

A Celebration of 40 years



1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

STORIES & *Memories*

of 40 YEARS



1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat Luton

A Celebration of 40 years

1983 – 2023

Shri Guru Ravidass Sangats 40th Anniversary



Luton has been home to the Ravidassia Sikh community since the mid 1950's providing employment in many of its factories and foundries for the newly arrived Indian Immigrant community. Numbers of which, steadily rose in the 1960's and 1970's and by the early 1980's there was significant community.

whilst coexisting with western society and traditions. Despite their struggles and only initially intending to stay for four or five years and then return to India, Luton had now become their home.

During the early years there was much talk of establishing a place of worship and a focal point for the community. Enabling gatherings for faith celebrations and festivals for them to attend, and mark the rites of passage ceremonies. In 1983 this vision become a reality as several members of the first and second generation immigrant community joined together to collectively purchase the Welsh Methodist Church site at 31 Cardigan Street.



The Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat opened its doors for worship in early 1983. With Mr. Sadhu Ram, Mr. Nasib Chand and Mr. Tarsem Lal as its founding Trustees. Mr Piara Lal as the President, Mr. Baldev Raj Bungar as General Secretary and Mr. Sodhi Ram as Cashier.

much needed funds to purchase the property outright. Before this time, worship and social gatherings were usually confined to local school halls with Beech Hill School a popular choice.

Fundraising efforts took members

across the country as they sought



At the time, most community members were blue collar workers in millinery, hat making, manufacturing, ball bearing, automobile production and other associated industries. Due to the nature of the employment wages were not highly paid, however community members still dug deep into their pockets to find much needed



donations to enable the purchase of the Church in Cardigan Street. They achieved all of this, despite at the time still facing discrimination, racism and prejudice throughout each layer of society. Many were still struggling settling in their first homes in the UK, supporting families back home in India and bringing up their young families. In 1983 the average house price in the UK was £27,3633 and the average weekly wage £203.77.

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Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat plays an important role in helping with community work and cohesion for Luton.

It is so heart warming to see a faith organisation play an active role within the town. We are honoured to work alongside such an organisation.

Cllr Sameera Saleem, Mayor of Luton (2022 -23)

A Celebration of 40 years



In 1997, Luton Borough Council, a newly formed unitary authority awarded the Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat its first grant to support the elderly community with a weekly Lunch Club, or Wellbeing Club as it is now called. Over twenty-five years on, the lunch club is still running every Wednesday. To date it has provided over 65,000 hot and freshly cooked meals.

In recent years the Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat has broadened its approach and services reaching out to wider community needs across Luton. This is often through working in partnership with like-minded organisations, to set up an array of services to improve the quality of life of local and disadvantaged communities.



In response to the outbreak of COVID 19, with the support of the whole sangat, Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat was able to provide in excess of 21,000 hot meals, over 42 weeks to organisations including other faith and community institutions such as Hope Church, Salvation Army, YMCA, Noah Enterprise and Signposts. Additional support was provided to key workers such as the Police, Fire Service, GP Surgeries, Luton Blood

Donation Centre and NHS staff at the Luton and Dunstable Hospital. Furthermore 4,000 items of snacks, drinks, fruit, personal hygiene products and PPE equipment for frontline staff was provided. By the end of 2022 there had been in excess of 210,000 deaths from COVID in the UK.



The founding members could not have imagined that a community that was struggling to fund their own place of worship forty years ago were now supporting others less fortunate than themselves. It is a testament to the values instilled by the first and second generation communities that of resilience, dedication and seva (selfless service to all).

We look back at the events of 1983 and the iconic 80's decade that shaped and



influenced the early years of our Guru Ghar. In doing so we detail the life stories of some of our members, who despite personal difficulties still maintained committed to continuously support the development of their community, prioritising the values instilled by their faith.

Sanjeev Kumar MBE
General Secretary

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It was a great pleasure to visit Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat just before we went into the first lockdown in 2020. I received such a warm welcome that I immediately felt at home and, needless to say, the food was amazing. It was no surprise to me then that the principle of Seva was expressed so profoundly, so lovingly and with such dedication throughout the pandemic. I am constantly inspired by the example of service and care for others that is shown by people of all faiths and none across all communities in Luton and Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat is second to none in that. Congratulations on your 40th Anniversary; the value you have brought to Luton endures much longer."

Mark Turner, Service Director, Luton Rising

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1980's – An iconic decade



The decade itself was not only a defining time for Luton's Ravidassia community, but also an iconic period for the United Kingdom. Arguably no other era changed the social and political atmosphere so drastically. From the conservatism of Margaret Thatcher to the decline in trade union influence, family owned shops giving way to privatisation and high consumerism. Energy companies were amongst the first to be privatised, with British Telecom in 1984.

Pop artists began to feel the need to make a difference. The 1980's Ethiopia famine was one of the worst humanitarian events of the 20th Century.

According to the United Nations

Ethiopia's food shortages and hunger crisis from 1983 – 1985 led to an estimated 1 million deaths. In 1984, Band Aid with the song "Do They Know It's Christmas?" raised over £150 million for relief efforts.

In 1981 the first recorded case of the AIDS virus in the UK occurred and despite medical advances the World Health Organisation has detailed the death rate to this virus to be over 40 million.



Video games including Pac Man and Super Mario were all launched in this decade with huge advances in technology during the 1980s. On January 1st 1983, the Internet was born when ARPAnet adopts TCP/IP protocols which would allow data exchange among a network of different models of computers. Home computers also became popular during the decade.



Throughout the 80's, domestic football was dominated by Liverpool FC. However Luton Town FC still managed to lift their first major trophy in 1988, lifting the Littlewoods League Cup on 24th April.

Until 1982 there were only three TV channels in Britain, BBC 1, BBC 2 and ITV but in that year Channel 4 began broadcasting. In 1980 the walkman, a portable music player was introduced. CD players went on sale in 1983. The first artificial heart was installed in 1982. The first heart and lung transplant was performed in 1987. In 1983 Magnetic Resonance Imaging or MRI was introduced.

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We are delighted to have worked in partnership with Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat on Bangla Fest and Sunday Exercise and Fitness sessions at the Creaky Bones Club. The Club was established as a response to local community needs to improve health and wellness and has proved to be very effective during Covid as a way to engage and keep community healthy. We congratulate Luton's Shri Guru Ravidass community on their milestone 40th anniversary and wish them all the success in future.

Mahmudul Hoque, Treasurer, Creaky Bones Cluv

A Celebration of 40 years

1983

The Year Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat was established

We look back at 1983 with events that happened in that year, many of which were turning points in history and even impact us today 40 years on



ਗਰੀਬ ਨਿਵਾਜੁਗ ਗਸਟੀਆ ਮੇਰਾ ਮਾਥੈ ਛਤ੍ਰ ਧਰੈ।

Gareeb nivaaj gusa'eeya mera maathai chhatr dharai.

O my beloved Lord, merciful to the poor, you have placed a canopy over my head.

Guru Ravidass Ji :Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji :1106

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We at Bedfordshire Police would like to start by congratulating the Guru Ravidass Sangat on reaching this momentous occasion of 40 years of service to not only the Ravidass Community but the wider community of Luton and Bedfordshire. The support of the Sangat has been hugely appreciated by all of us within Bedfordshire Police. I have been nothing but amazed by the work that I have seen the Sangat complete in the three years that I have been leading the team. They always make themselves available should me or a member of the team need to seek advice, and the welcome we receive from the whole community when we attend the Gurdwara is nothing short of breath taking. Congratulations on reaching this milestone of 40 years.

Sergeant Vick Sanghera of the Community Cohesion Team, Bedfordshire Police

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1983 – A Special Year

1st January – The Internet is born

ARPAnet adopts TCP/IP protocols allowing data exchange among a network of different models of computers.



17th January Breakfast TV – BBC

At 6:30am, Britain's first-ever breakfast television show, Breakfast Time, launches on BBC1.



