



I remember tapioca and semolina at school dinners.

I remember when they built the Haymarket.

I REMEMBER: LEICESTER

I remember the first comment was always 'Oh, you speak very good English.'

I remember the first steps I took on a tennis court. I was two years old.

I remember seeing the Beatles at De Montfort Hall in my pre-Mod days.

I remember he took an item from his pocket. It was a gold ring.

*'Extraordinary and moving
and glowing with art.'*

I Remember: Leicester

I REMEMBER: LEICESTER

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I Remember: Leicester

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This book is dedicated to all those we remember
(and those who remember us too)

LISTENING TO LEICESTER

Think of a city and you think of its buildings. Think of Leicester and it might be the Clock Tower or the Haymarket, its churches, temples and universities, Abbey Park, the New Walk or the Golden Mile. But cities are just where people live and work. The buildings are the trace of people's lives, hollow without us.

A city is its people. If you want to know Leicester, listen to its people.

Listen to them when they talk on the bus, in the café, in bed, when they walk home from work and as they watch football, outside mosque and Kingdom Hall, in playgrounds, parks and shops.

I Remember: Leicester

Listen to them tell the city's stories, their stories,
Listen to times past and dreams of what may be.
Listen now.

In this book, twelve people invite you to hear their stories. Their memories are unique, personal, even intimate. They are part of each writer. So we decided to present them without saying which is which, or who they belong to. You might read several by the same person or jump from one writer to another and another in three lines.

And really, it doesn't matter, because the echoes and connections are in what we share. We have so much in common despite appearances. You only have to listen. This down-to-earth, unpretentious city is a place of infinite diversity. So many paths as one writer says, but, in the words of another, humanity first. Wherever we started, wherever we are going, whatever we bring and whatever we lost on the way, we are Leicester.

This is the poetry of our lives. Just listen.

I REMEMBER: LEICESTER

ONE

I remember a green Ford Popular, dark night against my mother's breast. I am four or five. She is singing, 'Golden slumbers, fill your eyes.'

I remember living in an extended family: father, mother, brother, younger sister, grandad, grandma, aunties and uncles and cousins. It was so much fun, We lived in Rajpipla, in India.

I remember when we used to sit together as a family in the evening after dinner. We'd munch monkey nuts, share stories and play cards; there was no TV.

I remember we never, ever went to a pub or a restaurant for a meal. Mum always cooked, except



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on Saturday mornings when Dad would fry tomato bread on the stove.

I remember the exception was Friday night. As Catholics, we didn't eat meat on Fridays, and one of us, or two, went running to the fish and chip shop.

I remember going to the temple as a child and cupping my hands at the end of prayer for prasad, a sweet dough that you can eat with your hands.

I remember walking back from the beach to our house in Famagusta with bare sandy feet.

I remember the sand being so hot you could hardly walk on it with bare feet.

I remember listening to classical music on a big wooden radio.

I remember the Home Service.

I remember listening to Forces Radio and hearing Mum's request played for us.

I remember my brother having glasses with one lens covered to correct a lazy eye.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember my mum was a lovely lady. She loved gardening and had a greenhouse full of flowers.

I remember when I visited my mum in hospital she didn't know who I was. Her ankles were all swollen up.

I remember the first steps I took on a tennis court. I was two and I held my dad's hand as I tottered onto the court.

I remember my little sister being born in Changi Hospital. We weren't allowed into the hospital, so my mum showed us the baby from a balcony and threw down tubes of Smarties for us.

I remember we used to sleep on the terrace in summer. We would count stars and learn about astronomy from family members.

I remember sitting in bed when I was a little girl. I could see houses and gardens from my bedroom window.

I remember my dad's humorous nature made us laugh. It is unforgettable. He was a unique character and a pure soul.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember my dad's MG Eleven Hundred going at 85mph on the A5.

I remember going on the Autobahn with my dad in his Riley. There were no bridges over the motorway.

I remember my dad making display cabinets for London museums. He was so clever and wonderful.

I remember my dad trying to be an artist. He had a slide projector with a scenic photo, which he projected onto the canvas while he tried to paint over the image.

I remember I learnt hand embroidery and sewing from my mum. She is so clever. She made handbags, dolls and little purses using small material. She taught me and my sister to sew dresses. These skills helped me find work in Leicester, teaching art and sewing with the elders group.

I remember my mum's homemade stew.

I remember eating my younger siblings' Farley's Rusks.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember the work my mum went to making tomato and lentil soup, putting it through a sieve again and again.

I remember Bonfire Night with soup and baked potatoes, the warmth of the fire that we crowded around.

I remember all the neighbours having their own little bonfires and little firework displays. We never crossed fences.

I remember at Holi, the festival of colours, we played with friends and family, using coloured powder and water made with dried flowers.

I remember my uncle teaching me how to ride a scooter bike when I was in my teens. He was sitting behind me. I put the accelerator and brake on at the same time, the scooter flew into the air, and we both fell on the ground. We were not hurt so much but it was so funny, and painful too.

I remember crying for a new tricycle that my parents couldn't afford.

I remember Dad stopped using a rickshaw to get home from the bus station. He walked three miles

I Remember: Leicester

each way, to save money for the blue tricycle. I remembered the story today and it tugged at my heart just like it has always done. My eyes brim with tears.

I remember dropping the plate with the cake on it at Wappenbury Road, and my mum and dad being angry.

I remember getting in from school and mum wanting something we needed for tea. She'd say 'Would you just pop to the shops and get...' I'd whinge, and she would answer 'Oh don't bother, I've done nothing all day—I'll go'.

I remember being bitten on the ankle by a Jack Russell that had escaped from someone's house. I was cycling back from the swimming pool.

I remember when I was five I had a dog called Jenny. She was black and had long hair. She slept in a basket in my bedroom.

I remember she was killed when my dad was taking the car out of the garage. He didn't know she was there. The wheel went right over her. We buried her in the garden.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember Christmas at Brookhouse Avenue. One o'clock in the morning, gazing from the stairs, Santa-spotting in my candy-striped flannelette pyjamas.

I remember my dad made me a fort, hand painted, with lead soldiers. I played under the breakfast table.

I remember the Gulli Gulli man. He was an entertainer who did the trick with three cups and a ball and charmed a snake.

I remember the monsoons that arrived after long hot summers to quench the parched fields. The smell of water on dry sands. The cool water drops on my hot, hard, sweaty head and body were so heavenly.

I remember rushing up to the roof with my brothers to prance and drench ourselves in the pouring rains till our hearts, minds and souls froze and we began to shiver.

