INTERVIEW L15: KEVIN DONNELLY

Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interviewee: Kevin Donnelly [pseudonym]
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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: So first of all, thanks very much for agreeing to take part, and if you could just start us off by saying today's date.

KD: The tenth of March.

FR: I had to check there actually that it's the [laughs], it's tenth of March. Okay, so as I said the first sort of bit we're going to talk about your childhood, about growing up in Northern Ireland, so the first question I guess is where were you born?

KD: I was born in Derry in 1955. I was born in a road, street called Tyrconnell Street, which was in the heart of the Bogside, off, yeah, the heart of Bogside. I lived there for the first five or six years then I moved to, my parents moved to Bishop Street, which again is now classified as being in the Bogside, but in those days it's a wee bit in the, the edge of the Bogside. What else about it, I mean, I, Derry was a wonderful place, wonderfully, it's a wonderfully holding place when I was growing up, yeah. I went to a school called the Long Tower which was attached to St Columb's, St Columba's church, but again, it's very much rooted in the Bogside, and then I done the eleven-plus, so I went on to St Columb's College, actually the house my parents bought was next door to St Columb's College. So St Columb's College was a completely different beast from the Long Tower, it was almost as if there was this, it was, well, I mean, Long, when I went to the Long Tower, Bishop Street in the Bogside, it was very much a working-class, was a very working-class area, everybody knew each other, everybody knew each other's mothers, and teachers knew your mother, your father and there was a sort of a mutuality which was, you know, very obvious, you know, teachers used to send you out for a pound of mince for the mother who lived down in the Stanley's Walk and things like that [laughs]. It was very, very, it was almost like a, it was almost like something out of one of Seamus Heaney's poems, you know what I mean, it was very, very, very straight, very simple, very simple, but there was a lot of poverty, a lot of poverty, and although you didn't, I didn't, I didn't, my family weren't rich, but they weren't particularly, they weren't poor either.

FR: What did they do, your, your parents?

KD: My father was a coalman, so he had a coal business, basically he delivered coal around people, people's houses in, mostly in the Bogside, but also in the Creggan, Rosemount and in the Waterside, so he delivered all over, all over, and he had a certain number of people he went to every week, it was a bit like a sort of a, I guess a tick merchant, people couldn't afford, you know, to buy large bags of, large amounts of fuel, so they bought a bag every week and that's what he did. He was called the bellman, I think it was a, it was the title, a Derry title for it, so he drew the coal from, from like, down the quay and then went round and sold it, so that was it. I had a family, I was the eldest of seven. I think circumstances were such that we also lived with my granny and my great-aunt, so there was eleven of us in the house, and the circumstances were such, my mother and father didn't have the money when they were married to buy a house of their own, so they lived with my granny who was widowed and then she moved with them whenever they, whenever they moved to from Tyrconnell Street to Bishop Street, yeah.

FR: So eleven of yous in the house?

KD: It's eleven of us in the house, aye, it was, it was one of the reasons for leaving Northern Ireland [laughs].

FR: A bit more space.

KD: A bit more space, yeah, one of the reasons for getting out of your, getting out on your own, you know, or certainly one of the reasons for leaving Derry anyway, so yeah, that was, that was, that was it. I mean, I, I say Derry was a very, up until, I would say yeah, for up until, you know, '69, '70, Derry was a very holding place to be, then obviously the Troubles started, you know, people I, people I knew, you know, as we went through secondary school, for various reasons got involved with the IRA, got, ended up in the Kesh doing time and stuff like that. I wasn't necessarily drawn, I was, oh yeah, I'm not going to say I wasn't drawn to it, I was drawn to it in the sense of street disorders, but I suppose the idea of killing somebody was something that I, I just couldn't handle, you know, and I suppose there was an element of seeing people around you, I mean, I'm not a, there's two things sort of like, if you like, prompted decisions to leave, well, a number of things, but one of the sort of notion that if you didn't leave then you ended up, you could end up in a very sad and depressed place I think, sad and depressed because Northern Ireland to me in '70, in the early seventies, was sort of closing down, you know, the ideas of expressing yourself in other ways, you know, the way you expressed yourself, the community that I grew up, is by joining the IRA, that's how you expressed yourself, and your gateway to manhood was doing time in the Long Kesh, so that was very simple, that's how you expressed yourself, a lot of people expressed themselves like that, either that, or you sort of ended up becoming a teacher or a lawyer or sticking within Derry's middle-class and again, that wasn't necessarily where I wanted to go. I must say as well I also found like, you know, I say, I've got very happy memories of the primary school and some happy memories of the secondary school, but by and large I think there was a sort of rural-city conflict within the secondary school.

FR: That's interesting, where you would have been in the city–

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I mean, there was a sort of hierarchy cos it was a boarding school.

FR: I see,

KD: So there was boarders come, it was a diocesan boarding school, so boarders came from the diocese which was down as far as south Derry, Bellaghy and places like that.

FR: I see, yeah, okay.

KD: And Tyrone and they were sort of, I suppose to some extent they were regarded, I mean, you'll pick this up in Eamonn McCann's books and writings and stuff like that, they were regarded as being, you know, the people who taught you were overwhelmingly priests or, well, a lot of them were priests, not maybe overwhelming, a lot of them were priests, who came from that similar background and they saw, they saw those, that sort of culture as being more akin to their own, whereas city boys were looked down on, you know, a wee bit.

FR: And is there a kind of a class thing there or is it–?

KD: It wasn't, there was cert-, it wasn't, I wouldn't say it was, it wasn't class in the sort of, you know, this class and that class, cos, I mean, classes overlapped, you know what I mean, cos there was, there was middle-class people from Derry who joined the IRA, you know [laughs], and doctors' sons and teachers' sons and people like that, so it wasn't, it wasn't, wasn't sort of class, it was much more a, it was probably a cultural split.

FR: Culture, aye, okay, I see what you mean, so like, a rural culture or–

KD: Yeah, rural culture as opposed to an urban culture, and the rural culture, yeah, and, yeah, so.

FR: So it sounds like you remember the beginning of the Troubles in Derry quite, quite vividly. What age would you have been?

KD: Sorry?

FR: What age would you have been?

KD: I can remember the day the Troubles started, October the fifth, I was at the Brandywell.

FR: Oh watching the football?

KD: Watching the football, along with Raymond McCartney who was, is a Sinn Féin MLA now, or had been a Sinn Féin MLA, and a hunger striker.

FR: Aye, I know the name.

KD: And me and him used to go to football matches together, and I remember walking away from the Brandywell with him and we hear these people say they're beating the students up

on the bridge, they're over in the Waterside, now Raymond's life took a different turn a couple of years later, but we were walking away from Brandywell, I think, who were we playing, we were playing, maybe playing Coleraine actually [laughs].

FR: I, I, I used to go and watch Coleraine play, so I did, aye.

KD: So yeah, it was around then, sixty, it was '68, hearing boys walking down the street saying, you know, if I had a gun I'd have killed the, I would, if I had a gun I would kill those RUC, other boys saying to them oh could you really do that, but anyway, that was what was going on at the time, '68 then, obviously '69, there was the Battle of the Bogside and there were civil rights marches and big civil rights marches in '68, '69 and then in '69 **[00:10:00]** there was excitement about the no-go area, and a bit of, a bit of, yeah, I mean, I suppose it was a, people were sussing each other out, I think the, when the soldiers came in, the army came in, people were sort of like, sussing out the army, who are they, what are they like, yeah, and then, you know, the community started to separate, not the community started to separate, the army and the people of the Bogside started to separate–

FR: Well, the sort of story–

KD: And a barricade went up along the Fountain, cos where my, where I was brought up in Bishop Street had been quite mixed.

FR: Mixed Protestant and Catholic?

