INTERVIEW G02: LINDA CASSIDY

Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interviewee: Linda Cassidy [pseudonym]
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Transcriber: Naomi Wells

Textual Note: Annotations and observations appear in square brackets (e.g. [pauses], [laughs]). Partial, interrupted or unfinished utterances are denoted by a dash. False starts, filler words and non-lexical utterances (e.g. 'um', 'hmm') are not generally transcribed. Time codes appear at ten-minute intervals in square brackets in bold type.

JC: Okay, so that's rolling there, so before we start could I just get your verbal consent that you're okay for this to be recorded?

LC: Yes, absolutely, I'm happy for this recording to happen.

JC: Great, thank you very much. So could you begin then by just telling me your name and today's date?

LC: I'm Linda Cassidy and the date is the second of June 2020.

JC: Great, thanks a lot, and so can we start then by you telling me when and where you were born?

LC: I was born on the fourth of April 1971 in Owenvarragh Park, which is in Andersonstown. I was born at home.

JC: Okay, and Andersonstown, that's in west Belfast?

LC: It's in west Belfast, yes.

JC: And what sort of a place was that like, growing up?

LC: Well, actually the street itself is a street of semi-detached, quite nice houses and my dad was, he ran his own business as a plumbing and heating engineer, you know, he did various other things at other times, so, you know, we weren't, we weren't short of money really, or anything like that, but obviously being born in 1971 in west Belfast and, you know, living in Northern Ireland until I left to go to university in England, I obviously lived through the main body of the Troubles, so in terms of what it was like, it was like a childhood in Northern Ireland in the Troubles and because, until I was, I think I was ten when we left Andersonstown. I think that itself as an area was one of the kind of key flashpoint areas in Northern Ireland I suppose you could say reasonably, and, you know, not only did I kind of

grow up in Andersonstown, but I initially went to school on the Lower Falls and, you know, it was kind of, like, just really in that kind of west Belfast world, as a, as a child.

JC: Yeah, so you were really at the heart of it, then.

LC: Yeah, you could argue that, you know, there weren't many other places in Northern Ireland that were, you know, quite as central as that. I know there are others of course.

JC: So you mentioned your dad was a plumber. What did your mum do?

LC: My mum was a legal secretary and then when we were quite young she left that and worked with my dad running his business on a, on a sort of part-time basis, but really, you know, to help with childcare as well cos obviously there were three kids in the end, but, you know, obviously working, the lack of working flexibly as a legal secretary at that time, so she, she had to kind of fall in with what she could do and she ended up working with my dad to run his business, so she would, like, get involved with, like, lining up quotes and doing the tax return and that kind of thing.

JC: I see, right, and that gave her a bit more flexibility to take care of you and your siblings.

LC: Yeah, exactly that.

JC: Did you, were you the oldest or–?

LC: I'm the middle child, so there's my brother who's about a year and a bit older than me, and my sister and she is five years younger. I had another sibling who unfortunately died as an infant in between.

JC: Oh right, okay, and did you have any other close family in, in the Andersonstown area?

LC: Yeah, we had my, my mum's mum and dad who lived on Slieve Gallion which is up near the Holy Child school where I went to school and yeah, that was really it in terms of family in the area. In addition to her mum and dad there were her brother and sister who lived there too, and then outside the area there was my great-aunt Alice who lived in the Falls, on Sevastopol Street.

JC: So you had a few relatives in and around Belfast then.

LC: Yeah.

JC: And you went to school, Holy Child did you say?

LC: Yeah, I went to the Holy, well, initially I went to St Vincent's in Dunlewey Street which was round the corner from Sevastopol Street where my great-aunt lived, and then she died when I was in primary one and I ended up moving to Holy Child just cos it was nearer home.

JC: And that was primary school?

LC: That's a primary school, yeah.

JC: Yeah, and did you enjoy school at that time?

LC: Yeah, yeah, it was, I liked school, I was a goo-, a good pupil I think.

JC: Yeah, you were quite into the academic side of things, were you?

LC: Well, I ended up being, yeah, but I suppose, like, we'll get onto later, I ended up going to a school called St Colm's in Twinbrook which wasn't, like, sort of academically great for anybody [laughs], and I came out with some rubbish qualifications.

JC: Really?

LC: And I ended up having to kind of go off and redo that O-level year, if you like, at technical college.

JC: Sure, yeah, no, we'll definitely get onto that. So talk-, maybe talking a bit earlier then about, like, primary school and stuff, did you, did you have a lot of friends that you played with outside of school and things like that?

LC: Yeah, I don't have many memories from Dunlewey Street, from St Vincent's cos obviously I was only there in sort of nursery and I think primary one and I don't really remember people in the area, but it was very much that kind of Belfast childhood. I don't know if you're familiar with a, a documentary the BBC made called *Dusty Bluebells*, but you kind of see kids in the Falls area playing on lamp posts and that kind of thing and I do remember kind of knocking about in the street with loads of kids and I think when I was a bit older I, I did have friends in the same street in Owenvarragh Park where I lived and there was a sense that you kind of went out and people played in the street then, so we'd play games like Red Rover and skipping and, and that kind of thing and hide-and-seek and knock the door and run away and there were, like, almost, like, a gang of kids in the street that would knock about together, so I still remember the names of some of those childhood friends in the street and then at school, you know, I sort of didn't have, like, a best friend or anything, but I do remember friendships with people in, in my class that, you know, didn't necessarily live near me, but lived probably up on the estate near the, near the, nearer the school.

JC: Yeah, so it's kind of a mixture of friends in school and then in your immediate neighbourhood as well?

LC: Yeah.

JC: I'm just thinking, like, as, as you mentioned at the start, like, this was kind of the beginning of the Troubles and the start of that. What was it like playing in the street at that time? Did it feel dangerous at all or were you just not conscious of that at the time?

LC: Well, I think you're a child and it, it sort of goes over your head, so as, like, a child under ten as I was when I lived in Owenvarragh Park, you sort of accepted things as quite normal, so what would have been quite normal would have been army patrols, there was a barracks at, at Casement Park, so we lived, that's quite, that's just on the back of one side of Owenvarragh Park, so really, really nearby, and you would have regular army patrols up and down the street and I remember, there are things that would be different I suppose in that, like, my mum wouldn't have allowed us to have toy guns, for example, because of the fear that, you know, we'd maybe be shot, and, you know, I remember, like, somebody had a puppy and their thing was, like, the soldier stole it, it disappeared, so there were sort of stories and things that happened that wouldn't have been normal. You would have walked up the street and maybe there would have been a soldier hiding in a hedge or crouching down beside a gatepost, or just an army patrol walking up and down the street, so that, I suppose those aspects would've been unusual when you compare it to, say, a childhood in England.

JC: Yeah, but as you say it was just kind of normal to you at the time.

LC: To me it was completely normal, it was just, you know, what, what happened and then, you know, obviously at that time and throughout the entirety of my life in Northern Ireland before I left when I was, I think I was nineteen, if you travelled around you would be stopped at checkpoints and it would be, like, where are you coming from, where are you going to, your, your name and address and that would often be asked by somebody from the RUC who was manning the checkpoint, backed up by the British Army, so I mean, that's quite unusual in the sense that, you know, you're, there's a kind of stop-and-search function to the security forces that, that's kind of happening as a matter of course, so as a child in the back of the car you're kind of seeing that and when you go shopping in the city centre, you know, the main street was cordoned off and you'd be searched when you went into it, that's Royal Avenue, and then when you went into some shops you would have, like, a wand passed over you that would, you know, be sweeping for explosive or whatever and you'd, you had a sense that, you know, things, as I got a bit older you got a sense that, you know, things could be blown up and the rest of it and then when I was, like, a little bit older and just at, around the point that we left Owenvarragh **[00:10:00]** Park, you know, obviously the hunger strikes happened and I think at that age I was old enough to kind of understand a little bit of the context of that and things like, you know, the census happened and everybody was saying I'm not filling it in as a protest, so as I got older I got more aware of the political situation, but to me everything was completely normal.

JC: And, and was your family a particularly political family at all, did they talk about politics when you were growing up a lot?

