INTERVIEW L09: TANYA BOYD

Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interviewee: Tanya Boyd
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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.

FR: Okay, so that's rolling now, so if you just start by saying your name and today's date.

TB: So I'm Tanya Boyd and today is the sixteenth of January, 2020.

FR: Okay, thank you, and thank you for agreeing to take part in the interview. So, it's sort of a life history format, I should have said this before we started recording actually, but it doesn't matter, and broadly there'll be three sets of questions, so some questions about your childhood, about Northern Ireland and England, I think in your case, and then there'll be some questions about your adult life, and then there'll be some questions about how you feel about Northern Ireland now, some slightly more kind of reflexive or reflective questions. Does that make sense?

TB: Yeah, absolutely.

FR: And it's not going to be, don't worry about being completely chronological, we can jump around, it's fine, don't worry about that. But we will start I suppose with a classic chronological [laughs] thing, so where were you born?

TB: In Belfast, yeah.

FR: Wha-, did you, where?

TB: Lived in, the Royal Victoria, yeah, my mother had five children, five caesareans at the Royal Victoria, yeah, and the last one, he was actually called Dr Boyd, he said that's it, you mustn't have any more children, so yeah, I'm one of five.

FR: Five caesareans?

TB: Yeah, I know, unheard of, I know [laughs], I know, yeah, yeah, and we lived in Holywood, yeah, which was lovely, we were very lucky, we lived in a really, really beautiful part of the world, and I went to a fantastic school called Glencraig, which is still going, really beautiful school, which was a primary school, and then I went to Princess Gardens in Belfast, yeah, as

a boarder because I had failed the eleven-plus and I think there was a bit of a ruse going on where you could get into grammar schools if you went as a boarder, so that's what I did, yeah.

FR: And what did your parents do?

TB: So my mum was a housewife, although she was, she was very well educated my mum, and she'd been to Queen's, I think she'd done, I think she'd maybe done social sciences, it's very sad, she'd always wanted to be a nurse and she, before she was pregnant with my youngest sister she had gone back, I think to do auxiliary nursing at the Royal, to, as an entry into, to training as a nurse and then she became pregnant with my younger sister, so that kind of went by the by, and my dad managed a linen factory on the Falls Road.

FR: [pauses] And, so just to go back to Holywood, what was it like growing up there? It is a beautiful part of the world, I know it.

TB: It was just lovely. I mean, we had, we were by the sea, we had, we could just cycle anywhere on our bikes, we had a little shop we would walk to, we had amazing walks, we had the folk museum which was nearby, don't know if you've been there, but we went there a lot as children. You don't know any different at the time, but you look back and you think gosh, that was fantastic and actually I remember, even things like, when we did Brownies down at Lorne, you would go, you could walk along the beach there and there were seals and things and you just, it was just lovely, it was just really, really nice.

FR: And you're kind of nicely between the city and the country.

TB: Yeah, yeah, it's very, it's much more built up now sadly, and the fields that we had next door to our house are all, it's all houses now, so I think it's changed quite a lot, but yeah, it was lovely.

FR: And then, primary school?

TB: Yeah, primary school was fantastic. It was just a small school, really friendly, really lovely, great teachers, yeah, probably not a very broad curriculum, but yeah, it was great.

FR: And what about church?

TB: This is a good one. So we started off going to Ballygilbert Presbyterian church and I have sort of vague, I was christened there, I have vague memories of that because we used to have to do catechism every Sunday, which was really onerous and just learn by rote, which I really hated, and then my mother had a big falling out with the church because she, the manse was being sold and she just thought this was outrageous, and I think she was kind of set up by one of her friends and she went, you know, straight to the minister and said, or whoever you go to, and said that you mustn't sell the manse and was, you know, sent away with a flea in her ear, so she then decided that we would go to Glencraig to the Church of Ireland, which we did, which is where I was confirmed and where we got married and where my youngest sister was baptised and, yeah, I have nice memories of that church.

FR: Okay, that's interesting, and it sounds, was it quite a big family, five–

TB: Yeah, but actually that wasn't uncommon at the time, we knew lots of families who had sort of five children, some families, one family locally had six children, that wasn't so unusual at all.

FR: Okay, but, and was it nice though, was it a kind of a–?

TB: Pfff, well, there are four girls and one boy and I think, and he's the eldest, and I think my parents were very old-fashioned in the sense that the boy was, you know, was kind of the one who would've always had first choice of, you know, I don't know, if there was roast beef for Sunday lunch he'd get, do you know what I mean, he would get, and he would be the one who they would, if they were going to talk about a career, they would probably talk to the boy before they would talk to the girls. So looking back at that, that I think was a sort of, they were sort of, my parents were sort of products of their time really [pauses], and, I mean, my mother's dead now, but I'm sure if I discussed it with her she'd say oh don't be so ridiculous, but that is how, you know, that is how it was really.

FR: So a sort of conservatism, social conservatism.

TB: Definitely. I used to get very frustrated with my mother cos she didn't have any like, it's not that she didn't have any passions in life, she did, but she didn't have any causes, she didn't have any kind of, you know, I've got three daughters and I've tried to always make them very politically engaged and to, you know, be very vocal about what they think about something, and they're probably too vocal, but, do you know what I mean, I've just encouraged them to think very, very independently. I think I look back on my life and realise that I didn't really start thinking for myself until I was a student and, you know, that's not a good thing. I didn't question things really, that's it, I didn't question things, or if I did, we weren't really allowed to question things, everything was shut down, we weren't allowed to talk about things.

FR: That's interesting, and so, I'm trying to think, so you did your transfer test as–?

TB: So yeah, so that's funny, and I talk about this with a girlfriend a lot who moved at the same time, so we did, when we did the eleven-plus, we never expected to pass the eleven-plus (a) cos we were girls and there were more places for boys, more passes went to boys, and also because when you did your tests you would call out your score, your practise test, to the teacher and then she'd say when was your birthday, and if you were born early in the school year, the academic year, so I'm December, you'd get marks taken off, so you might say Mrs Rankin, she was my teacher in P7, yes Mrs Rankin, I got seventy-five or something and she'd say and when was your birthday, and you'd say December, and she'd say oh sorry Tanya, that's fifty-two, fail, yeah, so I do remember doing it and never, never expecting to, never really expecting to pass, and probably not even trying very hard, just thinking I'm not going to pass this, so kind of what's the point.

FR: Yeah, that makes sense, if there's a kind of lack of expectation.

TB: Yeah, also, other big beef I have is I'm left-handed and I'm very, very left-handed, and I think back to those sorts of tests that we did and it was all verbal, kind of non-verbal reasoning, and not really the way I, not really the way my head works, if that makes sense.

FR: Yeah, it does, and it can slow you down as a kid if you're left-handed.

TB: Well, when I started doing maths, when we did, when you have like, say, fourteen and fourteen, well, that's not a good example, but if you, I always started adding up from the left, not the right, yeah, and I think it was P2 before the teacher worked out why all my maths was wrong, and I remember her saying oh look, no, you need to start on this side, yeah.

FR: That's interesting, that's really unfair about the marks being taken off.

TB: Well, that's my memory for sure, and lots of really smart people didn't pass the eleven-plus. I'm sure lots of very smart people did, but lots of people didn't.

FR: And do you, so you, were you not disappointed then if you had–?

TB: No, cos I wasn't smart enough to think this is an injustice, this is wrong, and maybe it wasn't an injustice, cos maybe I wouldn't have passed it anyway, but I do, I look back now **[00:10:00]** and I think gosh, you know, how as girls did we, how as girls did, was that a thing and how did parents put up with that and, you know.

FR: And do your remember your parents' reaction or were they [indecipherable]–?

TB: In fairness to my parents, they didn't put any pressure on us at all academically, they, no, they didn't.

FR: And then you went to–?

TB: So I went to Princess Gardens as a boarder, which was the most awful experience, terrible, so my memories of being, look, I was very lucky to go to that school, you know, it's a good school, but my memories of going were, there was horrible low-level bullying as a boarder, there were lots of awful things that happened, I was remembering one girl who, we had quite a few girls there whose parents were in the army, and their parents had maybe been sent overseas, and when you were a boarder there was absolutely nothing to do after school, the only thing that I can remember was there was a table tennis table and I am fantastic at table tennis, I'm like, champs at table tennis, but there wasn't enough food, we all sat in the refectory, we all sat at tables where you had like, upper sixth first then you had two lower sixth, fifth, fourth down to first year at the end of table, and the sixth former served all the food, so all the big portions went to the older girls and by the time the food came down to the end of the table, and the food was pretty awful anyway, there was just nothing to eat. That is a really, really vivid memory and actually a point of contention for me with an older sister, cos I had an elder sister who was at the school, who's very biddable and had a different experience, and when I went home and complained to my mother and said

there's nothing to eat, and she said to my sister oh, you know, is this true, my sister, no, no, absolutely, everything's fine, so in fact, with my oldest two children, when they came to choose, they were much more involved in choosing which schools they'd go to, I sent them to different schools cos I wanted my middle daughter to have her own opinions and to have a, you know, be in a different place, yeah, so that, I was, one of the memories that I have about that school, which is just so awful going back to the poor girls who had to stay in at weekends, cos we came home at the weekends, there was one girl who went up, we had a housing estate up near the playing fields called Annville, and there used to be this thing about the girls like, the really racy girls would go up and talk to the boys, which was a totally natural thing when you're fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old for goodness sake, they would go up and chat to the boys, and this poor girl was caught or reported for talking to the boys, and she was made to sit in the laundry room for a day. I mean, you think back and you think that was 1979, 1980, unbelievable, and the people who, the people who were in charge of us were complete social misfits, the people who were the matrons and the, you know, in charge of the boarders, and they were women who were maybe down on their luck, needed somewhere to live, they had no experience on really caring for children. We had one teacher called Miss Cummings who just, she was a Scottish lady and she would stomp down, storm down the dormitories in the morning cos she had a dormitory bathroom, dormitory bathroom, and she'd say [adopts a Scottish accent] roll back the beds now girls, and then I remember her saying to us once when we were, you know, we weren't allowed to talk after nine o'clock or something, and I remember her just saying to us, you know, you're just all here cos your parents don't want you, I mean, really awful, awful, yeah, that wasn't, that wasn't a good experience at all.

