

BRADFORD MADE
Heritage Brought to Life
Stories from Bradford's Communities

KS 3/4/5 (age 11-18)
Activity Pack

VICTOR WEDDERBURN

Bradford in Full Colour



LOCAL STORIES

FOR LEARNERS



BRADFORD 2025
UK City of Culture

PACK AT A GLANCE

Find out about the life and work of Victor Wedderburn, who took photographs of the community living in Manningham, Bradford, in the 1980s. Victor's pictures are a unique and vibrant record of the Bradford African Caribbean community who were living, working and socialising around the Lumb Lane area at this time.

This pack contains a selection of Victor's photographs, a poetry film by Bradford poet Mycall Isrell, a creative writing prompt and two photography assignments (with top tips from Victor) in which learners are challenged to explore their own communities and to capture them in a series of images.

Recommended for: 11-18 year olds (Key Stage 3, 4 and 5)

Learners will need: Access to a device with a camera.

NB: Victor's story, the poem, and the Investigate tasks can be explored as a standalone session, without a camera.

Includes: Discussion prompts, poetry, film, short writing task and creative photography activities

Links to: History / Local learning / English / Music / Art / Photography / Media

VICTOR WEDDERBURN'S

LUMB LANE

BRADFORD IN FULL COLOUR



Photo © David Lindsay

Victor Wedderburn

Windrush Families

In 1948, a ship called the **Empire Windrush** arrived in Britain, carrying hundreds of people from the Caribbean. The British government had encouraged Caribbean families to help rebuild the country after World War II and to fill important jobs. Over the next 20 years, thousands more people came to the UK, working in nursing, public transport, manufacturing, and many other industries that kept the country running. Together, they became known as the **Windrush Generation**, named after that first ship. Victor Wedderburn's parents were part of the Windrush journey.

Victor was born on 7 December 1954 in Battersea, near Mandeville, in the Parish of Manchester, Jamaica. He was one of seven children. His father was the first to travel to England, arriving alone in 1959. The plan was to help rebuild Britain after the war, earn enough money to build a house in Jamaica, and then return. However, when he realised it would take longer than expected, he asked Victor's mother to join him so they could work and save together. Victor's mother went to England with their eldest child and the two youngest children, while Victor stayed in Jamaica with the other three siblings, cared for by family friends and his grandparents.

In 1968, when Victor was 12, his parents returned to Jamaica for good – or so they thought. But life there had changed. People assumed that because the family had lived in England, they must be wealthy. The very first time they left the house, it was burgled. Neighbours asked for money, watched them closely, and judged them harshly if they didn't give. His parents felt out of place, as if they no longer belonged.

Eventually, the family decided to return to England. In 1971, Victor, then 15, travelled with his parents and all six of his siblings, so the whole family was together for the first time in England. The decision to settle in Bradford had been influenced by a friend of Victor's father, who told him there was plenty of work in the textile mills. When the family returned, both of Victor's parents were able to reclaim the jobs they had left years earlier.

So in 1971, the family moved. 15-year-old Victor found himself in Bradford, Yorkshire, and in the UK – a place he had been told was a land of opportunity. Back in Jamaica, posters and adverts made Britain look like the best place in the world – happy bus conductors in smart uniforms, smiling nurses, and signs saying “the Mother Country needs you.” But the reality was very different. Even when families had a place to live, nobody showed them where it was or helped them settle in. They had to knock on doors and search for housing on their own, and there was racism too – rude comments in the street and even signs saying “No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs.”



Victor remembers the shock of his first bus journey through Bradford. In Jamaica, buses were noisy and full of life – people chatting, joking, and music in the background. But in Bradford, the buses felt quiet and eerie. On board, you could only hear the wires humming and twanging. People didn't really seem to talk to each other, and everyone wore the same heavy work jackets from the mills, which made it look as though they all worked together, even though they didn't.

Walking through the city centre, Victor noticed even more things that felt strange. The streets were often foggy from coal fires, because people burned coal in their homes to keep warm – there was no central heating. Streetlights glowed dimly through the haze. It was nothing like the bright, sunny photographs of Europe he had seen in books, magazines and posters back home. England felt grey, quiet, and cold compared to the colourful, noisy world he had left behind.

