INTERVIEW G13: CHARLES MCERLEAN

Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interviewee: Charles McErlean
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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: I've hit record there, Charles, thanks for, for sending me that consent form through. Can I just, for the purpose of the recording, get your verbal consent that you're okay for the recording to go ahead?

CM: Yeah, we're fine, go ahead.

JC: Great stuff, and then, can you start by then telling me your name and today's date?

CM: My name's Charles McErlean and today's date is the twentieth, I assume, twentieth of October.

JC: Twenty-eighth, I think, yeah.

CM: No, no, no, it's not the twenty-eighth, definitely not the twenty-eighth, it's the twentieth or the twenty-first, hold on a second, let me see. It's the twenty-eighth, oh you are right.

JC: Yes [laughs], no, it's, I have the advantage of having it up on my screen here, I should have just confirmed it myself.

CM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: Time's, time's a funny thing at the moment [laughs]. Alright, well, how about then, whereabout, or when and where were you born?

CM: I was born in 1952 in Carrickfergus, County Antrim.

JC: Right, and is that where you grew up?

CM: Yes.

JC: Yeah, and what, what type of place was, was Carrickfergus when you were growing up, what was it like?

CM: Carrickfergus, well, I'm sure as you know King William landed there in 1690 on his way to victory at the Boyne. It was a very loyalist town, I believe it's even more loyalist now than it was then, but we never, I honestly never really saw much discrimination. It was a prosperous wee town, or we thought it was prosperous, although it was pretty poor and backward on looking back, but my father got work with a factory, Courtaulds, and used to have kind of Christmas parties and things like that. It was a, it was a reasonable place to grow up, it was very separatist in that there was two churches there and there was two schools, you know, and we very, we very rarely met, but when we did meet, you know, there weren't any sort of strokes or anything like that.

JC: So you, you went to, you would have gone to school in Carrickfergus, then, yeah?

CM: Went to primary school in Carrickfergus, yes. It was a, when I went there it was a, a wooden shack.

JC: Right.

CM: You know, there were kind of, like a veranda with outboards on it, you know, like, something like that, and a big huge map of Ireland at the back. I mean, it must have, it must have been about fifty years old, there were these kind of wax marks with, you know, the different coloured counties.

JC: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know the type you mean, yeah.

CM: Right, that sort of thing, you know, and then I went to school in, in, in Belfast, I went, I went to, went there by bus.

JC: And what did your parents do for a living when you were growing up?

CM: My mother never worked, but my father, he worked as an engineer, some type of engineer, I don't know exactly what. A man of few words, born in sort of rural Ireland in a, he joined the RAF during the war, he was there for five years, which was difficult cos then when he came back, he came from a kind of, quite the opposite of a loyal town and found it difficult, you know, so anyway this, this big factory was opened up in Carrickfergus, quite a few, lots of, lots of employment and he went and worked there, five-and-a-half-day week, every week–

JC: And was that, was that a, like, a good job in the town, was that sort of a standard job that a lot of people in the town had?

CM: Standard, standard working-class, boots, you wore boots to work, gives you an idea, you know, [indecipherable].

JC: That makes sense, actually, it's a good way of putting it, and what about siblings, did you have any brothers or sisters?

CM: I was the youngest, two sis-, two, two sisters, one brother who died at a very young age, two sisters, couple of years older than us.

JC: Right, okay, so it was a nice enough, nice enough part of town to grow up in, yeah?

CM: Nice enough, yeah, that hits the nail on the head, it was a kind of growing community at that time because the school really only had one room, one classroom, so one, one group went in between nine and twelve and, and we went in between one and four.

JC: Right, okay.

CM: Into the same, same classroom, it sounds very backward and, and looking back it probably was, you know, but you certainly didn't see much evidence of, of discrimination, you know, apart from the, the egg story.

JC: What, what was that? Tell me, tell me about that.

CM: Right, tell you about the egg, right, okay. It was 1960, so I was eight, went to school as normal, collapsed, woke up in hospital in Larne which is about fourteen miles away, and a burst appendix.

JC: Right.

CM: So you wake up in hospital and couldn't get out of bed and what have you, but in those days, it were, normally above your bed in the hospital they've got what's the matter with you, right, but in those days it was what religion you were.

JC: Right.

CM: Right, so these two nurses had come out, you know, says right, okay, you know, what's your name, what school do you go to, St Nicholas, well, there's, there's two St Nicholases in Carrickfergus, both parties, so you still have to drill down a wee bit more, you know, so anyway, we'd always been taught to, to say nothing, you know, so, oh we don't know and things like that, anyway, so day one I got an egg, boiled egg in one, you didn't normally get a boiled egg, but if you were, were a good guy you got a boiled egg, boiled egg on a Tuesday morning or whatever one it was, and what religion are you, oh hard to say, don't know and all the rest of it, we don't know what you're talking about it, so the day after that got the boiled eggs, still no visitors, it's amazing isn't it, eight-year-old in a hospital, just no, no visitors. W didn't have a car and we didn't have a phone, right, but you think somebody would have made an effort, but anyway, so like, an egg on the first, an egg on the second day, on the third day I did get a visitor, the priest, not good, clear evidence here, no more eggs, you know, so after a while we got sent to another hospital and passed out our, our time there, but I think it's one of the first memories I've got of, you know, here you are now,

the guy opposite me got an egg, he got an egg, but I didn't get an egg, what does that mean, you know, I often, often thought about it, you know, but I'll come back to it at the very end.

JC: Yeah, no, it's just int-, interesting, so one side of the community got eggs and the other didn't.

CM: Didn't, correct.

JC: Right, that's, I've never, I've never heard that before.

CM: It's only a wee egg, it's only a wee egg, so you know, it's not a big thing, but it was to me, but anyway, that, that was the kind of situation that we had there. What else, let me see. It's a very, very loyal area and we were kind of, like, on the periphery, it's a council estate, but it was a brand new estate, but the, you know, when you get these estates they leave parts of the place, the more difficult places to build, they leave that for later on, they, they build the easy, the easy ones first, you know, so it was a bit, like, large open space up in front of us, between us and the shops, and there's, there's about five big towns in, in Ireland where there are marches, Carrickfergus is one of them because King William was there, so they used to gather early in the morning, six o'clock and quite smart, huge groups of them, but the deal was if, if you were a nationalist, if you kept your, your nose clean and you didn't bother them, you were fine. Mostly they wanted you to leave and round about the Twelfth the nuns used to run boats from Belfast into the Isle of Man, and, and the boat would leave on the eleventh, come back on the thirteenth, right, so you'd, you'd go away with your wee suitcase at five, it was like *Schindler's List*, five in the morning, get the train into Belfast and then you would, you would walk down to the boat, get the boat, go to the Isle of Man, stay there over the Twelfth, come back on the thirteenth, and normally on the thirteenth, there's boats came from, from Scotland with the, the contingent of Orange loyalists, and the two were never supposed to meet, but we met one, we met one morning, oh my goodness [laughs], it was a complete and utter shambles, right.

JC: What happened?

CM: Pirates, you know, and aye they were throwing bottles at each other and what have you. Policemen turned up, in those days they wore a green uniform, but they carried, they carried handguns, so we were, you know, when you're small you've no, no realisation of danger and what have you, but anyway, they were [indecipherable] bottles and what have you and this, this lone policeman, he turned up, so he took the gun out and he fired, fired into the air, and, you know, we'd been always, seen the TV, you know, these bullets go peow, just, like, made a crack, a crack, everything stopped, you know, we got to the side of the boat, that's pretty much that [laughs], then they must have decided that that crack, crack, crack wasn't a real gun, you know, they all got back into it, you know, but anyway reinforcements came and we got delayed coming off, off the boat, so we had to make our way back from the docks to, to the railway station, I don't know, two miles or something, but never forget it, you know, I'm about five or six and they had, you know the fires that they lit on the eleventh had kind of burnt down, but they were still glowing, you know.

JC: Right, yeah.

CM: Yeah, you know, it was raining and you'd be walking through this, like, like, rats walking along the side of the big warehouses, as they were then, you know, so, but nobody individually attacked us or anything like that, you know, it's just a group kind of thing, you know.

JC: So **[00:10:00]** would you have gone away every year for the Twelfth, then?

CM: Well, it seemed to me, you know, the memory plays tricks, but it seemed to me it would be, like, between 1956 to maybe 1961 or something like that, after that I remember we, we stayed and we, you know, I can remember seeing, you know, the, the bands marching and gathering together, like, you know, but they were peaceable enough sort of guys, you know, later on it became more kind of nasty, for want of a better word, where the old UVF commander would send out an intermission that it would be best if yous left for that particular day, if you left and your windows got broken they would reinstate them.

JC: Right.

CM: But, but if you stayed and you caused a nuisance and attracted attention then it's up to you, sorry, that's the way it is, you know, so.

JC: Wow.

