

Spinning Tales

A Celebration of Worktown by 21st Century Cotton Queens



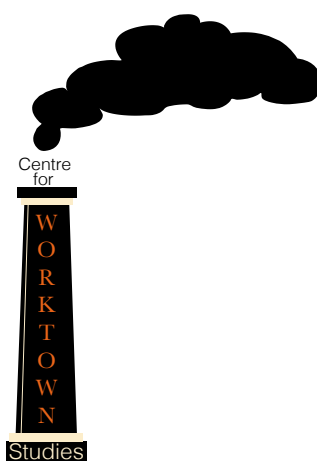
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Spinning Tales

A Celebration of Worktown by 21st Century Cotton Queens

Edited by:
Kathryn Thomasson
Sandra Nichol
Bríd Andrews
Gaynor Cox



The Centre for Worktown Studies

Dedicated to Worktown Women

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Foreword

The Lancashire cotton industry was a social as well as an economic entity. By the inter-war decades, it enjoyed a well-developed and collective leisure culture based around sports, especially crown green bowling and women's rounders, wakes weeks, and a newspaper, the Cotton Factory Times. It also produced Gracie Fields and George Formby who became famous without losing their Lancashire identity. The Cotton Queen competitions were an important part of this culture.

It is thus fitting that the Cotton Queens were adopted as the informing theme of a women's community project, jointly delivered by Bolton at Home and the University of Bolton. The play and other creative works by our twenty-first century Cotton Queens are an outcome of a University of Bolton PhD studentship based in and working with Bolton at Home. The research aspect of this project was concerned with the use of local history to engage women, over the age of fifty, from Bolton. Uniquely, Bolton's local history includes Mass Observation's 'Worktown' project 1937-1940, which chose Bolton for its study of everyday life in a northern industrial town. Although Boltonians were the subjects of this project, Mass Observation never shared its results with them. The Centre for Worktown Studies encourages research that addresses this by re-introducing Worktown to Bolton. The project shows how such re-connection with place can be important to women's well-being and sense of belonging.

*Professor Robert Snape
Director of Worktown Studies
University of Bolton*





Gaynor Cox

Bolton at Home

Gaynor Cox is a Housing Arts Officer with Bolton at Home's Percent for Art service, which sits within the organisation's Community Investment Team; Bolton at Home is the only housing management company to have implemented a Percent for Art policy in the UK. Gaynor has over 20 years' experience of working in the arts and creative industries and has worked with the Percent for Art service since 2004, managing around 100 arts projects, ranging from small community arts projects, through arts in health & wellbeing projects to large scale high profile public art commissions. During 2019/20 she led on the GM Ambition for Ageing funded 'Culture Champions' programme for Bolton. The 12-month programme aimed to reduce isolation by supporting over-50s to identify, develop and engage in cultural volunteering opportunities and activities.



Kath Thomasson

Kath is an Ainsworth Scholarship funded PhD student and associate lecturer at the University of Bolton. Her research explores how the influence of community arts outreach programs in the field of drama can influence women's subjective wellbeing. Kath is working in collaboration with Bolton at Home community arts programs and the Percent for Art team. Her research draws from the Worktown Collection as a creative source for women's groups in the Bolton area. Her role in this project has been to plan and support the group's creative work and coordinate the group's work and activities.



Sandra Nichol

Sandra is a full time lecturer at the University Centre at Blackburn College, Lancashire. Sandra's research interests include the social history of leisure and tourism and she is currently undertaking research on Mass Observation's study of women in Worktown and Blackpool during the inter-war years. Sandra's role in the project has been to introduce the group to Mass Observation's Worktown Collection (1937-1940) with a focus on the lives of mill girls at home, at work and on holiday in Blackpool during this period.



Bríd Andrews

Bríd Andrews is a senior lecturer in the School of the Arts at the University of Bolton. She contributes, currently, to the subject areas of Film and Media and English. Bríd has worked in the discipline of Theatre and Drama over many years at the University and has enjoyed especially her experience of researching professional practice whilst collaborating with the Octagon Theatre, Bolton, in the delivery of undergraduate performing Arts degree programmes. She has been working with the research team on the Cotton Queens project since early November and has been delivering drama workshops in support of the creative outputs of the project. Bríd is interested in the application of drama practices with global learners, in particular, and has recently been working with international PhD and Nursing students from Bangladesh and the Philippines in preparation for the oral communication elements of their assessment studying at the University. The Cotton Queens project has enabled her to work with a diverse group of women who, largely, have limited experience of drama work and it has proved a most rewarding experience.

A collection of photographs from the project



The Cotton Queens visit Leeds Industrial Museum's 'Queens of Industry' Exhibition and meet the curator of the collection John McGoldrick 07/09/2019.



The Cotton Queens learn more about the Worktown Collection at a special lecture given by Professor Bob Snape 14/09/2019





The Cotton Queens visit Bolton Museum and Library to view the original Humphrey Spender photograph collection and talk to Museum Access Officer, Matthew Watson 28/09/2019



Bolton Council. From the Collection of Bolton Library and Museum Services



Bolton Council. From the Collection of Bolton Library and Museum Services



The Cotton Queens work on creating their radio play at the Bolton Station Community Partnership community rooms 19/10/2019



*Interpretation through crochet-
A Mill Girl and Doris Bower
(Bolton's Cotton Queen)*





The Cotton Queens learn new drama skills with Bríd Andrews on the 09/11/2019



The Cotton Queens review their display banner design 11/01/2020

The Cotton Queens record their radio play at the University of Bolton recording studio on 17/01/2020



