

INTERVIEW: KIMBERLY

Q1a. Have you always lived in Milton Keynes? (Do you recall the area either before, or in the early stages of, construction? Have you ever wanted to live elsewhere and for what reasons?)

KIMBERLY:

Well I was born in Newport Pagnell so I kind of am a local and I lived in Bletchley up until I was about 15. By which time my dad decided for some reason he wanted to move back to where he was born which was a tiny, tiny little village in Sussex. And he made me move with the family. So I was taken from Bletchley where I had all my friends, I had everything around me, to this tiny little village that had a bus stop. Two buses a day one at 8 in the morning one at ten at night. I was a young punk girl that was basically stuck in this village. So the first thing I tried to do was move back to Milton Keynes with all my friends and the place I knew really. So we moved from this tiny village in Sussex to another little tiny village 10 miles outside Brighton which was much better because obviously Brighton is great. Still had to do a 10-mile bus ride you know when you could, and so yeah, I moved back to Milton Keynes as soon as possible, and that was when I was just 17.

I did occasionally when I was young because you know teenagers it doesn't matter what you got on your doorstep you've never got what you want, you know. I kinda toyed with the idea of moving to London when I was 17/18 because it's much more going on there and actually know the music scene, and the gig scene in Milton Keynes then was pretty good there were quite few bands around and so I kind of... and obviously with my friends I kind of stayed around. And when I got together with my ex-husband we moved to Devon for a while, and we lasted about six months in Devon there's a story behind that a well. The dole office paid us to move back to Milton Keynes which is pretty unheard of. Because they were trying to get people off their books, and they said if we give you two weeks money will you move back to Milton Keynes? So, we said yeah if you pay our petrol as well, so they did. So, we moved back to Milton Keynes. We moved to Devon because Dave's sister, my ex-husband his sister lived in Devon, so that's why we kinda went there for a bit, quite nice little paid holiday. So no,

not really, and I've got all my close family around here really, my children, grandchildren, so I kinda like it here now.

Yeah, definitely. I suppose growing up in Bletchley, that's like Milton Keynes old town is now. One of the three main towns that Milton Keynes was built from. And then when we moved away a lot of that construction started happening then. But before we moved I remember one of my parents friends who lives on Springfield that was just being built at that time people were just moving in and I used dial-a-bus to get to Springfield on the old dial-a-bus that, you know, I think dial-a-bus was way before its time. I think if it was around now, it would be used. It would be a good service, but I remember being on this bus and being a bit sort of confused by the whole thing, you know if you ring this number then go and wait for this bus that only comes your way if you rung to use the service. Driving through Bletchley across to Springfield and as everybody mentions all the mud everywhere because everywhere was just a big construction site and I remember a lot of construction went on in those couple of years I was away but when I came back I got the first bus, since I've moved back, from Bletchley to the city centre. It was all covered with mud up the sides. The roads were covered with mud, and as you went along the route it was just like building sites everywhere. There was so much construction going on and on. It is quite exciting because you'd think oh this new city, this whole new thing going on everywhere else used to be fields on the drive from Bletchley to New Bradwell. When I was little kid, cos my dad used to like the chip shop over here. It was all fields, it was all country drive you know to get to New Bradwell, so that was the difference really

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

KIMBERLY:

I think personally I found my place even though I've lived here all my life I have found my place. I've lived in Spencer Street for 34 years so pretty much all of my adult life. But I think changes out there in Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes has grown, people think of it still as a new city, but we're 40 odd years old you know. And for me the city centre this whole you know thing that was built it was new it

was you know one of the biggest shopping centres in Europe. But was this new fantastic thing but now it seems to me all the new bit is all a little bit jaded is kind of you know, you go to the city centre and its every single shop you've got everywhere else. There is nothing kind of new about it, and it's kind of got the same thing that is going on in other shopping centres as its everywhere, coffee bar or you know that kind of thing. And I haven't actually been to the city centre apart from the apple store to take my computer back to get it fixed for six years because there's nothing there for me you know, if I were...or when I shop, I shop locally as in Wolverton, Newport, Stony, Bletchley or online.