CM: So we, we kind of, how would we put it, we, we complied with all their requests and what have you, because they would knock the door and ask they want to use the toilet, you know, tea and all that carry-on, you know, but the gist of this story in my view is that you didn't really get bother where you have a ninety per cent majority cos you didn't feel threatened, but there were other bits, you could see in Belfast certainly, when you went up to school in Belfast you could see, you know, Taigs will be shot, that kind of thing, you know, and you had [indecipherable] burn your uniform and what have you, but we used to, used to go to school, you used to take a day off for a holy day of obligation, you had to go to mass, right, but then you had to go to school on the, on the Saturday.

JC: Right.

CM: And then you had a wee kind of pink bus pass, but you'd take a bit, you would take a bit of abuse for that, that's [indecipherable], the odd physical, but mostly kind of verbal, kind of verbal [indecipherable] type thing, you know.

JC: So you feel, you feel that it wasn't as bad in, in Carrick, then, because it was, it was such a heavily loyalist town that it was almost, the numbers were, were so skewed, yeah?

CM: Yeah, they weren't, they weren't, didn't feel threatened in any way, you know, I'll be with you in a minute, there's two different loyalist groups that seem to be kind of clashing round about that part of the world for, for power over whoever runs it, you know, but at that time it was just a, it was pre-UDA and pre-UVF times, but as I say, it was just a general nationalist, loyalist type, no specialists.

JC: So you're, you were obviously from a nationalist background. Did, did your parents talk to you much about, about the sort of the divide in Northern Ireland and, and politics and things like that?

CM: Nothing.

JC: Really?

CM: Not a thing, not a thing.

JC: But it's interesting, you said to me earlier that you, you were kind of aware that you needed to be very kind of quiet about what your background was.

CM: Yes, I mean, that was, that's kind of instilled in, in pretty well, in most of them, in that you know that policemen can be dangerous, you don't say or do anything in their company and there are other people that you, you avoid in authority, because the, the housing trust seemed to be slightly biased towards the unionist population, and the hospital [laughs].

JC: Yeah, clearly [laughs].

CM: No, but, as, as to advice or anything else, other than, you know, you say nothing, don't get yourself involved and let them get on with it and ninety-nine times out of a hundred you will be left alone and that, well, you still hear about, you know, guys getting shot who, you know, no reason atta-, random attacks and things like that, I'm sure there's an element of that, but the bigger element was of guys who were told to stop doing whatever they were doing and they didn't, they continued and I only knew one guy who, who, who eventually got done in, but he had, he was definitely told–

JC: Right.

CM: To, to leave, but he persevered, and he was eventually sort of done in.

JC: Do you know what he'd, he'd done?

CM: I don't know whether he'd broken into houses or, or what, but I know he'd been spoken to, cos I knew his brother, his brother's the same age as me and he was, like, two years older.

JC: Right.

CM: He had an odd kind of nickname, but he was a well known sort of gadabout town-type fella, you know.

JC: Sure.

CM: But he was, he was warned.

JC: So kind of going back to, to school, then, you went to school at St Nicholas's, was it, you said it was called?

CM: St Nicholas, yeah.

JC: What, and did you enjoy, do you have good memories of school?

CM: Yeah, yeah, oh as I say, it was, it was at, from one o'clock to four o'clock, the primary, primary school.

JC: Yeah, so not too long a day, then.

CM: Yeah, seats never got cold, yeah, but I mean, they were building new premises, which has since, since been knocked down, and I understand that the, the nationalist population down there is less every, every week. I read on the internet last night or the night before, didn't realise that, you know, but I did go through there last year and certainly the big school had disappeared and it did look a smaller group than when, when I was a boy.

JC: And what about outside of school, what did you do, sort of just in your spare time, when you were growing up?

CM: Primary school?

JC: Yeah, well, outside of school, yeah, yeah, around primary school time.

CM: Well, pretty, pretty normal. Saturday morning, football in the park, you know, the park was only yards away and it would be nationalists and, though, although we didn't know we were nationalists, or you didn't ask about it, we, we would play together and there was, it's st-, I only really noticed it when I went to Belfast, you know, [indecipherable] kind of thing, and we had, you used to have to go by an Orange hall to get to school, the odd time you'd get stones thrown, things like that, you know, but small, small town, but I had a pal who, whose, whose dad was a pretty big unionist, you know, but [pauses] I went to an Orange walk with him and he played Gaelic football with me, although he insisted on wearing his King Billy socks [laughs], you didn't think you could get King Billy socks, but you can get King Billy socks, so, and in the, this'd be about, I would have been about sixteen or something like that, but then the captain of the team, who was a local boy, he managed to blow himself up in an Orange hall in, in Carrick or the surrounding area, but he'd never ever mentioned anything to either of us of his allegiance or what he was doing or why he was doing it, you know, so.

JC: So was that not something you talked about that much with your friends, then, sort of background and politics and stuff like that?

CM: Rarely, rarely came up. I mean, we had a wee youth club attached to us and it was this, which was a kind of, like, a wee dungeon type thing, basement with no health and safety or anything else, but we could run it ourselves, and the, the unionists had this brick-built

astroturf football green fifty years ago and they'd ocean-going canoes in it, I mean, I joined both of them, you know, they didn't, they didn't throw you out or anything like that, you know, so, you see they were pretty fair and, I've got to say, most of the cops I ever met seemed not unlikeable, but then again I'm sure they've got two faces, you know, but they never, they never sort of took the mask off whenever I was, I was there, you know, so I have no grudge to, to, against them, some, some did, but some, some didn't.

JC: And it sounds like you had friends from sort of both sides of the community as well, then?

CM: Yeah, yes.

JC: Yeah, so I'm just wondering, obviously the kind of stereotype of Northern Ireland is that people from, from each side didn't mix and that they hated each other, and I'm wondering what your sort of attitudes were towards Protestants when you were growing up?

CM: You were surrounded by them [laughs], but, and there were ones I liked and ones I didn't like, but it wasn't something you spent a lot of time at. I mean, round about Twelfth of July you had to be on your, you had to be on your guard and, and watch what you did and who you spoke to and at that time these big drums and, can't remember the name of them, but they used to play them all night, you know, just go [makes a noise], Lambeg drums, that was the name of them, to show who was, who was in charge, you know, and as long as you accepted they were in charge that's fine, yeah, if, if you, I suppose if you, if you rubbed them up the wrong way then they would, they would take some sort of action against you, you know.

JC: And what about church growing up, was that a, was that a big part of your life?

CM: Well, you always went there, you know, still go, that's just the way it, the way it was, you know, but, but one thing that did, that sort of made us kind of drift away from, from Carrick was the, the first time I went to vote, cos obviously, cos as you're voting the cops were there with their guns and all that, and a couple of politicians there, and, you know, you get to, to sign, you know, your name's on a kind of list, with a green line through it, now this is one of the biggest unionist majorities in the world [laughs], now it's not that, I mean, look it up, about 130,000 people majority, 120,000, something **[00:20:00]** like that, you know, it's phenomenal and, but there's this green line through it, this is what I mean, he says you've already voted, I says no, no, I've not voted, no, so the guy who's with you, so he's [indecipherable], he turns up, no, you've already voted, right, so he says well, oh that's right, you know, and guy just, you know, they sit there, they look up, and he says well, do you, what you want, you know, so I went to the politician, there's a la-, first time I'd ever seen a Labour politician, anyway he said he'll do this, that and the next thing or whatever, right, so we approached it with one of the cops who was standing at the, at the door, and all he says was fuck off [laughs], fair enough, that's [indecipherable], you know, so that, that was the end of that, so, so certainly a wee trickle effect, you know, but–

JC: So you didn't get to vote, then, no?

CM: We didn't, never got to vote over there, no, no, the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties, maybe into the early nineties, Carrickfergus was a prosperous wee town, and full employment, full employment for all sorts of reasons. The MP was a guy called Molyneaux, Molyneaux, he actually lived in England in, he would come over on the Twelfth of July and say the Fenians are doing this, that and the next thing, and don't forget to vote for me, I'm alright, you know what I mean, but I mean, that's the way it went. I could say one thing for Paisley, he got rid of all that lot, the old Oxford, Eton and the Guards carry-on, you know, just dismissed them and, but a relative who was shot, a vague relative in, in Antrim and he had a wee shop and somebody came looking for stuff at night, he, you know, they lived above the shop and he came down and he got shot, but anyway, he got shot about two in the morning, by a pack of six, Paisley was there, you know, and he knew, it was, it was a nationalist area and he'd been shot by unionists, but he was there and he seemed pretty straight, all the rest of it, you know, so, so I reckon I had no axe to grind with him on either way, there were other guys who, who were out in the, the far left and right sort of [indecipherable], I didn't have any axe to grind against Paisley or any of his, any of his cohorts.

JP: Yeah, so it sounds like you didn't grow up with a particularly sort of political outlook, if that's the right way to put it?