FR: No, that sounds hard.

TB: Well, I think we were very resilient and, you know, if I chat to anyone about it now, you know, like, we just laugh cos it's just so, it's just so ridiculous, but it did make me, it did make me determined that my children would have a great experience at school and would love school.

FR: Where is this school in Belfast, cos I don't know it?

TB: Well, it's really funny cos did you, have you watched that brilliant *Derry Girls*?

FR: Yes, yes.

TB: *Derry Girls* is set at that school and in fact, I had a complete, my children make me laugh, they always say I've been triggered, the bit of the refectory which is where I have my memories of being starved is in one of their classrooms, and I was watching it and just said to the children oh God, switch it off. Well, actually it doesn't exist anymore, Princess Gardens, cos it merged with Ashleigh House to become Hunter House.

FR: Ah yes, I have heard of Hunter House.

TB: Yeah, yeah.

FR: [pauses] And–

TB: There's a good twist to this though.

FR: Go on.

TB: Which is that, because food really was an issue for me, just not having enough to eat, and I remember one Christmas my, I was being given a lift somewhere by a friend of my mother's and she said to me how's school, and me being completely honest just said oh I really like, I really hate it, there's nothing to eat, I'm really hungry, and her daughter had been sent to school, her husband was a judge, and her daughter had been sent to school, probably for security, I don't know, in England and had become chronically anorexic and very, very ill, and she then phoned my mother and said you've got to be really careful with Tanya, she'll develop anorexia, which I don't think I would've really, but anyway, and my mother was furious with me and said you've given me no choice, you'll have to be a day girl now, but you aren't, you know, you'll have to get yourself to and from school, on the train, I won't be driving you kind of thing, and so the, so my sister then stayed on as a boarder and I then was a day girl and got the train up from Cultra up to Finaghy every day, yeah, but that was all thanks to that chance conversation.

FR: [laughs] And what age would you have been then?

TB: So I was about fourteen then.

FR: And so you travelled to and from school?

TB: Yeah, yeah.

FR: On your own on the train?

TB: Yeah, but there were lots of people doing that, it was really fun because there were people going to Sullivan, there were people going to Inst., to Methody, to Ashleigh, you know, there were lots of kids going up and down on the train.

FR: And you mentioned that some of the children at Princess Gardens were the children of soldiers like, for instance, and a judge you mentioned there as well.

TB: Yeah.

FR: So in terms of kind of politics, Belfast in the late seventies, was that something that was talked about, was it something you were aware of?

TB: I wasn't aware of, when I was at Glencraig I was blissfully unaware really of anything and any, the thing I struggled with in Northern Ireland is that there's kind of like, two tribes and you have to be put in a tribe, and if people say to you what school did you go to or what's your surname, they immediately put you, they know that you're either Catholic or Protestant, don't they, and, but I do remember going to, I mean, I do think that system of,

okay, it was selection in a way, wasn't it, so there's no perfect set-up for a school, but there was a good, you know, there was a good mix of girls from different backgrounds, albeit predominantly Protestant at Princess Gardens, and I do remember when the hunger strikes were on we had one really feisty girl, so the day that Bobby Sands was being buried, school either finished at twelve o'clock or didn't happen, there was something, I think it was maybe a half day and that was fourth year which they call year ten here, and I remember this girl saying to the teacher well, I want to come to school, I'm coming to school, it's got nothing to do with me, and the teacher having to say no, no, it's not, we're just closing the schools, all the schools are going to be closed kind of thing, and then I also remember when the hunger strikes were on sitting down at school lunch and being really shocked cos some of the younger girls were talking and someone said oh did you go and throw stones last night, and I'm like, what, and they had gone, I think they'd gone to Twinbrook and were chucking stones at republicans' houses, I mean, something that I was just like, crikey, you know, yeah, yeah, and we had, I do remember another girl whose dad was in the police and how anxious they were all the time about, you know, she was anxious about her dad and, yeah, I think it's amazing looking back, I think there was so much trauma going on that just was buried.

FR: Yeah, and you weren't anxious or your parents weren't anxious about sort of travelling into the city or–?

TB: I was anxious, there was, I think I mentioned to you the thing about the bomb on the train, I was really anxious, so on my train line there was a terrible, terrible thing, this must have been about 1980 or '81, there was a, there were people killed, a bomb went off, I think just after Lisburn, and then our train line came afterwards and there was a boy from Friend's School who was killed, I think he'd been at rugby practice or something, and I remember wanting to talk to my mum about it, and actually what I wanted to talk about was what was the purpose of the bomb, what was the, what did they want, what did they want to achieve by bombing civilians on a train, and she just refused to talk about it and said you're glorifying death, and I didn't really even understand what she meant by that, but I just wanted to und-, I wanted to understand what the battle was about, I wanted **[00:20:00]** to know why people would put a bomb on a train that we all travelled on, you know, and so that was, you know, that just was never talked about, or we weren't allowed to talk about it.

FR: That's really interesting. Do you think that your mum felt like, to give any kind of reason for something like that would be to kind of–?

TB: I don't think she had the language to articulate it. I think it was such a, I think it was such a bonkers place, I just don't think she had the emotional wherewithal to, I don't think she knew, I don't think she could explain and I think they just thought, it's better just to [pauses] just not talk about this stuff and just pretend that everything's fine and you know, and the funny thing is, is that I actually, I'm so hypervigilant, I'm sure everyone who's grown up in Northern Ireland during the Troubles is, that I feel really safe in Northern Ireland and always have, cos everyone's on alert, no one leaves a bag unattended. In England everyone is just, bags here, bags there. I was in Topshop with my children, oh probably about five years ago, when there'd been, or maybe longer, when there'd been the terrible bombs on the tube, and they were down in the basement and I was lurking about just waiting for them at the front doors, and I saw two security guys picked up a bag that someone had just left by

mistake, and they literally picked it up and opened it, which is like, the last thing that you do, and they were kind of looking at each other and then there was another bag, and I just said, I just phoned my children up and just said we're going to leave the shop now, cos I just thought if you actually find anything, you just don't know what, you just don't actually know how to deal with it, you don't know what to do, and I have done things like, when I've been at airports and someone has just got a suitcase and they've just thought oh I'm going to go and get a coffee and they leave the suitcase in the queue, I'm the one who says whose is this bag, and everyone looks at you like, like, are you mad, and then the person comes back and just says oh I just went to get a coffee, and I'm like, yeah, but you left your bag, you can't leave your bag, and in fact, there's another quick memory, I recently in Richmond, at Richmond station there was a bicycle company advertising bikes, and they had those baskets on the side, those pannier things, and it was again when there had been some terrorist attack here, and I said to the guy, it wasn't clear whose the bike was, and I said to the guy who was doing the tickets on the ticket machine, I said whose is that bike, and he said I don't know, and I said well, you need to know, and he said no, that's not my job, I can't do that, anyway, we've got a very good neighbourhood watch thing here and when I got the email from the guy who does the neighbourhood watch I mentioned this to him and he sent it to local Richmond police, anyway, it's gone, the bike's gone, so.

FR: So like, the bags [laughs].

TB: Yeah, yeah.

FR: That's interesting, that kind of habit of awareness.

TB: Yeah, definitely, definitely.

FR: Did you, you mentioned that your dad was the manager of a linen factory on Falls Road, so would, he must have been affected to some extent by–

TB: Yeah, well, see that's another thing, he will very rarely talk about it and I think he saw some terrible things [pauses], yeah. I do remember as a child also watching TV and an ad would come on, you won't remember this cos you're too young, but an ad would come on and it would say, would the key holder to XXX factory please go up and check whatever, and we would shout dad, you need to go and check the factory and kind of, and I remember, I think I said to you the thing about in 1977 when his life was threatened and [pauses], yeah, but you just, you just kind of, it's not until you look back and you think crikey, that was crazy really, and he used to check the car, every morning he'd check to see if there, you know, check there wasn't a bomb underneath it, and we had glass where you could, people couldn't see into the house, but we could see out, so we could see who was there, and we had, I do remember when he'd drop us off at school, if he used to, when he took us back on a Monday morning, and he used to make me really sad cos he'd just say lock the doors.

FR: So you, I think you did mention it in your email about this thing in 1977, do you know what that–?

