

G05-SG1: VALERIE KERR INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Valerie Kerr [pseudonym]
Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interview summarisers: Dr Jack Crangle and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single audio file with no section breaks

G05-SG1: Valerie Kerr	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 01:14:44	Duration: 01:14:44	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in 1964 in Helensburgh, Scotland and grew up in Clydebank, which she describes as a 'quite an industrial town' that was dominated by the shipyards and the Singer machine factory. Her Presbyterian father, who 'had no Irish connections at all', was an engineer in the Goodyear tyre factory in Drumchapel. Her Catholic mother was raised in Cushendall, Co. Antrim and moved to Clydebank in the early 1950s, where she worked in various jobs, but was 'mostly a housewife'. Notes that her mother's friends were drawn primarily from Clydebank's large Irish community. Valerie attended a local Catholic primary school in Clydebank and had a sizeable extended family of cousins in the area.			
10:00–19:59	Explains that her parents met shortly after her mother moved to Scotland and married in 1954. Says that such 'mixed' marriages were uncommon at the time. Valerie found Catholicism quite tedious when young and stopped attending mass as a teenager. Notes that sectarianism in the west of Scotland was mainly 'focused around football'. Says that her father supported Clydebank, a non-sectarian team, and 'purposefully avoided' involvement in sectarian disputes. Her mother and aunt, who also lived in the area, talked a lot about NI, but rarely mentioned the political conflict.			
20:00–29:59	States that her mother referred to NI as home all through her life. Explains that her family spent most summer holidays in rural Antrim when Valerie was young and rarely ventured into Belfast. Recalls socialising with her cousins and enjoying the 'free and wild' environment that contrasted sharply with the industrial setting of Clydebank. Says that her family suspended visits to NI for a decade during the worst years of the Troubles. Recalls being stopped and questioned by armed men at a roadblock during one visit to Cushendall.			
30:00–39:59	Believes that her mother, who experienced anti-Irish discrimination while working in 1950s Glasgow, wished to keep her Irishness 'low key' in Scotland, being wary of any potential association with the Troubles. Says the NI conflict was not discussed at school, even though her schooling was occasionally disrupted by hoax bomb threats. After leaving school, Valerie trained for two years to become a qualified dental nurse in Glasgow. Says that she has never been tempted to leave Scotland, feeling a certain responsibility to remain close to her parents. Thinks that her mother had no desire to move back to NI.			
40:00–49:59	Says that her father would have been keen to move the family to NI, but her mother was unwilling, possibly due to the Troubles. Participation in Irish cultural activities was not a priority for her parents, so Valerie never played Gaelic sports. However, she thinks her Irish Catholic background has subconsciously influenced her parenting of her two daughters, the eldest of whom has a 'strong connection' to her Irish identity. Her younger daughter is less interested in Irish culture, but both have visited NI on numerous occasions, and one is currently attempting to obtain an Irish passport.			

50:00–59:59	Describes visiting Belfast for the first time with a friend during her twenties, a trip that made her mother ‘exceptionally nervous’. Remembers 1980s Belfast as ‘lovely’ and did not encounter many traces of the conflict. Believes that people from the west of Scotland are generally well informed about the roots of sectarianism and the NI conflict. Describes the Glasgow marching season as a ‘difficult time’ during her upbringing and a cause of ‘huge nervousness’, adding that her family would stay indoors to avoid potential trouble.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Reveals that her husband, whom she met at a local dance, is from a Protestant background and that they had a Church of Scotland marriage ceremony. Says that he was apprehensive about how his family would react to his dating and marrying a Catholic. Explains that neither she nor her mother held strong opinions on the politics or constitutional status of NI. Valerie is similarly uninterested in Scottish politics, describing herself as a ‘floating voter’. She continues to visit NI, primarily to see her only surviving aunt, who is now in her nineties. Believes that NI is more affluent than it was during her childhood and regards Cushendall as a ‘beautiful’, ‘picture box’ village.
01:10:00–01:14:44	Describes her most recent visit to Belfast, which included a trip to the Titanic museum. Concludes that the city is now ‘really smart’, but notes that employment is still more difficult to find there than elsewhere in the UK.