



# #MyBirminghamStory



In partnership with



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

## Keith Bracey's Birmingham Story

### 1. Background Who are you, and what is your connection to Birmingham?

My name is Keith Bracey and I was born in 1958. I was brought up in Bearwood (the Edgbaston bit!). I was schooled @GeorgeDixonAcademy and @UniBham in the 1960's and 70's. I am retired now and write poetry under the nom de plume @brummiebard and have had a poetry book published "From Bearwood and Beyond".

### 2. A specific place What is one place in Birmingham that holds particular meaning to you? Why?

@VillaPark just across Trinity Road from @AstonHall is the place that holds special memories for me. As a 4-year-old my dad Les Bracey would take me on the "Football Special" number 11 Outer Circle bus from the King's Head in Bearwood to Villa Park. We'd sit upstairs on the bus so that I had the best view. We drove through Bearwood, Rotton Park, Summerfield, Winson Green where me mom Dot Merriman was from, and then Handsworth, Handsworth Wood, Perry Barr and finally along Aston Lane to Witton and a Trinity Road sweetshop. Once there dad Les would buy me a white paper bag of sweets and we'd make our way to the Witton End (now the North Stand). Les would sit me on the long red metal stanchion facing him and I would suck my sweets (usually pineapple rocks, pear drops or barley sugars) while he watched the game. Then after the game had ended we would wait for the crowd to disperse a little before we'd make our way back to the bus stop and ride the Outer Circle (the longest continuous circular bus route in Europe at 28 miles!) back to Bearwood. Happy memories!

### **3. An important personal event Tell the story of one moment that shows why Birmingham, or your specific place from question (2), is important to you.**

In 1966 the Football World Cup was held in England (which England won against West Germany). My dad Les managed to get tickets to the Argentina v West Germany group game at Villa Park. We weren't in our usual vantage point in the Witton End but we stood in the Holte End instead which was packed. I was only 8 years old and in the crowd I soon got separated from my dad Les. A Birmingham City Police (it was before West Midlands Police were formed) sergeant spotted me crying. He shouted to the crowd to pass me over their heads to the front of the terrace, which they did. He scooped me up and lifted me onto the ground behind the goal and placed me into the scaffolding and wooden plank temporary police command post there. I proceeded to watch the game (a nil all draw with a West Germany player sent off!) from the best seat in the ground. This taught me respect for the police as the Birmingham City Police sergeant saved a frightened Brummie lad from possibly being crushed in the crowd. Me dad Les had spotted me behind the goal and collected me once the game was over. After a ticking off from dad we made our way home on the number 11 Outer Circle bus back to Bearwood. A less happy experience at Villa Park!

### **4. Reflections on Birmingham Why did you choose to share a story? Why is Birmingham important to you?**

Birmingham is my home and I have lived here all my life. I love its diversity and its multiculturalism which is OUR strength. As a Birmingham poet writing as @brummiebard I've published a book of poetry entitled "From Bearwood and Beyond" with poems mostly about Birmingham's heritage. There's one about my experiences as a student at the @University of Birmingham in the 1970's. There's also a poem about the birth of @LawnTennis at 8 Ampton Rd in Edgbaston. I am fascinated by the @LunarSociety and there are 3 poems on these great men who met at Matthew Boulton's home at Soho House in Handsworth to discuss "matters of moment". These men saw themselves as "Natural Philosophers" and discussed science, engineering, medicine, mathematics and many other subjects. These men of the Midlands Enlightenment can truly be said to have created the modern world with their Industrial Revolution based on knowledge and steam power....