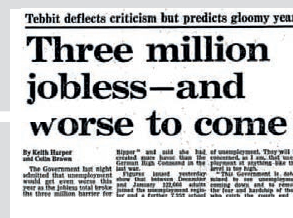
1st February – Breakfast TV – ITV

TV-am launches on ITV, with Daybreak and Good Morning Britain.



February – High Unemployment

Unemployment reaches a record high at 3,224,715. Although the previous high, reached in the Great Depression of the early 1930's, accounted for a higher percentage of the total workforce.



15th February – The Austin Metro

Is now Britain's best selling car, having outsold every other new car registered in the UK during January.



March – Compact Disc

The compact disc (CD) goes on sale in the United Kingdom.



8th March – Speech by. President Reagan

US President Ronald Reagan describes the Soviet Union as the "Evil Empire" and as "the focus of evil in the modern world" during the Cold War to the National Association of Evangelicals.



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1983 – A Special Year

April 1983 – Vauxhall Motors

Vauxhall Motors launched the Nova replacing the aging Chevette. Nearly 500,000 Novas were sold in Britain over the next ten years.

The Luton factory provided employment for many Lutonian's and in 1983 the Cavalier MK2 was being produced. Vauxhall sold 807,62 cars of the second generation Cavalier between 1981 and 1988.



By December 1989, it was the third most common model of car on British roads.



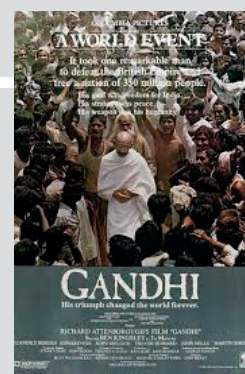
1st April – Roland Rat

Roland Rat makes his first appearance on TV-am and is generally regarded as TV-am's saviour.



11th April – Gandhi film

Richard Attenborough's 1982 film Gandhi wins eight Academy Awards.



21st April – £1 Coin

The new one pound coin is introduced in England and Wales. The £1 note would be phased out by March 1988.



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31 Cardigan Street has been a place of worship since 1881 in Luton initially by Methodists, serving and supporting local communities. The local Ravidassia Sikh community have continued that tradition when the former church was converted to a Gurdwara, in the 1980s. The building is however more than just a temple and place of worship it is a recognised as a community base, which reaches out beyond the local Ravidassia Sikh community in the town, to the diverse communities of Luton. The Sikh tradition is well known for its good works through its food programme and community kitchen, but the role of the Ravidassia Sikh Community is much wider in terms of charity works and support to deprived and vulnerable peoples of Luton.

Mike McMahon, Director, The Cultural History CIC

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1983 – A Special Year

11th May 1983 – European Cup Winner

Aberdeen FC, managed by (Sir) Alex Ferguson, beat Spanish giants Real Madrid to lift the 23rd European Cup. They would go on to win the European Super Cup in November 1983 also.



14th May 1983 – Luton Town FC

On the last day of the football season and a deciding goal from substitute Raddy Antic, stunned Maine Road and sent Manchester City shell-shocked into the Second Division in the critical closing game of the 1982-83 season.



City needed one point to survive, for Luton a win was their only solution.

The 85th minute goal meant that Luton would stay up in Division 1 (now the Premier League).

They would remain in there until 1992.



9th June 1983 – UK General Election –

The Conservative Party under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, (the 'Iron Lady'), won the most decisive election victory since that of the Labour Party in 1945, with a majority of 144 seats.

Future Prime ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were first elected MP's during this election.

The UK's first female Prime Minister would end her premiership in 1990 having begun it in 1979.



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25th June 1983 – India Win their 1st Cricket World Cup

India win their first Cricket World Cup , winning by 43 runs and completing one of the most stunning upsets in cricket history against the two time champions West Indies at Lords, London.



1st August – A registration appears on new cars

The new A-prefix car registration plates are launched, helping spur on the recovery in car sales following the slump at the start of the decade caused by the recession.



29th August – Blockbusters launched

ITV launches Blockbusters, a gameshow hosted by Bob Holness and featuring sixth formers as its contestants. It would broadcast on TV channels until 2019.



September – Luton Central Mosque

Luton's Central Mosque celebrates the 1st year of its official opening in 1982. It was one of the first purpose-built mosques in Britain and the biggest in modern Europe. Established in response to the town's growing Islamic population, its construction was financed by Luton's Muslim community.



8th October – Concorde arrives in Luton

The airliner had been chartered by Vauxhall Motors as a reward for some of their best-performing dealers.



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We are very privileged in Luton that we have welcomed diverse communities and faith groups. Like Luton's Ravidassia Sikh Community, Luton Central Mosque was established as a response to the needs of the local community to establish a place to worship. Both were and continue to be funded and supported by the local community. We acknowledge Luton's Ravidassia Sikh community on their milestone 40th anniversary.

Mohammed Shafait, President, Luton Central Mosque

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1983 – A Special Year

15th November – Thriller released

Michael Jackson releases Thriller in the UK.
It is the seventh single from his album of the same name. The “Thriller” music video premieres on MTV on December 2, 1983.
Many elements of the video have had a lasting impact on popular culture.
It has been named the greatest music video of all time.



6th November – Brink's-Mat robbery

In London, 6,800 gold bars worth nearly £26 million are taken from the Brink's-Mat vault at Heathrow Airport. Only a fraction of the gold was ever recovered.

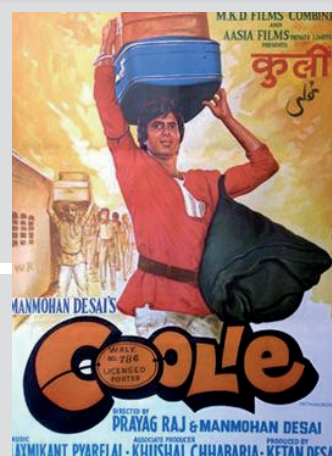


18th November 1983 – Walton Sextuplets

Born to Janet and Graham Walton the world's first all-female surviving sextuplets, and the world's fourth known set of surviving sextuplets were born in Liverpool .
The children are Hannah, Luci, Ruth, Sarah, Kate and Jennifer Walton.

2nd December – Coolie (Bollywood) is released

The film is considered a major blockbuster and was India's highest grossing film of 1983. Whilst shooting for the film the films star Amitabh Bachchan suffered a near fatal accident. Amitabh is regarded as one of the most successful and influential actors of Indian cinema. Often referred to the Big 'B' he was awarded one of India's highest honours the Padma Shri 1984 and Padma Vibhushan in 2015. Amongst his many other awards in 1999 Bachchan was voted the “Greatest Star” of the Millennium in BBC World online poll.



6th December – First life saving surgery

First heart and lung transplant carried out in Britain at Harefield Hospital.



17th December – Harrods bombing



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Supporting Others

At the beginning of the COVID pandemic no one could have imagined the extent and devastating impact the virus would have on the whole world.

To support the growing local need, the most needy and vulnerable, front line workers and the Luton and Dunstable Hospital Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat responded.

ਬੇਗੁਮ ਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ॥
ਦੁਖ ਅੰਦੋਹੁ ਨਹੀ ਤਿਹਿ ਨਾਉ॥
Begumpura sahar ko nau
Dukh andoh nahi tih thau

Begumpura, the city without sorrow.
There is no suffering or anxiety there.

Guru Ravidass Ji :Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji :345

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In recent years the Sangat offered their support to Bedfordshire Police by bringing hot food to the station during the Covid Pandemic, knowing that officers would be working long hours without being able to make time to feed themselves. The support of the sangat was invaluable during this time as they regularly visited our stations to make sure officers had the opportunity to eat. Over the last 8 years I have worked closely with Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat and in this time, I commend the work that the sangat do on a wider scale across Luton. Luton is a hugely diverse town with people from many different religions and background residing within it, I have seen the Guru Ravidass Sangat work tirelessly over my time to support all of the communities in times of need and in celebration, congratulations on reaching 40 years'

PCSO Daniel McHugh, Community Cohesion, Bedfordshire Police



Shri Guru Ravidass S



♥ Over 21,000 Hot Meals Provided
♥ 42 Weeks of Support Provided

Sangat Covid Response



ed ♥ 4000 Items of Snacks & PPE
vided to Luton's Communities

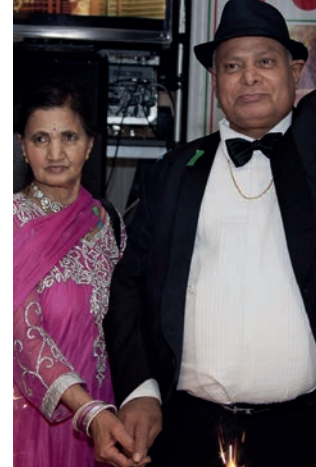
Stories of 40 years

Inspirational people

We have been truly inspired in the journey of our founding members. Their dedication, commitment and their drive in overcoming multiple barriers; striving to establish their homes, support their families and also fund raise and set up their places of worship.

