INTERVIEW G04: BARBARA MCKEE

Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interviewee: Barbara McKee [pseudonym]
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Location: Virtual
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 I've hit record there now, so before we start can I, in addition to the consent form that you sent me, could you I just get your verbal consent that you're okay for this to be recorded?

BM: I am, yes, that's fine.

JC: Okay, brilliant, Barbara, and could you just also state your name and today's date?

BM: Barbara McKee and it's the fifteenth of June 2020.

JC: Great, okay, so can we start then by, if you can just tell me when and where you were born?

BM: I was born November seventeenth 1963 in Dundonald hospital, just outside Belfast.

JC: Okay, and did you grow up in Belfast?

BM: Just, a village just south of Belfast, Carryduff.

JC: Right, okay.

BM: Yeah, mum and dad are still there.

JC: And tell me a bit about what kind of area that was when you were growing up, what the neighbourhood was like.

BM: We were the first family to move in, so it was a new estate, bungalows, middle class I'd say, very definitely Protestant, Carryduff in the main was, at that time anyway, it was a Protestant village although it had a, a Roman Catholic primary school, but yeah, a very much sort of middle-class Protestant area.

JC: And it, it was quite a small village, was it?

BM: Yeah, no traffic lights, it did have a roundabout, it's very different now, but it would've been, yeah, fairly small village then, yeah, small shops, yeah, a bus journey, five miles maybe into the city centre, from there.

JC: Right, okay, so not very far.

BM: And I went, no, I went to primary school in Carryduff, walked, but I was at a girls' grammar school in Belfast and took the bus in every day.

JC: Okay, and what did your parents do for a living?

BM: Mum, originally a nurse, but then really for the time I was growing up she worked part-time in a, a ladies' dress shop, boutique in Carryduff which was kind of working for a friend. My dad was very different, my dad was a part-owner in an electrical shop in the Ormeau Road area of Belfast which is a, quite a flashpoint. There's two sides to the Ormeau Road, above the Ormeau Bridge, the city centre side of the Ormeau Bridge was very Catholic and the other side of the Ormeau Bridge, the southern side of the road would have been very Protestant, so this was an electrical shop which is now a bike shop, I've been back just in the last year to visit it, but this was, this sold TVs, hi-fis, washing machines, tapes, cassette tapes, batteries, all sorts of electrical goods, sort of thing that Curry's would've sold, would sell nowadays, run by and owned by a man who was a huge Paisley supporter and hugely verbal about it, and yeah, he would've been very offensive, horrible man to the local population which would have been all Catholic.

JC: So the shop was on the, the nationalist side of, of Ormeau Road?

BM: Yes, it was, yes, beside the old TV studios, I don't know if they were UTV, or, I think they were, UTV's.

JC: Is it, is it quite near to Queen's?

BM: Yes.

JC: Yeah, I think I know the, the bike shop that you mean actually, I think I've, I've been there, I think I've been there myself actually once, yeah.

BM: Yeah, it's a pretty smart bike shop, yeah.

JC: Yeah, no, I do, I do know it, yeah.

BM: Yeah, well, there's a staircase that's sort of, it's glass now I think, well, it's not glass, but something like that and I have vivid memories of sheltering underneath that when the place had been bombed, growing up.

JC: And your dad was part-owner?

BM: So my dad worked in, yeah, my dad was a technician, he would fix televisions, Wi-Fis, washing machines, anything at all and he would've worked in the workshop out through the back which is the existing storeroom and yeah, the shop was maybe blown up, more than five, probably less than twelve times, I, I have no idea actually how many times the shop was blown up as I was growing up, the last time I remember I was living in Whalley Range and I saw my dad sweeping the glass outside the shop on the, on the six o'clock news, so that would've been 1983, I was in my second year at uni.

JC: And was this quite a prosperous business overall?

BM: There's a lot of people that have lived off the be-, the benefits of it, Graham Strong, the owner, lived in Comber, yeah, he would've been fairly well-off, we weren't particularly I would say, my dad sold carpets in the evenings to supplement the wage and would've done homers as well which was sort of, do work on his own, privately, fixing TVs rather than putting them through the business, yeah, it, it probably was prosperous enough, there would've been ten or fifteen staff in the place.

JC: Okay, so, yeah, a medium-sized business, then?

BM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: And, you said you went to school in Carryduff?

BM: Primary school in Carryduff, yes.

JC: What are your memories, do you have good memories of, of primary school?

BM: Yeah, kind of, yeah. I don't have a, I find my memory, it's not great, I think, I think to be perfectly honest I blanked out a lot of good memories almost with the bad sometimes, you don't have a terrific memory, yes, I think in the main it was. I remember walking to school one day with my little brother and meeting a masked man and a, not a masked man, a balaclava, a man with a balaclava and a rifle and I think he'll have been a, a unionist, he'll have been UVF or one of those organisations, and he met my brother and told us to go home, that we weren't to go to school that day, that they'd closed the village down and, and I can, a really strong memory I have is of saying, well, I've got mum at home and she's told me to go to school, you know, I don't know who I'm more scared of, a man with a gun or going home to my mum and saying we're not going to school today, so, yeah, yeah, it was, and I do remember some times of tension actually, not in school, but around it.

JC: So would this have been tension between local Catholics and Protestants?

BM: No, there were no Catholics.

JC: Oh right, okay.

BM: [pauses] I would say probably more a class thing, that there were some homes in the village which were council homes and there will have been a significant amount of poverty

and quite often in those places where there was some poverty, there was often a connection to a paramilitary organisation and that made, that made, sort of, the journey to school quite scary in case you bump into any of these people.

JC: So that, that was quite a common occurrence then, you would've, you would've bumped into–?

BM: Only once do I ever remember being met with a gun, yeah, I think that might've been, now my history is awful, but in the seventies wasn't there a power thing going on and the electricity was turned off during the week for a, pass, don't remember.

JC: Was that the Ulster Workers' Council strike?

BM: When would that have happened?

JC: There was a strike, I think that was in the seven-, in '74 or something arou-, around that time.

BM: Yes, yes, it could have been connected to that, so '74, yeah, I would have been in primary six or seven, so yeah, it's, that could have been it, yeah, I would have been old enough to walk to school, take my little brother.

JC: Did, did you have, you know, friends in school and the village that you would've played with and stuff like that?

BM: Yeah, neighbours, yes, I think I would be, now that I think back on it, my friends would've been very much kids like me, sort of middle-class kids, well, parents who owned their own home and who had jobs, but I, yeah, I think, I think there was a divide in Carryduff for me in primary school, that would've been it. **[00:10:00]**

JC: And was, was your primary school then mixed between people from both sides of that class divide, or, or it's a middle-class primary school?

BM: No, oh sorry, yes, sorry, all the Protestants would have gone to that school.

JC: Right, okay.

BM: All of them, yeah.

JC: And did you have any interests outside of school that you would've, you would've done, like clubs or anything you went to?

BM: Brownies, Guides, yes, I would've played tennis at the, oh what do you call it, Belfast Boat Club, just opposite, just on the other side of the Ormeau river, yeah, going to the cinema once I got a little bit older, I would've been allowed to go to the, take the bus to the local cinema on the Ormeau Road as well.

JC: And that would have been with, with friends, school friends and things like that?

BM: Yeah, yeah, it would, yeah, on a Saturday morning, lunchtime-ish, yeah.

JC: And then, so secondary school, you said you went, you went into Belfast for secondary school?

BM: I did, yes, yes, the school doesn't exist now, but Carolan Grammar School for girls just on the top of the Ormeau Road.

JC: Right, okay, and you, you got the bus in, did you?

BM: I did, yes, or occasionally my dad would drop me in because he would have been going down to, he would have been passing, to go to work.

JC: And what, what was Belfast like at that time, cos I'm sort of thinking that would have been mid-seventies when, when the Troubles was in full flow?

BM: Yeah, yeah, school was okay, it was a girls' grammar school run by a headmistress who was straight out of the 1940s or fifties, actually a very caring, lovely, single lady. School was a safe place in the main, I do have a lot of memories of bomb scares at school and the whole school would be forced out into the playground, for as long as it took for the, the property to be searched, but I, but I do also kind of remember, and I don't know if this is just a teenage thing, but wondering, you know, if, if somebody in the school had actually made the call because they hadn't done their homework or something like that, and I, yeah, but in the main it, it was a safe place. I used to go down on a Friday, for some reason I used to walk down to my dad's shop and I would wait in there and eventually just get a lift home from him at half past five and I would sit and do homework or something and it was only in later years that the smell of the workshop which would have been solder, the smell of solder, a solder gun, would've triggered me, but it was sort of during my late primary school years, was it primary school, yeah, primary school years sort of through to middle secondary that any time there was a, a bomb scare in the shop at night, that my dad was on duty to be the key holder that night that he would have taken me with him, to go down.

JC: Right, how, how did that feel? I mean, it must've been scary?

BM: That, yeah, I didn't, yes, I was scared, I, I didn't know it at the time, but it's only about ten years ago when I asked dad about it, and a lot had happened to me and I decided to ask dad just about it and I talked about the fact that I was scared, and I'll come back to the point about being scared.