“In winter, the smoke and fog from everyone's fires would start at three o'clock in the afternoon, making the sky grey until well past dark,” he recalled. It wasn't until the 1970s, when people switched from burning coal to cleaner coke blocks, that the skies began to clear – a change Victor still remembers vividly today.

Over time, the family began to settle into life in Bradford. Victor's father found work with Vickers Dawson engineers, and his mother worked in a factory making medical equipment. But for Victor, growing up as a Black teenager in the city was not easy. He often faced racism on the streets and the hassle of police stops – things his parents didn't always notice, as they spent most of their time at work, home, or church. Victor attended Wyke Manor School (now the site of Appleton Academy) and left at 18 to start his first job at Morrisons. One year later, he became a lorry driver for Croft's Engineers in Thornbury, delivering machine parts across the country. He stayed with the company for ten years before being made redundant (losing his job) at 28.

Victor says that people today expect him to have happy memories about coming to Britain. But as a teenager, the truth was much more complicated: it was confusing, lonely, and very different from the stories he had been told. Looking back now, he sees how much Bradford has changed. There's far less racism, and the streets are no longer filled with soot and smog. He says that if he had arrived in Bradford today, it would have been a very different experience – and he would have been much happier.

Starting to shoot film

After being made redundant at 28, Victor often spent time on Lumb Lane in Manningham – known locally in the 1980s as the "Frontline." It was a lively place where Caribbean, South Asian, and white communities mixed, sharing food, playing pool, and enjoying music and conversation. For Victor, it was one of the few spaces in Bradford that felt warm and welcoming, even if the name hinted at the challenges people faced in the area.



There he met Lanre, an aspiring photojournalist. Lanre introduced Victor to photography, showing him his attic darkroom in a community centre. The red glow, the smell of chemicals, and the way black-and-white images appeared on the paper felt magical to Victor – he knew he wanted to learn.

Through his girlfriend, Victor later heard about a man in Leeds who had been experimenting with colour photography. A biker who photographed tattoos. His prints were faded and washed out, showing how tricky colour was compared to black-and-white, but he was hooked immediately. Discovering the world of darkroom processing sparked a lifelong passion for photography in Victor. He decided to use his modest redundancy payout from Croft Engineers (the money a company gives when someone loses their job because the role is no longer needed) to buy a second-hand Praktica SLR camera. An SLR was a Single Lens Reflex camera, the best off-the-shelf camera you could buy, and with it, he purchased a colour photograph developing kit so that he could develop the photos himself.

After buying the second-hand colour developing kit, Victor proudly took it to show the photographer in Leeds – but instead of encouragement, he was told it was a waste of money! At first, Victor felt crushed, but the doubt only pushed him harder. Determined to prove he could do it, he spent nearly 23 hours straight in the darkroom, until he mastered the process. His first successful prints came out as sharp as any he had seen professionally printed in a shop, and he was ecstatic. Information on colour processing was almost impossible to find. “The manual that came with the kit was useless,” Victor recalled. “I went to Bradford Library a few times, but there was nothing on colour photography – only black-and-white.” So, Victor had to teach himself, learning the language of photography as much as the chemistry. He studied words like magenta and cyan from the dictionary and discovered through trial and error that sometimes the way to correct a colour fault was to use the same filter, not the opposite.

Unlike black-and-white processing, which allowed flexibility, colour development demanded exactness: the right chemicals, the right temperature, and precise timing. A few seconds too long, or a degree too hot, and the print was ruined. Victor invested in equipment from the only photography shop in Bradford at the time – paper, chemicals, tanks, and studio lamps – and gradually mastered the process. He remembered one evening, after spending hours in the darkroom, arriving at the café in Manningham utterly exhausted, eyes barely open, but clutching three perfect colour prints. They proved to him that all the frustration, guesswork, and long hours had been worth it. When he shared his prints with others, Victor could see how popular colour was; they showed the real vibrancy of the people and place, and he persisted with it, despite the processes being much more complicated.