I tried to buy from shops rather than online if I can, but I think the houses are getting a little bit jaded, but I also think that like I said; personally, I've found my place. I think Milton Keynes has found its place because you know it's always been a joke, people joke about Milton Keynes, the roundabouts, the concrete cows, all those kind of media hype stories.

But actually when I needed a place of my own, and I was moving out of my flat because me and Dave had a baby, Fern, as you've probably seen in Pioneer Tales. We were housed in Conniburrow which are properly brick-built houses they were more than adequate, very big houses right next to the city centre and if I have lived in Scotland or somewhere like that I would have been stuck in some tenement block, probably had running water but not all of them did you know. Yet here I was in this three-storey three-bedroom large house with a garden for my family, and there are not many other places you get that. That's pretty special, I think.

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

KIMBERLY:

Well I think what Milton Keynes has been good at is the new I suppose and I think we've embraced in many ways, local arts I think you know even if you look at typical arts like sculpture. I think Milton Keynes has been quite good in making room for sculpture and that doesn't just mean famous artists or whatever. We've got local artists like Bill Billings who has done quite a lot of art around Milton Keynes, and I think, drama we done quite well with theatre not that I know a lot about drama and

theatre because I don't kind of do that thing. But we've got, you know, Stantonbury Theatre, which is a great place I've got people that you know you rising young stars and we've got the stables. So, we kind of I think we do embrace new quite well and I think what Milton Keynes does quite well is we take it on the chin when people take the piss. I think we kind of grow up with it and I think people are pleasantly surprised once they get to know Milton Keynes. Wasn't it? Was it Bill Bryson that said Milton Keynes is nothing but a Windy city, but that was because he came off the train had a quick look at the windy bus station and was back on the train again you know. And I would kind of like to take him by the hand and show him around the real Milton Keynes. But yeah, I think I think we're quite good at embracing new ideas.

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?)

KIMBERLY:

Well, I think that is quite something for me because I live in housing co-op and for me being cooperative is a biggie I think community is a biggie I don't want to live anywhere where there isn't community, and I think estates in Milton Keynes and my housing co-op are very good at community I think. My daughter lived on Netherfield for a while. People really have got a lot of bad things to say about Netherfield estate, but her experience of living there and my experience of visiting was that where she lived was really with strong community. and that's very important to me. I mean when she first moved in she was like seven months pregnant everybody wanted to get to know them. When her baby was born people just knocked on the door and brought gifts you know, and it's important to be part of a community, and I suppose the big thing for me is family and that extends to family friends and community.

Oh, blimey what could improve my pride well I think what could improve my pride in Milton Keynes, well that is a biggie, I might have to think about that for a sec. I think Milton Keynes council are damned in many ways I'm not so sure that they have enough funding and I'm not so sure how they

spend that funding is best, but I would like to see Milton Keynes council strikeout and convert more housing to housing cooperatives and build more social housing. Therefore, before running, take that on and show the rest of the country how it's done because we have been a big city your firsts, you know. We have had a lot of firsts, and I would like to see them prioritise social housing and that that would make me really proud to be, for Milton Keynes to be the one that showcased how we can afford to make social housing and tackle things like homelessness you know and that kind of thing. That would make me really proud. Well, that's one of my big things is you know that when new houses are built in Milton Keynes there is a certain portion of it has to be social housing, and it is a very small proportion. But I just think why can't a proportion of that the prebuilt cooperatives you know, and if the rest of the social housing in that bit wants to then become part of that co-opted, they can, and it's the way forward

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: Best?

KIMBERLY:

I think Milton Keynes has done really well with green spaces and we got some fantastic green spaces and got some fantastic areas for wildlife. Parks trust are doing an amazing job I know they get a lot of flak but I think they are doing an amazing job and I think for me that what makes Milton Keynes tolerable as in it's a city, but it's a city with lots of green space lots of places to just go out there. I mean I can't walk like I used to, but if I want to do like a 20-minute walk I can either walk around the space where I live because there is lots of green space or I can drive to a specific area. Which includes water, which includes you know trees, which you know I can include whatever kind of, well we haven't got mountains obviously, but you know we've got a lot of lovely open spaces in Milton

Keynes. And I think we're relatively safe in those spaces which is important special being a woman who will walk on her own you know.