Some of their life stories follow, bringing immense pride, tinged with sadness knowing the hardship that each of them overcame.

Please see www.moreluton.com/shri-guru-ravidass-sangat for more details



ਤੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਮੋਹੀ ਤੋਹੀ ਅੰਤਰ ਕੇਸਾ
Tohee mohee mohee tohee antar kaisaa

You are me I am you what is the difference between us?
Guru Ravidass Ji :Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji :93

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Stories of 40 years

Bhagat Ram



Bhagat proudly displayed his passport and emigration voucher that brought him to the UK in 1963. Bhagat was living in Beas Pind, Jalandhar in the Punjab and was studying. At that time the British Government invited people living in Commonwealth countries to emigrate to the UK to support the labour needs, and as a way of thanking those countries for their role in the two World Wars. Bhagat knew nothing about this scheme until his brother told him to go. Bhagat's brother had been in conversation with a friend and thought this would be a great opportunity as employment prospects in India were poor. He was so keen that he even completed the application form for him, but Bhagat was reluctant to leave. However, he felt that he couldn't let his brother down so, he agreed.

Bhagat was issued with a voucher and came to the UK. Fortunately, some people from his village were already in the UK and were able to meet him at Heathrow and give him short term accommodation. Bhagat's uncle, who lived in Luton, came for him and on 20th July 1963 Bhagat began his life in Luton. At that time families supported each other a lot in settling in the UK.



Initially, Bhagat worked in a scrap yard but one of the other men there dropped some metal which narrowly avoided hitting Bhagat. Bhagat left and went to work in a factory on Wingate Road, manufacturing steel boxes for the Shipping Industry, where he stayed for two and a half years until he had a serious accident with some industrial machinery that left him with his little finger hanging off. He was quickly taken to the Luton and Dunstable Hospital and they managed to save his finger. Bhagat started work at Johnson Tools and Dyes, Dunstable, until he was made redundant.

Bhagat was out of work for six months before he found another job, this time at Kents, but after eighteen months, he was again made redundant. Luckily, Bhagat found some stability at Goldstar, where he worked for eleven years before retirement in 2006.



Bhagat recalled that he would often work seven days a week and would take on overtime. The intention was to earn enough money to go back to India and have a better lifestyle. However, when children were born and other families settled in the UK, it raised questions about why would want he want to go back and what he would do there.



Bhagat visits India annually since retirement to see extended family and looks forward to doing this again once it is safe to travel. During Covid, Bhagat and others have collected and donated money to their home village Beas Pind, Punjab to help those less fortunate.

In 1970, Bhagat bought his first home, in Holland Road Luton. With a growing family of two sons and a daughter, Bhagat moved to a larger home in Birdsfoot Lane. Bhagat has two young grandchildren by his youngest son.

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It has been a pleasure to be associated with your organisation that has had such a positive impact on the diverse communities of Luton for many years. Luton Irish Forum has gained first-hand experience of the outstanding contribution Shri Guru Ravidass has made. You introduced us to your community through the wonderful and shared experience of learning to cook Indian food during the Cooking in Harmony Project. The frequent distribution of hot food during the Covid-19 pandemic was well received by many of our members. We have also enjoyed sharing in each other's cultural events. On behalf of the staff, volunteers and trustees of Luton Irish Forum we look forward to continued partnership working with you while we enhance the lives of our communities together.

Tom Scanlon, Chair, Luton Irish Forum.

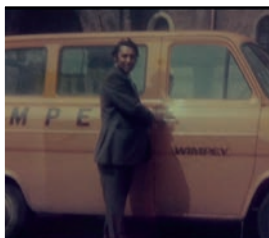
Stories of 40 years

Dhanna Singh Mahey



When Dhanna came to the UK, he was leaving behind a wife and three young children in the village of Mitapur, Punjab to give his family a better future. Dhanna had attended technical college and was a carpenter with plenty of skills to offer in a new country. On reaching the UK under the voucher system, Dhanna stayed with family and quickly found work with George Dodd Builders based in Frederick St Luton. Dodds specialised in doing up houses and selling them on, other larger properties were converted to flats. Dhanna was in demand as a carpenter because doors and windows on many of the properties he worked on were not standard sized and had to be made to bespoke measurements.

All of this time, Dhanna stayed in touch with his young family, and managed to go back to India to visit them, but it was five years before he could bring them over to Luton and the family initially settled with family in Claremont Road. With two families living together there was 16 people living in one house in the early years. Eventually Dhanna bought his first house in Havelock Road, later moving to Reginald Street in 1980. Dhanna's wife soon found employment in a Hat Factory near to home, as a machinist. All of this was new to her, as culturally it would have been unusual for a woman to work outside the home.



Fortunately, Dhanna had quite a lot of family in Luton and they helped one another, often meeting up at the SKF Social Club for a drink and a chat. Dhanna later worked at SKF, Vauxhall, Wimpey Builders and found it easy to find work. At Vauxhall Bedford Trucks, Dhanna was trained in spot welding, welding the body work on lorry cabs. Bedford Trucks operated a night shift and Dhanna worked from 6.00pm to 7.00am, catching up on his sleep while the six children were at school.

Dhanna was a founder member of the Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat Gurudwara, fundraising and bringing his practical skills to refurbish the building. Other Sikh (Ravidassia) communities across the UK also donated and there was a sense of shared purpose in creating local worship spaces. Sadly, in December 1992 there was an arson attack on the Gurudwara which was a terrible setback after all the time and money that the community had contributed. Literally everything was burned apart from the Holy book (the Shri Guru Granth Sahib), which miraculously was unscathed along with the exterior walls. Fortunately, the Gurudwara was insured, and the slow process of rebuilding could take place. The rebuild took around 18 months and today it is a beautiful multi-purpose building with a welcoming atmosphere and a feeling of peace and friendliness.



Like many immigrants, Dhanna only intended to stay for four or five years and then return to India, but over time he realised that his children were very settled in the UK and for them, going back would be placing them in a very different society.

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Stories of 40 years

Kamla Kainth



Kamla came to the UK when she was about 10 years old and her family settled in Southall, West London. Her dad had been living in the Fiji Islands and had a UK passport, which enabled him to emigrate with his family to the UK. Kamla nearly emigrated again, this time to Canada. The company where her dad worked was Canadian, and were offering assisted passages. Kamla's dad asked Kamla and her sister if they wanted to go and both girls said a huge no! So, the family stayed in Southall.

Kamla came to Luton when she married in 1972. It was the perfect place to settle and her in-laws were in Luton too. Both Kamla and her husband worked in Luton's famous hat industry at Bermona Hats on Bolton Road. Kamla's husband worked blocking hats, which is how they are shaped, and Kamla worked as a machinist.

It wasn't long before Kamla's first baby was born and for a while she gave up work to be a full time mum. When she returned, it was to Eastex, where she used her sewing skills again, as a top sticher on high-end fashion garments. Her mum in law looked after Kamla's daughter.



Kamla had always loved sewing, from when she was a little girl living with her auntie and uncle in Jalandhar. When she left Eastex, she continued as a seamstress from home, making suits and dresses, often without a pattern. Kamla recalled the late night last minute alterations leading up to a wedding to ensure that the bride looked her best on the day. She was always pleased to do this and there must be many Luton brides who benefitted from Kamla's skills and kindness.