LC: Do you know, they weren't and they weren't involved in any way and my mum was, you know, particularly peaceable I would say, and later on we moved to a mixed area, mixed in that it was Catholic and Protestant, an area called Dunmurry on the outskirts and we were in a minority of Catholic families and, you know, it's, my name isn't particularly Catholic, you know, it's not a Gaelic name or anything and the surname isn't particularly Catholic, so I think, you know, we kind of passed as Protestant to some extent. All of us, none of us have particularly, you know, Irishy names, and I remember, like, one of the neighbours coming

round and asking for a donation, so they could paint the, the kerbstones red, white and blue for instance, so I think, I think they were quite, my mum and dad weren't bigoted particularly, I dare say they were, like, Sinn Féin voters if, if they weren't overly political, so I don't know how often they voted, but I think that's just a function of the, the politics in Northern Ireland, where if you don't vote for one side you vote for the other and there's not much choice in between, yeah, I would, and my dad had Protestant friends, his best friend was Protestant and my mum, she, she would have had a mix of friends when she was young and especially when she was in her young working life, so it wasn't like they, they didn't mix with the other side, as you call it, and they, I wouldn't say they're particularly bigoted, but they were a product of their time in that they were brought up in Northern Ireland where people are segregated into areas where only one side live, and so they didn't do an awful lot of mixing with, with Protestants.

JC: Yeah, I mean, it must have been difficult to mix when you're living in an area where pretty much everyone is from the same background.

LC: Well, that's what makes it difficult, and when you go to a school and, and we all, my mum, my dad, me, my siblings, we all went to schools where everyone was Catholic, so it was, it's a complete monoculture, but my dad had hobbies, like, he was into sub-aqua which was pretty far out there in the seventies, but he had, like, loads of mates through doing that that were from all parts of Northern Ireland, so, you know, he, he wasn't the kind of, like, person that would be afraid to go out there and, and, you know, mix with other people, so I wouldn't say they were particularly bigoted or had very strong political views one way or another, they were maybe quietly republican, but not, not that they would have agitated about it.

JC: And it's interesting you say that your, it's, your dad and stuff had interests outside of their immediate area and their immediate community as well, and got to meet other people. Was church a big part of your life growing up?

LC: Yeah, it was, I, I just think it was culturally something that you didn't really opt out of, so in a way, my dad was from a town called Portaferry which is in County Down and it's, it's down on the bottom of the Ards peninsula and it's a small fishing village and his grandparents were from there on both, well, his parents were from there on both sides and I guess his grandparents too, so his, his whole family had come from there. As a child he had sort of grown up between there and Ardoyne, which is on the other side of Belfast from where I lived, and by the time we were all children he didn't have many ties back in the Ardoyne, but the family's connection on his side to Portaferry was very strong and in fact, they're all still living there, he's living there, and his sister and brother live there and his other brother lives not too far from Portaferry, oh and he's got another sister in Portaferry, so he's got two sisters and a brother still living there and himself, so they all went back, and I grew up partly between Belfast and Portaferry in that we would go there on weekends, like, almost every weekend, so that was largely where I went to mass and Portaferry, if anybody knows it, has a big hill in the middle of it and we used to walk over the hill to mass every Sunday and yes, so we were regular, every Sunday attenders when I was a child until I rebelled when I was probably about fourteen and decided it wasn't for me.

JC: Okay, so you, you got to a stage where you just weren't interested anymore?

LC: [pauses] Do you know, in a funny way being not interested wasn't really an option and I kind of mounted a, a political objection to it in that I just said that I wasn't, like, I didn't have a strong faith and that I thought that the church's policies on women were a bit rigged and I didn't really buy into it and I wasn't for going anymore. I'd kind of done my time and I said you can't make me and so I opted out.

JC: That's interesting the way you put that, that it wasn't just the sort of, this isn't for me sort of thing, but it was more of an active, almost like a statement saying that you didn't want to go anymore.

LC: Well, it was because I didn't want to go anymore as well though [laughs], because it was the sense that, like, church attendance was a mandatory thing that you had to do if you were Catholic and you didn't really have an opt-out, so for me to do that was quite a big deal and I had quite a lot of things to say about why I didn't want to go.

JC: And did you get much pushback from your family when you announced that you weren't going?

LC: Yeah, everyone was very upset, not so much my siblings, my sister was quite young, my brother was looking for any excuse he could get not to go, but I think my mum and dad really wanted me to continue to go. Catholic faith was important to them, although as time went on in my view they became less religious, but it, it was always there and in fact, after, after my mum died and when I had my first child I was thinking of baptising him to keep his options open in case he ever was going to go to a Catholic school and my family, by that I mean my sister, my brother and my dad, were absolutely horrified at me because by this time it had been twenty-odd years of me never going near a church unless there was a funeral or wedding and they were saying you're just using the church and they, they were still very much in the faith, whereas I was, like, they saw me and I saw myself as kind of outside the faith, but in saying that I still think of myself as, like, a, a Catholic from west Belfast, I'm just not practising.

JC: That's interesting, so it's still kind of part of your identity even now?

LC: Totally.

JC: Hmm, that's interesting.

LC: Like, to the extent I did think very recently about sending my child to a Catholic school, and I was kind of not against it, not actively for it, but it was a good school and I was thinking, well, this is a good school, he could go there and I'm not bothered by the whole Catholic bit, that would be good, but my husband, who is an English person of no particular faith, but probably Protestant in Northern Ireland terms, he was just, like, I don't, I don't want him having that in his head, and that was one of the deciding factors.

JC: Okay, yeah, that is interesting. We'll, we'll get onto your experience of Britain and stuff in, in a little bit. I just want to ask about sort of moving from Andersonstown to Dunmurry when you were ten, was it?

LC: Well, there was a, there was a kind of in-between, so what happened was my sister, who was maybe about four or five maybe at that time, she set the house on fire, the house burnt down, and obviously that meant we couldn't live there and as a I alluded to earlier my dad had, he had a place in Portaferry, like, a little two up, two down, that actually by then he had extended and, cos he had loads of mates in, like, the building trade and all that kind of thing, so we had by that stage a three-bedroom house in Portaferry, which is where we went, and this was at the height of the hunger strikes, I would have been in primary seven at school, so around ten, eleven, and it was quite a good time to be getting out of Belfast, getting out of Andersonstown. So I lived there for about a year, it must have been a year and a bit, and then my dad at that time was fixing up the house that had been sort of half-burnt down, or hugely fire damaged, and he then sold it and we bought somewhere else and I think that probably would have been motivated by the political situation and he bought in a place called Cloonagh, which was sort of broadly in Dunmurry, it was at the top of Upper Dunmurry Lane, and we lived there for about a year and then we moved to the final place I lived in Belfast, which was closer to Dunmurry village and Cloonagh wasn't a mixed area although it was a little estate, if you like, like a private housing area in a, in an area where there were pockets of different people, but it was very close to **[00:20:00]** a big Catholic estate called Poleglass and where we moved to in the village in Dunmurry was much more mixed in terms of, there were Catholic and Protestant families living next door to each other, and that would have been when I was about twelve I think, twelve, thirteen.

JC: Okay, and was that a bit of a culture shock, moving to a mixed area after growing up in Andersonstown, or not really?

LC: Do you know, I think I was so young I just took it as it went, and I didn't think too much about it and I reasonably quickly made friends with, with a girl who was probably my best friend in childhood in the broader sense, even though we only met when we were about thirteen, she was, like, my best mate all the way through until I left, and she was Protestant, and then I made really good friends with someone else when I was about sixteen and went to the technical college, who lived in Dunmurry and she was Protestant and I'm still friends, she's still one of my best friends, so for me, I didn't really have a huge culture shock at meeting Protestants and I think that's probably because my parents, you know, they hadn't demonised them or anything and, you know, my dad had Protestant friends and it wasn't a big deal, it was maybe something different, but it wasn't a culture shock.

JC: Okay, and where did you say you went to secondary school?

LC: I still went to an entirely Catholic secondary, which is in line with what people in Northern Ireland did, and it was called St Colm's and it was in an estate called Twinbrook.

JC: So, okay, so that was in Twinbrook, yeah.

LC: Yeah.

JC: And what, what subjects did you enjoy when you were at school?

LC: Art [pauses], English.

JC: And, and you mentioned that it wasn't a particularly academic environment in that it wasn't, like, it wasn't a, was it a grammar school or secondary?

LC: Oh no, I failed my eleven-plus and I think it was partly because of all the disruption because while all the eleven-plus stuff was going on our house had just been burnt down and we'd moved and, and I actually had, I went to three primary sevens, if you like, so I started off in, in Holy Child, I then switched to the school in Portaferry for a bit and then I wound up in St Ann's and I think all that disruption in my P7 year probably didn't help my eleven-plus, but I, I didn't pass it and that meant I couldn't go to grammar school, although I think I probably was bright enough and at St Ann's they were kind of saying to me we can't believe you didn't pass because St Ann's was a feeder school for Rathmore grammar school, near Dunmurry again, and everyone else in the class passed, but me, pretty much, it felt like that anyway. So it definitely wasn't a grammar school and it was, it was a pretty, I mean, it was a rough old school I think, you know, it wasn't, it was full of, of kids who obviously hadn't got into grammar school and Northern Ireland's education system was very divided between the very bright or those whose parents really wanted them to go to grammar school, kids who went to grammar school, and the people who went to the other schools and it was a school in the middle of a, a working-class housing estate, so with, with the kind of population of the school it wasn't an academic school, it wasn't a school where you were particularly pushed and I think, you know, I was largely entered for CSEs as they were then, and, you know, even in some of those CSEs I didn't do particularly well and I think that's because the teaching wasn't great in some subjects although some of the teachers that were there were just utterly fantastic and, you know, you could see they had a real vocation, you know. I enjoyed art and English and it's, it's no surprise that those two teachers I remember particularly well, they were great, great teachers.