INTERVIEWER: The most exciting element?

KIMBERLY:

Most exciting, mmm I don't know I am I an excitable type of person probably not but let me have a little think what's most exciting. Well, there is going to be a new gallery that could be quite exciting. And I hope it's exciting because it would be disappointing if it isn't. Also what I find quite exciting is all three of my kids went to Stantonbury campus which was a fantastic school. And again lots of people didn't kinda like the way things were done but having no school uniform, calling teachers by their first name I loved that, that spoke to me as a parent, so my three kids went there and then it went through the dark ages as far as I was concerned for a school. Putting up that massive fence you know the whole uniform thing, so that was pretty dire. But the exciting thing for me is one of my grandchildren is going there, and they are an international school, and they're doing the international baccalaureate which is great. I think that is really good and I think she'll shine there you know and that for me even though it's still got uniform: little kilts, how nice, that's quite exciting. So, I'm quite excited about that, it doesn't seem the sort of thing to get excited about, and I think we need more Stantonbury Campuses of old for our young people, less trapping them that whole thing. Well from my last three weeks, transport! Because I'm a driver, so I normally drive everywhere I want to go, and I think transport is, no not is, can be difficult for some people and I think people's not understanding what Milton Keynes is all about and what it was built on and where we've come from, and that's quite difficult I think. Understanding. Because it is great, I really do. I'm a Milton Keynesie, which is quite funny coming from somebody who has lived here pretty much all of my life because normally people who have lived here all their life are like 'well it's not like it used to be' 'oh it's not the place it was' you know that kind of thing.

INTERVIEWER: Lacking?

KIMBERLY:

It goes back to what I said before I think social housing, but I don't that Milton Keynes only that you know of UK well further afield, international based. Enough reliable housing. Enough secure housing. Its lacking giving landlords who make huge amounts of money giving them the boot, allowing people to buy to let was terrible. I seem to be talking about houses a lot I hadn't even thought I would talk about housing a lot. What is lacking I think teenagers haven't got a great deal to do if they haven't got much money. I think there is probably a lot to do if you've got dosh, but not everybody has got enough money to do... especially if you have more than one child, straight away, if you are going to the pictures you are paying forty quid, whose got forty quid to go and watch something for two hours. So, I think probably young people could do with more than they've got already for you know, the cheap on the cheap I suppose, or maybe I'm out of touch with what is actually out there because I don't have teenagers anymore.

I'm a great believer in things being inclusive in allowing as many people as possible to access whatever it is you are doing; I think that would be my answer to that, but again but that's not just Milton Keynes is it.

INTERVIEWER: The most culturally significant?

KIMBERLY:

Well, there's so many strings to that, isn't there. I love it that Milton Keynes is multicultural. I think it's a great thing I really like it that we've got many different cultures living in Milton Keynes, we've

got the Sikh society, we got quite a few different cultures. Again, and thinking about the arts really. I think we're quite good at the arts but one thing for me which is quite significant to me the minute is the way that the buzzy, the skate area has been screwed over. It's really really sad because, okay people could say; but that's only there for that young culture of skateboarding, but actually I don't think it is, because I think if you come off the train in a city and you've just got some glass buildings, and there's not really a lot going on. Bill Bryson -there's nothing happening here. Where is that you come off the train and you see a group of young people, and they are all skateboarding and BMXing having a great time, and they're not bothered with you because they're getting on with their thing. As the legal graffiti wall, is it 'hey what's going on here what's going on in this place?' There could be something exciting going on. And even if your thoughts are all my God what's this that's noisy was this mess was that spray paint everywhere... Generating thought, its generating reaction, it's generating something... it shows life. But it's like my partner he's an ex-skateboarder when he was young he was the skateboarder, and my sons are skateboarders, so that's why it's significant to me because I go to another city you arrive in the city and the something happening you kind of think oh great something is going on here. I'm talking a lot about young culture, really aren't I?