JC: Sure.

BM: But I, I talked about going down to CSA Electrics, being taken out of bed and brought down and saying, you know, dad were you not scared, you know, the reason the key holder was asked to go down was if police had turned up then snipers would have taken a pot shot at the police, they would have been coming into a Catholic area, been very vulnerable, late

at night, anybody could have been across the road, so it was always the key holder who was phoned to come down, and, and so I said to dad, you know, were you not really scared, and he kind of said nah, I don't have to be scared, you were with me, and I said oh what do you mean by that, and he said, well, you were my shield, I always figured that as long as I had a small child with me they would never shoot, and he says we never did get shot, therefore we were safe, and that was his, yeah, that, that's the way he kind of made sense of it in his head. I don't remember the feeling of fear, and it was only at about age, early forties that I started having flashbacks, I'd remembered all these incidences through my life, you know, I could've stated any one of them, but all of them would have been remembered without any form of emotion and all of a sudden I started remembering them, but with emotion, and that, that kind of started a period which I've had loads of different treatments for, the NHS has been superb, and I have been, on occasions, had private treatment as well, but, you know, I still, I know there are scars from that, I kind of, I would liken it to, my past, I'm sitting in front of a bookshelf, my past is a like a bookshelf with a few books on it behind me, I know the contents of the books, I don't need to look into them, but I can use what's in the book to sort of shape my life now, I can go in and look at some of those books and sort of open them up and re-examine them again which is really what I'm doing here, but I know it comes at a cost to me, so, yeah, that, that, we used to, every family in the, in the shop would've taken their turn at being the key holder, but I just remember dad used to take me, and there's sort of been a lot of me trying to get my head round that really ever since.

JC: And, and how often would, would this have happened, are we, are we talking–?

BM: No idea.

JC: Right, okay.

BM: It's before, I actually tried Googling it to find out. The only way I'll know is, my mum kept meticulous diaries and she'll have, she'll have had a, you know, Billy called down to the shop, Barbara went too, that's the sort of thing she would have put in her diary, but I wouldn't ask her and I think, I, I liken it very much to sort of, a bit like being an alcoholic, you know, in a, in a family with an alcoholic everybody denies there's a problem, everybody denies that dad's drinking or this, you know, it's whoever it is is drinking is a problem and you all live a lie, you all live denying that problem, and then when one of you kind of realises, shit, that's a lie, you don't ever look at the situation in the same way again and for me that's what happened, I just suddenly, I, I can't quite, a vague recollection of the moment it changed, but it was, I was scared, I was scared my entire childhood, I was scared, I didn't choose to go to Manchester because I thought it was a great city to go and be in, or that the degree would have been good at Manchester, whether I realised it or not I was running away, and, and once, you know, I still see that when I go back to Northern Ireland and I've tried to have gentle conversations with my family and say had you any idea how scared I was, and every one of them would just deny it, no, you weren't, you weren't scared, none of us were scared, nothing happened to us, it was fine, and as much as my family, you know, there's almost any Northern Irish family that are around that same age, that I could go back to and chat, I've lost some old school friends over it who just said no, you're just wrong, it was not, that was not what Northern Ireland was like, and that, yeah, that, that still strikes me as being really strange, and I wonder how Northern Ireland will become

reconciled, you know, when there's huge parts of it are almost still in denial, I don't know, I've kind of, for my own sanity I've stayed well away from Northern Ireland politics.

JC: Right, and did you, then did you have a sense at all of, of what this conflict was about, what it was for, did your, did your parents ever talk to you about that?

BM: Children talked, I never had any lessons at school on either side of Catholic or Protestant, I remember being **[00:20:00]** forced to rote learn the kings of England, I'm just taking a drink here, just bear with me.

JC: Yeah, no problem.

BM: So nothing, nothing from it within church, not that I went, was that interested in it. I, I came away from Northern Ireland, and this is something I still battle, and, and there's a lot going on about racism just in the press at the moment and the world, so I'm sort of very aware of it, but I came away thinking in my deepest being, you know, Catholics are, Roman Catholics are inferior, I wouldn't have had a single Roman Catholic friend in Northern Ireland when I left at the age eighteen, and that'll have come through the newspapers mum and dad read, the, the news itself, probably, I, I can remember a couple of times being in the bombed out shop that we had, the first thing after the fire brigade left and the police left is, we would all have all have been pulled in to do stocktaking for insurance purposes and I can remember a couple of just quite nasty incidences, you know, us being picked on in the confined space of the shop, you know, which had no lights, no electricity, smell of burnt plastic and damp everywhere, you know, it was quite a scary place for a kid, and I, you know, and I can remember a young kid on a bicycle laughing and saying I'm glad yous got blown up, and that, that young boy sort of almost became my focus when I was dealing with my bad attitudes to the Roman Catholic population, you know, that that young kid became my focus for when I was seeking forgiveness for my attitude, you know, I imagined myself going up and talking to him, so I've forgotten where I'm going with that [laughs], you're going to have to get me back on track again.

JC: Yeah, it's interesting what you were saying, that you kind of, you viewed Catholics as, as the enemy in a way I suppose.

BM: I, I absolutely, completely did, even if I couldn't articulate it, you know, everything and I still have to fight against it now, you know, if I meet something and obviously you do have the potential for that, you had it in Manchester, the kind of, the Catholic-Protestant thing, and there's very definitely in Glasgow as well, but yet there is part of me when I meet somebody and I'll just wonder, oh I wonder are you Catholic or Protestant, and I would never ask, but it, it bugs me that it's still part of me, that there's still part of me that wants to know the answer to that and somehow I'm asking that because I think it matters, yeah, it's, I, I have got a, a young, I have a, a ministry to young students, and one of them's a young woman from a very working part of Glasgow and, and I remember her very drunk laughing at, with me one night and just saying Barbara if you cut me open I'd bleed 'The Sash', and, and that, you know, she could've been in Northern Ireland, you know, it just felt like such a Northern Ireland thing and there is part of me that feels at home here and I wonder is it because of people like wee Valerie saying things like that, I don't know.

JC: Yeah, I mean, that's a really interesting point and I think that's, that's why we've picked Glasgow as one of our focus cities on the project, and we'll, we'll definitely talk about that once we get onto the kind of, the period when you, when you moved there, but I just want to sort of go back a bit. I mean, do you, do you remember the, you mentioned sort of reading your parents' newspapers and stuff, did, did they talk about politics? Did, did you get a sense of like who they voted for, or, or what they thought about Catholics, or, or just more general things about like, about the state–?

BM: I, actually we had, eventually there would have been a, a Roman Catholic lady, the McGuinnesses moved in across the road and actually mum and dad were fine, there was no problem and I don't think mum and dad will have spoken openly against Catholics, okay, I, they had a lot of UDR friends, they had all their army friends, British Army friends, that, that's who they mixed with, okay, but, no, I got it [pauses], I, I think I learned it in fear, there's something about a, them and us, they were different from me, they went to a different school, they went to a different church, they didn't go to Brownies like I would have done while my brother had gone to Scouts or Cubs or whatever it was, it was the othering, they were different to us and yeah, there was something very influential in that, probably much more so than my parents would've realised.

JC: That's interesting, and presumably you say that your parents mixed with like, people from military and UDR backgrounds and stuff, so presumably they, they were part of the us if you like, they were, sort of saw them on, as being on your side.

BM: Yeah, you're talking, yeah, but you'll be talking there about kind of at officer level, alright, you know, I mean, I, when I was a teenager and I used to be able to go to discos, we would have gone to Bangor, a well-off, very middle-class Protestant place which was a place where soldiers were allowed to go and socialise, but even they, there was one disco that the English would have been in and another that the Scots would have been allowed in, you know, even they weren't allowed to mix socially because they would have just got drunk and fought each other, yeah, mum and dad would've, and it's, it's really interesting, there was one guy who came over, Bob, as a British Army and when he was kicked out of the British Army at age forty he joined the UDR because that allowed you to stay in the army until you were fifty I think, and then he's retired and he's a very elderly man now living in Northern Ireland and other than my husband who has walked alongside me on this route, road, Bob would be the only person who understands the fear that I have to Northern Ireland, he is the only person I've ever met who gets it, and it's, I think it's really interesting and he obviously gets it too, I think he has probably had to walk some of the things, but he saw a lot more than I will have ever seen, but he, but he saw it all as an adult whereas what happened to me happened as a child.

JC: And you mentioned there sort of things like, you know, going to discos and things like that. Did you, did you manage to have sort of like, a normal social life alongside the kind of, the madness that was going on?

BM: Yeah, yes, I did, but we didn't know it wasn't normal, so it was always normal to me, but yeah, I thi-, I think, we would have gone to pubs, we would have gone to local discos, we

would never have gone into, I mean, a Catholic, a Catholic pub in a very poor part of town, that would not have been wise, but we did once or twice go into a very Protestant pub in a very poor part of town and my dad found out afterwards and just, you know, he like, went mad, they, they were passing buckets for prisoners and things like that, given that I was with a female friend it was a pretty foolish thing to do, but yeah, it was as normal as we knew, mum and dad would never have stopped me going to any of those places, I don't ever remember that.

