

INTERVIEW: GARY

Q1b. Have you always lived in Milton Keynes? (When did you arrive? What was your first impression? What reasons prompted your move?)

GARY:

No, I was born in 1959 in Waltham Forest, Walthamstow. I was 14 when I moved the new city of Milton Keynes in 1974. Which I felt was quite important that even though it was a very short period in London. I've still got a lot to London in me, and I think it sounds pompous a little bit of an advantage growing up in a huge metropolis specially in the turbulent 70s you had to have your wits about you and the like to think there's wits are still with me.

INTERVIEWER: First impressions?

GARY:

Bleak but also an undeniable feeling of excitement. I saw the sense of adventure, which is why, both of my parents are very nervous, very worried about moving up a highly-strung perhaps excitable teenage boy from London. I had a girlfriend, the first girlfriend, the one you always remember for the rest of your life. So its a bit of a heartbreak, underneath it all I wanted to get out of London as much as I liked it. People look back on the 1970s through very thick rose-tinted glasses; it was no picnic, it was racial. It was violent, at that time. Three-day week. It was pretty bleak, and I had a good sense of that, and I felt that Milton Keynes was an opportunity to sort of explore. When you arrived here, and it was just literally one road between South Milton Keynes and North Milton Keynes. They could go on a bike ride, everybody came here with a bike, you had to have a bike. You didn't find much, but there was still the sense of something was going on.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you move?

GARY:

My father worked in Liverpool Street in London in an essence firm MK, which made the flavouring in chocolate and drinks. It's still going actually; the company is still going now is located here [MK]. But like all London companies, they were targeted by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. The owners obviously were not the staff. I'm sure you're probably aware they were offered I think incredible deals. Eighteen months free rent and rates to move the company here and there's not many businessmen who in a damp squalid, difficult to get to by lorries in Liverpool Street, who didn't bite their hands off and my Father's company was one of them. I can remember to this day coming in and saying when moving to Milton Keynes. And I say it in a film, but it probably wasn't at that very moment, but magazines arrived, and I remember once my dad told me there was some huge posters up the West at the West End, I remember pointing it out to my mate and said I'm moving there. It was weird it was like the wild west it really was, it's strange when you look back, and he was like what really? Core!

It was strange, very strange. So, as a general sense of excitement, I had an older brother five years older than me who was having none of it. He just reached that age where he was enjoying that London life so didn't wanna know about it. Perhaps that was one of the other reasons I was looking forward to it because we had a proper brother relationship and now, we're great great friends now, that as you know teenage boys.

Q2. What do you feel has changed the most in Milton Keynes?

GARY:

It's just changed beyond recognition the whole ambience of Milton Keynes. So for people like me, and I'm connected with my friends and people I acquainted over the years it still that village atmosphere for the arts and culture. We get your message out and you can communicate a can know what's going on through that village newspaper which is now Facebook is in it is involved into Facebook. So that hasn't changed that was always there it was always word-of-mouth of Milton Keynes which is the strongest form of marketing of communication shall we say. That's a very tough question, its very simple one but a tough one. its beyond recognition for what I knew in the first five years. But actually it hasn't changed because Milton Keynes was built to provide people with decent homes and a decent way of life and especially for the children. So young children and I think if you take a step back now, people still will be here with young children for a better way of life. Actually to answer your question perhaps Milton Keynes hasn't changed that much at all. It's a tough one isn't it. It's still is a great place to live for a family. It's gone beyond recognition. they've ruined it. I don't agree with what they're doing. I was lucky enough to know David Walker and Fred Lloyd Roche, these people who shaped Milton Keynes. But I disagree about Milton Keynes going up because I think any major successful metropolis or town or city is one that goes up, but I want to do with style I hate the hub. I detest the hub. There was a golden opportunity to make a statement like we did in the 70s with some of the architecture we created, I say we, Milton Keynes created. And then we just took the cheaper option. I love this building we're sitting in, Stadium MK because it's an absolute statement. There is no other football club like this, its Milton Keynes. This is proper Milton Keynes, we're sitting in now, and that's what I would love to see around the city. I would like to see it go up. I think we've gone through that period of breeze blocks and, I think the hub was a bit of a mistake, I think they got swooned by the developers, or let's have a block of flats like, London like Canary Wharf, but actually we don't wanna be like Canary Wharf. Look I'm not knocking it. It's a nice place to live I think actually the last five or six years the hub has found itself again. I was a little bit worried, if you're familiar with North 10th Street and North ninth Street what one on there. That was the hub of

the 80s, everybody wanted to live there, but then ten years later it was home to pimps, prostitutes, drug dealers it was awful. Seriously awful. Because of the design and the way it evolved, I was worried that the hub would turn into that, but in the last five years the hub has turned around a little bit.