INTERVIEWER: The richest in heritage?

KIMBERLY:

Oh we've got so much heritage in Milton Keynes. I mean right back to... everybody mentions Bletchley Park don't they, but we've got a lot going on. The Shenley church road, there's that little heritage building there with heritage stuff there, we've got Newport Pagnell with the museum, the police museum there and we've got Olney close by with their stuff going on. Even more so than that we've got the everyday heritage while like these buildings here with the heritage they've got, and with the museum and the Living Archive. With sitting here and I can see a windmill from my window. We've got so much heritage and so much history in Milton Keynes that people don't realise because

we still think of it as a new city and although Milton Keynes as in the city is kind of been on the books for 40 odd years the history of the year goes back way further than that. We've actually got lots of places around where you can access that history I think. And we've got the history thing got going on in September we've got the talks and all that kind of stuff, and there's a lot of that stuff which is free which means people can access it, yeah and I think Milton Keynes is very rich in history and heritage. I only mentioned a few of them there. People can go as far as Bletchley Park people always mention Bletchley Park, even the archaeological stuff the Ryman Fiennes, we really have got very rich history.

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?

KIMBERLY:

Well I suppose I'm not very good at saying I'm successful or good at anything, but I think I got my degree with the OU which yes I could have done anywhere in the world in fact. But I think coming from Milton Keynes because I left school pretty much at 15 with no qualifications with nothing at all I think when I did stop thinking about doing more study. Well I don't know even before my degree and moving back to Milton Keynes I was in a band, and I used to put bands on and one the guys Paul Davies, I don't if you know about Paul Davies, but he was a youth worker in Milton Keynes. A wonderful, wonderful man just an amazing man. He saw something in me and said right I'm sending you off to train as a youth worker, so I trained as a youth worker. And that was really because of the scene that was going on in Milton Keynes at the time I wouldn't have been able to access that stuff if I live somewhere else and it was Paul Davies who saw that in me and decided to push me further with that. I think I'm a serial course goer I've got a folder like that of qualifications. And also because of living in Milton Keynes and being able to access the things I've been able to access I think that's helped me in so many ways. it is difficult even to explain how it helped me I suppose. And having

organisations like the Living Archive, like the community foundation, we've got some real good community assets, especially women to achieve things that they may not have achieved otherwise.

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

KIMBERLY:

I think if I was advertising it, I would sidestep the shopping element of Milton Keynes, altogether. I think that's had its day. I think everything that can be said about it has been said about it so that would be sidestepped completely. I think I will go back almost to some of the original Milton Keynes adverts. There was one in particular where there was somebody cycling around Milton Keynes that was showing the lakes, the walkways, the woodlands, the nature and all that kind of stuff. I think I would almost have that as my kind of key hub of what it would all be about. I don't think I would particularly even talk about nightlife because I think if you're focusing on that you're leaving something else out. What entertains people is so different across the board identity you get it right, so I'll probably say you'd have to talk about housing because you would want to attract people to the area with lovely housing. Industry in Milton Keynes with got quite a lot of industry in Milton Keynes, and I think it's quite nice the way that the industry is in little pockets which are surrounded by nice green areas and I think we're quite lucky in that way. If you cycle, there is good access to anything that you could want to access in Milton Keynes, and I think that would be where I had to focus, I think.

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

KIMBERLY:

Okay, I would see the person of Milton Keynes to be a bit mutton dressed up as lamb, a bit of an oldie but not wanting to be an oldie, or not perceiving themselves as an oldie. Some may be dressing a little

bit younger than their age but gaudily. Perhaps a 50th would be everybody invited like children, not one of those parties where they say no kids allowed this would be everybody, through the ages no dress code probably quite loud with lots and lots of boring speeches probably. And a present... Would probably be something handmade I may question my presence that's probably why I'm thinking that something handmade but bought locally. Or a tree, a tree to plant. That's not disrespectful is it much.