Lumb Lane Legends

Armed with his new camera and kit, Victor set about documenting life in the city of Bradford and where better to start than the lively Afro-Caribbean community he was part of. At the centre of it all was Lumb Lane in Manningham, known at the time as the so-called 'Frontline', with shops, cafes and West Indian music streaming out of The Perseverance Hotel.

Victor captured well-known characters who lived and worked in the area of Manningham at the time. His photographs include portraits of characters like 'Speedy', who he snapped sitting on a stack of tyres outside his business 'Speedy Tyres' and reggae musician DJ Barry Roots, who can be seen smiling at the counter of his Roots Record shop. He remembers;

"Rather than saying 'see you at the pub, or on Lumb Lane', they used to just say 'See you on the Frontline!'"

Bradford had a vibrant working-class culture, but areas like Manningham, Little Horton and Little Germany, which were home to many immigrant communities, were chronically underinvested in. Despite these struggles, the 1970s and 80s saw an increase in Black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs in Bradford, who not only provided services and goods to the local people but also helped build a great sense of place and community spirit at that time.



Embracing Colour: →



Embracing Colour!

Colour photographs had to be developed in total darkness and, without a darkroom, Victor improvised at home, working out how to develop his own colour film, he explains:

“To develop the negatives, I would put everything I needed in a black bin liner, asking my wife to seal the top with my hands inside using duct tape. I’d then put another black bag over myself with my head sticking out. Then I would carefully transfer the film negatives from the 35mm cartridge onto a spool and into a developing drum. I could then take the black bags off and pour developing fluids into the drum.

Each stage had to be completed in optimum temperatures and for the correct amount of time. Over time, I learnt to seal the bathroom door and window to block out light while I worked.

It wasn’t long before I managed to get a flat with a broom cupboard, which luckily was big enough to be converted into a darkroom. I was ecstatic when I managed to produce the first photograph; the colours weren’t quite right, but I was so delighted I had finally done it! Over time, my processing skills greatly improved, but I remember it was difficult to explain what an achievement this was to friends or family.”

Immigration and Nationality Laws in the UK

In the 1970s and 1980s, the UK government introduced new laws that made it harder for people from other countries to live and work in Britain. The 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 British Nationality Act changed who could live in the UK, who could work, and who could become a British citizen. At the same time, negative talk about immigration made life harder for Black people who were already living in cities like Bradford. Some groups, like the National Front, stirred up racism, and there were protests and riots in different parts of the country.

In Manningham, the area around Lumb Lane was called 'the frontline'. The name came from the fact that Black people living there often faced harassment from the police and sometimes hostility from others in the community – it felt like being on the front line of a battle. However, it was also a lively and playful place where people could meet friends, play pool, listen to music, and spend time together safely. For Victor, Lumb Lane was both a place of tension and a place of community.

"I lived in Manningham at the time and would regularly go out to the Young Lion café on Lumb Lane. I would drop my daughter off at nursery and go play a game of pool and chat with friends. It was the place in Bradford where Black people would meet. The area was called the Frontline, and every so often, the police would come and search your pockets and look in the café."



Thousands of Fleeting Moments

Around 2% of Bradford's population identify themselves as being of Black Caribbean, Black African or Black British background - that's roughly 11,000-12,000 people today (based on a population of around 540,000). In the 1970s and 1980s, the community was smaller, and people were more likely to live close together in certain regions of the city, often near the mills and factories where many residents worked. Since then, changes to housing and redevelopment schemes have meant families have moved to different parts of Bradford, so the community is now more spread out across the city.

Victor's rare colour photographs of Black life in Bradford help to keep the history of this particular part of Bradford alive. Despite the hardships and adversity, there was a great sense of connection and community that is clear to see in his photographs.