Since Thatcherism, we've become so insular, whereas before that people were accepted what class they were and embrace their class really. I think after that to many people were ashamed of being a certain class and try to pretend to be something else. So, there's a massive sea change in culture, and that's reflected in Milton Keynes. But that is society. The money men won in the end. For the five years the creatives were in control, and it's amazing they were given the amount of control but by God did they deliver, but then slowly but surely the money men came in the whole utopian dream. You've got to remember that Milton Keynes was fundamentally a city built to rent.

Q3. What, if any, qualities make Milton Keynes unique?

GARY:

The landscape is in it. The landscape is just unique. I know I've got friends, and family in Stevenage, which is quite a well-designed New Town of its time. Had a lot of space around it and cycle tracks but I think Milton Keynes took it to another level. I think my favourite saying is in London you're never 50 yards from a chip shop, but in Milton Keynes, you never more than 50 yards away from a park. It's just amazing it really is. It's just little rough bits of landscape, the landscape is incredible.

Is interesting I did a BBC film about two years ago, I didn't do it on purpose, but I just took them up the V8 out brought them back down the V6 and did a circle, and a course I just could not believe it they didn't see one house and it just blew their heads off. They didn't realise what they were taking in that when we were filming, they start to take it in, and I'm going behind those trees is Netherfield this is amazing this is the busiest road in Milton Keynes, this is the backbone. It hit me as well I never thought of it like that. And they were panning down and doing filming. It was shown, the actual final edit, it resonated. I think that is the major point.

Q4. What would make you proud to live in a place? (Do you experience some of these elements in living in Milton Keynes? What could improve your pride in living in Milton Keynes?)

GARY:

I love old London. Who wouldn't Wanna live in the heart of London, and around were all the embassies are, as it's just stunningly beautiful and aesthetically. And a person who loves history like I do, modern history, not Henry VIII, shall we say, I much prefer Queen Victoria. But to walk around those beautiful white buildings around Park Lane and to live in one of them for that would be my dream ticket. I like that. I like having a sense of worth of where you are. I love Bath, Nottingham. I was impressed with Leeds. I was blown away by the change in Liverpool in the three times I've been there. England's got some wonderful places. I've learned through the football and being a musician, and this is one of the things I think is the fundamental differences between me and some of the other people you might talk to, not to be disparaging the other people you've talked to. I know Milton Keynes limitations. It's a lovely place to live. But it's not the best city in the world, despite what some slogans used to say. It's got so many pluses and a few minuses like so many places.

No, not really not that kind of heritage, I don't get annoyed I'd just get saddened Milton Keynes has no sense of worth. They would let the oldest football stands get knocked down, which I thought was terrible. The Bletchley leisure centre, I was near to tears when they knock that down, I just couldn't believe it, I couldn't believe we were knocking down one of the greatest examples' of 1970s architecture in this country. I thought it was corrupt something was going on. I knew it was wrong. We just all take it, we had a beautiful 1890, right in the first years of cinema we had one of those beautiful art cinemas that needed to be cleaned, and we let that go. It's just Milton Keynes is really, really, really poor looking after its history. It really suffers. And now when looking at the point, one of the most influential buildings in the history of British cinema and now they are trying to bulldoze it down. At some point Milton Keynes needs to stand up and start realising, taking its own history seriously, it annoys me that it wanted to be a European city of culture and then it doesn't really to

safeguard its own cultural history in the same breath. It's bizarre I find it bizarre. I get quite upset about it. They haven't quantified even with the success of Bletchley Park; I like to quote 'what price history'. History is such an important commodity to local business and everyone and to the esteem of local businesses. If you're salesman, I remember people in the 70s who had companies here, and in the 80s, who didn't put Milton Keynes on their addresses cos they were so embarrassed about it, because they're going to meetings and seminars and going to big meetings, and people saying about concrete cows and dismissing them straight away, it was damaging. No one was taken them seriously. I'm gonna try and do a couple of talks next year to businesses saying wake up and smell the coffee we've got Bletchley Park, look at Bletchley now people look at Bletchley. If you take Bletchley Park away from Bletchley people would look at that some part of Grimsby but because Bletchley Park is there it gives it credibility. And when you got credibility people look at it in a different way, and that's what Milton Keynes needs. You've got Freddie Burretti. You got Jim Marshall over the road, you've got these people who can give you cultural history so embrace it. And then suddenly when you're going into a seminar you think 'hang on that's the kid, that's the boy who, that's the Bowie thing is in it?' And 'that's where Jimi Hendrix used to walk around'. I've got some great stories about Jimi Hendrix around the town. Suddenly they're talking about things they wanna talk to about. They say hey Bletchley, Jim Marshall is there, aren't they? So, there are all these fronts, and we've just completely ignored it, and the businesses don't have any money into perhaps historical heritage weekends they don't see any value in, but there's huge value in it.

