

**Callum:** Hello I'm Callum Robertson and welcome to this programme which we've called 'A True Mancunian'. Now, what is a Mancunian, well a Mancunian is a word for someone who comes from the city of Manchester and in this special programme we hand over to our colleagues in BBC Manchester who have recorded a feature for us on James Hickman – A True Mancunian. So just who is James Hickman? – Over to Ashley Byrne.

**Ashley:** He may have been retired for almost two years now but World Champion swimmer James Hickman still likes to go for a dip most mornings...

### **SPLASH SOUND**

**Ashley:** I'm Ashley Byrne and this is a profile of a True Mancunian...

James Hickman has been all around the world in his career as an international swimmer but he's always returned to Manchester...

**James:** Well I was really lucky in my swimming career that I managed to go all over the world. You know I'm just thinking about where I won my world championship medals. I won the first one in Sweden, the second one in Hong Kong, the third one in Athens, the fourth one in Moscow, so I've travelled all over the world and enjoyed every minute of it.

But the one fantastic thing is that when I land back at the airport in Manchester, I know I'm home, you just feel like you can relax.

**Ashley:** So what is it about Manchester that keeps him firmly fixed to his roots?

**James:** There was a time when Manchester was really big on the music scene and it was a vibrant city and then I don't know what happened. There just seemed to be a decline, the Hacienda closed and all that scene started to disappear. There was nothing in Manchester that was there, and that's why I moved to Leeds. But while I was in Leeds, something happened. I can remember 1996 really well cause that was my first Olympics and of course in Manchester we had the biggest bomb since World War 2, it took out the whole of the city centre and there had to be regeneration after that.

And it grew from the ashes, like phoenix rising from the ashes, Manchester came out and now it's a fantastic city.

**Ashley:** James' return to Manchester coincided with the Commonwealth Games being staged in the city in 2002 – and it was there that James had his proudest of moments...

**James:** It was a massive honour that they asked me to say the oath at the opening ceremony, and yeah I was really proud that my team mates...they voted for who they wanted to say the oath, and me being from Manchester, I was already Commonwealth Champion, that they thought I would do a good job.

**Ashley:** And James flew the flag for Manchester at those Commonwealth Games in 2002 clinching yet more medals to add to his already huge tally...

**James:** In the 200 fly where I got a bronze medal...ok I wanted to win, I wanted to defend my title, but I did a really good swim, great race, and then we got a silver medal in the relay as well

It was a fantastic moment winning those two medals in front of a home crowd.

**Ashley:** But the Championships that were to make a name for James' and help him put Manchester on the world swimming map were the World Short Course Championships...

**James:** World Short Course, of course by then in 2002 I'd won my fourth world title in Moscow, and yeah I wanted to really go out on a high.

Indianapolis 2004 as well, another world short course championships, the same year as the Olympics, and in my heart of hearts I knew I was gonna finish my swimming career in Manchester, training in Manchester. And that's what I did.

**Ashley:** So James returned to Manchester – and in true Mancunian style he absorbed himself once more into the life of this thriving city...within months of retiring he'd set up his own radio and tv production company and now makes programmes for national, regional and international networks...

**James:** I kind of thought if I want to do anything well it's got to be something | really like doing. Like my swimming, I love to swim, so I thought I'll give the media a try and set up a TV and radio production company.

Which in this city, in Manchester, is probably the best thing that could happen because it is a thriving media city.

**Ashley:** And of course all true Mancunians have a favourite football team...

**James:** Football is in the veins of all Mancunians. Well the true ones are blue...you can't take away from the reds they have done quite a bit for the city. Whenever I go somewhere, unfortunately, and I say I'm from Manchester most people go 'oh yeah Manchester united.'

Yeah I live with that every time I travel somewhere but Manchester's a little bit more on the map because of them.

**Ashley:** James sees himself as a TRUE Mancunian...but what MAKES a TRUE Mancunian?

**James:** A true Mancunian to me is someone who has grit and determination, definitely. That is in the city, but it's in a friendly way.

**Ashley:** And I suppose James follows in the TRUE Mancunian tradition...this is a city of firsts – the world's first computer was built here, the world's first railways, the industrial revolution, Coronation Street - the world's longest running TV serial...

And James...the first person to become 5 Times World Butterfly Champion...

**James:** I still see myself as a boy. Everyday he wanted to swim as fast as he could. I've trained in some glamorous locations...there's Bondai Beach in Sydney...there's nothing I like more than just kicking back with my friends in Manchester.

Because I know the city has got everything that I want... and on a Saturday, having the day to myself and my friends...and we can choose to do anything we want to do.

**Callum:** That was James Hickman, a True Mancunian and thank you to Ashley Byrne from BBC Manchester for that feature.