TB: Well, I do remember, I do remember my mother being really nervy, which was understandable, because there was some IRA policy, which was that if they, that if they could kind of sabotage the economy the British government would stop pumping money into subsidising businesses.

FR: Sure, yeah.

TB: And that a list of people who were prominent in business was drawn up and I do know my father's name was on that list [pauses], so I do kind of remember that quite vividly, and in fairness to my parents about that whole boarding thing, what they would say is, what my father would say is, that he wanted us kind of out of the way, he, yeah, he wanted us out of the way really. I think he saw some terrible things, and he won't talk about it, and I know he found guns once on the premises, and I know he had people who would come and ask for money and he would, you know, he would never give to any particular cause, so I think, yeah, I think that was really tough.

FR: It must have been, and something you were kind of semi-aware of as a child.

TB: Oh no, very aware.

FR: Very aware.

TB: Mmm, but then everybody was, everyone had a, you know, everyone was affected I would say.

FR: Yeah, a small country, and so then you were boarding at Princess Gardens until you were four-, fourteen?

TB: Until, so it was the first term of third year, so that's year nine, yeah.

FR: Fourteen, fifteen.

TB: So that's, yeah, fourteen, fifteen, fourteen I think.

FR: And then you start travelling in and out of the boarding–

TB: Yeah.

FR: And it sounds like that's better or a bit of a happier period [indecipherable].

TB: Yeah, I think it was, I think by then though I kind of, I sort of, I think the boarding thing had left such a sour taste that I, I never really enjoyed school as much as I would have liked, that school, and I think because I had loved Glencraig so much, in fact, one of my children's schools years ago asked us for money, their local state primary and I thought oh no, I want to give my money to Glencraig and I got a bench for the, you know, for the children, one of those buddy bunches, yeah.

FR: Ah yeah, that's nice, and so you go on, do you do your A-levels then?

TB: Yeah, so then in 1982 we moved to Leicester.

FR: Right.

TB: Yeah, so my father's factory closed in 1981 I want to say, and I do remember there was a big, I think my father was sick and tired of Ireland by that point anyway, but I do remember there was a big scandal about the money that Thatcher gave to DeLorean and DeLorean turned out to be an absolute crook. I mean, that's classic Conservatism though isn't it, thinking well, these companies aren't profitable, maybe not looking at, well, look, they employ fifty per cent Catholic, fifty per cent Protestant and they're, you know, that's the good thing to have employment, and then I do remember there was a lot of bitterness when DeLorean, when that whole thing went phut, yeah, so we moved to Leicester and then he set up a business in Leicester initially, and I think the reason for Leicester actually was that it was just slap bang in the middle of the country, yeah.

FR: And so what age were you when you moved to Leicester?

TB: So I was sixteen, so that was sixth form, yeah.

FR: And you had, did you have five, four sisters and, three sisters and one brother.

TB: So yeah, so by that point, by that point my eldest two siblings were at university and my younger, so it was really just the three children–

FR: Three children, okay.

TB: Yeah, who were there, yeah.

FR: And do you remember moving?

TB: Yeah, I do remember moving vividly, yeah, and that was a real shock because it was like a foreign country, it was just so diff-, I remember, I remember even physically looking at the like, the fields and things and just thinking this is, and the architecture, and just thinking this is just so, so different and, yeah.

FR: Would you have been to England before?

TB: Yes, but not, yeah, a bit, but not, not–

FR: On holidays.

TB: Yeah, not, yeah, we had been to England before, but not, kind of not really, and I do, so I do remember then I used to get a school bus from Leicester to Loughborough and it was a, we did the, that's a distance of about fifteen miles, but the school bus of course had to go all around all the different villages, so it was, you know, a really long trip and I just looked at

this landscape and just thought, where the, where am I, you know, what is going on here, and then it was very unsettling because I used to go back, you know, every half-term, every holiday to begin with I would go back home, yeah, so it's quite hard to, quite hard to settle–

FR: You'd go back, back home to Northern Ireland?

TB: Go back and see friends, go and see family, go and see my, one grandmother was still living then, yeah, so yeah.

FR: So you still had family in Northern Ireland?

TB: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, **[00:30:00]** so that was still, I still felt very, you know, very sort of Northern Irish for sure.

FR: So you were sort of moving between the two places–

TB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: Which is, which can be complicated.

TB: Yeah.

FR: But were you happy to be out of Northern Ireland given the kind of–?

TB: No, cos Northern Ireland to me was just, you know, was just a fantastic place and we had loads of friends and it was really fun and in fact, thinking about Princess Gardens has reminded me I did Duke of Edinburgh and we went off to the Mournes and did these great big expeditions and in fact, that's when one of the girls taught me 'The Sash', cos I didn't know, we were all singing silly songs and someone said let's sing 'The Sash', and I was like, well, what's 'The Sash', you know, they said you must know how to sing 'The Sash', I'm like, no, no, no clue, and they taught be the words of 'The Sash', yeah.

FR: So were your parents not political at all?

TB: No, they weren't, they weren't.

FR: Was there no Orange culture, no–?

TB: They weren't, but [pauses], but they wouldn't have, but they would have been unionist I suppose, but I don't think, I don't think they would have questioned is there a different way to live here, that's the thing, I don't think they que-, I don't mean just them, I just mean everyone, I just think people didn't really question [pauses] if there could be in a diff-, if they could be part of a different tribe, if they could be part of, you know, a different way of thinking, I just don't think they did.

FR: It's a kind of conformity.

TB: I, I honestly, I would kind of really love to know. I mean, I'm actually married to a Catholic and I remember–

FR: An Irish Catholic or an English Catholic?

TB: Well, he's, he's a funny old Catholic–

FR: That's a good, that's a very good answer to an Irish question [laughs].

TB: He's, no, no, no, no, he's a funny old Catholic because his grandparents were originally from County Mayo, so he's definitely properly Irish Catholic, and in fact, his church that he went to there would have been lots of Irish people, but his mother, she's the one whose parents were very Irish, is English. But yeah, but I remember my mother kind of being delighted that I was getting married to a Catholic, she just thought this was, she thought this was great really.

FR: Oh that's interesting.

TB: Oh yeah, there was no, there was no–

FR: No sectarianism, no–?

TB: Absolutely not.

FR: And I suppose your dad must have worked with–

TB: Oh yeah, no, absolutely definitely not.

FR: That makes sense, and so you moved to Leicester, you're sixteen, you go to school in Lough-?

TB: Loughborough, yeah.

FR: Lough-, I can never say it [laughs], Loughborough.

TB: Loughborough, yeah.

FR: And do your A-levels there.

TB: And did A-levels there, and then I went to Bristol Poly.

FR: And were you, how did you find Loughborough and Leicester initially?

TB: I was really, pfff, tutututu, I was definitely homesick, I probably wouldn't have been able to say I'm a bit homesick, but I was also, I also, I also kind of thought well, I'm here, I've kind of got to get on with it really, and I did go to school with some really fantastic girls who still are really terrific friends and have been great friends, so I wouldn't choose, I wouldn't

choose for anyone, unless they wanted to, to move for sixth form cos it's hard, and also it was a very different school to the kind of school that I'd been to, and my family was very unhappy, my mother was very unhappy, so I just think when you were young, you just, you just get on with life, you know things aren't right, but then things were never really right, so you just crack on, don't you.

FR: What else is there to do.

TB: Yeah, you know, and then I went to Bristol Poly and I really loved Bristol, and I did a great course, I did a humanities course and it was fantastic, you could choose, you could do history modules, English modules, anthropology, and I think that's where I first really started questioning stuff for the first time, and I remember in freshers', I had a much stronger accent then, but I remember someone hearing me talk and she was selling *Socialist Worker* magazines and she said oh are you west or east Belfast, and I just said to her there is a north and a south you know, you know, and then being really proud of myself, you know.

FR: [laughs] That's the *Socialist Worker* line, there's only two sides of Belfast.

TB: Yeah, yeah.

FR: [laughs] That's a good story. I was going to ask about accent actually–

TB: Well, it's funny–

FR: Were you conscious of it when you moved?

TB: Oh yeah, definitely and I also remember, there was a bomb, was there a bomb in Harrods or a bomb near Harrods, friends of mine had gone, in 1983 I want to say, and they'd had to come back from London and I remember being really embarrassed and kind of sort of saying oh gosh, I'm really sorry, you know, that's awful, that must have been terrible, I'm, you know, all of that, and then it's funny, I worked in public relations, was my first job in London, and I worked with lots of very polite girls from Surrey and I just think I ended up talking like them, but when my children were little, when they were really naughty, I would, I'd say in a, you know, Northern, I'd say [adopts a Northern Irish accent] stop that right there, just, you know, we're not having this now, and they'd go oh mummy stop it, stop it mummy, stop it [laughs], yeah, so that's funny.

FR: So it's still kind of there, somewhere.

TB: Well, I think also there are certain words, aren't there, things like, if you iron your clothes, you know what I'm saying when I say iron clothes, but if you say to an English person, have you got an iron, they're like, what, what, oh what, yeah, so funny things.

FR: And so Bristol was good.

TB: Bristol was fantastic, yeah, I love Bristol.