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?

KIMBERLY:

oh yeah, I remember the burning fields, from Bletchley you to feel the countryside with the burning fields.

Very yellow.

Wow, they're still doing it.

Wow he is looking very young [Fred Roche]

It's funny thinking that he's talking 20 years ahead, whereas this stage 40/50 years on.

It is magnificent. I think they did a really good job of Milton Keynes. I do feel sad that none of the buildings will get a bit taller than the tallest tree I really sad that that got pushed to the wayside.

I didn't think navy was a PC word to use.

And poor old Bletchley so tired.

I think the high street is kind of had its day pretty much.

I think a lot of farmers loved it because they were getting paid top price for their land.

I think we need a new hospital at this end of the city.

I went to a film thing of cooperative film thing that was on the chrysalis theatre, and they were showing films about the areas where there was like solar world and things like that that was really interesting the way that the Development Corporation made that happen.

It was a pretty brave thing to attempt, I think.

I think they were brave. I think they did a good job really all things considered. I think that followed on after were brave enough they didn't carry on that pioneering thought.

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?)

KIMBERLY:

I think the people who know Milton Keynes I think generally it's got quite a good reputation maybe that's because I really like it, I get the idea. But I think if people don't know Milton Keynes, they just rely upon what they've heard. Funnily enough, my partner was talking to somebody, in fact, it might have been Roger kitchen, and they were discussing how many times Milton Keynes is mentioned good and bad, some derogatory terms, in plays, in books and that kind of thing and they name quite a few. If you know Milton Keynes you kind of know is nice little secrets whereas if you are not really aware of what goes on here, what we have, then it's easy just to believe that media stuff that you hear out there which is roundabouts, all the usual.

Because that's what they've heard the most of, complaints about... you get a lot more complaints, than you do good things said, because people like to complain. people enjoy complaining I'm actually lots of people like hearing it as well but if that was being fed out there. We could look on the Internet now find all manner of bad stories of Milton Keynes but is searching for the good stuff you have to know where to look. If you look at the city discovery centre, if you look at Living Archive, if you look at

Bletchley Park, that's where you'll find the good stories about Milton Keynes and the truth of Milton Keynes whatever that truth is. That's where you'll find there's little gems, but a general search on the Internet for Milton Keynes brings up all the dross. All the bad stories. It becomes people's truth. And that's why if people don't know about Milton Keynes, they carry that on, they perpetuate it. They don't know any different they've got no reason to find out.

I just think great don't move here leave it for us leave it for the people who like a leave it for the people who appreciate it that's what I think. I don't know, you could waste your whole time trying to change people's ideas, and the only thing in the end that changes people's ideas is experience. If people who arrive too closed-minded or don't have the opportunity to access stuff and have their minds changed, then get on with it. People like to moan about stuff. Like I said before, I was looking on the dreaded Facebook the other day, and someone was really, really slating Milton Keynes Hospital. And as someone who's just had a lot of Milton Keynes Hospital's time, a few weeks ago, I think it's got a good side but don't always get heard, and what I got from it. I was thinking everybody's gonna be slating Milton Keynes Hospital, but as I read down I was interested what people had to say I was surprised by how many people were saying 'actually no I don't agree'. You know I think Milton Keynes Hospital is great and it was really nice to see that. And one person actually said if you don't like was being offered to you for free go and pay for it, a fair comment. I think that's true of Milton Keynes as a whole as well. I think if people diss it brings out people's urge to defend it and I like that. I think we're pretty hardy bunch.

I think awareness, try and make people aware of the wonderful things we have. You only have to go to other cities and as somebody who lived in Coventry was saying oh yeah Milton Keynes is this, that the other, you do well to point out that actually Coventry is a concrete city, and all. We've got everything come more besides that Coventry has got thanks. I'm sure that Coventry isn't all the myths make out either. I think tell Milton Keynes is good bits, spread the good news. But leave it for us who love it. If you get a moan live somewhere else, you not appreciated here. If you love it, yeah? Right in you go.

