

Telling our Stories, Finding our Roots, Exeter's Multi-Coloured History Interview Transcript

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SP: History of arriving in Exeter

TC: I don't know how to start

How long have you been here in Exeter?

From year 2004, April until now. Before that I lived in Somerton only 2 or 3 months. Before that it was Shepton Mallet in Somerset. I arrived in England 1996 August 21 if I remember right. From Hong Kong to England. Why I come to England? Before the England first? You want to know in Hong Kong first or England first?

It's up to you

In Hong Kong, My whole life I only have two jobs. Not on the same time: a travel agent and an ice skating coach. My first job is travel agent, and after I going back to teaching ice skaters, and after going back to travel agent. After my last job I met my partner and then he and me together about.. until he pass away, I think 16 or 18 years. And then in 1996 he had a really err.. illness, and then he decides early retired and then coming back to England, because he's British. And then he asked me do you want to come with him to England. And then I say yes. Because I, from child, I not really love living in Hong King because it's too noisy, too busy. So why after 1998. Oh sorry, he left in 1995, just before Christmas.

It's OK

And then. After arrival here, 1996, August. So then about half a year later I got a National [Chinese] Insurance number. So and then he tell me the meaning I can find a job.

Yes

Yeah, and after, about one week after, or just next day (the details I can not remember) and then I found a job, my first job in England, working in a pub, in the kitchen, about 3, 4 years. Before that always kitchen assistant - just tidy up the kitchen, prepare the food, and do everything. And then about one year later, no

about two years later, the pub the Head Chef asked me to do the assistant. I think in his country it's called chef..

sous-chef

sous-chef, yeah. And then about 3 or years later I left. And then I working about three four months I working in the KFC. And after I working in the local bakery, and then just about two years. So until, because of my health go downhill, so I give up the job. I can't work in a long job any more.

And then maybe the ice skating – I have injuries, quite serious injuries, so that now affects my hip and my knee. Quite painful. Sometimes the walking and standing or sitting, not moving any position over half hour or one hour. Start a little bit pain. So that's why I need to give up the job.

Yes

And then on the year 2004, my partner, oh sorry. Yeah year 2004, just after the New Year, and then from Shepton Mallet we moved to Somerton. And then one week after, my partner he passed away. It upset me so much, and then because after arrival in England, only myself and him, and then that moment upset me so much because in England everything he helped me do it. I don't need to think about trouble outside or anything. Sometimes I say can you help me, example say the government document or anything. Because talking and listening the English for me is not too problem. For writing and reading I have a really big problem. So many times he helped me looking and speak to me and what about the document or the blah-blah-blah. But after he pass away and since I lost support. So and then I don't know what can I do. Everything, I don't know what first and then second one and so on.

And then you decide to move out

I was quite upset, because only one week and he just pass. So and then because I had a support worker, and then he asked me do you want to leave Somerton and I say yes. Because of my support worker, the group in Exeter, so he says do you want to come to Exeter, I says I don't mind go to anywhere, I just don't want to live in Somerton any more.

So after, I think I'm never going back to Somerton.

Because for me is a really painful history. Over there. So, and then after I move to Exeter, I really lucky. One month after I got a council flat, I stay in a council flat and then my health quite damaged, I can't do normal work or anything and then at that moment, because the whole world collapse for me, in my life. And then my feelings, I thought over in a really deep black hole, never ending. I don't know how long or

anything. I can say until now inside my heart it feels really painful. Because the relationship from 16 or 18 years, really difficult for us.

But anyway on that same year, the year 2004, about... summertime, I can't remember what month, and then because of my home, I live a little bit outside, that way [pointing] but not too far, just outside a little bit the city centre, so any time I walk into the city centre I would pass, go up to South street, I always pass Oxfam. The charity shop. And then one day I saw the poster outside saying "we need help to keep this shop open". So and then, at that moment I have some network on the television show the Africa, the people, the poor people, and they show you how poor over there - no water, no food blah-blah-blah and then I just looking and because at that moment I really really down, my life is really down, down, how can I say the English word, so really low. But after watching the television and then I saw the whole world and my feelings say "OK, I'm lucky. My partner passed away, and only myself in this country, and I don't know everything. But I look at the world and then I find so many people. And compared to that people I more lucky than him". So then after I saw the Oxfam had a poster I think OK I can't have a long job, why I not use my little bit still can do, so I applied in Oxfam, working in a volunteer...