JC: So you went to Bangor, you went to Bangor, did you go to Belfast a lot as well?

BM: Never, I hardly, no, maybe, I came back from Manchester after three years and I did the, the teaching PGCE in Queen's for a year and that year, so I would have been twenty-two to twenty-three, that year I socialised with Roman Catholics and occasionally in a Belfast pub and that would have been the first time that I really socialised in Belfast, no, Belfast generally was not, no, the closest was the place called the Four Winds, which is just kind of outside the city centre, suburb area.

JC: And I think you briefly mentioned the church. Was that important in your family growing up?

BM: Yeah, mum used to make, encourage me to go, pardon me, but my dad never went, I don't recall my brother even really going either, **[00:30:00]** but once I got to about age eleven or twelve no, it wasn't particularly important. Having said that, my school would have been one that would have had, well, I think they all probably would at that time, but we would have had an assembly every day, and so there would have been an element of faith to my school life.

JC: And what church did you go to when you lived there?

BM: Presbyterian, a Presbyterian church in, in Carryduff, and actually it's really interesting, when I became a Christian I went back, one of my trips back to see mum and dad and I went to church there that Sunday morning and it's the first ever time I've been in church as a Christian in Northern Ireland.

JC: Really?

BM: And the sermon, at the sermon I took notes on it, I used to take notes in those days when I was in church and the sermon was on the difference between Catholics and Protestants, saints [indecipherable], so that would have been 2011, there we go, sixteenth of October, the definition of saints, so what they would have called a biblical definition of a saint was you're chosen by god whereas a Roman Catholic definition of saint is chosen by man, and that was basically an anti-Roman Catholic sermon, that I heard, you know, and I took on notes on it, but as I was doing it I was thinking, goodness me, you know, is this what's preached in a, an Ulster Protestant church.

JC: Yeah, and that was recent, it's not like we're talking sort of in the seventies or anything like that.

BM: No, no, that was 2011, so yeah, I, after that I don't think I went back to that Presbyterian church, what I have done is I've occasionally gone back to the Charismatic church in Carryduff when I've gone back and I happened to be there on a Sunday.

JC: Okay, and another thing I wanted to ask about when you were growing up was, was your, anyone in your family or even anyone you knew involved in the Orange Order or, or any groups or organisations like that?

BM: Yeah, my maternal grandfather would have been a, a Black, do you know, are you familiar with that?

JC: Yeah, yeah, you can, if you want to, you know, explain sort of what, what sort of things he did and stuff.

BM: No, I have no idea.

JC: Oh right, okay.

BM: Absolutely told nothing, they were in Portadown and he was extremely influential in the small town, he was the dentist in the town, and big in the golf club as was my grandmother, yeah, I never found out a lot about that. My own dad was in the Masons, I don't know if that's relevant or not, but that, that would have been the, dad would've always joked and said oh no, no, anybody can join, any man can join the Masons, but I understand there were no Protest-, no Catholics, no Roman Catholics permitted.

JC: And did you participate in Twelfth at all, or, or any of the marches or anything?

BM: [pauses] A couple of things, my paternal grandparents lived in Poyntzpass, which was a part of Northern Ireland that celebrated the burning of Lundy on the first of July with, and that went right past my granny's house, with a sort of an evening of drinking and bands up and down the street and then culminating in the burning of an effigy of the supposed traitor Lundy outside my aunt's house at the bottom of the street, so I have a lot of memories of being in Poyntzpass on the first of July, Lundy, and being, and I do kind of remember being a bit scared being a young child on my own amidst tons and tons of drunk adults, I don't know if you can imagine what that is like or not, but a lot of alcohol, yeah, a lot of, yeah, it wasn't a place for a kid, but yeah, for some reason I was always left unattended, so those would have been things, I remember that quite vividly and the Twelfth marches, my maternal grandparents in Portadown lived on the high street, and so the march went through Portadown just about most years and they had a very old, like a Georgian townhouse, the drawing room was on the first floor, and so we all would crowd up to the drawing room and just lean out the window and watch, so, yeah, it's interesting, my parents took my children, I have two girls, to the, the Twelfth in Belfast probably within about the last five to ten years and the two of them were just utterly horrified and really quite scared about the whole thing, so it was quite interesting for me to look through the Twelfth through their eyes.

JC: Yeah, yeah, sure.

BM: Yeah, but not, not involved in any bands, certainly as a teenager I would have followed them with my friends, but nothing more than that.

JC: And did you ev-, did you ever sort of go on holiday outside of Northern Ireland at that time, did you ever visit like, Britain or the, the South of Ireland or, or anywhere?

BM: So we had a caravan in Cloughey which is the Ards Peninsula.

JC: Right.

BM: Now I would have been very young then I think, probably [pauses], I can remember going to Butlins as it was then in Ayr, so that's Scotland and also in, is it Mosney, just outside Dublin, I think we would have had a few holidays in the South of Ireland, I particularly remember, it's either 1975 or '76 which would have been a very hot summer, being in Achill Island, the very west coast, I remember that being a beautiful, beautiful place and that would have been in a caravan I think as well, with friends, so there'd have been quite a large group of us. I remember my first trip to England would have been to Leeds, mum and dad had gone to Spain on holiday and met a Leeds couple who invited us all over to see the fireworks one Halloween, something like that, because we didn't have fireworks in Northern Ireland, so I remember that was my first time on a plane and I remember that being very exciting, yeah, so a few holidays, my first holiday in, in Europe, mainland Europe would have been in 1980 when I was sixteen, so sort of fairly old I think.

JC: And did you get a sense that these places were very different from Northern Ireland, or not?

BM: Not hugely I don't think, no, other than the obvious sort of culture in mainland Europe and weather, you know, accent, you know, finding the English accent funny, and hearing a very strong Leeds accent, and the South of Ireland, no, you know, I do, I do recall knowing there were parts of Donegal we would never go to, parts that were referred to as Gaeltacht areas, but, you know, just basically being told, yeah, they're not particularly safe for a Protestant, now I'm sure that's not true, but it's kind of what I believed, believed growing up. It's interesting my brother had a difficult experience cos he was a boy and he worked in my dad's shop, so he used to really struggle, a young Protestant with a job coming out into the street to get a bus home in an area where there, a high unemployment area, but he used to disappear over the border, every year he would have gone to Donegal to get away from Northern Ireland on the Twelfth and I can't remember the part of Donegal, and I should remember, he would have felt safer there and he just kind of didn't go and use his name, Michael, he would have rather **[00:40:00]** just gone by the name Mick and just felt much more at home outside Northern Ireland.

JC: Yeah, and, and did your brother or your dad ever get, like, were they ever on the receiving end of like, any, any violence or attacks or anything like that?

BM: I kind of think of attacks as being against the shop, so I do remember, you know, a doorman being shot one time, I, I remember Graham, the owner of the shop, carrying,

running down the road having found a bomb, carr-, running down the road and throwing it into the Lagan at the Ormeau Bridge, and I remember my dad, us pulling into the, the back of the shop and being about to search it and my, Graham used to keep, is it red diesel, kind of a, a factor, or a tractor's diesel, you didn't have to pay the same tax on, anyway he used this which was effectively a way of tax avoidance for Graham, diesel that he then used in his company cars which was my dad and a couple of others, dad would have been delivering tellies round the county, so we pulled in to where this diesel was in a huge tank and then somebody threw a petrol bomb, a bottle with a rag in it, leapt over the car and my dad not being frightened so much for the petrol bomb over the car, the fact that it was near a huge tank of diesel in a very enclosed space, that's as much as I recall, I don't think they would have told me, I suspect my brother has received a lot of threats over the years, he's a, a gobby lad [laughs], and he's grown up to be quite alpha male, and I suspect he just attracts trouble, but he certainly wouldn't be seeking it, no, he's–

JC: Your brother's younger, is that, is that right?

BM: Yeah, two years younger, yeah, I don't think he–

JC: And he's your, he's your only sibling?

BM: Yes, yeah, and I don't think he was ever asked to go to the shop, it was always me was dad's shield, yeah.

JC: So do you think he maybe felt like a, a little girl would have been the safest person to bring with him then?

BM: [sighs] I don't know, because he was so much in denial it's actually quite hard to ever get anything out about it, and I, I've had to conclude that actually my journey to work through that stuff was mine, I can't drive my mum and dad into it because they've just decided, no, they'd rather live in denial than sort of face it, so a lot of times as I asked questions they would close down on me, yeah, it could've been cos I was a girl, it could've been because I was the older and therefore, yeah, it maybe made him feel in his mind at least, you know, it's not as much of a child, so if I was late to primary school, Michael would've been three years younger, so that would have made him really quite early primary school, that's even worse than, yeah, it's all pretty, it's all pretty horrible actually, but it, it gives you an indication of how much fear was in the atmosphere, but yet unrecognised.