CM: Yeah, I would, I would say so, yeah, I mean, call me naive or innocent or stupid or thick or whatever, but I didn't obviously pick up on all the Stormonts and things like that, you know, nobody ever asked me to join the IRA, very disappointed, you know [laughs], but you don't actually join the IRA, you're approached, you know, and obviously there's a couple of rules, like, you have to keep your mouth shut, which I wasn't very good it, and you have to obey orders, I'm not very good at that either, you know, and you have to be useful, you know, you would have to do something in it to, there was a, there's one night, Ryan Bennett [indecipherable], it's a very close, but see, see on the TV when you see the westerns, you know you hear this peow and you see it came from over the right, you've no idea where it came from, just, what's that noise, don't know, anyway, what, what happens, obviously we didn't go out until it all stopped [laughs], but what happened, what happened was that there was a mob called the B-Specials, don't know if you ever heard of them, they were a, they're a paramilitary mob, right, now normally they would go out on patrol and man roadblocks and things like that away from wherever they lived, that was just the way they rotated them around, you know. Anyway, what had happened is that they had stopped a car driven by a nationalist, he was a car electrician and apparently he was suspected of making things happen, you know, but they hadn't shot, we heard him, he's, he'd been, been shot at and all the rest of it, but anyway a couple of days later it rained and there was a cable ran from, like, a pole outside our house to a pole over there and there's this spark and what happened, one of the blokes had went, they must have been wee tiny bullets, and it went through the cable, so when it was dry it was fine, but when it rained you would get the spark between the two, two thingummies, you know, so they didn't, they didn't shoot in the back or anything else which is what we were told, they did shoot in the air, you know, we had proof, but we never declared that proof or anything like that, and there were, there were odd incidents like that, but no knock on the door in the middle of the night or anything.

JC: Well, that's, that's something, yeah.

CM: Aye, I think we'd been kind of overlooked, you know, we've been let down, why, why didn't it happen to us, you know, but more or less, most of the guys I knew kind of drifted away, it wasn't a mass emigration, Flight of the Earls, down to the boats and all the rest of it, it was, you know, one day they were there and one day [indecipherable], you know.

JC: And so, you said you went to secondary school in Belfast, was that–?

CM: Yes.

JC: Was that a big change from, from Carrickfergus, then, experiencing Belfast on a daily basis?

CM: Well, on a bus it's you and me, the guys going to the other, the other side of the schools, you know, but again it was reas-, in the main it was reasonable. There'd be odd fights at the bus stations and things like that, and depending on which way the bu-, the bus went you could, you could get the odd stone thrown or escapade or things like that, but, but I was on a train once and then somebody fired at it, but nothing directed at me personally, just you happened to be there kind of thing.

JC: So Belfast–

CM: Belfast, Belfast, sorry?

JC: No, go ahead.

CM: I was just saying Belfast was, was dirty, it was difficult, I mean, it was sixties, it's all built up now, it's, you know, it's, it's regenerated [indecipherable], you know, but it used to be a kind of dark, depressing town and right behind Belfast is the Cave Hill, and this time of the year, the kind of fog and smog would be down and I mean, you could hardly see, we'd never seen anything like it, you know, in, in Carrick, you know, so, yeah, so it was a, it was a change alright.

JC: What area of Belfast was your school in?

CM: My school was in the Antrim Road. Are you familiar with the, with the town?

JC: Yeah, yeah, I've lived in Belfast for years, so I know it, I know it well.

CM: Oh right, well, we used to come up, used to come up, the bus used to drop us off on York Street, at that time Gallagher's factories and all that was there, and you'd go up toward, you'd go up to those, you know, those flats, there's always bother now.

JC: Yeah, New Lodge, yeah.

CM: Yeah, so and you'd turn, turn left there and then up Clifton Street, past that big Orange hall, the only Orange hall in Ireland that actually has a statue of King Billy on his horse.

JC: Yes.

CM: And you get to Clifton Circus, right, and you veer right onto the Antrim Road, St Malachy's?

JC: Yes, I do know it, yeah.

CM: First one on the left-hand side, well, St Malachy's, I don't know if it's still the same, but they shared a wall with the Mater Hospital, right, and they shared not one, but two walls with the Crumlin Road, was it Crumlin Road, prison, right opposite the courthouse, and when I was there, at, at St Malachy's, have you, have you been up to the jail, have you taken a tour?

JC: I have, yeah, I think I went soon after it opened about six or seven years ago, yeah.

CM: Brilliant, you know how there's three wings, A was for loyalists and C was for nationalist prisoners and in the middle was ODCs, you see that, ordinary decent criminals [laughs].

JC: Yes, I do remember that actually.

CM: Yeah, it's good, it's good, good job, well, I had an uncle in prison at the same time Paisley was in prison, he was in prison for not agreeing to something or other, not, not for any particular offence or something like that, you know, and I never found out what the uncle was in for, but they were in at the same time, you know, so.

JC: And you, you say you would have got the bus with Protestants to school?

CM: Well, you see, you know the big, there's a, the RAI, what's the, the big school off Victoria Street?

JC: Yes, RB, RBAI.

CM: RB something I.

JC: Yeah.

CM: Yeah, initials, yeah, we don't know the name of it, but it's got initials right.

JC: Inst, I think it's known as.

CM: Yes, well, I mean, there's two different types of neds, neds who get the buses and neds who get the trains. Neds who get the train are more civilised and polite and can understand watches and things like that, whereas the buses are just, just neds, you know, anybody know what time's the next bus, who knows, you know, we'll just get it anyway, you know,

whereas the train is at 12.42, so maybe it'll take six minutes, so obviously you'd pick up punters all the way into Belfast of both ty-, both types, again predominantly loyalists, you know, so, but you'd get the odd fight on the bus. I don't see that in, any different from any other bus, school bus anywhere in Britain, you know, there wasn't knives or danger or, you know, or not extreme danger anyway.

JC: And you, would you say Belfast was a much more divided and sort of fractious town than, than Carrickfergus was?

CM: And more dangerous, yes, yes, because, I mean, it's, you see when you're buying a house, you can do anything you want to the house, but you can't move it, and certain parts of the street, certain streets are good and certain aren't, even there are some streets that one side of it's good and one side of it's not, whereas in Carrick there's all that, in Belfast [indecipherable] go down to the Sandy Road, you know, or out to, out to the bus station, [indecipherable] do that, you will be challenged, you will be cha-, school uniform, green, white and black, oh you're going to get pulled, you know, so, whereas you could walk round Carrick and much, much of it, maybe something could happen to you, but highly unlikely, but highly probable **[00:30:00]** if you wandered round, and we used to have to go down through a carpark down by St Peter's church and you know the empty flats, they were on the right as you go down the hill, you could get in, you could get into bother there, yes, you wouldn't want to stray too far, so you had to know all these things, whereas in Carrick you didn't have to know, you know, unless you, you yourself started something, then they may well finish it for you, you know, so it's da-, a more dangerous place, aye.

JC: And were you ever targeted, or, like, because of your uniform or anything?

CM: Oh aye, you'd get chased or hounded or whatever, you know, sore face every now and again, especially at the bus stop, Smithfield bus station.

JC: Right.

CM: You see, none of it's left, you know, it was there, whereas it was an indoor bus station and you had to cross wee roads and what have you, rows of, of bus [indecipherable], but I mean, I can see why they, they eventually stopped it cos it had a roof and the diesel fumes were flying about and there was all sorts of mayhem which would, bigger parties would meet, bigger parties, it wasn't, maybe ten of them and ten of us or whatever would come to, you know, oh run in and fight, so and run away, but I wasn't selected or picked upon as a, as an individual who was continually harassed, I wasn't harassed, no.

JC: And what about inside school, what did you, what was St Malachy's like?

CM: What was St Malachy's like, it was, I think, I mean, there was boarders there as well, there was, it was a good school, I mean, I wasn't terribly academically minded, lazy, drifted about the place, I wasn't focused, wasn't terribly interested in anything really, you know, lots of people did exceptionally well. Martin O'Neill the football manager, he was there at the same time, but I didn't, I didn't know him, you know, the only one thing I can remember about is in one of the classes you were placed in, in alphabetical order, you know, so the old

teacher could remember who was, who was who [laughs], you know, yeah, it's the old story, could have done better, could have worked harder, could have done this, could have done that and the next thing, you know, but can't complain about the school or the type of education we got, we got a fair crack of the whip, just didn't do any homework, you know.

JC: Fair enough, and what about outside of school, would you, did you, did you go to Belfast, you know, with your friends and stuff at all, or was it just for school?

CM: You would occasionally go into Belfast on a Saturday night, and they did, they did have dancehalls and, and what have you, but going back to, to Carrick, the two St Nicholases, one was, as I say was this brick-built super place, they, they had kayaks and astroturf and jukeboxes and table tennis and things like that, we didn't have any of that, but we had a [indecipherable], like, it was this basement, but on a Saturday, a Sunday night, not Saturday, on a Sunday night we had, like, discos, well attended by both sides, when was it, there was a riot one night, but it kind of petered out, it was just some mob from, from further out, like, strangers who fell out with all us strangers, you know, not a sort of a planned attack or anything like that, you know, so occasionally, yes, we'd go up to Belfast. I remember coming back from Belfast one night, and as I say, the train was shot at, and I had my nice new corduroy jacket, but we had to lie on the floor of the train for what seemed hours and hours before they came to, it, it was at, see when you, before you get to Rathcoole, if you're ever on that way, the train runs through a bit of water, there's, there, you know, I don't know if that's filled in now or what have you, but anyway.