*The Cotton Queens visit
Blackpool Tower*





The Cotton Queens at Blackpool History Centre

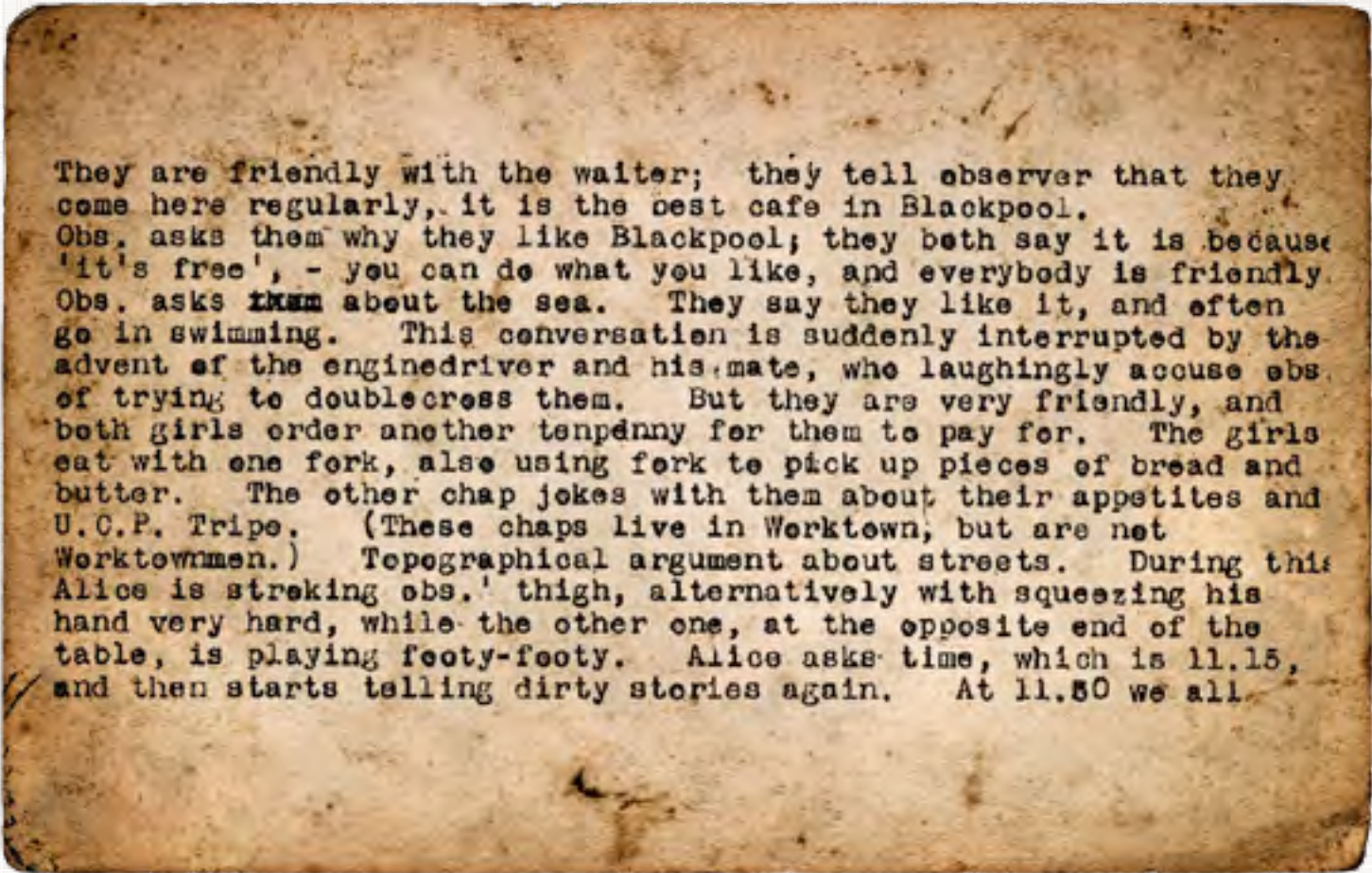


The Cotton Queens on Blackpool's Promenade 25/01/2020



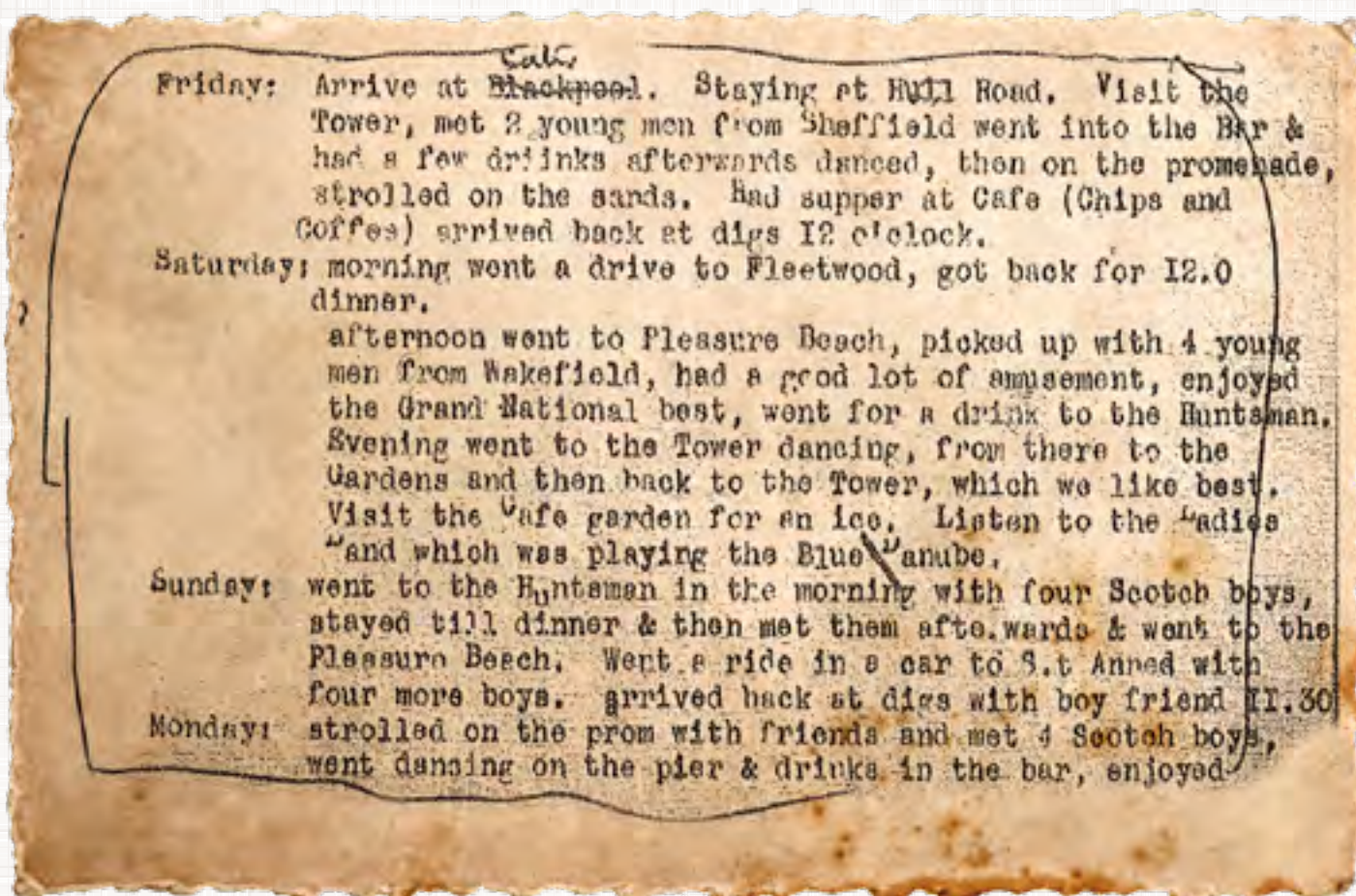
Mass Observation's Worktown Collection (1937-1940)

The play 'Worktown Wakes Girls' written by the Cotton Queens, is based upon archive material from Mass Observation's Worktown Collection which contains reports of Worktown girls on holiday in Blackpool. The Cotton Queens were inspired to have the voices of Worktown Women heard by adding their own humour, ideas and interpretations on how Worktown girls would have reacted to meeting a mass observer whilst on holiday in Blackpool.