So from Oxfam, from year 2004 summertime I think it's about July or August, until now I'm still working over there. So for my life is the longest job. Because in Hong Kong I work in the two job, but always quite short time about three, four years and then I will change and then I will change back. But in this one, my longest...

Eight to nine years

Yeah. So and then, after that I met, in the church I met a Chinese couple, he's a Chinese doctor. And then he tells me about a Chinese group in Exeter. He asked why you not coming to the Chinese group in Exeter. Before he say the Chinese group is called "is elderly group". So I figure that I'm not that old so I don't need the elderly group. But after he says you can any age you can come in. Then I started the Exeter Chinese Community, starting to join

In the same year

Ahh, no I think it was one year later. In the beginning, in the Chinese group, because I don't know everyone. I just, for me, I don't know what can I say, alone sitting in one corner and then I don't know anyone. But anyway, until to now, so many years after, I have so many friends now. And then the Chinese community, the director running, one day she talking to me and she says "we have the project called Sahara. So do you want to come to help. Probably this for you is a... this job I think is good, you can help". So I forgot what year, I think three four 4 years now. And then I am starting help send volunteers working in the Sahara Project and then in the Chinese group

and then sometimes I help the people with the translation English to Chinese and Chinese to English.

What is the Sahara project again?

Sahara Project is a government sponsored group, sorry government funding.

From England or China?

Yeah. From Exeter City Council. The funding from over there. And Sahara project means bring the people together.

To do what

Together. And then because Sahara project for the Southeast Asian, African people, and then so many Asian people are Muslim ladies, Muslim people in Exeter. All these, how can I say, it's a private communities not going out, not contact with different culture. I think Chinese people is not easy to mix culture together with other people. So this Sahara project can help bring the Chinese group and the Muslim group, the two groups are split, so one here one there. But now bring the two group together. Two community group.

And then after, maybe another group join, another group join. Not mean I am Chinese, I am not welcome, you are a resident or Muslim or Japanese people. No. Until people understand the world is here, we are needed, together.

To make people realise the diversity

Yeah, And then so many of the Asian people, the older generation... because in this country I understand they're working really really hard. And then so many people before not have any chance learning English or new technology, mobile phone, computer or anything. So in the Chinese group of the Sahara project, the government funding, now I am running a group called Exercise group.

Yes

The name is Hurricane [laughter].

Hurricane

Typhoon. This exercise group is every Wednesday. All welcome, every Chinese or another country welcome to come and do exercise. Because so many people who is after retired only sitting at home watching television, newspaper or just doing the

shopping, walking around. Exercise help the people keep fit. Not only the elderly people, some younger people can join too.

St Sidwell community?

Exercise no, but Chinese group and the Muslim group in St Sidwell. Yeah, Chinese group every Tuesday, Muslim group is Thursday. And then now have a Mandarin group on Sunday, but every month, one time every month.

To learn mandarin?

No, just the Mandarin people together, and the friends, those that live in Exeter but not contact too much because too busy. And then

All of these are under Sahara project?

Yeah. I think now the group is called Hikmat Devon. The name has changed.

Hikmat?

Yeah. The top one is called Hikmat Devon, and then after Hikmat CIC. And then under called Day Centre. Day centre is the Chinese group at St Sidwell, every Tuesday, and then every two weeks, the Thursday, is the Muslim group. And Sunday, one time every month

Mandarin group

Yeah, Mandarin group. And they have another part called Carers

What does it mean?

You take care of me. Carers.

Carers?

Carers, yeah

Sorry

Not you, C-A-R-E-R-S.

We mean the same thing

Carers means if you're in the family, you have..

Children

Children or elderly or disabled you need to look after. This is the new project, quite new. About one year now. They have foot care, because some people cannot cut their nails. [drilling noise] Not only the fingernails,

Toenails

Yeah, because some people, not easy to bend over and cut their nails. So that is part of Sahara. Hikmat here, and then under, under [inaudible]

So all of these are under Sahara

Hikmat Devon. It confused me.

OK. So all of these run by you?

Not by me. We have so many, some staff. One session from Sahara. I'm sorry. [inaudible]

In each activity there is at least one staff to take care of

Two. Normally two. Because in case, if I'm not well or I'm on holiday I have another one to take over. So. Yeah. In here, we have a friendship group, badminton group, basket group, walking group.

