Saturday Heritage Fair – Harkesh Interviews

1. Interview 1: Thomas Kraus-Wallace (Chissit Magazine)

Hari Farma: Hello, my name is Harry, and you're listening to Soar Sound. I'm reporting for the Evington Echo today from the Saturday Heritage Fair at Leicester Adult Education Centre on Belvoir Street. And I'm delighted to say that I'm joined by my first interviewee guest of the day, and he will introduce himself.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Uh hello, my name is Thomas Kraus-Wallace, and I am the editor-in-chief of Chissit.

Hari Farma: So, To- Tom, uh tell us about uh Chissit and something about yourself first.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, um I'm a third-year student at Nottingham Trent University studying English and Communications, and uh Chissit is essentially a photojournalism magazine. I suppose I could call it a culture magazine as well, but um I think the biggest difference between Chissit, because it's independent, is the fact that of how important it is to and add to keep print alive, and um I think there's a big emphasis uh I try to put on the issues I release.

Hari Farma: Yeah. So, for those of us not from Leicester or Leicestershire, tell us about the name Chissit.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, so uh when it comes to uh Chissit, it's essentially Leicester slang for "How much is it?". Um a lot of people may uh call um people from Leicester um "Chissits", but uh I just really wanted something that had a bit of Leicester's identity in it because I'm born and bred Leicester.

Hari Farma: Yeah, as I am as well. Now, I heard that when Leicester people go to Skeggy or Skegness, and they're looking around the shops and they often used to ask, "How much is it?"

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: "How much is it?" And I believe that the origin of the appellation "Chissit" is really from uh people from Skegness um calling Leicester people Chissits, is that correct?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, yeah.

Hari Farma: So it's a rather sort of irreverent, humorous title for a magazine.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: No, 100%. Yeah. But again, I think I think for me at least, when it comes to Leicester and talking about Leicester, I'm extremely passionate about it. And I think Leicester can get a bit of slack sometimes because it's I feel like it's one of those cities that is somewhat forgotten about when it comes to the Midlands. Um, most notable probably Nottingham being a bit more um noticed by people, but I think in the past couple of years I've definitely seen Leicester growing as a city. Um, definitely mainly because of the university students, I think. But it's I genuinely would say it's becoming one of the cooler, hipper cities, like that of Manchester. I know I'm pushing it a little bit there, but it really is starting to remind me of that a little bit.

Hari Farma: Right, that's really interesting, and I'm speaking to a person who's much younger than me who knows about these things. So let's um let's talk about some positive things about Leicester and Leicestershire. Now we're both, you know, born and bred in Leicester.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: So um, and our listeners may be as well, and if they're not, they will learn about Leicester and Leicestershire. So let's talk about some Leicester and Leicestershire highlights.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: So if you had a visitor to Leicester, I know where I would take them, the places I would take them.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: Um, where would you take a visitor to Leicester?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Um, a bit biased, but I'd probably take them to um King Power to begin with. Uh I think that's one of the biggest things when it comes to Leicester's identity. Um, 5,000 to 1, I think that's I mean, a really impressive thing to be proud of.

Hari Farma: Yeah.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Um, I think probably um the Curve as well. I think that's a big part of the Cultural Quarter. And even the L- um is it LCB Depot? Yeah.

Hari Farma: Yeah, the LCB Depot. So in the Curve um or in the Curve area, um there is a jewel of culture called the Phoenix Theatre. Do you go to the Phoenix?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Uh I've only been once, and that was for the Real Documentary Festival. Um a documentary I had to make for university was shortlisted in uh John Coster's um collection. But from what I've seen um as an independent theatre, I think again that's so important that we keep these things going.

Hari Farma: Yeah.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Compared to other establishments like Vue, um cinemas like that, that are just not really...

Hari Farma: Much more commercial and much more mainstream as well.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Exactly.

Hari Farma: Um, the films at the Phoenix are often in languages other than English.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: Um, they they have a very global um repertoire of films which they show. They have a café bar, they have courses, they have workspaces and offices for organisations. They really are a hub of multimedia.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, yeah.

Hari Farma: I don't work for the Phoenix, by the way, I'm a very enthusiastic member of the—

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: No, 100%, yeah.

Hari Farma: Yeah. Okay, so apart from the Phoenix in the city centre, um what about some cultural sites? Name one cultural uh venue that you would make you'd take along a visitor to.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Oh, I mean, definitely to um the University of Leicester campus where uh the Attenboroughs grew up. Um when I was— I went to college at WQE, and genuinely it was probably one of the highlights walking from the uni campus from to Regent, which was an old all-boys school, if I'm not mistaken.

Hari Farma: It has been—

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Not all—

Hari Farma: Wyggeston, yeah, yeah. Wyggeston Collegiate, it was before.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Um, uh again New Walk, just that part of the city. I think some of the houses and architecture down there is genuinely remarkable.

Hari Farma: Yeah, I would say New Walk is also a gem, um and it's a real pleasant route into and out of the centre, isn't it?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: Um, something that should be preserved and I hope will be for hundreds of years to come.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: Um, but also Victoria Park, which I'm sure you're often on Victoria Park, aren't you, being a student in your third year at Nottingham Trent?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Nottingham Trent, but you're actually from Leicester, as we know. Okay. Great.

Hari Farma: Um, so uh let's move slightly out into the county. We will come back to Chissit and what you're trying to achieve with this magazine— uh you're preparing the second issue— we'll come back to that in a moment. Let's sort of widen our scope to the county and Leicestershire. How well do you know the countryside and some of the small towns um in Leicestershire?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Oh, it's funny you mention that. I recently did a 50-mile walk for charity, so um we went to every White Horse pub in Leicestershire. Um, and although there was a lot of fields, I went through um— God, my mind's gone blank now. It was 50 miles. Um, but yeah, went all around the—

Hari Farma: Was it Loughborough? Was it Loughborough or?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Around, so we um went to Barrow upon Soar.

