

## **Alice and Sean describe their homes in Norway and Ireland and coming to London**

I'm known as Alice, my first name is actually Turid, I'm Norwegian by birth, so I'm known as Alice O'Reilly here in England.

Sean O'Reilly, born in Dublin, obviously now living in England... From your point of view, what did you particularly like? There is something special about Hertford for you and your Norwegian background.

Well, I come from a small town, it's not dissimilar to Hertford, and a county town as well. And it's small enough to get to know people and know places, but big enough to have all your shopping needs and all the facilities you want. So, yeah, I did like Hertford. 1994 Winter Olympics all the figure skating was in my hometown, which is 60 km south from Lillehammer, and all the speed skating was there.

Torvill and Dean skated.

The distances here are different from Norway. The nearest other town is further away, I mean, here, it's much easier to pop on a train and go down to London.

*Why did you come over to the UK?*

In 1967 I came to improve my English and I met this guy, and then when I finished school we got married. And then with Sean teaching we did look at the possibilities of him teaching in Norway, being a physicist, he would have got a job, but there was a problem with the language, you find that most women go to where the husbands are, where the partners are from, rather than the other way round. The nice thing now is Stansted, I mean it's so much easier now to fly over to Norway than it used to be.

Why did I come to England? I was in Ireland on a farm, a fine farmer's land in eastern, or north of Dublin with my Grannie. I was driving a car at twelve, I could milk fifteen cows, I could play Gaelic football, I was the county champion under-14s. But I was lonely because my parents had drifted in the fifties. Ireland was a hard call in the fifties after the War because we weren't in the Commonwealth, there was no Common Market. My father had a shop in Dublin and he earned a lot of money feeding the English, unknown to them, including horsemeat, very tasty, they have it in Norway, salami.

No they don't

Well, you have horsemeat salami

Oh, salami sausage

Exactly, you do. I love it. Dry, lovely dry meat.

I thought you meant like in France, with their chevalier steak...

But we don't have it raw. So, he made a good living in the War but after the War, it became a bit of an economic backwater and there was a lot of emigration then, America, Australia,

the usual stuff, South Africa, Canada; my sister went to Canada from England. My brother married a Swede in London and ended up in Sweden. I'm married to a Norwegian and my sister lives in Maidstone.

London was always a great attraction in a way. Because we married young, the quickest and easiest way to get money was teaching, so I went to Finchley Grammar School with no teaching qualifications. London it was exciting, the '60s, we had the Beatles, we had Carnaby Street, could wear what we want and so, you know je ne regret rien. I'm still very Irish in my sense of attachment, I go back regularly but a lot of my family are all over the world. But, I'm glad I came to London. I just find London cosmopolitan, more people in the mix but still a huge attraction for the immigrants from England, it's a melting pot.

But Hertford is not, that's the only thing, Hertford's a bit boring, although It's becoming a little bit more international.

Oh, quite a lot Alice, quite a lot.

When we came to Hertford, oh, there were people whose parents lived here...

Even had a Hertfordshire accent, you don't hear it anymore,.gone!

Because I did linguistics at University, I'm reasonably ok recognising people's accents. And there used to be a chap in Hertford on the B158, Reg the Veg. He used to have a farm shop, and I was convinced he was from proper East Anglia, born and bred in Chapmore End. I didn't realise how strong the Hertfordshire accent was.