They are friendly with the waiter; they tell observer that they come here regularly, it is the best cafe in Blackpool. Obs. asks them why they like Blackpool; they both say it is because 'it's free', - you can do what you like, and everybody is friendly. Obs. asks ~~them~~ about the sea. They say they like it, and often go in swimming. This conversation is suddenly interrupted by the advent of the enginedriver and his mate, who laughingly accuse obs. of trying to doublecross them. But they are very friendly, and both girls order another tenpenny for them to pay for. The girls eat with one fork, also using fork to pick up pieces of bread and butter. The other chap jokes with them about their appetites and U.C.P. Tripe. (These chaps live in Worktown, but are not Worktownmen.) Topographical argument about streets. During this Alice is stroking obs.' thigh, alternatively with squeezing his hand very hard, while the other one, at the opposite end of the table, is playing footy-footy. Alice asks time, which is 11.15, and then starts telling dirty stories again. At 11.50 we all

*An encounter between a mass observer and Worktown girls in Blackpool
MOA: Worktown Collection - Book Drafts on Blackpool, Box 61/F, 'Liquid', p.7*



Holiday diary of a mill girl
MOA: Worktown Collection - Book Drafts on Blackpool, Box 60/E, 'Sex', p.18

*Also available on line in Book Drafts on Blackpool (Worktown Collection), University of Sussex. Available through: Adam Matthew Digital, Marlborough, Mass Observation Online.

For more information on the Mass Observation's Worktown Collection please go to:

The Centre for Worktown Studies – University of Bolton
www.bolton.ac.uk/explore-our-schools/centre-for-worktown-studies

Bolton Worktown – Bolton Museum and Library Services
www.boltonworktown.co.uk

Mass Observation Archive
www.massobs.org.uk



Worktown Wakes Girls



by

21st Century Cotton Queens

CHARACTERS

CHARLES CARRINGTON:	The narrator. Mid 20s, A student of History and Politics. He considers himself to be a socialist and one day hopes to be a Labour MP. Charles has a character both as narrator and as character.
FLO:	A mill worker in her early 20s. Staying in Blackpool for the workers annual holiday - Wakes week. Charles meets her in a public house, on the sea front. She is a cheery outgoing sort. An intelligent woman, she is suspicious of him from the start. She is married but her husband can never be bothered to come, so he remains back in Bolton.
ALICE:	Best friend to Flo. Also, in her early 20s. A lot naiver than her best friend and very impressed by Charles' 'poshness' and dashing looks. She is unmarried and actively seeking a husband. She is also the sworn enemy of the current Cotton Queen from her hometown. Who won the 'beauty' competition that Alice had also entered.
MRS ALBERT:	The owner of the 'posh' bed and breakfast Charles is staying at. Her recent entry into the middle classes brought on by money. Elocution lessons failing to completely hide her Mancunian accent. Her overuse of the letter H, makes Charles cringe. She is an affable woman, an excellent housekeeper and good cook of plain fare.
HARRY:	Train driver and good friend of Flo's husband, back home.
ERNIE:	Driver's mate to Harry and unrequited lover of Alice
THE BARMAN:	We never learn his name. He's a Blackpool native. In his late 40s. Used to the tourist trade and the shenanigans.
GLADYS:	Landlady.
MABEL:	The Landlady's companion
POLICE OFFICER.	

SCENE I

A LETTER FROM A YOUNG MAN TO HIS FIANCÉE. HIS NAME IS CHARLES CARRINGTON AND HE COMES FROM LONDON. HE IS STAYING AT A FANCY BED AND BREAKFAST IN BLACKPOOL DURING A SUMMER BETWEEN 1937 AND '39 HE IS THERE TO DO HIS BIT, FOR THE MASS OBSERVATION WORKTOWN PROJECT. A STUDY CONDUCTED BY A GROUP OF MAINLY YOUNG MIDDLE-CLASS MEN, WITH MOSTLY LEFT-WING TENDENCIES BUT MIDDLE CLASS VALUES. IN WHICH THEY COVERTLY STUDIED THE WORKING CLASS OF BOLTON (WORKTOWN) AT WORK, REST AND ESPECIALLY, PLAY.

CHARLES IS SAT AT A WRITING DESK IN HIS ROOM OVERLOOKING THE IRISH SEA. IN THE DISTANCE THE SOUND OF SEAGULLS, GENERAL BLACKPOOL HUBBUB. CLOSER TO US THE RUSTLE OF THE CURTAINS, AND PAPER, IS HEARD.

VOICEOVER

CHARLES: My darling Clare, I hope you are well, and this letter finds you in good spirits. I miss you terribly, although I must admit, I am enjoying my observation work here in Blackpool. In the pub last night, an old man asked me if I was a spy for the Bosch. I assured him I wasn't and made the excuse that I worked for the brewery and was making notes as to the fixtures and fittings. "As long as tha doesn't touch my chair" was his disinterested reply.

Another amusing incident occurred last evening-

HE IS INTERRUPTED BY A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

CHARLES: Come in, Mrs Albert

THE SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING

MRS ALBERT: I noticed that you still had your big light on. So I thought I'd bring you hay cup hov hot cocoa (PAUSE) Hand hive thrown in a slice of Victoria sponge as well.

CHARLES: You spoil me Mrs Albert

GIGGLES

MRS ALBERT: Oh, go on you daft apeth. It's no more than I'd do for any other guest (PAUSE) Are you writing again?

CHARLES: I am.

MRS ALBERT: Too much writing can't be good for your eyes. Why don't you go to the Pictures? Watch a film instead.

PAUSE

Well, I'll leave you to it

THE DOOR OPENS

MRS ALBERT: I'll collect the cup hin the morning, but if you use the facilities before you retire, hit won't hurt to give it a rinse. Cocoa sticks summat chronic. Goodnight luv.

THE DOOR CLOSES

CHARLES: Now, where was I? another amusing incident?

PAUSE

Ah yes! The ladies in the pub. That certainly was an encounter to remember.

SCENE II

A PUB INTERIOR. PIANO MUSIC PLAYS IN THE BACKGROUND AND WE HEAR CLINKING GLASSES AND THE TYPICAL SOUNDS OF PEOPLE HAVING A GOOD TIME.

FLO: Are you lost luv?

CHARLES: I beg your pardon?

FLO: ARE. YOU. LOST? You're not here for wakes week are ya?

CHARLES: No, I'm a businessman on secondment.
Studying the brewery trade. Fixtures and fittings. Things like that.

FLO: Second what? Oh, never mind, well you've picked a right time to come up here if its peace and quiet you're after.
You should get yourself to Bolton, cos us lot from Bolton are all up here.

BOTH WOMEN CRACK UP LAUGHING

CHARLES: I decided to feign ignorance

CHARLES: Oh, why is the whole town of Bolton up here?

FLO: Well, most of it is.
There's a few stayed back like my miserable hubby

ALICE QUICKLY INTERJECTS

ALICE: I don't have a husband.

FLO: Cheers for that Alice.

CHARLES: Would you two ladies care to join me at my table?