UB Foods was a leading employer in Luton, making sandwiches for M&S. Kamla started working there in 1987 part time as her family grew up. She stayed for 23 years, making many good friends along the way. After being made redundant, she returned to sewing, this time making medical supplies.

Retirement has been busy for Kamla. She and her husband visit India sometimes twice a year but Kamla said that the Indian summer is too hot for her and travelling between the UK and India gives her the best of both worlds. It's always lovely for her to meet up with family, but equally special to be with her children and grandchildren in the UK. "Family is the most important thing," said Kamla.



A few years ago Kamla became Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat's first ever female Trustee, a position that she believes will inspire other women to achieve more.

Kamla reflected on how good living in the UK has been for her and her family. She is very grateful for the NHS and that she has been able to contribute to a private pension. If she was back in India, Kamla felt that 'they would still be slogging' rather than enjoying an active and fun retirement.

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Jagan Nath



Jagan was just 16, when he came to the UK in 1960. He'd passed his matriulation (O'Level equivalent) and his dad, who was already in the UK, sent for him. Jagan recalled his Mum crying when he left and everyone coming to the train station to see him off. It was a long plane journey alone and a very long way from his hometown of Garhi Mahan Singh, near Apra in India's Punjab. Jagan was really hoping to get an apprenticeship but when this did not work out, determined as ever, he went to evening school to study English and

Science, while working in a Plastics extrusion company in Harpenden. Jagan recalled that pay and conditions there were good but the three shift system was hard going, even for a young person. Jagan said "we sacrifice a lot when we leave our country."

Jagan enrolled on an engineering course to improve his career prospects and found work at Luton's Kent Meters. A year later, he started a skilled role as a machine setter at AC Delco Dunstable and stayed there for over 35 years. When AC Delco closed in 2002, Jagan went to work for Bernard Matthews, but by this time, Jagan was experiencing health problems with his knees and while the company would have welcomed him working part time, Jagan retired. Retirement meant that Jagan was able to spend more time serving as a Committee Member, at the Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat Gurudwara, where Jagan has held key roles over the years as President, General Secretary, Trustee and now as Head Trustee.



The Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat Gurudwara began as a dream for the Luton Sikh community, who were worshipping at Beech Hill School and dearly wanted their own premises. Through community donations and fundraising, the beautiful Gurudwara in Cardigan Street was purchased. A former Methodist Chapel that needed renovation. Jagan as well as many of the elders were key to the success of this venture. Over the years, Jagan said that the community has become "more flexible, and adaptable in their thinking, meeting, socialising and integrating with other communities."

Providing for his family has been central to Jagan's life. Over the years, the family have moved many times in Luton. Each move has been to create more space and a better environment. Jagan also has a lovely house back in India, but he has no plans to move back. "Our children and grandchildren are here" he said. "They don't want that life and we can't do without them."



Jagan does go back to India annually, but also loves going on holiday. To date, he has been to America, Dubai, Sri Lanka and all across Europe. Jagan has loved seeing all of these very different places but always returns to home in Luton. Jagan thanks God that he is here, in the UK for many reasons, most recently he has been benefitted immensely from the support the NHS has provided him.

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Stories of 40 years

Ramesh Sondhi



Ramesh was still under 16 when he arrived in Luton on 20th February 1967 with his mother. The youngest of seven siblings, Ramesh had recently lost his father. His elder brothers already settled in Luton felt a sense of responsibility to their younger brother and applied for Ramesh to join them as a dependent sibling.

Originally from Beas Pind, Jalandhar, Punjab, Ramesh settled with his eldest brother in Kenilworth Road. He recalls that during home football matches none of the family would leave the home, fearing attack by football hooligans. Racist abuse was common and occasionally windows were smashed. The weather was very cold and in the early months the snow was heavy and hard to adjust to however, despite the difficulties, Ramesh was determined to progress and better his life.



He soon found employment at Jewish owned fur coat company on Old Bedford Road. – it was a good start to Ramesh's career. After 3 years, Ramesh joined Vauxhall Motors and stayed with them for 10 years assembling large vehicles for Bedford Trucks.

Ramesh married Harbhajan in 1974 and a year later he had saved enough to put a deposit on his first home. "I paid £10,900 for my first house in Sundon Park in 1975, and I have been very happy here." Ramesh and Harbhajan soon had a family of their own, and his two sons and two daughters settled well in the area.

Later he joined another factory on Wingate Road leaving Vauxhalls. Often working 12 hour shifts, seven days a week and Ramesh was happy, and remained with the company for 26 years.

When the company closed he joined Loomis Security, a firm specialising in replenishing cash machines. However, near tragedy almost struck, on a routine drop to a cash point in Enfield, Ramesh was the driver and his truck was ambushed by gunman. Unaware of what was exactly happening outside his truck, he heard a commotion and as he was about to leave his cabin the gunmen fired. Ramesh was shot in the stomach but fortunately survived. Since retiring he has submerged himself to be a committed volunteer for Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat.



As the community settled in Luton there was a real need to set up a Gurudwara for everyone to congregate and worship together. In the early days the community hired Beech Hill School or Maidenhall Junior School halls to worship. In 1983 the dream of having the communities own place of worship became reality as the community came together and purchased an old Methodist Church in Cardigan Street. Ramesh was amongst the founding members. "We went house to house and up and down the country to raise the funds and establish our Gurudwara It was a great sense of achievement." "Luton has given me so much... I came when I was a young boy and now I am a granddad.. who is still able to support my family members back in India."

1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

I'm delighted to congratulate Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat on celebrating their Gurudwara's 40 years in Luton anniversary. Their contribution to our Luton community embodies the values of Shri Guru Ravidass, particularly sharing and supporting others, none more so than when providing hot meals for those in need, particularly during the Covid pandemic. Working across communities and supporting interfaith work have all contributed to helping build strong community cohesion in our town. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to Luton and here's to many more years to come.

Rachel Hopkins MP, Luton South

Stories of 40 years

Gurdev Bungar

Before she came to England Gurdev was attending the Government women's college in Ludhiana, studying Economics, Political Science, English Literature and Language. Ludhiana is very industrial city and locally known as mini Manchester.



After marriage when Gurdev arrived at Heathrow, she and her husband Baldev Raj Bungar were interviewed by the immigration authority. It was a detailed interview. "You can speak better English than me," said the Interviewer. At the time Baldev Raj was living in Bedford with his Aunt, where they stayed for very short while, before coming to Luton. There staying with Baldev Raj's uncle at Mansfield Road.



In Gurdev's family, her eldest son is married to a Finnish woman, a senior nurse and Gurdev's younger son is married to an English woman. Gurdev sees no difference between people of different races. Gurdev's granddaughter, Anna loves visiting her Granny and always wants to be an Indian princess.



Gurdev was offered a place on a teaching course but at that point she fell pregnant and had to make a choice about her career. She chose family. Gurdev started working later in the Eastex clothing factory. When she fell pregnant to have her son, the staff gave her a huge send off. Most of the staff at that time were Italians and Gurdev was fluent in Italian too.

Once Gurdev's eldest son was born, she helped her community, taking people to the Social Security office or the Doctors. In 1970, the family moved to Stopsley. Baldev Raj had steady work at Vauxhalls as an Electrical Engineer and a workmate suggested that he apply for a council house. They got one almost straightaway in Wigmore Lane in Stopsley. It used to be closed with a gate, which meant that all the neighbours could celebrate festivals in the street.



As the children grew up, Gurdev felt it was time to look for a job and a role at the airport came up. Gurdev started working in retail eventually she was promoted to Senior Sales, Shift Controller and Supervisor role. Gurdev only retired last year. She really enjoyed working there.

During her time at the airport Gurdev was recognised by her employer Alpha Retail, for her long term service (21years), in 2001 with a special ceremony at Hampton Court Palace.

In 1980, the family had moved to a larger home in Telscombe Way. In 1985, they had moved to Oving Close and they are still there today.