JC: Sure, and so, thinking then sort of towards the time when you were like, a teenager and stuff, sort of maybe sixteen, seventeen, did you, did you have a sense of what you, what you wanted to do? I know you went to university, I'm just sort of wondering when, when you first considered that as an option?

BM: No, I don't remember, so I was the first person in our family to go, neither mum nor dad were in education after age fifteen or sixteen. I don't think I'm particularly bright, I think, I, I think there's something about the way I was brought up that I felt I needed to be obedient, I would have found it very hard to rebel and that obedience included my dad asking me to go to the shop, then I would go with him, and that included, that also extended

I think to me working quite hard and it became clear that my results would have been good enough at O-level to thinking, yeah, I should be doing more and I think the school I went to would've had that expectation of their, their girls, and so I, I don't remember a defining moment I knew I was going to go to university, but it would probably have been slowly formed by my physics teacher through the years, it was physics that I studied at Manchester.

JC: Right, okay, yeah, cos I'm just wondering, like, if you hadn't gone, what type of work would've been available to you, like, locally?

BM: Bank, I think, yeah, probably the bank. I, interesting my brother left school at fifteen and went straight into dad's shop, that's another thing, they would have found space for me in the shop and, and on some level that would've been just the worst thing for me, you know, I, I didn't realise it, but I, I knew I needed to get away from, from there, but yeah, I think the shop would've probably been the most obvious.

JC: So when you did apply for university you obviously applied for Manchester, did you apply to anywhere else?

BM: Yeah, I think our school had a thing about anybody who was likely to get results that would allow you to do medicine must put medicine on their UCAS form, so I had Queen's medicine at number one I think, but actually the rest were all really into physics, so there was physics in Manchester, Queen's University, physics and electronics and I think possibly Newcastle I had in there as well. I, I, I don't know why I would have chosen any of the cities, I didn't know anybody in any of them, I could admit to you, this is a bit embarrassing, but I was a huge fan of Rowan Atkinson, do you, do you know him?

JC: Oh yes, yeah.

BM: Mr Bean, yeah, I actually thought he had done his electronics degree, or electronic engineering was it he did, at Manchester University and I do recall thinking, yeah, if it's good enough for Rowan Atkinson it'll do me, and then found out he never went there at all.

JC: Oh well [laughs].

BM: So [laughs], yeah, yeah, exactly, but it was, it was as much of a nothing as that in choosing Manchester, yeah.

JC: Although you did apply to Queen's even though you said you wanted to get out of Northern Ireland, was, was, was going to Queen's a serious consideration that you thought about, or was it just–?

BM: I, I probably, I probably will have been accepted to Queen's, I don't remember it, I, I think, I knew none of this at the time alright, this is just the, all the benefit of hindsight, so it could be completely wrong, but I think I felt obliged to protect my parents by going to the shop, right, by being my dad's shield, if I was there and I was their shield then dad would never get harmed by the Troubles was somehow the way I thought, and so there was part of

me was thinking I need to continue doing this, but there was also a part of me thinking I need to get away from this and that's the part that won and I ended up in, in Manchester, just, mind you, it was points only, I kind of barely got in.

JC: And so you went, how old were you when you went to Manchester then?

BM: Eighteen.

JC: Eighteen, and that was in, in the early eighties?

BM: 1980 to, no, sorry, 1982 to five, 1982 to 1985, I remember, you're in Manchester now aren't you, yeah?

JC: Yeah, well, I'm, I'm not based in Manchester, but I'm with, with the university, yeah.

BM: Alright, okay, well, next to what was UMIST's union there's a railway line and the other side of that railway line there's a, a high rise student accommodation, Chandos Hall, and I lived in there in the first year and I can remember being out with friends one night and I don't drink particularly, I never have done, but I can remember running up through the city centre of, through the city back to Chandos Hall at night and, and having this sense of freedom and peace that I had never experienced in my life before and I knew nothing about and all these years later I can still recall with absolute clarity and if you were to ask me, you know, what are the highlights of my life, I would list that moment, and there was something in that **[00:50:00]** moment in being in Manchester, my first year although I didn't know why, I was happier and more, a sense of freedom that I had never felt in my life, and all these years later I can absolutely remember it with such clarity, and being sober, you know, it was not connected to alcohol or drugs or anything.

JC: Can you pinpoint like, what, what it is you had the freedom to do that you wouldn't have been able to do in Northern Ireland, or just, was it just sort of more generally just like, being able to go out without having that fear?

BM: The thing is if you'd asked me all the way through university, anybody who was Irish would have said that we thought the streets of Belfast were safer at night than the streets of Manchester [pauses], and I've never really thought of that before, but I think that's part of the lie, you know, we, you know, we've could've been brought, you know, Ireland is safe, you know, the big bad across the water, pass, I don't know, Jack, I really–

JC: Yeah, sure. How did you feel before you went about leaving, were you, was it mainly excitement, or were you anxious?

BM: I thought, I was, yeah, I was quite apprehensive, I remember going to Greece with a friend and we were both quite apprehensive, she was moving on to uni and I was too and yeah, and my daughter has just graduated this year and her experience has been so different, you know, I went to uni and mum and dad came over, my mum came over once in three years to see me during term time and I went home once in three, in three years during term time.

JC: Wow.

BM: I know, you wouldn't consider doing that now, you know, my daughter came back, or we went up there to see her, you know about once a month, you know, over the whole four years she was away and I was not homesick at all.

JC: Really?

BM: Not, no, and I never have been, I, no, just, there was some part of me was just so glad to get out there and I was in a hall with lots of lovely kids and every now and then one'd be really homesick and I'm like, oh just, no, not at all part of my experience, I loved Manchester, I always think really fondly back to that time, but it's only I think maybe a bit later on in my life that I see why I loved it so much.

JC: And how did your parents feel about you leaving, were they supportive?

BM: Yeah, utterly delighted that one of their kids had got to university, and that was a big thing for them, I think they probably would have preferred it to be at home, but yeah, no, delighted, fine.

JC: And did you keep in touch with them regularly, like over the phone?

BM: Yeah, we'd have phoned every Friday, or they would have phoned me, yeah, and not, not a massive amount, but would've written letters to mum, so mum and I would've exchanged letters, of course that was before mobiles and things, but yeah, we'd have written letters to each other.

JC: And you mentioned, you know, Manchester being this sort of big city where you got quite a lot of freedom and stuff. What about, what about English people? I mean, how did, I'm just thinking how did they react to you as a Northern Irish person and your accent and things like that?

BM: I think this is all really interesting just given what's going on about racism now in the press, but really it was quite a racist culture, it was quite a racist world, you know, I think, there was a, a very racist comedian, Alf Garnett, familiar with?

JC: Yeah.

BM: Do you know, I think he had a, for my age group, you know, it's almost as though he, he made it okay to speak out, some offensive things about people from other countries, so there's a couple of other Irish kids that I made friends with in my first year and we all sort of, there was a group of about ten of us, sort of lived with each other in different combinations throughout the three years, those two were Irish Catholic, I was Irish Protestant, there was some significant tension between us at times.

JC: Were they from the South or the North?

BM: No, Downpatrick and Omagh.

JC: And you said there was, there was tension between you.

BM: Yeah, there would've been, particularly the lad from, Des, Omagh, yeah, he would've been very anti the Brits, as he would've referred to it, yeah, there just, there just was some tension, but occasionally there would have been too from the English, I think I found maybe, the locals, Lancaster was, Lancashire, is Lancaster in Lancashire?

JC: Yes.

BM: So there's kind of yeah, there was kind of a Lancashire-Yorkshire divide, but actually I, I loved the people from the north of England, anybody I met from Lancashire and Yorkshire, we, there just seemed to be a natural affinity, a gentle humour, it was easy to get on with people, but I find it very easy to get on with most people, but yeah, there was, I mean, I can just recall, not so much incidences, but more sort of feeling slightly hurt that I was being picked on and it would have been sort of more along the lines of the, sort of the stupid Irish-style jokes, yeah.

JC: So do you feel like you were, you were treated as, as Irish then rather than as Northern Irish?

BM: [pauses] That's an interesting question, because growing up we would have laughed at the, the Irish, the Southern Irish, they would have been the butt of our jokes, but yeah, probably once we got to England it, it, yeah, we were just lumped as, yeah, Irish.

JC: Yeah, I'm just wondering cos presumably growing up you would have thought of yourself as British?

BM: Yeah.

JC: Whereas when you moved to mainland Britain then maybe you were thought of as Irish.

BM: Yes, I suddenly adopted this term, Northern Irish even though I didn't know what it meant.

JC: Oh really, yeah?

BM: [laughs] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, no, and we would've, we would've, I would've referred to myself still as sort of British, yeah, yeah.

JC: And did you have a good social life in, in Manchester, then?

BM: Yeah, very much so, I remember my first year, I think we went out every single night the entire year because we were next door to the union and we had just a large group of us were friends which as a result I then failed all my exams at the end of the first year and

ruined my first summer studying for resits, but hey, you know, it was worth it, yeah, it was, there was a, it was a very free and easy lifestyle.