"From smiling faces and fashionable retro outfits to the struggle for social justice, Victor's visuals are a beautiful illumination of our history, shared humanity, and collective quest for social justice and human freedom." - Dr Kingsley Utam (FHEA)

Victor had hoped he could make a living from his photographs, especially the larger prints he worked so hard on. He framed them carefully and tried to sell them to the people he photographed, but most people couldn't afford to pay much - sometimes only a few pounds. He even borrowed money to help start the business with his wife and got support from the council, but customers were few, and the business wasn't making enough to cover costs. After several attempts at trying and failing to make the photography pay, Victor decided to stop. He moved to Birmingham to work for British Bakeries. Later, when his marriage ended and he gained sole custody of his daughter at age 15, he returned to Bradford. He took a job with the NHS and stayed there until he retired in 2021.

Victor still lives in Bradford today and finally had his incredible body of work recognised and celebrated in his first ever exhibition, Frontline 1984/1985, as part of Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture. He hopes the 1,500 negatives of his images that he has carefully looked after all these years may one day be digitised and preserved by the National Science and Media Museum.

**Victor says, "I didn't make any money...
but now it ends up that I've documented
the history of the Windrush generation really."**

It turns out, all these years later, that there was another legend of Lumb Lane; his name was Victor Wedderburn, and he was the one taking the pictures.



Bradford - The City of Photography

Bradford is known as a 'City of Photography' due to its rich history with photography. Throughout Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture, the city has celebrated this through photographic projects and exhibitions, such as 'Nationhood: Memory and Hope' and 'Make Yourself at Home', which celebrate the region's diverse communities and multicultural heritage through the art of photography. The city's relationship with photography began with wealthy mill owners forming the Bradford Photographic Society in 1860, the second-oldest photographic society in the world. The city later became home to numerous photographic studios, pioneering new technologies. The significance of Bradford was solidified with the opening of both the National Science and Media Museum, a global centre for photography and The Impressions Gallery, one of the first specialist photography galleries in the country. In 2009, Bradford became the world's first UNESCO City of Film.

The exhibition Frontline 1984/1985 presented a never-before-exhibited collection of Victor Wedderburn's extraordinary photographs, featuring African-Caribbean friends, families and communities living, working and socialising around Lumb Lane. Shown in April-May 2025, for Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture.



Photo © David Lindsay

Scroll the images that were included in the exhibition on the Bradford 2025 website here:

<https://bradford2025.co.uk/event/frontline-1984-1985>



Now let's

'Investigate': →



INVESTIGATE

Interview Victor

Imagine you were interviewing Victor for a magazine article...

What questions would you ask him? What is interesting about his story?
How does his story link to the wider history of the city of Bradford?

Once you have created and compared your questions, watch Tim Smith's interview with Victor in the **Dig Deeper** section.

Cameras and Photography Now and Then

Access to phone cameras has changed the way we use and think about photography. As a group, think about when, where and why you take photos and collect together some examples. Why do you think Victor took photos? Is this different or similar to why we take photos today? What happens to the pictures once you have taken them? How are they stored and shared? How might this have been different in the past, when not everyone had access to a camera and each image had to be 'developed' and printed?

Watch this poetry film by Mycall Isrell

– written in response to Victor's photographs.

Watch this poetry film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsCmt7Rzwss&feature=youtu.be>



- What words and images stand out to you?
- What impression do we get of the Lumb Lane community?
- How do we think Mycall feels about the history of the community?
- How does Mycall feel about Victor's pictures?
- What choices does Mycall make about how to tell the Lumb Lane story?
- What kind of words does he choose?
- What details does he choose to include?
- What tone does he use?
- How does he get and keep the listener interested in his poem?

Mycall uses the postcode BD8 in his poem. In Bradford, we love to use postcodes to say where we are from. What would you include in a poem / spoken word piece about 'your BD?'

You could use the writing frame below to get you started. Remember to think about the choices Mycall Isrell made in his piece:

- We are BD...
- We have...
- We love...
- We feel...
- On our streets there are...
- In BD...
- You can hear the sound of...
- Smell the scent of...
- Taste the taste of...
- Dream the dream of...
- We are BD...



