

# The Shop on Greame Street 1972

In Manchester back in the early 'seventies, inspired by the writings of George Orwell and the photographs of Bill Brandt, I began doing documentary work. I was twenty years old and a student of photography at the city's Polytechnic.

I lived in Moss Side, a vibrant multicultural inner city area which was undergoing regeneration, its residents being resettled to new walkways in the sky. To get close to people and to make a record of them before they moved on, I rented a disused barber's on Greame Street, and opened it at weekends: the Free Photographic Shop.



Angela Lorecetta Lindsey, aged 8, with her brother Mark Emanuel Lindsey.





Foster mother with children.



Meadows' shop was sandwiched between a second hand clothes shop and a tattoo parlour



Looking at new pictures in the shop window.





Football fans on their way to see Manchester City play at Maine Road.



Paul, Michael and Ian. Paul and Ian are brothers



Antoinette Rowbotham.



'Greasers', Patrick 'Ped' Donaghey with Eric, carrying a parcel





Watching as new pictures are posted in the window of the Free Photographic Shop at no.79B Greame Street, Moss Side.

There I made portraits and gave them away.  
I also developed the template for my subsequent practice — recording and communicating people's stories on audio tape as well as in photographs, documenting their motivations and triumphs, the ups and downs of changing circumstances.

Some audio recordings I made at the same time as I took the photographs. For others I waited years. To enjoy the pictures and the stories as they have come together over time, visit my website

In 1973, after running what we'd now call a crowdfunder, I put my shop on wheels. I called it the Free Photographic Omnibus. It was a 1948 Leyland Titan PD1 double-decker, registration JRR 404, which I bought for £360 and repurposed as my home, gallery and darkroom.



Joanne McKenzie (left); Donna Duncan (middle). Teenagers outside the tattoo parlour, no.79C Greame Street, next door to Meadows' shop

Over the next fourteen months I covered 10,000 miles and visited twenty-two villages, towns and cities across England. Parked up in shopping centres and on high streets I ran free portrait sessions for all-comers, developing their pictures overnight and giving them their prints the next day.

I photographed 958 people.  
Since 1995 I have revisited both of these projects — the shop and the bus — writing and photographing, tape recording and filming. Many of the stories told can be found in my books: 'Now and Then England' published by the Bodleian Library Oxford, 2019 and 'Book of the Road' published by Bluecoat Press London, 2023.

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