I remember Mum would put us in a warm shower and we all sat in the kitchen eating hot potatoes and chilli fritters with a hot cup of tea. I love the silent soothing rains here and I brave myself to

I Remember: Leicester

enjoy the drizzle in the cold, just to refresh those memories.

I remember the farmers praying for rain to have a good harvest.

I remember the famine-hit lands where people die of thirst. I quickly turn off the tap when brushing my teeth and remind my daughters of the kids in Save Water advertisements. And one of them says, 'Mum I want to go out and save the world.'

I remember the fields stretching in all directions as we travelled to our caravan in Wales.

I remember I started to sneeze as soon as we arrived. My eyes ran till they were red raw.

I remember the caravan was near the sea and our friends were nearby. We played tennis on the beach, and paddled and swam.

I remember we had fun and got a tan, but my eyes ran and I kept sneezing.

I remember we climbed the mountains, Cadair Idris and Snowdon, where the top was shrouded in mist.

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I remember our yearly two weeks in Wales was a joy.

I remember holidays in the Cameron Highlands in Malaya (Malaysia). We needed mosquito nets over our beds.

I remember when I was a child and I made my own writing code, like hieroglyphics.

I remember my granddad used to teach yoga and kusti (Indian wrestling) in early morning classes at Akhada open air gym.

I remember two conch shells which were on the sideboard throughout my childhood. They came from our stay in Singapore.

I remember family get-togethers at Christmas, with my aunts and uncles.

I remember cakes and trifle with sherry; the odd glass of wine.

I remember card games and roulette, a time of happiness and fun.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember the woods at the top of my street. Beware the swing going over the fence. A place of fun and danger.

I remember the swamp 'where many children have been lost before' and 'the mad axe man is in there': the words my mother always said.

I remember running through the woods. I ran. You used to scare me.

I remember that you were aflame in 1976. I stood with the firemen and helped to douse the blaze, covered in soot and ash.

I remember walking home, when we'd completed our extinguishing, an hour after curfew. My dad had bolted the door, so I knocked.

I remember my dad opening the door and punching me. I had no time for explanation or reasons.

I remember moving to Leicester in 1953, to Brookhouse Avenue in Highfields. It was a bit different from the Sussex Downs.

A black and white portrait of a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a white t-shirt with the text "USA TRIATHLON" printed on it. The "USA" is in a bold, solid black font with a white star in the upper left of the 'A'. "TRIATHLON" is in a large, outlined, sans-serif font. Below "TRIATHLON" is the word "REGD." in a smaller, outlined font.

USA TRIATHLON
REGD.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember our cinema was the 'Evo' in East Park Road. I joined the other kids at the Saturday matinée, for Flash Gordon, Zorro, Tom and Jerry.

I remember when I was allowed into town with my pals to the Odeon, Queen Street. I used to ask grown-ups to take me into an 'A' film. I was 12 and 'U' was for kids.

I remember going to the cinema with school for discounted shows, watching films with the whole school and breaking into dances in the aisles between the chairs.

I remember my brother's bike with a backpedal brake.

I remember my red Raleigh Chopper with yellow writing.

I remember my first (second-hand) bike, I would cycle with Noel and a few others from London Road to Bradgate Park. I can't even ride a bike now.

I remember another trip was to Evington Golf Course. There was a scrubby wooded area with a

I Remember: Leicester

stream. which we swung over on a rope tied to a branch.

I remember we would knock doors for a glass of water. If we were lucky we got dandelion and burdock.

I remember Roy Rogers riding Trigger down London Road, near our home.

TWO

I remember my first school in a mining town had outside toilets. We had Listen With Mother and sat on an old camp bed.

I remember listening to the next chapter of *The Magic Faraway Tree* at the end of the day.

I remember my next school had inside toilets; feeling warm, with white tiles.

I remember going to Linden School.

I remember it was a big school.

I remember my first day at school. I didn't want to go home. I hated my foster mum.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember taking my foster brother to school on the bus.

I remember walking to school in the rain, trying not to step on worms, even the ones other people had trodden on. I was five.

I remember holding my brother's hand all the way to school until someone laughed and called us boyfriend and girlfriend. My younger brother let my hand go and wouldn't hold it again.

I remember my first day at Linden School, Evington, Modern buildings with large windows, and green grass.

I remember grit-torn kneecaps in the playground.

I remember the lollipop lady helping children across Evington Lane. She wore glasses and a white coat. There was not much traffic.

I remember colouring pictures and writing words in a sentence.

I remember making sketchbooks so I could write and draw in them.

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I remember skipping away from my mother to the small art easel on my first day at school.

I remember drawing a picture of a submarine with really good perspective.

I remember the smell of books, the flavour of words and the dreams of childhood.

I remember the feel of holding a book and turning the pages. I hated people who used spit to turn pages or folded corners to mark their place. Books were much above idols in temples to me.

I remember being Goldilocks in a play, because I had long thick plaits, and wondering why they didn't choose a blonde, white girl.

I remember my first play at school, when I was a banana. I forgot my words and ad-libbed. I've been doing it ever since.

I remember my dad would iron our school dresses, while mum would pack the best lunches for us. It was a perfect division of labour, unheard of in those days. They were far ahead of their times.

I remember Dad was a stickler for polished shoes and he would tie the best knots for our school ties.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember walking across a playing field after rain and the mud sticking to my boots.

I remember my father's green Lada car. I loved it because it was so high, but no one wanted a lift in it from school.

I remember clatter, tin cups, so many colours, and jugs that would fall, and the noise of cutlery.

I remember the best school dinner was steak and kidney pie.

I remember eight of us seated at the table, and a prefect serving from the dish onto our plates.

I remember trying not to get the skin on the custard with pudding.

I remember dinner tokens, plastic yellow discs with a hole in the middle. They were 25p each.

I remember tapioca and semolina at school dinners. We called them tadpoles.

I remember drinking orange juice from water glasses made in France.

I remember loving liver and onions at school. All the other kids hated it.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember the school tuck shop sold big Wagon Wheels.

I remember when I got 20 paise pocket money in school time. I used it to buy peanuts and roasted chickpeas.

I remember buying sweets with our pocket money from the shop on Pergamos army base.

I remember sweet necklaces. They had an elastic string in the middle and you could use them as a catapult by biting the sweet in two. Half in your mouth, half on the other side of the room.

I remember getting lost in Charles Dickens' novels and wondering what an urchin would look like, and how one could get into a deserted house through a window and live secretly in the basement.