FR: And I suppose it's, the kind of politicising or, it sounds like you started to–

TB: Well, it was interesting cos that was when the miners' strike had, the miners' strike was sort of '84, wasn't it, and I do remember getting into a good discussion with someone about, his dad was a miner and we had, I, I loved hockey and that was actually, thanks to Princess Gardens, I loved hockey and I still played hockey at Bristol, and I remember our away match was going to be cancelled because the money that had been, was going to be spent on the coach was going to be donated to the miners and I remember just saying oh it's ridiculous, and he sort of pushed back and said no, it's not, and I remember just saying no, we should be allowed to do our sport, the government should be, you know, should be supporting the miners, that, you know, that sort of thing, so yeah, I really loved Bristol, I loved all the people there, I loved the city, yeah, it was fantastic.

FR: And a much different city from Belfast, I mean, a much more diverse city in some ways.

TB: Yeah, that would've, yeah, but Leicester was diverse, but actually Leicester was, Leicester had a, but those communities didn't integrate at all, so the Asian community, I don't know what it's like now, but then certainly didn't, there was no integration really at all. Bristol, yeah, I would've said there was much more integration, I mean, obviously there were terrible problems in Bristol cos they had riots in St Paul's I think before I'd maybe gone there, but Bristol was a really, and still is I'm sure, a really cool city.

FR: I've actually never been, it's not that far away.

TB: Oh yeah, you should go, yeah, you should go.

FR: Yeah, a friend has just moved there, so I'm going to, and did your parents stay in Leicester at this time?

TB: Ah now this, it does get a bit complicated now. So my father then got offered a job in London, my mother, I think cos I'd left home by then and then I went travelling, she stayed in Leicester for a bit and then they moved to a place called Leigh in Kent, which is near Sevenoaks, and then he commuted, yeah, he lived in St Albans for a bit and commuted and then they sold the house in Leicester and moved, so they weren't, it's funny, you know, no one really has any ties with Leicester or, that was just kind of a very bizarre period of our lives really.

FR: Just somewhere to move to, somewhere to leave Northern Ireland?

TB: I think so, I think so. It wasn't a successful move for my mother, it made her very unhappy.

FR: Leaving Northern Ireland or–?

TB: Leaving Northern Ireland I think, yeah.

FR: And leaving family and things like that?

TB: And leaving family and, yeah, I think it was, it was really hard for her.

FR: [pauses] And what about your siblings? So you had two younger–

TB: So, funnily enough my, the sister who's, my younger sister lives back in Ireland, she lives in east Cork, yeah, also married to a Catholic, very Catholic, and has a fantastic life there, is very happy there, good place to live.

FR: Very nice part of the world.

TB: Yeah. I've got one sister who lives in Jersey for her husband's work, a sister who lives in Bristol, and my brother remarried and has moved to Cambridge, cos his new wife lived in Cambridge, so he moved there, yeah.

FR: So kinda spread out–

TB: All spread out, yeah, yeah.

FR: And then, so, so you're at Bristol and then you go travelling after university [indecipherable].

TB: Yeah, so I met my husband, he was at the uni, I was at the poly, **[00:40:00]** we met at a student party, yeah, a long time ago and, yeah, we decided that we'd go travelling, we got working visas to go to Australia and we went out through, where did we go, we went out through Thailand and oh we were really lucky, we flew to Jakarta and did the, did a lot overland, got trains down, down through Java. Then we went to Australia and had a brilliant time in Australia, and I loved Australia so much I said I want to stay, and he said no, he's from Watford, he said no, we're going to go, he said I'm going to go back to London, London's fantastic, you know, you need to come back to London, it'll be brilliant, and so I did.

FR: And so, and you moved to London.

TB: Yeah, and I love London, I think London's the most extraordinary city.

FR: And have you been in London ever since?

TB: Yes, I've been in London for nearly, gosh, over thirty years I think, yeah. I think London is the most vibrant, I mean, I'm obviously, I'm very fortunate, you know, we've been very lucky with the property market, we've been lucky with the children's education, I live in a beautiful part of London, you know, and I know it's not everyone's experience, but I just think for a city to have so many people from so many different places, with, and they've all done, you know, interesting things, I think it's just a terrific place.

FR: Yeah, no, I also, I love London. You mentioned that you and your husband got married in Northern Ireland?

TB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: In a church in Holywood?

TB: Yeah, so back to Glencraig, and my sister did as well, yeah, so I got married in 1994, yeah, yeah, and I think I mentioned to you that the thing I remember about that vividly was, so obviously lots of Lawrence's family were kind of very anxious, lots of his parents' friends, I didn't really understand this at the time cos I thought well, why wouldn't you come, were too nervous to come to the wedding, I mean, lots of people did, but a lot of people just didn't, they couldn't even think that you would go and visit Northern Ireland.

FR: They were too nervous to go to Northern Ireland?

TB: Yeah, lots of Eng-, they just refused to go.

FR: In '94?

TB: Yeah, they just refused, but I do remember all my parents' friends just being so excited about the possibility of peace, and that was a tangible thing, and I remember my dad telling me, and just thinking gosh, I can't believe it, that, you know, really, wow, gosh, okay.

FR: And were your parents or your dad happy that you'd gone back there to be married?

TB: We didn't, that was just, that was just where we would go to, that was our church, that was always our church, that was our place, we just, you know, my sister–

FR: But then you wouldn't have done it in London, for instance?

TB: Well, I could have done I suppose, but I just didn't, I just didn't think that I, I just, I suppose my sister got married the year before there, and all our family were there you see, all our cousins and, you know, we used to see a lot of cousins when we were younger and my parents, you know, all their friends, and our friends, our generation were fine with going over, they were absolutely fine, but we just automatically assumed, yeah, of course we'll get married there. I think there would have been more people who would've had to have come to England than English going to Ireland, if you see what I mean, yeah.

FR: Yeah, I see what you mean. So I'm just, I'm trying to do the chronology here, so you were in Australia before you came to London. Why did you like Australia so much, do you think?

TB: Well, I really love being outdoors, I loved the sea, Australia was, well, I was in Sydney and Sydney's a particularly beautiful city, and I remember going to, maybe like, the art gallery in the morning and then going to Bronte beach for a swim in the afternoon and just thinking gosh, I can't believe you can live like this, but it's interesting because we've been back to Australia quite a lot and one of the times that I took the children back, we did a house swap with friends, friends who lived here and had gone, and I said it was sort of their,

they'd been when they'd been tiny, but they hadn't remembered it, and I said look, you're really going to love Sydney, it's incredible, you know, it's my favourite place in the world, anyway they got there and of course cos they've been brought up in London they're like, mum, is this it like, you know [laughs], what are you talking about.

FR: [laughs] Yeah, it depends where you're coming from.

TB: Yeah, but actually Lawrence was always very smart cos he found, he [pauses], he found, I am generalising now, a lot of men shockingly misogynist and they would, you know, they were racist and, I mean, I'm talking about, so we were there 1987, and there for the bicentenary in 1988, and he just said, he just said I couldn't like, couldn't stay here, I couldn't be part of this culture, which was probably the right thing.

FR: And then you moved to London.

TB: So we came back, moved to London, yeah.

FR: And did you like London immediately?

TB: No, I really, really struggled to begin with, because it seemed to me when I came to London that all the people I worked with had grown up in London and kind of knew, so I worked for this, I worked in PR, which I really loved actually, and I worked in Soho for this great little company to begin with, it was my first job, with, you know, lots of very lovely Surrey girls, but, you know, the boss would say can someone just, she would have breakfast meetings and she'd say right, I need someone to go to, before Patisserie Valerie was a chain, I need someone to nip round to Patisserie Valerie and get me, you know, however many croissants, and I remember just thinking oh my God, where is Patisserie Valerie, and they all knew all this stuff, and what's a brioche and kind of, you know, and, yeah, to begin with I found it really hard and it's a, you know, it's big and, yeah, but then, you know, you get used to something don't you, and then when I had my eldest daughter, that was when I really, really settled in London cos that was, I had, we were in Islington and I just had the best healthcare on the National Health Service, University College Hospital, midwives were amazing, the aftercare was extraordinary, I had a, she was Irish actually, Bridie, my health visitor, there was loads of support, it was just great fun and there was lots to do with a baby, loads to do, there were even like, music classes and, you know, larks in the parks and this, that and the other, I really, that was when I just thought oh I want to bring my children up here because this is great.

FR: Yeah, that makes sense, and do you remember travelling back very much to Northern Ireland in–?

TB: Well, we did a bit, and obviously for cousins' weddings and things like that, but then when I, when we had the children, and Lawrence and I had gone the year we'd got married, we'd gone back to his, to see his family farm in Mayo, and we'd always loved Irish holidays, and we started taking the children to Ireland a lot, but to the South, and then just completely falling in love with west Cork, and we were really lucky cos when the children were little we had a holiday house there, and so we spent all summer, Christmases, Easter,

everything there and so they just, all of them just love Ireland and they, you know, that's where they learned to ride and to sail and to do all the things that here you just would've joined a waiting list to, you know, to do them and kind of, I remember the horse-riding was brilliant cos it was such good value compared to doing it here, and there was so much freedom for them, we'd go to Inchydoney beach and they'd say mum can we run off and go and play on the sand dunes, and I was like, yeah, you know, off you go kind of thing, and not, you know, not worry about them and it just, yeah, it was magical.