JC: Did you have any, any boyfriends or partners or anything at the time?

BM: Yeah, I think I went over with a boyfriend who actually was a Roman Catholic, a Northern Irish guy, who I'd met in a nightclub and he came over and stayed once, that was it, and after that then there was a couple in Manchester, yeah, yeah. We just, we moved out in our second year into Whalley Range which was a red light area and there was seven of us living in the area, so living in the house and, so it, it was very different from Northern Ireland, we would regularly, the, the women would get kerb crawled and stuff, but it didn't feel threatening to us, you know, there were seven of us, we stayed together, we looked after each other, we felt safe, so actually it was fine and then in our final year we moved into Hulme and lived in a council flat actually they built in Hulme.

JC: And then you graduated in '85, was it?

BM: Yeah, yeah.

JC: And did you have a sense of, of what you wanted to do after that?

BM: [laughs] Yeah, I wanted to stay out of Northern Ireland.

JC: Right, okay.

BM: Yeah, and I can remember I had a long term boyfriend at the time and I'd known that if I applied for the teaching course I would only get a grant from Northern Ireland **[01:00:00]** if I went back and did it in Queen's, they knew that if they gave me a grant, any student a grant to do it in the UK they wouldn't have returned to Northern Ireland and they wanted people to return to Northern Ireland, so I can remember Phil and I trying to pretend, well, we would pretend to be getting married on the basis that that might be a reason, you know, to be able to stay and get a grant to stay in Manchester to do teaching, but it was a no-go and I ended up coming back to Northern Ireland, to Queen's, '85 to '86, and I met my husband in that year who is also from Northern Ireland and I then went into teaching in Ballyclare High School which is a lovely, lovely high school just north of Belfast, and that was a Protestant school.

JC: So what was it like moving back after your three years away, how, how did it feel?

BM: [pauses] I managed to be able to live in a flat that year, from memory, I think by about Christmas, I must have started the postgrad October-time, by Christmas I'd managed to get a flat.

JC: In Belfast?

BM: Yeah, and that just felt, I had that freedom that I would have had before, so that was quite beside, right beside Queen's, bottom of the Lisburn Road, so university part of the city.

JC: Yeah.

BM: And yeah, that was a really interesting year because the course will have taken on kids, people like me, but both Protestants and Catholics, so the Roman Catholics will have been doing all their work to get into a Catholic school and we will have been working to get into the, the Protestant schools in Northern Ireland, but actually I do remember that year sort of spending much more time with Roman Catholics which would have been the first time maybe doing that in Ireland.

JC: Right, and you met your husband that year as well?

BM: I did, yeah, Brian, yeah, he is, he was doing a PhD at the time, he had returned from two years engineering in South Africa to do a PhD in Queen's and then, yeah, go on.

JC: Where, where in Northern Ireland was, was he from?

BM: Hillsborough, very rich little town, his mum had a, a shop on the high street in Hillsborough and his dad worked for Queen's University.

JC: And, and was he from a Protestant background as well?

BM: Yeah, yeah.

JC: Cos you mentioned earlier that you did briefly date a Catholic guy, I was wondering if that was something you were open to long-term, or, or not really?

BM: [pauses] Yes, would I have been open to it, pass, I don't know actually, I can't answer that, my cousin married a Roman Catholic, now that will have been, I think I was still in school and now they're still together, that must be what, thirty-five, forty years later, but I still recall the tension over the wedding in the Queen's University chapel, I just remember it being quite, quite tense and not the, a cheerful wedding that you would anticipate, so it was possible but it wouldn't have been an easy route for anybody to take back then, so I did have a Cath-, a Catholic boyfriend, it was, I was in sixth year, it didn't last long, he was fairly middle-class Catholic, so socially very similar backgrounds, yeah.

JC: Did your parents know about it at the time?

BM: Yeah, I think they will have done, yeah, no, they wouldn't have bothered, they wouldn't have been bothered by that.

JC: And then, so you got the job at, at Ballyclare High School?

BM: Ballyclare, yes, that's right, yeah.

JC: And how long were you there for?

BM: Not long, fifteen months.

JC: Okay.

BM: I was, Brian was finishing his PhD and we knew he wouldn't get a job in Northern Ireland, and so, as we planned to get married in December 1987, we also knew that we were going to have to leave Northern Ireland at that stage to come over to England and hopefully for him to get a job and then me to follow with whatever it was I was going to do. What we did in 1988, the first year of our marriage, was we took a year out and went round the world together, and we, he only started looking for jobs once he returned, December '88, January '89, and he got a job in Banbury in Oxfordshire, and so we moved there for seven years.

JC: And what did you do when you were there?

BM: I had decided that teaching wasn't for me.

JC: Okay.

BM: I kind of felt I had gone straight from education, being educated to educating others and while I liked teaching physics I wasn't particularly interested in teaching kids it turns out, so yeah [laughs], I took a wise move to step away from it for a few years and actually I've never gone back, and I worked, I went in as a management trainee to Nationwide building society, starting in the Banbury office and then was promoted after my, I'd done my year and a whatever it was training, into the customer relations department in Northampton which was about thirty miles away, so I used to travel about a sixty-five, about a seventy-mile round trip, I think, a day to Northampton and I worked there for years.

JC: And how did, how did that area of England compare to Manchester?

BM: Oh we loved it, it was, it's very, it's very different, it's very little England, it's, it's beautiful, we used to be able to go, we lived in quite a rough area actually, if we have seen violence anywhere, we, we saw it in Banbury, and we did, I can remember us being locked into our houses one time [laughs], because a guy was rampaging round the area drunk with a machete or something, so it was a funny place, but I loved, we loved Banbury, we loved the people, we used to be able to go out cycling back, at the back of our house, go into the streets of Oxfordshire, country lanes, come across a little pub and, you know, it just was a very different lifestyle than living in Manchester or Belfast, it was, it was very, very rural by comparison, loved Oxford, yeah, but always felt perhaps we'd more in common with north of England folk, me partic–

JC: And you were in, you were in Banbury for seven years?

BM: We were, yeah.

JC: And then, then was it up to Glasgow after that?

BM: Yes, it was, relocated with my job with Nationwide, yeah.

JC: Right, okay.

BM: And I had the choice, now that would have been an interesting thing, that was the, that was me choosing, us choosing Banbury, or sorry, Glasgow, because the nature of my job and what I was doing, I could have based myself anywhere in the UK almost, okay, so Kent was a big possibility, the south west would have been a possibility, certainly Manchester and then the north east, Newcastle, Edinburgh would have done and Glasgow, any, almost any major city I could have made a financial case for living there and I, we chose Glasgow, and we chose Glasgow because we felt, we felt at that stage we were trying to get home, we still called Northern Ireland home, and we wondered where we, you know, well, we're as close as we'll ever be, you know, if we don't get any closer we're doing okay getting to Glasgow, the people there they're as, although I'd never been to Glasgow in my life I kind of instinctively knew that the people there would be similar to the Northern Irish, that it's, yeah, we'd never been to Glasgow, but we chose it and then we were given a weekend paid by my work to come up and stay in the city and try and find somewhere to rent and that was the first time then I ca-, I had been in Glasgow.

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

BM: We rented accommodation in Lenzie and we were there for about three months, we tried to buy a house there and we couldn't afford one and we ended up in Bearsden, G61, which is where we are now.

JC: Right, okay.

BM: So we had a, a very much a falling down house and we sort of **[01:10:00]** worked really hard to sort of pull it back together again and then just about ten years ago we extended it a bit as well.

JC: And you bought that house as soon as you moved there?

BM: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

BM: '95 yeah.

JC: And you were, so you were still working for, for Nationwide?

BM: I would've been, yeah, and my husband was able to get a transfer with his civil engineering company and he's still with them twenty-five, thirty years later, I'm, I'm not

with Nationwide anymore, but yeah, it, it, it was at Glasgow that I began and was eventually diagnosed with the post-traumatic stress.

JC: Right, okay.

BM: And received all the treatment through there as well, and somewhere in the midst of that, somewhere in the last twenty-five years I've stopped referring, Northern, if you talk to Northern Irish people in the UK and the mainland and ask them, you know, if they're going back to Northern Ireland they'll kind of say oh yeah, I'm going home for Christmas, and sometime in the last twenty-five years I've stopped calling Northern Ireland home, and I've made a very deliberate effort to call Glasgow home. I consider myself sort of adopted to this city, my girls consider themselves Scots, and I felt, yeah, it's, my husband. I'm saying I a lot here because it kind of has been my call and a lot of that has come out of just the trauma of Northern Ireland, but I, I would certainly call myself now, sort of, well, I don't know what I am now, but there was certainly a period I'd have referred to myself as sort of a Scottish person, an adopted Scot if you like.

JC: Yeah, sure. I'm interested, before you moved to Glasgow how aware were you of the sort of sectarian element of the city?