JC: And was there any ever encouragement of the prospect that you might go to university or anything like that at school?

LC: No, not, not at that school, I don't think it was, I don't think it was an outcome they really saw for kids from the school, so they didn't really push you for university or anything like that, and, and in fact, I only went to university because I found a book in the library that explained the process and, and why you might do a degree and then having left school and gone to the tech it was kind of something that was more mainstream there.

JC: So you left school after O-levels, was it?

LC: Yes, I, I did sit I think three O-levels and the rest were CSEs and I wanted to, like, properly get, you know, five, the equivalent of five GCSEs now, five O-levels or whatever and pass maths and, and that kind of thing, so I ended up going to Lisburn Technical College and resitting maths and English and I did English literature and a couple of other subjects, so

that I could get all of my O-levels if you like, because I had, I had outcomes like a grade four CSE in woodwork which is, like, not much use to anybody really [laughs].

JC: And then did you, did you go straight on to A-level after that or did you do anything in between?

LC: Yeah, I did, I did A-levels and by that time I'd sort of worked out broadly what I wanted to do, which was go and study kind of media studies.

JC: And what was it that gave you that, the idea to do that?

LC: Do you know, I don't know, I honestly don't know. My dad had had a video camera when we were kids and I suppose it was just an interest in TV and making things, generally, yeah, I couldn't tell you, I couldn't tell you what, when it, I didn't have a moment where it came into my head and I thought that would be the thing to do. So after my A-levels I'd sort of more or less decided that I wanted to do it and for whatever reason I decided to take a year out and I, I applied to university and got an unconditional offer cos I already had my grades, cos I passed in everything, and in the year out I went on a training course called E Force and it was like a sort of journalism media training course and work experience scheme, so for a year in Belfast I was on this kind of government programme scheme thing that was media studies-based if you like, and I studied radio journalism, was it radio, no, it was just journalism, print journalism, and other bits and pieces and I worked in a community video place out of a charity called Bryson House where we worked with sort of young people, I suppose, like, I mean, I wasn't much older than them, but we sort of made videos with young people.

JC: Okay, and you were still living at home at that time?

LC: Actually no, I'd moved out, in my, in my final, before going to university I moved out and lived on my own in a flat round the corner from my mum and dad.

JC: Okay, was that just for a bit of independence or–?

LC: Yeah, I think so, I think I just wanted to, I felt very grown up.

JC: Yeah, I suppose that's an expression of, of that, just being able to stand on your own two feet and stuff.

LC: Exactly that, it was, you know, it was, I mean, things were broadly fine at home, you know, it wasn't, I wasn't thrown out or anything, but I, I just had a real independent streak and I suppose, like, I was, you know, out of the blue kind of saying I'm going to go to university in England and all that kind of thing, which was to some extent unexpected. I had one aunt, my, my dad's youngest sister, she had gone and done teacher training, but I actually don't think I knew anybody else who'd ever done a degree.

JC: Really, yeah, it's–

LC: Apart from teachers, you know.

JC: So it wasn't something that was particularly on your radar before, like, when you were growing that, the idea that you might go to university?

LC: No, no, when I compare myself to, like, my child, you know, he would definitely know what it was to go away to university and that kind of thing and I, and I know the culture's changed and more people probably do go to university now, but certainly when I was young it, it wasn't really something that was talked about to me.

JC: And what about leaving Northern Ireland more generally? Did a lot of people that you knew move away or, or was it, was it not really the done thing, or did people not really talk about it much?

LC: I had an awareness of people going away, but, and I had made a friend when I worked, I think it was when I worked at Bryson House, or maybe before that, I'd sort of come across somebody that I knew and they had, they had applied and got a place on the university course that I ended up doing, a year before me, so obviously I knew that he went, but I didn't know many people that were going away, and in fact, when I think about my A-levels which were done in, across, between two technical colleges, there weren't, there wasn't anybody I knew who was, like, going away to university, anyone I knew well. It wasn't a thing where I suddenly clocked that loads of people were going in my social circle, but I do know that lots of people left Northern Ireland.

JC: Yeah, and do you think people were leaving because of the Troubles or economic opportunity or a mixture?

LC: Yeah, a bit of both probably, a bit of both. I mean, I, I certainly felt like I wanted to get out **[00:30:00]** and my mum was quite encouraging of it, even though I'm sure it broke her heart to see her daughter going away, but I sort of felt like Belfast was a very inward-looking place with, you know, backward views and I wanted to get away from it for a while and have a big adventure.

JC: Okay, yeah, cos that's what I was going to ask, were you set on going to England for uni or did you ever consider going to Queen's or Ulster or anything like that?

LC: I did apply to Coleraine. I went up and looked at it, but it didn't seem as, as interesting to me. I mean, I, I just thought, well, you know, there's not much doing up here, becau-, I don't know if you've ever been to the campus up there, but it's kind of in the middle of nowhere.

JC: It's not the prettiest campus, I must say.

LC: Yeah, I mean, it didn't really speak to me, and so I applied to a couple of what were very well-regarded courses and it came, it came down between two for me, one was in London and one was in Bournemouth, and broadly what was attracting me was the kind of reputation that the courses had in the industry and also, you know, the content of those courses, if you like.

JC: And did you visit those universities before you made your decision?

LC: Yeah, I went to interviews.

JC: Okay, and was that your first time visiting England or had you been before?

LC: No. My dad who was into boating and sub-aqua diving and that kind of thing. He used to go to London for the boat show, which was held in Earl's Court, and so we'd had, he didn't go every year, but there were a few years where he went cos he wanted to go to the boat show and we all would sort of come along and do touristy things in London, so I loved London from when I was quite young, so probably the first time I went there, I was maybe about twelve.

JC: Okay, yeah, and it must have been a real contrast for you, you know, you talked about the normality of growing up amidst army patrols in Northern Ireland, to suddenly be in a place like London where that doesn't happen, that must have been a bit of, bit of a contrast, growing up.

LC: Yeah, totally and, but I suppose it was more the, the things that other people notice that struck me as different, you know, everyone's accent being different and the buses being red and, and that kind of thing. In a way, because it was so normal to see occasional patrols and the rest of it, you didn't really think about it.

JC: Yeah, no, I can, I can imagine that it just becomes sort of part of everyday life.

LC: I, I think this illustrates it. I remember moving to Bournemouth to go to university and after about two weeks I realised that it was, like, uncannily quiet at night and I couldn't put my finger on it, and then I realised it was that you never heard helicon-, helicopters, but it took me that long to clock what it was.

JC: Yeah, so you decided on Bournemouth in the end then?

LC: Yeah.

JC: And what, what were your first impressions of it as a place?

LC: It was very English [laughs], like, very English, and I remember there was a lecture from the head of the course on, probably on the first day or something, and I'd been before and I'd been interviewed and that kind of thing, but when this guy spoke he was so posh, and he, he had, like, a really beautiful, like, received pronunciation English accent, and I had never heard the like of it, unless it was on TV, and I remem-, I mean, I was almost laughing because it was just so outlandish to me that someone would speak like this. I just honestly could not get my head around it and I think generally I found, I think a lot of kids do when they go to university, I, I found it quite hard to settle in in Bournemouth, so far away from home, and I think a lot of it was, like, that it was so culturally different from things I had experienced before. I really missed the Northern Irish accent, I missed the food, I sort of

even missed the weather, like, it was sort of too crisp and autumny in Bournemouth compared to the, the slightly damp feeling of Belfast or something, I don't know. I missed looking up and seeing the mountains, so I found it quite a culture shock to move to Bournemouth.

JC: And you mentioned your parents were overall sort of quite encouraging about you moving. Did you keep in close contact with them, like telephone calls and stuff?

LC: Yeah, I used to ring and I still have letters that my mum wrote me. She used to write me letters all the time and put in a twenty pound note and that kind of thing and it was lovely, so we had, like, quite a lot of communication and she, I had a wobble, I think it was probably about February, and she came over with my brother to visit, just to make sure I was okay. I was kind of, I was feeling really, like, really at sea about being away from home and, and I wasn't expressing it that way, but I think she perceived what was going on and came over to kind of, like, just hang about with me and settle me in a bit.