You mean inside the exercise group you have

No. Here, day centre. Other footcare, carers, exercise group, badminton group, basket group, lady group, no women group, sorry. And then bus group

It's a big project

Yeah, it's a big project. So before some people got the bus pass, only use it for the house, and then go to the centre. The bus group we go to the bus station, have a timetable, for example from Exeter you can use the bus pass go to for example Southampton. Of course you probably can't go direct to Southampton. You probably need to change the bus in some city and go to Southampton. And then you use this technique for teaching the people. And then not only the use the bus pass to go the centre, you can use it from here to somewhere.

Exercise: so many of the Chinese people working really hard. After they retire, not do too much. Some people come and do exercise and after feeling that the hair and the body was better before.

And then every summer we have a walking group. And in a way, a good example, we have a new member just joined in, a Chinese lady. She just this summer joined the walking group. Normally she, every day, from her home, near St Sidwell area, she walking to work – her work is an office in St Thomas. She walking every day from home to office, and when finished, walking from office back to home. Quite long, but long distance and ours a little bit longer. But she first time joined the walking group, walking group about three four miles probably, yeah three four miles only. And then only 45 minutes, and she can tell the difference, from her home walking to work and then going back home. And then the walking group only 45 minutes and then she, next days she says “I can feel the difference”. Because if you are walking around the city, for yourself, you’re not feeling here, too tired or anything. But she’s first time joined the walking group, and after she says she feeling here really tired. And then she says “this is really good” and then she knows the difference

How do you feel that you have made an impact?

Yes, I really quite surprised. Because she says she walking everyday and then she feeling too tired here, but she just first time joined the walking group she already have– I feel really really different. So then I tell my director and then she says “it’s good, it’s a really good example or result”, so sometimes I’m talking to the people and after the people says “oh yes I feel quite the same” Maybe because Chinese people sometimes don't want to talking too much to the people what you feeling or anything.

The director asked me to do this job, because maybe.. quite easy, because for myself, my character, I... how can I say... I quite easy

Open-minded?

I always open my eyes looking the world. Not only look in one corner. For me it’s... In Hong Kong I can tell you, in Hong Kong I only went to High School only grade one. I not finished grade 1 in high school, so why my English is not very good. But I’m teaching now so many people, my friends in Hong Kong don’t believe I can live in England over 14 years now. And I still can survive. Probably, my feelings.. I always thinking that, not only me, everyone good that is born in this world. Not meaning you are rubbish. You probably in somewhere, you are very good model or anything for someone. So for, I always thinking that way. Now I working in the help Sahara project and then I, now I understand my past is my experience. I can use my past, I have one client quite similar to my story, quite upset because of the partner blah-blah-blah. Ah now, I can use my past story how I can help this person.

Yeah

And then it's the same, some people, for example, I'm not well, or what about my future, I say "don't worry about too much. I know that talking is easy, but if you do, that's quite difficult". Then I will tell the person, I have the same, I need a long-term medicine or medical. And then I feel here, the world's not ending yet. For yourself. So I use my skill or..

Talent

Yeah. And then try to...Now I'm looking back and say "ooh. Not too bad" [laughter]

You have been here in England for over 14 years. Almost ten years more or less living in Exeter. Eight year I think. You see any differences when you first came here, and Exeter at the moment?

Oh. Yes. In Exeter, after I coming because Exeter is, compared to my before, I live in Shepton Mallet. Because Shepton Mallet is a very small town. The High St from the top to bottom about 5 to 10 minutes already finished. The first time I arrived in Exeter, and then I thought "it's quite big city". And quite nice. I still remember old Princesshay. First arrival I still remember the old Princesshay area. I have memories of the Greek restaurant, and the... one is a Italian style restaurant. Now he moved I don't know what the street now. St Leonards that area. You know the new Crown Court? Crown Court? Anyway he just, from here, a little along, straight on before the traffic lights, straight on, before that corner. And then, some shop in the old Princesshay. But for me, I don't really love that way, not in the daytime, because of the [inaudible] not comfortable. Feeling it's quite dirty, not meaning rubbish everywhere, compare. I don't know how to say

What's the area again please?

Ah Princesshay.

