

**[00:00:00] - Samantha**

Welcome back to Calder Navigation, where each episode serves as a compass guiding you through the vibrant tapestry of Calderdale. I'm Samantha McCormick, your host and artistic director of Curious Motion. I'm delighted to present Season 2 as part of our Culturedale Commission, celebrating Calderdale's rich cultural heritage during the year of culture.

**[00:00:24] - Samantha**

In this season, we continue to champion the voices of our remarkable neighbours, celebrating their resilience, diversity, and the shared experiences that bind us together. From intimate conversations to profound revelations, each episode is an invitation to connect, reflect, and celebrate the human experience. Season 2 of Calder Navigation is not just a podcast. It's a celebration of community, culture, and the enduring spirit of Calderdale. Join us as we delve into the heart and soul of our community, exploring the myriad of stories that shape our shared experience.

**[00:01:04] - Samantha**

We are absolutely delighted to welcome Molly Caton to the Calder Navigation podcast. Molly is an invaluable member of the Curious Motion community. She first joined us as a participant in our over 55 session, Brews & Grooves, and quickly became a dedicated volunteer. Recently, she's also taken on a leadership role as a member of our board of directors.

**[00:01:30] - Samantha**

Molly brings warmth, passion, and a deep commitment to her community in Elland, where she is heavily involved in a number of local activities and charities. Originally from Huddersfield, Molly's life and career have taken her all over the place, including a degree in English and politics at Swansea University and roles with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Cambridge University, and British Telecom. But her true passion has always been teaching, with over 30 years of experience in primary education, particularly in children's language development, she has helped countless students across London and Yorkshire. Even in retirement, her love for teaching continues as she tutors privately and runs Mrs. Molly's Story Time for preschool children.

**[00:02:17] - Samantha**

In addition to her many professional accomplishments, Molly enjoys a rich and varied life, from writing poetry and tending her allotment to supporting local charities like the Samaritans and St

Augustine's. She's been living in Elland for 18 years, is a proud mother of two, and shares her home with a mischievous 14 year old rescue dog, Barley. Molly, we are so excited to have you here.

**[00:02:48] - Samantha**

Welcome, Molly. It's lovely to have you on Calder Navigation.

**[00:02:52] - Molly**

Thank you very much, Sam. I'm very excited.

**[00:02:54] - Samantha**

Yeah, I'm looking forward to talking to you. So we're thinking all about Elland today, aren't we? So could you tell us when you first came to Elland and what your journey was like coming here?

**[00:03:05] - Molly**

Right. So I first came to Elland in 2006. I actually moved in September 2006. That's a long time ago. Good Lord. And I had been living in London for far too many years. Good years, really good years. Originally from Huddersfield and did live with my parents, my mum and dad, who had come over from a beautiful tiny island called Carriacou, in the part of the Grenadines in the West Indies, which, sadly, as many people will know now, is completely decimated because of Hurricane Beryl. Anyway, Mum and Dad came over, sort of the end part of Windrush and established a good life, more than a good life for themselves and for us. And they were able to move back to Carriacou, which was great. In the in between time, they had me and my brother and sisters and ensured we had one of the best childhoods. Definitely one of the best childhoods. It wasn't easy, we know that, but we had everything we needed. We were all able to get through O Levels, A Levels, degrees, Master's degrees, all sorts of things, and all thanks to Mum and Dad.

**[00:04:13] - Molly**

So for me, I left home and went to university, went to Swansea, did English and politics, and then I went to **Abingdon** and did a very posh Royal Society of Arts diploma for personal assistants, which meant I could get a job in London typing, that was a glorified secretarial job. But it was great. In those days, it was a really good stepping stone into doing careers that certainly I wanted to do, and many of my friends who did a similar course, and they're friends I still keep in touch with all these years later. So I went to London and got my first job working for

the UN High Commission for Refugees, which was very fascinating, very sad. It was my first real insight into how people have to leave their homes, the homes that they love. My parents left Carriacou because Britain said, "Come and work for us." And they did, and they worked incredibly hard and went through some very, very tough times. But that's not something I really want to dwell on. I mean, the history books tell us everything about that. But working for the UN really opened my eyes to the real plight of refugees and asylum seekers. And I was sort of a first port of call where refugees would come to our office and I would have to ask quite detailed questions, and one of the saddest things was seeing grown men breaking down and crying because of the journeys that they have to make.

**[00:05:48] - Molly**

Now, it's happening even now every day that we see, and it sadly hasn't changed. And on the basis of, I don't know, luck, you're given asylum status or refugee status. Many people were sent back, and we know that, sadly, some of them wouldn't have stood a chance back in their home countries. It was one of the hardest jobs I've ever done, but I really enjoyed, and I got to know lots of interesting people. It made me more empathetic, more empathetic than I've ever been, I think. And I think it's one of the things that's helped me to hopefully be a better listener.