Hari Farma: Yes.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Um, we went to Whitwick, um and then we uh stopped uh in the at the halfway point on the 50-mile walk was uh where I grew up in Birstall, at the White Horse.

Hari Farma: Yeah.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Um, but...

Hari Farma: So we're talking sort of North West Leicestershire.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, in the— yeah.

Hari Farma: You get some beautiful countryside there, isn't there? And a lot of sort of life in these villages.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, 100%.

Hari Farma: You know, a lot of community um life in these villages. Did you get a sense of that going to the pubs?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Oh, 100%. But one of the biggest things I I think I definitely did notice was uh the difference in how the areas felt. So, I'm from Birstall, and obviously I know different parts everywhere are going to feel different, but some of the parts I wouldn't have expected to be in Leicester. I would have assumed that I was somewhere in the Cotswolds at one point, just because of how how the houses were— there was lots of cottages. It was nice seeing slate, uh the slate from uh Swithland Wood.

Hari Farma: Swithland, yeah. Yeah, Swithland Quarry.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Um, so I think it's nice to it was a nice reminder to remind myself of how embedded in Leicester we are when it comes to heritage and culture, because all these buildings are made from the resources from that city.

Hari Farma: I would really recommend to young people and students to get out of the city, explore the county, go to different villages, go to some pubs, and really discover the rural life of Leicestershire, and Rutland as well, which is a separate county, is also a great uh a great county as well. So that's great. Let's bring you back to now the present and the Adult Education Centre, um and you're here, you have a stall. Uh tell us about your stall and tell us more about Chissit.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, um so obviously like I said earlier, I'm here to talk about the importance of print. Um, I remember John Coster, who's running the event, um told me when I first wanted to get into making magazines— I was like, I just said to him, "I'm really worried that

print's dying," and he may as well have just slapped me around the head because um it was made very clear to me straight away that it's not. And if anything, as the years have gone on, as Chissit's been in its development stages, um as the first issue has come out, I realised that people my age, the Gen Z, crave physical media more than ever now. The rise of vinyls is bigger than ever. Um, and it's almost that thing of everything that goes out of fashion comes back in fashion.

Hari Farma: Yes.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: I mean, a couple of years ago, again, we had this big rise in everyone wanting to get mullets and moustaches, and I think a lot of people wouldn't have looked at that and gone, "That's strange, that's what my brother was doing back in, I don't know, the '80s," for example, but um...

Hari Farma: So physical media...

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: Um, you can it's tangible, literally.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yes.

Hari Farma: Um, you can pass it on to somebody.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: Um, you can't really do that with um digital. You can digitally send it, you can't— there's nothing physical or tangible, is there?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: No, and I think the biggest thing at the minute is obviously social media. I think it can be a power for good at times, but I think it really does make people retreat to themselves a lot. It's almost this idea of the regressive nest, like people don't know how to deal with this because they've grown up with it, especially people my age. So I think it is easier at times for people from different generations to sort of disconnect with that and leave it, but when it's been ingrained in your lives from the minute you've been born, I think it's just experimenting with things outside of what you know, if that makes sense.

Hari Farma: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, yeah, social media isolation is a is a thing, um and um you know, it sort of um— with it, people in their bedrooms and rooms, they keep the conversation inside the room when really it's better to share, isn't it?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: And to be part of a community, a media community as well. And that you're a community media maker. What are the some of the differences between mainstream media and what you're doing uh with community media? Do you think there are some— one or two fundamental differences?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Oh yeah, 100%. I think the difference between mainstream and independent is that with independent, you've got more room. You've not got someone— you've not got uh— obviously you have audiences for both, but I feel like you have more leeway if it's independent. You find your niche and people come to you for that niche, as opposed to people wanting a generalised sort of, I don't know, fashion magazine like Vogue. Um, but I it's hard to sort of answer that question as well because...

Hari Farma: So...

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: I think it's it's because like mainstream has inspired me so much. It's what I've looked at and gone, "Oh, well, I really like that." So like, what can what can I use with that knowledge that I like that?

Hari Farma: Yeah.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: And I think it's adapting it, and turning it into something of your own.

Hari Farma: Now that's really telling what you say, that people, communities that make their own media, that media is going to reflect them and their lives and their concerns and their values.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: And that do you think mainstream media is sometimes— especially local mainstream media or regional news, for example— do you think that's becoming increasingly disconnected to the places um that we live in?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: I think it depends, because if you've got a community-based organisation, the argument is: is everyone getting a say in that organisation, or also people outside of the organisation, are they available to get involved with that? Um, so again, I think it depends, but when it comes to like mainstream, I think it's a lot more obvious that there's like bias and everything. From for example, like if you're making a documentary, although it might be impartial, the editor's still decided to put this clip in front of that one, this clip... Same with my magazine: I've decided to put this photo in my magazine, yes because I like it, but if I'm talking about it and it's a serious topic, well, again, it's really hard to not put my own view on it when I'm trying to, again, make it independent and uh impartial.

Hari Farma: It's hard to— as an editor, you and a media maker, you're making choices all the time, aren't you, about what to give prominence to?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah.

Hari Farma: Um, so let's— tell us about the themes of this magazine, Chissit. Um, what kind of concerns, what kind of content would you have in in in or have you had in the first issue?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, so my first issue um was a, just to be honest, a general mixed bag of things. So um two filmmakers decided to—

Background Speaker (Rob): You need to be much closer to that microphone. One's pointing that way, one's pointing that way, so you record in there and you record in there.

