

LIFE THROUGH LAUNDRY



GRANBY STREET
LEICESTER

A tale of two towns through the lens of the local laundrette.
Worlds collide from the high street, South Norwood London to
Granby Street Leicester.

With special thanks to Dan Winder, John Hickman, Amie, Dylan, Gen,
Hazel, Jack, Libby, Mary, Suzy and Zuleica in South Norwood and
Lobo, Adam, Will, Rokaiya, Zuber, Taz, Dylan and Mohammed in
Leicester.

Produced by



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Just before entering Granby Street, I like to gaze up and look as far as my eyes can take. This long stretch of road that gets narrower by the time you get to its end. The historical buildings, some built for banking and other functions, now transformed to accommodate high street changes. Then I start to walk, and this street is humming with colour and people and dialects of language. What will you not find here? A burger shop, pasta shop, a cute cafe that sells amazing gelato, some of your typical chains. You also have the charity shop and dry cleaners and family-owned clothes shop and pub. Streets leading off to historical quarters around Leicester. Granby Street is a hub of its own.



Writing and poetry by
Kaozara Oyalowo



Kadiri

in this place, we dry everything
our duvets, our uniforms, our clothes
that sleep through summer's heat.

Family run, father and sons, we've been
here for years this place, as housing prices
surged and people moved on, we remained

opening our doors wider for the new family
starters, the ones whose gardens are
pots of flowers and herbs resting on

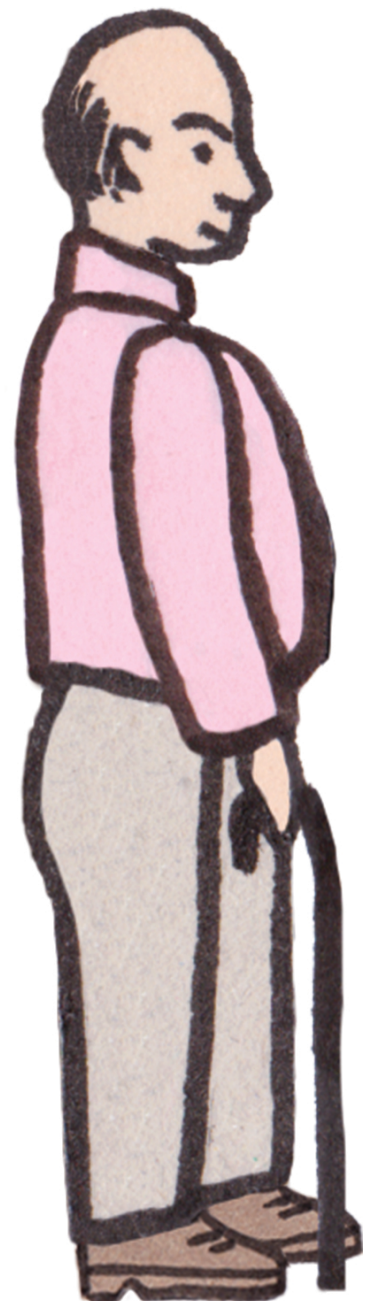
window ledges. The workers who stretch
out their uniforms, hands like the washing
line, swaying, shaking out the leftover
moisture inside the laundrette.

This place was once a takeaway shop,
greasy, salty fingers staining denim patterns
and chef whites. One way or another it is here

they circle back like the washer drum, twirling
out pockets for destructible gems, pushing
dangling seaweed sleeves. Duvet buttons

clinking against metal ridge and if you listen
closely, I know it reminds you of the family
trip to the sea, foam washing against glass

door, pushing back and forth like an excited
tide. When the timer goes [] it pulls us back
from the brink of a sunny sea into Kadiri.



Wash Day

forgotten clothes on top of the washing machine, spare duvet in the plastic basket. an old t-shirt turns spillage cleaner. myths of the sock stealing machine goes on like a bedtime story. those plastic bags can fit approximately 10 pieces of clothing and one duvet, some bits and bobs for living, enough to carry summer into winter or winter into summer. you would think they were off on holiday to the south or going to the train station only to make a sharp right at the dry cleaners, tugging black luggage along the cobbled road. I count uniforms through the window on the white rails, leather jackets and wedding suits. fresh smell of Lenor outdoors & Asda's own softener escaping each time the door pings. life in a pandemic has changed but people remain people, leaving signs that they are still here, still alive in their laundry baskets. it's Saturday morning, the sun is blinding, cold drinks waiting to be drank, but first the clothes need washing.