**[00:06:26] - Molly**

My dad always said to me, "Whatever you do, don't always assume you know everything. Be prepared to listen to what another person might have to say." And I think he's very right about that. Did lots of jobs in London. I stopped working for the UN because for me, it was too emotional. And I found I kind of got a little bit too attached, I think. And you have to draw a fine line and almost reluctantly, but I think for my own sanity, I couldn't really have stayed on. And I did lots of other jobs. I worked in PR, and I worked for the British Telecom, and then I moved to Cambridge and worked at the University of Cambridge.

**[00:07:02] - Molly**

This is a long journey. And I worked at the Examination Syndicate and sold English As A Foreign Language exams. So I travelled around a lot which was really glamorous. Always a suitcase in my hand and travelling to different European cities. Although it sounds glamorous and it was, in those days, fairly well paid and it was an okay job, it was the same all the time. Wouldn't say boring, but it was the same all the time. And for me, something was missing. I remember thinking, I don't know if I can stay here for much longer. I wrote something like a 10 page letter trying to explain to my mum and dad why I was giving up this really good job in Cambridge. And I got a lovely letter from my dad back saying, "Whatever you do, we are there

for you. We support you." My parents have always been very supportive. My brother and sisters would attest to that. They've always encouraged us to do the best we can, which is why we believe that we have achieved what we've achieved if it wasn't for Mum and Dad.

**[00:08:03] - Molly**

So I went back to London, and thankfully, my old flat with some very very good friends of mine with whom I'm still in touch, and I'm so grateful for the friends I've got in my life. And I did a lot of temping. Temping was easy to do. And because I had like 130 words a minute typing and shorthand because of the RSA Diploma for Personal Assistance, I was able to get jobs. And I worked in various offices just doing lots of different stuff, which was exciting and interesting. And one day I went for a walk around Stretton Park, and those who know me will say-, they've heard this story. It was like an epiphany. It was like, be a teacher. I'm like, wow.

**[00:08:46] - Molly**

So I applied and I went to the Institute of Education, and I was offered a place to do a PGCE, and I did it in primary education, and I never looked back. In terms of a-, not just a job or a profession, I think I found my vocation. And when I was younger, people thought, Oh, you should be a teacher, Molly. I thought, I don't want to be a teacher. I wanted to be a journalist, or I wanted to be a presenter on Blue Peter.

**[00:09:15] - Samantha**

Oh, that's such a good one. I love that.

**[00:09:17] - Molly**

And I did try. I really did try. But goodness, it's-, you have to be incredibly lucky. I worked on the school newspaper. I did a little bit of work at the Huddersfield Examiner. I even did a stint at Sheffield Radio. God, these things are coming back to me, the things I've done in my life. But once I decided to be a teacher, that was it. And the Institute of Education is a really, really good place. I was very lucky to be offered a place to do my PGCE there. I had some fantastic experiences in a range of different schools. One of my tutors, a lady called Fiona MacTaggart, I will mention her, was really instrumental in giving me opportunities to work in a range of schools and to develop my abilities learn to look at children as individuals and to provide a curriculum for them that would work. And she also placed me in schools with some really good teachers.

**[00:10:13] - Molly**

When I started doing my PGCE, there weren't many Black teachers. I don't really know how many Black teachers there are now. Statistically, I couldn't tell you, but I still think that they're in a minority. Certainly when I started, we were a very small number, but she gave me the opportunity to work with some brilliant Black teachers, and everything I think I've ever learned, I've learned from them. There was a passion, there was discipline, there was respect, there was creativity, there was imagination, and there was a love for the children that they taught. It really was quite beautiful. And I've taught ever since. It's hard work. It's incredibly hard. I've seen education change massively.

**[00:10:54] - Molly**

So anyway, I worked and worked as a teacher, and then I met my ex-husband, and we had two beautiful children, we have two beautiful children, Niamh and Liam, who are just the best things ever in my life. And they were little, we had a beautiful little two bedroom flat in London, but we needed more space. Cost of properties in London was extortionate. We came to visit my brother who just bought a house in Holmfirth, and his sort of, like, mansion, pretty much a mansion, was what it cost, what our two bedroom flat in London was. So we decided to move up to Yorkshire. We were going to move to Ireland, but my siblings were in Yorkshire, and they had children of similar ages as Niamh and Liam. And I'm from Yorkshire, and the decision was just to move up north.

**[00:11:46] - Molly**

And so we moved up. Liam was just two, Niamh was four and a half, five. And we moved in to Huddersfield, initially. And then 2006, through a series of coincidences, through friends of friends of friends, moved to Elland and have not looked back since. So that's my journey to Elland. And the moment we moved to Elland, for me, it was a home from home. It really was. Where I've moved to, where I live, is a community of beautiful, kind, thoughtful neighbours. Some of the original neighbours, the kids have grown up and moved away, as have my children who've grown up and worked and Niamh's moved to London. But it hasn't changed in that people were just caring, kind, friendly, very similar to the people I lived in and around in Huddersfield, when I was growing up in Huddersfield, and that was a really good feeling. For me, Elland has provided, sounds a bit over dramatic, a sense of solace. It's been a place that has given and allowed me to give as well, if that makes any sense at all.