KD: Yeah, mixed Protestant, Catholic, reasonably mixed, I wouldn't say overwhelming, I mean, the further you went into the Bogside the more Catholic it was obviously, but that area round the Dark Lane, and if your father's from Derry he'll probably remember the Dark Lane and Charlotte Street and Barrack Street and stuff like that, it's now overwhelmingly, well, it's not, now all Catholic, but in those days it was quite mixed, but eventually, I mean, gradually, not eventually, gradually, quite rapidly in fact, people were, quite rapid, yeah, probably not even gradually, quite rapidly people evacuated from that area over to the Waterside, people that you grew up with. I remember growing up and we'd be out playing in the street and come the sort of beginning of July you'd be playing with Protestants, you know, and people who had yeah, Protestant names and stuff like that and, you know, you would play out the street with them and then, come beginning of July, it was always as if separation occurred.

FR: This sudden change as you came up to the Twelfth–

KD: Well, it was a sudden, a sudden change, sudden change, we'd play cricket with them down the back lane, yeah, and stuff like that, played football and–

FR: But still a wee bit of a sense, I mean, even the fact that you're able to say a Protestant name, there's still a kind of a sense of a difference.

KD: It's funny like, you say that about Protestant names, I can remember having a, and when the Troubles sort of got going in Derry, I remember one of the priests who was a sort of like,

from east Tyrone or somewhere like that, you know, one of those type of people, always explain to you every-, he said could you distinguish between Catholics and Protestants, and we were, and he asked us this and he asked us that in the class and us saying yeah, we can, you know, we know what a Protestant looks like, or we know what a Catholic, a Catholic sounds like and stuff like that, so there was that sort of, those sort, even though we were mixed there was those nuances of difference, you know, and that was, yeah, it was, I would say there were nuances of difference, they weren't physical, you know, like, in this like, you know, you have people who are mixed race or black or whatever, you can see physically there's a separation, yeah, in a sense, but in, you didn't have those physical differences, but you had little nuances which were, yeah, which stayed with you in a sense, you know, I wouldn't recognise it now, but, I mean, at the time it was certainly was something that you recognised.

FR: Yeah, I understand that, and so what about, would you, would your parents have been political at all, did you have any sense of–?

KD: Not really, I mean, my dad voted for McCann, my ma, she's still alive, she's SDLP. They might've voted for what they used to call Eddie Half-a-loaf, Eddie McAteer.

FR: Eddie McAteer [laughs].

KD: Yeah [laughs], so they weren't, they weren't, they weren't, no, they weren't political, they were politically aware of what was going on and they didn't like the state that they were brought up on, they didn't like the state that they were brou-, it wasn't that, there was a sort of a very minor republican activity in the background, but nothing, nothing, nothing significant, you know, it was minor republican activity on my mother's side and there was actually British Army battle, First World War on my father's side and stuff like that, so there was, there was, there was, there were those, you know, those, those histories, they weren't, and most of the people around where I, my experiences of growing up, they weren't, they weren't political, they didn't like what was, they didn't, I mean, the resentment towards the soldiers set in quite quickly, and that was what, that was what divided people, and the resentment I think, I was thinking about it the other day before, before you came over, I mean, some of the resentments were quite strange, it wasn't necessarily, you know, what, there's a bit of a mythology I suppose of, you know, the army started raiding and everything, we started resisting, in fact, what surfaced, it was dancehall punch-ups.

FR: That's interesting.

KD: In the Embassy, in the Strand Road on a Sunday night in Derry, and afterwards boys stepping out and started throwing stones at the soldiers, it was dancehall punch-ups which started, which were one of the, I wouldn't say it was the sole trigger point, but it was one of the trigger points to the Troubles in Derry, which kicked off I would say in the early seventies.

FR: That's, that's really interesting, it's kind of the soldiers outstaying their welcome just on a kind of a personal, in a more personal sense, in a more intimate sense, just–

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, which is why the soldier dolls thing, the whole thing about soldier dolls and tarring and feathering women who went out with soldiers, that became, that was sort of one of the things you see very quickly happening in Derry, young women being dragged out of the houses, tied to a lamp post and tarred and feathered and stuff like that.

FR: Do you remember that happening?

KD: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I do, yeah, yeah, and, you know, it was partly bec-, it was, there was partly, it was, it was partly that sort of, you know, yeah, resentment of, these boys would come in and they're taking our women.

FR: That's really interesting, I know a wee bit about tarring and feathering, but–

KD: About tarring and feathering?

FR: Yeah, a bit about it, yeah, and you remember sort of street violence then as well?

KD: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I do remember street violence, yeah, yeah, I remember the no-go areas and the no-go areas and people, you know, you'd see [laughs], you'd see people that, yeah, there's a mask on and, and you'd think to yourself [laughs], I fucking know who you are [laughs], there's so many stories like that, you know what I mean, there is so many stories like that, and they would say oh go on there, and they would call you by your name, you know what I mean, and you'd recognise your voice and stuff like that, you know, it was like, it was, there was a certain intimacy involved in it all, you know, there was a certain intimacy, you knew what they were doing, you knew who they were doing, yeah, it wasn't sort of secretive, the no-go area wasn't secretive.

FR: It must be quite strange to see almost overnight that shift, so you talked about your man who you were at the football with, for instance, and as you said within two or three years–

KD: He'd, he was, he was in the Kesh, yeah, yeah.

FR: It must be strange to see that change, people wearing masks and–

KD: He didn't, I didn't, I didn't, I suppose I didn't recognise it at the time. I didn't because it was, I suppose at the time there was so much going on in Derry, we thought Derry was the centre of the world, and that was, I suppose that was the other thing which, you know, which was reinforced when I came over here to some extent, but, I mean, you did think about us being the centre of the world because it was in the news so frequently, so you never thought, you didn't think it was strange, you just thought it was normal that people that you knew were doing the things that they did, I suppose a couple, I mean, obviously Bloody Sunday was a major, a major, major change in Derry and, you know, that film that your man from Liverpool done, whatever, about Bloody Sunday and a guy, you know, it was a very true reflection of what had happened and people's mood changing, and often I thought myself about joining the IRA, I'm not really sort of going to deny that.

FR: Are you living, are you still living in Derry when Bloody Sunday–?

KD: Oh we still were, I was still, yeah, it was ’72 and I didn’t leave till ’73, so I was, you know, you were asked to do certain things which were on the fringes, right, not necessarily, you weren’t, you were asked to do certain things which were on the fringes, that’s probably the best way of putting it.

FR: Well, it makes sense as you say, it’s quite a small area, there’s this kind of intimacy.

KD: Well, people that you knew, you know, simple thing like, somebody would be scouting for an attack and you’d be standing at the corner with your mates, and you were meant to tell them what was going on, do you know what I mean, it was simple things like that or, you know, people were taking packages and stuff like that around, you know what I mean, so it wasn’t anything, it wasn’t anything, it wasn’t anything big, but it was just a step away from, you know, well, here’s a gun, go and do something, or here’s a bomb, go and blow up, you know what I mean, and it was at, that was the point where you, where I felt I couldn’t–

FR: Quite make that leap.

KD: I couldn’t make that jump, couldn’t make that leap, no. It’s partly to do, because of the fact that, maybe it was, maybe my mum and dad were quite religious.

FR: Were they, okay.

KD: Yeah, yeah, they were quite religious, and I’m an atheist now partly as a result of being brought up frigging [laughs], partly as a result of being overly, overly, overly Catholicised, but–

FR: So would you have been going to church quite a lot then?

KD: Yeah, I was, cos I was **[00:20:00]** an altar boy and all the rest of it.

FR: Oh okay, okay.

KD: Yeah, yeah, so that was part of the, that was part of that through, that was part of the thing that held me back, to be honest with you, yeah.

FR: So you would still have had a sort of a faith then, which would have prevented you from–?

KD: So, a?

FR: A faith, when you were that age.

KD: Sorry, beg your pardon?

FR: A faith.

KD: Yeah.

FR: You believed in God.

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, so that held me back a little bit and a fear of, I suppose there was a, a fear of hurting people, was my, yeah.