I remember I was shocked and upset that books at secondary school didn't have pictures in them.

I remember looking at the wooden zig-zag patterns on the assembly hall floor every morning.

I remember seeing my mother at the back of the hall where the families were sitting during the



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Easter assembly. She had an enormous smile on her face as the big mayor called out my name for winning the Easter painting competition.

I remember my dad taught me how to ride a bike that was my prize for securing second position in my class.

I remember when I was in school I enjoyed learning languages. I learnt Hindi, English and Sanskrit, apart from my mother tongue, Gujarati.

I remember my mother, a Hindi linguist, introduced me to the world of Hindi and English literature at a very early age. She encouraged us to write the best prose and poetry.

I remember borrowing books from my cousin who was doing graduation.

I remember getting *The Mill on the Floss* and the whole of Shakespeare from my cousin. It was like loot for me.

I remember my teacher reading us 'Daffodils'. He was more than six feet tall and he swayed as he recited the poem.

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I remember Mr. Tiwari when I see daffodils coming up each spring. I am transported to my classroom and recite with him, 'I gazed—and gazed—but little thought; what wealth the show to me had brought. They flash upon that inward eye; which is the bliss of solitude; and then my heart with pleasure fills; and dances with the daffodils.'

I remember buying a slide rule from W. H. Smith to be ready for the start of second year maths.

I remember that I didn't feel the need for a dictionary, as if I instinctively understood the complex words. Was there an English soul trapped in me from my previous birth?

I remember my hair freezing after swimming training while I waited for school to open.

I remember I chose my school because it had the most tennis courts.

I remember doing Judo, getting to yellow belt with three orange stripes and thinking I could take on a girl with a green belt. I was on my arse before I knew what had happened.

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I remember Dad would take us to the badminton and volleyball grounds of Punjab University in Chandigarh and play with us in the beautiful campus.

I remember being told off by the school teachers.

I remember swearing at the teachers.

I remember buying cigarettes in school lunchbreak from a corner shop. We had a mission to try every brand.

I remember our teachers were respected and we could proudly say, 'We love our teacher.'

I remember a pat on the head or back was like winning a gold medal that day.

I remember the science lab tables were really large and dusty, with connectors between the Bunsen burners, and lots of different shaped bottles of chemicals.

I remember being so bored in physics, when the teacher made us copy the diagram from the board.

I remember I liked experiments with the Bunsen burners in the science lab.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember my 11+ exam. In Cyprus the papers from the western end of the island were marked in the east and vice-versa. It happened that a friend of my parents had marked my paper. She knew I'd passed but she couldn't tell us until I had received the result officially.

I remember I sat my O-levels in Kenya. The exam papers came from Cambridge University.

I remember passing with good marks.

I remember my mum sitting with my brother till late at night to keep him company while he studied for his pre-engineering exams.

I remember we went on a school vacation to Dieppe in France.

I remember we were all excited and joyful on the train towards Newhaven. We were in a good mood, making fun of each other, ready to embark on the ferry which would cross the English Channel.

I remember Oxford, going round the old colleges with my second partner. Such lovely buildings; such great archways they have.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember wishing and wondering what it would be like to have an education in a place like this.

THREE

I remember my father drove me to an interview in Manchester for an art course and he made curried omelette sandwiches for the journey.

I remember my long bus journeys through Leicestershire to some of the most beautiful children's homes that support socially excluded children. I loved gazing out of the window, admiring the silent, serene fields.

I remember I never saw any work being done in the fields. It was not like Punjab, where it was common to see farm labourers working and singing together, sowing in the water, with the hot



I Remember: Leicester

sun reflecting from the water-logged fields up into their faces.

I remember travelling from Leicester to Birmingham by train, then taking another train to Longbridge and walking past the car factory to my school placement. It was two and half hours there and two and half hours back to Leicester.

I remember seeing the white cows and wondering if there were any black or brown buffaloes in England.

I remember getting lost trying to find my work place. I got off the bus and saw a young child pedalling his tricycle away like an aeroplane. I stopped him and asked if he knew where Holloway was. He didn't. I saw a man coming out of the house, so I asked if his dad might know. He looked into my eye as if I was the silliest person on earth and replied, 'That's not my dad, he is my mum's partner who visits at weekends.' I just stood transfixed.

I remember thinking that this boy was far sharper than me.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember a sophisticated old gentleman who helped me understand the London Underground map when I was seventeen years old and looking baffled in the tube station.

I remember my parents taking me to the Tate Gallery, the original one.

I remember asking them to buy a beautiful postcard in the gift shop for me because the colours and shapes really interested me.

I remember visiting a museum in London much later in my life and seeing the painting from my postcard. It seemed incredibly large. The artist was Wassily Kandinsky.

I remember travelling from Grantham to the South of France, Marseilles, in 24 hours on a motorbike.

I remember going by ferry from Liverpool to Dublin, and driving on board in a light blue MG Eleven Hundred.

I remember Phoenix Park in Dublin was just like countryside with trees.

I remember drinking Guinness, black stuff with a white top.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember taking 57 young girls from Sonipat, Haryana, to the State of Sikkim on a train journey of two and a half days with another lecturer and two assistants.

I remember my mum having nightmares because this long trip was such a huge responsibility when I was just 26 years old.

I remember the parents of young students coming to me and saying 'Miss, if you are going with our girls, we are not worried.'

I remember after we witnessed a gold chain snatch robbery we all took an oath not to tell anyone until we were safely home.

I remember we left Cyprus by ferry to return to England by road. Then the Turks invaded Northern Cyprus and there was almost a war with Greece. We couldn't go through the Soviet Bloc countries so the only way home was through Greece. But there was no problem crossing from Turkey into Greece.

I remember the real problem was at the Greece-Yugoslavia border. All the Greek young men were trying to leave in case there was a war and they

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were called up. The border crossing was jammed and there were massive tailbacks.

I remember our lane of traffic was not moving but the other one was. No one would let us switch lanes, so my mum got out of the car and stood in front of a car in the other lane so we could change. Then our new lane stopped moving and the old one started.

I remember the milk split in Split. It was in a waxed cardboard carton. Split was a town in Yugoslavia, now Croatia. My brother and I thought it was hilarious but my dad was cross.

I remember going up Mount Snowdon through white fog in an old steam train that pushed the coaches up the hill from behind.

I remember seeing walkers going up, feeling colder and pulling the scarf around my neck.

I remember taking a train through the Eiger mountain, into a tunnel like the underground to the end of the line above ice glaciers.