**[00:13:07] - Samantha**

And would you say that's part of your feeling of community here? Because I know you're really keen to promote that sense of community that you found in Elland, so I just wondered what community means to you.

**[00:13:25] - Molly**

Community does mean an awful lot to me, actually. Growing up in Huddersfield, there was a very strong sense of community. So my parents, as I said, came over from the Caribbean. The people I grew up with, many of their parents were immigrants as well. They were Polish, they were Irish, and they were the West Indians. I mean, looking back on the pages of history on the doors when my parents first came, and good friends of mine whose parents were from Ireland, no dogs, no Blacks, no Irish. That's a hard thing to hear as-, we didn't hear it much as children, but as we grew up and we spoke more to our parents, or our parents opened up a little bit more to us and we heard, not just anecdotes, you just heard stories, and then you read the history books, you realised this was what our parents went through.

**[00:14:16] - Molly**

But my parents and the parents of the friends that I am still in touch with from school, we had a sense of community through our church. We were all Catholic, majority of us were Catholic. We all went to the same Catholic school in Huddersfield. Primary school, the same Catholic high school. Our parents kind of kept in touch with each other, so there was this sense of togetherness, and you looked out for each other. So community has always been part of my life, a sense of sharing.

**[00:14:45] - Molly**

My parents, again, from Carriacou, you go to Carriacou and you see people working together. There's no real hierarchy. It doesn't matter where you're from or what social level you happen to be. You look out for other people. So you might see in Carriacou, for instance, somebody might be hungry, and you'll just give them a bowl of rice and peas or some soup chicken. And it's the same when I was growing up in Huddersfield. People always gave. There's always this giving and thinking about other people. So it's just something I think that's part of me. And when I moved to Elland, it was the same feeling, certainly from the people I met, and I can only talk about me.

**[00:15:31] - Samantha**

Yeah, of course.

**[00:15:32] - Molly**

So I met some wonderful people who were always-, for instance, there's a lady, and she'll know who she is. But when I first-, we were renting somewhere in Huddersfield and made friends with a lady here in Elland, and we were going to meet at the park, Hullen Edge Park there. And I sort of was wandering up and this lady said, "Oh, where are you? What are you looking for?" I said, "I'm looking for such and such a park." And she showed me the way, and that was that. And maybe about a year later, where I actually moved to, just moved in, and this lady's face was-, "I think I know you, don't I?" There's this amazing lady who then became our childminder. And is-, I don't see her very often, but she's still very much part of our lives. So yeah, I think there's something in Elland that people, certainly the people I've met who are always just kind and thoughtful, people in the shops, certainly down Victoria Road. It's not difficult to say what community is. It's just trying to find the right words to express it really.

**[00:16:38] - Samantha**

It's a very broad term, isn't it?

**[00:16:40] - Molly**

Yeah. I did think about that word community, and the dictionary definition is a group of people living together in the same place and having a common characteristic or set of attitudes or interests. And I think with Elland, Elland is our same place, the group of people, whether they're my immediate neighbours, people from church, people-, the Samaritans, people in the shops, wherever they happen to be. For me, there is a kindness and an openness and people will smile and say hello. When I lived in London, not many people would smile and say hello. So you'd be on the Tube, or you'd be on a bus and everybody avoids-,

**[00:17:24] - Samantha**

Oh, yeah. No eye contact.

**[00:17:25] - Molly**

Exactly. And it's a bit of a stereotype thing to say, but it's very true. They don't. Whereas you come up north, and I've not been to Huddersfield for over 20 years, and I've not lived there. I've gone occasionally into Huddersfield. My connection with Huddersfield is very, very limited now. My home is now Elland. It's got everything I need. It's got my wonderful neighbours. It's got the park. It's got my church, which is really important to me, St. Patrick's. It's got-, and I'm saying it

now because of you, it's got Curious Motion, which I came across, you've heard this story a hundred times, but quite by chance.

**[00:18:05] - Samantha**

This is a good story. You should tell us.

**[00:18:07] - Molly**

One of my son's friends' mum, said, "Molly, there's this new dance class at Southgate Methodist." And I sort of said, "I don't know. It's just a dance class." And I was not even hesitant. It didn't really register at all. And the particular morning, it was a Tuesday morning, I had settled myself to have a lie-in in bed with my book and a coffee. And my friend rang, sent me a message saying, "Oh, are you still coming? I'll meet you at the end of the road in 15 minutes." So I quickly got dressed and met my friend and went to Southgate Methodist Church. There was you, Sam. And all the ladies of Brews & Grooves, and they became my dancing tribe. And I-, you've heard this 100 times, Sam, and people who know me when I talk about Brews & Grooves. I can't-, my Tuesday morning isn't my Tuesday morning without Brews & Grooves when we have our block of dancing, and the ladies there are second to none. They are such an amazing group of women who have passion, and they are very funny. And sometimes it can be a diddy bit rude and so knowledgeable.