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

KIMBERLY:

Not that I can think of at the moment. If my partner was here, he would remember loads he's got this kind of thing about remembering them. I think there's some kind of talks about Milton Keynes like I was saying earlier about some places being safe, apart from that young girl who's gone missing around the lake recently. People like to say I never go on the red ways because they're not safe and you get this idea that it is unsafe, places are not, not-safe it's some people who are non-safe. I can be right in the middle of Milton Keynes shopping centre and be unsafe depending on who is around you. See you there is that whole thing about that whole wide-open spaces are a non-safe place to be and that we have no culture, that idea that we have no cultural heritage, but I don't know. I don't know if I can be of much use when thinking about stories or jokes, we had the record, of course, Milton Keynes then there's the alternate Milton Keynes record, by Eddie rich... Can't think of the surname, Milton Keynes we love you, like hell we do. He's a local guy who wrote the record. The overall thing is all the usual stories. I tell you one thing that is quite disappointing that in Milton Keynes if anybody starts a group of any kind they include the concrete cows in their names and include that whole. It would be nice if people just moved away from that let the concrete cows be the things that they are they are great how crazy is that you know. And the whole story about the fact that there is not only one set of cows there is two. And my partner was part of the group who had to set up for the opening of the theatre. They did this whole firework show, and an event and my partner was one of the ones with Neil Cannon doing the fireworks and blowing up the concrete cows. And the whole secret of that story is that one of them did a blow-up and they had to quickly hide it, and that's part of the whole thing carrying on about the concrete 'bloody' Cows.

And then there's good stories of the concrete cows this where people have painted them over the years and in fact Bill Billings' son Ryan, he's painted them a few times in the dark of night, and he painted the dinosaurs well actually. I think they should get him to do it a lot because he's actually really good at it. And I think it's nice that in his dad's memory he paid the things, well obviously Bill didn't make

the concrete cows, but he refurbished them. It's like the broom isn't it, the same broom I've had for 20 years, it had three new heads, and handles but it's the same broom. I worked on them for a little while with Leslie Bonner I did a few little things around Milton Keynes with Leslie actually many moons ago which was quite nice to be involved with that. I've got a lot of praise of Milton Keynes and its little pockets of wackiness. Is the tin man still there, on Bean Hill was the tin man? It may or may not be there. I will ask that question on Facebook you can bet top dollar someone will know the answer.

I kind of wonder if we had a time machine and instead of people talking about Milton Keynes as it was built up if people could suddenly see Milton Keynes now what they would be saying about it now. Would they be picking on things like the concrete cows or would there be something else that they would be saying oh yeah Milton Keynes that's kind of that.

That's one facet storytelling is, storytelling is different things to different people if you say to some people, I watched a storyteller well I read my kids a book at night, and that's all they think of storytelling as. For me, storytelling was definitely reading to kids and grandkids, but storytelling is keeping my dad alive to the grandchildren, keeping traditions going, not even traditional stories but our stories and I think it's really important. And that is part of who you are where you live because what Milton Keynes is to one of my grandsons who is 12 today is not the same as Milton Keynes to me because I've got my history with it and he's growing his history now. Objects storytellers it's all around you were all immersed in it whether we know it or not.

And how if you listen to other people's stories how which is this little crisscross of events and histories and were all kind of tied together. You may think the people are very very different but actually were all part of that same little mesh. It's what unites us.

KIMBERLEY

Date: 13/3/19

Location: Interviewee's sitting room, New Bradwell

Observation: Kimberly was convalescing from surgery, so the interview took place in her home so she would be more comfortable. Kimberly was welcoming and humble in her nature and was very calm and considerate throughout the interview. There was little gesturing or movement as she gave her answers, but this may be due to the recovery process she was in. She smiled throughout the interview, especially when talking about her family, and answers seemed heartfelt, with little hesitation.

The transcription was verbatim with minor corrections during the member check.