FR: That's lovely. In terms of, so what date would it have been when you moved to London, did you say '88?

TB: So '88, yeah, so I came back from travelling in '88, so it would have been the beginning of '89 actually, yeah.

FR: '89, yeah, and would you have been following the Troubles going on in Northern Ireland or in England, because I know in '92, for instance, there's a bombing in London, in '94 as well I think, is that something you would have been conscious of?

TB: Yes, and, as I say, just the frustration all the time of English people just not being observant, just not, not thinking that, you know, places could be a target, but always just being, just so sad when those things happened, just so, well, back to the bombing on the train, what's the, what's your, what's your goal here, what's your, you know, from whatever side, what's your, what are you trying to achie-, what can you achieve from this.

FR: I think you, you mentioned a story about your car registration.

TB: Oh yeah [laughs], that was in Leicester, police came round because my mum still had the car from home, from Holywood, with the Northern Irish number plate and they came and said we've had a report there's a Northern Irish number plate, yeah.

FR: So they're being observant there, but–

TB: Yeah, and things like, I remember my brother complaining cos he had gone home for something and he came back, he was a foot passenger on the Liverpool ferry and coming back and being questioned, and then **[00:50:00]** a friend in a pub in Camden, and there had been a fight, and the police came and they heard his, you know, Northern Irish accent and he was kind of hauled out and questioned and lots of subtle, lots of kind of subtle, small things.

FR: But enough to make you kind of conscious of your accent, or of your Northern Irishness.

TB: Yeah, but I've never been, I've never been ashamed or kind of, you know, I quite like it when people find out that I'm from Northern Ir-, they're like, what really, gosh, didn't know that, you know, but actually I think English people aren't really interested in Northern Ireland and I do remember when we went travelling, when you'd stay in hostels, you always had to put your nationality, and all the English people put English, and I remember saying to

my partner they are so stupid these people, they don't realise they're British, they're not English, they're British, so yeah.

FR: And would you have put British?

TB: Well, I did, yeah, yeah.

FR: That's always a, I'm never sure about British or Irish, which to put. I've got both passports. So I'm trying to think, so you've, what, you work in PR?

TB: Yes, I worked in PR and then I did a lot, I was really lucky, I did lots of travel PR before I had my children, and that was great because we had, we used to do press trips to, we'd take groups of journalists off to, you know, whoever you're working for, so I worked for the Tunisians and used to go to Tunisia, went to Malaysia, did stuff locally in London, Norway, did lots of yeah, really good, and you're young and you just, you just kind of think oh this is normal, I look back now and I just think, gosh, wow, lucky, like, lucky you, and then when I had my eldest daughter I couldn't do that anymore, so I did a bit of, did a bit, you know, freelance projects, which was quite easy to do and then, trying to think of the timing, then my husband set up his own business, which meant that he wasn't around very much at all, and I think I'd had my second daugh-, I can't remember, anyway I think I then had two children by then and then I, I thought right, okay, so I'm going to be at home with the children and I was really happy to do that, and it's very easy to do that when you're in an area where there were lots of other children, there was lots going on, you weren't isolated in any way and you still, you know, you could still have, catch up and have a coffee and have a, you know, chat to your book group of what book you've been reading this summer, anyway, I don't know. So then we bought a house, so the first house that we bought here was, it wasn't a wreck, but it wasn't in great shape, but anyway, I love doing up houses, so I kind of did that, Lawrence had his business and then, see again, you see we have been so extraordinarily lucky, although it's not so fortunate for my children's generation, we were ready for another project and so we then bought another house and did the same thing, and then I had, oh that was just when I had my third child, and then as she, when she went off to school that's when I, oh I'd also done a gardening course, so I've become quite a proficient gardener and did garden design, and then I went to Roehampton and did my master's, yeah, in historical research, yeah, yeah, and then we did that house up, did that house up, I sold that, but also had the house in Ireland which I did up, sold that and then moved here, so this is the project now, yeah. But I also do, which I really, really love, is I volunteer as an art therapist for people who have dementia.

FR: Oh how interesting.

TB: Yeah, at our local gallery and that's just been fantastic, I've done that for about five years.

FR: What does that entail? I've got a vague idea.

TB: So, when I first, when I first started with the dementia group, I got into it cos I was on a committee, a fundraising committee for our local gallery and we, after we'd sort of done all

the fundraising and I just wanted to do something really practical and I really love being with people and I don't want to sit in an office, I don't want to sit, if I have a choice, sit behind a computer all day long, and I knew that they had these amazing outreach programmes, one of which was, it's called' Talk and Draw', and when people have dementia they, a lot of the time they're very aware that they've lost their language and so they lose their confidence, they aren't able to, they don't enjoy speaking, so the 'Talk and Draw' sessions are a safe space for them and the people if they, if they, some of them can come on their own, some people in early stages come on their own, some people will come with their carers, and they're really fantastic productive sessions taken by, led by professional artists and we'll have quite a serious chat about a current exhibition, people are free to give their opinions, if someone wants to speak and can't speak, everyone is silent, respects that and waits for them to, you know, I might say something encouraging like, oh I think you said it was X, and then they might do that, and then we have a session where, where we create and we do all sorts of different things, print-making and then last year we had funding to go into, it's national care home day, where we go into care homes and take sessions there, which is hard, that is hard, that's really hard, yeah. So I do that, I love that, I'd love to do more of that, but the, unfortunately all those sorts of things, funding's being cut, there isn't enough funding for those sorts of things and they're just so crucial because the people who are caring for the people with dementia need the support as much as the people who have dementia.

FR: Of course, yeah, that sounds really interesting, yeah.

TB: Yeah, I love it.

FR: Yeah, and then the historical research at Roehampton, [indecipherable] so what was–?

TB: That was brilliant, that was great. I was taught by, you've probably heard of John Tosh?

FR: Yes, I have of course [laughs].

TB: Yeah, so he, yeah, so yeah, so he was one of my lead tutors, and Peter Edwards, he's a social historian, yeah, oh I just loved that, that was just fantastic to be back in the classroom and also I think when you're a mature student, I mean, I look ba-, I was reading some of the essays that I wrote at Bristol and like, you'd be given and question and I would deliberately take the complete opposite point of view, you know, just to be controversial, but I just, I, you know, when I was at Roehampton I, especially from somebody like John Tosh who's just so brilliant, when I was criticised I was like, yeah, that's absolutely right, John, I completely agree with you, yeah, absolutely right, you know. Just the quality of the teaching was amazing, the facilities were amazing, things like, students now, if you need a book, you don't even have to, well, I did, but students would go up and say can you find this book for me to the librarian, I'll come back in two hours and pick it up, it was like, what, what.

FR: At Brighton most of the books have been turned into e-books [indecipherable].

TB: Oh have they, oh my goodness, yeah, no, I just, I absolutely adored it there, and I had to do, you know, I was forced to do things like, I had to do palaeography, which is translating

old English script, cos I had a module that I had to do, that was a big challenge, I found that hard, yeah, but I look back now, I loved it, so, you know, go to graveyards and read, sometimes where you see the old graves and it's written in old script, you know, you can go oh yeah, that's, you know, that s is a d and that's a, yeah, yeah.

FR: That's great, I mean [laughs], I don't, I don't know how to do that.

TB: Yeah, yeah, my husband was very envious cos he's desperate to go back to, you know, go back to the classroom.

FR: What's his business, did you say?

TB: He works in advertising.

FR: Advertising, yeah.

TB: Yeah, yeah.

FR: And any Irish history at Roehampton, or was [indecipherable]?

TB: Well, yeah, I did actually because we did lots of Victorian history and you, the great thing about, you know when you do a master's you can choose your, yeah, so I did Irish emigration after the Famine. I think I mentioned to you that I did for my dissertation, I used *The Tablet* newspaper as my primary source and I looked at how English Catholics thought that the mass immigration of Irish Catholics would boost, would strengthen the English Catholic church, which it didn't because Irish Catholics were, well, I argued anyway, were a tribe unto themselves and wouldn't, never assimilated, so that was my argument.

FR: That's interesting.

TB: Yeah, I loved that.

FR: Yeah, like, this is a bit of a tangent, sorry, but you just reminded me, you and your husband got married in your church, which I guess was a Church of Ireland?

TB: Yeah, Church of Ireland, yeah.

FR: So he's not a practising Catholic or–?

TB: No, but I think, you know, and we laugh about this and we tease him about this, you know, he has got this whole kind of Catholic guilt thing all the time, all the time, and sometimes if we're in Ireland, you know, he might go to church or, but no, **[01:00:00]** he's not going, you know.

FR: And what about yourself, are you, is the church still–?

TB: Well, the weird thing is is that when I, when I go home, when I go back to Ireland, we quite often go to church, I don't know why I don't go to church, I just, we went to church, well, the children, well, the children were baptised here in England, so obviously we went to church. I think it's complicated here also because when I lived in Islington you had to, there were two church schools, there was the Catholic church which Tony Blair sent his children to, Sacred Heart, yeah, and then there was Christchurch, which is top of Highbury Fields, which is where Imogen was baptised and that, I think that primary school was called St John's, which was church school, and I just felt really uncomfortable about this whole, and the Catholic school, Joan of Arc, was much better than the other one, I remember sort of thinking, saying to Lawrence oh perhaps we should go, and then thinking no, I can't get into this, this is terrible, I can't, I can't go to this church to try to get to that school, that just, that just, you know, I just didn't like, I just didn't like it, it's a massive thing in London and then our local state school here, the infant school was, that was no church affiliation, but then the next school, cos they had infants and then juniors, St Stephen's, they did have church places, but we didn't go in on a church place, yeah.

