

News

Sights and smells of Hull brought to life in new book

AUTHOR SHARES RECOLLECTIONS OF CITY

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RECOLLECTIONS of his transformative years spent in Hull, when he witnessed the opening of the city's first Indian restaurant and struggled to get the smells from starch, soap and glue manufacturing out of his clothes, have helped shape a new book from John Cammidge.

Now resident in California, University of Hull graduate John has brought the part autobiographical, part fictional *She Wore A Yellow Dress*, to publication after five years of writing.

"I recollect the freedom and enjoying the amenities of urban living," said John, of his three years of studying in the city.

"On campus, it was participating in the social gatherings at the student union, and in town it was visiting the public library and eating lunch at the Gainsborough fish restaurant whenever I could afford to.

"I also vaguely remember the first Indian restaurant opening in Hull and how the food was considered very 'different'. Additionally, I recollect the Stoneferry Industrial Estate, although it is not a fond memory.

"Twice a day during my first year at university I would cycle between my lodgings just north of Holderness Road and cross the River Hull at Ferry Lane on my way to and from campus.

"The fetid smells from nearby factories would cling to my clothes and skin, particularly during foggy

and rainy weather, causing my presence, once in the warmth of lecture rooms, to release obnoxious odours.

"Memories are of the smells produced by starch and soap plants, the odours of oil seed milling, the emissions from fish and animal glue factories, as well as paint production and cement works."

Brought up on an isolated farm near York, John became a keen "birder" and made sketches of birds he saw at Spurn Point as a teenager, which appear in an appendix at the end of the book.

"My favourite bird remains the curlew; its haunting call from the fields close to my York home symbolised the arrival of summer, its magnificent long, slender, down-curved bill makes it easy to



recognise, and its ingenious protective behaviour of persuading intruders to follow it away from its nest has kept it at the top of my list.

"Even here in California it can be seen along the coast during autumn and winter, where it is known as the long-billed curlew.



John's coming of age book, which looks at the realities of life in Britain the '60s and '70s, is also a love story - he met his wife, Jean-Louise, at university, and their personal struggles sometimes mirror, sometimes contrast the national unrest of the time.

"Today's challenges are similar to yesterday's, such as a woman's right to choose, the financial freedom to secure an education, the impact of illness, under lockdown caused by external adversity, the importance of perseverance and a can-do attitude



John Cammidge with one of his favourite birds, a Eurasian eagle owl



and grasping moments of serendipity," said John, who, after gaining an honours degree in geology and geography, went on to a successful career in human resources, including many years at Ford of Britain and at the Bank of America.

"People who read *She Wore A Yellow Dress* during the Covid-19 crisis are likely to recognise these parallels and commiserate with characters."

The novel follows on from John's last work, *Unplanned*, and was originally called *Snakes and Ladders*

and latterly *Bonfire Nights*.

"It took my sister to point out that my wife, who I met at university, had boasted about a yellow dress she wore before we were married, and which she used on me and others as her dating frock.

"I was no doubt influenced by her appearance and hence the book became *She Wore a Yellow Dress*,"

said John, who hopes the book will broadly appeal to readers who enjoy romance or coming of age stories, those who wish to recall or learn about British politics and the car industry, as well as ornithologists.

■ *She Wore A Yellow Dress*, by John R Cammidge, will be published on Tuesday, February 16 by Gatekeeper Press.