It's like Olney they've got the Cowper and Newton Museum, and only takes great pride in that and Amazing Grace was written and wow Olney suddenly got credibility, if not they be Westcott or something or a little village on the edge of Bedfordshire. History gives you the credibility you can't buy it. You can only embrace it. Wolverton's got the works, and Stony's got the Cock and Bull, which is known around the world. Going back to what we are talking about earlier when we've got something of great historical importance, we just bulldoze the thing. What you doing? It's just weak at the top. I could digress, I'll digress a little bit, what I think Milton Keynes lacks, we talked about the Milton Keynes Development Corporation golden years, you had let say a dozen gifted individuals

they got up every morning thinking about Milton Keynes caring about Milton Keynes. No other agenda. How to make it a better place, how to make a brilliant place. They are gone now, but actually, that can't last forever. What I would love to see is the mayor who gets voted in who is like the one at New York the famous one who got rid a crime, some charismatic character who gets up every morning for three years and all they want to do is make Milton Keynes a better place. And I think Milton Keynes is crying out for someone like that sort of talisman. It is quite well networked. You would be able to, Pete Winkelmann has done it here, it would be a prime example. Someone who can get people to work together and work for a common cause. Unfortunately, the head of the council got so many things on his mind other than that bit that we are just talking about, the facets of history. Milton Keynes really lacks that. That's probably the same for a lot of towns. There's something wrong the I'd like to see an elected mayor who have a little bit more power than they have vote them in vote them out, but that is only a personal take.

Q5. In your opinion, what element of Milton Keynes is: The best. The most exciting. The hardest. Lacking. The most culturally significant. The richest in heritage?

INTERVIEWER: The Best?

GARY:

Attitude. Our attitude. There's a different attitude in Milton Keynes to other towns. It is been around since the 70s you feel you can do things in Milton Keynes the you can't do elsewhere, and in actual fact you actually can-do things here in Milton Keynes you can't do elsewhere. Either people coming in meeting with me, with Pete and myself, people who want to build a giant wave pool and we're all like, you don't laugh at them, you say what's that all about then, you don't say ar shut up. For an entrepreneur which is what probably call myself, you get the feeling you can do things here, and I've done things here I don't think I would have been able to achieve elsewhere just by showing films at the cinema and get books published. There is a very positive attitude. Perhaps it's not good thing, an

area of passiveness that we don't get too stressed about, you can shut the V8, and you know you say all right go up the V7, I'll shut the V7 and go up the V6. Where if you try and do that Tottenham high Road people would be screaming what you are doing. There is an air of acceptance. Opportunism still prevails, and I think it will do for a very long time. And what's interesting especially here I've seen people, with that wild West, I've used that analogy quite a few times. They come here thinking right I'm gonna have this place, they all basically inbred, so they don't know what they're doing, they've never done this never done that. Especially in the football club and all of a sudden they learn that Milton Keynes is like no other place at all to promote or to work or to network marketing, and it hits them like a big wet fish. And suddenly about two years later they begrudgingly admire what you've done before they've got here such a unique place. You underestimate at your peril. I've got Brazil coming next week basics like no other town right no other place where they been promoted to around the world. Which will probably get onto in the media. Three difficult, it's very weird.

INTERVIEWER: The most exciting element?