**[00:19:19] - Molly**

And one of the ladies there, again, I'm not mentioning names, but those people who recognise whatever stories I might mention here will know who she is. But a time when I needed somebody to listen to me and provide me with a space to do my story time, this lady was there, and I hadn't seen her for years and years, and then walked into Brews & Grooves on that Tuesday and she went, "Oh, Molly." And I went, "Oh." And I couldn't remember her name. Then, "Oh, my God. Yes, it's you." And that was lovely.

**[00:19:51] - Molly**

So Brews & Grooves and then Curious Motion have become very much part of my life because it offers me a chance to feel connected to people I wouldn't have been in touch with at all, ever. And to have a shared passion for dancing and movement and reflection and shared histories, there's so much. And I truly, truly love it. So that's another thing that Elland has provided quite almost unintentionally. It was-, you don't go out looking for it.

**[00:20:23] - Samantha**

Yeah, that's what I-,

**[00:20:24] - Molly**

It just comes to you.

**[00:20:26] - Samantha**

Yeah. And I just love that about your story of being literally in your bed with a cup of coffee.

**[00:20:31] - Molly**

I was.

**[00:20:32] - Samantha**

And you were like, "Oh, God, I've got to get out of bed now."

**[00:20:33] - Molly**

I think it was even raining. I think it was a wet morning.

**[00:20:35] - Samantha**

It probably was.

**[00:20:37] - Molly**

I thought, "Oh, my goodness".

**[00:20:38] - Samantha**

Yeah, and also, like, for us, that was, you know, such a special moment because you've come in because you've basically been forced by your friend.

**[00:20:46] - Molly**

I was.

**[00:20:47] - Samantha**

And then, you know, the next thing you know, you're a regular participant and a volunteer, and you've joined our board. I mean, gosh. Thanks, Molly.

**[00:20:56] - Molly**

And you know, it's-, when we talk about these journeys, every single one of us will go on a journey from the moment we're born. You're on a new journey now, yeah? And it's all so pivotal and so important. And there'll be lots of ups and downs, but it's what makes us, I think. And becoming part of Curious Motion was-, yeah, I mean, I was just going on a Tuesday morning to do a dance class. Whether I would have gone the second Tuesday, I don't know. But that first Tuesday, I was like, wow. And I watched all these ladies moving. These ladies of a particular age and a particular age that is beautiful, we are all who we are, were just moving and dancing so gracefully and laughing, and their faces were lit up. It was so joyous, Sam. It was so beautiful. And it was like, gosh, I want to be part of this. I want to be part of it. And I am part of it, which is lovely. So thank you for bringing-, and I didn't know anything about it at all.

**[00:21:56] - Samantha**

No, I know. And what we do is hard to explain, isn't it? It's not your average dance class.

**[00:22:00] - Molly**

It's not. And all the other things that you do as well, so the things that you do with the children, and again, children, for me, are a huge passion through my teaching. I've come to know some of the children who then I've seen the youth activities that you do and the activities you do with the children and the other people who are involved, Sarah and what's the other lady's name?

**[00:22:18] - Samantha**

You've got Debbie.

**[00:22:19] - Molly**

And Debbie. Then the walking group at Project Cult. There's so many things that link people. So when you make these little kind of tenuous links, you walk down Victoria Road or you walk into Elland and you see a face, oh, I kind of recognise that person. And you might smile, you might wave, and that is another connection, and I do think that that is incredibly beautiful. Without Curious Motion for Elland, and just because we're having this conversation now, we need that to make this sense of community work. I think it will take time. I think it will take time. But I think

those of us who are involved in it in our little ways will make it bigger and bigger and bigger. But these things take time. But it is so beautiful to be part of it at the time that I am part of it now.

**[00:23:13] - Molly**

And I'm looking forward to seeing what else will happen. And then there are links with St Augustine's as well, which I did some voluntary work a while ago. I befriended some Syrian families in Halifax. And again, that was just such an eye opener. And it makes me very grateful for an awful lot of things that I've got in my life. And I've had lots of ups and downs, really deep downs, and some nice, very, very nice, lovely, precious ups. But it makes me realise how fortunate I am. But then you look at some of these families and you think, oh, my God, they've been through such horrors and they smile and they give. The number of times I've been to homes of refugee families and the feasts that are put on the tables. You think, oh my goodness. It's incredibly humbling. It is really humbling. And this-, you know, some of the people I've met, they so want to give back and they so want to participate in the society in which they're living. Many of them, I think, would love to go back home. That's what my parents wanted. They wanted to go back home and thank goodness, they went back home and had 30 odd years of very happy retirement doing some wonderful things together, things that they wouldn't possibly have done had they stayed in England.

