

Alone on the Hattersley estate: the who refused to move as streets em

Bob Pendleton is searching for the words to sum up the last decade.

"Well, 10 years ago there were 107 homes standing right here where we're looking," he said, pointing at a huge expanse of mud beyond his gate.

"But everyone left and the houses all came down – so for the last six or seven years we've been alone on this plot. It's been a battle – the hostility, the contractors and now the mess. And now it feels like they are waiting for us to die, to get rid of this problem."

Pendleton and his wife Hazel moved to Hattersley in 1965, when their house was new. Built by Manchester Council, the overspill estate in nearby Tameside became home to families displaced in the city's slum clearances. When the Right to Buy scheme began, the couple bought their mid-terrace house from the council.

In the early 2000s there was vague talk about regeneration in Hattersley, and in 2006 the social housing stock transferred to Peak Valley Housing Association.

"For over three years we lived with the rumour hanging over us that our homes were to be demolished," said Pendleton, a retired heating engineer and union shop steward and safety rep. "Officials wouldn't confirm what was happening though. It was not until July 2003 that we learned via the newspaper that the properties were coming down."

'Money and land values'

The official explanation was that the low-rise, timber frame housing was structurally unsound and too costly to renovate. An independent surveyor who examined the Pendletons' property disagreed, and similar council homes had been modernised in Manchester and the Peak District.

Of the 200 condemned homes in Pendleton's area – a site valued early on at around £13 million – 27 were privately owned. They attended regeneration meetings but soon grew frustrated by the process.

"All I heard was money, land values and prices – there was hardly any mention of people,"

he said. "At the meetings I attended, it felt like barely a word was said about how to make it easier for those people who were going to be uprooted."

Gradually the social houses were boarded up, leaving owners marooned. Windows were smashed and youths set about torching the wooden buildings.

Pendleton said: "The fire engines were out – no exaggeration – two and three times a day and it got so bad that they stationed an engine near here all night with a crew. We'd spend our nights watching these kids going into the houses and we felt very vulnerable.

Postcode discontinued

"It could be scary and it made my wife quite ill with stress."

From 2007 the wrecking crews moved in. Dust and noise meant they could not open windows or put washing on the line, and one day a crane jib hit an adjoining property, smashing a hole in the roof.

Their postcode was discontinued, causing problems with mail, and fly tipping

became frequent. "You raise these things but don't really get very far," said Pendleton. "Over the years we had five or six written commitments saying that our whole row would remain intact until our property was vacated, but that meant nothing. The two end properties were bulldozed in 2010."

Condemned

A Tesco Extra supermarket was opened on the northern half of the site in 2012 but the southern side remains vacant except for Pendleton's forlorn row of houses.

Gradually the others gave in and moved away. Some

Hate crim

A play about the murder of a young woman for dressing like a goth is to tour communities in the North West.

Black Roses – which tells how Sophie Lancaster was kicked and stamped to death simply because of her appearance – is being taken on the road and into schools from next week.

The stage piece – adapted from a BBC radio drama by Sue Roberts – premiered at Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre in 2012 to acclaim.

Life sentences

Twenty-year-old Lancaster and her art student boyfriend Robert Maltby were beaten into comas in 2007 by a gang of teenagers who objected to their goth appearance.

During the attack in a park in Bacup, Maltby was kicked unconscious before the gang set upon Lancaster, a gap year student, as she tried to protect him.

He eventually recovered but his girlfriend never regained



Bob Pendleton insists he has spent a decade waiting for a fair deal. Photo: Ciara Leeming

couple ptied

accepted empty council properties and did them up with a grant.

New-build houses cost £195,000, around four times what the condemned houses were valued at. Some signed up for new homes off plan but Pendleton declined when he saw how waterlogged that building site was. Another house the couple were shown by the regeneration team had a pylon over it, which they feared could make it difficult to sell. A rented bungalow they were shown was too far from shops and up a big hill. They were recently sent details about another new-build, but

say the weekly £100 rent and maintenance charges would leave them out of pocket.