FLO: Why? We're not tarts if that's what you're thinking!

ALICE: No, we're not!

CHARLES: Absolutely not!

I just thought you might be more comfortable seated.

FLO: Oh, right, well, go on then.

CHARLES: Allow me to introduce myself properly.
My name is Charles Carrington.

FLO: I'm Flo Holden, and this is Alice Shuttleworth.
Pleased to make your acquaintance

ALICE Likewise.

CHARLES: So what brings you both here this good evening?

FLO: Well,lets get summat clear. We don't go in the pubs back home, so we're not slackies if that's what you're thinking. We're here for a quick drink then we're off ter tower

CHARLES: The tower?

FLO: Not the London one. You've probably got relatives in that one. Blackpool tower. Our cotton queen Doris Bower is making an appearance. She's from our mill. In't she Alice?

ALICE'S REPLY IS SULKY

ALICE: Yeah

FLO: Oh, don't mind her, she entered it an' all (PAUSE) And lost

ALICE: It was a bloody fix if you ask me. I wer May Queen three years running when we wer kids. She din't get a look in. How them judges din't notice her skenn is beyond me, but there you go. That's what happens when you're dad's in charge er't card room.

FLO: Shurrup you daft apeth, she won fair and square.

ALICE Are you married Charles?

CHARLES: Erm, no

ALICE: Got a young lady waiting for you?

CHARLES: Erm, No

CHARLES: We were joined then by two men, one alarmingly burly and carrying a tray of drinks. He raised his knee and nudged Flo with it.

FLO: Oo!

BERT: Hutch up Flo. Eeyar girls, I got you a drink.

FLO: Oh, you didn't half give me a fright Bert.

CHARLES: They obviously knew each other well. I was beginning to wonder if Flo's husband had arrived to surprise her.

FLO: This is Charles you two. Charles, this is Harry and Ernie. Harry's a train driver, a friend of my Bob's and Ernie's a... What do you do Ernie?

ERNIE: I'll show Alice what I do when we get under the pier. She can tell yer after.

ALICE. I bloody won't because I'm not going on no sands wi thee. cheeky sod!

CHARLES: The four of them laughed in unison. Alice was very close to me due to the hutching up.

ALICE: You're all wind and water you are, Ernie. Pay no mind to them Charles, common as muck they are

CHARLES: I became aware that Alice, who had finished the drink that I'd purchased for was halfway through her next one, bought by the men. She was also playing footsie with my right foot. Ernie obviously mistaking my left foot for Alice's, was doing the same.

THE LAST FEW SECONDS OF GEORGE
FORMBY'S SONG 'LITTLE STICK OF
BLACKPOOL ROCK' IS HEARD, FOLLOWED
BY APPLAUSE FROM THE CROWD

FLO: I love George Formby. Do you like him, Charles luv?

CHARLES: I was at a loss to know who George was. However, it became apparent he was the singer of risqué songs.

ERNIE: I've got a big stick of Blackpool rock, Ask Alice

LAUGHTER.

FLO: You two had better watch yourselves, or my Bob'll be having words when we get back home. Pay no mind to them luv, they're just being daft. He's lovely is George. I've seen all his films. Not as lovely as my Bob though.

CHARLES I was amused by Flo's ability to speak romantically of her absent husband. Meanwhile, Alice due to the 'hutching' was now thigh to thigh with me. I thought her hand on my leg was accident but found it quickly necessary to ask my companion if they'd like a drink giving me the opportunity to stand quickly.

SCENE III

THE SAME PUB INTERIOR

BARMAN: Same again sir?

CHARLES: Yes please, and two pints of Bitter as well.

BARMAN: You sit yourself down an one of the barmaids'll bring em over.

CHARLES: No need for that. I'll wait here

BARMAN: Scary lot when they've had a drink or three aren't they. That little one is a proper rum bugger. She had some poor lad in tears last night.

CHARLES: Darling I was going to leave. But I was here to observe the working classes and where better to do that than the pub..... Upon my return, decisions had been made.

FLO: Cheers for the drink luv. We've decided not to go to the tower tonight.

ALICE: Yeah, cos at the end of the day, we only have to go three doors up from my house if we want to see that ugly cow, who thinks cos she's cotton queen she's it!

FLO: Alice! Mind your manners. I think she's getting a bit tipsy Charles (PAUSE). Anyhow, that's what we've decided. We're gonna see out the night in here, then we'll go ter 't' chippy. And you're coming - No arguments!

CHARLES: I'm not really a 'chippy' person. But, thank you Flo. You're very kind.

FLO. No trouble. Come anyway. Right, have we all drunk up. Are we ready? Right, off we go.

SCENE IV

THE QUEUE OUTSIDE THE CHIP SHOP.
EVENING SOUNDS, TRAFFIC, PEOPLE
TALKING, LAUGHING

HARRY: Best chippy in Blackpool this one. She comes from Bolton an all. She met him on her holidays.

ERNIE: Oh aye?

HARRY: Yeah. Don't you remember? Used to be in't windin room. Worked wi her mam. Till she got wed to him anyway. Lily her name is.

ERNIE: Oh aye, yeah I remember her. Any road, what we all having?

CHARLES: I've had such an enjoyable evening with you all. Do allow me to pay for the food?

DRUNKENLY BUT WITH A FRIENDLY
PLAYFUL TONE

ERNIE: Listen mate you don't have to be posh to have a bob or two. Its th' holidays and I'm flush I'm buying the lasses their supper and that's it! I'll buy yours an all, if you like. What you avin then?

CHARLES: That's very kind of you, Ernie. But no thank you. As I said, I'm Not a 'chippy' person.

ERNIE: Suit yourself cocka - Now, what are you girls having? What about you Alice?

ALICE: What about me. What about you! Look at ya, wobbling all over the place. You're a bloody embarrassment you are and you can shove your fish and chips, I don't want nowt from you.

ERNIE: Aw. Alice don't be like that!

ALICE: Well, go on then. But only cos me mam wouldn't want me to waste food. I'll have a fish and a tuppence er chips. Haddock. And don't be jumping to confusions it dunt mean we're courting.

FLO: Have some chips Charlie? Go on. There's nowt on yer.

CHARLES: Very well, thank you Ernie. Just a twopence worth please.

ERNIE: Oy Lily! Put us four fish in will yer, Haddock please!

LILY: Ee! Well if it isn't Ernie and Harry. Nice to see you two. You avin a good time.

HARRY: Aye, not bad Lily, not bad This is Alice, Flo and Charlie.

LILY: How do! I'll get your order. Why don't you all pop in tomorrow. It'll be quieter then. You can tell me how everybody's doing.

HARRY: Aye oright. What's the damage then Lily.

LILY: Four bob to you. Here yer are! See you tomorrer then. Ta-rah

HARRY: Ta -rah. See you tomorrow.

FLO: Oh that Ernie! He's like Helen Keller when it comes to Alice. Deaf, dumb and blind, to the word no.

CHARLES. He's obviously very fond of her.