FR: No, I can understand that, and so what age were you when you started to think about leaving?

KD: [pauses] I was, suppose it wasn't really until I was in my last year at, at secondary school that it started to sort of form in any shape, I mean, I think it was always a, there was always a feeling that if I, if I passed my A-levels I would get out to Dublin or something like that, but I suppose the other thing is Derry, it was, it was two things sort of happened for me personally. One was the sort of, the, your own choices about getting out and doing something else, and then there was the fact that Derry was closing down in a sense, you know, come, I mean, there was Operation Motorman in '72 when, you know, the army came in and occupied, came and occupied the Bogside and the Creggan and stuff like that.

FR: So it's the kind of the end of the no-go area.

KD: The end of the no-, oh, so it was a bit of a, it was the end of the romance, the romant-, what I would call the romantic period.

FR: Aye, it's interesting, I think that's an interesting idea, the kind of romance of that period, I've heard other people talk about that.

KD: There was a lot of romance around in that period, we're free, we run our own thing, it was very–

FR: The kind of little local radio stations and things like that.

KD: Radio Free Derry, and everybody was listening to Radio Free Derry, and you'd go down to the border, you wouldn't, you wouldn't socialise in Derry, you would socialise across the border in Borderland and everybody was talking about what was going on in Derry, and you thought you were at the centre of everything, this thing about thinking you were at the centre of everything, the, that romance, it was very romantic, and people, if you went to other parts of Ireland, if you went down the Gaeltacht or you went in Donegal, people'd say oh you're from Derry, oh yeah, what's the, yeah, so people, it was, there was a sort of a lot of bigging up the place, you know what I mean, which was probably, well, it was good for your ego, but I'm not sure how, about anything else really, you know.

FR: And would you have done that quite often, going across the border to–?

KD: Well, Derry was only three miles from the border, so, I mean, Buncrana was thirteen miles, twelve, thirteen miles, spent a lot of time in Buncrana, or we didn't, I mean, I was saying to you about, you know, the, there was a dancehall called the Embassy in Der-, the

Embassy in Derry, in the Strand Road where the, the initial trouble between the soldiers and locals started off on a Sunday night, beating people, you know, fist fights, but then after that people'd say we're not going the Em-, we're not going to the Embassy anymore, we're all going across the border, so we all went down to Borderland in Muff–

FR: Oh yeah.

KD: Which was like, three miles, four miles, from the centre of town, you know, so in that sense Derry had a, had that sort of release valve, pressure point, release valve.

FR: So was there a dancehall in Muff?

KD: Yeah, it was called the Borderland, have you ever been to Muff?

FR: I, my, my parents have got a holiday house in Culdaff–

KD: Ah okay.

FR: And we would drive through Muff to get there, but I've only ever driven, it's got three petrol stations in it, you know, I didn't–

KD: Well, Muff in those, Muff, Muff now is now like a sort of a, I suppose it's a suburb of Derry really, I think that even the buses from Derry go down to Muff, but if you go through Muff on the left-hand side is a thing called the Borderland Stores, and that used to be the, that was the ballroom of our romance in the early seventies [laughs], yeah.

FR: That's interesting, I suppose it's a, you, it's an all-boys' school, isn't it, at St Columb's, so.

KD: St Columb's was an all-boys' school, which was another reason for getting out of Derry because the whole sort of like, sexual, gender thing was very split, everything seemed to be very split in Derry.

FR: In terms of like, who you met and what you did, yous–

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, you know, you didn't grow up until you were seventeen, eighteen, or, you know, you didn't sort of, there wasn't any natural development, it was almost like, sudden, you know, yeah.

FR: And, so I've lost my train of thought now [laughs], what were we saying, so you, around that age then, seventeen, eighteen, you started to think about the possibility of leaving.

KD: I did. I mean, initially I wanted to go down to, to Dublin, down to Trinity, and I suppose [sighs], I suppose it was a lot of sort of personal things which meant I wanted to get away from Ireland as much as possible. I was quite angry with Ireland I suppose, I was quite angry with the way things had turned out. I also had a row with a couple of IRA men, and it was a wee bit, one of those situations, I wasn't expelled or anything like that, but it was one of those situations where [pauses], I was, I was done over by them.

FR: Done over as in beaten up?

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, and that was the end of it, but it sort of left a bad taste in my mouth really.

FR: I don't know if you want to talk about how that came about, but you don't have to, I'm asking, but you don't have to.

KD: It was somebody that I knew who was an operator and I bad-mouthed him basically, yeah, and he got his mates to teach me a lesson, which is fair enough in retrospect, well, partly fair enough in retrospect [laughs].

FR: I'm not sure [laughs], I'm not sure if it is fair enough, but.

KD: Yeah, I bad-mouthed him, I had bad-mouthed him to another IRA man.

FR: I see.

KD: Right, and this other IRA man, who I thought was a friend of mine's, the friendship of the IRA transcended, the comradeship of the IRA transcended any friendship, so I had bad-mouthed this guy to this other guy, and this other guy, it was actually, I bad-mouthed a Provo to a Stickie.

FR: Oh right, okay, you, more complicated.

KD: And the Stickie then went back to the Provo.

FR: There you go.

KD: So that, that, that, in a sense, I suppose in retrospect that taught me a bit of a lesson, which was about that comradeship was very, very strong and I was either, you know, that comradeship that they had between them was very, very strong and I didn't want to be necessarily part of that, to be honest.

FR: I guess that's kind of the other side of that intimacy that you were talking about earlier, which is that it can be quite tight, it can be quite a tight net.

KD: Yeah, and that was the, that was the, that was the, I suppose that was the overwhelming feeling that I had about Derry for years, that that intimacy was, if you stepped above a certain li-, if you stepped over a certain line then you were slapped down, and irrespective of what the, what the issue was, yeah, that you were told how to behave, and then sometimes in a gentle way, but sometimes in a quite a bru-, quite a brutal way as well, you know, deviancy wasn't allowed, yeah.

FR: Absolutely, it's that kind of policing of behaviour.

KD: I'm sorry?

FR: That kind of policing of behaviour just, just generally, yeah.

KD: Yeah, yeah, it was, it was, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, and I, you know, if I'm honest about it I don't even think it was like, I don't know or not, well, there was enough of them involved in doing me over for me to think it was actually organised, but it was, that was, it was, you know, it was down in that dancehall I'm talking about.

FR: Oh really?

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, dragged into the toilets one night and gave me a, a doing over, that was it, basically.

FR: You tell your parents?

KD: No, of course not [laughs], it was another world [laughs], it was another world, you know what I mean, it's a bit like, I suppose nowadays you could think of it in terms of, you asked me did I tell my parents, I mean, there's a young lad in Peckham, north Peckham, and he gets slashed in the arm, was he going to go back and tell his ma, when he's stealing down the street, is he going to go back and tell his ma, probably not. **[00:30:00]** It was the same, it was the same, cos you've got to bear in mind that the people who were administering the so-called republican justice were contemporaries of mine, they were same age as me, you know what I mean, it was just, that was the world that you operated in.

FR: No, that makes sense. Would, I was thinking earlier you said you had brothers and sisters, but I can't remember where you were on the, were you older or younger?

KD: I was the oldest.

FR: The oldest.

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: Okay.

KD: My sister got out as well, I've got another sister who's, I'm sixty-four and I have a sister who is sixty-three, and she went to UCD, and she got out to Spain and has been living in Spain more or less since she was about twenty-one, twenty-two, yeah, her story would be interesting, why, bit odd, maybe slightly different from mine's, you know, but anyway.

FR: But your other siblings stayed?

KD: They all live in Derry.

FR: They all live in Derry.

KD: Mmm, mmm, yeah, I think once me and Josephine went, that's my sister, I think my mother sort of says no, no, no, you're not going anywhere [laughs], it was also partly about getting, it was partly about getting out and making room for the other ones, you know, when you've got, you got seven brothers, six brothers and sisters you've got to get out and make room for them, and I guess the expectation–

FR: And did you share a room?