I remember people skiing and getting sunburn it took me two days to recover from.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember travelling in a Ford Cortina from our council house in Wood End, Coventry, all the way to India in 1969. I was eight years old.

I remember all the Coca Cola we drank in the different countries we crossed.

I remember the busy ferry we drove onto in Istanbul and singing 'Istanbul–Constantino-o-o-pal'.

I remember we slept in the car or a small tent, sometimes in a hotel room, and sometimes on the floor of temples.

I remember all of us children had spots, warts and rashes all the way to India, where we had to have very large injections in our bottoms.

I remember my first journey by air. I was very excited to fly away to the UK in an aeroplane.

I remember that I hugged all the relatives who came to see me off at the airport of Mombasa.

I remember shaking hands with my father who then pulled me towards him and gave me a good hug.



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I remember he took an item from his pocket. It was a gold ring which he put on my middle finger.

I remember getting very emotional and my eyes were watery. I will never forget that moment, which happened about 50 years ago. I still have that ring.

I remember this when I look at my father's ring. It doesn't fit my finger any more.

I remember leaving Leicester Station in the evening for an epic journey on Interrail, travelling to Paris by train and ferry.

I remember meeting my friends at the Gare du Nord and eating croissants on the station.

I remember travelling through the countryside by train and finishing up in Finland.

I remember arriving very tired for a party at a holiday home for disabled people. It was the last day before it closed for the winter. Some residents had smuggled in booze under the stumps of their amputated legs.

I remember they tried to get me to drink vodka or martini.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember the people were very kind. They gave us a huge meal and food to take away with us.

I remember everything was different when I came to England—the weather, food, culture, people and lifestyle. It was challenging to adjust.

I remember when I first came from India, I was judged by people's perception of my country as rural, uneducated and easy to oppress.

I remember their first comment was always 'Oh, you speak very good English'.

I remember thinking that they had not been exposed to modern India, with doctors, nurses and IT professionals putting their country on the developed world map. The media loves to show only the poverty, the snake charmers and the elephants in India.

I remember seeing staff in supermarkets struggle with numbers that eight year olds in India could rattle off in their heads.

I remember when I started to rethink my concept of the developed world.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember being harassed on the coach to Shimla by a big man who was travelling with his wife and children.

I remember I pushed my suitcase onto him and swore at him, as other passengers told him to stop hassling me.

I remember travelling by water taxi to a restaurant on stilts where you picked the fish you wanted to eat while it was still swimming in a tank.

I remember a trip from Cyprus to Israel with my aunt, who was a child psychiatrist. She wanted to study children on a Kibbutz.

I remember we fished from the deck of a ship in Haifa harbour and caught some fish. My aunt gave them to the crew to cook for our evening meal. We never saw the fish again.

I remember when I came to the UK under the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme.

I remember visiting Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford. I stood transfixed and felt I had done my pilgrimage.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember wondering if children read these classics today and revere great writers as we used to do at school in India.

FOUR

I remember the smell of cheese and onion crisps.

I remember ham sandwiches. I would take a bite of sandwich, then a mouthful of lemonade, and chew them together. It tasted better.

I remember a wonderful Greek stew with crusty bread in a small restaurant, after we had crossed the Turkish border.

I remember shish kebab with ice-cold coke on Larnaca sea front. The stall was under a terrace covered with growing vines.

I remember strawberry ice cream from the ice cream man.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember eating jelly and ice cream after having my tonsils and adenoids removed in Dhekelia Hospital.

I remember ugali. It is a food eaten in Africa, but it was special to us. It is made from matoke, which is like a banana. It is boiled and mashed like potatoes.

I remember fish and chips at the seaside.

I remember French strawberry tarts.

I remember mushroom soup.

I remember being shocked by the bland food on my first day at school and breaking down in tears.

I remember eating mogo, which is also an African food. It is fried.

I remember going to Mombasa beach with my parents and eating mogo. It is very tasty. We still make it here in the UK, especially at birthdays or occasions or for a get together. It can be bought from Indian food shops.

I remember homemade soup and garlic bread. I made it with the Women's Group.

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I remember John cooked steak soaked in Guinness for the both of us.

I remember homemade Irish stew with my first partner.

I remember when only chocolate and red wine will do.

I remember my Nana in India bought an English cow that gave a very high yield of milk. In the summer holidays with our grandparents we would gorge on homemade yellow butter, ghee, milk, rice and carrot puddings and cookies. Our grandparents pampered us with love.

I remember that white cow was so sensitive it would start mooing when Nana started for home from his factory, a mile away.

I remember one of the black buffaloes lost her colt while delivering and didn't yield any milk for days. My younger brother, who was about five, went and squatted closely with her, like a colt nuzzling his body with hers. I saw tears come from her eyes and she started to give milk.



I Remember: Leicester

I remember Yorkshire pudding every Sunday, because no one makes Yorkshire pudding like mum did.

I remember mum's Sunday dinner, a roast and always with a rice pudding. I remember the battles over the skin because we all loved it.

I remember Mrs Rhodes' budgerigar committed suicide by diving through the skin of the rice pudding. That was on a Sunday too.

I remember rhubarb crumble and custard, boiled puddings, apple and ginger, and spotted dick.

I remember dinner on Monday night, the leftovers of our Sunday meal.

I remember getting home from work at seven or eight o'clock to meet my friends in the pub for a few pints and one of the big sausages they cooked there.

I remember when I got home from the pub, I'd make myself a Ryvita sandwich with Edam, salami, tomatoes and mayonnaise.

I remember eating a spicy meal on my own in a restaurant in Shimla. The family at the next table

I Remember: Leicester

asked me if I wanted to join them. They felt sorry for me.

I remember that every mouthful tasted of freedom.

FIVE

I remember working in the kitchen, washing up. The worst bit was getting your hands wet.

I remember my first Saturday job at the British Home Stores cafeteria, serving meals, collecting used dishes and regularly dropping trays. I was fifteen years old.

I remember not using rubber gloves even though it could be unhealthy.

I remember my first job in 1963 working at Morgan Squire. I had one week holiday after leaving school. My day started at 9am and finished at 5.30pm.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember selling kitchen hardware, a Prestige toolset with a potato masher, and Whitewood furniture.

I remember slipping into the television and radio department on Saturday afternoons to see if Leicester had won.

I remember going to the staff canteen for lunch. There was an old man with yellow fingers from smoking too many fags.

I remember working in a roadside café on the A1 called the Road Hog. There was a staff minibus to take us from the town centre. I started with clearing tables, and loading and unloading the dishwasher. When they found my maths was good I was moved to the till.