Hari Farma: Oh right, thank you Rob, thank you.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Um, sorry.

Hari Farma: I asked you about the concerns, values, content in the last issue of Chissit.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah. So in my first issue of Chissit, um it was a mixed bag of things. Um, two filmmakers uh performed *Hamlet* in *Grand Theft Auto Online*, and that was um I'm pretty sure it got put on Amazon Prime for a bit, but it was published in cinemas. And I thought again that was really impressive, like it was something different, and again it was quite a big um piece of news at the time within the cultural sort of cultural gaming space. Um, but that was my first time contacting a publisher asking for a press toolkit, um so that was exciting. Um, I had an interview with John Coster, um my mentor, bless him, um again just talking about print and what he essentially thinks of it, um obviously 'cause he was the former editor-in-chief of *Citizens' Eye*.

Hari Farma: Yes.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Um, so it was really nice getting insight about that. Um, going forward I would like to start talking about a few more serious issues, but I think that's really dependent on the resources I have available to me, because it's really hard— it's not exactly like I can go fly out to Vietnam and document people's lives, which is obviously quite sad, but never say never, that's something I would love to do.

Hari Farma: Are you looking for reporters in the community, or will you be at some stage?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, I definitely. I think I think it's really important to capture other people's stories, and sometimes I don't think as a journalist or citizen journalist you can really do that when I think sometimes people need to tell their own stories.

Hari Farma: That's great, Tom. Is there anything else you'd like to say to our listeners?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: No, just thank you for interviewing me today.

Hari Farma: You're very welcome. Do you have uh a contact, an email address, or a website that you'd like to give to our listeners so if they wish to keep get in touch?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, absolutely. Um, so for Chissit, it's chissit.com, um and my sort of personal portfolio account on Instagram is krausycreative. Um, and again just Chissit Magazine or Chissit on social media.

Hari Farma: Can you spell Chissit for us please?

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Yeah, it's C-H-I-S-S-I-T.

Hari Farma: Thank you so much, Tom.

Thomas Kraus-Wallace: Thank you, Harry. Thank you.

2. Interview 2: John Ghent (Local Historian & Estate Agent)

Hari Farma: Hello everyone. Um, I'm Harry, and I'm reporting for Soar Sound and the Evington Echo, and we're bringing you voices from the Saturday Heritage Fair at Leicester Adult Education Centre. I'm delighted to be with my second guest of the day, and he'll introduce himself.

John Ghent: Hey, morning Harry, yeah. My name is John Ghent. I'm an estate agent in Leicester and sort of keen amateur historian.

Hari Farma: Right, okay. And um will people have heard of you?

John Ghent: A few. Yeah, a few of the listeners might have done. Um I've got sort of 80,000 followers across social media, most of which are Leicester people, and yeah, mainly people that are interested in the older parts of the city, the older nightlife in the city. Uh do quite a bit on sort of the railway history and the old rivers and the old brooks and a bit on logistics and quite varied subjects really, Harry, is what I cover.

Hari Farma: Well, local history is is fascinating, isn't it? It's on our doorstep, and sometimes we don't look up above the shop fronts, or we don't really take an interest or ask questions about our environment, our local environment. How did you get into um local history and heritage?

John Ghent: I'd always had an interest in history, even going back to sort of secondary school— it was one of my favourite subjects— and I find it quite fascinating. I'm born and bred Leicester, have been here for 43 years, and um probably from my parents and my grandparents, we my whole family is sort of that real uh working-class, industrial-type British family really, that my granddad worked in the old sock factories and my dad was a milkman around all the industrial areas, in fact down Belgrave Road, and so the history down there. Um, so I think I was sort of brought up with it accidentally, really, and then my interest has just gathered through my job as an estate agent, so property and areas and what and amenities and what's going on there. I just find it quite fascinating, and it then branched out into social media, and uh yeah, not looked back really.

Hari Farma: Okay, I'm going to ask you a series of questions about your favourite so-and-so. So, what's your favourite building in Leicester?

John Ghent: My favourite building in Leicester... That's a great question. I would say, do you know what? There's a building on Northgate Street and uh Sanvey Gate that is the old Richard Roberts building, and it's beautiful. It's actually boarded up at the moment, which is really sad. But it's a it's a curved building on the corner with a little turret on top, and it's in the regeneration area, so it's going to be something amazing soon, as long as they don't knock it down, Harry. That's what we need not to happen. I do love the rail- the old railway station as well. Great Central Railway Station is a fantastic building.

Hari Farma: So the building that you just mentioned, Northgate, Sanvey Gate, um is it protected?

John Ghent: I'm not 100% sure. If one of your listeners could tell me, that would be amazing.

Hari Farma: Please get in touch with John Ghent if you do some research on whether that particular building um is uh protected. Just remind us about the name of the building again.

John Ghent: So it's the old Richard Roberts building, and it was a café as well at one stage, but it's right on the corner of Northgate Street and Sanvey Gate. Anybody who knows that area will know the building really well because it looks at you as you're driving down Northgate Street, you can't miss it.

Hari Farma: Great, thank you. Now moving from buildings to people...

John Ghent: Yep.

Hari Farma: Can you tell us a very prominent person from Leicester um that you've researched and you think somebody who's not from Leicester should really know about?

John Ghent: Yeah, so there's um Arthur Wakerley is my favourite guy. Um, some of the buildings that he designed within the city are fantastic. My favourite story I guess of Wakerley is the council houses that he built. Um, they're quite well known. There's a few of them dotted around different parts of the city, so there's some in Aylestone, there's a there's a few in the West End still, um there is some over towards um Clarendon Park and Knighton. And interestingly, uh which ties in I guess quite nicely with you, Harry, is some of the road names around Evington are named after his daughters. Um, so yeah, you've got I think Ethel Road, Dorothy, um...

