

**ABERTAY** 

4

# **Abertay 25**

Kalam Chowdhury: Community Pioneer



An Abertay 25 Research Project



## Introduction

#### We will:

- Use evidence to discover the story of one of Dundee's community pioneers
- Explore the links between Abertay University and Dundee's first mosque
- Meet a range of characters from Dundee's Muslim community
- Present our findings in a creative way to an audience of our choice.

City development, immigration, faith & religion, community spirit, history of the

community in Dundee; the experience of

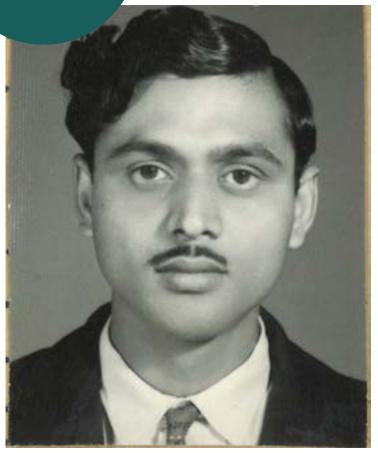
Mosque in Dundee; history of the Bangladeshi

other South Asians in Dundee – good and bad; historical connections between Bangladesh

### **Topics of interest:**

and Dundee.

Teacher's notes a longer overview of the Education in Industry story can be found <u>here</u>



### Learning outcomes:

I know who Kalam Chowdhury is, his link to Abertay University and Dundee's Central Mosque.

I have used evidence to discover a story around a topic of my and my group's interest.

I have understood a timeline and answered questions as well as created some of my own.

I have used primary and secondary resources to explore answers to my, and my group's, questions.

I have used my, and my group's, research to build a narrative and used the creativity and skills in the group to present this narrative to a chosen audience. In 1969, the first Dundee mosque was founded. Numbers grew quickly and by 1995 Dundee had the first purpose built mosque in North-East Scotland, the Central Mosque. Kalam Chowdhury played a huge part in the life of the Bangladeshi community and of the mosque in Dundee.

### I expect this project to support me to:

reflect on my strengths and skills to help me make informed choices when planning my next steps

learn about where to find help and resources to inform choices

communicate, collaborate and build relationships

explore and evaluate different types of sources and evidence

develop my understanding of the history, heritage and culture of Scotland, and an appreciation of my local and national heritage within the world

broaden my understanding of the world by learning about human activities and achievements in the past and present

establish firm foundations for lifelong learning and for further specialised study and careers

recognise and nurture my creative and aesthetic talents

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Kalam Chowdhury Student Record, Abertay University Archives

### Teacher's Notes - How to Use This Pack

To recap on the 3-stage project, watch our <u>video on</u> <u>Enquiry Learning</u> from the Welcome pack

This project aims to encourage the group to engage in discussions based around the evidence provided. The more they discuss, the more topics of interest they might come across. For example, they might become interested in how Kalam Chowdhury's faith and work with the community developed over the course of his life. They might explore the history of the Bangladesh community in Dundee or even discover historical connections between Dundee & Bangladesh going back to the 19th century.

This pack provides ideas to help you take a group through a research project by questioning and discussing evidence in archive documents. We have highlighted some questions you might ask to get the discussion started. However, the aim is for the group to take the lead, and for you to be helping it achieve its goals. This can take time, so encourage them to make suggestions and ask questions, and see if they can discover their answers in the given resources. If they cannot, they can keep a note of those questions for further research. Over time they will use their research to find their own direction and build a story that they will tell in a presentation that they design and develop themselves.

Contact archives@abertay.ac.uk for more information, or for extra resources.



Teacher's Notes Bonus discussions with this pack!

> The research in this education pack relies heavily on oral history interviews from Kalam Chowdhury as well as his friends and family. There are also articles from newsletters and newspapers available for further research.

Kalam Chowdhury's interview has been provided via a link to Colourful Heritage, a project dedicated to sharing the story of South Asian and Muslim heritage in Scotland.

The other interviews are rather long, and so we have shared small snippets of them that the groups might find interesting. There is plenty more to explore from these interviews and you can get in touch at any point to request the full interview, or more audio clips depending on your research focus.

> Each document in this stage has a suggested activity (or two!) to help your groups with their discussions. The purpose of this stage is for the groups to identify the story the recordings and documents tell, and find a topic, a person, place or a theme to focus on for their further research. In their discussions they will identify more questions to research, and take individual responsibility for tasks preparing for stage 2.