BM: Yeah, I was, yeah, absolutely, my dad's a huge football fan and I think it's interesting that the, the cities, the universities that I considered going to are all with strong football teams, and so almost my awareness would have come from football, so there would've been just a similar awareness of sectarianism in Scotland, not just for the football teams, but also I would be very aware that on the Twelfth of July there would always have been bands with a, a Scottish sort of, Coatbridge Loyal Orange Lodge or whatever it was sort of written on the drum, so I was always very aware that Scottish people from Glasgow or thereabouts came over to Northern Ireland for the Twelfth.

JC: And how did you feel about that moving there, did that concern you at all?

BM: No, it's, but at that, the stage I chose to come, we chose to, Glasgow, I still had no awareness of the impact my past had had on me, you know, I, I've lived most of my life not really understanding why I made some decisions, I, I made that, we made that decision just on the basis that yeah, yeah, they'll be like Northern Irish people, all the good bits and all the bad bits, but that's fine, would I have chosen it if I had, if I had been more aware, I don't know.

JC: And did you experience much sectarianism after you moved to Glasgow either sort of personally or indirectly?

BM: I can remember trying to get to work one Saturday morning and not being able to because they'd closed the roads off for Orange marches and thinking, goodness me, you know, I thought I'd left this behind, but that's about as much, once the symptoms from the past came back with a real, a vengeance on me I would have really struggled, I can remember working in St George's Tron Church of Scotland in the absolute middle of Buchanan Street in Glasgow city centre and there was a, an Orange march walked round the

church, the church was surrounded, it sort of sits on a little island and Orange marches walked past us one day, I think it must have been a Sunday, a Sunday afternoon and I can remember just being completely frozen, just really awful for me to be reminded of those noises of a, a Twelfth, so that was the bands, the whistles that you got, but then they're forced to stop playing the music when they go past a church, so there was a, this, there's just one drummer generally plays the beat, you know, the, to which they all walk and it was that beat that just really triggered me, just made me very frightened, want to crawl away and hide, so nothing directly, no, but I have been reminded of my past quite a bit here which wouldn't have happened in other cities in the UK.

JC: Do you think people in Glasgow maybe have more awareness of what Northern Ireland's all about, or what the Troubles are all about, than, say, people in Manchester or the south of England or something like that? Do you think because of those, that sort of shared past, yeah–?

BM: Yes, yeah, I, there is yeah, yeah, it's interesting just yesterday a friend and colleague, a minister rang me about a minister called Reverend John White who was in Scotland, 1920s, and his bust, he arranged for a lot of churches to be built in very deprived areas, and in a lot of these churches there is a bust of him, that you're, you are met with in the way in and my pal Barry had contacted me and he said his church elders had said to him, just in the light of all of the racist stuff and the taking down of statues, but did you know that this man Reverend John White was very anti-Catholic, very anti-Irish and was actually now an embarrassment to the church and I think it was only in 2004, I think, that the church apologised for words he'd used in calling for all Irish to be repatriated back to Ireland and I just found it really interesting that Raploch, a really poor part of Stirling, there is a bust to this man John White and that church are beginning to realise, actually, do we want this bust of John White in the middle of our church, we're supposed to be welcoming everybody, you know, so there is this, this awareness that you get, I think, in Scotland that we had, we became really friendly, made lovely friends in Banbury, but a very different culture, probably the first place I'd ever been in my life where I didn't make an automatic assumption if somebody was a Protestant or a Catholic, I certainly did it when I started moving back, when I moved up to Scotland again, but I don't have any memories of doing that with the pals I met in Banbury, workmates, it is, it's a different culture, yeah.

JC: And do you think Scottish people reacted to you as a Northern Irish person with your accent and stuff maybe differently to how English people would have done?

BM: [pauses] I think I would answer that by saying I don't really recall any comments about me being Irish particularly, other than my accent, we used to joke that my husband would need subtitles, but twenty-five years on he still needs subtitles for people to understand him, but that's because his voice is so deep as opposed to the accent, but certainly my English friends would have struggled to understand him much more than any Scottish people would. I think our ears are maybe more attuned to each other's accents.

JC: Yeah, yeah, you could be right there.

BM: Yeah, I, I al-, do you know the funny thing, the interesting thing about being Northern Irish in Glasgow is I've come through ministry training for the Church of Scotland and, and I've been placed in very wealthy churches and also one of the poorest in the country and that's in Faifley in Clydebank, and that's the only church I've ever been in where there was an Orange Order corner, so you would have had about ten or twelve people every Sunday, would have turned up not wearing the Orange sash, you know, the collar, but they would've worn a three-piece suit, tie, poppy, war hero stuff, Orange Order badges and necklaces. There's something about two and a half, there's a biblical reference to two and a half which is really taken strongly into certainly the Scottish part of the Orange lodge and there's something about my Irish accent, I'm actually very middle-class Northern Irish, but to a Scottish voice I could just, whether I meet posh Scottish people or very working-class, **[01:20:00]** they all accept me as one of their own and I was accepted into this group of Glaswegian or Clydebank Orange Order folk and they loved me, you know, they just, they, they just loved me and they assumed, they made big assumptions that because I was a Protestant I would have affirmed everything they stood for, and absolute, that was the absolute opposite, you know, at that stage I honestly didn't want to be near, I actually found it easier being near Catholics than I did that very strong Ulster Protestant narrow-minded bigotedness and that's, that's what I became part of, not, I didn't get involved in any way, but that's what I encountered in the church in, in Faifley. Lovely, lovely men, you know, but they'll have been out and I don't know if you saw, there was sort of riots in George Square in the city centre in Glasgow yesterday, and they were out supposedly protecting the statues, that'll be my friends, I'll have, most of them, well, a certain number of them I'll have friends on Facebook and they still, yeah, so they just had this strong feeling that I was one of them and I on the other hand just had this feeling, I want nothing to do with you, you know, I'm here in a professional capacity and I loved every one of them as best I could when I was in there with them, but I was being invited to certain clubs in the West End, in Whiteinch, parts, there was one man was involved with the Blacks and would have been very keen to sort of have me along, it's, it's really amazing, it's like stepping into 1980s Northern Ireland [laughs], honestly, it just, but I, I've, other than the fact that I have a Facebook connection with these people, I don't have any connection with them now, but I just, I was really astonished at how much they assumed that I would think like them.

JC: Did you meet many Northern Irish people in Glasgow or, or indeed people from the South?

BM: I don't think I've met very many people from the South.

JC: What about the North?

BM: The North, more so in churches once I started going to church up here. I, I go to a church, yeah, Northern Irish seem to have infiltrated the, the Presbyterian church here and I have, just in my time I have gone round a lot of the Church of Scotland churches, just through my training, but also in the evening I would've gone to a lot of independent churches and there was just Northern Ireland voices everywhere.

JC: Right.

BM: And I think that would have been mostly students who'd come over. There's, there's a lot of Northern Ireland students would come to Glasgow uni.

JC: Yeah, I think you're right.

BM: Including now my own niece and potentially my nephew as well, so not a, not a massive number, no.

JC: And you've, you've never got involved with any sort of Irish community groups or organisations?

BM: No.

JC: No.

BM: No, because, because I would have struggled with my identity, yeah, I would. I do notice that Northern Ireland Protestants don't have the same sense of identity as maybe the Southern Irish or Roman Catholic community living, from, from Northern Ireland, but living over here, I think the concept of kind of the Irish pub and music, Irish music being played in pubs and the, the lovely gentle social life that kind of comes through that is not part of my culture, it's not part of my background, it's not part of my experience and therefore I, I, I don't relate to it. I'd love to relate to it, I kind of stand looking on and thinking, you know, I actually would quite like to think of myself as Irish, I would no longer like to think of myself as Northern Irish, you know, I would yearn now at my deepest levels to see a united Ireland. I couldn't even voice that back with my mum and dad, or brother but that's what I see as being the way of peace, the way ahead for Northern Ireland, so I'm, I sometimes feel I'm in a, a bit of a no man's land, you know, I don't really fit into the Northern Irish culture, the Scottish culture's still slightly different, yeah, probably the Irish culture within the UK would be the one that I would like to be part of, so no, I haven't joined anything.

JC: That's interesting, so do you want to talk to me a bit then about how you kind of got in-, got back involved with the church and started going and then obviously you trained to be a minister as well?

BM: Yeah, can I, can I, what's, is this is a, a project that's sort of that you're working on as specifically related to faith?

JC: No, it's not, it's, I suppose the project as a whole is about migration and the Troubles and the reasons why people have chosen to move, and, and how that relates to the conflict as well, but obviously faith is a really integral part of that because, you know, it intertwines with so many of the different themes that the research is looking at.

BM: Yeah, right, okay, yeah, right.

JC: So, I mean, it's something I'd, I'd be interested in, in talking to you about.

BM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, no, that's, so I wouldn't have been a, a Christian and I only came to faith at about, just in my early forties, just through the ministry of the, the local Church of Scotland here, and I always felt that was where I should be going and that's where I should be devoting my time, so when I, I came to faith in 2005 I, I joined the local church here and I think about five years later then my husband started coming. He would've, both his parents would've been heavily involved in the church in Northern Ireland and my mum would've attended so, you know, all were delighted that we're sort of getting involved over here, and Brian would've been very supportive of me going. I would have probably felt more at home in a, a kind of a Charismatic setting, but I did feel sort of strongly led just to my local church, which, which would be the same denomination of the one that I would've been baptised in in Northern Ireland, Presbyterian.

