

R4 No Ball Games SCRIPT v2

R4 PRES INTRO

Now on BBC Radio 4: we mark the 100th anniversary, this month, of Britain's largest council housing estate – Becontree, in East London. This is: 'NO BALL GAMES'.

0'00" TITLE EXPLAINED

FX WALKING ATMOS

GILL: There's always this sign – the NO BALL GAMES sign – and that's been there for years, and that's a fairly modern one. But it's always been on there – NO BALL GAMES...

GARY: ...NO BALL GAMES signs? They do seem to have been put up widely across the estate. I can only assume it's to save people's windows...

GILL: ...It's a big bit of green... I suppose if they played games on it, it would all get ruined. So you're not allowed to play games on there.

GARY: I don't think anyone takes too much notice of them anyway. I mean kids have gotta do something haven't they?

GILL: They've got this basketball area for the children now, which is good... The Gores, the River Gores runs through this, although they're gonna try and open up the river, bring it back to the surface again, so that'd be good...

MUSIC: Devlin – Love Cards (Instrumental)

GARY: I mean, this is about an estate – but there's something to remember about where people live.

RODRIGO: There's definitely loads of people that don't care where they live in London, they just wanna like commute to their place, and whatever, and it's not really about the community around them... but there are lots of people in the area that do care, and I would say I'm one of those people. Those are the people that are gonna change the area and make it beautiful! (laughs)

1'40" THE CALL-OUT

GILL: “November 2021 is the centenary of the first house being built on Britain’s biggest council estate – Becontree, in Barking and Dagenham, east London.

GARY: To mark 100 years of Becontree, BBC Radio 4 hands over the microphones to three residents – Gary, Gill and Rodrigo.”

That’s us!

“Here’s the assignment: What do Radio 4 listeners need to hear about Becontree?

If you could interview one person about life on the estate, who would it be, what would you ask them?

What would you change about where you live? What does ART have to do with it?

And, where would you take listeners? Which bits of Becontree would you go to? Where would you start?”

MUSIC: Devlin – Love Cards (Instrumental)

2’20” TOUR OF HOUSES (shifts between the three)

GARY: DOOR FX – All right?!

RODRIGO: DOOR FX... Come in! Welcome to my house... so... my front room of course, my kitchen, the garden... living room...

GILL: I’m gonna give you a tour of our house! This is our dining room..... olive green walls, we’ve got a small fireplace there, bookcase, that’s my Mum’s chair we didn’t really want – rather than throw it away!...

GARY: My main living room, quite clustered I suppose...

RODRIGO: So, all of this kitchen is an extension, and so is that front room... so, the original house, built in the Becontree era, is all within the living room. Basically the size of the living room and up. So, all of this was the land around, and this part used to be a garden. Because, this is an end house...

GILL: This is my garden – which is my pride and joy really, spend hours in the garden... I grow a lot of seeds, tend not to have too many pots, they need a lot of watering...

GARY: It's – I suppose you'd call it a galley kitchen, it's small but functional again, I do my own cooking, I'm not useless at cooking, but I'm no gourmet... That's the tea tray, it was in horrible mess this morning so I decided to wash it.

MUSIC: Devlin – Love Cards (Instrumental)

RODRIGO: My room is my sanctuary, my place of peace. It's where I started my creative journey as well, it used to be my art studio, it's now my music studio as I have an art studio in Peckham...

GARY: ...well this is me bedroom, not a great view to be honest, but I don't spend much time looking out there... Over the back, electronic tools...

GILL: They're fair sized bedrooms aren't they, not too bad... and this is a box room... And we built this cupboard... (DOOR CLOSSES)

MUSIC: Devlin – Love Cards (Instrumental)

GARY: That's me bird... squeak! ... All right little man?! He ain't been out this morning so he's been giving me the bird's version of the raspberry, for the past hour... He thinks he's the boss, got pecking order, birds... they always try to be the one on top. He was on my head yesterday – riding around on the top of my head!

MUSIC FADES OUT

4'45" INTRODUCE GARY

GARY: I'm Gary Hutton ... I'm 60, I live in Becontree... I'm one of life's observers, I'm one of life's witnesses. I watch, I think, I cogitate, that's the way I am, I'm not one of life's doers.

