

Brigitte, Danielle and David Houghton remember their first impressions of Hertford after moving from South Africa.

Where were you living before you moved to Hertford?

Brigitte:

Brigitte Houghton, moved to the UK thirteen years ago, and been living in Hertford since October 2008.

Danielle:

I'm Danielle, and I was also born in South Africa. I've lived here for the majority of my life now, obviously moved at the same time as my mum.

David:

David Houghton, I was born in the UK, the East End. When I was five, we moved to Rayleigh, in Essex. Went to South Africa when I was nine, picked up these two, and came back in 2008. I moved to Hertford a month before them, September 2008.

What was your first experience of Hertford?

Brigitte:

First experience of Hertford was he had a job interview at Hertfordshire County Council. We drove into Hertford and we just went "Aaahhh". It was just so beautiful, it was like parts of South Africa where I'd grown up in Pretoria, in an area called Brooklyn and we had all these sort of jacaranda trees. It was all of the trees and things, it was just that whole area around county hall that just made me feel like I was at home. I know that's a strange feeling, but that's sort of how I felt, I think we all did.

Danielle:

Yeah, I remember vividly looking up at the old buildings and thinking how gorgeous it was here...yeah, I think we fell in love pretty much that day.

Why did you leave South Africa?

David:

We decided it was time to go due to safety and security reasons, sold everything and left South Africa with nothing.

Danielle:

We lived under armed guards, electric fences, so didn't have any freedom to do anything. I wouldn't be able to just go out on a Friday night by myself.

David:

There's not enough infrastructure supply or the power requirements for the country, so they will take an area and give them a power cut for two hours a day.

Brigitte:

The same thing's happening with the water.

Danielle:

Schooling here is much better, education is much better, opportunities are much better.

What other differences have you noticed?

Danielle:

The culture is so different. The subtleties and social behaviour and sometimes you don't understand why a certain look means a certain thing or a certain turn of phrase means a certain thing, and I have to explain it to you.

Brigitte:

One thing I have found especially in the workplace, is I've really had to try and tone back. In South Africa, we don't put politeness around it – "I need you to do this, do it now please." I think it's very much our mannerisms and our bluntness.

David:

In South Africa, you've only got two seasons, summer or winter, it was hot or cold, it was dry or wet. Whereas here, there are four seasons, and each one has its own beauty. Some are better than others. But even in the middle of winter, crisp, fresh air. Its lovely.

Brigitte:.

You just don't like the dark days.

David:

Yeah, the short days drive me nuts.