JC: And do you, do you know, do you, do you sort of have a sense of what it was at that time that made you decide you wanted to, to start attending?

BM: To start attending church?

JC: Yeah.

BM: Yeah, I, it was a very clear sort of, what felt to me like a supernatural encounter, that was a, a call to go and to commit myself to God, so there was no aspect of it connected with what I would have understood as my past or experiences at all, no, I, I don't, although the church must and will have had influence a lot, I, I didn't, the church was nothing to me at that time, neither as a place of faith nor as a place of influence and culture, you know, it just seemed to me like the church in Scotland, then and now, you know, is irrelevant to most of the people on the streets of Scotland, so no, I, it, it felt to me like a clear call from God to go to church, yeah, and, and then to commit to the church, yeah.

JC: And I'm interested, as someone who is obviously heavily involved with, with the church in, in Scotland and who has attended churches in Northern Ireland, even if growing up it wasn't necessarily a big part of your life, do you notice any differences or similarities between how people view religion in the two places, or, or how people relate to it?

BM: Yeah, there is a, I would say there's a strong sense of religiosity, if you like, in Northern Ireland, there's a strong sense of being seen to do the right thing, being dressed the right way. I can remember one time, coming back from, my mother-in-law was ill in hospital here before she died, she was in Northern Ireland **[01:30:00]** before she died, and I'd gone over and was being picked up by my dad and taken from City Airport up to see her in the hospice, and I remember it was a Sunday lunchtime and I remember passing a church, so this is only two, three years ago and saying to dad there's a wedding in the church on a Sunday, that's just bizarre because there was just all these men and women coming out and to me every one of them looked as though they were at a wedding, and dad laughing at me and saying no, that's just they're out at the normal Sunday service and that to me kind of typifies sort of the church in Northern Ireland. There is still a formality to it, there is how you appear is, matters, the fact that you do appear matters, and, and that's my experience of church. It's, it's interesting at some stage in, when I was being treated back for the post-traumatic stress, I ended up with various different counsellors over the time, some great, some not so

much, but I do remember a Christian counsellor in Glasgow, sorry Christian counselling, saying to me, you know, close your eyes and, you know, how do you see the church of your childhood, and I just immediately had this image of me being a small child in a, a building with a black roof, surrounded by men in long black, like, morning coats and all holding a black umbrella, so over my head, and that, that's, that's quite a picture really, and it just, I, I saw somehow man, you know, was controlling everything, was stopping you looking upward if you like to the, to God. There was something in that picture which was very oppressive, and I think that's probably a good image of what the church felt like to me as a child. I don't see that in the same way in Northern, in, sorry in Scotland, but that's really difficult because I'm a part of it now, you know, and it's very difficult to see things that you're a part of, you know, quite clearly.

JC: Sure.

BM: But, you know, I've been in a church like Faifley which has its Orange Order corner and just somehow tries to rub along not offending both the Orange Order plus the other people in the congregation, and, and I've also been in churches which are very middle class, very Presbyterian, you know, and I've even, and it was only when I was in Scotland that I, I'd spoken to a Roman Catholic priest, so I went up and introduced myself and said oh I'm from Northern Ireland, I grew up in the Troubles and I want you to know you're the first ever Roman Catholic priest I've spoken to, and he kind of says oh pleased to meet you and then walked away [laughs], he completely was not interested. It was such a big thing for me to take courage and speak to him, and he's like, oh he's just not interested in the slightest, but yeah, and I've, I've come across a couple of nuns that I, that I just found really warm and gentle and I find myself now reading some Roman Catholic authors sort of [indecipherable] would be one, and while I was at university doing my theology degree as well a lot of this stuff kind of came to light. I had an excellent lecturer who kind of recognised me for what I was in 2013, as sort of a very bigoted Northern Irish Presbyterian and he gently shaped, helped shape and mould me into something slightly different now, well, I hope it's slightly different, so yeah, I'd be more likely to read Roman Catholic authors now, yeah, yeah, sorry.

JC: So you think your attitude towards Catholics has, has changed as a result of, of being in Scotland, in Scotland then?

BM: Yeah, so for me to get through the post-traumatic stress stuff, I needed to acknowledge that the part that I had played in, if you like, repressing the Roman Catholics, now it was all done at a very general level because I was a child at the time, but I was part of a, a family, part of a system that would have systematically kept down Roman Catholics in terms of jobs, housing, education, everything, and so there was, you know, that required a change of heart on my part and, and then I had to forgive the Roman Catholic population if you like, of Ireland for the damage that they had done to me sort of growing up and leaving me fearful, and, and that started out, and it was actually fairly straightforward, that process, it was not comfortable, but it, it was doable, and then it kind of for me forgiving people, it moved sort of closer and closer to home and it became much more about me needing to forgive my dad for taking a kid into a, a life-threatening situation, so that whole process has required a, a huge change in attitude for me, a huge change in heart and I, and I always, I mentioned a young boy on a bicycle sort of taunting us in the, the burnt-out shell of the shop and I

always kind of kept in mind, you know, I felt, so if I met him in the street and I'm now an adult and he's now an adult, but we somehow knew each other, you know, can I walk up to him and shake his hand and wish him well, you know, and genuinely mean it and, and so that kind of became the endpoint if you like in the journey for me, was just sort of getting to the stage where I felt if I, I met him that I could do that, so yeah, there's been massive, a massive journey, yeah, but I'm the only one in my family who's done it.

JC: And do you go back to Northern Ireland regularly?

BM: Yeah, but not as regularly as I should. Honestly, I'd be happy never to go back, but it's, I do, despite all I go through, I find it quite easy to get triggered there. I last went back, I'll have been back to see mum and dad shortly before the lockdown, I managed to get over, not knowing it was coming and, though, then in October last year there was a conference, twenty-four-seven prayer conference in Northern Ireland, Belfast and I went over with a friend and we stayed in Belfast and that was lovely, it was great, but it was, it was quite traumatic for me, yeah, it was [coughs], excuse me, it, it was just difficult enough, so I do go back. My mum and dad are there, Brian's dad is still there, my brother's there, I've got a brother-in-law over there as well, there's lots of family there, but now I, I feel I go back with different lenses to everybody around me, and yeah, I just find it frustrating, yeah. Lots of Northern Irish, lots of Northern Irish people here just have this yearning to go back one day.

JC: Whereas you don't, no?

BM: I don't think I do, I don't, I think, no, I think it would not be good for my mental health, no.

JC: Do you think Northern Ireland has changed a lot since you left?

BM: Yeah, it must have. I, I wasn't able to follow the peace process at all, there were several years I couldn't listen to a Northern Ireland accent on television, I found it too painful, and I wouldn't have slept then for days afterwards, so actually I missed a lot of the news in Northern Ireland, I really did not follow it at all, and I've never tried to catch up particularly, there's something in that that it's, feels like it's, it's not my journey almost, so yes, Northern Ireland has changed, it's bound to be, but I, I don't actually know how, I do, when I go back though I still see a layer of denial, you know, of the, the fear that people lived through in those Troubles, but that, that was a survival mechanism. I had it too when I was there, there's lots of people get that in periods of war, periods of trauma and things like that, it's just a way of coping.

JC: And have you brought your children back to Northern Ireland?

BM: Yeah, yeah, oh aye, yeah, they're, we, we, there's several years we'll, our summer holidays will have been in Northern Ireland or in Donegal and we'll have taken parents and in-laws with us, so yes, we do, we go back, the girls, **[01:40:00]** the, the girls have, I, I don't know what their impression of Northern Ireland is, but I do remember one year, they would have been about late primary school, we were in a local shopping mall and we sent them off, the two of them, to go and buy a phone case each, they'd have had their first mobile

phones and they, the two of them came back and they'd chosen a phone case with political slogans and the flag of the South of Ireland because they thought, oh yeah, our grandparents are all Irish, we'll get this cos it's Irish [laughs], and Brian and I looked at each other and it was like, goodness me [laughs]. I mean, the very, they'd very little idea of the politics, I've always found it too difficult, too personal to talk about in any great depth, I've been unable to talk about it. I kind of figure that after my parents die I will, because a lot of the pain for me boils down to the fact that they were in that place that they decided they would let me, you know, do what I did, so, and I don't want to tell my grand-, their grandkids, my kids, that, so yeah, I'm putting that off.

JC: And do you think they, they think of themselves, your kids think of themselves as Irish at all, or just Scottish?

BM: They have a, they have a fondness, yes, watching rugby is very confusing, watching international football matches is very confusing for them I think, but I think they would both put Scotland first, but they're both, because they've both, they've grown up with Northern Irish parents they're both very good at mimicking our accents, and they're quite funny doing that and they'll do that sometimes to amuse their friends as well, so yeah, the link is there for them, yeah, they have a lot of cousins still in Northern Ireland, and actually I think Ellen, my eldest, actually considered university, considered Queen's, until I told her she'd have to live with her grandmother and that was it, not so interested anymore.