FLO: He's not a bad lad, he earns good money. He'll drive his otrain one day. But that's not good enough for Little Lord Fauntleroy's sister - Have you seen that film? I wanted to slap that kid at first.

CHARLES: Erm, no, but I have read the book, many moons ago.

FLO: Oh, Have they done a book of it? The only thing I read is lips when I'm at work. Anyway, its films I blame for her being so fussy. She wants someone who talks like Leslie Howard and looks like Clark Gable.

CHARLES: Goodness me.

FLO: Where the bloody 'ell she thinks she's going to meet him is beyond me. He's not just gonna pop out of a doorway, is he? And there's no bugger int mill that fits the bill.

CHARLES: No, probably not.

FLO: Apart from coming here, the furthest she's been is Wigan for a funeral and that took it out of her, she was fit for nowt for almost a week. (PAUSE) I suppose she thinks her dream man is waiting for her here in Blackpool.

HURDY-GURDY TYPE MUSIC PLAYS IN THE
DISTANT BACKGROUND.

FLO: Ooh, I love that music. Variety shows on't wireless, Wednesdays

just before bed. It comes from Blackpool sometimes.
Marvellous int it? We're sat in Bolton listening to what's going
on in Blackpool as clear as we can hear it now.

CHARLES: Flo? Would you ever consider anywhere else for your holiday?

FLO: The lot of us? Or just me?

CHARLES: You and your family

FLO: I don't have a family yet. It's just me and Bob and he won't set
foot out of Bolton. He's a fair few years older than me see. He went
abroad during the war and that's his lot he says

CHARLES: Well, you and Alice then.

FLO: Like where?

CHARLES: Anywhere! London, maybe?

FLO: What do we want to go there for? The water tastes funny, everybody
says so. You know, I got a chippy tea once wrapped in a London
newspaper The price they charge for eggs. They want locking up,
and correct me if I'm wrong, which I'm not, but last I heard there was
no seaside in the capital of our country. It's not a holiday with no
seaside is it?

CHARLES. Some people think so,

FLO: Are you laughing at me?

CHARLES: No, absolutely not. I'm smiling because I've never met anyone like
you.
I find your candour refreshing

FLO: Come again?

CHARLES: I like your outlook on life

FLO: Me what?

CHARLES: The way you see things.

FLO: Oh! Hang on whilst I put me paper in the bin.

SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS LEAVING AND
RETURNING

FLO: CONT Eh! From far off, you look a bit like Clark Gable, and you definite sound like Leslie Howard.

FLO LAUGHS

NARRATOR They both linked arms with me. Alfie and Harry happily walking ahead shouting out dubious things to the many courting couples we passed

ALICE: Dunt the sea sound lovely at night? But int it scary when you look out across the water? It's all nice and bright up here but look out there. Nowt but blackness. It's a different matter during the day with all the people and the donkeys and the ice cream man. Just think Flo, me and you were in that sea today.

FLO: Only up to our ankles you daft sod! I wouldn't swim in it. I'm not having the whole of me street seeing me in a swimming costume, even if I had one! And you don't need to list everything on the beach. I'm sure Charles has seen what it looks like for himself.

CHARLES: Indeed! I have rooms that overlook the sea

CHORUS: Ooooooh! I have rooms that overlook the sea

FLO: Aren't you the lucky one. We're about six streets back. Close enough for seagull shit to splatter the windows, but no sea view.
Oh my god!

ALICE: What's up?

FLO: Have you got your watch on?

ALICE: Course I have - Oh my god!

CHARLES: Ladies! Is there anything wrong?

FLO: There will be if we're not back at our lodgings in two minutes. Alice shoes off and tuck your dress in your kecks, we're gonna have to run like the clappers.

SOUNDS OF THE CAST GETTING THEIR
BREATH BACK

FLO: Oh bugger! The door's locked.

CHARLES: Shall I knock?

FLO: And have the world and his wife listening to her big gob telling us we can't come in? No fanks.

ALICE: What're we gonna do Flo?

FLO: How should I bloody know. It's not something we've ever had Happen. We're just gonna have to wait till she opens up int morning

ALICE: But that's hours away

FLO You missed your calling, luv, you should have been Sherlock Holmes with those powers of deduction.

ALICE: There's no need for the sarckiness!

FLO: And there's no need, for pointing out, the bloody obvious!

ERNIE: Now, now girls. There's no need to fight. But if you want I'll hold your handbags. Ooh if looks could kill!

FLO: Have you any sensible suggestions Ernie? Cos don't forget, you're locked out too.

ERNIE: Our rooms are at the back. We could try shinning up the drainpipe?

ALICE: I'm not climbing up any drainpipes in me best dress

FLO: You'd better take it off then cos that drainpipe is looking like Hobson's choice. Unless?

ALICE: Unless what? I'm not taking me dress off!

FLO: Why are you lads taking your coats off?

FLO: You won't have to luv. What's that down there on the floor

ALICE: By the little window?

FLO: I meant the actual window!

CHARLES: Aha! I see. That could be the solution

CHARLES: We're going to enter the premises via that window

FLO: Look at that window and then look at them clodhoppers you all call feet! Tell me what part of your body Is gonna get through that teeny

window. I expect that sort of nonsense from Laurel and Hardy here but you Charles should know better.

ALICE.: Well, what are we going to do then if you're so clever.

FLO: I'm almost offended! The only person who can get through that window is you short arse. Who are you looking round for you daft sod? I mean you!

ALICE: You can sod off! You know I hate cellars

FLO: Look! All you have to do is get through that window, nip across to the door, there's bound to be one, by the stairs. There won't be anyone about this time of night. All you have to do is unbolt the door and let us in.

ALICE: Oh! Is that all I have to do?

FLO: We haven't got a choice have we. Besides! You're always going on about your tiny waist. Jesus might have given you that waist for this very reason. It might be blasphemy not to use your gift.

ALICE. Give over Flo. Right I'm going to do it, but not cos of that rubbish you just came out with. Bloody blasphemer! You only go to church at Whitsun. Someone remind me not to stand near her next time its lightening. I'd do it, but only cos I'm fed up and I want me bed.

FLO: Right then, which end are we holding?

ALICE: Come again?

FLO: Are you goin headfirst or feet first. Whichever you choose we'll hang on ter th'other other.

ALICE: We?

FLO: Yeah. Me and the lads

ALICE: Why can't it just be you? If I go in headfirst they'll see all me doings.

FLO: I said you were little. I never said owt about light! -Oh go on then! Lads? Stand guard and turn your backs if you don't mind.

SOUND OF WINDOW OPENING AND
SCUFFLING.
HUFFING AND PUFFING FROM FLO

FLO: Have you not found the floor yet? My hands are going numb You've got thick ankles you have. The blood's left me hands completely. Hurry up!

ALICE: Its pitch bloody black down here. The floor feels lumpy.

FLO: What do you mean, lumpy? Feel around some more.

ALICE: Oh, eeyar, it's flat here.

FLO: Oh, thank god for that! There's no feeling right up to mi elbows now. Oh, oh. I'm letting go! mi hands is sliding, Oh Alice you're going.....