Barbershop

The overhead lights are dimmed, out of date hair cut posters lining the wall. Like an executioner,

the barber gestures to the next waiting man, a nod to signify 'you're next.' Customer's eyes graze over

the posters, a slick fade is chosen, and they sink into the rotating chair. Fluff bursting through hairline

cracks on the backwall seats and the ones with the beards are lowered back, white hot towel pressed

against their neck an opening, blade scraping live hair by the jugular. Used towel discarded into the basket

below the gigantic mirror, once full, wheeled out back to the laundry room or a bag to be washed at home.

The barber sparks a conversation with his client, lord knows where this will lead, some spew a series

of movies since the last time they sat here, others a trail of broken hearts or their new baby now old as a shrub

and how the weekend is a glitching matrix and work is work. But by the time the cut is done, and the face is cleansed

of stray hair, the customer is 5 pounds lighter back into a world where stress and worry cling to the fibers of his hair.



Restaurant (Haiku)

On Granby Street edge
We are sat loving the years
that roll by. Persons

we tucked away in
the corner of our warm
restaurant. On some

days we wear orange
paying homage to chicken,
the lamb, the beef cooked

in our delicious
delicacies. Bubbles of
joy wafting in from

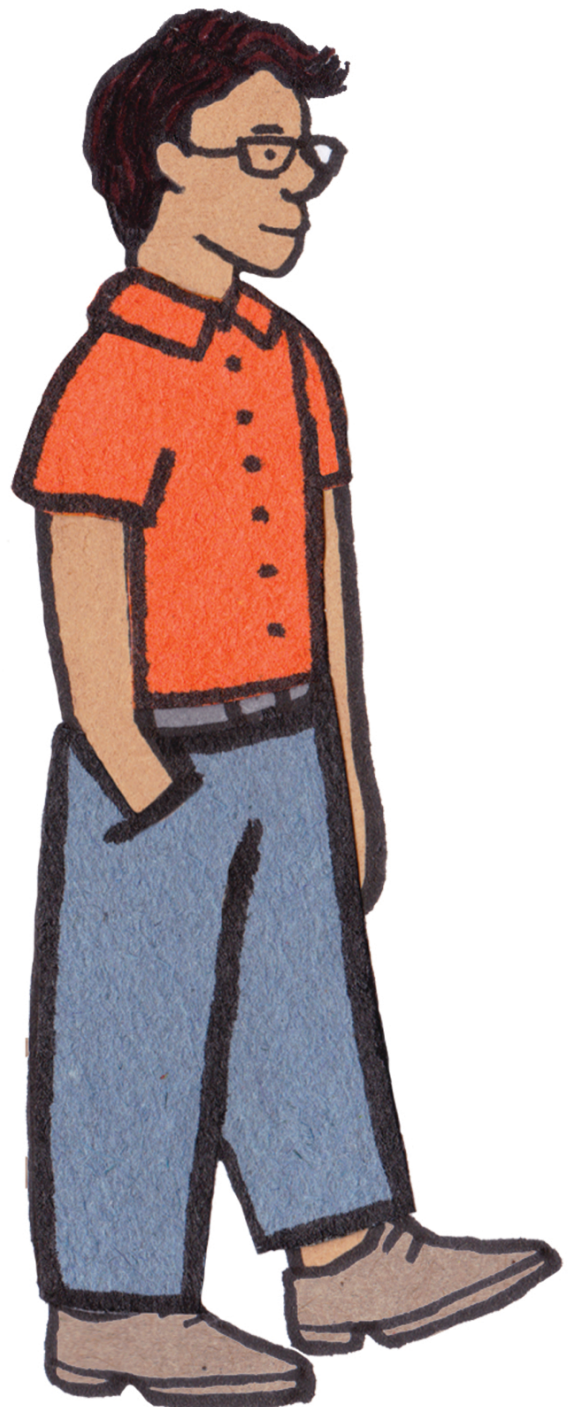
kitchen to tables
lingering on leather chairs.
At times in the week

we adorn ourselves
in green like guava flesh in
our salad special.