JC: It's enough to put anyone off, I think.

BM: I know, yeah, tell me, yeah, absolutely, yeah.

JC: I wanted to ask, you've obviously talked about your, your memories of the Troubles when you were in Northern Ireland and then obviously you, you got out in, in the eighties and haven't really been back. Do you have any memories of sort of the news of, like, the big events of the Troubles that happened whilst you were in mainland Britain, like, I'm thinking things like, like the Warrington–?

BM: The Omagh bombing.

JC: Hyde Park bombings or indeed, yeah, the Omagh bomb?

BM: Oh aye, aye, aye, aye, gosh, yeah, the, the London bombings.

JC: Yeah, I'm just wondering how that felt.

BM: I do, I do, do you know what it felt like, it felt like, I do recall a kind of a, now you know what I've been talking about stuff, you know, now you'll get what we've been talking about or what we've been experiencing, I do remember a sense of, yeah. Do you remember when they were?

JC: So the Omagh bombing was in '98, I think there was, there was, Docklands was in, in the nineties as well.

BM: Right, Google's a great thing.

JC: Yeah, absolutely, Docklands bombing in '96 and then–

BM: Okay, gosh, we would actually have been up here.

JC: Hyde Park was in '82, and I think Warrington was in the early nineties as well.

BM: Hyde Park, Hyde Park was in '82?

JC: Apparently, yeah.

BM: Gosh.

JC: Yeah.

BM: No, I don't have a great memory for that, no, no, I don't, I don't think I do, I have just this vague recollection of, yeah, now you know what it's like sort of thing, that would have come, not that I would ever express that, but just it would have come out of my pain, or actually I might've, was that directed at me, no, I can't remember, no, if I talk now I'm making stuff up, so I should just stop, I should just stop talking.

JC: I just, yeah, I was kind of wondering cos I have, you know, we have had interviewees who've said that they, they felt like there was suspicion directed towards them just by virtue of being a Northern Irish person in Britain.

BM: No, yeah, yeah, yeah, right, okay, yeah, no, no, absolutely not, no.

JC: It wasn't your experience?

BM: No, it wasn't part of my experience, no.

JC: Sure.

BM: No. I think probably men could find a very different experience than being a Northern Irish woman, I would say it might have been quite difficult to be a man in the midst of that, but I think in that case as a woman no, not so much.

JC: And did you ever talk to your, your family or friends back in Northern Ireland about it?

BM: About the UK atrocities?

JC: Yeah.

BM: No, I don't really have very many friends in Northern Ireland.

JC: I suppose you've been here a long time.

BM: Yeah, yeah, I've been away, there's still, when I first moved into the flat, there was four of us moved in together and, two couples as it turned out, not that we were at the time, and we both ended up married to each other and I'm still in touch with them and we see them occasionally, but they would be probably one of the only ones, so no, I, I don't really have much in the way of conversations with folk in Northern Ireland.

JC: And you've said, you know, quite understandably you've wanted to sort of stay away from Northern Ireland politics and things. Have you ever, have you ever been involved with British or Scottish politics, have you ever been in any campaigns or parties or anything like that?

BM: No, no, never.

JC: Yeah, no.

BM: No, I'm not tempted by that, no.

JC: That's fine, so I've just kind of got a final, final few questions here. You said that, you know, you've, you've found it difficult to, to follow the peace process and you haven't really been able to, to follow it. I mean, what's your, what's your opinion on, if you have one, on sort of the way things are going with, with Brexit and how that might affect Northern Ireland, do you–?

BM: Yeah, I've perhaps picked that up a little bit more. I think there's the sense that Northern Ireland or Ireland are, are struggling maybe to be heard, it does seem that the British government, the London government is sort of prepared to risk going backwards in terms of the peace process, which I hear, you know, from my family is very painful in Northern Ireland, from my part I kind of think the DUP has brought a lot of this on, you know, through the years I've watched the DUP team up with the Conservative Party and I don't really have a right to say that it annoys me, but it really does. It's really interesting, as I grew up I viewed, you know, the two saviours in my household if you like would have been Queen Elizabeth, who had always said that she was made Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and that therefore she was not going to give up Northern Ireland, and the other one would've been Margaret Thatcher, who was just so determined that the Union would remain together and I don't think I've ever voted Conservative, but yet I would have been a big Margaret Thatcher fan because I believed she would save the Union and that somehow mattered to me growing up, and I think there must be a lot of people in Northern Ireland who vote DUP for that same reason, it's the sort of preserving the Union thing.

JC: Yeah, for sure.

BM: And I see that in Faifley and Clydebank too, you know, just all of those people I spoke about before in the Orange Order, every one of them, despite many of them not having had a job ever, and some of them being into second generation, their children never having had a job, but yet vote Conservative at every opportunity and I don't quite know how I

[01:50:00] got from Brexit to there, but, I, I see a huge amount of pain over Brexit within my family in Northern and, and here as well, it just happens to be the beliefs of my friends and family, yeah.

JC: Well, it's really interesting to me, you said there that growing up one of the main things you, you would have been concerned about was the preservation of the Union–

BM: That's right, yeah, preserve, yes.

JC: Yeah, preserving the Union, whereas you said earlier in the interview that now you'd be quite happy to see a united Ireland, so that, that's obviously a massive, massive journey, massive journey you've gone on, since, since you've moved.

BM: Yeah, yeah, completely, yeah, just honestly, I can remember conversations at school where we were encouraging each other when we got married to have lots of children because I remember Paisley talking about the need for Presbyterian families, Protestant families to have large families simply because that's what Roman Catholic families tended to do and that if we wanted to remain the majority in Northern Ireland we had to have large families and I can remember like, a, you know, a teenage earnest conversation, you know, we need to do this, and that was all about preserving the Northern Irish majority of being Protestant, so yeah, it's a massive shift, isn't it.

JC: Yeah, no, I was just really interested cos one of, one of the questions that we a-, we try to ask all our interviewees is, how has moving to Britain changed you and it just strikes me that your journey, you have changed a lot over that period.

BM: Yeah, yeah, yes, yeah, it's, I, I still, I know there's been a lot of stuff recently in, you could, you could watch programmes on Northern Ireland and stuff on the Troubles and my husband watched something recently, I couldn't, but he, and he said to me, do you know, he said maybe growing up in Northern Ireland was more scary than I thought it was, and it, it's as though, it just seems to take that distance, whether it's a physical distance or time to actually consider that, yeah, it might have been more stressful growing up there than we realised, yeah.

JC: Well, it's like you said earlier, it was just so normalised at the time, you didn't, you didn't even realise it was that exceptional.

BM: No, no, when you're a kid normal is whatever's in front of you, isn't it.

JC: The final question I have, I think we've kind of touched on it already and it's, it's sort of a question about how you would define your national identity now if, if you wanted to define it, would you, would you describe yourself as Irish or British or Northern Irish or Scottish even, or all of, it could be all of those things.

BM: So I wouldn't, I wouldn't, British is, sadly the Brexit thing is, I'm feeling more separate from the English than I ever have done before, there's always been a Scottish-English divide anyway, and Brian and I have always worked hard to speak against that simply cos we loved

living in England, we loved the English. I wouldn't use British now simply because it's just come to mean that quite, yeah, quite a narrow-minded and bigoted views, sort of a pro-Brexit viewpoint if you like, I suppose, but in the past it would have been British, that's the word I would have used, Northern Irish for a few years maybe, but not particularly and now I am a determined, I am, I am a, not determined, I know I don't know, I've known for a couple of years just, not long, that I don't know how I identify myself anymore, and I'm in the process of trying to work that out, but the very fact that I said to you I can see a, a united Ireland as being the one peaceful way forward, I think I'm probably moving more towards reclaiming that part of me that is Irish.

JC: So you're, you're still on your journey, then?

BM: Yeah, yeah, I do, yeah, I know that, yeah, and sometimes just articulating it, you know, sort of sets up a few thoughts in your mind and you maybe shift a little bit more, you know, and, and maybe this interview'll be part of that because I was quite keen to do it, but yeah, I don't really know just at the moment, but I have been moving very definitely away from, I called myself British, moving towards somehow being an Irish person in Scotland.

JC: Well, listen, that's all been incredibly interesting, I've sort of come to the end of, of the question set that I have.

BM: Excellent.

JC: I wanted to just ask is there anything else that you particularly wanted to mention that you think's important, or anything that maybe we've missed that you'd like to say?

BM: No, I don't think so, no, you're going to have an awful lot of rubbish to, to sift through after a lot of interviews [laughs], after a lot of interviews like this, oh my word.

JC: Not at all, no, it's, it's, well, thankfully I don't have to transcribe it, so.

BM: Oh gosh.

JC: Sorry, sorry to whoever is transcribing it.

BM: [laughs] Yes, indeed, you're doing, yes, you poor people, we have every sympathy for you.

INTERVIEW ENDS