Hari Farma: Constance.

John Ghent: Constance, yes, is another one. Uh obviously Wakerley Road is him. So, and I think there's one or two other little bits that are tied in with him that link with Evington as well, but I think that's one of the things I find most fascinating is how these older areas— probably from sort of the 1880s, 1890s up until about the 1930s, '40s— how they got their names. You know, all the road names that then intertwine as in they've got a common link. On the face of it, there doesn't look to be a link, but then when you actually dig down and research it, there's some really good interesting bits as to why roads get their names.

Hari Farma: Now, if somebody were to research the name of their road, what would be a good source? Where would a good place to go to be?

John Ghent: Do you know what? Um, there's two things you can do. Your obvious one is to Google it, because if it's out there, it's probably on Google somewhere. Another great resource though is the Scottish universities have a map database. And on that database, you can look um at two sides of the map: you can look at modern day and what the same area looked like 10, 15, 20, 50, 100 years ago. Um, and so you can compare them side by side. So you may not necessarily get how it got its name, but you can certainly see what was around there, how it developed, and from there you then may be able to do a little bit further research of who the builder was— that's the key, 'cause the builder is nearly always instrumental in how a road got its name.

Hari Farma: That's really interesting. That brings us back to your business.

John Ghent: Yes.

Hari Farma: Tell us a little bit more about that.

John Ghent: So I've been in estate agency for 18 and a half years, uh been self-employed, working for myself for the last, oh, 9 years. I mainly sell houses across Leicester city, I do a little bit on the outskirts. I specialise really in the in the urban areas, so sort of your estates. So on my side of the city, what I tend to work in: sort of Braunstone, New Parks, Beaumont Leys, um and all the bits that intertwine there. And then on the other side of the city, so uh your neck of the woods, Harry, it would be sort of um the the sort of Goodwood Road, Evington area, so where sort of around Whitehall School, um Netherhall, Thurnby Lodge, those sorts of real sort of, yeah, 1930s to '40s, '50s estates. And then I do some more modern stuff as well, but generally speaking the sort of starter homes is my sort of bread and butter really.

Hari Farma: That's great. Maybe we can have a separate interview about housing in Evington and the surrounding area.

John Ghent: Yeah, that would be cool. Yeah, I mean Evington village is really, really interesting and—

Hari Farma: And I think it deserves a completely separate, its own interview, doesn't it?

John Ghent: 100%. Yeah, I mean there's some really interesting buildings around there, some great conservation areas, and I think because it's been built around quite heavily, if we're honest, some people don't really realise they're in Evington village or leave the village and go into another area, and actually when you dig down and look into it a bit deeper, the history in that part of the town is tremendous, do you know what I mean? Yeah, it's really good.

Hari Farma: Evington is unique for many reasons. One of the reasons is that it's a village that's the furthest away from the city, but still remains under the local authority.

John Ghent: Yeah, 'cause I mean it— yeah, the boundary finishes not too far from the village itself, doesn't it? Yeah, sort of around the schools, you know, uh yeah, uh well City of Leicester and Judgemeadow. Yeah, Judgemeadow is right, right on the outskirts, yeah.

Hari Farma: And what I love— I mean I live um off Downing Drive— and within 10 minutes I can be into the countryside.

John Ghent: Yeah, it's perfect, isn't it?

Hari Farma: And I love that. So you have, and then within 15, maybe 20 minutes bus ride, I can be in the city centre as well.

John Ghent: Yeah, yeah, you're in a really good spot there. Do you know what I mean? Down— you get down Shady Lane and you could be in the middle of nowhere, couldn't you? I've done a bit— I did a bit of running a few years ago across the golf course and that— it's beautiful, beautiful scenery.

Hari Farma: We'll talk about the green spaces of Evington, we'll talk about the urban life of um of Evington in a separate interview. Now, it's the first time that I've seen you at the Saturday Heritage Fair. Am I right? Is this your first visit?

John Ghent: It is, yes, this is my maiden voyage.

Hari Farma: And how did it come about?

John Ghent: Uh John Coster um follows me on Instagram I think, and he reached out and we met up and had a chat, and we thought, "Could it work?" We decided yes, so here I am.

Hari Farma: So listeners, it's John Ghent, G-H-E-N-T, and it remains for me just to thank John for um having this interview with me today. Great pleasure.

John Ghent: No problem, thanks for having me along, Harry, really appreciate it.

3. Interview 3: James Gun (Leicester Civic Society)

Hari Farma: Hello, you're listening to Soar Sound, and this is Harry at the Saturday Heritage Fair in Leicester. My guest is going to introduce himself.

James Gun: Hello, I'm James Gun. I'm from the Leicester Civic Society. Uh my involvement with the society: I'm on the committee and I arrange all the guided walks and the events.

Hari Farma: Tell us about the society and its work, please.

James Gun: The Leicester Civic Society has been running since 1971. Uh we try to protect some of the buildings around town. Uh we suggest things that perhaps would be better than maybe being sorted by others, um and we just like to campaign for the betterment of Leicester. Um, and yeah.

Hari Farma: Thank you. And so all about preserving the built environment...

James Gun: Yes, that's right.

Hari Farma: Protecting historical buildings.

James Gun: Yes.

Hari Farma: And you must have had some successes with that as a society.

James Gun: Yes, we have, yes, over the years, I believe, yes.

Hari Farma: Right. You have a biannual magazine. Can you tell us a bit about that?