KD: Of course, yeah.

FR: Must've done, aye.

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, you had to get out and make the room, make room for people, you know what I mean, and particularly, you know, when you had your granny and your great-aunt in the house as well, you had to sort of like, you had your own, you needed your own, needed your own space and you needed to be, you needed to be able to express yourself in whatever way you wanted to express yourself, which a sixty, seventy-year-old person doesn't necessarily want to hear, you know.

FR: Yeah, it must–

KD: So there's a lot of, so, so Derry was a romantically, in many respects romantically interesting place to be, but there was these sort of, you know, there was these pressures from the repub-, from republicans, as well as familial, family pressures and stuff like that, which made the place from my point of view quite unhealthy, on top of which, you know, you got stopped. I mean, to be honest with you, I didn't, the stopping and the harassment, I, it was a bit of a joke, it was a bit of a joke cos, I mean, you–

FR: So this is by the, by the army rather than by the cops?

KD: By the army, it was a bit of a joke, I mean, you didn't, they might have duffed you up or might have been a bit nasty to you, but I, personally speaking, didn't, I mean, I got arrested, okay, I got arrested and taken away and interrogated and all that sort of stuff, but you were usually just put into a room and asked a few silly questions and you told them you knew nothing.

FR: But did you get arrested for something or for nothing?

KD: Just lifted, you know, you'd go to–

FR: Just lifted.

KD: A checkpoint, yeah, just lifted, that's what we used to call it, just lifted, you know, screened.

FR: I know, aye, but e-, I mean, even that, it's so casual, as just, just lifted, for nothing, I don't know [laughs].

KD: Yeah, but, I mean, well, well, yeah, you know, and no, I understand and I appreciate the point that you're making, I appreciate the po-, what I'm saying is it, it wasn't as, what I'm saying that, that, I mean, that was something that you didn't, you know, of course you shouldn't, that should not happen to anybody, but it wasn't in itself a reason for, you know, because it wasn't in itself a reason for not, for getting out, do you know what I mean.

FR: I understand you.

KD: I suppose that's a better way of putting it, yeah.

FR: That wasn't your primary kind of–

KD: It wasn't a primary reason, no, no, no, it was a combination of the social and all that sort of stuff.

FR: And it sounds like you still had a kind of a social life at that age despite the kind of–

KD: Oh yeah, we did have a social life, yeah.

FR: Football, dancehalls.

KD: Sorry?

FR: The football–

KD: Yeah, we'd go to football matches, we'd play football, there was dancing across the border if you wanted to go away across, if you wanted to go away for a weekend you usually went away to cross the border or something like that, down to, down to Buncrana. I suppose it, I suppose, you know, we're talking about the various trigger points, from my perspective the various trigger points in terms of growing up were obviously the start of the Troubles in '69, or '68, '69, then Bloody Sunday was a trigger point, but the biggest, bigger trigger point was, was I suppose the Operation Motorman, when the romance of the whole thing disappeared, it became quite, it became quite, sort of like, mundane after that really, you know, the army was in and they weren't going to be, they weren't, they were going to be there forever, you know, and all the stuff that had happened before, like people putting, armed men patrolling areas and riots, you know, I remember going to, taking part in riots and stuff like that and there'd be IRA men there with rifles and they would tell you to go out and throw stones there as a bit of cover for your man there, you know, Martin McGuinness was one of them, you know what I mean, it wasn't, it was, it was very obvious what you were doing and very, it was very, there was a romanticism involved in it, you know, you know, you'd be up in the little Diamond throwing stones at the soldiers up there and, you know, they would fire rubber bullets or CS gas down, and McGuinness would have a couple of guys lined up down there in the ruins of the post office and he would be telling you to go out and, or him, maybe not necessarily him, but other ones would tell you to go out and throw stones to try, to encourage the police to come down, so that the snipers would be set

up to have a pop at them, you know, those sorts of things were done quite regularly, and I was involved with those sort of things quite regularly.

FR: It's interesting because it, it sounds as if you didn't, certainly from when you were saying about being lifted before, it doesn't sound as if you had a lot of animosity in some ways towards the soldiers or the cops.

KD: A lot of an-, did I have a–?

FR: Animosity or do, you know, was it, was there a kind of a–?

KD: We thought we were superior to them, to be honest.

FR: That's interesting.

KD: We thought we were superior to them, we were Irish, we were in their country, we were in our own country, yeah, we thought we were superior to the British Army, not in any military sense or anything like that, but just, you know, we had a greater, we had a greater sense of who we were, whereas the British Army sold-, your individual soldier or squaddie was a nineteen-year-old lad from Blackburn who didn't know why he was there and was probably, you know, as much flabbergasted by everything that was happening around him, whereas we felt we were heroic, not, not, we didn't, I don't, I don't think we were, yeah, I think we, we, yeah, we did, we did, I suppose we did seem that we had a superior mission in what we were doing.

FR: Would you have thought of yourself as a nationalist then?

KD: Okay, I was a nationalist, but my father, I mean, the interesting thing, my father had a, my father's business, it was a coal business, he delivered stuff over in the Waterside.

FR: Aye, you said that earlier.

KD: In the, in sort of Bond Street and King Street and stuff like that, and they were, they were really staunch loyalist areas, I mean, the same, I mean, Jesus, and my father, and I suppose that was another, that was another reason for being a bit, a bit cautious because I was conscious that my father was going into really staunch loyalist areas, at least once, maybe twice a week, and he'd be delivering coal with, he delivered stuff up avenues or up back alleys in these loyalist areas.

FR: And he kept doing that?

KD: And he kept doing it and, you know, there was times when guys appeared with guns and, you know, I was conscious because there's guys that maybe worked with my da who were IRA men and, well, they were IRA men, and they had their ears, they knew, they were a bit, they were streetwise, they were streetwise, they knew what was going on and they would just sort of say to me now keep your profile low, keep your profile low, because the

police will be telling, yeah, yeah, yeah, and if the police tell these guys then, you know, me and your da could be hit someday up back of Bond Street.

FR: Yeah, you're sort of vulnerable.

KD: Sorry? So he was vulnerable, yeah.

FR: So you're sort of vulnerable, right.

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, but my father I suppose from a more personal point, you know, my father, because my father had been brought up in a, in the area that we eventually ended up living in, and my mother still lives in Bishop Street, which as I say at the time was mixed, he had a more, I think he had a more open-minded view of sort of Protestants and stuff like that, he didn't, you know, he, he respected people, he didn't think that they were all over there, you know what I mean, or that they were all sort of like, all, all of, all of an opposite culture or religion and whatever, he respected who they were and he acted accordingly, you know, he probably, he gave them respect and they respected him back, but at the same time it, yeah, it was a bit, I suppose there was periods when it was a bit dicey, bit dicey. **[00:40:00]**

FR: Yeah, I'm, I'm surprised that he would have kept doing those deliveries through–

KD: Sorry?

FR: I'm surprised that your father would have kept delivering to the, those places on the Waterside.

KD: He'd no option, he had no option, he had to put food on the table, you know what I mean, he had no option other than to do it, yeah, I mean, yeah, yeah.

FR: Yeah, and so you're seventeen or eighteen when you start to think about leaving, and you said initially you thought Dublin.

KD: Mm hmm, and then, as I say, when I was about seventeen, eighteen, I was about seventeen or something like that I had this row–

FR: Ah yeah, that's right.

KD: And I thought to myself that, I suppose that was a trigger for thinking to myself I'll get me away from this fucking place as much as I possibly can [laughs], as far as I possibly can, and I also thought and I suppose, yeah, I, Derry was closing down, but I also thought Dublin and, I mean, see Belfast wasn't an option, I didn't think I wanted to go and study in Belfast.

FR: That's, why not?