GARY:

I've got to be honest I can't say I'm generally excited about Milton Keynes' future. Not really. I think it's got. Ultimately, we are becoming a suburb of London. And I quite like that, that excites me a little bit, because by doing that the influx of new residents would demand things that when people before came here just accepted it. That there was no chip shop 50 yards away, there wasn't the cultural bands playing, or whatever. But they're used to in their own... whether it be Leeds, Birmingham, or London, whenever they're moving from a large metropolis, but in this current climate they would demand it, they would want it. And where there's demand people will meet that demand that entrepreneurialism of Milton Keynes will meet the demand. And I suppose, excitement is a funny word, but that interests me. But I think we'll see a massive scene change in the next few years in Milton Keynes. I like to think there will look back on these eras and think oh wow look at how much it's changed, you ask,

and they are dying to see it. We're starting to see it with the rail link, and the new proposed rail link that I should think is going ahead. And the timing of trains when I first came from London to Milton Keynes there used to be a cheap train to help you go back, so you didn't miss it too much. It was only 25p each way or return. Anyway, the point I'm gonna make is a good run was 50 minutes, 55 minutes and you know what I'm gonna say now it's 25. We are basically Watford now. Watford used to be 35 minutes into London, were basically Watford. And you see it with house prices and the demand people coming up, the clever people. Yet if you've got a good job in London you can have a great lifestyle here, especially if you've brought property in London it's just a no-brainer you could buy anywhere in Milton Keynes. A dream house. Driveways and double garages and what have you. That's what I was saying about getting back to what we was talking about. The wife and two kids whatever and the children, if you're in Tottenham or Bethnal Green you think, hang on I've only got go up there on the train I'll do it for another ten years, and your lifestyle just changes overnight, and I think that's what people do.

INTERVIEWER: The hardest?

GARY:

The most frustrating, would that be all right, the most frustrating thing for me is the lack of media. People are not answerable like they were. Strong media make strong cities, make strong towns, make strong communities. And at the moment it's the weakest it's ever been, and that's reflecting on, I think the state of local culture. That's not me being disrespectful to any of the current radio stations or newspapers, I know politicians and councillors who are extremely concerned about it there's no political debates, there is no. Facebook has just changed things so much that everybody is a journalist, but they're not, unfortunately. And everybody is a DJ accept they're not. The power of one person who was read, whether you like them or loathe them. I've just seen the Queen film I think it is marvellous. You've brought into what a mate said is good before you go and see it whereas, now you've got in the

past 10 minutes probably thousand people on Facebook saying you've got to go and see the Queen movie, it doesn't actually inspire people to go and watch it. It's there people become extremely lazy on it [Facebook].

In the 90s, 93 and 96, the culture in this town was on fire. The best dance music promotion in the country. Had the best DJs coming in, all the names that I can't remember, the top names Boy George everyone coming in. They were internationally renowned, you had bands at the 'Pitts' [an event space in the early days of Milton Keynes where many local bands had their first break, and national bands played] that Chris Kemp was running as a live venue it was voted one of the best live music venues in the country. They were all independent promoters doing all these clubs, music clubs from Britpop to dance music, the place was buzzing and the reason it was busy was because it had to strong radio stations and three or four very strong newspapers that were being delivered free people knew what was going on and people wanted to be a part of it. So, you get after you saying I went to this last weekend and I went to that last night. The DJs were talking about it. It was all just a ball everyone was on it. And it's sad that they've all gone away. My best example is when Man United came here when Manchester United were the most famous football club in the world end of, and we were just as little club, and everybody hates and we the them four-nil. He turned the radio on, and no one was talking about it because they're based in Luton and the based over in wherever. I listened to it for 2 1/2 hours and apart from the news on the small the DJs, whereas had that been in the 90s people would have being going crazy bringing in what a night! It just rammmed it home to me then oh my God this is the end of an era.

You've got BBC Northampton you got BBC Luton we haven't got BBC Milton Keynes. Why? It's ridiculous! And we haven't kicked up enough fuss about it. We should, but how'd you kick-off a sit-in this world we're living in anymore, how do you protest? It is ridiculous. We should definitely have a home BBC radio station. It's a shambles if I'm honest, it's embarrassing on the part of the BBC. It really is. To think this is going to be a 500,000 population, one of the most major new towns/cities in the country and it does never die radio station it's ridiculous.

INTERVIEWER: Lacking?

GARY:

A radio station, media in general. But that's the problem facing a lot of new towns a lack of newspaper. Especially here. Because the thing is Milton Keynes was raised in not buying a newspaper, you didn't have to buy newspaper, whereas in Norwich and Peterborough normally there's the daily evening paper and people are used to buying it to get information get in the correct information which I think is great value in these places. But I love a newspaper. If you print something in there, it has got to be the truth. Whereas what you read online you have no idea if it's the truth or not. I don't see the point in reading it if you don't know if it's the truth or not. And I think slowly, but surely that will come in, and people go back to it, that if you really want to know about something pick up the times. The problem with all that fake news is where you can find out it's fake, or laws of got to come in. I don't know to this day why libel laws haven't been brought in when they can be brought in in China, the country that size can do it or they can't be brought in in England. I just don't know. As a journalist I just can't get my head around it, it's very strange.

