

G15: JOAN GILLESPIE INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Joan Gillespie [pseudonym]
Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interview summarisers: Dr Hilary White and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single track with no section breaks

G15: Joan Gillespie	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 01:28:10	Duration: 01:28:10	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in 1950 to Catholic parents on a small farm close to the village of Swatragh in Co. Derry. One of twelve children, Joan had ‘a pretty happy childhood’ in the years before the Troubles began. Explains that Swatragh was overwhelmingly Catholic and that she ‘didn’t have a lot of contact with other religions’ while at primary school in the village, nor when she went to secondary school in Magherafelt. She enjoyed helping out on the farm, unlike some of her siblings. Says that her brother now lives on the site of their parents’ original house.			
10:00–19:59	Activities outside of school mainly involved playing in the countryside and visiting nearby families and friends. She didn’t have many toys or a TV when young, but remembers listening to the radio a lot for news and entertainment. Explains that while ‘the republican element’ in the area was ‘always simmering’, her parents were moderate nationalists who did not support the IRA before or during the Troubles. Explains that there was ‘absolutely no friction’ between them and their Protestant neighbours. Joan left to attend university in Edinburgh and moved to Glasgow afterwards, so therefore had limited first-hand experience the Troubles, unlike the rest of her siblings, all eleven of whom still live in NI today.			
20:00–29:59	Recalls walking to Sunday mass in Swatragh, but felt it was a duty rather than a choice. Explains that the church organised fundraising events, as did the local Gaelic football club, which provided much of the social activity in the community. Remembers ‘no rivalry at all’ between the Protestant and Catholic churches in the area. Recalls going to a Twelfth parade in the next town, ‘attracted by the spectacle of the bands’. Mentions that some of her family were involved with the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Says that she wasn’t aware of anti-Catholic discrimination in her immediate surroundings, but read about its prevalence ‘in the wider province’. She enjoyed her secondary school years, even though the regime was ‘pretty strict’.			
30:00–39:59	Although the corporal punishment at school was ‘a wee bit scary’, she says that she ‘coped’ with it. She encountered Protestants mainly on the bus to school, since there was no ‘intermingling’ during the school day. The dances she would go to at weekends were similarly segregated. Explains that she considered going to Queen’s in Belfast, but her parents preferred that she go to Edinburgh instead, not only because of the growing unrest, but also because she had an aunt there who could help her settle in. Began her pharmacy studies there in 1969. Recalls the province-wide campaign for civil rights that was burgeoning at this time.			
40:00–49:59	Joan had anxieties about moving to Edinburgh, having never previously been away from home, but ‘adapted pretty well’ and met her aunt weekly to begin with, often at mass. After graduating and marrying a Protestant Scotsman, relations with her family became strained, but they eventually ‘came round’. Thinks that it was easier to marry a non-Catholic in Scotland than it would have been in NI at the time. Describes her overall experience of life in Edinburgh as ‘pretty positive’, noting that she had freedoms there that she wouldn’t have had			

	at home, especially since her parents were 'anti-alcohol' and averse to socialising in pubs. States that she went back to NI regularly during the Troubles and never experienced any problems during her journeys, although there was always an 'underlying anxiety about being out and about' when she was in NI.
50:00–59:59	Recalls following the news coverage of the Troubles while in Edinburgh and contacting her family to alleviate her anxieties about their safety. Explains that she graduated from university in 1972 and that her year group have held regular reunions since then, which she helps to organise. She and her husband, who is from Dundee, moved closer to Glasgow some years after their marriage in 1973. Reveals that 'it was totally unknown' for anyone in her family to marry outside the faith. Her mother and some of her family attended their wedding, which took place in a Catholic church in Edinburgh, but not her father. Says that her husband's family had 'no problem' with him marrying a Catholic.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Explains that they initially moved initially to Erskine, where her husband, a town planner, worked for the local authority, and from there to Old Kirkpatrick near Glasgow in 1976, where they raised their two children. Joan worked part-time in local pharmacies up until she retired. She was aware of sectarianism when she first moved to Scotland, but had no direct experience of it, and was keen that her children attend non-denominational schools. Explains that her husband was aware of the situation in NI and was, like her, often 'absolutely horrified' by it. Reflects that the conflict 'was very, very complex and at times it didn't seem there was any way out of it'.
01:10:00–01:19:59	Thinks there are still 'underlying simmering tensions' in NI. Explains that her son and daughter have a strong interest in their Irish heritage and still visit NI regularly, keeping in touch with cousins there. Both of them have 'really clung' their sense of Irishness, and her daughter's two children now play Gaelic football in Glasgow. Singles out Bloody Sunday, and the inequities that flowed from it, as particularly egregious injustices. Regrets that NI politics have recently become so polarised, leaving little room for 'the more moderate parties'. Says that she was aware of 'a lot of ill-feeling' towards Irish people in Britain during the Troubles, but did not encounter any of it herself. Mentions that she supports Scottish independence.
01:20:00–01:28:10	Thinks the reinstatement of a hard border in Ireland because of Brexit would be a regressive move. Believes that NI is a 'much more relaxed and open-minded place' since the Good Friday Agreement. Asserts that that living in Scotland made her 'more open-minded' as a person. While she still see herself as Northern Irish, she is 'very fond' of the Scottish element of her identity and regards Scotland as home, not least because her children and grandchildren make it a homely place for her. Overall, she feels that she has 'moved regions' within the UK rather than emigrated.