JC: No, I, I know where you mean. I get, I get that train quite often cos my girlfriend's from that part of the world, so I, I know it fairly well, so.

CM: Right, great, yeah, well, if it had been anywhere, like, inland you could have walked away because the driver, I don't know what happened to the driver, but he left or whatever, you know, we were there for donkeys, absolute donkeys, you know, but, but I, I don't think the train was actually, actually hit, you know, so.

JC: It's interesting you say you'd have been able to go to dances and stuff with, with people again from both sides there.

CM: Yeah.

JC: That's interesting that it wasn't, like, completely segregated.

CM: No, there were those that would want that to be, you know, we'd go on a bus from one chapel to another to, and I've been on some of those buses, so they were kind of keeping it amongst themselves, you would, you would get that, but in the city centre, there used to be a kind of nightclub, not that far away from the Europa, on the other side, and it was kind of like an early kind of discotheque I suppose, but it, it wasn't segregated in any way.

JC: And, so tell me a bit more about your church then. Was that, your family's church, was that in Carrickfergus?

CM: Yeah, St Nicholas's, yeah.

JC: Yeah, okay, and was there any kind of rivalry between the churches in the town?

CM: If there was it was at the higher level and we never saw it.

JC: And were your, were your parents quite religious, were they into it?

CM: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: Yeah.

CM: Yeah, certainly, certainly attend all the services, you know.

JC: Yeah, and how did you feel about it, were, were you kind of into it or was it–?

CM: You'd just go along, you'd just drift along. I was one of those guys that, you know, just thought oh this suits me, you know, I should have been more upstanding, but I just, easiest possible route probably.

JC: Yeah, well, I suppose you turned up and did your bit, so.

CM: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, so I'm just interested then, like, I'm thinking you would have been sort of coming of age if you like, or, or becoming an adult around the time that the, the sort of, the Troubles started and I wonder if you have any, any memories of that happening and if, if there was a change in atmosphere?

CM: Well, the church didn't seem to take any, any particular kind of side on it, you know. I remember the Burntollet Bridge and the participants there, the peace march and the cops would always, you know, beat everybody up, but nobody ever saw it. I distinctly did see it, that was the difference and now it's mobile phones and things like that, you know, so they kind of got away with what they used to, used to, but I mean, I couldn't believe it, how violent they were. I mean, I'd heard they were, but I'd never seen it, you know, so aye, yeah, there were those that took sides, but I didn't particularly take any sides cos I didn't particularly like the guys that were supposed to be on my side, I wasn't wild about them and I certainly wasn't wild about the other lot. I remember the first guy, as I say, that kicked off at the Troubles, oh he was a barman, his name'll come back to me, anyway, he was a, he was a, we went in this chip shop on a Saturday night and it's quite, it was pretty new, but quite small, and in the queue, in the, this fella was in the queue, right, his name'll come back to me, but anyway something happened and he produced a hatchet, right, and it, it was like a big phone box, you can't get out, hey mate, you alright, you alright, but there was a, there was a guy there gave him a doing, a guy in a kind of [indecipherable] coat, didn't look, I don't know what he was, you know, but anyway, he, he done him in anyway, I saw that, and occasionally you would see Provisionals, but I didn't like the look of them [laughs], I didn't fancy, didn't fancy them, you know. I mean, linking back to, to the two women with the egg,

when I came here I worked for a guy, Johnson, he saw himself as a kind of UVF killer, you know, like Oliver Stone with a wee beard and all the rest of it, you know, and he would always tell guys that the Troubles would come, could come to Scotland. I says no, they won't, why not, it's cos of the egg, right, she wouldn't give me the egg, I says [indecipherable], see to support the UVF or to support the IRA or any military, for the one guy that fires the bullets you need seven other guys to feed them, clothe them, drive them from here to, to there, arrange cars and all the rest of it, so these two women were very bitter, very bitter and would support some sort of action, I believe, but nowadays they don't and there's not that depth of feeling in most of Scotland, where children would be refused something because they weren't one of them, you know, and that was my argument to, to them, that's what I wanted to, to get across [indecipherable], you know, sorry I haven't any more exciting to say, but.

JC: No, that's interesting, and I wanted to come on a bit like, when we talk a bit more about when you left sort of what you thought the, the similarities or differences are between Scotland and Northern Ireland, but I suppose what I, what I was wanting ask is, is sort of around the Troubles started when you were still in Northern Ireland. Did you feel like the atmosphere changed at all, either in, in Carrickfergus or in, in Belfast, did you notice anything different? I mean, you mentioned, you mentioned Paisley a bit.

CM: Yeah, I mean, I met Paisley a couple of times and to show how duplicitous I was, you know, there were other guys would shout and swear, oh I shook his hand and all that carry-on, you know [laughs], bit of a quisling sort of thing, you know, but my grandfather he stayed in the middle of Derry and it was bitter, there was a big divide there, and there were **[00:40:00]** military groups, they were fully supported by both, both sides. You didn't get that in Carrick cos, you know, there was just a, but anywhere where there was a divide, you would get wee towns that were solid unionist, but the farms round about them would be loyalist or the other way, you know, the other way round kind of thing, you know, and you would always get trouble there, and you'd get more trouble in, in wee cowboy towns like Bellaghy, places like that where there's a bit of a divide here and, you know, you could walk into the wrong pub, but I did walk, you couldn't get much more bitter, well, they say Carrick's the most bitter place in, in Northern Ireland, now if you look it up on the old t'inter, but Larne used to hold that crown, you know, and I remember being in there in maybe the mid-seventies for whatever reason, right, went on the boat and was in this, was in this bar and the pub had a tannoy, I was with my cousin, no one was saying anything, right, just kind of, tannoy message come on, two gentlemen have just arrived, if you'd like to leave your drink and walk out the door, so I [indecipherable] it, just put the pints back on the bar and walk out, see you later, whereas there are other guys, aye, what you going to do about it, you know, and then they're all into it kind of thing, you know, but, so, and I think that it's fair warning, you've only got to [indecipherable], you're in the wrong pub.

JC: Was that in Larne, did you say?

CM: Larne, I think it was called the Manchester, it's not that far from the docks, whether or not it's still there I don't know, it was an old-fashioned kind of place.

JC: Yeah, and was, so you were asked to leave because you were outside–

CM: I hadn't spoken as far as I know, but they twigged that we were not of that particular sort.

JC: I see, and how did, how did you feel about that, I mean, were you okay–?

CM: Glad to get out, I mean, obviously I kind of took the easy way out of everything, and that's fine, but you would always get, but nine, but nine out of ten guys are like me, you would always get then the one character that wouldn't put up with it and where my grandfather stayed there was a couple of notorious characters that would fight in an empty room, one was the name of Hughes, another was McGlinchey, and they, they just wouldn't take any of that nonsense, but that, that didn't help, you know, I'm saying to myself, that's their view, and that's fine, there's another pub around the corner, we'll go there, but they wouldn't, no, they would, they would start a fight, all sorts of men [indecipherable].

JC: So you, you didn't feel bitter about having to leave the pub just because of who you were?

CM: Couldn't care less, couldn't care less, no, it's just another pub, and I didn't like the pub [laughs].

JC: Yeah, fair enough.

CM: Not worth a sore, not worth a sore face anyway, put it that way [laughs].

JC: And so getting to, I mean, you mentioned at school you were sort of middling, you weren't, you said you weren't, like, massively academic. Did you have a sense of what you wanted to do when you left St Malachy's?

CM: None whatsoever, just drifted along.

JC: So how old were you when you did leave?

CM: So round about seventeen, eighteen.

JC: And what did you do, did you go–?

CM: What did I do when I came here, I worked, first of all I worked in a bank.

JC: Yeah.

CM: All safe kind of occupations, then I worked for the Post Office for thirty years and then I worked for the DWP, crap job, the DWP, call centre, Universal Credit, shambles, anyway, didn't like that, you know.

JC: So when, when you were sort of an adult, like, just, or a young adult, like, I'm thinking late sixties, early seventies, were there a lot of people leaving Northern Ireland around that time, did you know people who'd, who'd left and gone elsewhere?

CM: I would say, out of say every ten people I knew of a nationalist persuasion, at least seven left.

JC: Wow.

CM: Sometimes nine, sometimes nine. Well, Carrickfergus had, had Courtaulds, ICI and Carreras, full employment, even my dad could get a job, you know, but I couldn't get a job, but you could, but you could see that the work was slowly disappearing, it was like the mines, right, and the unionists in Carrick, they had a lot to lose in that they had full employ-, full employment and you could, a house on the National Trust, right, the change in the last thirty years is that now you've got an unemployed loyalist and an unemployed nationalist, you know, what's, you know, what were we thinking of thirty years ago doing all this malarkey, you know, it's just crazy, but anyway there were not a lot of options, so.

JC: So you didn't feel like you had a good chance of getting a job if you stayed in Carrick?