INTERVIEWER: The most culturally significant?

GARY:

Bletchley Park. Without a shadow of a doubt, a fantastic place I used to go there as a telephone engineer in the 70s. You knew a bit about it, but you didn't know but that side of it you knew some army people would go in there for some reason, so that was like 78 we still had no idea about Alan Turing and all that kind of thing there and how Bletchley kept its mouth shut for so long. With all the gossiping and whatever you hear in the town, incredible achievement. Then when I worked at the Citizen in the 90s. We all knew about it then, and we were so proud of it and so frustrated that

computer boom was going on all around us and no one was taking any notice of it [Bletchley Park]. It was just a couple of corridors open it was a quaint little, like a living archive. I used to think oh my God all the potential. And then to see that potential reached just fills me with absolute pride, and wonderment, and congratulations to the people who made that happen it shows it can be done. I just think it's a fantastic place now. And it will just get better and better. And it seems every year is getting more credence as being such an important building, not just in Bletchley, not just in Milton Keynes but the world - it's amazing. It's a fantastic place so yeah that's the place.

Q6. Has Milton Keynes played a part in helping you gain any achievements which you might not have been successful in if you lived elsewhere? Has it aided any failures?

GARY:

Yeah, just that sense of togetherness, really openness yah I didn't have enough money to print this book people help me print this book. [I'm] forever indebted to them for that. [When I came to] Milton Keynes, I was 14, very uneducated at the age of 14, at a typical 70 school, I was great football. I had not mastered the 3Rs at all. I could write my name, but I couldn't really write a letter. Which is just terrible handwriting and dreadful spelling, but I was 14. I sort of knew it wasn't right, the opportunity to come to Milton Keynes and to get that just that last year away from the massive comprehensive school in East London and come to, what was considered a really big school, but it was nothing compared to the one I'd been in. It was just like somebody had wiped the slate clean, and in a funny sort of way, it does say in the book, I don't think I had any educational papers although they said they lost them. It's probably because I just didn't have any. So when I arrived at the school, in Lyon school in Bletchley, I don't know why perhaps can I had nice clothes on or something, but they put me in all the top classes. So was really embarrassing ride for two months watching myself come down the pecking order to the D group bind saying that there was a couple of lovely teachers there. I loved history which is no surprise to anybody reading this. Miss Ballinger there, and Dunleavy, the English teacher, and he just got me enough to barely to write things I left school. You couldn't go back in

those days to sixth form I knew I'd made the mistake. The day left school. I knew I'd made a mistake; I should have actually knuckled down. But I was having such a good time being a teenager. But I sort of knew, and you couldn't go back in those days. Most people will say that they realise that at 30 but I knew three months out. Perhaps I should of done a bit more. But then in the 90s I was still that illiterate by the time got to 91, 92. But I just felt the urge to write so much really just wanted to write. I know it sounds really corny in Billy Elliot when he says, 'I've got this fire I just Wanna dance', that's what I felt like inside about writing, I just really wanted to write. And then with the advent of computers suddenly I could start, my handwriting wasn't in issue it was my spelling a grammar, so I just worked really hard with my wife and got books at the library and just try to teach myself the basics of English and somehow succeeded.

Q7. If you were in charge of advertising Milton Keynes what view/image and/or tag line would you give it?

GARY:

In them days the marketing campaigns, in the early 70s were just on another level, I'm just flicking through the book here, don't think got them in here. I don't think I can better them. How would I sell Milton Keynes? The concrete jungle. I'm a minimalist I do marketing here [The MK Stadium], and I love minimalist. And it [the MKDC campaign] had a big effect on me. [Referring to the MKDC adverts] 'wouldn't it be nice...' 'The underground in Milton Keynes' and it's a mole. 'Wouldn't it be nice if all cities were like Milton Keynes' how would I sell it? It would still be the same. I was getting a big company, like Sacha and Sacha in, so the design brief is this is a fantastic place to bring up the kids. There's not loads of threats, it is basically a great place to bring up a young family. And probably a great place to be a pensioner around a young family as well. It's very flat. I know it sounds ridiculous, but you don't want to live in Bradford when you're on a bicycle. So, I would never advertise to be what is not, and it is not Leeds or Brighton or Harrogate or Sheffield. Is not that it is what it is. Great place to live at the kids to go to school. To appeal to that kind of marketing.