KD: Why not, because Belfast had north Belfast and sectarian assassinations and stuff like that, and it seemed to be, from the people I knew who were in Belfast, it seemed to be a

place that you were in, you were in, you were, you were in the university area and you never went out of the university area because of the fear of being knocked off if you went out of the university area, so I suppose I was at the age of seventeen, eighteen, wanting to see the bigger, wider world and so Belfast didn't tick those boxes really, it was going to be very much a closed, was very much closed down. Coleraine, there was a sort of, there was a, within our, within our group at school there was a, there was a sort of a, we don't go to Coleraine, cos they should have given the university to Derry.

FR: [laughs] Ah sure, okay.

KD: So it was a wee bit of a boycott, if I'm honest about it, we were not encouraged to go to Coleraine because–

FR: Cos that's, when did that happen, when was the big protests about that?

KD: About '67, '68,

FR: So it was only, yeah

KD: So it was about six years later and then people were looking at it, and the people of Derry were obviously saying oh that should have been, that university should have been Derry, why are you going to Coleraine, people wouldn't go to Coleraine for that reason.

FR: I've never heard that before, that's interesting.

KD: Yeah, there was a bit of a boycott in Coleraine, on the university. I suppose the other thing about it, Dublin seemed a wee bit sort of parochial as well, I didn't fancy it, I think Dublin seemed a wee bit sort of, yeah, it was okay, but it wasn't the big wide world and it was the sort of, you know, beginning of the seventies and the world was opening up and England was the swinging place.

FR: Dublin's still quite a conservative city then in some ways.

KD: I seen it as being quite conservative, yeah.

FR: No, I think that, I think that's, I think that's probably–

KD: It's probably not now, but, I mean, I certainly at that time saw it as being quite, quite a conservative place, yeah.

FR: Yeah, and so you then, the plan was always to go to university then, it sounds like you're saying–

KD: Yeah, it was, I mean, I had a job offer to go work at a bank or something like that, but I thought ah fuck, I couldn't be arsed with that [laughs], that's not me.

FR: You didn't fancy that.

KD: I didn't fancy that [laughs].

FR: And what did your, would your parents have been enthusiastic about the idea of university?

KD: No, my, they were really, they really tried to, they really, really didn't want me to do it. My mother particularly really didn't want me to do it, she was, no, wouldn't say she was in floods of tears, but she was, she was really against me leaving and going to–

FR: She was against you going to university or she was against you leaving?

KD: Both.

FR: Both, okay.

KD: Both. My da wanted me, why don't you go and get a proper job, what you want to go to university for, but I'm going to get a grant, dad, want to do okay, no, no, my mother, my mother was very much against it, really, I remember, I remember I got the university offer and I was probably beyond myself, come out to my mother and says hey mother, I've got this university offer, I'm going to go to Hull, that's where I ended up, Hull, in the far end of Yorkshire, you know, and my mother said oh, should reconsider, but my granny said to her well, just let him go, you've got to let him go, we've got to let him go, so I suppose it was a combination of going to England, which my mother didn't want me to do, as well as me being the oldest one and having to come to terms with losing her oldest son, you know, those were the two things which were, the two factors really, the two pulls from her point of view, yeah.

FR: But you remember being excited to get the news.

KD: Yeah, I was excited to be leaving Derry. I was excited to be getting away from this place which was closing in, people, yeah, this, where, where behaviours were, were, were policed by, by others, that they didn't, yeah, where peo-, where behaviours were heavily policed. I suppose that's the, that's the overwhelming feeling that I had about Derry at the time, that behaviours were heavily policed, whether it was parentally policed, whether it was policed by the church, whether it was policed by the republicans, behaviours were, behaviours were policed, and I didn't like that.

FR: You wanted freedom or–?

KD: Sorry?

FR: You wanted some more freedom or you wanted some more–?

KD: More freedom, yeah, more freedom, yeah, yeah.

FR: How did you, how did you settle on Hull?

KD: I just decided on a course. I wanted to do economics and I liked what I did, it wasn't very much, it wasn't very different from many other courses, could've been Hull or could've been Southampton, could've been anywhere.

FR: Had you, had you been to–?

KD: No, I–

FR: Had you been to England?

KD: I think about, no, I had been to England when I was about two [laughs] and, yeah, so I was in, I'd been to England when I was about two, and I just needed to get away and I just applied to Hull, got into Hull.

FR: Do you remember leaving, do you remember the day that you left?

KD: Yeah, borrowed, my mum and dad left me up to Aldergrove. I got a flight for six pound.

FR: Six pound [laughs].

KD: From Aldergrove to Leeds, Leeds Bradford.

FR: Leeds Bradford, I've been to it, aye.

KD: And that was the nearest airport, and I arrived in Brad-, Leeds in a Saturday, Saturday afternoon it was, yeah, very distinct and it was wet and grey and Yorkshire, and I thought to myself, I'm in England, Leeds, Bradford, where am I going to go, Hull, I don't have to be down there until, it was only, there wasn't any flights on a Sunday, I don't have to be down in Hull until the Sunday, right, so I'll go and explore Leeds Bradford, so what I'll do, oh I'll go to Bradford, this bus outside the station saying Bradford, I jumped on it, went to Bradford, I looked round Bradford and went, hmm, fuck [laughs], it was grey and it was grey and Yorkshire, you know what I mean, it wasn't–

FR: I do know what you mean.

KD: Yeah, you know, do you know Bradford?

FR: I lived in Manchester, we used to go, I mean, Bradford I think, there are some beautiful buildings in Bradford–

KD: There's some beautiful buildings in it now, but for me–

FR: But that grey kind of–

KD: Stone, yeah.

FR: I know exactly what you mean.

KD: I was put, I mean, it was in the seventies and it was still, buildings were still quite dark, I remember wandering around and thinking I've not, I was, one of the things I was quite interested in was seeing English people in England.

FR: Cos you would have seen English people, English soldiers I suppose–

KD: In Derry, but it was actually seeing English people in England, that was one of the things that, you know, okay, bus drivers and then, it was, the bus drivers were, bus drivers took you into it, but then when, I remember going to the shop, I can't remember what the main shopping centre was, it was covered or something like that, I can't remember where it was, I remember walking through it and, yeah, English people in England, strange, and then that, later on that day I got a bus from Bradford into Leeds because I was going to get a train the next day from Leeds down to Hull, yeah, and I got a bed and breakfast in a pub, and it was strange as well, you know, I mean, the guy was about, I suppose the guy, it was a pub, I can't remember, some back street, above some back street, and I can't even remember where it was. I remember listening, I was lying in bed that night listening to people outside and they were singing Yorkshire songs and stuff like that and actually I just found the whole thing quite strange, you know. Leeds was a bit like, looked a bit like Bradford, only a bit bigger and that was it really, and then got on a train the next day down to Leeds, or down to Hull, and I was met at the station by the university people who took us off to, I was in a shared student house.

FR: I've actually never, I've been, I know Leeds quite well, but I've never been to Hull.

KD: Have you not, yeah, yeah.

FR: So is it a similar–?

KD: No, it's not, Hull's quite flat, it's a bit sort of, the end of a, once you go past, I don't know, about, you go ten, fifteen minutes out of, out of Leeds and Leeds is sort of like, hilly isn't it, but then once you get a bit beyond that, ten, fifteen minutes, out there it becomes flat **[00:50:00]** and it's flat for the next fifty miles till you get to Hull, it's all very, very, very flat. This was the height of the fishing industry, and coming into Hull and with a, in the train, with the window in the train open you could sm-, waft, you could see, you could smell fish in the fish processing plants as you were coming into Hull, it was very evocative really, you know, on a Sunday afternoon, and then arriving in this station which was, I mean, it's a little, it's a little sort of, I don't know, I wouldn't say it, Hull's not a small town, but do you know what I mean, it's not a huge, big place, but it seemed to me compared to Derry, phew this is huge, yeah, and Hull itself was, how would you say, Hull was, it was very orderly, very orderly. I mean, you've got to bear in mind I come from Derry where there's chaos everywhere, and the family chaos, the street chaos, barricades all over, everything, up about, but Hull was, had been flattened during the Second World War, so they had rebuilt a lot of it, so the streets were very, very, very straight, long and straight.