**[00:24:39] - Molly**

I don't know if I should say that, they might have done it, but they had the best times in Carriacou together. Then, sadly, Mum passed away, eight years in November now. Still miss her hugely. My dad is coping in Carriacou with four bags. He's 85, 85 and a half, four bags of possessions. His house has gone, but there is a sense of community still in Carriacou. When I do get to talk to him, my cousin puts some things on Facebook sometimes, and they are slowly rebuilding places, very, very slowly. But there's nowhere for people to meet. There's no community place for anybody to meet in Carriacou anymore. So you would have the little bars where they would play dominoes. They're no longer there. The shops that they would meet and chat, they're no longer there. The banks have gone, the churches have gone, the schools have gone. Everything's gone in terms of a physical building where my dad and his friends who are all 86, 87 plus, where they would meet and talk and sit and just be together because they have been on that journey from when they were 14, 15 leaving Carriacou to come to England and living the lives that they had to live. And then they've gone back and they're all kind of on their own.

**[00:26:00] - Molly**

Yeah, it's a different-, but people are looking out for each other in Carriacou, and I think that that's when-, when times are tough, I think that's when community is supposed to be strongest. Personally, I've seen it. I think collectively, we've seen it during COVID, where I live, we got together as a neighbourhood. And my neighbours, as I said before, have always been lovely, very welcoming. During COVID, they were fabulous, and now they're even more fabulous. And we meet up every so often. We share things. We have the odd little get together in each other's houses. We've had the odd street party outside of COVID. They are just thoughtful and really, really lovely people.

**[00:26:47] - Samantha**

And it's nice to hear that you've carried on that sense of togetherness, even though you had it before COVID, because I think there can be a sense, and I'm sure this is still true in some places, that all of the togetherness we had during COVID, we've lost it again.

**[00:27:01] - Molly**

Absolutely.

**[00:27:02] - Samantha**

So it's nice to hear that you've managed to hold on to that in your area.

**[00:27:06] - Molly**

We have. We're very lucky for that. We're very lucky. We've got two little children who make sure we do keep connected.

**[00:27:13] - Samantha**

Aw, that's lovely.

**[00:27:13] - Molly**

They're always asking us what we're doing, where we're going, what have we done? They're up and down on their bikes every day, especially during the summer. And yeah, we're very lucky. And I keep thinking of that word lucky. My daughter gave me, beginning of COVID, when things were very difficult for many of us and particularly difficult for me, Niamh gave me a beautiful A4 booklet with a very glittery butterfly on the front of it. And she said, "The only thing you can write

in there, Mum, is the good things, just the positive things." And I'm probably on my 100th book now.

**[00:27:48] - Samantha**

Oh, wow.

**[00:27:48] - Molly**

Because every day, what it reminded me of was-, it's a bit like Pollyanna, isn't it? The Glad Game. Yeah, imagine all the really good things. I try and instil that in the children that I have taught over the years and the children that I currently teach, I do some private tutoring, which I absolutely love because it gives me a chance, again, to-, I think community is about connectedness as well and connect with the children and listen to what they have to say.

**[00:28:16] - Molly**

And what they-, there's that expression, what they can bring to the table, and little ones can bring so much to all of us if we stop and really listen and give them the time and the space and the respect that they need if we want them to grow up to be the best people, best types of people in our world, in our homes, in our local communities, and you know, national and internationally as well, I think.

**[00:28:45] - Samantha**

And is that your-, so your story time work and your work as a teacher, I imagine that underpins a lot because community is obviously really, like you said, part of who you are, but also your teaching, as you said, you had an epiphany. Yeah, I imagine those young minds and voices are really influential.

**[00:29:06] - Molly**

Yeah. I smile every time I think about my teaching. I think, as I said, I've done lots of different jobs in the past, Sam. Lots. And I've enjoyed them all. I've made lots of great friends and learned lots of great skills and all sorts of things. But teaching for me is, I can only just put it simply, one of the best things I've ever done. I learn from it every single day. I love to impart knowledge as much as I can. I don't know everything, and I say to the students, I don't know everything. I have to ask Mr. Google or Mrs. Google or whatever it might be. But when you see that the children suddenly get something, that awe and wonder moment, they suddenly get it, I can't tell you how joyful that is and how wonderful. And you know that suddenly they understand

that so they can apply that piece of knowledge to that area in learning. And when I teach children, I don't teach to pass exams. I've always said that to parents when they come. It's not just about passing exams. It's fairly easy to say, learn this, learn this, learn this in a particular way. For, you know, 40, 50% of the children, they will pass them, but they're not necessarily able to apply that knowledge later on in life.