You don't like

The old one. Maybe the everything quite old. It's in the High Street, not the Princesshay side. But in the day time, it's quite down, still you can see everything, but your feeling umm umm. And sometimes I pass over there. And there's, I remember old Debenham's, now it's John Lewis. I still remember. And after when they demolish the old Princesshay, and I saw day by day, they find some archaeological, the history, the Roman time history, because they have the window. And the people see what they're doing, the area, and then I saw the people dig on the floor. And finding Roman history or another history. So this is I remember

Quite interesting. Have you got any photos of Exeter in the past?

Err. Not really. Anyway

But there are a lot of changes

Yes, Still a lot of changes. For me, quite big changes, the Princesshay. Oh another one thing is I arrive in England, watching on television they're talking about antiques.

Antique?

Antique, yeah And then after I starting collection antiques fans. And then I have over 20 total fan. And one time me and Chinese group go to the St Nicholas House or Tudor House and I have a visit over there and the staff give the file and then talking about the collection and ask the people what are your interests, why you interested that one. I have pictures of the fans and I say Oh I love this one and then he says why, because I have a collection. And then after the staff says "ooh, that's good" and then people give name and contact address so I give that. And then there's a... Royal Albert Museum, because it need a repair, so shut down so many years, so while we're visitor in Tudor House. Just before the opening about, before the re-open about two years before, they have a marketing manager in Museum he phone me, a lady she phoned me, I can't remember what's her name, she phoned me and says "oh, I know you have the fans collection. Are you interested to lend to the Museum? You might have a photo-shoot" I says yeah, all right, no problem. Then I make an appointment, because going back to the Tudor House. I have a photo-shoot, as a local people collection . Oh Ok. So I bring my collection, go to over there and then show the people and then they take the photo. And then after the [drilling noise]. At that moment I met the man his name Roy, I forgot his surname he's marketing manager. After the photoshoot he asked me telephone number, name address and email. And he says "do you mind if the Museum's open, do you mind to loan your collection to the Museum, for the next exhibition" I says "OK" So then after, I forgot this moment, and then just before the opening he phoned me "are you still interest to loan your fans to the Museum, decoration?" I said "Oh, OK" So before the opening, he had one session called Local People Collection or something I can't remember now. So and then I and my friend go there and they have a three month exhibition over there, until now. Every three months or four months they change. After me, I remember is a Iron Lady, because she collects Irons! [laughter] First time I heard that. Iron Lady – Margaret Thatcher. Oh it's not. Look in the picture, it's not. Before the Christmas, I don't know if it change now or not, last one is called he collection water, And then I quite like the title, because my title Fan of Fans.

Very nice name

Yeah. And then the second one called Iron lady because she collection irons. The last one because he collect the water, called Water Water Everywhere. [laughter]

No, sorry. After the Iron Lady, Beautiful Game, because he collection the old football catalogue and football cap or anything.

This happens when RAMM opens

Yeah. So. The Chinese people quite surprised. Maybe, you know the English word "You're on the right place on the wrong time" So I change, I say on the right time, no on the right place on the right time [laughter].

So do you think you are the right person in the right time and in the right place

Yes, after, your remind me, probably I am a right person in a right place and right time.

Can you explain this phrase to me, in terms of your opinion about you are the right person in the right place, in Exeter, in UK, in England? What it means by that?

No, I. Maybe I in Hong Kong, I always think that I am nobody. Working this one not very good and working the only one for me is quite good for me. Oh yeah one thing I forgot. In 1980 I'm Hong Kong ice skating champion. And then second years I'm not have a competition because the competition makes me nervous quite a lot, so I not really loved it. Because this is the first ice skating in Hong Kong, it's the first one. There were not many people learning ice skating. 1982, a big championship in Hong Kong, a big one, open championship in Hong Kong. I was the Men champion and then I'm a pair (man and woman) champion. My partner, she, was a lady champion. So he and me have three title. Only this one, in Hong Kong, I feel yes. But after the competition, I think that I'm nobody.