FR: Kind of like a grid?

KD: Almost like a grid, yeah, in the centre of town and the buildings look quite new and modern, yeah.

FR: So you were conscious of a big change from Derry?

KD: I was conscious of a, big changes, yeah, and it was quite, it was quite interesting and I quite, I quite liked it.

FR: Were you homesick?

KD: I suppose as time went on I became a bit more homesick. There was a college in Hull called, in those days it was called Endsleigh and it was where a lot of teacher, it was a teacher training college for, a Catholic teacher training college, so it imported a lot of young women from, particularly Belfast, and Ballymena and places like that, Catholic teachers, teacher training college, so, you know, one of the guys in the, I was sharing this house with, it was a big house, was going out with somebody who was from Liverpool, and he was going out with somebody who was going to Endsleigh as well, so he introduced me to Endsleigh and all of that, so there was a wee bit of, there was a wee bit of, well, yeah, there was a lot of crossover initially between going down to see, going down to discos and stuff like that at Endsleigh college, yeah, didn't quite understand how the, it took me a while to understand how the university worked, it took me a good six, eight months to understand, not so much how the university, not so much how the lectures worked and stuff like that, but how the social aspect of the universities worked, cos the social aspect of, of Hull and all that seemed very, was very different from what I was used to in Derry, things were a wee bit, people were a wee bit more, I wouldn't say stand-, yeah, they were a wee bit, they were a wee bit more standoffish, yeah.

FR: A bit more reserved.

KD: Yeah, bit more reserved, yeah, yeah, yeah, whereas the, in Endsleigh it was, because it was a high Catholic Irish population, it was much more communal.

FR: And it felt more–

KD: It felt more, yeah, there was a lot more going on in a sense, yeah, yeah, so yeah, that was, that was, so that I, I used to go down there to the disco, only for the first six months or something like that, you know.

FR: And then after a while you started to get used to the sort of slight difference.

KD: I started to get used to the slight difference and I, you know, there was, I made friends with people in the Labour Party, in the Communist Party and that sort of was a way, was an introduction to, if you like, English working-class way of life in a way, you know, I joined the Labour Party for a while, yeah, and then I, and then when I was, after a while, was it, yeah, after a while I joined Clann na hÉireann, and that was a sort of another gateway into other things which are going on in England really.

FR: So excuse my Irish pronunciation, I can't speak Irish, but tell me a little bit about Clann–

KD: Clann na hÉireann.

FR: Clann na hÉireann.

KD: Clann, there's, there's actually a, it's probably worthwhile if you, I don't know if you've got catch up, there was an interview there, well, I'll come back to it in a second. Clann was the, basically it was the political wing of the Stickies in England. It was based around Birmingham, but they had a head office in, they had a head office in Fulham I think it was, branches in Bristol, had about half a dozen branches around the country, we had a, there's a branch in Hull, largely, there's a guy, it's largely, it's largely driven by a guy called Francis Devine. Francis now, I think he's still around, he used to work for the, for, I haven't seen Francis for about thirty years, but at the time he was working for, I think he's retired, he worked for the Irish TUC or something like that as a labour historian.

FR: Right, it rings a bell, you know, the name rings a bell.

KD: He's a labour historian, yeah, yeah, but he was very, he was doing a PhD in Hull I think and he, although he was English himself he was going out, he was married to a woman from Belfast, and him and a couple of others established a bra-, a *craobh*, called a *craobh*, of Clann na hÉireann, and it was, I mean, the objective was to sort work with the British labour movement organisations on the Stickies' agenda, which was, you know, sectarianism kills workers, and that was very much what we were about, anti-sectarianism and trying to put across a different message in England to what people were hearing about in terms of the, the sort of the usual crap from Ireland of the Provos, cos at that stage in Ireland, I mean, the Provos I think had sort of, they had dropped into the sectarian war, tit-for-tat sectarian war of, and that was, that was going on, very much so in Belfast, you know, not completely, but that was part of what was going on, yeah, so I was involved with Clann na hÉireann, yeah.

FR: Whereas the Stickies would've maintained this sort of slightly more Marxist–

KD: Yeah, they had, I mean, they made relationships with the trade union movement. I mean, they were a bit, I mean, they were, there was also the Connolly Association was also around, the Connolly Association was like, the sort of the, the Irish version, the Irish immigrants' organisation for the Communist Party. They used to have a bookshop down in Gray's Inn Road or somewhere like that called the Four Provinces, so they were quite well known, I think they got, there was a guy called C. D. Greaves who'd written the biography of Connolly, have you written that, heard of that?

FR: I haven't actually, no.

KD: Yeah, he's written the biography of Connolly, or he's dead now, he's long, long dead, but he was sort of the person who held the, I think he was quite a, one of those sort of English Marxists who had a bit of wealth behind him, but who had a very strong interest in Ireland, you know, he wrote a biography of Connolly and Liam Mellows and people like that.

So he, he was involved with the Connolly Association, he kept the Connolly Association going, and then there was Clann na hÉireann, and there was a wee bit of, there was a wee bit of conflict between, not conflict, but a wee bit of sort of, they were fighting on common ground, yeah. People who were in the Communist Party thought that the, that you should be in the Connolly Association rather than Clann, but, you know, Clann had links back to Ireland directly, you know, Tomás Mac Giolla from, and people from the, from the Workers' Party, and Sinn Féin Workers' Party, used to come across and do speeches and things like that, and we would try and set up, we would try and set up meetings with trade unionists in Hull and things like that, some of those were less success-, some of them were more successful than others, yeah. I must say that the Birmingham bombs was a point at which, you know, support for all that sort of stuff started to disappear.

FR: Which is in–

KD: '74.

FR: '74, and you remember a shift then, a change.

KD: Yeah, yeah, we were actually trying to organise a meeting that night, not that night, we tried to organise a meeting, I remember that day, that was, I was working with some communists and we were putting up posters for, we were trying to put, what's it, what when you used to do the old printed, the old-fashioned printing things.

FR: Like a lithograph?

KD: Yeah, that sort of thing, yeah, we were, we were doing those for post-, for fly posting round Hull about this public meeting. We'd invited a couple of Stickies and a couple of, we'd managed to get a couple of trade union leaders from Hull to do a meeting on, you know, workers together and all that sort of stuff, and we were, we were making these posters on the night that the Birmingham bombs went off and the next day we went, just went to, we were going to have the meeting in the, in the Trades Council house, or Trades Council offices in Hull and just went down and, you know, you ain't coming in here, you know, so it destroyed–

FR: As quickly, as quickly as that?

KD: Yeah, it just destroyed everything, you know, it destroyed, destroyed everything, any, any attempt to, and, you know, there was quite a lot of, I, we had a, a week of action. I managed, me and a couple of friends managed through the students' union to get a week of action on Ireland, we had a week of action on Palestine, a week of action on Vietnam, week of act-, week of action on Ireland, so it was big posters and stuff like that put around the place, and it coincided with the Birmingham bombs as well and, I mean, posters were torn down, we got beaten up.

FR: Beaten up just by English, angry English people?

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: It must be frustrating.

KD: It, it was frustrating. I think, I don't think we thought, I don't think I thought too much about it at the time, but just accepted it as being par for the course **[01:00:00]** really, you know, there was a conflict and we were on the wrong side of the conflict as far as the people who beat us up were concerned, you know.

FR: But then for you there's a gradation, or there's a difference, you're not exactly on that side of the conflict.

KD: No, I wasn't.

FR: See what I mean, so that's frustrating that suddenly yous all got lumped in as the same thing.