JC: And were you staying in university halls?

LC: I stayed in a shared house with my friend who'd gone the year before, so I'd gone to the interview, and I suppose it was part of my reasoning to go there, but I honestly did like the sound of the course and he was, you know, giving it quite good reviews, so when I went over for my interview I stayed with him. He was staying in the student village, in the accommodation, the student accommodation, and then later on that year he said, you know, we're going to go for a shared house in the town and if you want to there's a room with your name on it, so I was living with Colm Doyle who was from Andersonstown, well, from Ladybrook, and three English lads.

JC: I suppose that must, must have been a bit of a comfort having someone you knew already there?

LC: Yeah, that was really nice, but he was the only Northern Irish person that I had, well, no, there were two, so he was pretty much the only Northern Irish person I had dealings with in Bournemouth. There was one other, who sort of came onto my year of the course because she dropped out for a year and then came back and she ended up sort of in my class, if you like, in my year, and so I got to know her, but really Colm was, like, my connection to home, if you like.

JC: And you mentioned sort of, you know, coming across English people and being a bit of a culture shock, you know, the accent and the posh lecturers and stuff. How did English people react to you at the time?

LC: A lot of them couldn't understand me because I had a very strong Belfast accent and I learnt to slow it down massively, and I made friends with people from the north of England and Scottish people on the course quicker than I did the people from southern England, although as you can imagine most of the people on the course were from southern England, but the friends that I made were all from up north, so I don't know what that was about, but maybe they understood me better or whatever. So I think English people didn't really

understand what I was saying sometimes and also they didn't know how to take me, they didn't really, I, I felt they didn't have the same sense of humour and yeah, I think that's it really, I, I just felt like I didn't have a rapport with them in the same way.

JC: So just maybe different, yeah, sense of humour and, and things like that. Did, did you ever get asked about the Troubles or anything like that, did people ask you to explain things, or what it, just what it, what Belfast was like?

LC: Not overly. I, I think, I have, maybe it's just a theory I have, but I think English people generally, you know, they weren't particularly educated on it. I used to get called in, the course that I did, it involved things like making radio dramas and I would always get called in if they needed an Irish character and somebody made a drama-documentary about the Bloody Sunday events in Derry, so I was called in to act on it and most other, as were, and it was quite funny cos the person making it, they were English, they were from Exeter, and they went round campus asking lots of Northern Irish people would they act in a documentary about Bloody Sunday, and the person making it, they had no connection to Ireland, it was just, like, a subject that interested them and they were really shocked themselves by the kind of responses they got from people, because they, they'd asked a Protestant fella and he was utterly horrified and he'd, he'd responded something like, why do you want to make republican propaganda or something like that, and this guy was like, oh my God, I can't believe I got that response, you know, cos he was kind of looking for people to act in it and, and he needed the accents and in the end he didn't, he didn't end up with too many accents cos there weren't too many Northern Irishers there, but he got me and some other people who put on dodgy accents, cos they were English.

JC: Right, yeah, I see, so, I mean, more generally, like, what was your experience of student life in **[00:40:00]** Bournemouth? Did you enjoy the university experience? I know you mentioned sort of being a bit homesick, but were there–?

LC: Yeah, that settled down and in the end I did, I think I really enjoyed it and I made friends for life and recently it's been twenty-five years since I left Bournemouth and we had a reunion down there last year for the twenty-five years and loads of us went there. I think there were a hundred people in my year, it was quite a big year, and there were probably about thirty of us that went out for dinner in Bournemouth last summer and all met up again, and there were other people that kind of sent their apologies and couldn't come, so it was a very friendly, lovely experience and even, you know, where I hadn't initially kind of built up a rapport with the English people on the course, I definitely did that toward the end and, you know, I, I made lifelong friends and it was great and I think living there was kind of interesting, just, like, sort of getting to know a little bit about that part of the world. I had a car and I used to drive around. I used to get pulled over cos I had Northern Irish licence plates and they [laughs], which used to bemuse English people because they'd be, like, why are we getting pulled over, oh my God, cos you're, they would never have been pulled over and I would think it was really kind of, that's what happens. So I used to drive around, like, Dorset and go day-tripping to places like the Durdle Door and, you know, scenic spots and kind of potter around the New Forest. It was a lovely part of the world and I worked in the hotels doing silver service waitressing and went out, you know, like, did student things, went out drinking on a Friday night, you know, pottered around. I was, I was very bemused

by English supermarkets because supermarkets in Northern Ireland were different brands, you know, you didn't have Sainsbury's and Waitrose and Tesco then, you had Crazy Prices and I don't know, other places that, that only existed in Northern Ireland, you didn't have the mainstream supermarkets, so I loved Waitrose, I thought it was amazing, used to go there, so I quite, you know, in the end, I had a lovely experience of Bournemouth and really enjoyed myself.

JC: Yeah, so it sounds like you had a good student experience, so you graduated after three years, was it?

LC: Yeah.

JC: And then did you have any sense of what you wanted to do next? Did you think about going back to Northern Ireland or not?

LC: In my final term I applied for a job that was advertised on the bulletin board in the college and for whatever reason a small production company who had no real tie to the university would advertise when they wanted a runner and had, you know, employed quite a few people from our course, and I applied for the job and got it which I was delighted about and I went to work for a small production, a TV production company in London, so my job was lined up before I left the course and before I left Bournemouth, and so I think I even stayed in Bournemouth in my final summer and my sister came to visit me and myself, my sister and my boyfriend, who's English, we all travelled round the south-west and we went to kind of places like Stratford-upon-Avon and, I don't know, all round, all round. I can't remember the name of the area, the Cotswolds, places like, little towns like Chipping Norton and all that kind of thing, we went, sort of went on a two-week drive around in that part of the world, so it was really memorable, my last kind of summer in Bournemouth, it was lovely.

JC: And you, did you meet your boyfriend at university?

LC: Yeah, he was on the same course.

JC: Okay, and then after you finished you moved to London?

LC: We moved to London and I went to London and, like, people go with what they know and I ended up searching for a flat in an area that I had been to before when I was younger, a friend of mine from college, like, tech college when I was doing my A-levels, we'd all gone over to London as, like, a little group of us, and he had, he had been able to get his auntie to sign up to having us all sleep in her living room, and it was in Wood Green, so we'd been, I'd been to Wood Green for the weekend, like, three years before, four years before, five years before.

JC: That's incredible. I, I actually grew up in Wood Green, just–

LC: Oh no way, whereabouts?

JC: Yeah, Turnpike Lane area.

LC: Oh nice. I remember, I remember when I first moved, so this was, like, what, thirty year, twenty-five years ago, we used to go to the Turnpike Lane Coronet in its final days.

JC: Wow.

LC: The cinema, and it was really grotty [laughs].

JC: I bet. It's not there anymore I don't think.

LC: No, no, they've taken it away, but it was, oh it was a lovely old cinema, although at the time I was there you would walk along the floor and the carpet would sort of, like, stick to your feet a little bit, in the way that it does in the worst clubs the morning after, and people would, people would be smoking in there and they'd have a carry-out of, like, alcohol [laughs].

JC: [laughs] That's amazing.

LC: So I was up the other end, his aunt had lived quite near the tube station, Wood Green tube station up the top, and I ended up living just, like, really near there. I ended up looking for flats in an area that I knew cos I thought, well, if an Irish woman can go and live there that'll be the spot for me. I didn't really have any other reference points in London to live.

JC: And what was Wood Green like at that time? I'm, I'm partly asking for the interview now and partly just out of my own curiosity, yeah, what was it like living there?

LC: Do you know, like, now, now we're talking different because I was raised in a monoculture, wasn't I, in west Belfast where everybody was white and Catholic, and then I moved to Bournemouth and there was, there was a black guy and a black girl in my year of the course and there were a couple of Asian fellas, and that was it, everybody else was white, and now, and now they were from all over the UK, but, well, I was the only one from Northern Ireland, but, you know, everybody was white and Bournemouth's, you know, very much like that twenty-five years ago, so you didn't see a lot of diversity, and then I moved to London and I moved to Wood Green and it was just massively ethnically diverse. So where I lived in Wood Green you had, like, loads of shops where you would have, like, Turkish produce, and, you know, Indian produce and, and that kind of thing, and I like cooking and experimenting with food, so I was kind of loving this. I loved buying olives that were just, like, sitting soaking in brine in the shops, so for me it was, like, massively ethnically diverse in terms of, like, the colour of people's skin that you saw and the accents that you heard and in many ways I felt like a natural Londoner because everyone was from somewhere, and, and I felt it really aided me to kind of fitting in, in a way that hadn't happened in Bournemouth. I just felt, like, from day one I'm a Londoner, this is great, so yeah, Wood Green was great then, it was, it was a good area to live because, you know, you had all the amenities, is it Shopping City the big shopping centre?

