

An Iranian in North East....!!!!

When I arrived in South Shields, some 41 years ago, the plan was for me to qualify as 2nd mate and then return to Iran to continue my work as a tug master and pilot till I retire!!!

Before going back to Iran, I married a Geordie girl and left these shores to settle in Iran in 1978.

By 1981 I found myself back in the North East as a result of a so called revolution and a war with Iraq.

This time I was here with a wife and a year old daughter and without a job and very little money to live on, but I felt at home and never thought that I'm not wanted in this town.

I managed to work and provide a decent living for my family and always tried to be an active member of the society and give a little back for all the good things I received in South Shields!!!

South Shields, out of all the other towns and cities in North East, is probably the most hospitable place for people like me, and I think this is due to the nature of the Sand dancer's professions and life style!!!!

Being a port and also a big mining and ship building centre, gave the opportunity to the town's residents to know more about distant parts of the world and their populations at the working class level of relationship.

I believe this experience and being a working class society; made north East people and especially the South Shields folks to become so tolerant towards the other nationalities who decided to choose to live in this beautiful part of UK!!

For years the Iranian community in the North East was very small and till about 15 years ago the numbers wouldn't have been much greater than one thousand, but at the moment within a 50 mile radius, I reckon there are at least 5000 Iranians settled over here.

We as Iranians are very flexible in our integration with the indigenous people in any part of the world, and the ones who have settled here, they have mixed very well with the Geordies.

There are quite a lot of mixed marriages, not for immigration purposes, and in the past 15 years there has been many businesses set up and established by the new comers which have helped the local economy enormously!!!!

We now have quite a few authentic Iranian restaurants in Newcastle and they managed to convert a lot of the Geordies from being the curry lovers into Persian food cognisors.

Of course there are problems every now and then, but both the Iranians and North East people get on very well with each other and I know a lot of my country men who feel just as much at home here as they would have if they were in Iran, and may long live this wonderful co- existence in this part of UK and similar in the rest of the country and the world!!!!!!

Siamak Kaikavoosi