

Kuljeet's story

KULJEET SINGH DOBE

The Barrister

"Slough and Eton was full of Indian, Pakistani and Jamaican kids – and English kids as well... There were loads of kids like me and I really felt at home. We were all different colours."



Kuljeet was raised and educated in Chalvey, attending Chalvey Nursery, Chalvey First School, Montem Middle School and Slough and Eton, before attending Herschel Grammar School.

Kuljeet's parents came to the UK in 1967 from Punjab. His father's ancestral home had been in Rawalpindi but following the Partition of British India in 1947, his family fled across the newly formed border to India. Kuljeet's unusual surname is a consequence of immigration officials at Heathrow misunderstanding his father and misspelling the family name. The employment opportunities offered by Slough Trading Estate encouraged Kuljeet's family to settle in the Chalvey area.

Kuljeet enjoyed growing up in Chalvey. His family lived near the Hindu Temple on Keel Drive and he remembers as a child seeing what is now called Montem Primary Academy being constructed and watching developments take shape on Concorde Way and Griffin Close.



Ely, Sefora and Sara interview Kuljeet

Kuljeet recalls experiencing a lot of racism while growing up. He was called "Paki" and told to go back to his own country. Some of our interviewers could identify with his experiences, themselves having been told to 'go back to their own country.' Kuljeet feels his own experiences of racism became far less frequent when he started to attend Slough and Eton in the early 1980s.

Kuljeet was motivated by his experiences of racism to work harder at school and then to pursue justice for others and this led him to a career in law. He both defends and prosecutes people. He practices law at a barristers' chambers in Fleet Street, London.

"The racism that I faced growing up made me want to be a lawyer to help people who face racism and injustice. It's why I ended up doing what I do..."

Kuljeet was saddened to find out that the young people who were interviewing him had experienced racism and his wish for Chalvey's future is that racist bullying becomes something of the past. He remains as committed as ever to ensuring that younger generations do not have to grow up in a society where they are victimised in this way.

Kuljeet's experiences growing up clearly did a great deal to inspire the man he has become and his affection for the area shone through in our interview with him. Like many of our interviewees, he remembers a time when Chalvey was a lot less developed, however he remains upbeat about the area:

"My favourite part of Slough is Chalvey. It's the part of Slough I know the best... When I think about this area, they are all good feelings - positive feelings."

Margaret's story

MARGARET INNISS

The volunteer

"It was a pleasant place - lots of pleasant people living here. All different people, from different backgrounds. It was very diverse and my husband and I made it even more diverse because my husband was from the West Indies."



Margaret was born in London, raised in Twickenham and moved to Slough in 1972 when her husband secured a job on Slough Trading Estate. Her first residence was a Victorian cottage on The Crescent and this was the first place that Margaret moved to in Slough. Margaret recalls that Chalvey was diverse even then.

Margaret fondly remembers celebrations that took place while she was a resident of The Crescent. She threw a big party to celebrate her house's hundredth birthday and recalls a street party that was held for the Queen's Jubilee in 1977:

"We had a fantastic party in the Crescent. Nearly every child came and we had almost one hundred children there. It was a great mix. Everybody knew everybody."

Over the years Margaret has taken on a broad range of voluntary roles. She is Chair of Slough in Bloom, helps organise Chalvey Fete and she has been a Governor at her sons' former school, now called Montem Primary Academy, for over fifteen years. She is also Chair of Chalvey Community Forum, a group that brings together Chalvey residents to respond to local people's concerns. Margaret worships at a St Peter's Church and is the treasurer and warden for the Church.

"This is a community. It's always been a community. Other areas might have nicer houses or bigger gardens but they have no community and that's what I get from Chalvey. I know a lot of people here and I know the place and that's what keeps me here."

Margaret believes that the issues that impact on Chalvey are shared in places all over Slough and the country more widely. She believes people are slightly less friendly than they used to be simply because of their busy lives. She laments that some people don't dispose of their waste properly by littering or look after their properties. However, she maintains that despite these issues, Chalvey remains a special place with its own heritage. She shared the local legend of the Chalvey Stabmonk with our young interviewers many of whom live near Stabmonk Park:

"In the 19th century an Italian organ grinder's pet monkey bit a child in Chalvey. The father killed the monkey with a knife and locals created a funeral procession for the monkey [This became an annual event in years gone by]. If you were born this side of the railway bridge, people here used to be called Stabmonks."

Margaret hopes that Chalvey continues to be a welcoming place in the future, willing to welcome and accept newcomers regardless of where they come from.

"Chalvey changes all the time but it remains a special place."



A scene from the Queen's Silver Jubilee street party in The Crescent (1977)