ALICE: Give me a chance to

SOUND OF ALICE FALLING.

ALICE: Ow! You bloody cow. I'll have you!

FLO: Never mind that now, find the door!

STILL MUFFLED

ALICE: There is no door!

FLO: No door? What do you mean? Course there's a bloody door. What kind of cellar has no door!

ALICE: It's not a cellar. It's a bloody coal hole.

FLO: What kind of coal hole has a window?

ALICE: This bloody kind. The only way out of here is through the chute. I'd wake the dead doing that.

FLO: You've done that already. All the bloody lights have gone on. Hurry up and get out of there. Give me your hand quick. Lads, lads! I need your help.

ALICE IS LIFTED UP

ALICE: Never again Flo, never a - bloody -gain. What're you all gawping at?

FLO: I'll tell you later. We'd better get out of here sharp.

ALICE Oh hell fire! Look! Look! She's gone an sent for the bloody coppers!

ERNIE Grab hold er mi hand Alice! Come on run!

CHARLES: They set of a terrible rate darling, Ernie and Flo following, and it was with some confusion that I followed. I must say, despite the anarchy of the situation I found myself rather amused.

SCENE V

THE DOORSTEP OF THE BOARD HOUSE.
PRESENT ARE THE LANDLADY,
HER COMPANION MABEL AND A
POLICE OFFICER

POLICEMAN: These noises you heard?

GLADYS Like no noises I've ever heard before, officer. Coming from't cellar of all places. Proper spooky weren't it Mabel?

MABEL: Frightened me out of my wits. An ungodly sound if you ask me and very foreign sounding

POLICEMAN: Foreign sounding?

GLADYS: It's funny you should say that. When it all started, the family what's stopping in the attic looked out of the window, and saw a gang running off. One of them was very dark. It could be somebody foreign?

MABEL: It could be one of them sideshow men. A lot of them are foreign.

GLADYS: Not the African Pygmy acrobats though. It won't be one of them. I know a lass who's courtin' one of them. They're a lovely bunch of lads, honest as the day is long. Not very tall though.

POLICEMAN: All right, all right. Let's not go all round't 'th' houses. Put kettle on Mrs. We'll ave a brew while I do your statement. It wouldn't go amiss if you had a spare piece of cake as well.

GLADYS: I might er known. Never heard of a copper doing summat for nowt.

SOUNDS OF THEM GOING
BACK INSIDE DOOR SLAMMING

SCENE VI

SOUNDS OF THE PROMENADE
LATE AT NIGHT

ALICE: I am dead! when me mam sees the state of me dress.

FLO: It's only a bit of soot.

ALICE A bit?

FLO: A lot then. But look at it this way. At least we didn't get caught. Mud sticks.

ALICE: So does bloody soot!

FLO: It's not all bad. You still have your film star looks.

ALICE: Oh, which one? Me mam says I favour Betty Grable more and more each day.

FLO: I was thinking more Al Jolson meself. Right!, come with me and we'll get you cleaned up at that water fountain. I'll help you wash your dress in the morning.

Who'd a thought it? A coal hole with windows.

CHARLES: Flo did an admiral job of cleaning Alice to a grey pallor. Our collective efforts turned to the pressing matter of where to spend the night

ERNIE: Now that all the kerfuffle has probably died down, we could always go back to plan A. How about me and Harry nip back, shin up the drainpipe and take the door off the latch?

FLO: Don't be silly! We'll just have to wait it out. Good job it's summer. We just need to find somewhere to have a sit down or we'll be fit for nowt tomorrow. Right Charlie lad, we'll have to love you and leave you.

CHARLES: I couldn't possibly leave you all in such circumstances. Come back with me to my place. I'm sure I can get you rooms for the night.

ALICE: Aw, how kind

FLO: How bloody daft you mean. We've got no nighties and how's it gonna look? Thank you kindly Charles but we're staying put so we can get can back in't digs as soon as she opens up. Come on Alice, we'll

head back to the prom and sit under them sheltered seats. Harry?
What are you two going to do?

HARRY: We won't be leaving you two on your tods. Your Bob'd have our guts
for garters

FLO: Wipe the smirk off your face, Ernie. Alice'll be glued to me hip

ALICE: And even if I wasn't you'd have no chance. How many times have I
told you? I'm meant for bigger and better things.

CHARLES: I felt Alice's eyes boring into me as she chastised poor Ernie.

FLO: Charles luv? Best you get off now.

CHARLES: I wouldn't sleep a wink knowing your predicament, so I'll stay too

FLO: You don't have to do that luv, we've got the lads with us.

ALICE: He can do what he wants!

FLO: Oh, I can't be mithered it. If he wants to stay he can do..

CHARLES: The journey back towards the promenade was less frantic. But when
we arrived, it appeared, that we were not the only ones who had been
locked out.

FLO: Bloody 'ell it's like the train station down here

CHARLES: Ladies! Avert your eyes!

FLO: Too bloody late luv. Ooh It's put me off me breakfast has that. They
want locking up.

ALICE: What's he doing to her?

FLO: He's waiting for the tide to come in..

ERNIE: Nice pair of legs though! Ow! There was no need for
that Flo!

FLO: I promised Alice's mam I'd look after her. There's things she dun't
need to know yet....So shut it!

ALICE: Things like what?

FLO: Never you mind. Come on, let's find somewhere quiet to get a bit of shut eye if we can

FLO: Look, an empty shelter and it's nice and quiet. Come on, let's get comfy. It's only a few more hours till we can get back in.

SOUNDS OF THEM 'SETTLING DOWN

Oy madam! get your feet down, there's no room. She's an only child Charles, it's made her selfish.

ALICE: You said to get comfy so that's what I was doing.

ERNIE: You can put those lovely legs on my lap, if you want?

ALICE: And you can put your bloody head in a loom going at full whack.

LAUGHTER FROM THE OTHERS.

ERNIE. Don't be like that Alice.

CHARLES: Soon, time and the effects of the alcohol, caught up with them. With Harry and Ernie's jackets across their shoulders and my topcoat shared between their knees, the girls spoke less and less. The lads by now were snoring away.

FLO: I'll sleep for England tomorrow night. What time is it now Charles?

CHARLES: Two o'clock.

FLO: Not too long to go. They unlock the doors around five-ish. You don't have to stay luv. Go on, get yourself back to your hotel.

CHARLES: I'll go back to my lodging when you are safely back in your lodgings

FLO: Well, if you insist. Eh! Give us a nudge at five, if we sleep through the clock chimes. I don't know about anyone else but I'm absolutely shattered.

ALICE: I wonder what me mam would say if she knew I was out at this time of night?

FLO: It'd be summat you'd never hear from the mouth of a Vicar. And don't be telling her

ALICE: Will I eckers like! I want to live to see twenty-one.

FLO: Charles...., Charlie.... You asleep, you asleep love?

CHARLES: Oh, er, no, just resting my eyes. Something wrong?

FLO: I'm really cold Charles.