KD: I suppose from a personal point of view, you know, it was [pauses], it was, I suppose, I suppose from a personal point of view this is where I think the whole [pauses], the sort of like, the Stickie-Provo split as it were from that point was, you know, I knew a lot of people who were in the Provos who had done time, who'd done horrible things, and these are people I'd gone to school with, so totally distancing myself from them was quite, it wasn't, it didn't, it, you know, you had to be mindful of the fact that these are people you grew up with, it wasn't to say that, and they were part, they formed part of your culture as well, even though you were against it you, they formed part of your culture, you know, it wasn't, the split, it wasn't quite a, say if, I'll walk out the door, it wasn't quite like that there, you know.

FR: No, I understand that.

KD: Yeah.

FR: It's, I mean, that, that, it's kind of what I was thinking about more generally that it's interesting that on the one hand you describe this real urge to get out of Derry, really like, an urge to get out of Derry and to be somewhere else and to be in England, but then it sounds like your kind of political engagement in England is a lot to do with Northern Ireland.

KD: Well, yeah, it was, yeah, huge, huge amount and I think most of my life in terms of political engagements or political perspectives has been to do with Northern Ireland, if I'm really honest about it, most of my life has been like that.

FR: Sounds complicated.

KD: It is complicated, I don't think Northern Ireland ever leaves you, the conflict in your mind never leaves you cos it's not just, you know, it's a bit like, you know, yeah, there's a conflict, but it's also a conflict that's in your mind and it's there forever and ever, you know, yeah. Sometimes I wish it wasn't. Most of the books that I read, I mean, I've got books about, you know, all sorts of subjects, but overwhelmingly it's books about Ireland, so your

mind is closed down to other things. It's an, it was a traumatic, I suppose in that respect, to be honest with you Fearghus, it was a very traumatic period which in many ways I'm not convinced, personally speaking, I've got over.

FR: This is your childhood you mean rather than–

KD: Yeah, going back to Derry, it was a very traumatic period, the conflict, even when, when people had, I suppose people have a, have a, you know, when people become teenagers and become young adults and stuff like that, their, the degree to which, I don't know what your own experience was or whatever, but there's a degree to which you try to help your, your children into those, in, in, through that period, yeah, and I think what the, the traumas which were going in Derry at the time meant that it was very difficult for any parent to hold their children in a proper growing way through that period, so I think there's a lot of that early, that early development which we've maybe lost out on.

FR: Because, is it, it's like we've talked before about, did, did you tell your parents when you got beaten up, for example.

KD: No, you wouldn't.

FR: And it's because there's such a big separation between–

KD: Things which are going on on the street, if that had been, you know, if you'd been a, yeah, things which were going on in the street were things you didn't necessarily bring home, they were, yeah.

FR: Which means you've got kind of two–

KD: Two worlds going on, yeah.

FR: Which can be, can be difficult I suppose.

KD: Which is, and at some stage I guess a role of the parent is to try to help to bridge those two worlds, but in a place like Derry, you know, it was, it didn't happen, I don't feel it, I don't felt, I feel that it didn't happen in a way which I see now, people dealing with their own children, you know.

FR: That's really interesting, and so you're in Hull and you're involved in this kind of organising around the Troubles I suppose. Would you be going back and forth?

KD: Oh yeah, I was going back all the time, yeah, backwards and forwards all the time.

FR: And what, was that like, strange to go from one place to another?

KD: [pauses] It was strange, and there was also periods of time when I didn't go back [pauses]. It was, it was, but there was still, it was still lovely to go back and to be in something where there was family and friends, yeah, you can't, I can't, and that was

something that you didn't have, the depth of that, those relationship you didn't have over here, you know, whether there was family relationships or friendships, you didn't have those over here. I mean, ironically now I've got friendships from university who are stronger than the friendships I've had when I've had when I was home [laughs], when I was a kid, you know, so, you know, I suppose it's about a life, a journey through life, you know. You were hassled going through the port by the police under the PTA, called in under the PTA, detained.

FR: So what did that, what did that entail?

KD: What did it entail, I just mean, I was never, I was never raided by the police, although I'm sure I was surveilled, and people put surveillance on me cos they knew who I, they knew I was involved with Clann na hÉireann and stuff like that, and I suppose the gateway was going through the port, so I was going on the plane, about to go through the plane, policeman stopped me in front of me, come on you're coming with us, go through the boat in Belfast, you're coming with us, going through the boat at Stranraer, come on you're coming with us, so it was all of that stuff went on and you were held for two, three, four hours, whatever.

FR: And they would question you, they would just–

KD: Just question you about who you were, what you were involved with, and I'd just go, but you know who I am, you've got my photographs, I mean, they would, I'd been down in marches for Chile solidarity down in London and they'd, the, the guy would show me photographs of me selling *United Irishman* and stuff like that [laughs], so they knew who I was, yeah, and all I could is like, look, you knew who I am, you know what my politics are, you know the politics of people in, in, that I associate with, what more do you want me to fucking tell you, it was, you just had to be [makes a noise], you know, you know, I'm not, I'm not hiding anything, you know what I am, yeah.

FR: I mean, I think one of the things that sounds frustrating about that to me is that the only point of it is to hassle people because, as you say, there is no, there's no value to the interrogation–

KD: There was no, there wasn't any paramilitary activity going on behind it, yeah.

FR: They're not trying to find anything out about you that they don't already know, they're just doing it to hassle you.

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: And I feel like that, that would be frustrating.

KD: It was frustrating, yeah, but again, and to some extent there was a degree of, you just took it as, took it as read that that was going to happen, you know, yeah, and that went on, it went on all the way through till I suppose, at various levels of intensity, up until the early eighties really.

FR: Really?

KD: Mmm.

FR: Long time.

KD: It did yeah, I mean, and it, I gradually thought Clann na hÉireann, well, Clann na hÉireann started to fall apart, to be honest with you, but yeah, but it sort of coincided with the demise of Clann na hÉireann I suppose.

FR: But that's almost a, a decade that, that you're in Clann na hÉireann, if I–

KD: I was yeah, yeah, well, I suppose associated with it, yeah.

FR: Yeah, that's, maybe in is a bit of a–

KD: Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't, I mean, after a while we had, I had a daughter in '79 and thought, you know, I'm not going to get more involved in that, and stuff like that and, you know, so it sort of, so gradually, and that sort of activity, I was a member of the Communist Party, I was secretary of the local Communist Party branch as well, and that became, I was more, more involved with the Communist Party than with Clann na hÉireann, Clann na hÉireann seemed to be a sort of a like, a one trick pony from my point of view, you know, so I was more interested in wider political stuff, Chile and stuff, Chileans particularly, yeah.

FR: Well, that's interesting that as after a while–

KD: Cos Chileans came over from '73, with the Chilean Allende overthrow in '73, and a lot of them were academics who settled in Hull.

FR: They settled in Hull?

KD: Yeah, there was quite a few, it was about, there was a small community of, well, no, no, yeah, but there were–

FR: That's so interesting, I wonder, I wonder why that was, I wonder–

KD: I think the university gave them an odd, gave them a, gave them research opportunities and stuff like that, you know, and, yeah, so those were things which were much more in-, became more interesting to me than Ireland which was slightly, you know, I knew, been there, done that, got the t-shirt, you know [laughs].

FR: [laughs] No, I can understand that.

KD: Yeah, and I was involved with the Communist Party, and I was secretary of the Communist Party, and I was on the various district committees and delegates and stuff like

that, so I wasn't climbing up, I wasn't climbing up to be, climbing up a tree or anything like that, but I was, that was, that's where my enthusiasm lay really.

FR: And it's a more **[01:10:00]** internationalist–

KD: Yeah, there was more of the international, there was apartheid and stuff like that happening as well, yeah, yeah, and there was more, it opened up, it was, there was, there was more of an opening up, yeah.

FR: So just to sort of go back to the, you did three years economics at Hull.

KD: Mm hmm.

FR: I assume three years, I'm just guessing, and then what did you–?

KD: I stayed in Hull, I married a Hull girl, a Hull, first, my first wife was Hull, so I married her, we had a child, I stayed in Hull up until about '83.

FR: And she was English?