Q8. If Milton Keynes was a person could you describe them and the type of 50th party they might have?

GARY:

Milton Keynes is Spike Milligan. An absolute genius, maverick, original, entertaining, sometimes disturbing, and sometimes disappointing. I think that's in a nutshell if you will a person that's who I thought straight away when you asked. I've never been asked that question before by the way, never. I like that. Party? 70s and Curly Wurlies, and soundtrack... What would it be...? So many great songs written in the 70s, I suppose Ziggy Stardust. Yes, this will be a party I would go to. Blimey, a gift that's really tough, not very good at things like that. I'm trying to think of a really bad new town and a postcard for it saying 'bullseye, this is what you could have been'. Really bad, banal, boring, picture of town, and overhead picture, this is what you could have been something like that.

Q9. Please watch this clip from the BFI archives, 8 mins

(<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-milton-keynes-a-village-city-1973-online>). It shows the early days of Milton Keynes. Does this evoke any memories or thoughts you are comfortable sharing?

GARY:

Oh yes, I've seen this one. I think I've seen them all.

That's MKDC, that's their offices. That's where everything is yellow. They used to wear yellow slippers.

He [Fred Lloyd Roche] was my neighbour. His daughter was the first person I met Milton Keynes how weird is that. Is a bit scary really, I took the dog for a walk over this bridge, and this girl said, 'all right I haven't seen you before was your name?' And we start chatting [I thought] core blimey they're friendly, and it was Louise Roche can still friends with to this day.

He was a man who knew his own worth; he wanted you to notice him. His daughter was a little bit like that sometimes. You can see all these in his house he used to show me all these models and all that. And he would say yeah that's there, and that's there, and that's there, I say in the film was football for club he says all that will come, it only took forty years.

You know where that is, don't you? You know there is? That's Campbell Park's over there is the city centre that's Campbell Park where you come up. Let's see it, so there's a city centre there, walk over and Campbell Park.

You see this is what I was on about this is what you see when on my bike [in 3 curly Wurlies], not even that much that wasn't even built when I arrived.

What I like about Stony Stratford is that people used to, and it's still like it to this day, 'I don't live in Milton Keynes I live in Stony Stratford'. And all the people building Milton Keynes lived in Stony Stratford, and I was like well you are building it. Oh no we nothing to do Milton Keynes where you're building it mate. It's always got this sort of Yorkshire you know; we're not English were from Yorkshire. I always think Stony Stratford is like that, we're not Milton Keynes we're Stony Stratford. Know your Milton Keynes you have to accept it.

This is it this is where I moved to, that's the actual village I moved to. So, there you go got my bike and this is what I would have seen I'm looking for a new city, but this is it [building site, mud], weird is in it. I was expecting a lot more.

Yeah, all those houses built on a five-year period, it's unbelievable.

You did feel a sense of privilege, it's funny I had that same sense of privilege when I witnessed the first season of Milton Keynes dons football club, I felt hang on this is a bit special that's why I wrote the book, called 'It's been emotional'. I thought wouldn't it be great to pick up a book about the first year of Tottenham Hotspur or West Ham, or United the first season which somebody is written about. Not just who won two-nil, and why like to do with my books is explain the culture at the time, so I went back to the 70s I was trying to write my memories, but in 2005 I was right about eating pies, phones, and it was all chock-a-block we couldn't get there until 10 minutes. So when people pick it up

I knew I was writing the book for a hundred years' time, it was a really weird thing to do, is like a yearbook it was really good the end of that year, actually in my mind I was right for somebody reading in a hundred years' time. There will be thinking pies how could they be so unhealthy? Because that's what I wanted to read about someone hundred years ago what pubs do they go to, what they drink, how did they get to the game? What was the atmosphere like? Not just a result, the result is immaterial it's been and gone. And I'm proud that Curly Wurlies and all that, I just wanted to write a book that Curly Wurlies, and I had a column in the citizen which was popular for some reason, it did seem to touch a nerve, and a really liked it okay I'll write a book then. So, I carried on then that sort of style. And just wrote about all my friends and the experience of the time.

I remember thinking at the time this is ridiculous what are you doing? Stop it. Now I want to do it once I do something. I like to finish it. And then, of course, I was right about cigarettes at the time, and how the cigarette packet was the mobile phone of the day. I was proud to be working class, so I smoked number six, and then the other guy who drove a Rover he wouldn't be seen dead smoking number six he would smoke Rothmans, and the bank manager would smoke Benson and hedges. And it went up and up and up. It was bizarre, but nothing's really changed. So when somebody comes to Milton Keynes now reads that they will get a sense of that, it's not just what I found frustrating, which is being very interested in Milton Keynes history and they used to be a picture of RoadX coach and those with the only source of books that would be around. And that also drove me to write Curly Wurlies, because we thought who can write from the perspective I was here, and I brought the T-shirt? Well me so I'll do it.

