, and I couldn't get enough, comforted by the fact that soon enough I would be on their side playing my part in traditional malarkey.

They would need to wait for me to join them at the bar, but I was advised to join the Union immediately. I proudly paid my dues and stood among them putting the world to rights, while probably being reminded 'you were always a gobby bugger.' It wasn't how I imagined it would be: it was better. I suffered the rituals gladly.

My education was ongoing, living and working within walking distance was extra-special, my horizons within my own district widened, and my perceived wisdom deepened. A day never passed without me being told 'engineering had no future,' these journeymen could sense it was all too good to last. They were right, but I was never without work for long, and even when I moved on, I met those familiar faces I had first seen on that auspicious occasion in '64.

That explains why we can become so enamoured to something as inanimate as a city district, it isn't about lines on any Ordnance Survey map, it's about the people who live and work there, they give it colour, feeling and heart. Gorton is my forever home.

Gorton is...

like spring where different plants and flowers bloom,
People from diverse communities call it home.

like a date tree having strong and firm roots deep in the ground,
despite rich and significant history it is uncrowned.

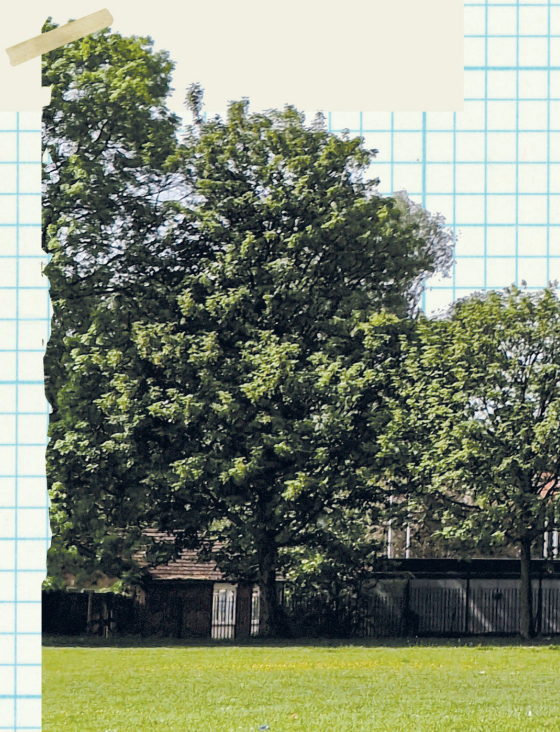
like beautiful horse which is powerful, energetic and tough,
for some Gorton area is rough while others think this is bluff.

like a delicious plate of Biryani and a hot cup of tea,
Some want to stay here permanently but some want to flee.

like a comfortable train with many compartments,
People love Gorton whether they live in houses or apartments.

like a cosy and comfy recliner chair to rest after a tiring day,
it is peaceful and beautiful no matter what other people say.

Benish Sabir





How I Feel About Gorton

Gorton, Manchester, is a place that holds a special place in my heart. It's where I first felt at home in this bustling city.

One of my favourite things to do in Gorton is to visit the local parks. They are a great place to escape the noise and chaos of the city and enjoy some peaceful moments in nature. I love taking long walks in Debdale Park, admiring the beautiful flowers and trees, and watching the ducks and swans in the pond.

Gorton also has an excellent community spirit, and there are plenty of events and activities to get involved in. From the annual carnival to the local football matches, there is always something going on that brings people together. I have made many friends in Gorton, and I feel lucky to be part of such a welcoming community.

Overall, Gorton may not be the most glamorous part of Manchester, but it has a charm and character that make it a special place to call home. I feel grateful to have discovered this hidden gem and look forward to many more happy memories in this vibrant part of the city.

Although I was hesitant at first, I soon realized that Gorton is a great place to live. My neighbours are friendly and welcoming, and I feel safe walking around the neighbourhood. I also appreciate the convenient location, with easy access to public transportation and major highways.



One of my favourite things about living in Gorton is the sense of community. I have made many new friends through the local Sure Start program, where my children have also benefited from the educational and social activities.

Yes, it is true that Gorton has had a negative reputation in the past due to high crime rates and other issues. However, like many areas, it has undergone significant improvements in recent years, with investment in community resources, infrastructure, and housing.

While there may still be some challenges to overcome, I can personally attest to the fact that Gorton is a great place to live. The community is diverse and welcoming, and there are many opportunities for residents to get involved and make a positive impact.

I am grateful that I took a chance on Gorton and purchased a home here. It has turned out to be a wonderful place to raise my family and build a fulfilling life.