Artwork

'The Selfie' photo

There was no such term as 'selfie' back then. This image came long before anyone had even invented the word - and it was technically complex to do this shot. He used a clever trick with a cable release — a little button you could screw onto the camera so you could take a picture without touching it. He'd stand back, press the button, and nobody would know he was taking the photo. The picture was actually of him in a mirror. Using the cable release meant he didn't have to worry about the bright flash in his eyes or fumbling with the camera. Like all his photography, it was about experimenting and trying new ideas. He learned by doing, seeing what worked, and not being afraid to get creative.





LEARN AND CREATE

Two Photography Challenges

Make sure learners are familiar with issues around safety and consent when taking photographs.

Use whatever camera you have access to!

Photography Challenge 1 – Capturing People

Look again at the people in Victor's photographs. There are some links to more of Victor's pictures in the Dig Deeper section of this pack.

The people Victor was photographing were often his friends, family and members of his close community. Some of Victor's portraits of people are photos that the subjects prepared for. They will have been thinking carefully about their clothes, shoes and hair and any objects they wanted to be photographed with.

Find a member of your community who agrees to be photographed. It could be a friend, a member of your school community, sports team, neighbour or a family member.

Ask them to think about what clothes they would like to wear for their portrait and whether they have an important object they would like to be included in the picture. Think about colours and how you could use them to make your portrait vivid and lively.

Think about the background for the portrait. Do you want it to be very plain so that the person stands out, or do you want a background which helps tell the story of your relationship to your subject?

Try to use natural, outdoor light for your portrait and avoid using zoom.

You could think about the 'rule of thirds' - putting your subject a third of the way into the frame.

Experiment with your subject, looking at and not looking at the camera and how they are standing or positioned.

You could take lots of shots and decide later which one you and your subject like best. Get creative! Direct them to sit, stand, lean and move about, making different facial expressions, laughing or looking more serious.



Photography Challenge 2 – Capturing Place

Go for a walk around your neighbourhood or another area that you are very familiar with. Learners can do this with an adult, a friend, or in a group.

Keep an eye out for the places and sights that you always see on this route. What places are important to you and to the community? These could be specific buildings, shops, trees, playgrounds, signs, cars, bus stops, corners, doors or anything else that you notice. Don't limit your choices to places that look 'nice' – try to capture the reality of the area you are photographing. Think about the ideas and feelings connected to these places.

Take at least 10 photos of places in your neighbourhood, these could include people, but don't have to.

How, in your photo, can you reflect the feelings connected to this place? E.g. you could use a 'worm's eye' view from low to the ground to make your subject look bigger or more important, or try to capture a favourite place flooded with a warm evening light. There are some photos you could look at for ideas and inspiration in the Dig Deeper section.

Are there interesting colours and contrasts to be captured?

Try to create a collection of photos that builds up a sense of place.

If you can, print your photos and create a 'map' of the area by arranging them on a large sheet of paper and recreating your walk.