You've got to have your roots, and people moving to a new town they've want some roots, they want their kids to have some roots. It's what we were talking about before about local businesses it comes back to that again, people have a sense of pride, that helps you; it helps everyone. And that's what I help with this for my generation who moved here this is what we did. And then other people who move here later feel what is this place? I wonder at this, wonder at it all, that's funny, I didn't know they did that, just giving them a bit of an idea. We built this city on rock 'n' roll quite like it, I think that's the end of a chapter, that's the Milton Keynes, and in the next 50 years I hope somebody writes

part two is a be completely different from that, that's why indeed with the exhibition I've done it now. I'm passing the gauntlet to someone else. Quite proud of it especially Curly Wurlies sold extremely well the number one selling book in Milton Keynes. Yes, I sold lot of copies. Humbling there's a lot of people seem to like it and identified with it, the moving the loneliness of moving set then you garden, it all seems not that important when you write in it, but then you get it out there, and you look back, it brings back to people what people going through.

In time it will be appreciated.

Q 10. Do you think Milton Keynes has a good reputation a. Internally with its residents, b. Externally with the rest of the country? (Why do you think it has this reputation? How does that make you feel? What could improve it?)

GARY:

No, it's got problem, not a good reputation at all, it should have. They should have a good reputation, but it should have a much better reputation than currently has. That's partly to do with credence, and people misunderstand the city also people who don't know Milton Keynes. Marketing Milton Keynes in such a way, we'll use the European city of culture as an example, I was embarrassed people of Milton Keynes thought this could be a European city of culture. Yeah, I know we've got Bletchley Park and we spoken quite passionately of a lot of pride about a lot of things, but you have to accept win not on a par with places like Nottingham and Glasgow were just not and accept it and don't get upset about it. A lot more realism needs to come in and strengthen focusing on the points are really good about Milton Keynes and stop trying to be something you're never gonna be.

INTERVIEWER: How does it make you feel?

GARY:

Annoyed. That's why I love pointing out the stack, the Marshall stack, a very important and influential musical amplifier was created in Bletchley and then obviously been taking a lot of pride in telling the story of Freddie Burretti, the star man story that he lived here was part of the Bletchley culture.

It makes me want to tell the people to take the history a lot more [seriously, its] important to treasure the history we've got and enhance it more than just ignoring it, that's what we've got to learn and do better. On a political front I want an elected mayor I think that would make a big difference in Milton Keynes. A sense of worth really, people become so insular. They used to be so much pride about Milton Keynes I'd be surprised if you found that sense of pride now, to the 25 to 40-year-olds I think the sense of pride is still in the over 50s, in that generation who through so much open criticism about our lovely little New town fought off bravely. I'm not sure there's that sense of pride that there has been so that would be worth trying to enhance and getting back.

But then you don't get that sense of local pride or affinity until you are older anyway, I think. I mean apart from a football team when you're a teenager if you came from the Tottenham area you supported Tottenham, but I wasn't walking around the road banging the drum for Walthamstow, I probably do more now. I don't think you get that sense of worth or belonging when you're young is when you get into your 30s, and then you quantify it.

Q 11. Do you know any stories, jokes, or urban myths about Milton Keynes? Can you share them?

GARY:

I think I've already shared them in the books I think, yeah, they're in there, I'll share one with you probably my favourite urban myth is to do with Jim Marshall and Jimi Hendrix. Two very very famous people Jimi Hendrix being a legendary 1970s well 1960s rock icon. He played at the Woburn, one of the first-ever open-air music festivals in the country. At Woburn they called it the flower