**[00:30:16] - Molly**

And for me, learning is to learn-, to learn, to find your way or find a way that works best for you to become more proficient at something and to make progress. And also to be able to then show and tell a other person how something can be done. And I don't think in many ways there's no hard and fast rules about what should be done in a particular way. You find your own way. And for me, just helping children to find their way. That's what I love about teaching. And when they say, I've got it, and you can see in their eyes that they've really got it. One little boy, I will mention his name, Lyndon. That's all I'll say, Lyndon. He was an absolute gorgeous little boy. We had some moments when I first started teaching. I remember when he really, really learnt to read. I don't mean just decoding print, and there's this expression barking at print, where children read words, but they don't understand what they're reading, and part of my job as a teacher is to help children to really understand.

**[00:31:18] - Molly**

Bit like when you're teaching us to dance and you say, right, we're going to do this, but this is what it does in your brain, and this is what it's doing to this part of the body, to be able to break things down into small little components so that the learner has a clearer understanding of what it is. That's what I think makes good teaching. So Lyndon wasn't just reading words. He was really reading. And you could see on his face, and he went, "Miss Caton, I can read, I can read," and I said, "I know." And I've cried twice when I was teaching. And once when Lyndon learnt to read, it was my first-, I was NQT, and we had had some difficult moments. And another time with Lyndon when we had Offsted come in, and that's another story.

**[00:32:03] - Molly**

But I remember when he, at the end of the school day, said, "Do you think we should tell Mummy?" And he went, "Yes, yes, yes." When his mum came, she was another amazing lady that had gone through lots of challenging times and things. I said, oh, you know, "Can we just have a quick word? We've got something to tell you." And all the other children had gone home and we sat at the desk and said, "Lyndon's got something to show you." He read and she cried

and I cried again. He got it, and from then on, you could see he understood what words meant and what he could do with them. But he knew he also had put the effort in.

**[00:32:44] - Molly**

And that's the thing about teaching. It's very easy for an educator to just say, "Do this, do this, do this." It's this thing that says, Tell me, but you don't really listen. Teach me, and I might kind of learn it, but involve me, and I really get it. And I think with Lyndon, that was what it was. He certainly got it, and I think teaching does involve lots and lots of talking in lots of different ways that would benefit that individual child and getting them involved. And the more you involve them, the more they take ownership and the more they're empowered to learn. And I don't want to get political, but I do think we need to really, really think about how it is we're teaching our little ones now. And teaching reading and stories and storytelling is so pivotal.

**[00:33:34] - Molly**

My Masters was on children's oral language development through storytelling. So storytelling has always been part of my life, again, we were always encouraged to read when we were little, go to the library. A library, again, a sense of community in the library. I think our library in Elland, and I will say this, we need to do something more to engage more people going into our library. We need to do something else. I have some ideas in my head, but I think we need to do something that will make people feel that the library is central. It was when I was growing up as a child in Huddersfield.

**[00:34:09] - Molly**

But storytelling is as old as the hills. We talked. Storytelling began through talking. It was an oral tradition. And then we developed the art of writing and then reading because we had to decode the marks that we made on walls and pages and et cetera, et cetera. So we need to, as a society, we need to make reading so much more important and so much more pivotal to our learning. So you've got a lovely little baby in your tummy now, and your baby will be hearing all sorts of sounds. So by 32 weeks-, 30 or 32 weeks or something, your baby's hearing has developed. It's hearing all sorts of sounds. It doesn't know what those sounds are yet, but it's hearing all these sounds. The more we give our little ones when they are in the womb opportunities to hear words and sounds, the more chance you're giving your child to be more successful in life, however you want to see success to be.

**[00:35:08] - Molly**

But academically, a child who is spoken to from the earliest possible time is more likely to be more successful in life, generally. So, children who have books from very, very early ages will go to school with, you know, thousands of words. You get some children who already hear, no, stop, go, don't do this, don't do that, and it's pretty limited. And the first five years of life are the times that you learn everything. The rest of the time, we're just getting better at it. So if you look at your baby, it's looking. The moment your baby's born, it will be looking at you and hearing everything, and it'll be learning so much. We underestimate how powerfully able babies are to take up-, they're soaking everything in. You know that proverbial sponge? That's what babies are, even when they're in our tummy. So the more we sing to them, talk to them, read to them, give them an opportunity to hear words, to be able to discuss, to debate, to challenge, that's something else we don't do.

**[00:36:09] - Molly**

And when I teach, I say to my children as well, just don't take for granted that what I'm saying is right because I'm a grown up. I could be very, very wrong. I could be telling you something that is not true at all, and you've got to challenge me. And I don't know if our children are necessarily being offered the opportunity to properly challenge in a polite respectful way in school. But I'm going to stop there because I know how political I can get when it comes to teaching and learning. But I love teaching. And as I said, I don't teach to pass exams. I teach to learn to learn. The storytelling I just love because it's such a connectivity with the grownups and the little ones. I use grownups as a term simply because there are so many different definitions of what a grownup is, a mummy, a daddy, and all these different gender terms that are being used at the moment, and then the little one.