JC: Yeah.

LC: That was, that was on the go, do you know, there was, like, you could walk down, there was a high street, you could get anything you needed there, and the tube station took you into central London if you wanted to, so yeah, I, I loved Wood Green.

JC: Yeah, it is really handy for pretty much everything and as you say because it's so diverse, like, maybe your accent didn't stand out in the way that it would have done in Bournemouth, for example.

LC: No. So were you, were you brought up in Wood Green then?

JC: I was yeah, I, yeah, I was born in the North Middlesex Hospital, grew up there, went to school in Tottenham, went to secondary school in Muswell Hill.

LC: Lovely.

JC: So, yeah, no, I kind of, obviously I grew up there, so I have a bit more of a love-hate relationship with it, but I still go back, my mum and dad are still there, so, still visit, regularly.

LC: Brilliant, well, do you know it's changed, but, has it changed much in the last ten years? I don't think I've been there recently.

JC: It's starting to get a bit gentrified.

LC: Yeah, that's all of London isn't it.

JC: Which brings its good and bad points, like, it feels a bit safer, but at the same time it's pushing local people out, so, I don't know, it's, it is changing gradually, I think. So when you were living there you, whereabouts in London were you working?

LC: I was working for that, that TV company and they were kind of near King's Cross.

JC: Right, so just a tube, tube ride away?

LC: Yeah, just, like, down on the tube.

JC: Yeah, and how long did you stay in that job for?

LC: For about three years, yeah, about three years and I left in the end and went to another job with Channel Four.

JC: Okay, and that was in London as well, was it?

LC: Yeah.

JC: And then how long did you stay, stay in London for then? Did, were you still with the same boyfriend or–?

LC: We broke up after a while. We probably stayed together for about six years and then we broke up, yeah.

JC: And **[00:50:00]** then when did you meet your husband?

LC: Oh years, well, actually, around that time, around the time I first moved to London, he was in a wider circle of friends and he had been to Bournemouth too, but a different course, and so we had a lot in common and we stayed in touch, you know, all across the years and ended up getting together about ten years ago, just over.

JC: Okay.

LC: So I'd known him a long time by the time we got together. I'd known him since I was, how old was I when I moved to London, well, I'd known him since 1994 and we got together in around about 2008.

JC: And you, how long did you live in London for, cos you mentioned you're living in, in Glasgow now, so?

LC: Yeah, I lived in London until about, I think it was 2011.

JC: Right, okay, so you, you were there–

LC: So nine years ago, a long time.

JC: Quite a long time.

LC: Yeah.

JC: Almost twenty years.

LC: Yeah.

JC: And yeah, so you, so you met your husband in Bournemouth and in London–

LC: Well, no, I never met him in Bournemouth, I met him London.

JC: Oh you didn't, yeah, oh okay.

LC: But it turned out he'd been to Bournemouth.

JC: Oh right, okay, I see, and he's, he's English?

LC: Yeah.

JC: And I'm kind of curious as to what he knew about Northern Ireland before he met you?

LC: Well, one of the first times he met me he called me a Fenian. He said what would you know, you Fenian, and then, and I, like, bristled at this and started to fight with him and then he said, well, I don't really know what it means [laughs], just threw it out there as an insult, so he had no clue, but he was from, he was kind of from near Birmingham and he had been brought up to believe, like, Irish people were one step removed from the devil cos they'd blown up central Birmingham and he didn't really understand, like, what, what had happened in Northern Ireland overly, wasn't particularly clued up on it.

JC: And did you bring him over to Northern Ireland?

LC: Eventually yeah, and he loved it and he got really into it and his sister got really into it and in terms, when I say got really into it, got really into the kind of history of the Troubles and what had gone on there, kind of engaged with it and felt like they knew a lot more about it once they'd kind of looked into it and they saw a little bit of it through my eyes, so I remember the first time he came to Northern Ireland, before we officially got together, he came over for a weekend in Northern Ireland and I picked him up from the airport and I took him on a bit of a tour and it was, like, a sort of tour of my childhood if you like, so I took him to, you know, the convent school that I'd first gone to school in near the mill where my great aunt had worked in the Lower Falls and she, you know, told, was telling him kind of, like, things that had happened in my life, she, she died in an accident in the mill and it was an area where, like, you know, poor Catholic people lived and I was kind of giving him a flavour of that area, and we went to the, the cemetery where my mum is buried which is the main cemetery, but she's just down from the republican plot, do you know it's, like, Milltown cemetery where Michael Stone had attacked the people who were having the funeral, so, you know, we were able to go and look up on the internet, you know, footage of this cemetery and that's where my mum was buried, and I think it was through my experience as well and through me showing him things like that in and around west Belfast that he kind of got really interested in it and engaged with what had happened in Northern Ireland which, you know, from his perspective hadn't overly been reported in the media in a way that was intelligible to the English public, so that they could understand what was going on, because he felt that he never really knew why the conflict had started, or, you know, what had happened, or why people were agitated and he felt it was just a, a story of the IRA are terrible people and that's all there is to it.

JC: So you kind of helped him see a bit more of the nuance then.

LC: Well, yeah, I suppose so, I mean, he sort of helped himself as well, but I think knowing me was the starting point of that in that I was saying, well, here's my experience and this is, you know, where I lived when I was young and here are the things that happened in, in these areas where I lived.

JC: And did anyone in your family mind about you having an English boyfriend or partner or anything like that, was that ever an issue?

LC: I think my, I think, I think they were largely bemused. I think my brother is a bit, like, grudging about it, but it was never, like, a problem, do you know, like, I think when I was young I would reflect that people would talk in hushed tones about mixed marriages, and mixed meaning between a Protestant and a Catholic, and, and here I was with, you know, an English person who you would, you would pretty much put down as Protestant because he wasn't a Catholic, and they weren't overly bothered about that, to be honest.

JC: And did you get married in Belfast or in England?

LC: In New York.

JC: Oh right.

LC: Because I'm not much of a, I suppose I'm a very pragmatic person and I was older and I didn't want the big wedding, and so we sort of did this thing where we just went and got married at the registry office in New York.

JC: Okay, and did you have any family there at all or–?

LC: I had my sister there, she, she came, but I didn't, I didn't really want a big wedding, so it was really just like a very small number of guests and it was done more or less as a kind of, like, elopement-style wedding where we just went and did it and there wasn't too much fuss.

JC: Yeah, I mean, that, that works for a lot of people for sure. I just kind of asked because I was wondering if there was any meeting of the two families, but clearly if, if you had a small wedding–

LC: Well, no, his parents were dead by that time, so, and, like, definitely, like, I'm very friendly with his sister, but, you know, we don't live in the same town or anything, there's no conflict between the families, but yeah, there never had to be a big meeting because I think largely his parents were dead as well, so didn't, it, I suppose that's part of the reason why we had, like, that low-key wedding because I think a lot of people do have weddings as much for their parents as anything, and, and my mum was dead by then as well, so I think had my mum been around and had his mum and dad been around it probably would have been a proper wedding.

JC: And then your son was born quite soon after?

LC: He was born, he was born 2009, was he, hang on, yes he was, he was.

JC: And I'm kind of curious as to whether you've sort of tried to keep him in touch with his Irish heritage–?

LC: So, yes and no, yeah, yes and no. He's got, he's got an Irish passport and he doesn't have a British passport and that was as much a matter of convenience and because I've never had a British passport, so I didn't, you know, I didn't, like, sort of go out of my way to think too

hard about it, I just sort of thought, child needs a passport, and I got an Irish passport, and we're still in touch with a friend I made when I was at, at technical college, and we go to see her all the time and we stay with her and she's, like, an auntie to him, so he knows Northern Ireland really well and we go there at least once every year. We haven't been this year because of coronavirus, but we're trying to get there this summer if we think we can and we go over on the ferry from Scotland, and so he would know Belfast quite well and there are things that we like to do there. We went on our holidays there last year for a more extended holiday than usual because I, I play traditional music and we went to, like, a traditional music event in central Belfast for a week and he, he plays the fiddle, so I suppose that's, like, a cultural-type connection as well, the fact that, you know, I've enrolled him in what is, like, ostensibly a Scots fiddle class, but, you know, that's very closely tied into Irish traditional music in that it's pretty much the same thing. So yes, I think I have kept, kept him in touch with Northern Ireland in that he visits often and he can, you know, I sort of occasionally try and coach him to do a Northern Irish accent which he can sort of do, it's quite entertaining, and he knows not just my friend but obviously all of my remaining family there, my brother still lives there, my dad lives there, you know, various other people I know live there, so, you know, he does the rounds and meets them all.