# The pros and cons of oral history interviews

Oral history interviews are a great way to get stories straight from the people that witnessed events. As the groups work through this project, they will hear some amazing stories...but there are also disadvantages to recorded interviews—especially ones that have been done during 2020's pandemic!

As you're working through this project, keep the following in mind:

#### Pros...

- Interviews provide a human perspective on events: feelings, opinions, and everyday details that don't always come across in an article.
- Oral history relays history that doesn't make it into books: women, children, laborers, minorities, popular culture, and home life.
- Everyone has a slightly different memory of the way things happen—by interviewing more than one person, you get to hear multiple perspectives.
- Alternatively, to the above point, multiple interviews on the same topic can confirm someone's recollection of a person or place.

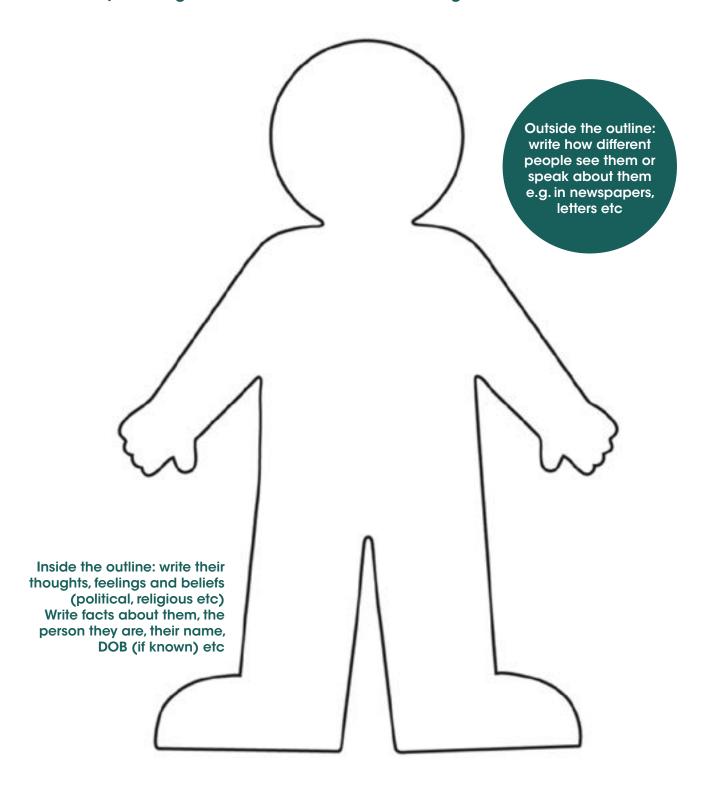
### Cons...

- We can only ask for interviews from people who are living.
  We are very lucky that Kalam Chowdhury was interviewed by Colourful Heritage before he passed away.
- Interviews are sometimes not too reliable for hard facts, which should be confirmed with written sources, like newspaper articles. However, remember that, unless you're looking at statistics, there is always a person with a memory or opinion behind the written text, too.
- Finding the right people to interview can be a challenge especially if they are not close by. Using technology is a great way to overcome the issue of distance and pandemic restrictions, but technology has its own issues e.g. the audio might not be perfect depending on someone's surroundings or internet bandwidth.
- Everyone has a slightly different memory of the way things happen—when stories conflict, it's hard to tell which is most accurate.

# Stage 1 - Find your Focus

As the groups work their way through the documents, they'll come across the "main characters" of their research.

Before they start, ask each group to draw two large outlines of a person on a piece of paper. As the groups discover more about the people, places or events they're researching, they will add the information to the outline, constantly building on their research and discovering areas of interest.



### Meet your main characters - Main Character #1

<u>Colourful</u> <u>Heritage</u> <u>interview with</u> <u>Abul Kalam</u> <u>Chowdhury</u>



You can pause this interview as many times as you want for discussion. There is so much information in this 7-minute interview, it might be best to break it down into smaller chunks to make the discussions more focussed and the information digestible.

There are also some very interesting images shared throughout the interview:

1 minute 12 seconds—student record from Dacca university

1 minute 47 seconds—who recognises this place in Dundee? (Dudhope Castle)

2 minutes 46 seconds—photograph of students on the Jute Manufacturing course at Dundee College of Technology

5 minutes 52–6 minutes 14 seconds–photographs of Dundee Central Mosque–some learners might not have seen this before, particularly the interior.

#### **Discover your main character**

What was his previous life like in Bangladesh? What did he study and where?

Why did he go to Dundee initially and where did he stay?

What do you think is interesting about his first impressions of Dundee?

Why do you think he chose to stay in Dundee instead of returning to Bangladesh?

What did he study at the Dundee Technical College?