What difference Hong Kong and here. After England is the same. I think it's the same, I'm nobody here, before my partner is still alive. Because under his protection. I don't worry about everything on my life. And then after, from the beginning I need to do everything myself. And then, my common knowledge I learning from watching the television. I know my parents always complain "don't watch the television too much, you need to learn from the book". Because for myself I find not easy learning from the book. I easy the learning from the television, example the history programme or the drama, talking the history. Quite easy to pick it up over there. After the people you must in the school, and then now I can tell the people not really. Some people, example, say me "Why you know everything, where's your knowledge come from? You probably really good in school" I say "no, my knowledge come from the television". Some people easy learning from the book, some child maybe not, so don't use your thinking. So why I understand, working in this culture, any time you use your thinking and then on top to another people. This is your thinking or your.. it work for you. But for another people, not working. So why's that, I use this technique, my experience, so I always think that the people sometimes argue, I just tell the

people. He is he, you is you. Everyone is different. My new partner's always the same. Why everyone not same as me...? And then I say if the whole world, billion people, everyone the same you, this world's really boring [laughter]

Right. So what kind of a person are you, in Exeter now? Because you are somebody in this town, in this city

I feel a humble person, not special person. But sometimes, before I always think I'm nobody. But now I feel, no I'm not..

You are somebody

Yeah, I am somebody. There are so many people say "I never see you upset". I say "you don't know. Sometimes you saw me happy face all the time" I say "No sorry inside my heart there's a really really big area you don't know". So maybe because I just talking before, after my partner he pass away, I have anti-depression medication, until now I still take it. Because I always can remember him, and then make me so upset and I cry a lot. Until now still the same. So why sometimes if I'm really close then, I say my feeling myself... any time I left home, I will put a mask on my face. And everyone saw only outside, not inside.

Maybe another thing I not easy to cry in front of people. So, for me it's really hard. Really tired. Until now I say I always very tired, I need, in front of people strong, but inside it's not. So why is that I say that, before change I say not too bad. Before nobody, now yes, I am someone. After the exhibition sometimes on the road, near my home people say "oh, your collection" "are you sure it's me". Inside it's quite Chinese, the Asian people. One thing, I don't know if you're the same.

Don't show off too much

Not me. But inside you probably "yes, it's me". Sometimes I'm quite happy, This moment I can help people. I know I'm not nobody. Since I work at Oxfam, any time I'm working over there, I saw the... I already help so many people in Africa, or somewhere, the poor countries. Sometimes I'm talking my new partner and then I always "oh you see, this is the better talking the Oxfam" and he say "oh yeah" and then sometimes he tells "oh, do you Oxfam" and I say "Oh really"... I don't know

And then.... Honestly, after Exeter, I think my life change so much. Maybe because I arrive in England and live in a small town, not many Chinese people, I think only two Chinese takeaway. And then I just go to the bad Chinese takeaway, I don't know the family too much. And then after the move to Exeter, starting to have my new life, call second life in England, met so many Chinese people so many very close friend now. Sometimes we travel, just daytrip together, and then talking, and then sometimes the people ask me to go to her home, have a meal, party or anything. I don't want to say

yes and no, some people say that I'm quite good cook, because I love cooking, so you can see my first job working in the pub, in the kitchen. Because in this country I already say that my English is not really good, writing and reading. So I'm scared working to the public or anything. So I work in the kitchen, don't need to face the public. But now I'm not scared now. Because the Sahara project the old volunteer and staff have a training. On the training they say don't worry about your mistake, if you make a mistake you just apologise... if you.. I forgot something now. Sorry my memory is starting a little bit

No worry. Can you say that Exeter is the right place for you now?

Yeah. OK, I just say, my heart, inside my heart I'm still upset. I think.. I quite enjoy in Exeter now. If my partner say do you want move in with him or anything, I say yes and no. Yes I will but not long term. Because I.. I don't want to change too much now. Maybe I have so many friends in Exeter I don't want to leave my friends and then go to another town or city. And then I need another life, starting another life. The right place, probably I quite love here now. I don't want to move into somewhere.

Another one thing I have a very good neighbour. This is not easy. Before I have a cat. And then my neighbour is a cat lover. So any time I go to the holidays, before I need to take my cat to cattery, quite expensive. And then after my neighbours always say "Oh don't do that, I don't mind to look after your cat" And I say "are you sure?" Because I thought the Asian people don't like to put the people into trouble. But any time, I have two neighbours, and then other. And any time I on holiday or leave a couple day, do you mind help me look after my cat, and then everyone's quite happy to look after my cat. So for the people if you have a really good neighbour, sometimes you don't want to move out.

You're right

That's why I'm thinking I'm on the right time, right place. [laughter]

So, how about the time?