JC: And I know he's only obviously fairly young still, but do you think he considers himself Irish or anything like that?

LC: No, I think he considers himself English and he's, he's very proud of the fact he was born in London and I think that is the draw more and he has a bit of an English accent.

JC: Okay, **[01:00:00]** yeah, so what was I going to ask, oh yeah, so I'm kind of curious, you mentioned a little bit earlier about being stopped in the car because of the Northern Irish number plates. I was wondering if there were any other instances where you felt that maybe people in England or Scotland treated you differently because you were from Northern Ireland, or if you were ever, like, discriminated against or, or anything like that by colleagues, people you knew, anything at all?

LC: You know, like, a little bit, but I think discrimination is something that, like, sort of just resides in people, do you know, sometimes, you know, I kind of sometimes felt a bit out of it if I was, you know, maybe, like, the only Northern Irish person in, like, a big group of English people, you know, sometimes I think I had a sense of that at university a little bit. But I think because of the workplaces that I was in, which were quite diverse in themselves, and London itself, you know, just drawing people from everywhere, I think that maybe protected me to some extent from feeling like an out-, too much of an outsider. I, you know, I had a couple of incidents where, you know, there was obviously, like, a bit of a [pauses], a sort of, I don't know, element to them that you would think, well, that's, like, obviously somebody singling you out there, so, like, I remember a road rage incident where somebody called me a fucking stupid Paddy, but I, you know, I didn't get too much of that I don't think.

JC: So it was just sort of isolated incidents like that, that then.

LC: Yeah, I never felt like anyone had an axe to grind because I was Irish. My, my impression was people were just generally ignorant and not really that bothered about it in, in the

circles that I moved in, which were generally all kind of, like, very nice middle-class people, and I think it might have been very different if I'd sort of, like, been knocking around with my husband's crowd in a working-class area near Birmingham, do you know what I mean, so I think, I don't think I really encountered much discrimination, if any.

JC: And do you have any strong memories of any of the events of the Troubles that kind of happened in mainland Britain, like, I'm thinking maybe things like the Warrington bomb and stuff like that would have been when you were at university?

LC: I remember Canary Wharf very distinctly because I had a boss at the time who was sort of fascinated with Northern Ireland and he would talk to me about it. I remember him telling me about the Canary Wharf bomb and saying that it had been a huge bomb, and also Liverpool Street, so yeah, I do remember mainland bombs.

JC: And how did you feel about it at the time?

LC: I mean, glad that I didn't live in Northern Ireland anymore, and I felt like I, I didn't want any part of that, I didn't want to be associated, not, like, I didn't want to pretend to be English or anything, but I wasn't that sort of Northern Irish person who supported that activity or thought it was good or, you know, wanted it. I, I sort of thought well, do you know, I'm more like a Londoner. I don't want this happening round me, I don't want these things happening, not, not in my name, so I suppose I had a similar position on it to a lot of English people, thinking this is a terrible thing, but probably having a more informed opinion on it, because I was from there.

JC: Yeah, that's interesting and I'm wondering did you ever feel the need to sort of vocalise your, your opposition to that sort of thing or if you, if there, if there were ever any people who maybe just by default, because you were Northern Irish, grouped you in with the more extreme elements or, or if, if you didn't feel that?

LC: I didn't really get that, I have to say. I don't, people would sometimes ask me and I would find myself explaining stuff, but I always tried to be fairly neutral on things.

JC: Yeah, no, that, that makes sense, and I suppose if you've moved to kind of get away from that then you don't necessarily want to be drawn back into it. So you moved to Glasgow in 2011, did you say?

LC: Yeah.

JC: And was that for work?

LC: That was for work, yeah. I think, I had an opportunity to move here for work and I did it partly to get closer to home, cos Glasgow, it's kind of like a big Belfast and it's really not very far away from Northern Ireland at all.

JC: Yeah, I know exactly what you mean. So did you feel kind of at home there when you moved?

LC: Well, in a funny way less at home than I did in London, cos I think by the time I left London I very much felt like it was my home, and Glasgow was in Scotland and I wasn't from Scotland, so I moved to be closer to home, but also because I thought it would be better for my child to grow up there rather than London, where I had a long commute and various other reasons that, that made sense to move, so I didn't feel more at home in Glasgow initially, I felt less at home.

JC: And what area of Glasgow did you move to?

LC: I live pretty much in the city centre.

JC: Okay, and you've lived there the whole time you've been in Glasgow?

LC: Yeah, yeah, I mean, there are, when you said, I know what you mean about the fact that it's, like, a bigger Belfast, it has lots of the stuff that Belfast has in terms of, like, the sectarian undercurrent and Glasgow, most of the people can count some sort of Irish ancestry connection.

JC: Yeah, and I was kind of going to come onto that and ask you about that next, like, how conscious have you been living in Glasgow of the sort of, the Orange and Green social element to that and, and the, you know, the fact that it's part of the city's past?

LC: I live in a nice middle-class area, so, you know, in terms of, like, my life on a day-to-day basis, I don't trip over it too much. But you are very conscious of it, so in Glasgow you have Orange marches, all, all the fun of home really [laughs], and there's definitely a sort of sectarian element to interactions between people in Glasgow sometimes, that I pick up on really naturally because I'm from Belfast, that people who weren't from Scotland wouldn't get, probably even, like, people outside Glasgow wouldn't get, cos it's more pronounced in Glasgow than it is in other parts of Scotland and there's legislation here, you know, to kind of enshrine it and, and things like Old Firm football games, you know, they sort of bring up all that tribal sectarianism, so I'm, I'm quite aware that there is that undercurrent here.

JC: It must have been strange for you moving back, or not, not back, but moving after so long away, moving somewhere where suddenly there are Orange marches again and things like that.

LC: Yeah, yeah, I mean, I would say, like, Glasgow's not quite the same in that you don't quite have the sort of completely segregated areas and murals and, you know, people getting really fired up politically, but you're not, never too far away from it, and it was everything I left Northern Ireland for, so, you know, you can have a very Northern Irish experience here in Glasgow. You could, you could probably, I could probably go and dip into an area in the East End where there were, there are a lot of people who kind of understand what it is to be a Catholic from west Belfast and culturally, you know, get that, and probably themselves sing rebel songs and that kind of caper, but that's not really my scene.

JC: Have you been involved with any kind of Irish heritage organisations or anything like that or is, is that just not something you're interested in?

LC: It's not something I'm interested in. I'm trying to think off the top of my head if I have, you know, when I, when I play music I don't even do it with, with Irish groups cos there's a Comhaltas here, which is a traditional Irish music group, but I, I don't have dealings with them. I've sort of, I've gone the, the Scots music group, and I'm trying to think, yeah, I don't have any real connections into any organised Irish groups here at all, I'm racking my brains and there's nothing.

JC: And do you know any other Irish or Northern Irish people in Glasgow?

LC: I do. One of my son's friends at school, their dad is Irish, I'm trying to think, and there, there have been a few mums and dads at the school who I would know who are Irish **[01:10:00]** in that they were, like, they're from Ireland, and there are people that I work with who are either Irish or maybe they're sort of, like, as I say, like, their grandparents or their parents are Irish.

JC: And do you think people in Glasgow have kind of more awareness than English people of the Northern Ireland conflict or is there not much difference?

LC: I think because of that connection to Ireland, yeah, and the sectarianism, I think yeah, they do definitely know a little bit more about the Troubles. I suppose they're closer to it as well, aren't they, and you get things like people from Northern Ireland, like, coming here to Scotland, like, Johnny Adair apparently lived in Troon for a while, he was a, a loyalist character who took, had to leave Northern Ireland and came here, so you do, you get, there's, like, there's always been a history of back and forward migration, so I think yes, absolutely, people here have more awareness of things that happened in Northern Ireland and who people in Northern Ireland are.

JC: And did you ever experience any sectarianism in Glasgow yourself?

LC: No.

JC: I suppose as you say, you're not really in the sort of area where, where that maybe takes place as much.

LC: No, no, exactly.

JC: And so, can you tell me a little bit more about the job that you've been doing in Glasgow? Where is it you work?

LC: I work in, near the Clyde, in the broadcasting industry, and I'm a lawyer, and that area is, has all been redeveloped and you've got lots of TV companies there.

JC: Okay, and yeah, I'm just, I suppose just trying to get a sense of, of how you feel your life is in Glasgow. Does it, after having lived here for nearly ten years, does it feel more like home now?