How do you think Dundee as a city adapted during Kalam Chowdhury's time there? What made it easier for him to stay?

When did the Central Mosque open and what involvement did he have in the building of the Central Mosque?

Why do you think he is an important figure in Dundee?

# **Golden Document**

CHOWDHURY Address	Abul Kalam	1/1/47
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Abul Kalam Chowdhury's student card, Abertay University Archives

### **Discuss! 5 minutes**

What other details can you discover, or confirm, about Kalam Chowdhury using his student card?

Why do you think there is an address crossed out?

What do you think `c/o Bombay Restaurant' means and why do you think he has an address in Edinburgh?

Can you use this photograph to identify Mr Chowdhury in the images shown in the previous video?

# **Golden Document -**

### Interview with Kader Chowdhury, Kalam Chowdhury's son

Archivist Ruaraidh Wishart interviews Kader Chowdhury, Kalam Chowdhury's son. Kader shared many amazing stories of Kalam Chowdhury's life. Some are shared in this pack and others can be requested , along with the full interview, at archives@ abertay.ac.uk

Click on the links to hear audio clips about ...

- The Hilltown Mosque
- Kalam Chowdhury's original plans for life
- How Kalam Chowdhury's faith outwardly manifested
- Fundraising for Dundee Central Mosque
- Kalam Chowdhury as a community elder and leader
- Outreach for the Mosque
- How much Kalam Chowdhury is missed.

The full interview, can be requested from archives@abertay. ac.uk

### **Discuss!**

What do we discover about Kalam Chowdhury's faith and pious lifestyle in this interview with his son?

If you met Kalam Chowdhury, what questions would you ask him? Why?

Why do you think Kalam Chowdhury was so loved by the community?

Why and how did his faith in Islam grow?

How did he express his faith?

Why do you think he is an important figure in Dundee?

# **Golden Document -**

### Interview with Abu Karim, friend of Kalam Chowdhury

Archivist Ruaraidh Wishart interviews Abu Karim, Kalam Chowdhury's friend. Abu shared many amazing stories of Kalam Chowdhury's student life and how he changed as his faith grew stronger. Some are shared in this pack and others can be requested, along with the full interview, at archives@abertay.ac.uk

Click on the links to hear audio clips about ...

- Kalam Chowdhury's Jute Class and how many stayed after qualifying
- <u>Content of the Jute Management course</u>
- <u>What he did after qualifying</u>
- How he applied his Jute management qualification
- Kalam as a pioneer of the catering trade in Dundee
- How the Bangladesh Association started

The full interview, can be requested from archives@abertay. ac.uk

### **Discuss!**

Why do you think Kalam Chowdhury decided not to work in the Jute industry?

Why do you think he stayed, while many others left?

Why do you think the Jute course was so popular to overseas students?

How did Kalam Chowdhury use his skills from his Jute courses in his career?

What did he end up using his qualifications for?

### Dacca to Dundee—A Journey That Redefined a Life (Part 1)

#### Abu Karim

The year was 1970. I was 19 years old and I had applied to Dundee College of Technology to study Jute Technology as this was the qualification that would put me on a fast track to become a Jute Mill manager. My acceptance letter came from Mr. Gordon (Head of the Department). Bangladesh was not a country then and it was known as East Pakistan. The independence war started on 26th March 1971 and I took part in the freedom movement. Therefore, I had to put my plan to study abroad on hold till the end of the war. On 16th December 1971, East Pakistan got freedom from West Pakistan and a new country called Bangladesh was born. Soon after the war, I started to arrange my passport and foreign exchange. Being a new country the Bangladeshi passport had not yet been created. However, with the help of one of my father's friends I managed to obtain a travel permit on an A4 size paper. I still

My friend Zubair reached Dundee after a few days and we rented a flat at Dundonald Street for £4.00/week, luckily with a toilet inside, but no sink. These flats were built around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to accommodate jute mill workers. Many of them had a common toilet on the corner of the staircase of each floor for the occupiers of two adjacent flats. We had two rooms and a scullery with space for only one person to cook. I was surprised to see the gas lights still in use on the streets. Our close had an automated gas light. The gas lights, dark building for jute workers and the streets paved with cobblestone resembled a shot from the Victorian era.

to close at 10 pm and most shops closed at 5.30 pm. A common hangout for locals of all ages and very popular among Dundonians was Dens market. It was only a minute's walk from our flat. The shops in the market mostly sold used goods and the cafeteria had local food like pea-buster (mashed peas and chips), mince and tatties, bridies, Pie, etc. In the middle of the market, there was a prize bingo stand. The most interesting element of Dundee for me was the conversation among the locals. They weren't afraid to drop in the 'F' word into any conversation at any given opportunity. It took me some time to make sense of some of the dialect and certain phrases for example, "ye widnae ken" meaning "you wouldn't know", "bonny lassie" meaning beautiful girl, "hae tae" meaning "you two".