FR: So that's a further complication.

TB: Yeah, and it is interesting though cos I've got a great Australian friend who is Catholic and her children, three girls as well, have gone to brilliant Catholic schools, state schools, and she's very modern and progressive, but that has been, and very sadly she lost her husband when she was very young, but that, that, her Catholicity is quite integral to, quite important to her, quite, and I respect that, so I wouldn't, I wouldn't argue against, what I'm trying to say is, I wouldn't argue against church schools, but just for me, yeah.

FR: It wasn't, okay, and then, this is probably going slightly back in time, but I thought it was interesting you mentioned when you got married, '94?

TB: '94, yeah.

FR: Which is the kind of beginnings of the peace process, and then there's a, there's a ceasefire in '94 and there was this sense of optimism.

TB: Yeah, absolutely.

FR: Do you remember 1998 then, and the Good Friday Agreement and the–?

TB: Yes, I do, but I also remember, cos I had cousins still back in Northern Ireland, so being, probably having really naive conversations, and they would explain to me and just say yeah, but it's, but it's all still, it's all still bubbling, it's all still bubbling under, and one cousin who's a pharmacist saying that in her parade of shops, they, some of the shopkeepers had to still pay protection money, but the pharmacist didn't because everyone had to go in and get their local drugs and get their tranquillisers and get their painkillers and they needed the pharm-, they didn't want to hound the pharmacist out, so I think that was always, I think that was always a reality check, talking to people who actually lived there still, full-time, whereas what I read in the paper and watched on the news was really only half the story.

FR: So you get the kind of more optimistic narrative from the news and then the people who are there see that it's still going on?

TB: Yeah, absolutely, so don't be so naive, yeah.

FR: Do your cousins live in Holywood as well or–?

TB: Or near Holywood, yeah, yeah.

FR: Around there. That's really interesting, that the pharmacy is exempt from the protection racket scheme, and then as your children are growing up you mentioned that you would have gone back to Ireland a lot more, and back to Northern Ireland as well or–?

TB: Yeah, well, we'd have to go back for, you know, I remember we went back for my aunt's, it would have been her, maybe her eightieth or her seventieth, my grandmother's funeral we went back for, but I think, I mean, I think actually even just things like, the weather in Northern Ireland is just so, it's so much worse than the South, that if we had, if we, you know, whenever we had the choice, we just always, always, cos the South is just so, I know the North is beautiful like, obviously it is, but the South is just, was just heaven for the children, they just, you know, loved it so much, and then I suppose the more you go and the more you settle and kind of, yeah.

FR: You get used to certain places, like Cork or wherever.

TB: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: But would you have talked to the, to your children about Northern Ireland or about your childhood or–?

TB: Yeah, we talked to them a lot about Northern Ireland, and in fact, I run a lot and the first marathon I did was in, was the Belfast marathon and that was when they did the old course and it drove me mad actually because they, cos it was a really hard course and there were loads of hills and stuff and it was cos they wanted to take people up the Falls Road, which I kind of get the, I understand, but I just thought gee, you could've, you know, it could be a bit easier, but I also remember running that marathon and just thinking where are all the women, where are all the women runners, and it was, they have lots of relays there as well, so they're not people doing the full marathon and that kind of, the people, there were very few people doing the full marathon and there were very few people doing, females doing the full marathon, so I ended up in my category coming like, top five or something ridiculous, but in the great scheme of things it wouldn't be that, but we also ran a lot in the South, and the South is brilliant for running, everyone in the South runs, I mean, I'm sure it's maybe different in Belfast now, but that is a big memory, I just thought where are all, where are all the female runners, I thought, they're all at home cooking the tea for the men.

FR: That's interesting, the kind of gender politics in Northern Ireland always seems–

TB: Yeah, I think actually I have talked to the children a lot recently because of the abortion debate, so they've had all the repeal, we've got the repeal poster, we've got the repeal car stickers, we've had the repeal sweatshirts, I've talked to them about, you know, what was going on in the North and they're just completely horrified by it, they can't believe, regardless, my argument with them always was, it's not, I'm not, I, it's regardless of whether I'm pro-abortion or not, that's not the issue, the issue is democracy, you can't have, you can't have men legislating for women and saying what's right for, over a woman's body, in fact, one of my girls came up with a great phrase, she said you impregnate and then you legislate, and I thought yeah [laughs], yeah, you, you, you go girl, yeah. I did have a friend in Northern Ireland who, this is a terrible story, who did get pregnant and forged her a cheque from her father and got herself to Liverpool and had an abortion, and then obviously sooner or later it all came out and she suffered with mental health issues for years, it's terrible, just dreadful, and I don't understand how you can have, how in one part of the UK you can have healthcare rights which you can't have in another, I just, it flummoxes me, I just can't, I cannot understand how, how that's been allowed to happen.

FR: It's always been the, one of the really frustrating things I think, both in the North and in the South of Ireland about abortion being illegal, as in it was never illegal cos you'd come to England, if you were able to come to England it wasn't illegal, but then it placed this horrible strain on people.

TB: Yeah, but that just added so much to the trauma for women and I think one of the other reasons why we love the South so much, and again I am generalising, I know, I know this, but it just seemed so much more progressive, so much more outward-looking, so much, you know, Dublin is so international now, and obviously that brings problems cos house prices there are crazy, cos I think I said to you my daughter last year was at Trinity in Dublin, yeah, yeah, so you know, rent there is just extortionate.

FR: I lived in Dublin for four years about a decade ago and even then it was hard, yeah, even then it was hard, so I think now, it's a, I know, most of the people I know or I knew in Dublin have moved on.

TB: Yeah, yeah, have had to leave, yeah, and lots of the artists I think, and actually in this area, in fact, I've got a great friend called Tim Acott, this is a good book, you should read this book, it's called *Stealing Mortar*, and he grew up between Northern Ireland and South Africa, and it's, it's the most brilliant book, but he, he lived here and they were kind of, his wife's an artist as well, and they were sort of forced out by house prices.

FR: [pauses] I'm just writing down [laughs].

TB: Yeah, no, honestly, it's a brilliant, he's a fantastic writer.

FR: It's a good title. It's interesting that, yeah, so the South still feels a little bit more liberal and Northern Ireland still feels more insular.

TB: Well, I just, I cannot bear listening to the DUP, you know, there was something recently, oh the, I think I've said to you, one thing I am sad about is that we never had the chance to learn Gaelic. Did you do Gaelic at school?

FR: I did not.

TB: Yeah, see we didn't and why not, and, you know, Scottish dancing we did at primary school I think maybe, but why did we not do Irish dancing, and then Arlene Foster said something like if we're going to have the Irish language we may as well have Polish, we have so many Polish people living here, and I just thought honestly, do you really not get it, are you really so kind of culturally frigid that you don't feel this, you don't feel any connection with the rest of your island, how can you not. **[01:10:00]** Yeah, I feel really strongly about that.

FR: Yeah, and the language issue has been in the news a lot in Ireland lately, right around.

TB: Yeah, well, the Ulster Scots thing is interesting because my, the friend who was here at the weekend reminded me of course, and she's quite right, is that that's just a dialect, it's not a language, so it wouldn't, why would it have the same prominence, it's not–

FR: There's been a big argument, I've actually been reading quite a lot about this–

TB: Okay.

FR: Yeah, it's a, yeah, that–

TB: It's not to say it's irrelevant, but you can't, you know–

FR: It's certainly been like, politicised in a particular way.

TB: Yes, yeah, but why do they have to turn everything into a political, why does everything have to politicised, that's what I don't get.

FR: Would you go, have you been back to Northern Ireland lately or do you go back?

TB: We went back, sadly we went back for a funeral in March, but then it's always lovely when you go back and, you know, nothing really like, nothing really kind of changes there, and you sort of know where everything is and, yeah, no, it's always lovely, it's always lovely to go back, yeah.

FR: Did you ever think of moving back [indecipherable]?

TB: Well, actually going back to the school thing, when we were looking at secondary schools for the children I kind of thought gosh, that whole Northern Irish school thing is fantastic, if you go to, if you can go to a good school.

FR: It's fantastic in the sense that it's that, the sort of grammar school–?

TB: Yeah, yeah, and I remember phoning, I remember phoning Methody and saying could my daughter do the eleven-plus and they said she could, but she can't take it when everyone else does it, we have to do it for overseas, you can do it in April or May or something, you do your entrance then.–

FR: I had no idea that was even a possibility.