Our food has won hearts
plenty of hearts. We even
appeared on telly

once or maybe twice.
Our menu, a wonderful
tribute to our South

Indian heritage.



Charity Shop

What will you not find in this shop?

A hint of scarf, a bag of ponchos,
a dazzling mix of sequins from Primark
and Next and that multi-coloured shop
tucked away at the end of the shopping centre.
The weirder it is the faster it sells. We keep
the racks buzzing with rays of colour from
fuchsia to lilac to sky blue. On this high street
life moves through the cycle of clothes,
some are outgrown and dumped into black bags
that end up here and others show their faces
on those new apps where new buyers give them
a home for the next few years. As time passes
the high street feels distant, hideout shops with
peeling paint, shut eye doors that never reopen.
We watch new shops open with hope and flourish
for a season then take the back door out by
the winter solstice. We are the charity shop
still standing on Granby, clover green hands
always happy to help.





LIFE THROUGH LAUNDRY



SOUTH NORWOOD
LONDON

South Norwood is a place of contrast, a place that ebbs and flows. A place where people are enacting change together for a future they plan to stay around for. From the laundrette on the high street, our journey begins with laundry and ends with possibility. This is my love song for South Norwood, to a place of hopes and dreams from people who make things happen.



This booklet features extracts from an historical audio trail, to listen and find accessible formats visit: www.historicengland.org.uk/lifethroughlaundry

Writing by Jessica Scott



South Norwood High Street & Clock Tower
1992 © Historic England Archive



Libby moved to South Norwood in 2007 and used the launderette while she was doing up her flat. She speaks fondly of spending time in the launderette, accompanied and calmed by the whirr of machines as she carved out time to read. The best was when she was flush enough to get a service wash, a lovely smelling slice of luxury.

Libby is an accidental community activist. Before moving to South Norwood she had moved four times in three years so she was ready to put down roots. She wanted to make South Norwood her forever home so she thought about how she'd like that to be and set about making it happen. She has been involved with the Clocktower Market, instrumental in the local library campaign and set up a local film club at Stanley Arts.

In danger of being mothballed, The Stanley Arts building was taken into community ownership in 2013. The community has brought the building full circle: it is once again a place for arts, music and entertainment and for people to come together.

Built from the ground up, it developed over time. Libby started doing film screenings and her friend Katie helped her to turn it into a proper community film organisation, a mums group started, an independent cake and coffee shop opened. There is now a full timetable of comedy evenings, music gigs, independent theatre, drag shows and vogueing classes among other treats.



Every couple of months Gen goes to the launderette to use one of the big washing machines. She has a beautiful husky whose dog bed she washes in a giant pillowcase designed for washing horse tackle in.

She lives on Portland Road just round the corner, she grew up here and travelled around but ended up back in South Norwood. There used to be a launderette on Portland Road too but it closed some years ago and eventually was made into residential space. She echoes what several others have said - she worries about the quality of the housing and whether much light ever reaches the inhabitants down there.

She talks about the ups and downs of the High Street. When her parents moved there in the sixties there was a jewellers, a pet shop, a shoe shop, butchers, fishmongers, bakery..... Gen thinks it was the beginning of the end when the family upholstering business lost their retail space.

Still, Gen is positive about the area - there's a colour and a vibrancy that she can't always quite put her finger on but it's there and so is the sense of community.