Dacca to Dundee, an article written by Abu Karim for Dudhope Multicultural Centre. This article, in 2 parts, details his arrival in Dundee at just 19 years old and how fear of the unknown quickly turned into a strong feeling of community and a "home away from home". It goes on to describe how he and his friends found success despite the difficulties in pursuing careers.

This article covers many topics that are highlighted in Kalam Chowdhury's story such as Dundee as a changing city, the Jute course, the war of independence in 1971 and community spirit.

### **Discuss!**

Abu Karim arrived in Dundee 5 years after Kalam Chowdhury. Discuss the similarities and differences you think they will have experienced as new arrivals in the city.

What similarities and differences can you find in this article and Kalam Chodwhury's Colourful Heritage interview?

What attributes of Dundee as a city were shocking or different for Abu and Kalam?

Imagine arriving in a new country for work or study, what do you think would make your time there less worrying? Think about a shared culture, community, values and friends.

# STAGE 2 FURTHER RESEARCH Teacher's Notes

Where the group's further research takes them depends entirely on them. At this point, the group has curiosity. Some of the questions raised at the end of Stage 1 will not be answered by the documents in the pack, so where does the group need to look to find the answers? First of all, they need to decide which questions they want to answer—they need to discuss and decide on the direction they want their further research to go in. What is it they want to discover and why?

#### **EXAMPLES OF FURTHER RESEARCH TOPICS**

There are so many directions for further research in this story. Anything from exploring the significance of Mosques and the history of mosques in Dundee to discovering the historical connections between Bangladesh and Dundee stretching as far back as the 19th century.

Groups might reflect on their own experiences of immigration, their own faith or culture and how their values and experiences match, or differ, from those of Kalam Chowdhury.

They could look further into the significance of higher education and how skills learnt can be adapted to multiple situations.

Contact archives@abertay.ac.uk when you know the topic your groups want to explore further. We can send larger copies of the documents from this pack as well as help you discover more sources of information! The last page in this pack lists further sources of information.

<u>Click here for an example of what a further research topic could look</u> <u>like</u>. **New Hope For Dundee's** 

# Pakistani Students

Hard-up East Pakistani students will be interviewed by Dundee College of Technology authorities this week.

The students had claimed they would be expelled if fees weren't paid. Stadents' Representative Council vice-president, 20 year-old Michael Gumbrell.

Appeal Fund.

The lack of funds was used by civil strife in air homeland.

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ollege governore the £150 fees -in September - to d until the end of

The SRC have planned an appeal fund for the Bengal

Left: Dundee Evening Telegraph, 24 November 1971. Copyright **DC Thomson & Co. Ltd** 

# **Mosque In Dundee** Tenemen

A COMPLAINT of "chanting" from down A onwards every week-end in a ground-floor flat has been made to Dundee City Engineer's Department.

The complaint came from a tenant of a North Erskine Street tenement where the city's Moslem community have a mosque.

ecial satilats are worn. There is no furniture—just ripets and wall decorations. All that distinguishes the sate from any other in the sate from any other in the all targe sign on the all targe of Muslim sate, Dunder," and the

e, Dundee," and the smell of incense, sokesman for the City

agineers Department said the leader of the Moslem ammunity had been

Is the mosque there is a reparation room, where the considupters, all men, cleanse bemanives in a stainless teel invogs before critering as inner sanctum, where pecial sandals ace worm. There is the function is the rest Planning Committee material for approval for change of use from dwell-ing house to mosque. Although no structural alterations have been made, permission has still to be

Left: Dundee Courier, 5 May 1969. Copyright DC Thomson & Co. Ltd

### Hotel room becomes a mosque The man who opened the door was in

his stocking soles. So were the young men who filled the room into which I stepped in Royal British Hotel, Dundee, on Saturday momme

**Dundee Courier and** Advertiser, 15 June 1953. Copyright DC Thomson & Co. Ltd

> You are always welcome to contact archives@abertay.ac.uk for further information or to ask for help with your project from a member of the archive team. We can help further focus and develop your group's research.

# **STAGE 3 PRESENTATIONS Teacher's Notes**

The group will need to decide on a few things before getting started on their presentations. We want them to be as creative as possible, using the skills of those found within the group. Is there a confident speaker? A musician? Someone who enjoys arts and crafts? Encourage the group to discuss the different ways they could present their research to an audience.