**[00:36:59] - Molly**

So it's grownups and little ones and spending time together, that lovely cosy time with your mummy and your daddy or whoever your grown up is, sharing a book, looking at the words. And you've not only got the cognitive development, but you've also got your physically gross motor control skills. That turning of the pages, turning backwards and forwards, pointing to things, making connections with experiences you've had. You know, you've had particular experiences. Your little one may have had a different experience, but you can talk about that and what it might be like to taste an ice cream, a strawberry ice cream or any ice cream. I think also by doing that when they're very, very little, as they get older and they have to answer GCSE questions, you're more able, I think, to empathise a bit more, to be able to analyse something. Because so often you ask, analyse this text, break it down, build it back up again, and find the evidence. By reading books, you are looking for evidence all the time. And so many jobs in our world now, you have to provide the evidence. Prove it. Show me. Tell me. And all these things.

By starting very, very early, we are giving our children such an opportunity to do better. We're just giving them just that little bit extra.

**[00:38:23] - Molly**

And I think as parents and carers and grownups, that's what we need to be doing all the time, just giving our children as much as we can give them to be the best people that they can be. We support them always as parents and as teachers and educators, and that's what I always try and do and give my kiddies. Give my kiddies. The children I teach space and time to talk, and that's the other thing to-, and I do know I talk a lot, so sometimes I say, if I'm talking too much, you need to say, Molly, stop, and challenge me.

**[00:38:54] - Samantha**

Yeah, that's lovely. I think it sounds-, it all weaves together, really, doesn't it, in terms of how we can be nurtured and looked after as children and all the way through our lives leads into this sense of togetherness that we all need, community that we all need, support in the dark times.

**[00:39:13] - Molly**

Absolutely.

**[00:39:14] - Samantha**

And I think, yeah, it's lovely to hear you talk about it because it kind of all-, I feel like it all eventually weaves together into your strong kind of sense of community and togetherness with other people.

**[00:39:27] - Molly**

Yeah. As I said, it's part of who I am. It's what my parents brought us up to be. It's where my parents have come from, particularly on my mum's side of the family. They were very strongly into the Catholic Church community in Carriacou. And my uncles and aunts, well, there isn't a church for them to sing in at the moment, but they would sing in the church very much. My aunt helped a lot with the lay of the church, all often, my mum did lots as well. When she went back to Carriacou, she did things like, you know, little bring and buys and things like that, would come to England with an empty suitcase and buy things from the charity shops and bring all our old toys, the toys that the children, her grandchildren, didn't need anymore to bring back to Carriacou all the old clothes, so this sense of just sharing things. So that's what we've grown up

with me, my brother and my sisters and I, and what we try and instil in that-, certainly what I try and instil in Niamh and Liam.

**[00:40:17] - Molly**

And also with the children I teach as well, because sometimes I think it's important-, not sometimes, I do think it's important when it's appropriate to use our own experiences to help children to understand what's going on in the world and not to shield. We can't shield them from all the awful things. That is the way of the world. But we can prepare them and we can cushion them a little bit, but we need to prepare them. Some of the other things, the other place I've been involved in, like I said, St Augustine's, the Samaritans. I do some work with the Samaritans, a bit like Tuesday mornings, Friday mornings. It's another morning that is pretty much devoted to going into the Samaritans. I had originally wanted to be a listening Samaritan. I can listen. I do think I can listen when necessary. But I like to say, "Oh, no, really?" I like to see a person's face, and I like them to see my face, to see that we're connecting. The listening Samaritans that we have that I know are amazing, but they have their own skills. I don't think I have that skill. I need to, sometimes, if a person will allow me, just maybe put my hand on their hand or on their shoulder. And sometimes in the shop, people will come in and they'll say, "I just need a hug." And for me, that is my way of getting giving and taking.

**[00:41:46] - Molly**

I love that. That's another part of Elland that has a strong community. Again, you've got your charity community. I also have some friends, they know who they are. We call ourselves the Chopping Ladies. We go to lots of charity shops because we're giving back by buying things from the charity shop. We get some wonderful things, and then we go for a nice lunch somewhere.

**[00:42:11] - Samantha**

Oh, that sounds lovely.

**[00:42:12] - Molly**

And we always chat and catch up and everything like that. And then, as I said, church is really, really important to me, St Patrick's Church. Again, part of Elland. They're all Elland and my allotments, which I love. People just give. They give kindly and they give without expecting anything back. I think that's one of things that I've learned, yeah.

**[00:42:37] - Samantha**

That's an important point, actually, is that the generosity of people is a real connector, and it's genuine.