James Gun: Yes, we issue the magazine called *The Citizen*, as you said, every six months, generally every six months. And that's a magazine that um covers various articles all about Leicester. Um, this month's— this this magazine, the recent magazine includes uh information on Wakerley's uh in Evington.

Hari Farma: So this is Arthur Wakerley and his relations in North Evington in particular.

James Gun: Yeah, yeah, that's right.

Hari Farma: That will be of great interest to our readers um with the Evington Echo, certainly.

James Gun: Yes, yes. Um, there's an article in there this time about the uh University of Leicester, how we shaped space exploration. Um, about Susannah Watts, a lady from the 17th century uh who provided a uh book, *A Walk Through Leicester*, being a guide to strangers. And the changing face of Leicester including North Evington as well.

Hari Farma: Yes, that's right. North Evington is known for many things, but especially a part— a light industry, and there are factories there...

James Gun: Yes.

Hari Farma: And so on. And some of them factory buildings have been preserved, haven't they?

James Gun: Yes, that's right, yes.

Hari Farma: Obviously it's a residential area, and I believe it always has been.

James Gun: Yes, it was developed as residential. And basically Arthur Wakerley wanted it to be almost its own village in the sense that you'd have accommodation, houses, and there would also be factories close by so the residents only had to walk. It was a benefit to the residents and a benefit to the factory owners, the company owners.

Hari Farma: So the residents also worked in the area, it was convenient for them.

James Gun: That's right, yes, yeah. So it was all in, you know, everything was there in one in one spot, really.

Hari Farma: Okay. So the Civic Society would have documented these factories and um would know about them quite intimately.

James Gun: Yes, some of the factories we know about, yes, yes. We do— we've done guided walks around around the area, around the Spinney Hills area and North Evington.

Hari Farma: So Arthur Wakerley was a very important um benefactor of the city, wasn't he?

James Gun: Yes, he was, yes. Yeah.

Hari Farma: Okay. So let's move from North Evington to what you've called Old Evington or Evington Village. What are the links and connections with the village and the Civic Society? What uh work have you done around there? Tell us about that.

James Gun: Well, we have a uh project called "The History of Where I Live", where we're trying to— well, we provide guided walks for schools. So school children tend to be years four and five, so they're sort of eight or nine years old. Um, and those walks, we take the— we leave, we go from the school itself generally, and then we'll walk around an area and we'll be talking about such simple things as even down to the sewerage system, the postal system if we see a post box, um and different things like that— things which the youngsters probably wouldn't know anything about, but they are an important an important part of the as-built environment really. And then we will also talk about some of the buildings as well on the route.

Hari Farma: You pointed out something very specific to a group of school children in St Denys Church in Evington. Tell us about that.

James Gun: Yes, well I mentioned about the lightning conductor um and pointed it out to them because it runs from the steeple down into the ground to earth the building. And I I asked them, I said, "Well, do you know what this is?" And they looked at me and they— well, they didn't know what it was. And I guess that unless they ask, they're not going to get told, but I like to talk about, you know, the everyday things that in this instance keep a church safe from being struck by lightning. Um, so yeah, they they took it in and seemed interested as well.

Hari Farma: So you bring history to life and make it relevant to today.

James Gun: Yes, that's right. Yeah, we do.

Hari Farma: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add, James, about the society that we've not mentioned?

James Gun: Um, well as I say, we offer a lot of guided walks, various subjects around around town. Uh we head out of town a little bit. Um Wigston uh we did this year. Uh next year we'll be into Kirby Muxloe a little bit. So it's just, you know, we're there as a, you know, just keeping an eye on things within Leicester. Uh so yeah.

Hari Farma: Well, we should definitely discuss a return visit to Evington Village and see whether we can arrange a tour.

James Gun: Yes.

Hari Farma: Um that would be really good.

James Gun: Yeah, that'd be fine, yeah.

Hari Farma: Thank thank you very much, James, I appreciate that.

James Gun: Thank you, thank you.

4. Interview 4: Lisa Bateman (Victim First)

Hari Farma: Hello listeners, um my name is Harry, and I'm reporting for the Soar- for Soar Sound and the Evington Echo. We're bringing you the voices from the Saturday Heritage Fair at Leicester Adult Education Centre. Um, I'd like to introduce— or my first guest will introduce herself.

Lisa Bateman: Hi, so my name's Lisa Bateman, and I work for Victim First, the locally commissioned victim services for Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland.

Hari Farma: So how do you practically, or how does your organisation practically support victims of crime?

Lisa Bateman: Well, we offer a range of services for victims of crime. Um, it's important to say that the crime doesn't need to have been reported to the police, so— and it doesn't matter how long ago it happened. So it doesn't have to be recently, um we can support people from crimes that have happened many years ago. Um, and our support is solution-focused, so we we like to hope that we can help people to recover and repair some of the harm um that's been caused by the crime. So that could be— we offer ongoing support, that could be anywhere from just one-

off support to months, um and in a couple of cases it's been a couple of years of support. So yeah, we're there to support for um any length of time really that's needed by the by the victim.

Um, we offer things like low-level emotional support, so we don't offer counselling or therapy, but we do offer low-level emotional support, which is basically somebody to talk to, somebody to give you some advice and just be able to offload to a little bit and help you find ways to deal with what's happened and move forward hopefully in a more positive way.

And we also help with practical um help, so we we can support with um personal alarms. So if you're feeling unsafe when you're out in the community, we can offer a personal alarm, they're free of charge. Um, we are a charity so we do need to um— we do offer them to victims of crime, we don't offer them as a a big package to other agencies, but we do offer them to victims of crime. We also can support with um— at the moment we have um we're able to support with some other kind of security devices such as um Ring doorbells, sort of, but we um we obviously have a pot of money for that. We are funded, we are a charity and we're funded, so we don't have an infinite amount of money to spend, but we will help those victims that we can if they need that kind of extra security. We don't fit or install any of those things, but we do send them out.