CM: I didn't think there'd be any chance, cos they were all shedding staff, you know, skilled staff and, and the assumption was that, you know, if you came to, to, I mean, I heard about a guy, his first job was working for a big insurance company or something and, in Carrick, and he went in the post room and there was applications for a job that high, right, and the guy tells him to, like, put it into two lots, put into two lots, throw one of them away, right, he says you never, ever associate yourself with unlucky people, right, and then the other half he went through and picked out the schools that, that his group went to for them to send, threw the other ones away, and they all found this a great, great lark, you know, but then you're saying to yourself, well, maybe across the road there's some of the mob doing the opposite, you know, and you're going what's the point of all this malarkey, you know, but there are some bitter people that, and there still are, but not as many, so you're talking about Scotland, there's like kind of wee pockets round about Ayrshire that are, are still pretty, pretty loyal, pretty [indecipherable].

JC: And when did you sort of decide that you wanted to leave, leave Northern Ireland?

CM: Well, the opportunities were kind of thin on the ground and it's the, the whole [indecipherable] between the egg and the, the green line through the, through the voting, you know, and it's just wee things, it's not huge things that push you over the edge, it's just, you know, and especially going up to the cop and saying look, you can fuck off, just fuck off, do what you want, you know, you had no mobiles phones, no TVs, no cameras, you know, they can do what, they can do what they want, you know, so and you could see in Burntollet, and I mean, I read about a guy who got to jail for writing no tea here, don't know if you remember that, what happened was, there was riots on Burntollet Bridge just as you drop down into Derry and there was wholescale mayhem for about a week, anyway the army was deployed and as you know in Derry, the Waterside's pretty, pretty loyal, and the

other lot in the Bogside, it's the other lot, Creggan and all that, you know, well, when the, when the police and the cops went into [indecipherable], is our time up?

JC: No, no, I've, I've got as long as you, you want to be on, I'm in no rush, so feel free to–

CM: In, in the Creggan, and [indecipherable] the cops, well, there was soldiers in the, who wanted to be like that and the housewives coming out with tea, right, he wrote on the gable end no tea here, okay, but he only got as far as the 'r' of her, here, he could have left it, got six months for it, no tea here, you know, and you're going, hmm, that doesn't seem, doesn't seem very, very accommodating, I've got to say, so, and that was, that's more or less me, so we knew our place and we knew where we stood or didn't stand and it wasn't great, but happy days, the sun shone.

JC: And how old, how old were you when you did deci-, when you did leave Northern Ireland?

CM: Eighteen.

JC: Eighteen, and you went straight to Glasgow?

CM: Yeah.

JC: What made you decide to move to Glasgow?

CM: Well, I had an uncle and a grandmother over there.

JC: Right, okay, and had you visited beforehand, before you moved?

CM: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, the family [indecipherable] all the rest are the same, have a great, if you go back through their history, they would work in Clydebank which had a lot of employment and then during the summer they'd [indecipherable], that and there was also a thing called the, the mines, but they weren't really mines, they were, like, pits around about Edinburgh, large scale pits, they produced some sort of, that oil that's quite popular now, you haven't heard of it for a hundred years, but, you know, they squeeze it out of rocks, I can't remember what the name of it was, but my grandfather and all them, they would go over during the summer, come back and jump about here, there and everywhere, you know, and that's, that's probably why I just drifted across, you know.

JC: And how did your mum and dad feel about you going?

CM: My dad was a man of few words, you know, very few words. I think he was doubly unfortunate in that he came from a strong republican union, joined the RAF during the war, cos somebody had to go out and earn money, you know, and then he came back with a uniform and wasn't well received, so in his own bit, you know, traditionally he would have inherited a wee farm sort of thing, but it didn't work that way, you know, and **[00:50:00]** my mother only met my grandfather twice and one of the two times he, he only sat in the car,

didn't come out, you know, the way they were, old fashioned, rural, peasants for want of a better word [laughs], difficult, difficult people, I've got to say, you know, and they weren't, they never took advice and they never gave advice.

JC: So you don't, you weren't particularly close to that side of the family, then?

CM: I always remember a story about my grandfather, well, what happens, in the early, late fifties or early sixties, my dad went away to work in Africa and I got sent to live on the farm, and Sundays this rural outpost, you'd go to chapel, pick up all the wains in the van, come back, no seatbelts or anything like that, run about, you weren't allowed to run about and play and all that carry-on, but anyway, he would buy two papers, the *Express* and a smaller paper, and a guy would go by the window, he'd open the door, you know the latch thing, he'd open the door and he'd come in and ignore us, wouldn't say anything, sat in the corner, what he used to do was he was waiting till my grandfather's finished the paper, so he could read it, rather than having to buy it, another, another two characters would come tumbling in, but anyway, one of the guys reads it and he says look, he says, it says here that you can phone Australia, so if you had a phone you could phone your, your brother in Australia, your twin brother in Australia, so he's saying oh okay, I never spoke to him when he was here, I'm unlikely to speak to him in Australia [laughs], back on with the paper.

JC: I see.

CM: No, cos I, you know, they weren't the most, the most communicative, but they'd come from hard times and maybe more difficult circumstances than me.

JC: Sure, and then, so you moved to Glasgow in, was it 1970, around then?

CM: '70, yeah.

JC: Yeah, and did you find it easy enough to get a job once you moved over?

CM: I found it quite easy, yeah, and again, you know, we all have relatives who don't have a job cos they're looking for the perfect job and that perfect job may turn up or it may not, or you may already have it, but I wasn't one of those guys, I do have relations who are like, waiting, you know, they're waiting, and they don't want to take a Mickey Mouse job because it might impact on them when they get their real job, but I would take the Mickey Mouse job.

JC: What was your, what was your first job in Glasgow?

CM: First job was working, working in a bank.

JC: Right, okay.

CM: And in, and in those days, you know, you got actual bank books and cheques and things like that and, and there was, the cheques were actually physically kind of stored and what have you, but I'll give you a good example [laughs]. I worked there for a couple of years and

then one of the managers took me and another guy over to this big giant room or whatever's [indecipherable], she says this is the computer room, computer room, oh and big grey cabinets and big mirrors and stuff [indecipherable], one of our jobs was that, see when a cheque came in, you had to repatriate that cheque to that batch, right, and then, and then they were filed away in big giant trays and things like that, right, so anyway, so I says what is this, this is a computer room, I says is this the future, future, right, okay what is it then, and she says, well, instead of taking all these cheques and filing them away it puts them onto a piece of tape and on that tape it, it records everything in the correct sequence, brilliant, so we don't have to put all of them away, oh she says, oh you still have to do that [laughs], but this, this stored it, you know, waste of time this crap, you know, anyway, so I left, but the guy I was with, he then went on, he worked another couple of years and then he went to the electricity board and some American company, you know, and he ended up, I don't know, ridiculous money, two hundred grand, things like that, you know, he could do a two-night week and things, you know, just fantastic, anyway, so I was stuck in that, never stuck at pretty well anything after that.

JC: And whereabouts were you living in Glasgow?

CM: Living in, do you know G12, or, how, how well do you know it?

JC: I know, I do know it well enough, G12, what, what area's, where is that?

CM: About, about a mile past Byres Road, between Byres Road and Annie's Land, on the right-hand side.

JC: Right.

CM: It's a kind of hill, looks down on the pond, Pond hotel, Jury's, the Gartnavel hospital.

JC: Okay, I don't, I was mainly sort of south Glasgow when I was, was there, what, what part of Glasgow is that?

CM: It was called Kelvindale.

JC: Oh right, okay, mm hmm, and what was the area like?

CM: Minted, absolutely, absolutely fine, yeah, yeah, yeah, no problems, whatsoever, the odd scramble in a, in a pub, or, or on the bus or something like that, but no knives or bullets or anything like that.

JC: Yeah, and what was, what were your impressions of Glasgow, I mean, what did you think of it as a city?

CM: I wish I did more thinking, but I just kind of accepted it for it, it is what it is, it is what it is [indecipherable], you know.

JC: Did you see any similarities with Northern Ireland at the time?

CM: Well, it was a Saturday morning and I was down in Argyll Street and I heard the old flute, yeah, said oh I'll wait and see what these guys are like, you know, I couldn't believe it, could not believe it. In Carrick there was a Eleanor McKee Silver Band, silver, immaculate, absolutely immaculate, right, and the supporters all had bowler hats, and all, could all march, all ex-army, you know, could all march in time, you know, they all had ragbag on the, on the pavements, right, but I says I'll wait and see this band, oh I couldn't believe it, oh for God's sake, you know, half of them didn't have instruments, they didn't all have the, the uniforms, they had no bowler hats, shambles, absolute shambles, you know, and complete riffraff on the kerbs, you know, this is at nine o'clock in the morning, they're all steaming, didn't happen, didn't happen in Carrick, I mean, they even had tea-drinking Black lodges and what have you, respectable, they've all fallen away, you know, and it's, it's just a kind of ragbag, defeated, torn type characters that would run home [indecipherable], couldn't believe it, poor show, poor, poor show, you know, but they, they are difficult people, you wouldn't want to walk across, you're not allowed to cross, you know that, through a, through a band or anything like that, not like that, that'll attract an issue, but it's usually from the guys on the, on the sides of the roads, that'll give you the bother, you know, but there is a bit of that, the old Celtic-Rangers malarkey.