TB: Yeah, I mean, that was a while ago cos my eldest daughter's going to be twenty-five, and then when we were in, oh this is an interesting thing, so when we were in Cork we looked at Bandon Grammar School, which was kind of like, the local school, and school fees in the South compared to English school fees, if you go privately here, are peanuts really, and I started reading up on it and the private schools in the South are subsidised by the state, which, I can't understand how that works, because you could live, you could not pay, you could have not paid anything into the Irish tax system and say you could live, I don't know, let's just make it up, let's just say China, and you could apply to go to school in Ireland, to boarding school, and you would pay those fees, and it would be subsidised by Irish taxpayers, well, why would Irish taxpayers do that, you know, and why would Irish taxpayers subsidise my child going to, you know, if we hadn't paid into the, do you see what I mean.

FR: Yeah, and most of their children don't go to those schools.

TB: Yeah, yeah.

FR: That is strange, I didn't know that.

TB: Yeah, yeah. I think also I worried, because they hadn't been to primary school, that and, you know, they hadn't done Irish, I just thought oh is this going to be too, is this going to be too hard for them to go, yeah, yeah.

FR: And it sounds as if your school experience made you quite sensitive to your children's school experiences?

TB: I just wanted them, I just think it's so important to be happy at school, it's like, you know, everyone should be happy at school. The funny thing is is that my daughter's school, the headmistress is a girl who had been at Princess Gardens, the current head is, had been at my school, she was older than me, but she, yeah, so I just thought oh that's funny, yeah, that's funny, isn't it, yeah, yeah.

FR: Okay, well, I think we're sort of, this'll be the kind of final section, I think we covered quite a lot, so just some questions about how you feel about Northern Ireland now I guess, although we've kind of touched on some of that already.

TB: I would be pro-united Ireland, definitely, and I hope that eventually, and maybe that's what's going to happen with Brexit, it just seems logical to me, I think there, there are so many reasons why it should be. I [pauses] wonder how, I wonder what's going to happen with the border now, I don't think people have any, people outside Ireland, have any real

understanding of how complicated that's going to be, and [pauses] I think, I, I think the people, I think Northern Ireland has produced some extraordinary people, probably very ordinary people who put up with amazing things and problems, never complained, just got on with life, in fact, around here we've got neighbours who are really sensitive to noise and there was one time, our children, it was like, a Saturday night, it was bonfire night, kids were out in the garden, one of the neighbours complained, and I remember just thinking honestly, are you for real like, yeah, honestly, is this really a problem in the great scheme of things. I mean, I do remember the noise of bombs going off and kind of, you know, well, there would have been lots of noise for people, people would've put up with horrendous riots and things and, you know, fair play to them they, you know, they got on with it, and I think yeah, I think it would be good to shine a light on those people more, who did just get on with it and bring up their families and do the best they could under those circumstances.

FR: People who kind of just continued to live their everyday life.

TB: Yeah, and didn't compl-, and didn't complain, that's the thing, and I think my children always criticise me because I'm always saying to them you've got to be resilient, you know, I remember like, going to school, so we had Rathmore school behind us and we all had different times going to and from school, I think probably so we didn't all shout at each other, but we regularly, you put your uniform on in the Troubles and probably still now, and people knew, oh well, there you go, Princess Gardens, so she's a Prod, people would just shout, you know, fucking Prod, but you didn't go home and cry, you just kind of, well, I was a Prod, I mean, you know, you just didn't, I'm not saying that makes it right, but it did make you, it did give you, does give you a good perspective on stuff now I think.

FR: I mean, that kind of resilience idea.

TB: Yeah, that's a good thing, you need to be resilient.

FR: Did you know any Catholics growing up in Northern Ireland?

TB: Yeah, we did–

FR: Oh yeah, you mentioned you had some Catholics at your school, I think you said.

TB: Well, we had, at Glencraig, we had a really lovely, lovely Catholic family, I wouldn't have known that they were Catholic, but she had her holy communion, her first holy communion and so she had a special party and I remember we were all just so envious cos she had this beautiful white dress, she would have been about seven or eight at the time, and she had this lovely party, but it wasn't her birthday and I remember we were all sort of saying oh what do we have to do to get this dress and get, and she had a new name, she had her new communion name, and we were just like, oh this is fantastic, but it's, you know, like, going home to my mum and saying I want to have one of those, you know, and, but no, I didn't know enough Catholics at all and I think it would have been much better if I had and that's why I would be a very pro fully integrated education and, yeah, I, I, I hate the way that we were, we were in a tribe and forced to stick to that tribe, I hate that.

FR: The segregation which is–

TB: Well, it was segregation, you probably went to a Catholic school, did you?

FR: I'm a Protestant actually.

TB: Oh are you.

FR: Despite my name, so I went to a Protestant, well, I went to a state grammar school, which was effectively Protestant.

TB: Yeah, was it big rugby pla-, wasn't Ballyme-, yeah.

FR: It was a big, it was a big rugby place, yeah.

TB: Yeah.

FR: I didn't know that I was [indecipherable]–

TB: I think I remember that, yeah, that's funny.

FR: Yeah, Ballymena Academy, yeah, what was I going to say, but would you think of yourself as Irish or British, cos you were saying a united Ireland–?

TB: I just don't get, I'm not honestly, if anyone said to me, in fact, if I fill something out I say Northern Irish, which isn't an option on lots of things, so I just cross it out and say Northern Irish, cos I don't really know what I am, I mean, I mean, I've got my Irish passport application, I'm really razzed off with all these people who are applying who've got no, who've never even been to Ireland, and my children have got theirs, but I actually, with the first Iraq war, I remember with Tony Blair, just saying to my husband God that's it, we've got to get, we've got to get Irish passports, I'm just ashamed, I'm completely ashamed of having this British passport [pauses]. People get, people, I can understand, people just get so hung up about it don't they, about what your, yeah, I would just say Northern Irish, I think that's, that's the, that's what I am really, and I'll travel on a British passport, Irish passport, I don't really care, you know, as long as I have a passport.

FR: Yeah, there's a kind of pragmatic aspect to it.

TB: Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. How about you?

FR: I have got an Irish and a British passport. I had an Irish passport when I was a kid, and then I didn't have one for a long time, and I just recently got one for Brexit. My partner's French, so I wanted to make sure that I always have the capacity to live in France–

TB: Of course, of course.

FR: If I ever want to.

TB: Of course. We actually had, we have a friend who's adopted and we'd been saying to him for ages, he hadn't wanted to trace his birth mother and we, my girlfriend **[01:20:00]** and I had been saying to him oh look, she was probably Irish, you've got to, you've got to do it to get your, you've got to do it to get your passport, anyway he did trace her, sadly she wasn't Irish, but [laughs] anyway, but that was his, that was his main motivation, yeah.

FR: [laughs] It's worth a try. So I've got, I think I've got two more questions and then just see if there's anything more that you want to talk about. So you mentioned the Iraq war, have you been involved in politics at all since you've been living in England or have you got any kind of political, I suppose I was thinking that you mentioned your mother's, didn't, not having any causes.

TB: No, but I [pauses], I can't really, there's something I can't really talk about, but–

FR: That's, that's, that's no problem. Don't, don't, don't feel, that's fine.

TB: Well, there's something I feel quite passionate about actually [voice wavers; pauses]. I had a friend who killed herself recently [voice wavers], who I helped to look after, who, funnily enough I went to school with her in Loughborough and she was, she lived here and she was a teacher and she was the most amazing woman [pauses], and she became very, very mentally ill and I just looked after her with three of her teaching friends for about four or five years, and we had a lot of interaction with social services, with psych wards, with, oh she ended up, up in front of the magistrates a lot, a lot, anyway, she was very, very badly let down by, by mental health provision in this country, which is just shockingly lax, and subsequently, it was one of the last times I saw her, she was at Tolworth Hospital which is acute psych ward and she was brilliant, she was a literacy specialist, and she was really ill at this point and she was just so bored and so all she did was think about her life and what was happening, she was my age, so this is recent, this is about a year and a half ago, and she had nothing to read, and I went up to the ward manager and I said Georgia hasn't got anything to read, she needs something to read, and he said oh yeah, we've got some magazines, I said, no, no, no, I said she needs books, she needs *War and Peace*, she needs, you know, the Brontës, she needs this, she needs that, anyway [pauses], she killed herself about a week after that and we had the inquest, which we were all very involved with, and we then set up, and I'm proud that we've done this, and it was my idea and I'm proud of this, we set up reading stations on her ward, so that all the patients now, regardless of their reading ability, have books, they had no books, so they had bookshelves with no books, anyway, they had an inspection, I suppose it's like an Ofsted inspection, and they got extra marks for having these books, so that's something I do, is to keep the books on the ward.

FR: That's a, that's a wonderful thing to do. I'm sorry, that's really difficult.

TB: And like, really like, good quality books, so we don't, you know, and the other thing about that is when you're, if you go in under section you go in in the clothes you're standing up in, you don't have any possessions, you have to wear the clothes that are on the ward, so you wear clothes that don't fit you, you might wear jeans that are men's jeans that are kind of like, falling down, you have nothing. But if you have a book, even if you can't read and

you like the cover you can pick that book up, and you can take it and you can, they're allowed to keep all the books, we just say keep the books, we say to the staff keep the books, it's your book, but they can pick up a book and they can just look at it and it's, and they have something, they own something.

FR: Something that's, it's yours [pauses]. No, that, thank you for telling me about that, I'm sorry, that sounds like a really important thing to, to do.