And we can also help with advocacy, so we can speak to other agencies or services on somebody's behalf if they're struggling to communicate. Um, what else do we do? We do um so many things. Um, the biggest thing that I'm here to to promote today is restorative justice.

Hari Farma: Yes, tell us about restorative justice.

Lisa Bateman: So restorative justice is basically a way for a person who's been harmed by by crime to have their voice heard and have their questions answered and hopefully move forward in a more positive way. Um, so this is a completely voluntary uh process, so we would never force anybody to take part. And even if somebody decides to take part and then at any point through the process they decide they don't want to anymore, they're completely free to withdraw. There's no pressure at all to continue.

Hari Farma: Does restorative justice, or can restorative justice um involve meeting or otherwise communicating with the perpetrator?

Lisa Bateman: That is our potential— that is our our main aim, is to get people together with the offender. That doesn't necessarily mean sitting across a table from from the offender and and um and having it out, if you like. A lot of people are misinformed about that or they only see what they see in the media, which is obviously dramatised. So it can be direct, so face-to-face conference, which would be risk-assessed completely and would take a long time to come to that that time, it's not a quick process.

Um, but it can also be indirect, so we can do shuttle mediation, so that can be myself or another practitioner taking messages between the two parties. So we can— we will find from

the victim what their questions are, what they if they what impact it's had on them that we can share with the offender— we would never share anything they didn't want us to share— and then we would take that to the offender, put that to them and ask for their response, which we could then take back to the victim. Um, and that's a shuttle mediation. We can also do that via letter, so we can have restorative letters. Um, like I said, it's a very long process, so it's very risk-assessed, we'd never put anybody in a place of harm or danger.

Hari Farma: So I'm interested to know in which settings have you met perpetrators: um on remand, in prison... Um tell us about your um communication with offenders.

Lisa Bateman: Okay, so my my communication with offenders has been limited so far because because we're a victim service, it is funded by the by the Police and Crime Commissioner to support victims of crime, we are victim-led. So we would generally be speaking to victims, um and then going to the offender once we've got permission to do that. We can't just approach an offender and say we've had a victim come to us; we have to have them approached via somebody who's already working with them, so maybe probation or their offender manager. And we wouldn't ever approach and let them know that this is what's happening, we would ask that to be a to just be a subject that's broached with them by somebody who's already working with them.

Um, we can go out and speak to them if they're in prison still, if they're on remand. We don't generally get involved— we don't start a process while an investigation is ongoing, because we would not want to conflict with that. And also the fact that while an investigation or a court case is ongoing, the victim is probably not going to be in the right headspace to be thinking about restorative justice when they're still already dealing with so much other things that we're not here to re-traumatise victims.

Hari Farma: You mentioned um the advocacy for victims and um speaking on their behalf or helping them to communicate with agencies. Do you advocate for victim rights with criminal justice agencies?

Lisa Bateman: We— well mainly a go-between with the um between the victims and agencies. So most work we do with things like— um we do obviously we do work with other criminal justice agencies, so we do work we work with the Out of Court Disposals, we work with the Crime Reduction Network, um probation, but um the majority of our work for advocacy takes place with probably local authorities, mostly. So a lot of it is things like housing support, if they're if they're having antisocial behaviour issues or neighbour disputes, we can write supporting letters. We don't have any influence over those outcomes, but we can support in those and speak to those people on their behalf.

Hari Farma: Thank you very much. Um, it's really very interesting. Um, final question: are you looking for volunteers, uh or currently do you have enough volunteers?

Lisa Bateman: We have a list— we're not we're not currently looking for volunteers at the moment, but we do have um we do have our on our website is our inbox, our email address.

Anybody who is interested in volunteering can send us their details, and we will put them on the list. We do take on volunteers, but we don't need any at the moment, but that's not to say that we won't need them in the future, so we do have a list of volunteers that we keep.

Hari Farma: Thank you. Can you please um give us your email address then, please?

Lisa Bateman: Yes, so let me just let me just—

Hari Farma: Or website, yeah.

Lisa Bateman: Website, yeah. So it's victimfirst.org.uk. It's the email address is www.victimfirst@— oh actually, do you know, I I do know it, but it's it's just...

Hari Farma: What which would you prefer it for? Just the—

Lisa Bateman: Just the website, because that will have our inbox on there.

Hari Farma: Yeah, if you gave us the website...

Lisa Bateman: So yeah, that's just victimfirst.org.uk.

Hari Farma: Brilliant. And from there people can get other ways of communicating with you.

Lisa Bateman: And they can also self-refer on there. So they can refer themselves to us. We get a lot of referrals from the police, yeah, um but if somebody wants to self-refer or refer somebody else in their service, um you can do that on there. You can do a self-referral or a professional referral on the website as well.

Hari Farma: That's great. Thank you so much for giving us information about your organisation.

Lisa Bateman: You're very welcome.

5. Interview 5: Matt (Brotherhood Legion)

Hari Farma: Hello uh listeners, I'm Harry. I'm conducting this interview for Soar Sound. I'm at the Saturday Heritage Fair, and I want to start this interview by way of context with a couple of statistics: 510,000 men die from suicide globally each year; three-quarters of all suicides are male suicides. So bearing this in mind, I'd like my my next guest to introduce himself.

Matt: So my name is Matt. I'm a volunteer who helps at Brotherhood Legion. I do my own group at the Black Horse in Aylestone. But mental health— I've suffered depression before, and I believe a lot of the time if you're not talking and sharing out, not some of the old-dated statements are "bottling it", "man up", um "why don't you talk?", "why don't you show your emotions?".