JC: And did you, did you ever get any, any trouble in Glasgow?

CM: Never.

JC: Okay.

CM: Never.

JC: So when people heard your accent and things, were they curious about like, what background you were from or where you were–?

CM: Aye, well, see everybody's got their own ideas of what it's like over there and, and, but again, you would never, you would never say too much though, go into any detail, cos some of them don't understand, you know, sorry, what I mean to say and what I actually say and then what they take out of it, you know, and they're, they're wanting to, they're sort of, to, to hear if you, you know, if you were involved in any of that kind of thing, you know, but never did.

JC: Do you think people in Glasgow did or do understand what, what the Troubles was all about and what the culture of Northern is like?

CM: They, they have been drip-fed by, by the British for a thousand years. Tell you something, I was in, I was in Sri Lanka, right, years and years ago, Tamil Tigers and what have you running about, right, and there was this English woman talking to the, on behalf of the BBC, and she said it was shocking, you know, the blah, blah, blah, and terrorists and what have you, you know, why can they not be more like us, you know, but, but what actually happened was that the people who, I'm sure you know this, the people who lived in the islands, Thomas Lipton went there to grow tea, but the higher up you go in the hills the

better the tea, but the locals wouldn't, couldn't be arsed going up and doing it, right, so he imported the guys from Tamil down the very south of India, he imported them, same as Britain had done everywhere it went and it had a divided culture for, for three hundred years and then they, the Tamils decided they'd had enough of [indecipherable] they'd all got into it, you know, but then there was this woman who went wagging her finger about why can't you be not more like us, you know, well, it's the same, same in Northern Ireland, everybody assumes it's, it's Catholic-Protestant, it's republican-nationalist, but people's eyes glaze over when you tell them that, they just want to do what they read in the *Sun*, want to go out and go with that, you know, they're not, not interested in drilling down. Nationalists, they have a set idea, they don't want to change it, it, it has changed in Ireland because of this, as I say, an unemployed nationalist is the same as an unemployed unionist, you know. People here, they're, they say, like, the Rangers games, they are living in the past, still in the past, you know, they talk **[01:00:00]** about the Provos and UVF and these other, Gusty Spence defence was the guy in that tuckshop with a hatchet.

JC: Oh okay.

CM: Do you know his name, look him up, right.

JC: Yeah.

CM: Aye, aye, like, they're doing [laughs].

JC: Yeah, yeah, no, I will, for sure.

CM: But that's what they're doing, in a wee fish and shop, for God's sake, you know, aye, cos he's seen to be irresponsible for the kind of spark that set the place, set the place on fire, you know, and after I left school I went to the, the College of Technology, which was the oddest, the oddest spot because see where the Falls and the Shankhill come down like that and they're looking like they're going to meet, but they don't meet, there's a wee street in the middle and that's where that College of Technology is, so every day you'd be up on a bus and there'd just be a riot on one side or the other side, but that, that was '69, '70 kind of thing, you know, and after a while you'd get, you'd get tired, cos they were in a complete riot on the Shankhill Road, the place was wrecked, fires all over the place and we went up to have a look and they were dead lucky because there was a guy there from the, the College of Technology in amongst the rubble and all the rest of it and he, he saw us, we saw him, right, but he didn't know what we were cos he was a local and we were from Carrick, and oh what yous doing boys, you know, what yous doing, you know, and I went oh Carrick, alright Carrick, well, I always just assumed, so we were taken round the various sides and it was like a wee tour, had to watch what we were saying, you know, but all these things take a toll and tire you out and although that kind of phased out, and that mass kind of trouble kind of phased away in the seventies, early seventies, you know, still ran on, but everybody who believes in, in, and sooner or later I think there will be a united Ireland because it costs a fortune, it, it's now com-, completely over, it's the, the unionists in the, in the twenties, thirties, forties, fifties wanted to keep Northern Ireland, keep Ulster Protestant and unionist and what have you, but the last time I was there there was a distinct feeling that they wanted, they just wanted it over with, just go for this, this whole Ireland

and it was the republicans who were wishing to retain the, the status because of the, the amount of money that Britain pours into the North in terms of benefits and, and grants and, so I don't know about this madman Boris or anything like that, he would, I get the impression if the time was right he would, he would let it go now, feel like he would, but there are these, there are other guys are still hanging onto a hundred years ago, that's all, all old hat, finished, it's away.

JC: How, how would you feel about the prospect of a united Ireland, or–?

CM: Well, I've got a daughter living in Dublin, she, she works in, she works in Dublin and see at the end of the day, it's not going to make a huge difference to me, you know, it really isn't, you know. Do I think it's the right thing, yes, yes, I do, you know, cos I mean, there, there was the plantations and, you know, alright if I was back in Sri Lanka, you know, they planted the seeds of the problems and then when the problems come, oh, why would you, oh, you know, but they actually started it, you know. I think it's sensible that this island is, becomes, sooner or later it will, you know, go back to being the one, the one place, you know, I think.

JC: And would you have gone back to Northern Ireland to visit a lot when you moved over, after you moved over to Glasgow?

CM: Used to go maybe every summer.

JC: Did you enjoy going back, or how did that feel?

CM: I, I think I honestly felt better there, safer. I was over at a wee do there, well, must be about two years ago and it was a, I think he was an Indian doctor, tiny guy, you know, and he says oh, you know, Northern Ireland is blah, blah, blah, this is a, he was a, a surgeon or high up anyway, and he worked in a hospital in Magherafelt which is, the big, big Derry hospital, up, and then he worked in Altnagelvin, and he worked in Jordanstown, where they had some sort of, some sort of centre up there, you know, and they were all saying oh, you know, in the seventies, oh terrible, terrible, he's never felt safer [laughs], never. I actually said, you know, I said that's the point, you know, you know, going back to the, yes, there were random shootings, but in the main they'd been told, and it's, they didn't listen, they were talking when they should have been listening, you know.

JC: And so what about in Glasgow, then, after you left the bank, what did you, what did you go on to do then, after that?

CM: Oh I went into adult education because I was going to do this that and the next thing, but I lost interest in that, you know, so, then I got, I got sent to learn to be a heavy goods driver by the job centre, that was good, you know, but it was funny, I was, I was down at Prestwick in a, which is the airport, you know, it was a big airport, I imagine it isn't now, right, you know, it's actually on their border, their gate and while I was on the gate and I was arrested by the cops [laughs].

JC: What, what for?

CM: Well, for, you know, you sound Irish, you come with me, right.

JC: Oh okay.

CM: They just checked us out, you know, what were you doing there and all, that piece of paper, aye, okay, right, fuck off, you know, but you'd get more out of them than we did the guy at the polling station.

JC: So do you think there was, was any suspicion towards you as someone with an Irish accent?

CM: There, it'd be the exact same if, I mean, sometimes when you see a, an Islamic fella with a big bag on his back, it does cross your mind, you know, people say it shouldn't and I understand that, but, aye, it would aye, yeah, and I can see that, you know, it happens, so, I mean, I wasn't going to argue with a cop, you know, what you doing here, I'm doing this, right, well, out you go, we weren't followed or hounded or anything like that, you know, but yeah, so if you had an Irish accent in the seventies, round about, you would be, you would be questioned, aye.

JC: And did you follow the news from Northern Ireland or, or the news of the Troubles, or anything like that, did–?

CM: If it's on the TV I'd watch it, but I mean, I don't, I can't stand the BBC news or the ITV, especially that guy Huw whatever his name is, with a curling Welsh lip, can't be arsed with him now, and I think, I honestly think they give you their opinion of what happened, not what happened, you know, when this, when you were wee you read the newspapers, all the truth that's fit to publish and all that kind of carry-on and these guys just make it up and, you know, they hold court as if it's true, but it may not be true. I honestly don't believe half of the stuff and they seem to put a spin on everything, call me biased, call me cynical, but I don't, I don't, you know, cos I would say, you know, if you ever hear about something, if you were ever at an incident and then you read about it it's a different incident, who are, who are these people, so call me cynical, but I don't, they don't, don't take anything they say as, as a hundred per cent true, I think it's their opinion of what they think's true.

JC: And do you think, like, yeah, sort of British news outlets like the BBC, do you think, what do you think of their reporting about Northern Ireland, do you, how do you think they portray Northern Ireland in the media?

CM: I can't say I've seen, I've seen an awful lot about it recently, but they stick to the, to the party line, although slightly more and more they're bringing in this, this, it used to be always Protestant-Catholic, you know, oh why don't they behave themselves, you know, talking, but then they're bringing in a wee bit more, well, there is nationalists and there is this kind of thing, you know, the public's, you know, it's not just religious, it's ideological, you know, there is a wee element of that, but to a large extent they give you the, the official, the official line or whatever that happens to be.

JC: So I'm interested to find a bit more about sort of when you were living in Glasgow, after you'd moved there, what, what did you do sort of outside of work for, like, your social life, did you, did you meet anyone sort of romantically or make friends or anything like that, like, just?