I remember making children's shoes for Clarks, working at Chatterbox.

I remember washing the wax from big sheets of shoe leather with methylated spirits and getting high on the fumes.

I remember I was sometimes put on ironing, or banding and labelling.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember matchmaking reject shoes for sale on Leicester Market.

I remember my mum and dad met playing tennis when they worked at Airborne Shoes. They played against other boot and shoe companies, once in London, against Lilley & Skinner. There is a group photo of them all.

I remember my first job, cutting out shapes, shredding paper and sticking envelopes. It was a big building. They were nice people.

I remember my first job helped me with my speech because I had to talk to people all the time.

I remember being a folder and packing clothes into ladies' boxes.

I remember my first job in a garment factory. It was during the summer vacation as I was a student then.

I remember that most of the workers were ladies.

I remember making sweaters and then putting them in blister packaging.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember sitting in the canteen with the ladies asking me about my student days.

I remember working at Victoria Wine when I was a student, spending my wages on Gitanes cigarettes and expensive wine.

I remember living in Abbey Lane and getting a job at Mansfield Hosiery. I started as an overlocker and then got shoved onto buttons. You started to sew the buttons on the cardigan then the needle would hit the button and break in half and nearly take your eye out. I ended up on draw thread instead. It was safer.

I remember a mug of tea was 5p in the canteen.

I remember at Mansfield Hosiery we'd go to The Abbey pub for dinner break.

I remember just before we broke up for the Christmas holidays, we went to The Abbey to celebrate. We all came back drunk and the boss came down to see us.

I remember when I was made redundant from my job in Grantham, I got another at Quantel, near Newbury. One beautiful summer evening my

I Remember: Leicester

cousin and his girlfriend invited me to a play at the Watermill Theatre. It was an old Tudor building. After the performance we went to a village pub. I tried Tanglefoot bitter for the first time and got a bit drunk. It was stronger than the beer I was used to.

I remember starting work as a systems analyst for the AUEW. It was a trade union in Peckham Road.

I remember every morning and every evening spent crossing London on the Metropolitan, Central and Northern Lines.

I remember the club in Peckham where I went for lunch. It was Jamaican, and open 24 hours. The police would sail past taking no notice.

I remember going to the railway training school in York. Because of train timings we always got there early and had breakfast at the Railway Institute first. There was a sign outside saying 'No Winos'.

I remember going to the back of the ticket office every Thursday to collect my wage packet. It was clear paper so that you could check it contained the right amount before you opened it.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember using punch cards and magnetic tape on computers as big as a room. They cost half a million pounds and had less power than a smartphone.

I remember my boss Frank, who dressed in a suit and tie every day, as I was expected to do. He was always complaining about his train journey from Brighton.

I remember decommissioning telegraphs on the Sedgebrook to Barkston branch line. We had to wear high visibility vests. We threw the poles from the trackside over a fence, into a field to be picked up later by lorry. My vest got caught on one of the footrests and I went over the fence too. Luckily, I landed on top of the post.

I remember my first day working at Burton's Menswear, on the corner of Gallowtree Gate, where all the shop fittings were dark wood.

I remember the Prince of Wales suit I wore.

I remember so many racks of ready-to-wear suits on display. There were pink shirts and crimplene trousers made by ICI. When you wore them you got static electric shocks from the carpet.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember selling my first pair of trousers.

I remember pattern books of cloth for made-to-measure suits.

I remember wearing a grey check suit, single-breasted with two buttons, a white shirt with blue and white striped tie, and a pair of black shoes.

I remember Ernie wearing a pinstripe suit and white shirt, measuring tape around his collar.

I remember still having friends from Burton's. It's a bank now.

I remember standing with the Hope Group, waiting for a photo. We all had to smile for the camera.

I remember working for a systems house in Essex. The girls wore white shoes.

I remember moving back to the Midlands to work for a small systems company in Nuneaton and Bedworth.

I remember working days and nights with no sleep, when optimistic deadlines were set—just the occasional coffee break.



I Remember: Leicester

I remember my second job was at Reliance Telephone Company. The work was to my liking as I was studying electrical design engineering.

I remember working with an Irish guy who was very experienced in the work.

I remember red telephones with a dial you turned with a finger to compose the number.

I remember the clicking of the relays when you dialled. These relays were replaced later with electronics known as Programmable Logic Controller.

I remember my work at Reliance Telephone Company leading me to robotics and automation.

I remember my most revered teacher at the University would get embarrassed when I called him 'Sir', as is the practice for addressing teachers in India. I was myself a lecturer from India. He would admonish me, saying 'Please don't remind me about the British Raj.' I realised for the first time that there were people who knew the impact of British Rule, and saw how much the society changed.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember that when I go back to India now, and get addressed as 'Ma'am', it jolts my senses.

I remember my first lesson as a teacher at a secondary school.

I remember there was a lot of shouting with pupils and I dropped my notes. I was too nervous and had no control.

I remember my second lesson as a teacher. All the children were listening.

I remember preparing lessons about Kathe Kollwitz when I was an art teacher. Her work was very powerful and dark and painful.

I remember I didn't sleep very much for a long time when I taught.

SIX

I remember when they built the Haymarket.

I remember running across the footbridge with my friends, and going round the shops, looking at all the clothes and trying them on; but not buying any.

I remember when cars and buses drove round the Clock Tower.

I remember going to Walkers in Allandale Road for pork pies and sausages. All the Walkers shops are closed now.

I remember sleeping in the old St Margaret's Bus Station when it was a wind tunnel.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember I met a young man who was sleeping on the streets. He'd been beaten up twice for being on the street. A broken hand and a broken ankle, all for being homeless.

I remember giving away dresses and clothes to the homeless children.

I remember buses going up High Street past the old Co-op, before The Shires was built.

I remember getting off the Number 8 bus at night.

I remember the first Mini on sale for £495 in a car showroom in Humberstone Gate.

I remember watching from the viewing platform when the Roman site was being dug.

I remember taking my son James to New Walk Museum and seeing the koi carp in the basement.

I remember he squealed at the dinosaur.

I remember the display of Egyptian mummies fascinated my little James.

I remember seeing a big stuffed antelope at the museum.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember haunting bookshops and libraries just to enjoy the smell of books.

I remember envying my friend, whose dad owned the biggest bookshop in the town. I dreamt of marrying a bookseller. For me it meant access to all the books in the world.

I remember playing tennis properly aged eleven. My mum and dad taught me how to play and we played as a family.

I remember we played at Anstey. It was one of the happiest times of my life.