In the early years Gurdev volunteered within the Luton Sikh community, using her fluent English to help others with form filling and applications. Her husband who was fortunate to have a car, used it to offer lifts to appointments. It was a very close knit community. A number of events in the community galvanised them to decide that they needed somewhere of their own to worship and come together. It would take a lot of fundraising and hard work but the community was committed to this project.

Through collective efforts the community was able to purchase the Welsh Methodist Chapel. The Gurdwara opened in 1983 and many local dignitaries present including Kelvin Hopkins were present.

She feels blessed that her marriage of more than 50 years to her husband Baldev Raj has brought her much and joy and happiness.

1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

We enjoyed our visits to your temple very much. The building is so interesting and welcoming and the food produced in your kitchen is so delicious. Congratulations on the 40th anniversary of your temple, we wish you many more decades of good work in the community.

Mary Browning, Chair, Warden Hill Community Association

Stories of 40 years

Piara Lal



Piara Lal was born in 1944, in Jadali, Punjab, India. Piara Lal lost his mum when he was only nine years old and he has few memories of her. He was brought up by his brothers' families. He was fortunate that his family were able to send him to school and then onto High School. At Ramgarhia college he studied English. After completing college, Piara Lal married Nashattar Kaur in 1961 but after only two months of marriage, Piara Lal came to the UK in January 1962, leaving his wife in India. Initially staying in Scotland, Piara Lal received news that there was work in Luton and he travelled south. His first job was in the Alliance Foundry, Icknield Road, Luton.

At the time Piara Lal lived with his nephew, Tarsem, in one room where they also cooked and slept. With the prospect of bringing Nashattar to the UK, Piara Lal needed somewhere more suitable to live. He struck lucky with a three bed roomed house on Old Bedford Road, one of Luton's most expensive areas, in 1965.

In 1967, his wife Nashattar was able to come to the UK. In 1969, the couple were blessed with a son, Nirmal Rai. A second son, Surinder was born in 1971, his daughter, Manjit was born in 1976 and a third son Amarjeet, in 1973. Tragically, Amarjeet aged only 19 was killed in a road accident on 5th November 1991. Both Bonfire Night and Diwali fell on the same night that year and the week should have ended on a celebration with Mr Lal's son Surinder's wedding. The family were so devastated by Amarjeet's death that the wedding was postponed for a year while they grieved. Over 30 years on Piara Lal still misses Amarjeet so much.

Piara Lal started working at SKF in 1966, buying a bigger 4 bedroom house in Elgar Path in 1972. It was newly built and had much more space. Around that time, Piara Lal bought a convenience store in Rockley Road. The shop was Nirmal Rai's first job. After two years, he asked for a bigger shop. There was a Coop in Abbotsford Road, so Piara Lal bought that. Surinder moved to Bedford and the family bought another shop there too. Eventually, Mr Lal closed the Luton shop and the whole family moved to Bedford.

On 18th October, 2008, Mr Lal had retired from SKF after forty two years of working there. He had a huge party at Chaul End Lane, surrounded by friends, family and work mates. The SKF Managing Director even came all the way from Sweden and presented Mr Lal with a beautiful silver plate to honour his service to the company.

In the early 1980's Luton's Ravidassia community had grown, and they wanted somewhere that they could all worship together. Piara Lal initially viewed the Chapel and saw its potential as a Gurdwara. Next, he and other community members had to fundraise to buy the Chapel and they travelled across the UK to ask for donations.



Eventually, the community proudly opened the Gurdwara with some distinguished guests in early 1983.

In 1992, the Gurdwara was arson attacked. It says something about the resilience of the community that they rebuilt the Gurdwara. Today it is a beautiful building; a place of peace and a hub of the community.



1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

As a Christian I am always inspired by the practice of Langar (or free kitchen). As part of a Near Neighbours programme to share food traditions a few years ago, a group from our church enjoyed joining Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat for a number of sessions to cook - then at some of their delicious recipes. We were delighted when these appeared in a recipe book for us to follow at home. Sharing hospitality without discrimination in this way is a powerful demonstration of concern for one's neighbour, whoever they may be and we are privileged to have this example here in Luton.

Rev'd Canon David Kesterton, Vicar Parish of All Saints with St Peter, Luton, Area Dean of Luton

Stories of 40 years

Pal Ram Salan



Pal was sixteen when he came to the UK from Jadali, Punjab, India in 1969. It was snowing heavily on the day he arrived. As he had turned sixteen, he was too old to go to school and literally, within a day of arriving, he had started work at a Foundry in Chaul End Lane. Pal's father was already working there. It was dangerous work and Pal was put to work hauling up buckets of molten metal by pulleys. This was made more dangerous as Pal did not understand English very well.

Home was two rooms which he shared with his dad and two brothers. It was so cold and the rental house had no fire. It was a common career path for the community to work at a foundry or factory, improve their English and then move on to the Vauxhall or SKF factories.

Pal moved to Leagrave Road in 1983 and he has been lucky to have good neighbours, with many members of his family living within walking distance. Pal really valued education for the next generation because his generation had so little themselves.

Pal spent forty years working at SKF and before that at Brown Green Foundry and George Kent Meters. He also worked at London Brick Company for a short while. Pal joked at that at the time, if you left a job that you could find another one on the same day.

Pal married in 1971 but the new couple had nowhere to live because his family home was too crowded. He struggled to save the deposit for his first house – a 2 bed house for £1500 in Salisbury Road! The mortgage was £20 per month and he was earning about £10 per week.

In 1974, when Pal was working at Kent Meters, he suffered an awful industrial accident which affected his sight. Pal had finished for the day and was just going to use the company shower when his foreman called him back to finish something. As Pal was working the hot metal blew up in his face. Pal's Shop Steward used his own car to take Pal to the Luton & Dunstable Hospital (L&D), where he stayed for two weeks. After two weeks at the L&D, Pal was due to be moved to a convalescent hospital, but he refused as he wanted to be at home, with his wife for her to look after him. Luckily the nurse, who was English, understood Hindi and agreed to this. Pal's wife nursed him brilliantly, administering eye drops three times a day.



Pal has recently had a stroke and has been under the care of the Luton & Dunstable Hospital. He recently saw a doctor who was of Pakistani heritage but was surprised when the doctor only spoke

to him in English. Pal is making great progress although he acknowledges that the NHS care he is receiving is easier to access than the healthcare support he would have received in India.



1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

Stories of 40 years

Simar Kaur

Simar grew up as the eldest in a family of five brothers and one sister in the village of Jadali, Punjab, India. She came to the UK with her husband Sucha, in 1968 and lived with her in-laws.



Arriving on 28th December, Simar was greeted by the harshness of an English winter. But there was a warm welcome from her husband's family at their home at 65 Dane Road. Conditions were quite cramped as despite the house having three bedrooms, the couple were sharing with up to ten adults from her husband's family. Everyone just made do but the important thing was that the family was together. As her husband was the eldest of his family in the UK, they had their own room. There was little in the way of heating and no landline phone.



When they moved to Stanley Street Simar soon settled in keeping the house work up to date, looking after everyone and sewing from home for an income. Her first job was sewing coats for a person from her own community and then for an English man who used to drop a wide assortment of women's clothing to sew. Her husband's brother married and his wife came over from India. It was then that her husband and brother decided to jointly buy a home in Chester Close. Her sister-in-law, is a lovely friendly woman.

By now, Simar had a daughter, Lakshmi, and three sons, Nirmal, John and Parvinder who attended Beechwood School. As her sister in law also had a son, they were great company for one another and were brought up together. Simar's daughter has now been married thirty one years and has two children who have been to university.

Simar related to some sadder times. They couple bought a shop in Barton Hills but found it hard to make the shop pay for itself. Barton Hills was a new estate at the time, and this should have been a lucrative location. Recession hit during the 1980s and Simar's husband turned to drink. He was a man who believed the best in people but received bad advice. Simar tried to warn him but by then, they had lost everything. All of this impacted severely on Sucha's health and he died aged 42 on Christmas Eve 1992. This left Simar widowed with four children, the youngest aged only five. But she was a determined and resilient woman and returned to sewing to pay the bills.