My Mum and Dad are dead, one of my brothers is dead, another is schizophrenic, and my other brother lives 40 miles away. So, yeah, I don't really see my family much, what remains of it.

I was born in East Ham, on the Barking Road. I didn't wanna leave actually, but my Mum wanted her own front door, as she put it. Cos we lived in a flat above a shop, and she felt it wasn't a nice arrangement.

We moved from East Ham, in 1972, to Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire. We lived there for 21 years, then we came back here. I think my Dad came back to die, that's my feeling. He never said so, but that's my feeling.

MUSIC: Kate Tempest – Theme From Becky

5'55" INTRODUCE RODRIGO

RODRIGO: Hello I'm Rodrigo Domingos, I'm 24 years old, and I live on the Becontree estate. When I came to Becontree I was a complete newcomer, I didn't know anyone. My family didn't have any friends in the area, I didn't have any friends in the area... I told people I was moving here, people didn't know where it was! Where the hell is Becontree?! (laughs)

My family moved here from Portugal. I guess being an immigrant family and having to find a job, and do anything to survive in London, is part of why we live in Dagenham maybe, because it was one of the cheapest boroughs to buy a house in at the time.

So now I'm an artist. And I've created a character as well, like an online persona, and I dress up in crazy wigs, and I do my makeup looks, and I – it's very non binary, gender non-confirming vibes. (laughs)

Becontree is my home, but I can't fully express myself in Becontree. Like, I don't feel comfortable dressing up in a non-binary way, not looking "masculine presenting" in Becontree... I know Peckham is safe, surrounded by other artists, but not around here, you won't catch me at Becontree station in a wig! (laughs)

ADD TUBE FX??

MUSIC: SANDIE SHAW – Long Live Love

7'35" INTRODUCE GILL

GILL: Becontree station is my nearest tube station, it takes about 45 minutes to get into London – I suppose when it was first built it was a long way to London, but now, it's pretty simple.

I'm Gillian Coombs – I've lived here all my life, which is 70 years this year.

PUB FX

In 1970 I met my husband at The Roundhouse.....

***NOT TRANSCRIBED**

...so the Roundhouse has got lovely memories for us, I'm sure many other people as well.

MUSIC ENDS

WALKING FX

GILL: I could take you round to my street where I lived... just around the corner...

PIANO IN GARDEN STORY ***NOT TRANSCRIBED**

...gradually went away! Oh, he didn't care!

MUSIC: Dudley Moore Trio – I Didn't Know What Time It Was

9'35" WALKS AROUND BECONTREE

RODRIGO: Right now, we're walking through the streets of Becontree, between my house and Parsloes Park – yeah, there's a pile of dirt with a union jack flag on it! To be fair, all these houses now, lots of people are building lofts, even my parents are speaking of doing that too, which is kind of against the ethos of Becontree, it's meant to be equal housing for everyone... we're turning here...

MUSIC: Dudley Moore Trio – I Didn't Know What Time It Was

GARY: I do speak to random people on the street, particularly dog walkers – just pass the time of day... CAR FX... A dog in a coat. I always think the dogs are thinking – what are you doing dressing me like this?! CAR FX Which way do you wanna go?

MUSIC: Dudley Moore Trio – I Didn't Know What Time It Was

GILL: Now, these privet hedges have been here since the estate was built. But the council have replaced them with wooden fences. Now you're not telling me a wooden fence will last 70 years like a privet does? So that's a privet hedge – they've been there all that time.

GARY: Now look at that hedge – they've cut the sides, but not the top. I mean it's like a lot of modern haircuts, innit, that?!

11'05" HISTORY - GILL

ARCHIVE: King George V visit

GILL: Becontree estate was built for people after the war. Fit for heroes, wasn't it, they built this estate 100 years ago now, so as I say it was just built for those people. In those days, in actual fact, people had to have a job to come here, and they had to follow lots of rules, they had a Tenant's Book, which stated what they had to do, they had to keep the windows clean and the steps clean, and the front gardens all tidy...

ARCHIVE: King George V visit

GILL: I think – I can't remember how many different houses there are but there's quite a few different houses – I think it's a radius of four miles? When it first came, they didn't really

have much for the people to do. People went back into London to have their social lives. But then, eventually, churches came, community centres were built... so it gradually built up.