people or the flower Festival. In actual fact, the Duke and Duchess of Bedford actually thought it was a flower Festival which is quite hilarious they just went away for the weekend leaving their sons and daughters, yeah, yeah, yeah we're having a Flower Festival. They didn't really know what was going on it was also low-key. It was a bit scaffolding, but they managed to get Jimi Hendrix to play. Jimi Hendrix came and played, as it happened, as it appeared, he had some problems with his equipment so the next day, and this is the urban myth kicking in now. So, the next day in Bletchley at Marshalls, Jim Marshall always had a music shop, so he had a music shop in Bletchley High Street, and he used to be working, and you go in there and talk to him I didn't talk to him, but other people talked to him. So I had a friend of mine who was working in there, so the myth goes that the door swung open they heard a lot of American expletives. And then a fuzz box came flying through the air and smashed against the wall, and words to the effect you can tell blah blah to stick that somewhere where doesn't shine, and he looked up and the American that was shouting it was none other than Jimi Hendrix in pink flares and a caftan top. And he's thinking oh my God and got straight on the phone because Jimi Hendrix was like their icon, he was there David Beckham to Burberry. He was the man who was selling all the amps, so he said think you better hurry up he don't seem that happy. They were all dispatched in cars hoping to find him, and the legend has it that Jim found him smoking one of his different brands of cigarettes outside the Co-op. And all I have in my head as an image of Jimi Hendrix walking down Queens Street with a funny cigarette in 1967, and if he did it now it would stop Bletchley, to do it then! And the great thing is they've never actually disowned the story. I've published it and as you would know if you publish things you have to pretty much make sure it's not lies, they just sort of nodded and said yeah you can print that. That's one of my favourite little stories that are proper Milton Keynes urban myth.

Give you another one, one that was popular about Bletchley Park, so you've got the connection. There was always when we used to go to Bletchley Park for courses, it was still very 1950s, when you got through those gates even though it was 1978, it was still 1955 to a lot of people who run Bletchley Park. And one of them, you couldn't really leave the premises to go out for drinks, which was ridiculous because there was nothing stopping you doing it, but they didn't like you doing it. And you

they used try and sign you in, and they wanted to know when you were coming back in, which was like... we were grown, men. We were on a course; we can stay out if we want. We were all pretty 1970s revolutionary about it. It was word got around the canteen that there was an underground tunnel that went from Bletchley railway station to Bletchley Park, and I've never ever been able to find out if that is true. But we were trying to find it walking around the carparks trying to find an entrance to this tunnel so we could go to the night club and stay out until half-past two and not have to go through the gate. But I've never known to this day if it was true. So, I must ask Bletchley Park the next time I go there if there is this secret tunnel. It made sense, if Winston Churchill came up to the train station, he wouldn't have to walk so he wouldn't have to get snipped, but I haven't had that one confirmed. Bletchley Park, there are just so many more stories about that place, it is amazing.

And then there is the other one that Boudicca is supposed to be buried in Fenny Stratford. That's another one.

Obviously, Dick Turpin at the old Swan in Woughton. Where the ceiling goes like that is where he used to put his horse. There are some good ones aren't there, they are everywhere. I could sit and listen to them all day because I always believe them.

Then the biggest urban myth, which was told to me for 25 years was that they was a boy in Bletchley who made Ziggy Stardust's clothes. Yeah! Sure Yeah! Really? Then it turns out to be true. So that is probably my favourite urban myth which was told to me in 1985/86. 'You do know he lived down Whaddon Way' I had no idea, and when I finally went back to it, it was. The thing with Burretti was that the truth turned out to be more remarkable than the urban myth. Which was fantastic. It changed my life, I still working on it, I was working on it this morning, we're doing a musical version of it. Mr Bowie's management give me permission to do it, so its head down for six months, it's in the workshop production, and then we'll see how it goes. Hopefully Freddie will be on the West End, that would be nice, wouldn't it. Freddie is going back to London. His Home is here first and then home to his real home, the west end. There is a lot of goodwill about it. It seems to have a spirit of its own, which is nice you just sort of hang on to it.

Date: 14/11/2018

Location: Executive room at the Stadium, Bletchley, Milton Keynes

Observation: Gary has a background in media, especially radio and film, and has been on both sides of the interview process, so despite the formal setting and it being a first meeting the atmosphere was relaxed. His passion for Milton Keynes and the opportunities he has found here were evident through his deep knowledge of the area and the recent heritage of its development and people. It was also evident through his own coming of age story of school, and later teaching himself to improve his reading and writing as an adult, leading to several books on the heritage of the New Town of Milton Keynes.

Through the interview it felt as though this is a person who, without any training or formal education to do so, has really considered the area through an anthropological lens innately trying to understand what makes the area, and thusly the people in the area tick. Gary also showed great consideration in contemplating what the ethos of the original MKDC plans were with how the area is used today noting how compromises were needed to keep MK relevant. This has been an unusual trait in the interviews thus far where people have mostly dogmatically cited the MKDC plan as rigid.

The transcription was verbatim