**[00:42:45] - Molly**

Yeah. There's no-, you'd be at the allotment, and it still amazes me that I could walk into my greenhouse or my shed, and there'll be a bag of apples or a pot of chutney or-, I mean, I do that as well. Or, you know, a handful of chillies or something. Do you know what I mean? It's like, oh my gosh, that's really nice. They don't need to put a name. They don't put a name. Nobody says, oh, this is from Dave, and this is from Claire-Marie, and this is from blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's just left for you. We also leave a table where we leave excess produce, which other members on the allotment site can take, and we put a donation in for Overgate. Again, another big part of our community. It's so important as a hospice that we know that, God forbid, the time may come, you or I or anybody we know may have to have access to that service, and that is a very big part of Elland.

**[00:43:56] - Molly**

I'll tell you something else I'm part of as well, which I found quite by chance. I love walking, and another nice thing about Elland is the accessibility to lots of different places to go walking. I couldn't tell you exactly where they are. I just set off from my house and I just walk.

**[00:44:09] - Samantha**

Oh, nice.

**[00:44:09] - Molly**

Just go walking. And this is lovely. It's always a joy, you know, you can do the same walk every day, but because of the weather, it feels as if it's a very different place. But I went for a walk, it must be about six months or so ago. I was coming through Shaw Park and there was a group of ladies all just tidying the park. I I just started talking to one of the ladies. And so now I help out at Friends of Shaw Park. So every Monday morning, we go, we tidy up, tidy the leaves, plant bulbs, make sure the park looks lovely, get involved with the-, well, I don't get involved with the council, but we do try and keep contact with the council. So on Saturday, a bit of promotion, so they've got a new green cabin, this can maybe go in. There's a new green cabin that's being put in at Shaw Park, and it will mean that members of the public can go and we'll have different

activities for the children to do, you know, colouring in, and maybe going and identifying different types of leaves and trees and things.

**[00:45:07] - Molly**

But that's another part of Elland, Holywell Green, that expanding area or part of the Calder Valley, probably, yeah, and where people do something for others. It's this-, I think for me, with Elland, as a sense of community, is people do for others without necessarily thinking how it will benefit them. I think just talking to you now, it's probably just come to my mind that that's-, and that's what I've experienced. And it's taught me a lot about, I was going to say, how to be a better person. It sounds a bit pious, doesn't it? Yeah.

**[00:45:55] - Samantha**

Yeah. So to finish us off then, can you sum up Elland in three words? Just three words, Molly.

**[00:46:04] - Molly**

Okay.

**[00:46:05] - Samantha**

You can do it.

**[00:46:07] - Molly**

Friendly.

**[00:46:07] - Samantha**

Nice.

**[00:46:09] - Molly**

Kind and accessible.

**[00:46:13] - Samantha**

Wonderful. I think we need that on a sign somewhere.

**[00:46:19] - Molly**

Yeah, I think that's it. Yeah, I could say more, but I'm going to stop now.

**[00:46:23] - Samantha**

I think that summarises it beautifully for us, and it's lovely to hear your experience, your really varied life experiences and also that deep sense of community here. I think it's-, thank you for sharing that with us.

**[00:46:37] - Molly**

Yeah, it's been really reflective. And as I said, I love Elland. I love it. So there's Willow Court. I sometimes think when I can't manage where I'm living now, I'll put my name down for Willow Court because it's not far-, it's okay and I can still access Elland.

**[00:46:56] - Samantha**

Yeah.

**[00:46:57] - Molly**

I think so.

**[00:46:58] - Samantha**

Yeah, there's lots of options here.

**[00:46:59] - Molly**

Yeah, yeah, I think so. And get to the canal. I mean, Sam, there's so much.

**[00:47:03] - Samantha**

There is, there is. Oh, thank you very much, Molly.

**[00:47:07] - Molly**

Yeah, thank you.

**[00:47:07] - Samantha**

It's been great chatting to you.

**[00:47:09] - Molly**

It's been fun. Yeah, I've enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

**[00:47:14] - Samantha**

Pleasure. Thank you.

**[00:47:15] - Molly**

Thank you.

**[00:47:15] - Samantha**

It's time to wrap up another episode of Calder Navigation. And as we do, we want to express our gratitude for joining us on this journey through Calderdale's stories. We hope these conversations have moved and reminded you of the power of human connection. Calder Navigation is part of the Welland Activator Project, aimed at combating loneliness in Elland and Calderdale. A massive thank you to our funders, Calderdale Council, Culturedale, and Reaching Communities from the National Lottery Community Fund, empowering us to continue our mission of fostering connection and combating loneliness through projects like the Welland Activator. A big thank you to Untold Creative for production support, too. Remember to subscribe to Calder Navigation on your podcast app, share it with others, and please leave us a review. Keep exploring and connecting. Until next time.