TB: Yeah, that was, that was, that was hard, and actually that friend came to Northern Ireland with me, she came after our A-levels, we went cycling in the South and then went up to the North and she met all my family and my granny and kind of, yeah, and in fact, when she was ill I used to always say oh Georgia, you know, I'm going to take you back to Ireland and in fact, she had had, she'd been at, she'd been at an addiction place, in therapy, and it hadn't worked, and I had found somewhere for her to go in Wexford, and I thought if I can get you to Ireland I'll fix you, you know, but we never got there.

FR: I'm sorry. I was going to ask one last question, unrelated, you mentioned watching *Derry Girls* [laughs], with your daughters and I'm kind of interested in that like, is that a, is that an occasion to talk to them about Northern Ireland?

TB: Well, they're brilliant actually, so they, my eldest two daughters love history and they were really lucky, they were taught, do you know Marc Mulholland?

FR: I do, yeah, you mentioned him in the email, yes, I do.

TB: Okay, so yeah, so they both did his module and of course they're learning about the Troubles, and they know much more than I do.

FR: [laughs] Which is a strange dynamic.

TB: Yeah, and my eldest daughter was given a grant to do, cos they both did extended essays on the Troubles and various aspects of the Troubles, she was given a grant to go to Derry and to go to Northern Ireland and so we went, oh I don't know, what, a few years ago, and that was brilliant, yeah, they're endlessly curious about it and in fact, my, I mentioned that my middle daughter went last year to Trinity to do a master's in modern Irish history, yeah, so I think that, I think that is kind of because I have always talked about it and I have, I've always expressed huge gratitude for, for having lived there and, you know, family and everything, so I think they've always kind of, that's just always been part of their lives really.

FR: It's really interesting that they would study the history of the Troubles, specifically.

TB: Yeah, in fact, I'll show you when we've finished, my daughter's just given me a book to read which is *Say Noth-*, *Hear Nothing or Say Nothing* or–

FR: Ah Patrick, Patrick Radden O'Keefe.

TB: Could be, yeah, they remem, they've got every book, they've got, you know, yeah, so they, they, and they would be like me, they would want, you know, they would say yeah, united Ireland definitely, and in fact, my middle daughter did think about staying on in Dublin and still says, you know, I might go mum, I might, and they go to Dublin, in fact, last weekend Imogen was there for the weekend, she and her friends, they go all the time to Dublin for a weekend, that's their kind of, say, where do you want to go for the weekend, oh we'll go to Dublin.

FR: Yeah, it's a great city, isn't it, to go out in.

TB: So that's what they do.

FR: Okay, I think that's probably everything, but before we finish, there's two questions, so first of all, is there anything that you haven't talked about that, that–?

TB: I think, the other thing I think would be quite interesting for you is, especially for my mother's generation, I know at one point that she was given tranquillisers and I know that was all to do with the stress of the Troubles, and that does make me cross cos I think there should have been [pauses], there should have been space for people to talk about stress that they were going through. I do feel quite bitter about that cos my mother ended up with a chronic drinking problem and I'm sure that was all linked to that.

FR: There's, I've read something about the use of Valium in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, and this very heavily, especially, I mean, I think it was gendered, the way that Valium was used in England as well, but, a very heavily gendered usage of those kind of tranquillisers.

TB: I just think it shut the women up, you know, just give them tranquillisers, just, you know, shut them up, keep them quiet, you know [pauses], and then I think, yeah, I just think people need to, people should be able to talk about, about what happened more than they, I mean, my, my mother's dead, but her sisters, you know, they, you wouldn't, they wouldn't want to talk about it, wouldn't be, it'd be like, it's like, no, we'll just, we're just not going to, we'll just shut that off, shut that off and not, not talk about it and that, I think that's why I couldn't live in Northern Ireland because, that's a cultural, is that a cultural thing?

FR: I guess it's historically grounded or is to do, it's to do with the Troubles to some extent.

TB: Is it, I don't know.

FR: I don't know [laughs], I don't know either, but yeah, I know what you mean, a kind of a, an unwillingness to–

TB: Yeah, I mean, I'm not saying I want to emote all the time, but, you know, it's an odd, it's an odd, my husband always says, you know, if we go, he said oh God, you know, set your watch back by fifty years, here we go.

FR: It's interesting because people talk about English reserve and a certain kind of like, withholding, for instance, my French partner would think of English people as quite reserved, but there's also a kind of–

TB: God, well, I think that, I think a certain category of Northern Irish person is in a league of their own really, definitely, I think and talking, thinking about school, another horrendous memory I've got is that there was a girl who was a boarder who went off and was killed one weekend in a, **[01:30:00]** I don't know, water-skiing accident, something.

FR: Oh okay, not a conflict-related situation.

TB: No, but there were girls, there was a girl who answered the front door in Finaghy who'd been at Princess Gardens who was just shot dead on the doorstep, and there were girls who, there was someone who was shot in Finaghy, was he an MP, and they were there at the time, anyway, going back to this girl who was killed and when you're at boarding school, this sounds really stupid, but your bed is really important and it was like, military style, you had to do your hospital corners, you had your bedspread and you had your teddy, this, that and the other, and your bed was your bed kind of thing, and she wasn't in my dorm, she was older than me, but she was killed and those poor girls had to go back into that dorm, no one talked to them and said this is dreadful, this is what's happened, and that girl's bed was just left until it was the next changeover time with the teddy bear on it and the–

FR: That's horrible.

TB: Yeah.

FR: It sounds, boarding school sounds really [laughs], very unpleasant.

TB: I'm glad I've put you off [laughs], yeah, but that was my experience, you know, and my sister would say something different, she had a different year group, she had a different experience, but that was my experience and I just absolutely hated it, and also when you're at boarding school you never get any time on your own, you're always with people, all the time, and that is suffocating.

FR: And then the final question that we've been asking everyone, and I still haven't really found a form for this question that I'm happy with, but it's something like, kind of looking back on leaving Northern Ireland and the sort of trajectory of your life since leaving Northern Ireland, are there any kind of moments or images or periods or things that seem to you to be especially important or especially vivid or especially–?

TB: [pauses] In what way?

FR: Just kind of, that are like, central, that–

TB: [pauses] Yeah, getting married was because I had the most fantastic, I remember the minister coming and saying, making it very, very personal and saying this isn't about your dress, this isn't about a party, this isn't about, you know, this is literally about these

marriage vows and talking us through the vows beforehand and saying to me do you want to say this, do you want to say that, and then saying, giving us a Bible and saying love keeps no record of wrongs and kind of, he made that very special. Oh and I do remember, this is the other thing is, so we hadn't, bearing in mind that we were living in England and we had to get married by a special licence, all the choir turned up to sing, which was incredible, and the organist and everything, and I'm really grateful for that. What other things, getting confirmed I remember, by Robin Eames, and then I remember being quite proud of him afterwards cos he always seemed to be quite moderate, if I read about him in the paper, so he was Archbishop, Church of Ireland, and he always seemed to be, you know, quite progressive, I don't know whether that's the, I don't know whether I'm right in thinking that or not, but that's how it always seemed to me, and what other things, I do remember being scared, I remember doing Duke of Edinburgh and being taken by a local policewoman, she took us to a court and, and we went to Castlereagh and stuff, and I remember, yeah, and I also remember doing Duke of Edinburgh, and in the Mourne Mountains, and I seem to remember we had soldiers who were ta-, who were taking us, doing this expedition and I ended up with a tick in my stomach and I remember saying to the other girls, going oh look at this like, the funny tick, and I remember the soldier immediately knowing what it was and just going chunk-chunk and getting the tick out and just thinking oh thank God there was a soldier to hand, you know, kind of things like that. What other things [extended pause], yeah, that, that, that train bomb I do remember because that was just so awful, and his sister went to the, went to Princess Gardens and that was just terrible, he was just, what, fifteen or something, that was just shocking, and now you're a parent yourself you think how on earth did those parents keep going, how did they, how did they keep going.

FR: And I suppose having to send their kids along the same line.

TB: I know, I know, I don't know, and we had other family friends, it's really sad, he got shot, he was killed and I, you know, so he never got to see his grandchildren and I think that's just such a terrible thing and, yeah, I, there are things where you just feel huge sadness and sympathy for people, definitely.

FR: Shot by the IRA?

TB: Yeah, yeah, he sold, I think he had a builders' merchants and they probably supplied stuff that got, went to head barracks or something and therefore you're, yeah.

FR: A legitimate target, that's what they'd say.

TB: Yeah, yeah, so I think, I think, I took the children to *Titanic* museum and thought this is all, this is all really exciting for them to see this and you just hope, you just hope that it stays calm and I, but I do, I really worry about Brexit for sure, I do worry and I think, I think the Conservatives have been very unfair on Northern Ireland and not had it top of mind and not understood, Boris Johnson not understanding the politics of the place and I think that's bad when you're prime minister.

FR: And being like, deeply uninterested in the politics of the peace, yeah.

TB: Yeah, yeah, and really not understanding, and respecting it actually.

FR: Yes, it's worrying.

TB: Yeah.

FR: Okay, I think that's it, that's everything from me, thank you so much.

TB: A pleasure.

FR: It was really, really interesting and I appreciate it. Now I just turn this off [laughs], it's the wrong mic [laughs].

TB: Did it record? [laughs]

INTERVIEW ENDS