I remember Dad played tennis to the age of 83 and was interviewed by the Leicester Mercury.

I remember summer picnics in the park with my auntie Alice and Mum, my sister Felicity and my cousins Jeremy and Catherine.

I remember splashing in the paddling pool and the smell of freshly mown grass.

I remember a picnic with my family on the bank of the Narmada River, near the world's tallest statue to Sardar Patel. Such time with family is unforgettable.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember a sledging accident at church hill in Barrowby, when my hand went under the runner and it cut through my glove and into my skin. It didn't put me off sledging.

I remember we were all waiting for the snow next winter but we didn't get much. When it came we went back to the hill but the farmer had ploughed the field and it was impossible to go down.

I remember Midland Red buses.

I remember a bus conductor, wearing a beige jacket with silver buttons under his ticket machine.

I remember Leicester City Transport buses were painted cream with a small band of brown. They had famous names like Leyland, Daimler, AEC and Bristol.

I remember Midland Fox buses in bright yellow and red.

I remember you could travel by bus from Leicester to Coventry, Hereford or Shrewsbury.

I remember Leicester City winning the Premiership, and the bus parade to Victoria Park, crowds overflowing and traffic jams.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember my father bought a big white television and the whole neighbourhood came into our house to watch. It was the first colour TV in our estate, in Coventry.

I remember Wood End had a bad reputation, but to me it was a happy community to live in. Our council estate was very friendly in the 1960s and 1970s.

I remember Morecambe and Wise, 'Singing in the Rain'. It was better than film, with all the family watching telly together. It was the highlight of the week.

I remember *Coronation Street*.

I remember Jack and Vera.

I remember *The Sound of Music* and the five children from the Von Trapp family.

I remember Julie Andrews.

I remember Mary Poppins and the chimney sweep.

I remember getting lost in the other world of friendship and laughter with Laurel and Hardy, Dennis the Menace, ghosts and fairies, the witty

I Remember: Leicester

tales of Akbar and Birbal, sagas of Hindu gods and goddesses. and children's magazines.

I remember I bribed one of my uncles to let me borrow from the collection of *Readers' Digest* that was his proud possession.

I remember going in the summer holidays to my Nana's home, where we would all sleep on cots on the roof. The air was cooled by water poured on the floor in the evenings by the servant.

I remember we would gather around our great Nana and he would tell us stories that would be a week long.

I remember every night we would fall asleep imagining what would happen next, while counting the stars and seeing the shapes of monsters from Nana's stories in different constellations, enjoying the cool breeze till the early rising sun and the chirping birds woke us.

SEVEN

I remember my first mohair suit. It was green with long double vents and a ticket pocket. I wore a green paisley tie and a green silk handkerchief in my top pocket.

I remember the noise of the music, soothing but melodious, warming the heart to excitement.

I remember feeling happy. My feelgood factor was high and I was very happy.

I remember going with my parents to see The Shadows at the London Palladium. Three guitars and drums on stage, playing 'Guitar Tango', 'Atlantis', 'Apache'.



I Remember: Leicester

I remember seeing the Beatles at De Montfort Hall in my pre-mod days.

I remember the screaming—not just the girls, but lads as well. John got all the jelly babies.

I remember those worry-free days.

I remember eating fish and chips. There were chippy shops around every corner.

I remember going with my aunt to The Rocket on Armitage Road to meet all her friends. We sat around tables and my aunt bought me Coke and cheese and onion crisps.

I remember when I was young I used to go to discos.

I remember it was the trend then, eating out and then going to a disco, a night out, especially Fridays and Saturday night.

I remember the procedure of getting ready to go out on the town. I got myself together spontaneously to the tune of 'Good Times' by Chic. Eighties groove, that is.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember I donned my favourite suit which I thought would draw the ladies. Wishful thinking.

I remember my Aunt Sheila with her mink coats, and her gold jewellery and diamonds she loved to wear.

I remember sitting on a stool and talking to my aunt while she got dressed up to go out to meet her boyfriend.

I remember watching her put on heavy make-up, blue eye shadow, sometimes green, false eyelashes, face powder, dark red lipstick, black eye-liner.

I remember she back-combed her hair then put it up on her head, with hair lacquer to keep it in place.

I remember it stood tall and proud. It was called a beehive.

I remember the strong smells of perfume.

I remember the socialising, the excitement of mingling with the ladies, conversations flowing past and all the people are having fun. No one is unhappy in this place of enjoyment.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember enjoying my night out when a woman approached me. She asked, 'Are you a professional dancer?' I said, 'No. but I can be if you want me to.'

I remember going for a dance at the Dog and Trumpet after my late shift at the ABC. It was underneath the cinema and we'd go for a drink and dance around our handbags.

I remember buying a special handbag just to dance around it.

I remember seeing a white MGA, parked outside a nightclub.

I remember creeping out the back door at midnight, when the stars were out. I cycled into town, left my bike at Baz's and hit the Burlesque, the first all-nighter in Leicester. It was on Humberstone Road, opposite the Co-op funeral parlour.

I remember hearing Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody' for the first time and thinking what a brilliant line 'I sometimes wish I'd never been born at all' was.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember record shops with racks of LPs and singles.

I remember a cassette player that would play twelve tapes in a row.

I remember soundtrack albums by Ron Goodwin on EMI: *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines*, *Battle of Britain*.

I remember playing the William Tell Overture and the 1812, with cannon sounds, on a record player with oak wood.

I remember buying a lottery ticket shortly after it started. I matched three numbers and won £10. The next day, I bought the Oasis CD, *Definitely, Maybe*, which has the track 'Cigarettes and Alcohol'. When I got back to Marston House, one of the old tower blocks on St Matthews that's been knocked down now, I showed it to the doorman. He looked at the CD and said I knew a lot about cigarettes and alcohol already.

I remember getting two packs of 20 Embassy Regal for £1. There was an offer with coupons in the packs. We asked for the packs, opened them to get the coupons out, and then paid for the cigarettes.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember seeing The Shadows at De Montfort Hall in the 1990s, playing old hits like 'Moon River' and 'Heartbeat'. Everyone enjoyed themselves.

I remember going to Theatre One Cinema in Coventry with my family to watch *Ben Hur*. I loved Charlton Heston, but now I don't.

I remember big crowds for James Bond films at the Odeon on Queen Street. *You Only Live Twice* and *Thunderball*; *Moonraker*. Shirley Bassey singing 'Diamonds Are Forever'.