But the beauty of Brotherhood Legion is: you can. And a lot of people realise when you're going through the same things, it's less alienated, you feel more connected to other people through real wholesome communication, and it's real. So it exists. You don't have to watch it in the news or anywhere else; you can connect to these people at Brotherhood Legion uh on the Saturday and on the Wednesday session I do, you can go on a hike. Everything is shown and taught: fitness, mental fitness. People talk about mental fitness, not always physical fitness, but the physical fitness obviously represents going to a gym or a walk or a jog, run, whatever you can physically do, but the mental fitness is more important, I sometimes believe, where if it's all stored in your mind, then the thoughts are not always good ones. That's why the suicide rates are so high. And yes, it can be governmental, it can be communities, your councils, whatever, but you have to do something about yourself, where if you know things like this event we're both at today, if you know that you can come and just talk to someone like we're doing now, this is beneficial for both of us, but it'll be beneficial for your listeners, your viewers, people who read your stories, your podcasts and everything, because it's like-minded people just talking. And the ability to talk around people you make those wholesome energy kind of connections to will lower these rates, and I believe that's what I enjoy doing.

Hari Farma: So you're working in a very important role during this men's mental health crisis that the statistics uh strongly imply that we men are going through. Um, just remind us about the venues um you mentioned these regular sessions. Just tell us about where they are and when they are again.

Matt: So Saturday at 12:00, Leicester has got the Novotel hotel. You go to the entrance, walk through, and it's called 9B. 9B is their restaurant which is connected to Novotel. And that's where you can meet up, whatever amount of numbers, just turn up, show up, talk, have some wholesome natural communication. That's every Saturday.

Uh the one uh the event I host is at the Black Horse in Aylestone. Uh that is every other— every other two weeks. The next one is on the 2nd of December, and then the one after that will be on the 23rd of December. That's a skittles alley, so you can turn up and just play skittles, but and darts and stuff like that, but you can also come, chat, get out the house for a couple of hours— it's from 6:30 till 8:00— and make new friends. 'Cause the ability to make friends as an adult as well, if you're not at uni, college, or work or whatever you're doing, that can be hard sometimes. So to meet new friends and share your number or your socials or whatever you want to do, or just make it a regular thing, that's why we do these events.

Also, there's— I forgot, nearly forgot to say— um on a Sunday, sometimes people cannot always afford gym memberships 'cause that can be an additional expense— do free fitness sessions as well, and that's at Transformation Fit. So that's 10:00 Sundays.

Hari Farma: That's really good stuff. And if somebody would like to um find out more before attending one of these sessions, can you just give us a website address for our listeners?

Matt: Yes, so we've got uh brotherhoodlegion.com is the website. If you are on the socials— not everybody is, but if you are— Facebook: Brotherhood Legion, uh and then Instagram as well is thebrotherhoodlegion.cic. This obviously is a communication we're chatting all about um men, but there is sisterhood_midlands, which is females, which go through the same um problems as men as well and things we deal with, but Brotherhood's like sister obviously is that group as well, which yes, I'm promoting this this for men down at this event today, but sisterhood_midlands, they do the same thing with the fitness groups and we all come together as well and go on a hike. Last couple of weeks ago uh we went to Peak District— subsidised travel— went up there, and for mindfulness, to get away from times from your house, from your city, whatever, it's nice to get away and come back too. That's healthy for your mind.

Hari Farma: Let's just outline some of the major issues that men are faced with— life events and so on— that you've come across in all the years that you've been working within this field.

Matt: Yep.

Hari Farma: Can you tell us: is there a pattern? Have you seen the same issues cropping up that present real challenges for men?

Matt: Yeah. Um, depression, um the shame of not what is what is a good modern man like, what does that represent? People doubting themselves, self-doubt, um not being where you're meant to be in life— um that can be financially or family. Can be a lot of the communication I've been talking with some of the guys I've been working with can be um to do with relationship breakdowns, family disputes.

Hari Farma: Yes.

Matt: Um, a lot lots of things like that to be honest, but I think if you can share your experience— lived experiences— you then realise that it's not as bad. But I think the more we can talk about this— even dark suicidal thoughts, stuff like this— some of the guys I've worked with where we will talk about it 'cause it makes it feel we're normalising things like this that we should be talking about. There's no shame in any of this stuff. If you don't have the shame, then it can it can be a load lifted from your shoulders, from your mind, and to make you feel a lot better. So a lot of these big issues what you will hear sometimes on the news— the news is only what you see. So if you don't see it, your news is what you share around people. So if you share positive things, you put the positive thoughts in your head and you can do the right things. So whatever group you're in, be around like-minded positive people and life is then what you kind of make it.

Hari Farma: How has social media helped you in the work you do, your organisation? How has it helped, but also how has social media posed a risk um and is a threat to positive mental health?

Matt: Correct. So with that, anything we want to promote we can put on there: any advice, any guidance, any other groups 'cause it's good to do some cross-collaboration as well. Um, also yes, there are people out there who promote certain ways of how a man should be, how they are around uh females, how they talk to females and stuff like that, but we wouldn't promote those kind of people and we'd educate. It's all about education as well on this, like you need people to understand what we're going through to then show how to deal with it. We all deal with mental health, we all deal with mental fitness, however you want to word it, in your own way, but to come together and do this makes it makes it worthwhile.

Hari Farma: Let's talk about communication and communication styles— the way that men speak to each other, the way that men speak to women.

Matt: Yes. Mhm.

Hari Farma: Um, tell tell us a little bit about about that and what your views on that are.