The time..

You think it is good for you to stay in Exeter at the moment? Or life in Hong Kong or anywhere else?

No, I think.. probably it's the right time. I don't know, the right time. Quite difficult to say.

Yeah, I think so. You want to stay in Exeter for longer, or come back to Hong Kong?

No going back to Hong Kong only holiday. Because, about three years ago in 13 years, first time going back Hong Kong. I know Hong Kong change a lot. Before I live in Hong Kong every day change here, new building going up, old building coming down. And you know. Because in 13 years I live here, the first time I know the change. The building does not bother me too much. I quite excited by new building. New building here, new building there, oh that old building's gone. To me it's not too problem. But I'm not enjoy in Hong Kong because it's more people than before I left. First time I've been to Hong Kong in 13 years, I went back 6 weeks. In first week, I already tell myself I want to go back in England [laughter]. I don't want to stay over there. So I quite want to rush coming back. So for me, now , here, in Exeter is my home. Hong Kong is only my holiday home. Or second home

Does your family still live there?

My whole family, my Mum and my sister and my niece still in Hong Kong. My elder one, my elder niece, she and her husband are in Beijing. So.. I'm not too close to my home too much, my parents, working really hard, since I was a child, I get up, my parents are already gone to work. My parents have a very small factory, old factory, very small, running the business himself. Leave home at 6 -I still asleep - and some time coming back at midnight. I already go to sleep. I not see my parents too much. My grandma looks after me, from 9 or 10 years old. Before, my grandma every day whole day look after me, she need to look after my cousins. Every day, after I from school to evening, the dinner, about 6 hours, my grandma only look after me. So I need to look after myself as a child in - this country now it's illegal now – long time ago - 1970s, not illegal. So why I am quite independent - starting from child I need to look after myself. And then about 10 years old or 8 years old, my sister married and had a baby - I need to look after baby too. Because of my sister working in a factory, she going back to work. Then two years after, another baby, so I look after a little child and a baby. And then after the second one, a third one, another four years. [drilling noise] So until now I love children. Always I tell myself 'why?'. Now I tell myself, "now I know why"

So you living in Exeter rather than Hong Kong – Chinese traditions - do you still have it in Exeter?

For me, yes. Because I quite traditional. Inside I am very traditional. At New Year I love. Sometimes at Chinese New year I will put Chinese clothes. And then if it's Thai New Year, if I have Thai clothes, I will wear it too. I love it. I have some different clothes - I have a whole set. In Somerset I wear it everywhere. In America in 2004 because my partner passed away, my best friend (now he's my partner now)- that moment he working in Washington, I was so upset, he asked me to go to Washington at Christmas. I said yes, but the problem is that I not have any money saved or anything because my partner, my first one, he helped me with everything.

And then he helped me pay the airfare to stay with him, and then we book the holiday, the Christmas holiday in Williamsburg - a really old traditional town. Still the local people 200 years ago the style of the clothes walking in the town. Because that is a history town. And then the Mall areas, the shopping centre. After he tell me we got a top hat, and clothes. The second day, I wore the clothes, and people say "can I take a photo of you" - the people were quite excited, coming to see what you wore, the costumes same period that area. And one asked me and I said "I'm not working here" [laughter]

And then one time on New Year day, in Washington, he had a friend asked me and him to go to brunch in his home. I wore the same clothes walking down, not use transport, and then walking there, a local newspaper said "can I take a photo of you" [laughter]

You must have been attractive!

I don't know. I'm really open, on the one side. I love to try food from every country. I don't mind – there are so many people that don't like it, don't try. For me, I will try Japanese food, Thai food, Vietnam, Indian, Malaysia, the whole world, I will try everything. Of course, the meat I'm really scared or I don't like it, would never touch. But the style, I will try.

In Exeter before, we have so many Chinese restaurants. After, now more Chinese restaurant. I say to my friends "why everywhere's a Chinese restaurant?". I don't know. Before I came here, let me think about how many Chinese restaurant here - (I mean Exeter centre, not outside) one, two, [bell sound] total restaurants not takeaway, I only know one. Now we have one two three four five - five.

Takeaway?

No, restaurants.

At the moment?