CHARLES: Hm. Early mornings are always rather fresh, aren't they?

FLO: I suppose so.... Charlie, do you really like Alice?

CHARLES: Of course, yes of course I do, she very nice

FLO: Do you like me Charles?

CHARLES: Yes, of course I do, erm, you're very attractive.

FLO: Oh. Do you think so? Bob, my husband you know. He's a great bloke. Older than me though, and quiet like.

CHARLES: Oh yes?

FLO: Mm, and he's funny with me sometimes.

CHARLES: Oh, how is he funny?

FLO: Well, It were the war you know. He were only fifteen when he went. They shouldn't have took him really but well, you know... He just goes off his head sometimes. It's not his fault though.

CHARLES: I'm sorry, it must be difficult for you.

FLO: Yeah. I get fed up sometimes. He don't like going out and all that. Not like me.... I'm cold Charles. Are you cold as well?

CHARLES: Flo I.....

FLO: They're asleep Charles. It's fine, they'll sleep, trust me.

CHARLES: I'm, I'm engaged Flo. I...

FLO: I'm cold, that's all. These three are just kids Charlie. They'll sleep through anything. Come on. Let's snuggle up, we can both be warm then....

A CHURCH CHIMES FIVE TIMES

Flo: Alice?

ALICE: I'm awake!

MAKES SNORING SOUND

FLO: Alice!

ALICE: Oh for gawds sake! I'm awake! And you've ruined mi dream. I was Ruby Keeler and I was -

FLO: You'll be Ann Boleyn, if we don't get back in our lodgings before some of them witches wake up

ALICE: What's she famous for ?

FLO: Being dead! Now shift yourself - Aw, look at the lads all snoring away. It seems a shame to wake 'em

ALICE: It weren't a shame to wake me though!Aw, dun't Charles look handsome sleeping? Me dad always has his mouth open when he's asleep.

FLO: And his teeth out

ALICE: Ew, don't remind me. I hope I never get old.

FLO: Good luck with that chuck!

ALICE: Do you think I'll ever see him again?

FLO: Course you will, we go home on Friday.

ALICE: Not me dad! – Charles. Like kismet?

FLO: Yeah luv. Like kismet

FLO: Well, it's not like we mix in the same circles is it?
Aw, put your face straight. If it's meant to be, it'll happen

SOUNDS OF THE MEN WAKING

CHARLES: I rubbed the sleep from my eyes and stood up embarrassed. I hadn't been watching over the girls as I'd promised. But also because of what had happened between Flo and I. However, her warm smile and sly wink reassured me our secret was safe

CHARLES: Good morning ladies

FLO: Good morning luv.

ALICE: Good morning Charles.

FLO: So, we'll say our goodbyes now. We had a lovely time last night and we won't ever forget you, will we Alice? We're gonna have to get back to our lodgings.

CHARLES: I'll walk with you.

FLO: Best you don't luv, we're not even gonna turn up with them two. People talk, you know how it is.

ALICE: No

CHARLES: Nor I, you fine people. In that case, I'll bid you the fondest of farewells.

CHARLES: I exchanged hearty handshakes with the lads and kissed the lady's hands.

ALICE: Ooh, I've never been kissed on the hand.

FLO: She's never been kissed at all.

CHARLES: I turned and walked away through the early morning mist. Just before I went out of sight, Alice called out to me from a distance.

ALICE: Where do you live when you're not here?

CHARLES: I have lodgings in Halliwell.

ALICE: Halliwell in Bolton?

CHARLES: Yes. Maybe we'll meet again one day. Bye

ALICE: Did you hear that Flo? Bloody Halliwell. You know what this, don't you?

FLO: Yeah, a bit of a dump

ALICE: Tut! No! it's kismet,

FLO: Oh shurruup ya daft sod!

ALICE: I hope we see him again. I could tell he liked me. He did like me didn't he Flo?

FLO: Erm yeah. Course he did love. It's a funny to-do, though. A person of his station. Not that he's any better than us- being here for wakes

week and now we find out he's got lodging in Bolton. He's a nosy sod though, don't you think?

ALICE. I didn't notice anything. Eh! If we bump into him again. You could invite him to yours for tea.

FLO: I don't bloody think so!

SCENE VII

CHARLES IS BACK IN HIS HOTEL

CHARLES: Yes, my dearest Claire, a most amusing evening indeed. I met two young ladies and their men friends. All four, the epitome of working class life and marvellous subjects for the study. I learned many things which I won't bore you with in this letter. Give my fondest regards to your parents, The next couple of months will be gone before we know it and then I'll be home for good my darling. Love always, Charles.

CHARLES: And you, dear Flo. I'll certainly never forget you

FADE OUT



Introducing the Cotton Queens





Eileen Earnshaw

Creative Writing Lead

My name is Eileen and I am a creative writer. I joined the group at the beginning of the project which was at the end of August 2019. My primary function was to teach the group to write a piece of work on the subject of the 'Queens of Blackpool'.

From the beginning, the project went very well. The content was of great interest to the group, the majority of them being Boltonians, or having a connection to Bolton. They were also inspirational writers, researchers, crafts women and above all enthusiastic in their determination to produce work to a very high standard.

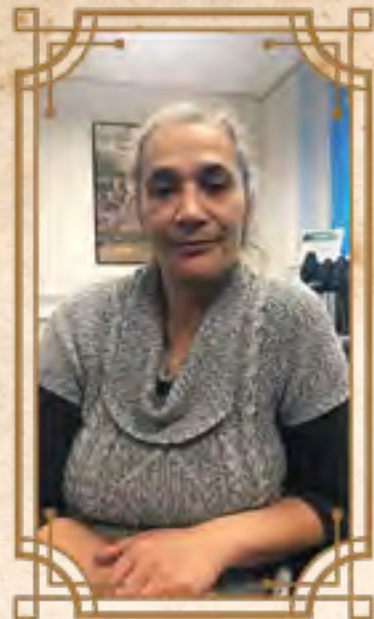
We produced a radio play (amongst other work) which has been recorded in the media department of Bolton University which in itself was a most exciting experience. Over the period of the last few weeks we have all become close friends and supportive colleagues. I have enjoyed every moment of my time with them and sincerely hope that in the future we continue to write, perform and inspire each other and any other women who hold Bolton, its past and its future in esteem.

HOW I BECAME A 21ST CENTURY COTTON QUEEN

So this support worker was visiting a friend of a friend who was a carer. And she mentioned the group to the friend who mentioned it to my friend, the day before it was due to start. My friend said "I know it's short notice, but do you fancy it?" I replied "Tomorrow? And what's a cotton queen?" "Dunno" she replied, "But there's free refreshments." I perked up at the word 'free' and we reasoned to ourselves that if it wasn't for us, we could make our excuses and have a look round the art gallery.

So off we popped to the first session. That was six months ago. I haven't missed a single Saturday. I've learned to love research (no mean feat!) and have made friends I may not have met in my day to day life - friends from cultures different to mine - friends for life.