I remember seeing Chuck Berry at De Montfort Hall. I was thirteen and Chuck seemed ancient.

I remember the Stax-Volt tour of '67 at the Granby Halls. Otis Redding, Sam and Dave, Eddie Floyd and Booker T. I got high.

I remember coming on a coach trip from Grantham to De Montfort Hall to see Van Halen.

I remember Dave Lee Roth, the singer, downed a bottle of spirits on stage. He started another bottle, drank half, and passed it into the audience. I was near the front and got a hand on it. I tipped it



I Remember: Leicester

towards the lad opposite me, so he could have a swig, then he tipped it towards me, so I could have a swig. It was vodka.

I remember my life was so full of fun.

EIGHT

I remember a dream that came to me while looking at the postcard. In it a woman is trying to sleep.

I remember the hot summer afternoons came alive in the pages of Perm Chand's novels, which gave me a peep into an adult world of poverty, family commitment, upholding truth and dignity with honesty, love and adultery.

I remember words from *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* that I took to heart at that impressionable age: 'Beauty lay not in the thing, but in what the thing symbolized' and 'A strong woman who recklessly throws away her strength, she is worse than a weak woman who has never had any strength to throw

I Remember: Leicester

away.' Neither my parents nor I understood how books were shaping my life.

I remember I liked collecting small books from poets I have met and heard.

I remember going to the House of Lords for the Yellow Book Award when my poem was included.

I remember afternoon tea, scones with jam and cream, sitting on the terrace, overlooking the river Thames.

I remember seeing Ruby Wax at the House of Lords.

I remember I played tennis with my mum in the Leicestershire Ladies Doubles League, until I had an eye injury and couldn't play anymore. So I took up art, poetry and singing. I walk my dog.

I remember when my dad collapsed and died. We were all at the table having lunch.

I remember not knowing what 'funeral' meant at primary school.

I remember the blackouts during the India-Pakistan war in 1971, and the creation of Bangladesh.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember us playing the war in school. The boys would play air raids and army seizures. The girls would play doctors and nurses and try to operate, heal the injured soldiers, and secretly nurse their crushes.

I remember wishing I could lead the air strike. Patriotism was at an all-time high.

I remember having flashbacks.

I remember standing in a small room and the bad smell that hung around.

I remember looking down and seeing red lino.

I remember a small window overlooking Lincoln Street.

I remember wondering why I wanted to leave. To me, it was a warm, safe place, and I wanted to go back.

I remember working long hours in the kitchen, and cleaning. It kept a roof over my head.

I remember my life was much simpler then. It was hard, but fair.

I remember all the friends I made there.



I Remember: Leicester

I remember meeting my first partner there. I want to tell my friends about him, that I loved him and he died.

I remember dogs have been my lifeline, over the years.

I remember when relatives died, they have been my solace, constant companions with unconditional love. I see their soulful eyes and know they care.

I remember my dear children, Jess and Rosie, and Julie my close friend. They are the pillars of my emotional temple.

I remember loss.

I remember my parents, and Cassie, our daughter, who died at birth.

I remember being fed on stories of Partition between India and Pakistan, and what my parents faced in Punjab as children. My grandparents had to leave their established businesses and big havelis in Sargodha and Mianwali.

I remember my dad telling the story of how he got lost in the train from Punjab and was reunited with

I Remember: Leicester

his dad. My heart would jump to my mouth. I felt so protective for my seven year old dad.

I remember feeling fear, anger, hatred, helplessness, grit and hope.

I remember my maternal grandmother never ate corn on the cob as she had lost one of her daughters to thirst and hunger in the train from Sargodha to Delhi. Her daughter died asking for corn on the cob. My mum was the only child they were left with.

I remember that Heena looks after me. She always thinks about other people before herself.

I remember cheering Heena up. We get on ever so well.

I remember I have a lot of good friends, always there for me in times of trouble.

I remember being emotional when my partner died. My friend went to the funeral with me.

I remember Drew invited all of us for dinner after the funeral.

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I remember my grandfather's humbleness, intelligence and love for mankind.

I try to remember that humanity is above all religions.

I remember moulding a hand out of clay that described my pain. It is still standing like a small statue on my side cupboard.

I remember I passed some difficult times as I was feeling low and depressed. I lost my job, had an accident. I was off for whiplash injury for three months.

I remember I love turning on my lamp lights because they create a warm, comfortable atmosphere.

I remember so many paths. Robert Frost, yours fade in comparison.

NINE

I remember when my son was born. He was handed to me screaming. I fed him and our bond was forged.

I remember all the milestones in his life, first steps, teeth, words and as he grew he became a lovely young man, a credit to us.

I remember my twin daughters call themselves British Indian Babes.

I remember my elder daughter being born in Leicester General Hospital. When she came out the umbilical cord was round her neck. The midwife pressed the alarm and the crack team came in. They moved so fast it was a blur and

I Remember: Leicester

everything was alright. We had tea and toast afterwards.

I remember it feels amazing to fall for someone quickly, that adrenaline rush.

I remember I shouldn't fall in love too fast.

I remember, too, not to make someone fall in love with you, if you don't know how to love them.

I remember my friend Bridget getting married and she looked so lovely in her off-white wedding dress.

I remember her radiant smile as she walked down the aisle.

I remember my friend taking a picture of me by the wedding cake, of three tiers with white icing, and cupcakes at the bottom.

I remember getting married on the beach in Mauritius. Our two year old daughter was bridesmaid.

I remember the birth of our first daughter Jessica, Elated beyond words, grateful, emotional—our baby girl.

I Remember: Leicester

I remember the birth of our second daughter, Rosie. Perfect little person, raging against the moon. Welcome, little one!

I remember my 21st birthday as John, at Monk Fryston Hall in Yorkshire.

I remember my 70th birthday as Mandy at Coast to Coast in Leicester.

I remember my Mum and Dad, and my brother and my brother's wife.

I remember my brother taught me to think about other people and not just yourself.

I remember when my three year old daughter asked me 'How long do you live?' and I replied, 'About 100.' A few days later I saw her classwork in which she had written the numbers from 1 to 100. And the teacher had put down a question to challenge her 'What comes after 100?' She had written 'You die.'

I remember I went to live with Heena when I was 15 years old. So many years have gone by. She is a lovely lady.

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I remember coffee and ice cream on Saturday with my best friend.

I remember a pint and poems at the Lansdowne on London Road.

I remember Jane's homemade cake.

I remember Sisko the dog loves his biscuits.

I remember spending time with my husband and sons in our old home's garden; very precious moments.