Her older son bought a house, in Leagrave Road, and for a while everything seemed to settle. However, his wife forced him to sell the house which left Simar homeless and she had to rent. The rental property in Tenby Drive was filthy, damp and cold. Simar worked in a Nursing Home in Marsh Road as a Cook. It was very hard work but she carried on.



Simar is now happily settled in a lovely home on Ash Road. Despite all the sadness that has been around Simar, she still has a wonderful giving nature and will go out of her way to help people.

1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

I am so pleased to add my congratulations to you and all members of the Luton Shree Guru Ravidass Sangat on the 40th anniversary of the opening of your Gurdwara. I am especially pleased that I was able to attend your opening all those years ago and to now celebrate that significant event 40 years later. You may recall that your Gurdwara building was previously the Welsh Methodist Chapel in Luton where services had been taken in the Welsh language for the then significant Welsh community in the town. Two of the members of the chapel had been Gwilym Roberts who was a local Labour MP for Luton between 1966 and 1970 and his wife Mair. Gwilym had been a close friend and mentor to me and I know he too would have been delighted that your historic building is still being used as a thriving place of worship as your Gurdwara.

Kelvin Hopkins MP Luton North 1997-2009

Stories of 40 years

Surrinder Pall



Surrinder was born in Pandori Ghandar Singh, Punjab, India. Surrinder's father was a teacher, assisted by the voucher scheme and he was already in the UK. On arrival Instead of teaching, Surrinder's dad worked in a foundry. Surrinder's uncle was living in Luton and invited him to come and work in the Alliance Foundry. Not long after he made the move, they both went to work in SKF.



Surrinder was 11 when he came to the UK in 1960s, with his mum and three brothers, and he attended Beech Hill School until 1969. Starting school in the UK was a different experience for Surrinder. It was bonfire night on his first day and snowing. He had never seen snow before. The family were living at 33 Moor Street for about six months.

In 1969, Surrinder finished school and started work at Softalite on Biscot Road. Surrinder wasn't too keen on the job and on August 4th 1969 he started at Byways Ltd, a Jewish family business, where he stayed until 24th February 2017. This was a company that made hat linings. Over time, the company grew and moved to larger premises on Enterprise Way. This gave Surrinder a lot of job security.



During this time, Surrinder's dad had bought 19 Spencer Road, which was a three bed house, but in need of modernisation. Surrinder married in 1974 and moved out of Spencer Road in 1977. His son was born in 1975 and his daughter in 1976. Surrinder loved living with the family but it was too cramped and they needed more space. Surrinder applied for a council house and was given one in Wexham Close, Marsh Farm.

In 1995, the family moved to Austin Road. When they moved to a five bed house, it was because there were now four children and they needed more room. The house cost £83,000. Surrinder's family have all grown up and moved out now. Surrinder and his wife now live in a smaller house in Barton Hills.



Surrinder's wife was already in the UK when they married, in a Registry Office in Bedford. Surrinder first went back to India in 1986. It had changed a lot. The family house was still there, looked after by his cousins but his dad sold it and instead built a house in the city.

Sadly, Surrinder's dad who was a severe diabetic had an infected finger which turned gangrenous. Once back in the UK, he got the medical care he needed. Unfortunately, his father slipped into a coma and died on November 5th 2006. After that Surrinder has been going to India virtually every year.

Surrinder's mother passed away 2nd January 2020 and Surrinder and his brothers went back to India together to pray for her.

Of course, Surrinder's children's lives are rooted in the UK. Surrinder has six grandchildren. Surrinder retired on 24th February 2017 at 63, after 47 and a half years, taking voluntary redundancy. Life is more relaxed now.

1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

Stories of 40 years

Bikram Rai



Bikram was fifteen when he came to the UK, so he was fortunate to attend Stockwood school for about six months. There were few opportunities to go on to college and it was important to be earning. Bikram started as a Sheet Metal Worker at South Beds Sheet Metal company on Union Street in July 1967. He stayed with South Beds Sheet Metal for 5 years, moving to another factory and then on to SKF where he worked from 1984-1988.

Bikram said that earning money was vital, not just to support his family in Luton, but to send back to India to help improve the lives of families there. Sadly, Bikram's brother died in an accident back in India. Bikram had already lost his mum when he was seven and his elder brother had always been the one to look after him.



In July 1988 Bikram became a Financial Advisor for Gresham Insurance, based in Alma Street, Luton. He had no financial background but Gresham offered training. Bikram worked there for five years before the firm was sold to an American company, who closed all of the offices. Bikram struck out for himself and in 1994 opened Rai Insurance Services Ltd in Crystal House, where he has worked for twenty eight years, with a client base all over the UK.

In recent years Bikram has been promoting natural health remedies on the radio. Bikram gets a lot of calls from people wanting health advice who had given up with their GP. Bikram has done extensive research into natural remedies and gets huge satisfaction from helping people, despite not making any money from this. People have been so grateful.



Bikram moved to Leagrave Road and has been lucky to have good neighbours for over forty years, with a lot of family living on the same road. Originally, Bikram paid £8000 for his house in 1975. The house gave him everything he needed – three bedrooms, front and back gardens and an ideal location. Bikram says that over time, the commercial traffic on the road has increased which has brought a lot more pollution.



When he moved to Leagrave Road, he was one of the first Asian people to live there and now he has Pakistani neighbours on both sides. Everyone gets along well. Bikram's wife also sewed from home. She had no formal education so it was hard for them to find work outside the home, especially work that would fit around a young family. This meant that wives did not have the opportunity to improve their English. When Bikram's family were grown up, his wife started packing sandwiches at a factory in Alma Street and her English improved rapidly.

He has lived in in the UK for over 55 years now and feels this is home.

1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

I am constantly inspired by the work of our Faith Organisations across Luton. In Luton our Faith Organisations play a vital role in supporting the most vulnerable in our Town and in outreach work. They also are an important part of our Luton 2040 agenda ensuring Luton is a healthy, fair and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive and no-one has to live in poverty. We are blessed to have the Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat Gurdwara based in Luton, working to make Luton a better place. The kindness and compassion shown by our volunteers and organisations is a core strength of Luton and part of why Luton is recognised as the 3rd most generous place in the Country.

Robin Porter, Chief Executive, Luton Council

A Celebration of 40 years

Community Projects

In recent years Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat has broadened its work to provide a range of services reaching out to wider community needs across Luton

ਰਾਮ ਗੁਸਈਆ ਜੀਆ ਕੇ ਜੀਵਨਾ॥
ਮੋਹਿ ਨ ਬਿਸਾਰਹੁ ਮੈ ਜਨੁ ਤੇਰਾ ॥
Ram gus-ee-aa jee-a kay jeevnaa
Mohi na bisaarahu mai jan tayraa

O Lord, Master of the earth, life of the soul,
Please do not forget me! I am your humble servant.
Shri Guru Ravidass Ji: Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji:345

1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

Faith Matters

Shri Guru Ravidass Ji's 640th birthday

Community meal at temple celebration

WRITTEN BY
DAVID JONATHAN

There was devotional singing, reflective talks and plenty of food served in the langar (a community kitchen in a Sikh temple) on the occasion of the 640th birthday celebration of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji at Shri Guru Ravidass Bhawan in Cardigan Street.

Shri Guru Ravidass Ji was a prominent visionary of the Bhakti movement during a period of extreme caste oppression in India. Throughout his life, he strove to remove the obstacles that were creating barriers between the oppressed and the oppressor. He strove to uplift them economically, religiously, socially and politically.



The community meal at the Sikh temple

He challenged protocols and emphasised equality, social freedom and justice for all. Forty of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji's Shabads (deliberations) are included in the Shri Guru

Granth Sahib Ji, the Sikh Holy Scripture. In his speech, MP Kelvin Hopkins affirmed his friendship with the community, applauded the community's role in strengthening peace and unity in our town.

Faith Matters

Shri Guru Ravidass Bhawan event

Birthday is cause for a major celebration

WRITTEN BY
RYAD KHODABOCUS

The Shri Guru Ravidass Bhawan in Cardigan Street, Luton, celebrated the birth of their founder Shri Guru Ravidass Ji last Sunday. Guru Ravidass was a prominent visionary of social equality during the time of extreme caste oppression in India in the 14th and 15th centuries.