I only came to Bolton to escape domestic violence and for the four years I lived here prior to coming to the group, I always felt a little bit 'foreign' and homesick for a place I couldn't go back to... Now, with all I've learned about 'Worktown' I feel like I belong. I've always been proud of my working class roots. Learning about Worktown makes me even prouder.



Amina



Barbara

I left school at the age of fifteen and went to work in the cotton mill industry. I worked in the ring spinning room, from the age of fifteen until I left at the age of eighteen. The last mill I worked at was Swan Lane Mills. I was doffer in the ring spinning room. It was very noisy from the machines.

Before joining this group I didn't know anything about the Cotton Queens. It has been very interesting to find out more about the Cotton Queens. Their ages varied from teenagers to early twenties.

I have enjoyed being part of the radio drama. It is something I never thought I would do and it was really enjoyable to make. I also enjoyed the day at Blackpool and going to look at photographs and newspaper cuttings about the Cotton Queens in the Blackpool History Centre.

I came late to the group and have only been here four or five weeks, I've really enjoyed it though. It's all about the cotton queens and how people lived in the 1930s. I also learned a lot about how the cotton industry worked in Bolton.

I worked in a mill myself, Courtaulds and Bolton Textiles as a creeler until 1975.

I have enjoyed meeting different people. We have talked about our lives and formed friendships. The museum we visited in Blackpool was great and I'd love to go to different places and learn more about the cotton industry and the history of the town where I have lived all my life.

Last week we had a lady called Imogen who specialized in Textiles. We were able to use the materials, felts, satins and cottons, we made flags and it was really enjoyable. I can't tell you how much I enjoy coming to this group. I love it!



Brenda



Brenda

I came to the group because I was told about it at the Golden Oldies Group I go to and I thought it sounded interesting.

I really liked it when we looked at photographs of the old days in the archives and when Matthew Watson, from Bolton Museum and Dr Bob Snape came to talk to us. I learned a lot from the photographs and they brought back lots of memories. I was able to help the writers because I had a lot of information about working in a cotton mill that they didn't have as they'd never experienced working in a mill.

When I was young, I never got to go to Blackpool, although I knew others who went. Going with the group was lovely, although it was a bit cold. We went to the museum in Blackpool and I enjoyed that. We also went to the Tower ballroom and danced a waltz, played slot machines in an arcade and had fish and chips for dinner.

I have enjoyed being part of this project from the beginning. It has been diverse and stimulating and has introduced me further to the Worktown Archives which has given me an insight into Bolton life at that time, the importance of the Cotton Industry to the town and the role of the Cotton Queens.

I have enjoyed co-operating in writing a radio play, performing in it and seeing it being professionally produced.

I have enjoyed meeting new people and doing new things like making a banner, drama improvisation and of course the trips out together.



Kathleen



Michelle

I have been coming to the Cotton Queens Group since it started in August. I've done a lot of research online about Bolton's Cotton Queen, Doris Bower who was crowned in 1936/1937. I have used my research to create my own patterns to crochet two dolls for the project, one of Doris Bower and one of a mill girl.

We visited archive centres at both Bolton and Blackpool and I have had the opportunity to look through lots of old photographs of Worktown Women. We also visited Leeds Industrial Museum to see the 'Queens of Industry: from loom to limelight' exhibition. We were able to see working looms, which was really interesting.

As part of the project we have also written a play which is about mill girls on holiday in Blackpool during Wakes Week. The play has been recorded at Bolton University and is being aired on the radio at Fairfield Hospital in Bury.

I have made a lot of new friends at this group and have really enjoyed myself. My name is Nora. I have lived in Bolton all my life. I worked in Dove Mill when I was a girl as a sewing machinist. I made Victorian style nightdresses.

I come to the group with my friend Michelle and really enjoy it. I meet people I wouldn't meet ordinarily and I have made some lovely friends. I've liked learning about the Queens of Blackpool. They were ordinary people with ordinary lives. They worked in the mills and spent wakes week in Blackpool. I didn't know about the Worktown Project before but I loved all the photographs that Humphrey Spender took.

I really liked the visits to the different places, like the museum in Leeds and Blackpool Peoples Museum, mostly the Blackpool Trip, we went into the tower and sat in the ballroom where they filmed 'Strictly'. We had a camera crew with us and a photographer. They did interviews and took some photographs for our exhibition in the Central Library in Bolton. Some of us have written a play. It was good going to the University to record it. Hearing it for the very first time was great.

I enjoy coming to the group, I hope it carries on and we are still able to meet.



Nora



Sandra

My name is Sandra Castle, I am retired, married to Eddie and have a family that includes eight grandchildren, who are a source of great joy to us. My main interest is creative writing and I am a member of a local creative writing group.

Although I no longer live there, I am a born and bred Boltonian, which was once a proud cotton town, and it is memories of this that persuaded me to get involved with the Worktown Cotton Queen project in August 2019.

Not really knowing what to expect, it has turned out to be a great experience. We have learned so much, including researching the Bolton Museum Archives, and have been guided by friendly, experienced mentors. Our team of mainly strangers have morphed into a band of friends over the last six months who look forward to the next step along the journey in discovering how the workers of Worktown lived.

I have always been interested in local history. I have always had an interest in Bolton's Mills. So when I got the flyer for the Cotton Queens, I jumped at the opportunity. I have found it amazing and made lots of new friends.

We have been to Leeds Industrial Museum and on other trips. It has given me a new appreciation for Bolton (Worktown). I have done things I never thought I would, like do a radio play and other projects such as The Mantelpiece Project. It has gone from an 18 week project to 'whoever knows how long' project.

We are now planning a presentation of our work at Bolton Museum- "watch this space". I am happy to continue however long this course runs for as I have found it has made me appreciate how we used to live and all the hardships our family faced.



Verona



Bernie

I have been interested in local history and social history for as long as I can remember. The huge mill buildings in Bolton fascinate me and the museums at Wigan Pier and Quarry Bank Mill gave me a good idea of what they were once like inside.

The Worktown Cotton Queens Project has given me more insight into a specific period of history through the eyes of the people who worked there. It has been lovely to take part in such a variety of activities, from looking at archive material in Bolton Library to banner making, from creative writing to performance and the recording of a radio play.

Cotton Queens has given me many new friendships as well as a sense of purpose. From this small group of women I have gained a greater sense of belonging to the wider community of Bolton.

Joining the Cottons Queens has given me the opportunity to develop confidence and skills that I never thought I had. I joined the group at the last minute after hearing about it from a friend and I had no idea what to expect.

I really enjoyed learning more about the Cotton Queens on our trip to Leeds Industrial Museum which was wonderful. I also enjoyed writing and recording our play and filming on the promenade at Blackpool.

I have recently discovered that my mum worked in a cotton mill and so doing the project has become even more special. I have made some amazing friends that now seem like family and I am looking forward to taking part in future projects and performing our play to the people of Bolton.

I would like to thank the Cottons Queens for giving me opportunities I never thought I would get.



Jeannie

Worktown



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Cotton Queens