MUSIC: The Tremeloes – Even The Bad Times Are Good

RODRIGO: I'm sure it was a beautiful suburbia land... a bunch of beautiful families, and their children, and their dog... it still is suburbia. But it was probably monocultural then, and now it's completely diversified, which is beautiful. I prefer it now!

MUSIC FADES

12'35" GILL VISITS IRENE

GILL: So this is where my friend who still lives in a council house still lives...

KNOCK ON DOOR...

GILL: I think she might be out... oh no – Irene it's Gill – and the BBC! Still a council house, how long have you lived here?

IRENE: Fifty years. Long time! Any more questions? Am I gonna be on telly?

GILL: No this is the radio dear! This is Becontree 100. Now how has the estate changed over the years, what are the good and the bad bits?

IRENE: Oh I can't think of anything good, sorry... bad, it's got an absolute dump. I dunno, they just don't think of doing gardens and cleaning windows. When I look at old photos, all the privets were all neatly done, gardens were tidy, windows were clean... Never mind. I'm sitting here trying to rev up the energy to do my garden, I'm procrastinating, just have another cup of tea... I'll do it in a minute, yeah. So this is Radio... 4! Love it! Woman's Hour, Afternoon Theatre... yep, good!...

MUSIC: Devlin – Rewind (Instrumental)

14'05" NEW CULTURES

RODRIGO: I would describe Becontree as somewhere in the middle ground between a lot of old people living here, and a lot of new people moving here, of loads of different cultures. And I think there's a bit of anonymity between those two cultures. Which is all around England, not just Becontree. But it's also exciting, because it's the evolution of a place – why wouldn't that be exciting?!

MUSIC: Devlin – Rewind (Instrumental)

GARY: I mean, the type of people on this estate has changed over the years, but it's fundamentally the same thing – alright mate? – I don't think it's degraded the interpersonal relationships on the estate at all. And maybe that is testament to the way they structured it originally.

MUSIC: Devlin – Rewind (Instrumental) – ENDS ABRUPTLY

15'05" RODRIGO – INTERVIEWS TOM

Start: mic setup

***NOT TRANSCRIBED**

End: "...young people, if they're not seeing art, they might not think it's a possibility for them."

MUSIC: Delly J – Thirsty

17'15" GILL – INTERVIEWS PASTOR BRENDA TOFT

Start: I'm Brenda, I'm minister of the Dagenham Baptist Church on the Becontree estate...

ICE CREAM VAN INTERRUPTION

GILL: How has congregation changed Brenda?

BRENDA: The right to buy changed it completely. Suddenly an explosion – people bought their house, but they had no idea what it cost to run and maintain it. So, a lot of mortgage reclaims. Whole families had to move out. It was a very unsettling time. It did settle – and on the good side of right to buy, we had young professionals moving in. Nurses, carers etc. Diverse ethnic make up. It's good. Good for the church and for the area, because we're learning from each other.

MUSIC: Delly J – Thirsty

GILL: The Becontree estate – obviously we had Ford, and mainly factories – so it's known as working class. And therefore sometimes people – like, when my daughter went to school, one of the teachers said to my daughter, "your mother's got middle class aspirations". Because we had a piano in the house, and we read The Guardian! (laughs) But to me that is a ridiculous thing to say because you can aspire, wherever you come from. I think everybody should have a chance. I mean... if you make it in Dagenham, you can make it anywhere!

MUSIC: McLean – My Name

19'15" GARY – INTERVIEWS JON CRUDDAS MP FOR DAGENHAM & RAINHAM

START: So – my name's Jon, I'll speak about this level if that's ok...

GARY: Jon can you introduce yourself...

JON intro...

GARY: I see. You're writing a book I understand about Becontree – can you tell us more...

JON: In effect it's the 100 year history of British capitalism condensed into quite a small community.

GARY: Becontree is like the history of capitalism? Would that be locally? ...

JON: 100 year history – post war homes for heroes, settled working class stability, 43,000 people employed on the Ford plants, the rise of Fordism and its decline... triggering right to buy, de-industrialisation, Thatcherism, the Far Right, extremism – all big moments of the last 100 years – strikes that arguably brought down two Labour governments. A disproportionate influence on the history of Britain. Working class history condensed. You see it played out in films like Made In Dagenham – nostalgia – but there are deeper truths.