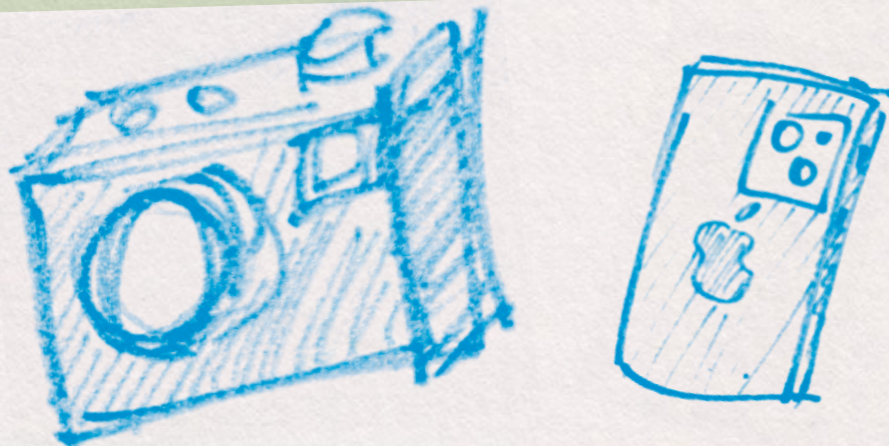


Victor's Top Tips

- If you ask someone to pose, take another photo straight afterwards – when they're more relaxed. That second one is often the best.
- Go out and photograph places where people are having fun and feel relaxed.
- Try capturing movement – people running, playing, or dancing. Motion always makes photos interesting, and you don't need to worry too much about light settings these days.
- Visit parks and public places. Take your time and just watch what's happening around you.
- Explore different angles. Don't be afraid to get low, climb a little, or move around – it can give your photo a fresh perspective.
- Don't delete your photos straight away. The ones you think aren't great might be the ones other people love – and vice versa.
- Show your pictures to others. Ask friends and family which ones they like; you'll often be surprised.
- Photograph in all seasons and settings. Don't just stick to summer or outdoors – indoor moments, rainy days, or winter scenes can be just as interesting. Victor wishes he'd taken more pictures of people inside – watching TV, chatting, playing games – as well as outside.

Once you have taken your photographs, you could:

- Compare your pictures with someone else's and give each other some feedback. What makes a 'good' photo? And how can we try to make our photographs of people and places better?
- Print your photos and create a group exhibition.
- Create some exhibition 'notes' explaining the choices made by the photographers.
- Create a playlist of music to help bring the images to life for an audience.



DIG DEEPER

More on Victor's work here

Conversation between Bradford photographer Tim Smith and Victor Wedderburn:

bradford2025.co.uk/story/in-conversation-victor-wedderburn-tim-smith/



BBC News article:

[‘Place and people now gone’ caught on camera by city snapper - BBC News](#)

Yorkshire Evening Post article:

[13 nostalgic photos of Bradford that feature in photographer's new exhibition](#)

Bradford in the 80s:

[An Unseen Side of Black Britain https://autograph.org.uk/online-galleries/bradford-in-the-80s](https://autograph.org.uk/online-galleries/bradford-in-the-80s)

Black History and Community in Bradford:

For more information about Bradford's black community, watch this engaging and informative documentary about the history of the Newby Square flats and the people who lived in them:

[Newby Square Stories - YouTube](#)

Newby Square Stories is a digital archive of reminiscences from people who lived and worked in and around the Newby Square area of Bradford. These stories came out of research that was carried out in Bradford's black community for the Rooting project, funded by Bradford 2025 and The Leap.



Photography of People and Place

For inspiration and ideas for taking photographs of people and places, you could check out the following archives:

- An archive of Bradford family and community photographs curated by young curators from New Focus at Impressions gallery, Bradford. Part of the exhibition 'Make yourself at home' which opened in September 2025: [Home | Bradford Family Album](#)
- Browse a vast archive of UK photography documenting culture and communities here: [British Culture Archive | Photographer Galleries](#)
- Pictures taken by Bradford young people during COVID: [Project Gallery – through our lens](#)
- Photographs of Yorkshire landscapes and buildings by Peter Mitchell: [Peter Mitchell Instagram](#)
- Real Bradford Instagram: [Real Bradford \(@real.bradford\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)

For more on cameras and the technical aspects of photography:

- [How does a digital camera work? – BBC Future](#)
- [Top tips for taking portrait photos at home - BBC Bitesize](#)
- [BBC Scotland - The L.A.B Scotland, How to Take Brilliant Photos on Your Phone](#)





NOTES FOR EDUCATORS

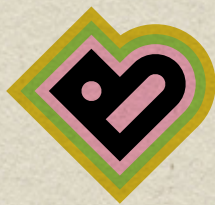
Educators will be aware of the need for sensitivity and care when discussing race, class and migration with groups of learners. Please read and check that the materials are suitable for use with your learners before use.

Please take care to stick to any policies around photography and consent in your institution, and to make learners aware of issues around safety and consent if they are undertaking photography activities independently.

For more guidance on talking about migration with learners, please look at these guidelines created by Bradford Schools of Sanctuary:

[Teaching about Forced Migration – A Guide for Bradford Educators](#)

Care was taken to represent Victor's full life experience when telling his story, meaning the story text is potentially quite long for some learners or purposes. The story is presented in sections, and educators should feel free to use these sections independently if required.



BRADFORD 2025

UK City of Culture



This resource was created by the Bradford 2025 UK
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