LC: It does now. I was saying earlier, when I moved here it really didn't feel like home, but now it totally feels like home and I think we've all settled really well and we all love it [laughs]. I suppose one of the other things I could say about connections to Ireland, I sent my child to the Glasgow Gaelic School and I don't know that I would have been open to that if I wasn't Irish. I know my husband wouldn't have been, but I think there's a connection through the Gaelic to Gaelic cos they're very similar languages, one originates from the other, and I had known of people in west Belfast who had sent their child to the, the Gaelic schools there and I was kind of convinced by the argument of them being very good educationally, but I think it was that cultural connection to, you know, Gaelic Gaelic that, that tipped me over into doing that.

JC: And you mentioned the thing about Catholic school as well. I mean, I suppose they, it's not as segregated, but they still kind of have the history of, of Catholic and Protestant schools in Glasgow as well.

LC: Yeah, totally, there are loads of similarities, but I don't, I don't feel at home because it's sort of like Belfast for those reasons. It's just that we have kind of made a life here and settled down and met people and that kind of thing, and it, you know, it suits us. I like the job that I have here and I like where I live and I think, I think for me, like, the motivation in Belfast really was kind of partly because I didn't like the environment, I, I didn't like the kind of closed-minded nature of Northern Ireland and, and the Troubles were a big part of that. People were, you know, very sort of [pauses], I don't, I don't know, I just, I believe that everybody, everybody was going around, people were being brought up to be bigoted and you would be coming across these people in everyday life all the time. It felt like a very small society, it felt like a bit of a fishbowl and I didn't really want any part of it, and I left for that reason and also because I kind of felt like I could pursue a really good career in England where there were, like, more opportunities, particularly in London, in, in the kind of career that I had chosen which was to work in, in broadcast media. I felt, you know, all my opportunities are going to be there, they're not going to be in Northern Ireland, where there isn't much industry, so I left for two reasons and I think that's borne out because, like, I now have a really good job and throughout my experience in England I've had this lovely kind of, you know, middle-class, everyone's-very-nice experience in my life in England, and it's because of the industry that I work in, the education that I've got, and at one point I switched the kind of focus of what I was doing in the industry in, in that I used to work on TV productions and then I decided I was going to be a lawyer and I studied for the bar, it was called the Bar of England and Wales. I kind of qualified as a lawyer if you like and now I do sort of tele law and I don't think I would have had those opportunities in Northern Ireland.

JC: When did you qualify as a lawyer?

LC: I was called to the bar in 2001.

JC: Okay, so that's, yeah, quite a while then, and yeah, you moved up to, to Glasgow and yeah, as you said, you've been doing more of the, the legal aspect. So I've got a few more questions here if, if that's alright to sort of finish off.

LC: No, go for it.

JC: Yeah?

LC: Yeah.

JC: So I suppose, the first thing I wanted to ask is, is how often you go back to Northern Ireland. You've kind of answered that already. Is it sort of, like, once, twice a year sort of thing?

LC: Well, I used to go back a lot with my job as well.

JC: Oh really?

LC: Yeah, in a funny way there's, there's a lot of production in Northern Ireland now. It's quite famous for *Game of Thrones* being shot there and there's, there's more than you might think, and my job would take me there pretty frequently, like, a number of times in the year, but it would be, like, a quick overnight, or even a day trip from Glasgow. But I suppose, like, properly going to see family and all the rest of it, two to three times a year.

JC: Okay, and do you generally enjoy going back? Is it, is it a place you feel like you have fond memories of or is it, does it, cos you mentioned the sort of, it being more of a closed fishbowl-type society?

LC: Well, I do think that still, I still think, this is terrible, this is me showing my prejudices now [laughs]. I still think that Northern Ireland's, like, it's like going back to the 1950s sometimes in terms of people's attitudes and, you know, all of the, all of the kind of the, the national debate around things like abortion and, you know, gay rights, you know, the kind of Ashers bakery storm and all the rest of it and, you know, some of the politicians who'll, you know, I think one of them denounced gay people as an abomination a few years ago, you know, it's, like, it is like fire and brimstone stuff still and a lot of people are in my opinion quite closed-minded, and I also find it quite incestuous, you know, everybody knows everybody else kind of thing. I still find it a very small inward-looking society, and, and I think, this is pure snobbishness really, but I think because I, I have kind of, you know, been around the place, and, you know, lived in London for so long and all the rest of it, there's a little bit about Northern Ireland, around, like, the lack of diversity that you get there and it's sort of like diversity of experience where, like, everyone's kind of, like, very focused on Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland stuff and still caught in the same old ideas about, I'll have to hang my flag out here and, you know, keep these traditions going and the whole, like, perpetuation of bad feeling between the Catholic and Protestant community, I still don't like. So I am really fond of Northern Ireland and I think it's, like, a changed place from what it was when I was young, you know, I, I sort of remember it as, like, almost dark and now I, I perceive it as, like, a very bright and vibrant place and it's probably cos I go there in

the summer mainly now, but, you know, there are really, it's a playground and there are loads of, like, really good things to do and it's a showcase for some really good stuff and, you know, I've taken my child round the Titanic museum and, you know, the whole city centre's so beautiful now, compared to, you know, it used to be a bit down at heel and, you know, vacant places where there were bomb sites and whatnot and all the rest of it, so in some ways very positive about Northern Ireland and I really love it and I think, you know, it's just beautiful some of it, and then a bit down on it at the same time.

JC: So do you think it has changed a lot since you left then?

LC: It, well, it has **[01:20:00]** changed massively, yes, hugely. I think people's attitudes haven't hugely changed in my opinion, but I think Belfast has changed, yes.

JC: And you kind of associate that more with the, sort of the growth in people visiting, tourism and, and things like that and the reduction in violence as well?

LC: Yeah, the tourism's mental actually, I mean, tourism in Northern Ireland's something else, cos occasionally I've had to stay overnight in a hotel with work and I'm always astounded by, you know, the sort of, the tourist industry in Northern Ireland, that it can have so much of a tourist industry, because I, I don't know, but I think, like, the place where you grow up that doesn't have a tourist industry when you're young, you can't really get your head round the fact that it does when you're older. It'd be different if you grew up in the Bahamas, you'd, you'd sort of, like, get the picture, but the fact that people come to Belfast to go on tours of the murals, my nephew, my brother's son, lived, well, still lives, like, in the Falls and he lived opposite, just as you go up the road and you go past Divis and on your right there's a long road, there's a long wall, it has lots of individual murals.

JC: Yeah, I know where you mean.

LC: And he lived in flats opposite it, and I went to visit him and there was, like, a coach parked outside his place and loads of tourists getting out and taking pictures and I could not get my head around this. I was laughing my head off, I thought, I went in and we said, like, you're, you're, like, in a tourist area here, it's like Piccadilly Circus and he said, you know, honestly, there's, like, two or three coaches a day, and I really–

JC: Yeah, Troubles tourism I think they call it.

LC: Troubles tourism, it's massive and you've got, you can go and get the black taxi tours and all the rest of it, but I think until, like, a few years ago, I hadn't realised, like, quite how big that was, that's a massive industry, like, the fact he's getting two or three coach loads a day [laughs]. It's madness and they're, they're all taking pictures and I thought, oh my God this is, like, like poverty porn or something [laughs], cos it's still, you know, it's, like, it's not an area full of rich people or anything, and it's, like, people taking pictures of the deprivation or something, I don't know, I found it all very strange.

JC: No, I know what you mean. It must be difficult to comprehend, like, just the idea when you were growing up that people would come and go there on holiday must have just been unthinkable.

LC: Yeah, it is, it's very strange, very, very strange.

JC: And have you followed sort of Northern Ireland on the news a lot since you left? Have you sort of kept, kept an interest in things like the peace process and stuff like that or did you more feel as if you'd left it behind?

LC: I felt like I'd left it behind and I didn't really pay close attention for a long time, but obviously I couldn't miss things like the Good Friday Agreement and, and all the rest, and the Anglo-Irish Agreement and all the rest of it. I think those both happened when, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, I was still there I think, but yeah, I sort of knew when things were happening and I would sort of, like, know, but I wouldn't be, like, hugely interested. I think now, I dip into it more. I listen to the BBC North-, BBC Radio Ulster, so, and, and I often look up, just because of the nature of my job and where I live and where I'm from, on the BBC website or, you know, other websites, I'll often look up regional news, if you like, in Northern Ireland and Scotland and I'll have, like, a Scottish or Northern Irish focus to the news that I look at, so I think I'm probably more in touch with the news there now than I have been in years gone by.

JC: And how do you feel about the peace process, are you optimistic?