CM: Well, I've got to say I can't say I make friends easily, not great with small talk, you know, so I'd say, but yes, yes, married a girl, reasonably similar background, her mother and father came from Donegal, and he came to, to Scotland in the fifties, worked in Newcastle and then, then worked here, and worked for a couple of, a couple of big companies, and they were Gaelic speakers, or Gaelic speakers, but married, three children.

JC: How did you and your wife meet?

CM: How did we meet, at a wedding.

JC: Right.

CM: A wedding.

JC: And do you think you felt drawn to someone who, who was also from an Irish background, or was that just coincidence?

CM: No, I would say you're spot on, aye, find it easier.

JC: Did you get married in Scotland or in, back in Ireland?

CM: In Scotland, Scotland.

JC: So your family would have come over for that then?

CM: Yes.

JC: Yeah, what year did you get married in?

CM: Well, my dad wasn't invited [laughs].

JC: Okay.

CM: What year, '87, '87.

JC: Putting you on the spot there [laughs], yeah, so just, I'm just, yeah, cos a lot of people I've talked to have, have married **[01:10:00]** people from backgrounds who, who didn't have any connection to Ireland, so I'm just wondering, like, if that made things easier, if you'd have, if you'd have gone back with your wife and stuff?

CM: I think it, it did, but I mean, well, I, I was offered a job in Belfast, well, tentatively offered a job in Belfast, not guaranteed it, you know, but she didn't, cos she had the same

impression of, of, you know, they were all behind each other and every two minutes and shooting and all that carry-on, well, you know, that wasn't the case, but that's, that was the view that she took and she'd be unhappy moving to Belfast, so that was fine, that's the way it is, you know, so I mean, you'll never know if it'd worked out, or, it might have, it might've not, you know.

JC: Would you have been tempted to move back?

CM: I think so, if I'd have been single, yes, yes, yes.

JC: So you, you kind of, you stayed in Scotland I suppose more because you'd, you've established those family ties than–?

CM: Yes, yes, yes, you still hanker for what you don't have, you know, but–

JC: How, how often would you have gone back to visit, you sort of, every, every year, would it have been?

CM: I think we, like, missed one year, but it was kind of traditional, but you relied on babysitters and things like that and [indecipherable]. Northern Ireland's a lovely place, you know, a nice place, yeah.

JC: And you said you've got three kids?

CM: Yeah.

JC: When were they born?

CM: Well, one's thirty-two, one's twenty-nine and one's twenty-seven, something like that.

JC: Okay.

CM: Two hard-working girls and one normal, below average boy.

JC: [laughs] Yeah, sounds familiar, and I'm wondering if you, if you sort of joined any, if you were interested in keeping in touch with the sort of the Irish, Irish in you, like, in, when you were in Scotland did you join any sort of cultural or community organisations or anything like that?

CM: No.

JC: No, was that, was that something that would have been, would have interested you, or were you just kind of glad you got away from that?

CM: I kind of, you know, that's in the past and in the past it must remain kind of thing, you know.

JC: Did you carry on going to church when you were in Glasgow?

CM: Oh yeah, yeah, still went to church, yeah, still go.

JC: So is that still a big part of your, your life, then?

CM: Aye, well, it's one of these sort of continuous links that, that, you know, if you stopped going, I think you would miss it.

JC: And do you still, you still visit Northern Ireland regularly?

CM: Occasionally. My, my sister, she, she lives in Glasgow as well, she was there last week for two weeks, Malone Road somewhere.

JC: Right, what, what brought your sister over to Glasgow? Was it, was she, did she come at a similar time to you?

CM: No, she, she worked for Aer Lingus, and her husband, he's an English guy, and he worked in Edinburgh and then for one reason or another took on a house in Glasgow and so lived there for the last thirty-odd years.

JC: Yeah, and have you stayed in the same area of Glasgow, or have you moved about a bit?

CM: Well, more or less, within a, certainly moved around no more than about two miles.

JC: Right, okay [laughs], yeah, and you, so you moved on after the bank you said. Did you go to the DWP after that, or was there something in between?

CM: No, I was a driver for X amount of time [indecipherable], I was a driver for them for many years then I became a wee Mickey Mouse manager for a while and then, so I sort of semi retired when I was about fifty-five, I thought I had enough money to live on, silly me, so I had to go back and get a job and I got this pathetic job in the DWP, working in a call centre, contact centre, Universal Credit, a job I was totally unsuitable for.

JC: Yeah.

CM: You know, I wasn't that kind of, I wasn't that good at it and it was a bad day when the, when the punters knew more about it than me [laughs], so I only stuck that out for about five years or something, had enough of that, you know.

JC: And what about, kind of one of the questions I like to ask people is, is sort of about the peace process and things. I wonder how closely you've, you followed the news over the past sort of twenty, thirty years in Northern Ireland and if you've, obviously if you still visit, if you've got a perspective on how things have changed?

CM: How is Arlene and company?

JC: Hmm.

CM: What would I say, I wouldn't say I would know, I would know much about it, other than I mean, I believe all politicians are rogues and they're in it for themselves. I think Paisley was straight, Hume was straight, but McGuinness and all these other punters weren't straight and I don't think Arlene is either, is either, or Mary Lou or any of them, they, but they deal with things that we don't know about and there's two sides to every story and they have a hundred sides to try and please, so, most of them just I think try and keep a lid on it, think about it, you know, so it maintains their, their position.

JC: And what about sort of more in society, how much do you think sort of Belfast and, and Northern Ireland has changed as a place?

CM: Well, they keep telling us about how, how it's regenerated and how bright and breezy it is, but it's just another town isn't it, you know, same as Birmingham or probably better than Birmingham, and I do think slightly better than, than most English or Scottish cities, I do, trying to think the last time I was there, it wasn't that long ago, but, you know, some of the places that are closed, the same as everywhere, but there's a bit of life about the people and, I mean, the last time I went to get a bus in York Street, I couldn't understand what the guy was saying, you know, I had to just give him the money, you know. I says how much is it to wherever it was [makes a noise], what the fuck's he talking about [laughs], take whatever you want I said, you know, so I mean, things have changed, changed a lot, but it's a lot cleaner, brighter, still these big spaces round about York, round about York Street they haven't really filled in, but yes, nice town, nice river, bridge, that airport, which was the airport on the other side, George, no, is it George Best?

JC: George Best, yeah.

CM: Aye, it's George Best, aye, that wee airport and then the other big airport, Aldergrove, or whatever they call it, I thought it was clean, it was bright, people cheerier than, than here.

JC: Really, yeah.

CM: I thought so, yeah, more open, you'd think they'd be more closed, but they're more, I don't know, go ahead, entertaining.

JC: I wonder why that is?

CM: Maybe the old rose-tinted glasses, you know what I mean [laughs].

JC: [laughs] Maybe.

CM: Maybe, aye.

JC: Yeah. Have you taken your kids over to Northern Ireland a lot? I mean, do they have a sense of their Irishness or their connection to the culture there?

CM: Well, as I say, my daughter, one of my daughters works in, in Dublin, she's, you know what they call the, the self, self-isolation in, in the South.

JC: What's that?

CM: Cocooning.

JC: Oh okay.

CM: She's, she's cocooning, she went out, there's a bank holiday in Dublin Monday, anyway she showed us photos of Temple Bar and all the rest of it, nobody there, completely deserted, you know, it used to be absolutely mobbed, so does, would she want work in Dublin all the time, no, she'd rather work in Glasgow, however, she worked in Edinburgh and you might be surprised, quite a big loyalist following at the, at the higher levels.

JC: Really?

CM: Yeah, you'd be surprised, in, in legal and bank terms, aye, yeah, I was amazed, couldn't believe it, could not believe it, quite open, some of them, quite open. However, one of the partners, he, he's a kind of, he's a cyclist and he, earlier in the year before this Covid, he, he cycled through the North and he said it's all going, that was all he said, it's just all going, and he's a big staunch Billy, you know, but with influence as well, but he said it was, it was going, so I assume he meant the, you know, the grip, and things have changed, but time changes.

JC: So do you think Scotland's still di-, Scotland and Northern Ireland are still divided along those lines then, along those nationalist-unionist lines?

CM: For fifty weeks of the year they're all in it together, round about the Twelfth is a dangerous time, still a dangerous time, and where reasonable-minded people go into complete nut jobs, and here it's gone down to Rangers-Celtic, the old **[01:20:00]** diehards get themselves wound up and ready to cause mayhem, and they do cause mayhem, you know, that seems, every year, less year on year, I think, you know, I mean, I would never have believed that they could police these, these football games, when I, when I was a boy you just turned up and you got into the game, now, you have to book a ticket and they have to know you, and you have to sit in that seat, you're not allowed to jump about and what have you, but in the old days it was absolute mayhem and of course there's no drink, you know, but I mean, the last Old Firm game I went to, used to be a season ticket holder, the [indecipherable], have you ever been to one?

JC: I've not been to an Old Firm game, no. I've been, have I been to, I've been to Celtic Park, but that was for a Scotland game, no, I've never been.