GARY: What do you think is the most important issue for Becontree right now?

JON: Today if you look at the housing issues... demands solutions... by politicians who have the imagination of those who created this estate...

GARY: We've yet to find them, I think...

JON: I think we can agree on that! But, where is the scale of the thinking, the imagination, about dramatically resetting the lives of working class people?

MUSIC: McLean – My Name

21'50" INTRO TO VERITY AND LIVING TOGETHER

SCRIPT:

**The three of us are now sitting in Gill's kitchen, having a cup of tea.
And we've got one more interview lined up, with the person who first
brought us together.**

**She's called Verity Jane Keefe, she's an artist who's been working in
Becontree for years.**

We've collaborated on this project called LIVING TOGETHER.

**We make artworks, videos, music... there are walks, talks, reading groups, an
exhibition... LOADS of different things...**

FADES INTO VERITY INTERVIEW

22'20" VERITY JANE KEEFE – INTERVIEWED BY RODRIGO

VERITY: OK, it's quite hard – it's hard to describe! – Living Together is... I could just read the bio of what Living Together is... "a multi-disciplinary project..." etc... but it's so many more things. At its core, it's a project to "celebrate" the centenary of Becontree. Lots of caveats there – how can you celebrate the "completion" of a place when people are still living there? What does the centenary mean to people who are living here and working here? And who really cares? What can we do collaboratively that would make people care, or people would be interested? But all thinking about, how can I as an artist use my agency and cultural capital to get people engaged in a place that's already hard to engage?

RODRIGO: Is it harder to engage people here in Becontree than other places?

VERITY: I guess on a basic practical level – the planning of the place? There's a lack of social spaces so where do you find people? Where are the pubs, the community spaces? A lot of people in Becontree work somewhere else, go home and close their door. Very different types of people too. All with different agendas...

RODRIGO: I feel like there's a disconnect between me and, the new Becontree people and the old Becontree people... politically, racially, territorially... Maybe being an immigrant... What I liked was, connecting with older generation. If it wasn't for this workshop...

VERITY: That makes me so happy! It's one of the whole points of the Becontree group, to bring together people that would never normally... where would you go to do that? Where does Gary meet Gill meet Rodrigo? So I really wanted to bring together people that would never normally want to talk to each other.

RODRIGO: When I first approached you... At first I was nervous – it was the first time I had come across an artist who wanted to work in this area – rather than central London, not Becontree! – so I was like, what's Verity's angle here? So it took me a while to warm up to you. But now I understand more of your practice in Becontree. I definitely feel you've achieved transparency, and bringing people together, I feel like you've achieved that.

MUSIC: Devlin – Love Cards (Instrumental)

25'20" NEXT 100 YEARS

VERITY: Becontree – it's just a place! It's almost 100,000 people's homes. So this idea of putting it on a pedestal – oh holy Becontree – it's gonna land hard for people who just want bins collected or to park car. So the point of Living Together is not to romanticise, but it's to explore what it's like today. And just kind of learn to love it, and get along with it properly.

MUSIC: Devlin – Love Cards (Instrumental)

GILL: So what do you hope for the future, for next 100 years of Becontree?

BRENDA: That the community grows together, people originate from different places but I hope it settles into one community, and look out for one another. Not because we're told to, but because we just want to.

MUSIC: Devlin – Love Cards (Instrumental)

TOM: How long do you think you'll live in Becontree?

RODRIGO: It's weird because, I want to rep Becontree in everything I do, but I want to travel the world. So, I might travel the world then in 10 years be back here, bring back what I've learned. What about you...?

TOM: I wouldn't see myself living in Becontree for the rest of my life. I too have aspirations to travel. I don't see myself here for a long time, but it will always be home.

ENDINGS

GARY: And that's that!

RODRIGO: Yeah! That's it! (laughs)

GILL: Yeah, so there we go! See our lovely privet hedge? (laughs) DOOR SHUTS.

27'45" (needs to be 27'30") R4 PRES OUTRO

NO BALL GAMES was presented by Gary Hutton, Gill Coombes and Rodrigo Domingos. The producers were Jesse Lawson and Steve Urquhart, and it was a Boom Shakalaka production for BBC Radio 4.