LC: Like, massively positive, but I think it's, it's got shaky foundations cos I think people's attitudes haven't hugely changed.

JC: Mm hmm.

LC: I think people are very glad of the peace process and everyone's benefiting from it, but the fact that you still get very strong attitudes on both sides of the political divide means that it could kick off again very easily, and, and with Brexit I was very worried that that would kind of maybe kick things off again because of the whole argument about the border and the border problem and, you know, people, I mean, I remember, like, arguments in the British press about, well, maybe we should have a united Ireland and me kind of, like, facepalming, and, like, things like Priti Patel, I think at one point she said, well, if there's a problem with import, well, you know, the Irish people will just have to not have the food or something [laughs], and people were saying have you heard of the potato famine, you know.

JC: Boris Johnson saying the Irish border was just like a border between Camden and Islington or something like that, yeah.

LC: Yeah, there are lots of examples, so I think there's still a lot of English ignorance [laughs], and there's still a lot of, there's still a lot of bad feeling in Northern Ireland that I think, you know, one wrong move and we could be back where we were or somewhere close to it very quickly.

JC: Do you think your outlook on Northern Ireland and the conflict there has changed since you moved and during your time living in England and Scotland?

LC: Definitely. I think when I was young, I was sort of saying earlier, you kind of accept things and you think, that's the way it is, and then you get older and you, you know, you maybe gain more knowledge and you start to put things in a context and you live in different ways and you think, well, you know, maybe that wasn't something to just be accepted, and I think these days, you know, I would, you know, I, I sort of don't agree with people calling it the Troubles. I'll often just say, well, it was, it was a war, it was a civil war, do you know, and I grew up in a war zone, and not to make, like, a fuss out of it or anything, but because I do believe that, I think it was a war zone, do you know, like, if, if, you know, Sarajevo was a war zone, then so was Belfast at times, you know, with bombs going off round you and people being shot, and we haven't really focused on it too much, but I think there are things that I was aware of in growing up there, where, like, tragic things had happened that, you know, impacted on me, like, a good, like, one of my circle of friends was killed when I was in my first year of university. He was walking up the road with his girlfriend and two terrorists who were trying to blow up the police station were driving a stolen car and rammed into him when they took a corner too fast and killed him, so that's like a death that wouldn't have happened but for the Troubles, and, you know, there was a girl at my school who got shot by a plastic bullet and, do you know, so there are loads of, like, little things where I know of somebody or somebody else or, you know, this thing that happened that was, like, really sad and horrific, and that, I think that leaves a mark on you that sometimes you don't appreciate when you're twenty cos you're, I think when you're young you're quite [pauses] immune to a lot of really awful stuff and I think, I was really upset when my friend died and stuff, but now as an adult and having had a child, I am heartbroken by the loss that his parents had, you know, and the loss that parents in Northern Ireland went through where, you know, young people were killed, it's just awful, really awful and, you know, it has more of an impact on me as an adult than it had when I was younger.

JC: And I suppose having that distance as well when you're not living in the midst of it, you kind of maybe have a bit more space for reflection and perspective and stuff.

LC: Well, you see how crazy it, it is or was, you know, when I'm bringing up my child and, you know, and there are things happening in his life and I compare it to my life I think, well, that was, like, crazy stuff going on back there, that, I mean, what was going on, that was madness, and I had a neighbour here in Glasgow and her dad, well, they're all from Northern Ireland, but when they were very young they all moved here to Scotland. They left when she was maybe two, so they left and, and in many way, you know, I'm just not saying I question my parents for staying there, but I question my parents for staying there at the same time, cos I think when we were all in it and living life in the Troubles, it was very, like, well, this happened and that happened and it was all very normal and it was normal for, you know, things to be, for buildings to be blown up or set on fire and people to be shot, but actually that's not normal. I think we're all conditioned to think it was normal, but it wasn't normal at all.

JC: And did you ever feel, like, personally in danger when you were growing up there, do you think?

LC: No. I remember when I was in my first part of working life, when I was working in the place in Belfast just before I went to university on my kind of, like, training year, or year out when I was on my work placement, every Friday there was a bomb scare about three o'clock and I used to think, this was brilliant, you get off work early, you know, there was a really kind of almost macabre attitude to it and I never really felt in danger and I suspect had you really felt in danger you wouldn't have been able to, to carry on.

JC: Yeah, that's interesting, so you almost become a bit blasé about it.

LC: Yeah, I mean, there's a real gallows humour among a lot of people in Belfast, where they kind of laugh about a lot of what happened in the Troubles and, you know, and I think that comes from the horror of the situation when you sort of, like, scrape the surface, **[01:30:00]** it, you know, it wasn't a good place to live.

JC: Do you think at any time you would consider going back to live in Northern Ireland?

LC: I would consider it, yeah.

JC: Is there a, a draw,? Do you still feel drawn to it as a place or–?

LC: I do, but I do have that reservation about, it could all kick off again and also the kind of, some of the parochial views or entrenched views of people, I can't relate to.

JC: And that kind of leads me on to my next question, which is where is home for you now? Where do you consider to be home, is it still Belfast or is it London or Glasgow?

LC: You almost end up with nowhere, and it's all those places, and at the moment it's really Glasgow. This is, like, this is home, this is where I live, but there's, you know, I'm from Bel-, I'm from Northern Ireland, broadly that is home, you know, it's funny cos, like, Irish people always do go on about home [laughs], even though they haven't lived there in decades and I think, like, home is Northern Ireland, but really, like, my home, the real home is Glasgow at the moment.

JC: And how would you describe your identity, is it Irish, Northern Irish, something else?

LC: This was interesting, we never really touched on this actually. I would broadly say Irish, but I remember me and my husband went to a St Patrick's Day thing in Trafalgar Square and there were two, two auld fellas in front of us and they were, like, oh I said, oh where are yous from, and they said County Cork, and they said where are you from, and I said County Antrim and they said that's not Ireland [laughs], so I always had the sense that, like, you know, if you're Northern Irish, like, it wasn't proper Irish and, you know, I, I obviously, well, it's not obviously, but I never felt like I was part of the Republic of Ireland. I never, you know, particularly felt like it would be great if I would be ruled, you know, by the, living in the North, be, you know, have, like, a government in Dublin or anything like that. I'm not,

I'm not overly a republican and I don't think, like, Irish politics, or, you know, the Irish, Republic of Irish political system is better and all that kind of thing, that's not me, so I have a very strong Northern Irish identity, like, certainly I'm from Northern Ireland and I don't feel part of the South, as it's called, and I don't think they particularly always claim Northern Irish people either, but I sort of think it's a, it's a small island and I've got an Irish passport and I certainly don't feel particularly British, so I don't know where that leaves me.

JC: It's interesting that people from the South of Ireland maybe wouldn't have considered you properly Irish, whereas British people presumably wouldn't have considered you to be properly British either, so it's kind of a weird in-between space.

LC: Totally, totally, you sort of float in, in between and I remember, like, not being long in London and going into a post office to post something and they asked me, they were kind of questioning the fact that Northern Ireland was in the UK and I was saying yes, it's very much part of the UK [laughs], so I think, yeah, you would never with my accent be walking around in England and somebody say anything other than, you know, you're Irish, although the odd one thought I was Scottish, but you know what I mean. It's, like, once people know you're from Belfast they're like, oh you're Irish, right, great and they don't, my experience has been in England they don't default to, oh you're from the UK, they say you're Irish cos you're from the island of Ireland, unless they're partic-, particularly switched on to Northern Irish politics, in which case they kind of do that whole Northern Irish dance of, you know, working out what nationality you probably think you are.

JC: And obviously, like, from a, purely from the standpoint of, like, the borders, you're an internal UK migrant, but do you feel like an emigrant or a migrant or anything like that, or do you just feel like you've moved within the UK?

LC: I, I do, I do feel like I'm Irish and I came to England even though it sort of doesn't work like that as you say, and [pauses] I suppose that's because, going back to what we were saying, English people just look at you as Irish and they don't differentiate between you and somebody from Cork, they don't, I mean, the Cork crowd might [laughs], but they just see you as an Irish person unless you choose to correct them on it.

JC: So you almost get that sense of your Irishness being reinforced by English or British people.

LC: Yeah.

JC: It's interesting. Well, I've pretty much come to the end of my list of questions that I had, but I wanted to ask if there's anything else you think we haven't touched on, that you think's important that you'd like to talk about?

LC: No. I sort of don't know what you're looking for [laughs], but we've, we have talked an awful lot [laughs].

JC: We have talked for quite a while and I know, especially when you're talking virtually it's, it's quite tiring and it gets a bit draining and stuff, so no, that's been really interesting and I'll stop the recording there.

INTERVIEW ENDS