The celebration of the birth of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji

Forty of his Shabads (Holy Scriptures) are included in the Sikh Holy Book, the Guru Granth Sahib. Members of different faiths and cultures dropped in during this day at different times to celebrate the occasion.

Through his spiritual devotion Guru Ravidass Ji had enhanced the cause of equality, social freedom and justice for all, particularly for those who were oppressed, exploited and marginalized.

645th birthday celebrations of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji

After the culmination of 'Akhand Path' (non-stop recitation of the Sikh Holy Scripture Shri Guru Granth Sahib) over a period of 48 hours, at Luton's Guru Ravidass Sangat, many dignitaries joined in the auspicious 645th birthday celebrations of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji, who was a great saint, philosopher, poet, social reformer and a prominent religious visionary of social equality in north India during 14th and 15th century.

Through his spiritual devotion Guru Ravidass Ji had enhanced the cause of equality, social freedom and justice for all, particularly for those who were oppressed, exploited and marginalized.

Princely courts were amongst his supporters, many of whom had eventually become his disciples. Forty of his 'shabads' (devotional sayings) are included in the Sikh

Holy Scripture. The melodious 'Kirtan' (devotional singing) was all about loving and serving all.

Dignitaries in their speeches appreciated Luton's Ravidassia community's efforts to outreach and serve the wider community.

Honouring some guests with Siropa – a length of cloth bestowed on someone as a mark of honour, General Secretary Mr Sanjiv Kumar, MBE said, "Two years of COVID has affected all our faith communities so much and in ways we never had imagined."

"During this time, Gurudwara's services to community were massively supported by many of our external partners and organisations. The Siropa was a very small token of appreciation and a way of thanking all of those extraordinary people, who supported acknowledged and guided us through our journey of supporting others."

Guests join Sikh celebrations to mark philosopher's 645th birthday

Written by
David Jonathan

Grassroots & Luton Council Of Faiths

After the culmination of 'Akhand Path' (non-stop recitation of the Sikh holy scripture, Shri Guru Granth Sahib) over a period of 48 hours at Luton's Guru Ravidass Sangat in Cardigan Street, many dignitaries joined in the auspicious 645th birthday celebrations of Shri Guru Ravidass Ji.

He was a great saint, philosopher, poet, social reformer and a prominent religious visionary of social equality in north India during 14th and 15th centuries. Through his spiritual de-



Guests receive a gift of Siropa

The princely courts were among his supporters, many of whom eventually became his disciples. Forty 'shabads' (sacred sayings) are included in the scripture. The 'Kirtan' (devotional singing) was all about loving and serving all.

Dignitaries, in their speeches, appreciated the Ravidassia community's efforts to outreach and serve the wider community.

Secretary Sanjiv Kumar, MBE said, "Two years of Covid has affected all our faith communities so much and in ways we never had imagined."

Faith Matters

Grand Trunk Project

Indian independence anniversary event

WRITTEN BY
RYAD KHODABOCUS

Shri Guru Ravidass Bhawan hosted the Grand Trunk Project exhibition.



Some of the people who attended the Grand Trunk project event

unifies India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The happenings of 1947 are an important part of the cultural memory of the faith communities disproportionately

have often been under-represented. In Luton, speakers from Sikh, Hindu, Muslim and Anglican faith representatives came together to speak

Faith Matters

Peace Light Service

May we be faithful neighbours to all

WRITTEN BY
DAVID JONATHAN

The annual Peace Light Service concluded the year 2022 at All Saints Church, Luton.

The Peace Light (flame) is brought from Bethlehem by the Scouts and Guides and is distributed across Europe, spreading the message of peace in all countries. Cllr Naseem Ayub, Mayor of Luton, Maygood Anwar of Madinah Mosque and Sanjiv Kumar, MBE, General Secretary of the Ravidassia community, were present. They emphasized the importance of peace in our world, saying,



The peace light concludes its journey at All Saints Church

united in faith

WRITTEN BY
RYAD KHODABOCUS

Over the past six weeks members of Luton's Irish Forum have worked with Luton's Ravidassia Sikh community to learn the richness of authentic Indian cooking techniques.

Supported by Near Neighbours, the Cooking in Harmony project based on langar (free Sikh kitchens) has enabled these two diverse communities to join together to enjoy a spectrum of Indian favourites from tarkka daal to vegetable biryani.

Through these sessions the Ravidassia community have



Some of those who took part in the event at Guru Ravidass Temple

settling and living in Luton, attended each others celebrations and formed friendships outside the kitchen and dining hall.

Guru Ravidass Bhawan general secretary Sanjiv Kumar and Luton Irish Forum chairwoman Niall O'Leary

remarkable it had been to see through the simplicity of preparing and eating a meal together, two diverse communities can form friendships and value for each other. The next free sessions begin at 6.30pm on May 8. For more information contact Sanjiv Kumar

Faith Matters

Lady Clifford praises support of our local religious groups

David Jonathan
Grassroots & Luton Council Of Faiths

The High Sheriff of Bedfordshire for the year until April 2023 is Lady Jane Clifford.

Although largely ceremonial now, the High Sheriff still remains the Sovereign's representative in the county for all matters relating to the judiciary and the maintenance of Law and Order. Keeping these links with our judiciary and Police forces remains pivotal to the role today, ensuring these services have not been

societies to work for the common good.

It is admirable that Lady Clifford made an effort to visit parts of Luton for the first time, soon after taking over the role. She visited the Madinah Mosque in Oak Road; Church of God in Christ (COGIC) in Dunstable Road; Discover Islam Centre in Upper George Street; and Guru Ravidass Sangat in Cardigan Street.

The warmth and hospitality she received at each of these places of worship humbled and moved her. She praised Luton's diverse religious communities for their generosity and contribution to the community in need and

ton is inspiring. Religious leaders, faith-based organisations, and faith groups provide vital support, comfort and guidance to the communities they serve. "My heartfelt gratitude goes to all who volunteer in our county. Their daily acts of kindness and giving are a living testament."

Commending the role played by Grassroots & Luton Council of Faiths (LCofF) and Near Neighbours Programme, Lady Clifford Added: "By bringing people together from different communities, you are indeed promoting social action and transformation. I'm delighted that your efforts have been recognised, and that LCoF has

and The Queen's Award for Voluntary Services last year.

"My heartfelt congratulations to all who have been involved in this journey."

1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

The Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat, is one of our most respected groups in Luton and their contribution to our community over 40 years is immeasurable, and this was so evident during the COVID lockdown when they provided over 21,000 hot meals, feeding so many people in need. I am pleased and proud, as both an Irish person and the current Luton in Harmony champion to be a friend and supporter of Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat.

Sandra Hayes, Strategic Community Services, Luton Council



1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

I am very pleased and proud to congratulate the Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat Luton, on this, their 40th anniversary. The Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat community are one of our most respected groups in Luton and based in one of our oldest and historic buildings. They support, enhance and preserve Luton as a place of welcome for everyone. Shri Guru Ravidass Community's contribution to Luton over 40 years is immeasurable and this was especially evident during the COVID pandemic when they daily prepared, delivered and fed so many people in need. Thank you to all of the Shri Guru Ravidass community for your continued contribution to Luton now and over the next 40 years.