On page 18, there are some questions the group could discuss together to help guide them towards a presentation.

### What is your topic?

- The group should agree on the topic of the presentation, the story they want to tell, and the message they want to send.
- Their message should be clear, strong and something that they are confident talking about.

### Who is your audience?

- How will the group get their message across?
- How will the group's chosen audience benefit from their research?

### How will you present your discoveries?

- Now they know what their message is and who their audience is, they can focus on the best way to get that message across—what will make the biggest impact.
- A short story, drama, piece of music, animation, artwork, interactive exhibit the possibilities are endless!

#### **Create!**

Once the groups have decided on their message, audience and presentation style, it's time to create! Each member of the group needs a role either in the design or delivery of the presentation (or both!) Before they start, they should make a plan. How long do they have to create their presentations, what equipment and skills to they have laptops, art supplies, cameras etc. Remember to contact archives@Abertay.ac.uk – we might just be able to help!

Most importantly, the group needs to create realistic goals. They should think about time, resources and skills and what they can actually achieve with the resources available to them.

#### **Record!**

Whatever the presentation is, we'd love to see it. If you're able to take photographs, video or audio recordings—or even send a file over—please do. It might just end up in our archives! Contact archives@abertay.ac.uk to find out more.

### Stage 3 - Presentations Group Worksheet

Work through this sheet to help prepare your group presentation. Discuss each of the questions with your group before making a decision. Think about the skills of each person in the group, for example do you have an artist in your group? Or someone who is a confident speaker? Do you have a musician or someone who is interested in video editing? Use what skills and equipment you have available, but make sure everyone has a role in either the design or delivery of the presentation.

#### What is your topic or message?

Discuss the main topic of your presentation. Write your topic in 10 words or less. This will help you decide the title of your presentation. Try to summarise the story you want to tell in a paragraph. This can help you plan how it could be divided up into sections / scenes in your presentation.

#### Who is your audience?

Discuss who you are creating this presentation for. Your school, a nursery, a future employer or customer? It can be a completely made up audience—someone from the future, the past or even an alien!

#### Why do you think they should listen to your message? How will they benefit?

Your presentation needs a "why". Think about why your audience needs to hear your research. It might help them change their perspective, or inspire them to make a change.

#### How will you present your work?

This will depend on the topic/message and audience you have chosen. A younger audience might benefit from storytelling or rhyme, whereas an alien might need a lot of visual cues. Use the skills in your group to decide on the best way to present.

Discuss realistic goals. What can you achieve with the time and resources available to you. Play to each other's strengths – maybe one person is an amazing writer, another a great illustrator and someone else is a fantastic speaker – work together to create something you can all feel confident presenting!

### There are different sources for your research, including the ones below.

Abertay University Archives archives@abertay.ac.uk

British Newspaper Archive www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/

Colourful Heritage www.colourfulheritage.com/

**Bangladesh Association FB page** www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community-Organization/Bangladesh-Association-In-Dundee-Scotland-313272475813435/

Dundee Central Mosque www.dundeeislamicsociety.com/

Dundee Central Mosque Facebook Page www.facebook.com/DundeeCentralMosque/

Factory in Miniature Exhibition www.abertay.ac.uk/visit/a-factory-in-miniature/

#### **Acknowledgements**

Abertay University would like to thank the following organisations for support in the development of these resources. They can also be contacted for further help with research.

Dundee City Archives archives@dundeecity.gov.uk

Local History Centre www.leisureandculturedundee.com/library/localhistory

University of Dundee Archive Services www.dundee.ac.uk/archives/

**DC Thomson Archives** – www.dcthomson.co.uk While their collections are not normally publicly accessible, an enquiry service is offered but responses may take a few weeks. Historic newspapers can be searched through the British Newspaper Archive, and the Dundee Central Library collections hold modern editions so please use these sources first.

Verdant Works Museum www.verdantworks.co.uk/

Rautomead Ltd www.rautomead.com/

Colourful Heritage www.colourfulheritage.com/

### We would also like to thank the following people and organisations for direct help in creating this pack

- Kader Chowdhury Abu Karim Bashir Chohan
- Mohammed Issa

# **Congratulations!**

Congratulations! You've completed Abertay 25's Kalam Chowdhury: Community Pioneer education pack! <u>Don't</u> forget to fill in your postproject evaluation forms!





We'd love to see your creations, so take photos and recordings and send them to archives@ dundee.ac.uk

If you have any feedback from your experience (either as the group taking part or the group leader) please do get in touch.