CM: Well, it, it was a, must have been a Wednesday night game, it was raining, round about this time of year, miserable and, you know, one lot was down one side of the road and the other lot goes down the other, right, and they had to park at different places and what have you, and there's cops with dogs and cops on push bikes, cops on, like, motorcycles, for

racing here, there and everywhere and a helicopter and rows of vans and, I mean, I'm paying money for this, this is just ridiculous, I just don't really do it anymore, you know, and, cos they hated us and we hated them kind of thing, you know, it's just, just madness, great waste of money, can't even remember who, who won or what have you, you know, so I says I'm not going to go back.

JC: So did, did you go to a lot of games then?

CM: I used to go the games, yes.

JC: Are you a Celtic fan, then?

CM: Oh I'd go and see Celtic, yes.

JC: Yeah, yeah, had you been a fan of them since before you moved to Glasgow?

CM: Never heard of them.

JC: Okay [laughs].

CM: We, we, we got the English football.

JC: Oh okay.

CM: At that, at that point, didn't know anything about them.

JC: But you, so you became a fan when you moved over to Glasgow, then?

CM: Aye, yes, yes.

JC: Yeah, that's interesting.

CM: Some of them.

JC: It's interesting, I always find it fascinating the way sort of Celtic and Rangers have almost, like, appropriated a lot of the, the stuff that gets said in, over in Northern Ireland, like, all the chants and the history and stuff, it's almost been transplanted into a new environment.

CM: Aye, I saw one of the, one of the murals, one of the recent murals, over in, over in your bit, in Belfast, and it was, you know, the NHS, the loyal always would support NHS, and Glasgow Rangers, on the same mural, what the fuck [laughs], so they, they do try and keep, keep it alive, you know, but whether it'll survive the next fifty years, I wouldn't have thought so, but, anyway, anyway, you know what I'm saying.

JC: I'm just interested, so if you're a Celtic fan, would you have sort of been part of, more part of like, the nationalist community in Glasgow as well, or did you not see yourself, like, fitting into that box?

CM: I didn't fancy any extremist behaviour, or wouldn't encourage, would not encourage this, this super loyal, when you know that, you know, the guys that they're supporting have got feet of clay and, and they're doing deals behind your back and, and you can't believe a word they're saying, but, but they were held up as kind of heroes and, you know, and you're going, well, I don't think they're actually heroes, you know, can't see me, can't see me joining that one you know.

JC: Yeah.

CM: But I can understand that, the lengths of, people wanting to be a part of a group and feel important or, or whatever and I don't know if you've ever seen the Green Brigade which is a kind of a, there's a big, quite a [indecipherable], you know, kind of lit-, a little small, there's one big corner holds about six thousand guys and they're all, they're called the Green Brigade, and they've got, like, a drum and different things, you know, but, you know. they all clap at the same time, like, take their tops off at the same time and, or whatever, pull their trousers down, or whatever they do it all the same, the one, anyway, they've got this big feeling of, of this loyalty and, and there's that word, loyalty, but part of the big group, they want to be part of a group, but I never really wanted to be part of a big group, again, cos, well, the, thirty years ago these guys would carry knives and things like that, but nowadays they can't come out tonight, I know one of them, right, can't come out tonight, why, because he's, he's, he's sewing, and they're sewing flags and bunting and things like that, I says oh for God's sake, you know, young guys, but they're part of a, what, what is it they say, you know, that if, if we don't, to get a vaccine for Covid, herd, herd–

JC: Herd immunity, yeah.

CM The herd, well, they want to be part of the herd, you know.

JC: Yeah, and what about sort of other, other herds in terms of, like, more, I guess more mainstream politics? Have you ever taken an interest in, in stuff like the Scottish independence movements, or, or just general politics in Scotland?

CM: You know, going back on the theory that all politicians are in it for themselves and in the main they try and keep a lid on things, right, I've got to say I think Boris is a buffoon, Priti's hopeless and Cummings and the rest of them are the worst ever, just the absolute worst ever. Never fancied Nicola, but she's come out pretty sound, alright, and I don't, you know when they say facts have really not got anything to do with politics, right, well, as far as I understand, Scotland on its own doesn't work, there's not enough money, there are not enough taxes lifted to pay for all the things that get paid for. Now, that's the, she's not going to let that stand in her way, but lots of people do believe, and more because Boris is so incompetent and that Chancellor running about spending money like water, certainly, but I know of a very English and has recently joined the SNP, which was a surprise to me, I don't join things, but I'm not a, I'm not a big SNP fan, can't stand this, for this, it seems odd that I don't support Scotland being separate, but it's the exact opposite of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is in Ireland and they want to join it together. Scotland and England and Wales is a big island, but Scotland wants to go separately, just doesn't seem, doesn't seem,

you know, doesn't seem it'd work, I don't think it'd work, but maybe it will, but I don't think the money's there to, to support all that. Other than that, I mean, I think the pound'll be devalued and what have you, and I think, well, I was saying to the daughter the other day that, you know, she says she can't wait to come back to Glasgow, but she's getting tremendous money in Dublin, and I says, well, I think you're better off getting paid in Euros, that might be wrong, but, you know, but that's my view on, on politics in this country, they're rotten, the whole lot of them.

JC: [laughs] Yeah, I think there's something to be said–

CM: You're not a politician, are you?

JC: I am not a politician, I can, I can confirm.

CM: Vote for Jack, aye.

JC: [laughs] Yeah, why not, eh, so I just have like, a couple more questions if that's okay, just sort of like, finishing off questions if you like. I suppose one of the things we, or I like to ask everyone I talk to is, is how you would, if you can define your sort of national identity, if, if, how you see yourself, would you describe yourself as Irish, Scottish?

CM: I put myself down as, as white Irish, normally, you know, you know, like, with the questions, I don't know if it still says white, I'm not sure about that, but yes, I still put down Irish and I have an Irish passport.

JC: And you'd, you'd still see yourself as being Irish as opposed to Scottish or Northern Irish or–?

CM: Yes.

JC: Yeah.

CM: Yes, aye, I would like to think that, you know, and it's just the way it is, you know, for thirty years or fifty years, you know.

JC: And I suppose the other question I have, which is, is kind of linked to that is, where you would call home now?

CM: Well, if my wife's mother and father lived in Scotland for, I don't know how many years, lot, lots of years, but her mother always talked about home being Donegal, so I was always careful not to, I, I didn't like that idea, you know, that kind of split personality, so I never encouraged them to think Ireland was their home, it's not their home, so here is, is their home. Now as I say Louise is in Dublin, likes Dublin fine, but they prefer to, you know, buying a house, they would buy it here, cos well, apart from the fact you can't buy in Dublin cos it's too dear [laughs].

JC: Yeah [laughs], so, so Glasgow would be home to you?

CM: That, that, yes, yes, I mean, personally I think of Ireland as home, right, but I would never say that, you know, to them or, or anything like that cos it's just kind of, just, like, a kind of wee rose-tinted glasses idea that you have, you know, you know, going home with plenty of money and all that malarkey, you know, the idea you've had for a hundred years, but you've never really had to examine it, or, or apart from once, you know, so, so yes, Glasgow's home.

JC: But it's interesting you, you say you kind of feel like Ireland'd be home from your own **[01:30:00]** personal perspective, so you've kind of got, I guess, more than one home in a way.

CM: Well, aye, yeah, well, one, one's a kind of theoretical one, in the cloud, you know, in the cloud, how do you get into the cloud, you know, but yes, aye, there's always things that you, like, you know, guys that say they would like to retire to Blackpool, or retire to Spain or what have you, but going somewhere on holiday's different to, to living somewhere, you know, so, so Glasgow's home.

JC: Good stuff, okay, well, I mean, I think I've got pretty much to the end of my list of questions. I don't know, we said at the start that we didn't want to miss anything, so I don't know if there's anything that you haven't mentioned that you wanted to cover, or, or anything you think would be good to add?

CM: No, I, well, bottom line, the fifties, sixties in Carrick were good times, the, that disco-type place that we had was before health and safety and we could do what we wanted, and it didn't bring any trouble, there was no threats or, or bombings or anything like that, it was fine, plenty of, plenty of pals, the, the guy I was pally with that played in his King Billy socks, Gaelic, had me going on the, the Orange walk, knowing that particular Orange walk was unbelievably well-attended and what happened was that, you got the train to it, but the train that came was longer than the platform, so, cos there was so many people, so the train would stop at the platform, all the guys would try and pile on, then the train would move forward, so the, the next carriage they were adjacent to the platform [laughs], oh the train's leaving without out us, oh for fuck's sake, [coughs; indecipherable], you know, but they were reasonably well behaved, [indecipherable], but no, I wasn't one of them, one of them, but nothing to say, nothing to say, [indecipherable], well behaved and as I say, the egg incident, I tell guys here that that's why you don't get the same trouble here, there are guys that would like to do it, but they need support of these middle-aged nurses and some of the guys, to give them food and shelter and make the bullets and all the rest of it, you know, and that's why I didn't think there was going to be any trouble apart from somewhere in Ayrshire, but that, but that never ever came to pass, you know, so Carrick, sun shone, happy.

JC: Good stuff, well, that's a, that's a good note to end on, then, and I will, I will end the recording.

INTERVIEW ENDS