CLlr Hazel Simmons MBE, Leader of Luton Council

A Celebration of 40 years

Prominent Committee Members 1983 - 2023

Founding Trustees

Mr. Sadhu Ram
Mr. Nasib Chand
Mr. Tarsem Lal

Current Trustees

Mr. Jagan Nath – Head Trustee
Mr. Bishan Dass
Mr. Resham Lal
Mr. Amrik Singh Lagah
Mrs. Kamla Devi Kainth

Previous Trustees

Mr. Parkash Chand Sondhi
Mr. Ram Krishan Salan

Elected Committee Members 1983 – 2023

Year	President	General Secretary	Cashier
1983 – 1984	Mr. Piara Lal	Mr. Baldev Raj Bungar	Mr. Sodhi Ram
1984 – 1986	Mr. Ram Murti	Mr. Baldev Raj Bungar	Mr. Abtar Ram Lagah
1986 – 1988	Mr. Pargan Chand Kainth	Mr. Jagan Nath	Mr. Ramesh Sondhi
1988 – 1994	Mr. Sodhi Ram	Mr. Kishore Kumar Kaler	Mr. Ram Sarup Jassi
1994 – 1996	Mr. Ram Krishan Salan	Mr. Kishore Kumar Kaler	Mr. Onkar Jhall
1996 – 1998	Mr. Kishore Kumar Kaler	Mr. Sudesh Ram Sangray	Mr. Onkar Jhall
1998 – 2001	Mr. Baldev Raj Bungar	Mr. Resham Lal	Mr. Gopal Chand
2001 – 2001	Under Trustee lead management		
2001 – 2003	Mr. Amrik Singh Lagah	Mr. Ram Sarup Jassi	Mr. Madanjit Singh
2003 – 2005	Mr. Amrik Singh Lagah	Mr. Ram Sarup Jassi	Mr. Tarsem Lal
2005 – 2007	Mr. Nirmal Singh Chambers	Mr. Kishore Kumar Kaler	Mr. Tarsem Lal
2007 – 2009	Mr. Surrinder Pall	Mr. Kishore Kumar Kaler	Mr. Tarsem Lal
2009 – 2011	Mr. Surjit Pal Ardhawa	Mr. Kishore Kumar Kaler	Mr. Tarsem Lal
2012 – 2014	Mr. Jagan Nath	Mr. Kishore Kumar Kaler	Mr. Tarsem Lal
2014 – 2016	Mr. Surjit Pal Ardhawa	Mr. Ram Sarup Jassi	Mr. Bhagat Ram
2016 – 2018	Mr. Surjit Pal Ardhawa	Mr. Sanjeev Kumar MBE	Mr. Bhagat Ram
2018 – 2021	Mr. Bhagat Ram	Mr. Sanjeev Kumar MBE	Mr. Ram Parkash Mal
2021 – 2023	Mr. Bhagat Ram	Mr. Sanjeev Kumar MBE	Mr. Ram Parkash Mal

1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

Community Interest Luton was glad to work with Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat on several skills and enterprise enhancement projects that targeted and supported the most disadvantaged communities across our town.

Shri Guru Ravidass Sangats warm and friendly approach and reach into some of Luton's deprived wards enabled our partnership project to be successful with many 100's of people benefitting as a result. We congratulate everyone at Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat on their milestone 40th anniversary.

Aimee Clarke, Director, Community Interest Luton

A Celebration of 40 years

Acknowledgements

There have been so many people that have contributed to this special anniversary booklet and without each and everyone of them it would not have been possible.

A special thanks to

**Shri Guru Ravidass
Sangat**

Mrs. Gurdev Bungar

Mr. Piara Lal

Mr. Ram Parkash Mal

Mr. Jagan Nath

Mr. Bhagat Ram

Mr. Ram Krishan Salan

Other Supporters

Mr. David Johnathan MBE,
Grassroots & Luton Council
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Luton Rising

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**Luton
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Luton Council

Miss. Lauren Cox

Ms. Deniece Dobson

Ms. Sandra Hayes

Mr. Sultan Khan

Mr. Shohir Uddin



Our community invitation for the opening of
Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat 1983.



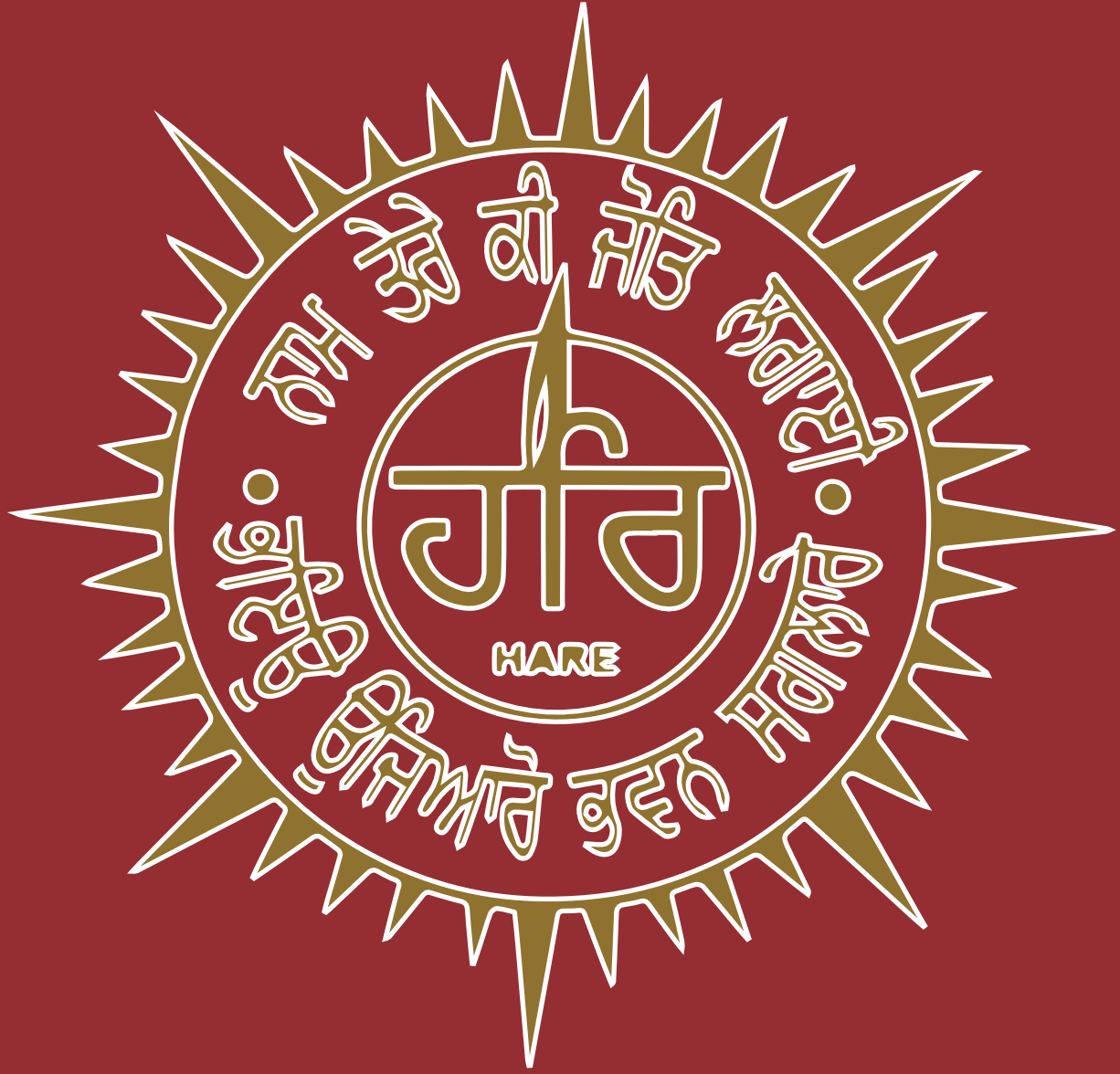
Our 40th anniversary
community invitation 2023.

1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

I have been highly impressed with how faith communities across Bedfordshire rise to support the challenges that society is facing, be it the cost-of-living crisis, influx of refugees, support to minority communities or providing multiple provisions throughout the pandemic. The Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat is a shining example of this.

It has adopted its approach to provide range of support programmes reaching out, assisting and supporting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. From its learning programmes, social gatherings and weekly lunch club – it has expanded its offer to deliver much needed services. None more so than when providing over 21000 hot meals for those in need during Covid. May your good work continue and in doing so inspire others to follow too.

Festus Akinbusoye – The Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire



1983 - 40TH ANNIVERSARY-2023

President
Bhagat Ram
☎ 07732 358 740

General Secretary
Sanjeev Kumar MBE
☎ 07957 681 587

Cashier
Ram Parkash Mal
☎ 07919 101 210

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