I remember being torn between loyalty and duty, and taking pride in being righteous. I am thankful to all who helped me shape what I am, including the writing group who have given a refresher on humility, being sensitive, being brave in the face of adversity, laughing through your troubles and weaving life through words.

I remember mum and dad took their own lives in a pact, aged 79 and 80. Miss you both, the lunches on a Thursday. Your granddaughters are now in their thirties. I am certain you're in their memories, memories like the colour of my mind.

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I remember that whenever I ask my dad how he is, his standard response is, 'All is well that ends well'. I remember that he has never, ever complained in life.

I remember.



THE WRITERS

Julie Allnutt

My name is Julie. I live in Evington. I am friendly and chatty. I work at LT on London Road. I enjoy watching *Heartbeat* and swimming in my spare time. My favourite meal is fish, with a small amount of mushy peas.

Sonal Bhavsar

I completed my Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) at Gujarat Ayurvedic University in 1991, before coming to the UK, where I gained Level 5 adult teaching qualification. In 1993, I set up a clinic in Belgrave as the first woman Ayurvedic doctor in Leicestershire. I promote holistic medicine in the media, including reflexology, aromatherapy, Indian

I Remember: Leicester

head massage, healthy lifestyle, yoga and meditation. In 2012, I set up a community-based Diabetes Self-Help Group because I wanted to make a difference in people's life by empowering them so they can self-manage their health problems. I am blessed with three sons, who taught me how to stay happy and enjoy life. I love helping people learn about health and wellbeing. I enjoy sewing, gardening, art and craft, and cooking a variety of dishes. I spend most of my time keeping active, which makes me happy. I believe math is a number game and I love overcoming barriers to solving mathematical problems when I am helping my children do homework. My mum and my dad are my real-life heroes, who taught me many things, including letting go and moving on in life. I wouldn't have achieved all this without the help of my husband and children.

Mandy Jo Book

I am Mandy. I love my bus pass, travelling around England and my garden with lavender and palm trees. I have a garden shed full of model railway, love cooking Italian food, with a bottle of vino, and music playing in the background. Music and painting help me to relax. I have loved going to Spain, Italy, America and Canada.

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Jackie Dunkley

I love to paint street art. I love my art and poetry to express my feelings. My pet hate are people who lie about small things. I sing modern music in a choir. I do stand-up comedy to put a smile on people's faces.

Grant Hammond

The nomad: I've lived in a lot of places. As a child, Leamington, Kenilworth, Singapore, Cyprus, Melton Mowbray and Grantham. As an adult, Grantham, Leeds, Newbury, and Leicester. In my 56 years on earth I have had 28 different addresses. When I reach my final resting place, it will say 'Dunroamin, Duncarin, Dunlivin'.

Jane Knight

I am Jane and I write a lot of poetry. I have poems in three books and I enjoy performing too. Wherever I go my dog Sisko comes along. He is small and fluffy and very cute: my little teddy bear.

Sarbjot Sanhdu

Survivor of mistakes, but isn't that life? Lived in Coventry, Walsall and other sunny spots in the West Midlands. I can get lost in museums as well as

I Remember: Leicester

Netflix. Born in the Himalayas but flat shared with Yetis at Art College.

Geeta Sethi

I am Geeta, not like the holy Hindu book Gita. I consider myself a lifelong learner. I stand for truth without having to play deceit. I love music, reading, writing, painting and creating. I love kids, beautiful kind human hearts and engaging intellectuals who are down to earth. I am alive to the beauty of the mountains, rivers and flowers and forests, the man-made inventions, space crafts, mobiles and chips, intrigue me, the medical discoveries amaze me and the vastness of the universe and our place on earth humbles me. I hate routine and am consistently inconsistent in my varied interests but am rigidly consistent in my principles and values, thanks to my parents. I am trying to give the best to my 8 years old twin daughters.

With Steve Hardy, Romeo and Pindar S. Tara

THE ELDER TREE

I Remember: Leicester is the result of creative writing workshops held in Leicester between January and April 2019, part of The Elder Tree Project, a three year programme to support creative writing among older people developed by Writing East Midlands.

Following exploratory meetings with five community groups, we ran 10 weekly sessions at Attenborough Arts, University of Leicester. In all, fifteen people took part, though not all have contributed directly to the book. Much of our work involved talking and listening to each other, with one memory sparking another. So this book is a collective text shaped by everyone who was present in its creation. We would like to thank Lilavanti Karsan, Champavanti Kothari, Osman Tarmah Ohmed, Dinaben Parmar and Gunival Shah for their

I Remember: Leicester

participation. We would also like to thank three students, Ross, Alex and Helen, who participated in several sessions, and Theo Stickley, from the University of Nottingham, who took part in one. The project was facilitated by François Matarasso and Sabrina Mei-Li Smith, supported by Lydia Towsey, Arts in Health Coordinator for Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust.

We are grateful to the team at Writing East Midlands for their support throughout the project. Thanks also to Alison Colledge and Becky Gooding (New Walk Museum), Tim Sayers, Michaela Butter and all the staff at Attenborough Arts. And thanks to Ian McMillan for his generous words of encouragement. Finally, and very importantly, we want to acknowledge the late Joe Brainard, whose book, *I Remember* (1970), was the inspiration for our work. It has been a joy to walk in the footsteps of an artist and writer with such a vividly original imagination.

The Elder Tree is funded by Arts Council England and The Baring Foundation through the Celebrating Age Fund. The Elder Tree consortium led by Writing East Midlands includes First Art, Made in Corby, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, Museums Development East Midlands, Age UK and Orders of St John Care Trust.



**The Baring
Foundation**



In 1970, the artist Joe Brainard published a small book called 'I Remember', in which he wrote growing up in post-war America. Inspired by this, a group of Leicester people have recalled their own memories of life in the Midlands, India, Kenya and other places too. Their collective story of wonder and resilience echoes with reminders of how much we share in our differences.

'This book is a wonderful example of the power of so-called 'ordinary' memories; these glimpses of a past become extraordinary and moving and glowing with art when they are written down and presented alongside each other. Here are stories that are personal and local but which become universal when they're shared. Read and enjoy... then have a go yourself!'

Ian McMillan,
Writer and radio presenter

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JULIE ALLNUTT

SONAL BHAVSAR

MANDY JO BOOK

JACKIE DUNKLEY

MARTIN FROST

GRANT HAMMOND

STEVE HARDY

JANE KNIGHT

ROMEO

SARBJOT SANHDU

GEETA SETHI

PINDAR S. TARA

**WRITING
EAST
MIDLANDS** 