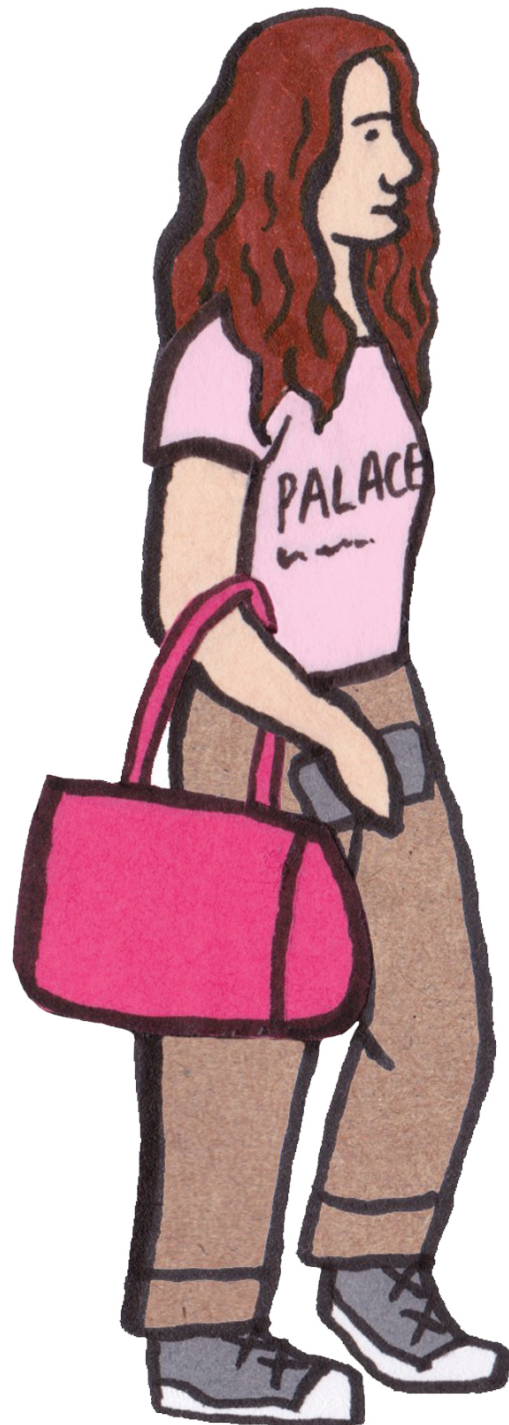
Dylan and Zuleica grew up in South Norwood. They both moved away but found themselves back here. Zuleica proudly shows me her pink Crystal Palace football shirt which her brother sent to her in Australia when she was feeling homesick. She's taken it everywhere with her.

Zuleica remembers buying clothes with her mum from Pinch a Pound on the High Street. Dylan mentions the local toy shop next door, JH Lorimer, but Zuleica doesn't remember it, she says her mum probably didn't take her, they went to Pinch a Pound and that was it. Dylan bought his first record, New Kids on the Block - Hangin' Tough from the local independent music store.

They reminisce about when Palace was in the FA Cup final, there were flags everywhere, the station had been decorated and the whole area was buzzing. They didn't win but they had united people. Dylan says that the club is like a glue that holds the community together. They have the local vaccination centre at the grounds and open it up as a homeless shelter in the winter.

Dylan normally lives in Portland Road. He's in temporary accommodation paid for by his insurance company after a leak from a Thames Water source flooded underneath the floor and caused it to sink. Ten months on and he's still in temporary accommodation, living out of a suitcase in a small studio flat. He is philosophical about the situation and learning about living minimally. This upheaval, coupled with Covid has changed his perspective on a lot of things.

More widely, Dylan thinks the upheaval of Covid has intensified the local community spirit. There's a lot on social media nowadays, people seem to care more about where they live and want to stay in the longterm. They hope this momentum continues.



Hazel and her partner Murray moved to South Norwood in 2016. It was lockdown though that really helped them feel like part of the community. Their daughter was born two months before Covid hit. Murray was therefore unexpectedly working from home, meaning they could share the load and both bond with their daughter

Hazel has found a wonderful community through mums WhatsApp groups, discovering plenty of people who have wanted to connect and who have been up for going for walks. The library has also been a lifeline for them.

Their nearest park is Grangewood Park just up the hill from them. Murray had always presumed it was a place for illicit activity but fell in love with it during lockdown. Similar to nearby Beaulieu Heights, another piece of ancient woodland with similar associations, it forms a selection of beautiful outdoor spaces that have been a refreshing change of scene during lockdown for many.





South Norwood is a place of surprises, a place of unexpected natural beauty spots, a place where chain shops have not taken a grip on the high street despite hard times for local businesses, a place of grassroots campaigning for a future created through collaboration. It may not be obvious from a cursory glance but on inspection, there is so much treasure to be found here. South Norwood - a place that deserves a beautiful love story - yesterday, today and tomorrow.

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@QuietDownThere



Illustrations by: Eleanor Finlay-Christensen
www.elschristensen.co.uk
Instagram: @elschristensen

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