Benish Sabir



Gorton

The weather in Gorton is dreich and grey,
the rain falls heavily every day,
I go to Debdale park to stay,
But then run about and play,
But get soaked and go away.

In Gorton park I found a rose,
with my beautiful girlfriend's nose,
she smelt it and arose,
and kissed me as I posed.

By Fallowfield loop is my Rabbit,
while other dogs bark he stays wabbit,
he eats plants but really loves carrots
but wishes he could talk like parrots.

In Gorton my dad had a Rover,
that he used to drive to Dover,
While he was away I covered,
my head as the rain above hovered.

In the Gorton Hub was a table,
that included books about a fable,
the mysteries tied me up like a cable
that took me to the end of the gable.

In Gorton cafe I have some bread,
I put down a newspaper I have read,
I pick up my money and then I dread,
I have to pay and then I tread.

Iain Harley





Like Blackpool Through Rock

Gorton is engrained in me like Blackpool through rock. I grew up in Abbey Hey and from being a small child it was my home. My mum had grown up round the corner from where we lived and her mum and gran grew up there too.

My great gran and great great gran are buried in Gorton cemetery in a pauper's grave. I located them a few years ago and have had a stone put on their graves. I can now put flowers on their grave and a wreath at Christmas. I also put a poppy cross on Remembrance Day as they lived through either the first or second world war and women's voices and the contribution they made to the war effort are often missing from history (herstory). Both of them were single parents and tough ladies who worked and brought up children and grandchildren through very tough times.

My mum got married at 18 and had me at 19. She escaped from a domestic violent household. She and my dad worked hard and although we weren't well off, my mum always put a decent meal on the table to make sure we were well fed. She joined the Prudential, which was like catalogue credit to make sure we were well dressed too. We would go to Lewis's on the big red bus to see Father Christmas, but she wouldn't go anywhere near Kendals and St. Anne's Square as she said it wasn't for the likes of us.



I went to school at Abbey Hey Primary school and Wright Robinson high school. When I got to 15 I got a job at Belle Vue. I loved it there. During the summer holidays me and my friend would work 60 hour weeks. This enabled us to get on the bus to Chelsea Girl every week and buy a new outfit. We also went to the record shop on Cambert Lane in Gorton to buy the number one single. It also meant we could help our families out too.

When I was 16 I got my first proper job at Post Office Telephones, later to become British Telecom. I would get the train from Gorton Station. My mum kept mentioning that she wanted to move to Audenshaw, but I kept begging with her not to make us move. But, when I was 18 the unthinkable happened. We moved to Audenshaw. I will never forget seeing our house in Abbey Hey empty. I was heartbroken.

As soon as I could and I had got married and had my first child I moved back and I have lived here ever since. I now represent my beloved Gorton and Abbey Hey as a councillor. I could not be happier.

Julie Reid



Gorton Grit

If I were a bee, I'd come to Gorton. 'Inner-city', but there's more green than grey. Swathes of it. The sweep of Debdale; dip of Sunny Brow; stretch of Gorton Park; ribbon of the Fallowfield Loop. A butterfly sanctuary right by the main road: apple blossom, lavender, dog rose. Grass verges. Football fields. All these tiny squares of garden. I'd make a route from flower to flower; dance my way home.

Home is where you feel connected. It's what you make from the spaces you find and the people you meet. It doesn't always look the way you'd imagined, but you know it when you find it. A place you can't help going back to. A place you'd stick your neck out for. A place where you feel right.

Right here is where the flats used to be. They had a bad reputation, but didn't deserve it. Hot water. Inside bath. It was just getting dark, the first time he went there: a chequerboard of lights like a ghost ship in the night. The monastery looming. Kids playing in between the buildings. The sound of singing.

Singing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. Wednesday morning baby group at the Sure Start Centre. Through the fog of early parenthood – amongst the chaos of buggy, nappy bag, snacks, milk, wet wipes – a low, unassuming building behind a black fence. Inside, her boy runs towards the toys. Here there's light, and new friends, and warmth.

Warmth is something to be sought out. Picking coal from the slag at Gorton pit. Climbing up to 'the birdcage', this bridge with its metal lines looped all the way around. Clang of shoes on rough steel, the railway tracks sweeping east to west beneath. The kids would stand and wait for the trains, the steam billowing up, hot on their skin.

Skin in the game. Grist to the mill. There is talk about grim and talk about grime, but the word, she tells me, is grit. Gorton grit. A place where things aren't always easy; where you have to find ways around, and across, and in between the tricky bits. Never boring, she says, never dull. There's nowhere she'd rather be.

Sarah Butler



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