

INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTINE GOH

[SM]

This is Sami Masani conducting an interview on the 9th of February 2026 in Whitney High Street with our interviewee today who is Christine Goh. Christine, could you please say your name for the record?

[CG]

My name is Christine Goh, G-O-H is my surname.

[SM]

Thank you, and is that the name you'd like me to call you with, Christine?

[CG]

Yes.

[SM]

Thank you very much. Christine, can you tell us a little bit about your earliest memories or your first impressions of Whitney? How did you come to know about Whitney, or what were your first impressions of the town?

[CG]

Well, we'd been visiting Whitney about 20 years ago, off and on, as more like tourists really. We came to Cotswold for the weekend, and we stayed around Whitney, just outside Whitney, not in the town centre, but outside. And when we started to think about downsizing, one of my friends said, why don't you consider Whitney?

And what happened was, she suggested that we stay in town centre, so we did for one weekend. And my husband and I both felt that it was a very friendly, compact, and easy to access town, because there was so much facility in terms of doctors, library, shops, supermarket, all within walking distance. So we started looking for somewhere to live in Whitney.

That was about 15 years ago.

[SM]

And obviously you thought it was worth it, because you're here now.

[CG]

Yes.

[SM]

So initially, you've answered my next question, which is what brought you to Witney, but how long have you lived here, and what keeps you here?

[CG]

We have been here, well, just over 15 years. Unfortunately, my husband passed away two and a half years ago. But we both love it here, because it is so convenient, and people are generally quite friendly.

We know more people here than anywhere else we have lived in the past.

[SM]

That's so lovely. And that leads us very nicely to our next question. In the time you've lived here, which is 15 years, you say, how has the community around you or the town itself changed, or has it changed at all, do you think?

[CG]

Oh yeah, it changed dramatically. First and foremost, the population has increased, the housing has increased. Unfortunately, due to, I think I can only say because of the, first and foremost, COVID, and then internet shopping, and then economic crisis, a lot of the main big shops, we had quite a few big names in town, like Curry's, like Debenhams, and places like that, they're all gone.

We still have a few independent shops left, but most of the big names are gone, except Marks and Spencer and the supermarket, of course. But generally, the town looks, it was a prosperous town. Don't get me wrong, I'm sure it's still quite prosperous.

I mean, I think a lot of the population are quite prosperous. But the town now, in my opinion, people may not agree with me, looks poorer for it, because of the number of shops that are closed. And if you look at the changes on the high street, you will find there are more shops that not very interesting, because there are lots of charity shops for a start.

Then you've got lots of barber shops, you've got a lot of nail shops.

[SM]

And you've got 1,000 cafes in different places.

[CG]

Yes, and we've got loads of cafes. So, in that sense, the interest of the town has gone, in terms of all the lovely shops, independent shops, that sell unusual stuff. So, yeah, so you have change.

And also, I don't know, I just felt that it's getting a bit more busy, crowded, but not necessarily for the better, because the shops are not making money. There are a lot more people, but the shops are closing, so you can't be making money. So, I don't know, I just felt very sad that you have changed.

[SM]

What about the people themselves? Do you think the community has changed very much, or is it the same?

[CG]

Oh, no, no, you have changed. The community has changed. I would say it's becoming more diverse.

I think, essentially, it was a very white, middle class, and older population. I suppose it has changed in a sense that it becomes more diverse, has more nationality. If you go into town, you will hear a lot of different languages spoken now, Eastern European, Middle Eastern.

You hear loads and loads of different voices and languages. So, yes, it has changed.

[SM]

Oh, well, very much. And can you share maybe a memorable day you've had, or a special object, or a place that really just reminds you of Whitney?

[CG]

Oh, gosh, that is quite difficult, actually. I don't know. I mean...

[SM]

Essentially, what makes you think of Whitney?

[CG]

Oh, oh, the variety in terms of... Although it's a town, you don't have to go very far to get open spaces and greenery, and water, because there's the rivers, and then there is the park and the lakes. So, in that sense, yes, that will...

If I have to think about Whitney, that's what I think about Whitney.

[SM]

Lots of opportunities to enjoy...

[CG]

The outdoor.

[SM]

...a less busy lifestyle.

[CG]
The outdoor.

[SM]
The outdoor.

[CG]
Yeah.

[SM]
Okay, wonderful. And so, this is a bit of an interesting question. What are your hopes for the town in the future?

Where do you think the town should go? What should they do? Should they not do?

What would you like to... Which direction would you like to see Whitney headed towards?

[CG]
I wish that the people in charge has a bit more creative ideas as to how to revive the high street, and also how to improve the environment in terms of cleanliness. The high street has become quite dirty. I'm saying this because I see the difference from 15 years ago.

I mean, there's always litter, but they're litter and litter, and the state of the pavement and the state of the road, they are filthy. So, these are things that are being neglected by the people in charge of looking after their spaces, and I'm sad about that.

[SM]
So, you'd like to see the streets cleaned up?

[CG]
Yeah. Yeah. It would improve the appearance of the town.

[SM]
And do you have any other hopes or any other ways in which you'd like to see the town change, either to be more futuristic or to go back to the past?

[CG]
Oh, no, no, no. I don't look back. Neither do I want it to be totally futuristic.

I think it has to move with the time, and I think the people in charge need to be a bit more creative. We've got a lovely shopping area called the Marriott. The council bought the shopping mall.

They are now owned by the council. They have owned it for at least a couple of years now, and in that time, shops still remain closed, empty shops, and they're supposed to do something about it to create more businesses and make money and attract more people to it, but nothing is happening. So, I mean, maybe they want to employ me as a consultant.

I might give them a few ideas. I think you'd be very good at it. My friend and I often talk about ideas.

I'm not giving it for free. No, that's fair. That's very fair.

I'm only joking.

[SM]

But that was some very helpful insight. Thank you very much. So, is there anything else you'd like to add at all about Whitney or about yourself or anything you'd like to say?

Uh, not really.

[CG]

The other thing is, Whitney is expanding beyond the area that we consider Whitney Centre. It's spreading out outwards, east, west and north and south. They're building more and more houses, but there is not the infrastructure to support all these houses and population, and this is a joke, okay, but it's not a joke.

You should take it seriously. When we first moved here, as you know, 15 years ago, but soon after we first moved here, they were building all over the place, along Burford Road, along wherever, and my husband said to me in the car one day, he said, you know what? All these houses, but they're not building the infrastructure, and worse still, they are not, there's not enough, what do you call, sewage system, because he knew that, because he studied whether this place will flood or not flood before we move in, right?

So, he's very, very aware of this, and he said to me, do you know what, Chris, he said, I think if they build any more houses, the sewage will get bumped up. And true enough, although we laugh about it, when there is flood, the sewage does come up. So, it's not a joke, and he had the foresight, an old man, I mean, by that time, he was in his 70s, right?

He can say that over 10 years ago, 10, 15 years ago. So, why are the leaders, are the people in charge? Not thinking about it.

So, that's my sadness about this town. I love it dearly, because it's one of the town I lived for a long time, and I feel very sad.

[SM]

Well, let's hope that the people in charge do try and, you know, as you said, think creatively, and try to better the living conditions here. Yeah, thank you so much. This is Sami Masani with My Vision, conducting oral history interviews for the Oral History Project with the Whitney Industry Museum.