Yeah. Takeaways, how many before, I don't know. Only one or two

In the year 2004

Yeah. Now you can have a Japanese restaurant – we have one, two. One is called Sushi Steak. Now there's a Spanish restaurant – it's changed a lot.

It means that there are more people coming in

Yeah. The Thai restaurants - now we have two, no three

Thai?

Yeah. One in Fore Street, one in Cathedral Green, one is not really Thai restaurant – it's Thai and America in North St called Tiger Bill.

Ahh, yeah. Another one in Cowley Bridge

That one's not really Thai. That one's Chinese, he called Thai restaurant - I don't know why. He does Thai dish but not traditional.

You know him

I know him before his restaurant. Before he owned St Sidwell Combat Rock. Before Exeter he had one there, one there.

So Exeter is a city where people from many countries are living now.

Yes. Only the local Chinese people - not many Chinese people come. Every summer there are Japanese students coming to this country for summer school. Every summer I saw the Japanese girls in uniform, speaking Japanese. So I noticed that probably have a summer school. And then after some years, last two years so many Philipinos, working in elderly care homes. And then, from three four years ago, so many Chinese students. [buzzing noise]. This year more Hong Kong students. Hong Kong speak Cantonese, mainland China speak Mandarin, South China speak Cantonese. In Exeter's different – I can hear whether they're from mainland China or Hong Kong. I can feel the difference.

Now I met the one Chinese supermarket - my good friend now.

Near Iceland - I've been there too

So many Chinese people go there too – I'm not surprised. Before in Exeter only one Chinese supermarket – in Marsh Barton. Now – one, two, three, four – four Chinese supermarkets here. So why is that? We can see the difference. Before, only one Chinese supermarket, supply the veg or fruit to Chinese takeaway and restaurant. And then now, in the last three, four years, Exeter have so many Chinese students, they've started to grow. This is a big difference now.

Yeah, I can answer your question. Why do I think I am in right time here?

First, it was quite difficult to buy the Chinese ingredients – I had to go quite far far away. Now I can quite easily. I live in Hong Kong. Soy sauce – in a local, normal supermarket you can get it. Before it was not easy. In the Chinese supermarket, that woman, can get the ingredients that I used to get from Chinatown.

OK, one last question. What are the reasons that makes people from other countries come to live in Exeter?

People want to change their life from his original country. Probably for some people maybe here have a good chance to make money. Before I know the Philippine people go to the Hong Kong work as houseworker...

Housekeeper?

Housekeeper –help the family, help the child, tidy up the home. All the parents go to work, nobody look after the child. So many have finished university but not easy to get a job in Philippines. In the whole world the Asia people, go to Hong Kong, China or Asia come to England the people hope to have a good chance with more money and send it back to home. With so many Asian people it's the same way.

Some people say me "I just follow my heart". Some people, because my partner coming back here - not easy to have true love, first in your life, and after, he coming here. Of course I want to come with him. But I don't know –at that moment 50-50 not sure if I can stay here. I make myself a good decision. Until now, the people just hoping good chance and good life in this country. I know some people – maybe not right, but this is my feeling – maybe the feeling of people coming here England - I heard the news, I'm not sure, says on the news, in the whole world or in Europe, the benefit for the people is best than other country. So why so many people left his country - first choice England. So probably this is a problem, the reason sorry. But for me, I just follow my heart.

Exeter makes you happy.

Yes I can say. But still I have a small heart. But that doesn't mean I hate Exeter, because..

It's very interesting story, and interest me a lot. Thanks for your time today

Is all right. I hope it's not too boring for everyone

No no. Your story will be published by the Global Centre, but of course they will inform you before and the consent form before doing anything with the information we have interviewed today. I'm sure that Gordon will send you the consent form

One thing is because the people always call me Tony, but my passport name's not. Because my English name's not easy pronounced, so that's why I tell the people, call me Tony

Your Chinese name..

No Chinese name. My English name is Zorro.

Like a knight?

Z-O-R-R-O. So I don't ask the people call me that. Only my partner call me that. Because it's not easy

I heard that many Hong Kong people have got an English name

Yeah. This is my English name. Tony I use for the social. I worked in a travel agent and before I used telephone to make appointment, make a booking. And then I always said "Zorro" and then the other side "Zero?" I said no Zorro. "Sorrow?" I said no Zorro. And then after "Forget it - call me Tony" I tell the people to call me Tony. Because it's quite easy.

End of interview