

Going home

British-born Sylvia Arthur recently visited her parents' birthplace, Ghana, for the first time as an adult. It was a journey of self-discovery



After the murders of Stephen Lawrence, Michael Menson and Ricky Reel, Africa seemed like a natural haven from life in racially divided Britain.

At the time, I remember having a debate with a white friend who insisted I was British simply because I was born and raised here.

He believed cultural identity took precedence over racial identity. No matter what I said, he was adamant I was no more African than he was.

But having visited the motherland only twice before as a child, my claim to being African was in danger of losing its validity.

Diaspora

At the dawn of a new century it seemed only fitting that I, as a black person, should return to the cradle of civilisation and the birthplace of my ancestors. So I booked my ticket, packed my bags and left home for home. It would prove an enlightening journey of self-discovery.

Ghana was the obvious destination. As one of the last African

decided to move back to Ghana after nearly 30 years in Britain.

I was born and bred in Britain and had only spent a total of 10 weeks in Ghana so it was, to all intents and purposes, foreign terrain.

The last time I visited was 12 years ago when I was 11.

Then I was more concerned with becoming quickly acclimatised than observing the beauty of the country before me. Now I would be seeing the country with more mature eyes.

The first thing to hit you as you arrive is the vastness of lush, green land.

On the four-hour drive from the capital Accra to the country's second largest city Kumasi, where my family lives, there are acres of fertile farm land, an expanse that produces the local staples of yam, plantain and cassava.

Although most famous for cocoa, Ghana yields a mouth-watering array of fresh fruit and vegetables.

You can't help but think that a land so rich in agricultural and mineral resources – it is also one of the world's biggest gold pro-