

Cardiff Migration Stories



Photo courtesy of Annelise Girardi ©

Miss Girardi

I was born in Creigau, Cardiff. My Dad was born in Italy-his name was Antonio Girardi. My dad had a barber's shop in Cardiff called Il Figaro in Charles Street in the City Centre. He appeared in a newspaper article in the paper celebrating 25 years of working with his partner in the shop. They were both Italian. My dad came from Cervinara- near Naples. My father's family live on a vineyard.

He used to love cooking vegetables and pasta. His first language was Italian. All his family were Catholic, but they had open minds towards people of other religions and the wider world. He was very fond of fashion and being well-groomed, like many Italian men. People used to admire his suits from Italy. Not long after he moved here, Marks and Spencer started importing Italian clothes.

He arrived at Christmas in 1963 and stayed in a flat in Canton. When he arrived in Wales, he was 23 years old. He had to go back and do his National Service in Italy. He came back and stayed for a year. He had 3 children-me and my 2 older brothers. He travelled by train and ferry to get here. He learnt English while he was here.

He decided to come back to Cardiff after his National Service because there were not many opportunities to make money in Italy at the time. He stayed because he liked Cardiff and the Welsh people were very friendly, even though he couldn't speak English at first.

His sister went to Australia to be a seamstress in Adelaide, Australia. I have a lot of family in Australia and Italy. My dad was a very good cook and he taught me a lot. He liked cooking pasta and peppers. Everything comes with garlic.

He loved it here, and when he died he was buried in our local church here. He was very glad he stayed here.

Civinarra is actually quite like Cardiff as there is countryside and the sea. I think that's why he liked it here so much.

He used to love playing darts and he loved a nice Welsh cooked breakfast.

I think he was a bit scared but excited to come here, because he didn't know the language. He found it difficult to learn, especially because of the Welsh accent. He always spoke in a strong Italian accent.

I think I like Italy best because of the weather. But I like both countries. It's good that I can visit my Italian family easily-only a couple of hours by plane. I try to go over there every year. I feel

half Italian and half Welsh. I can understand more Italian than I can speak.

His shop is no longer there, but I am a qualified barber, but my dad died before I could get any more experience from him. He brought his barber equipment over from Italy.

My mum is Welsh. They lived in Church village, then moved to Creigau.

My father never took a day off sick from his shop the whole time.