"It feels like if you refuse these places it's held against you by the officials," he said. "But they have a gun to your head all the time – with the first new-build properties we had 10 days to sign up for one or we'd lose them. They have been so difficult with us that we find it hard to even deal with them.

"We also don't feel we should have to live where Peak Valley wants to put us, and don't see why we should have to pay them money every week out of our pensions.

'Unfortunate predicament'

"My valuer has never agreed with theirs about what these houses are worth. He thinks this land is valuable because of its proximity to the motorway but what they are offering wouldn't even get us an equivalent property. This is not about profiteering – all we want is like for like. We weren't asking to

move from here. We've spent the past decade fighting for a fair deal for everyone but we're still waiting."

Phil Corris, managing director of Peak Valley Housing Association, said: "We understand the situation has been very difficult for Mr and Mrs Pendleton and we have always tried our best to work with them to find a solution that causes them the minimum upheaval.

"Over the years we have tried repeatedly to work with Mr and Mrs Pendleton and have made numerous offers of rehousing. On each occasion our offers have been rejected and, in recent weeks, a further offer has been made.

"We are yet to hear back from Mr and Mrs Pendleton on this latest offer and remain willing to engage further to reach a satisfactory resolution to their long-standing, unfortunate predicament."

CIARA LEEMING

e victim's name kept alive

consciousness and died in hospital 13 days later.

Five teenagers were convicted of the killing – which the judge described as a "hate crime" – including Ryan Herbert, then 16, and Brendan Harris, then 15, who were both given life sentences.

Smaller communities

The latest run of *Black Roses*, at the Royal Exchange, ends this Saturday.

From 11 March it will tour smaller communities with little theatre offering, including Tameside, Burnley, Maryport and Workington – with many performances in schools.

In the play, Lancaster is played by Rachel Austin and her mother Sylvia is played by Julie Hesmondhalgh, who until recently played Hayley Cropper in *Coronation Street*.

Lancaster's words are written by award-winning poet Simon



Julie Hesmondhalgh in *Black Roses*

Armitage, while her mother's words are her own.

Senior producer Richard Morgan said: "In it, Sophie talks about her life and hopes, and Sylvia remembers what happened and how they had to go to the hospital and the difficult decisions they had to make.

"We really wanted teenagers

and young people to see it, as well as a regular theatre-going audience."

Lancaster's mother went on to set up the Sophie Lancaster Foundation, which builds understanding of subcultures and campaigns to ensure their protection by the law.

Court transcripts

The tour ends in London at the end of March at the Southbank Centre. A second radio piece about the case has recently been produced – this time focusing on the murder trial. *Porcelain* was developed using interviews with Sylvia Lancaster and dramatised scenes based on court transcripts. Due to play on BBC Radio 4, it is also being aired on 8 March at the Royal Exchange in a pay-what-you-can event to raise funds for the Sophie Lancaster Foundation.

CIARA LEEMING



NEWS IN BRIEF



Music, film, drama and poetry combine to mark the 30th anniversary of the year-long miners' strike in an event at Chesterfield's Winding Wheel on 8 March. Born in '84 will celebrate the legacy of the 1984/85 dispute 30 years since it began. Volunteers are bringing together strike-themed music, film, drama, poetry and photography to highlight the dispute and its impact on generations past and present. Jeremy Deller, Turner Prize-winning artist and the creative director of the film *The Battle of Orgreave*, will take part in a Q&A session in the afternoon after a screening of the film. Any funds raised will go to the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign. For more information see www.bornin84.co.uk or phone Colin Hampton on 07870 387999.

CORRECTION



We omitted to credit the archive images used last week to illustrate the BBC's *World War One At Home* stories, which should have read: *Lizzie The Elephant*: courtesy of *Sheffield Archive and Local Studies Library*; *Little Khaki George* (pictured): *Bankfield Museum Halifax*; *Edith Smith*: *Lincolnshire Police*; *Arthur Fisher Painted Fabrics*: *Sheffield Archive and Local Studies Library*.

Hundreds of *World War One At Home* stories can be explored online at bbc.co.uk/ww1.

GOT A STORY? CONTACT 0161 831 5563 OR EMAIL NEWS@BIGISSUENORTH.CO.UK