Matt: So the best way for me to describe this is that we do have a separate group, sisterhood_midlands, but how men will talk to each other, yeah, we've all been through different scenarios in our lives. But there is lad culture, where lads will talk in certain ways, different nicknames around people. Certain sports clubs might banter— is banter low-level bullying? Can some people not understand banter who are um neurotypical people might understand it in a certain way, but neurodiverse people might not understand your influences— uh inferences, sorry— of how banter is portrayed? So they're ways of communicating, but some of the deeper meanings of communication is body language, facial expressions, uh how you hold yourself, how you walk to places or get to places, um how you project your voice, how you are heard, how you feel heard, if you want to be heard— do you know what I mean? All of these kind of things are how good communication is portrayed, and coming to these groups is good good ways of seeing how, 'cause a lot of people can be visual learners, if they can see how to present yourself. Even hearing our voices on this now, to be honest, is a great healthy way of having natural conversation.

Hari Farma: So on that note, do you have one final message— if we end with a message for our listeners— or an important message that you'd like to give our listeners?

Matt: You're always heard, and always use your voice, and just be kind to people, because the world can be a better place when you are kind in it.

Hari Farma: Thank you, Matt, from the Brotherhood Legion.

Matt: Thank you.

6. Interview 6: Rob McArdle (The Érin Project)

Hari Farma: Hello uh this is Harry, and you're listening to Soar Sound. I'm at the Leicester Heritage Fair, and my guest will introduce himself.

Rob McArdle: My name's Rob McArdle, and uh I've been running a stand here today on behalf of the Érin Project. Uh Érin is a small village— 220 people at the last count— um in Pas-de-Calais in northern France.

Hari Farma: And what is the Érin Project all about?

Rob McArdle: Basically, the town has been— or the village— has been at the centre of history for many, many centuries. In the um in the Hundred Years' War, it um it was involved because just Agincourt is just four miles up the road. Um, Crécy is barely 20 miles in the other direction— a lot of history around there concerning uh Joan of Arc. Um, in other wars, the War of the Spanish Succession, it was very close to the old Spanish Netherlands border— in fact it was part of the Spanish Netherlands for 250 years, so it wasn't technically even in France at the time.

Um, but it's more interesting in the um in the last century. In um the Second World— sorry, in the First World War, um it became the base for the British tank repair shops. So all the tanks that needed repair or maintenance um went to Érin for the for their uh general upkeep. Um, it was interestingly, it was manned largely by the Chinese Labour Corps, um who did most of the manual work behind the scenes. Um, and so that was the First World War. In the Second World War, the local château was uh headquarters for the Germans' uh V1s um project, which of course they had many ramps around that area— they had four ramps within easy distance of Érin, and as I say, the château was um a base.

So that's the brief version. I don't know how much more you want; I can give you a lot more detail in the in um in the First World War, as I say, it was Chinese Labour Corps were heavily involved. In fact, at one point the Germans did bomb the workshops; four Chinese were killed, and in fact there is a war memorial in the village which was only opened in uh 2018 on the centenary of the bombing. Um, the Second World War um obviously with the there's lots of information and stuff behind the scenes about the Resistance.

Um, but moving on a little bit towards the um the present day: eight years ago, the village school became redundant. Um, doesn't mean there's no children there, they put the children all moved to a bigger school in a another village a little bit further away. Um, amongst the school buildings was a teacher's apartment, um so obviously the teacher didn't need to live on-site anymore, so that became vacant, and also the mayor's offices, um and the village had a new office built for the mayor, so it meant the whole area or compound became free. Local historians um wondered what could be done with it, decided because of the history of the area— there is a rich history— um that it would make an ideal museum. And so um they raised

the money over several years um and they finally completed the purchase about three years ago. But now it's the point of improving the buildings. Buildings um need a lot of refurb, but of course with all these things, it's money and it's funding and what have you. But basically they own the building now, and the idea is to make it into a museum celebrating particularly the First and Second World War, but also to a lesser degree things like Agincourt and Crécy.

Um, and um part of it will be a library and resource centre, so people can come and study on-site, um and also um as a base for tours and what have you. So we're looking at maybe having a little café there— not um not in permanent use, but maybe two or three days a week where local people can use it as a café, but it's also good for the historical tours. Um, as I say, as a resource centre it would be ideal: anybody studying any of those wars I mentioned, you are literally an hour to an hour and a half behind away from the things like battlefields and things of interest, um graveyards and cemeteries, as I say war memorials. There is a lot to see within a very, very small distance. So um that's basically where we're at at the moment, so.

Hari Farma: So um maybe when the museum is up and running, I could interview you again.

Rob McArdle: You can, yeah.

Hari Farma: Once you've uh once you've visited it.

Rob McArdle: Yeah. If if uh anybody is interested in the idea, we we've got a few um uh few projects to come where next summer is looking to do the electrics and the CCTV and some major construction work. Um, but uh one of the project— one of the things we do is we allow people to camp on-site with a caravan or a or a tent if you really want to, or camper van or stuff, um free of charge, but the condition is that they spend a day or two helping with the project in some way. It's basically: yes, bring your holiday clothes, but bring some decorating clothes as well, sort of thing. But uh yeah, so that's that's basically where we're at. Um, do you want some contact details?

Hari Farma: Yes, please.

Rob McArdle: Yeah, so anybody's interested, um they can email, and this is um 7— that's the number 7— vmmnet@gmail.com. Um, and mark it Érin Project, E-R-I-N Project. Um, my name's Rob, and basically we can take it from there. So if anybody is interested and would like to get involved in some way, shape, or form, or just want to know what we're doing at any given time, then uh get in touch.

Hari Farma: Rob McArdle from the Érin Project, thank you very much.

Rob McArdle: You're welcome.