KD: She was English, yeah, and I found, that's what, I mean, yeah, on an emotional level I found the English very open, I found the English very, very open, it was a sort of, they were almost like, democratic about how they spoke to you, you know, I found the English very open, yeah, very–

FR: That's interesting because it's kind of not what the stereotype is, is it, the stereotype of English people is that they're aloof, reserved, cold.

KD: I didn't find them cold, no, I didn't find them cold. Some of them were, some of them were, I'm not going to say they weren't because, I mean, Hull had a high proportion of sol-, people who joined the soldier, joined the army and went, yeah, so there was a high proportion of that, so if you went to a disco in, went to a disco in the centre of town, but, I mean, the milieu I worked in, which was largely university-based, based around sort of a couple of pubs where artists and musicians and people like that hung out, it was much more, much more open than, much more, and I suppose that's the contrast with Derry, those sort of things in Derry, the artists and musicians and liberals and stuff like that were declining in Derry to me, yeah, whereas in Hull there was this opening up of things and that's what I was looking for, and the people from Hull who were involved with that I found very open and welcoming, to be honest, I couldn't, yeah.

FR: Yeah, no, I mean, that, that makes sense, and so you, you stayed in Hull till–

KD: I stayed in Hull till about eighty-, '83, '84.

FR: And did you, were you, did you work?

KD: Yeah, I was a, worked for local government, worked for the council, yeah. I was a community worker.

FR: And do you remember, so you were talking about the Birmingham bombings, but any other incidences of the Troubles kind of coming to, to England or to Britain? I suppose you–

KD: That period in, that period in Hull, not really, cos Hull didn't have a, there wasn't any republican, not that I was aware of anyway, there wasn't any sort of republican activity in Hull. There were republican prisoners in Hull prison and the, there was a Hull prison riot in I think the late seventies at some stage, yeah, it was late, late seventies, and I think the republican prisoners were heavily involved in that, but we didn't have, from a Clann, Clann na hÉireann point of view we didn't have very much to do with them because they were Provisional prisoners, we had some things to do with the Stickie prisoners, but they were down, they weren't in Hull, they were down in Albany, down in the Isle of Wight.

FR: Ah okay.

KD: Yeah, there was a couple of guys who were involved with Clann who offered solidarity, whatever that meant, to the Hull Provo prisoners, but, but I wasn't involved with that, no.

FR: Okay, and then coming into the eighties, when did you leave Hull?

KD: Left Hull '83, went over to Liverpool, over, over to the Wirral actually, yeah, Birkenhead, and lived there for two years. My wife at the time couldn't settle, couldn't get a job, she'd finished a university degree and we decided to come down south.

FR: This is your wife who you were with in Hull.

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, so we came down south and we lived in Tottenham, and I lived in Tottenham for about thirteen years.

FR: And what did you make of the south of England, was it–?

KD: The south of England, unfriendly.

FR: It's different, isn't it?

KD: Yeah, yeah, I mean, to be honest with you, when I was living in Hull and in Liverpool I found I couldn't really distinguish between that culture and the Irish culture after a while, I could sort of like, flit quite easily between them, there was a communality involved in both of them and, you know, if you went to a political meeting, you went down for a, down to the pub for a drink afterwards and you forgot your political differences and you had a chat, ba, ba, ba, ba, ba, but the south of England politicals were much more standoffish, much more standoffish.

FR: That's interesting, so is it, this is still in a kind of a, are you still in the Communist Party at this stage?

KD: I was starting to, I mean, that was the time the Communist Party was starting to fall apart then, cos all the political organisations I was involved in fell apart [laughs].

FR: [laughs] I know, I know what you mean [laughs].

KD: It was the time of the *Mar-*, I don't know if you remember, if you're aware of the *Marxism Today* row with the Commun-, within the Communist Party.

FR: I, I think to some extent, right, so talk me through it.

KD: Well, I mean, the, the *Marxism Today* row was about the, Martin Jacques having the Eurocommunist, you know, line and the *Morning Star* having a Stalinist line, and the two were conflicting, and I found myself a bit there and a bit there, but probably more with the Euro-, the Eurocommunists and at that point the Party just fell apart and I just thought to myself there's no point, as they say in Belfast it's a beaten docket [laughs], you know.

FR: [laughs] Yes, I know what you mean.

KD: So I dropped out and joined the Labour Party in, and it coincided with me and my first wife splitting up as well, so joined the Labour Party in, and I suppose there was a period from about eighty-, yeah, from about '83 to about '88, yeah, when I didn't have very much involvement with anything, anything Irish really, even before that, yeah, well, well, from about '83, in Liverpool, not really, no I didn't, I was still in the Communist Party in Liverpool that stage, but, and, and I made some contact at that stage with the, with the Connolly Association, cos this guy Desmond Greaves lived in Birkenhead, yeah, and there were people that I knew who knew him, but he was a miserable bastard, so he was [laughs], so yeah, and then '85 coming down here, hanging round the Communist Party, or just coming, we had a couple of meetings, but it wasn't going anywhere, so left, I didn't sort of pursue that one, and then a bit later, about '86, eighty-, about '87 joined the, joined the Labour Party and sort of touched base with IBRG, Irish in Britain Representation Group.

FR: Oh yes, okay, oh yeah, I do know what that is, okay.

KD: There was a branch in Manchester and there was very, I mean, that was, it was a whole mushrooming of, of Irish stuff at that stage I thought in London, which was quite interesting, the IBRG, I was involved with the, I wasn't involved with, I went along to a few meetings and some of the stuff that they were producing at that stage was actually quite good, there was things about Irish people and mental health, Irish migration and stuff like that, they were, they did do quite a bit of, bit of useful things then, you know.

FR: So you, you started at that stage to get back more interested in Ireland again.

KD: No, hmm, no, I think I was probably more interested in what was going on in the UK, I was, I suppose I was, to be honest Fearghus, I was a bit split between the two.

FR: Aye, sure, aye.

KD: I was split between the two, I wasn't particularly, no, if I'm honest about it I was a bit split between the two. Ireland was there, I had an opinion on it [pauses]. I got involved, no, I started going to things in, in London which had an Irish orientation, but, I mean, I kept asking myself the question well, what have these people got, cos coming, bearing in mind I'd been in the Communist Party, in the Labour Party and stuff like that, I was thinking, I suppose in some terms, in social and class terms, I mean, well, what have these people got in common other than the fact that they are from the same island, you know, there must be something else going on and I was struggling to see what that was, to be honest, and maybe that's different from your opinion.

FR: Oh I don't know.

KD: Yeah.

FR: And are you still going back and forth to Ireland at this stage? You're a wee bit older and you're maturing–

KD: Yeah, okay, of course I am, yeah, cos I've got family and daughter and stuff like that and, yeah.

FR: And you were taking them all back to visit?

KD: Yeah, yeah, course, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: And what did they make of Derry, do you remember? **[01:20:00]**

KD: Well, my daughter loves Derry, she goes, yeah, she, she, she's, she loves Derry. My first wife, she liked Derry and she was made welcome by my family.

FR: And you've still got quite a lot of family there, brothers and sisters, aunts.

KD: I've still got quite a lot of family there, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, but I suppose there's a period, if I'm honest about it, a period in my life where Ireland sort of faded into the background a little bit, it wasn't quite as important as what, wasn't, wasn't quite as important as what it had been, and my Irishness was, was there, I mean, I've still got an Irish accent, I've been here forty years and, you know, sometimes I think you decide to keep an accent because, you know, it's important to you, I mean, you've got an Irish accent, it's important to you, you know.

FR: It changes, I think.

KD: Of course it changes, yeah, of course it does.

FR: But it, it's still there.

KD: But you decide you want to keep it, you know, where it, you know, yeah.

FR: And, and what, so you found the people in London a wee bit more standoffish, but is that a kind of an anti-Irish, was there any kind of anti-Irish–?

KD: I don't think there was any, I, I, well, I suppose it was difficult to say Fearghus, because they were so standoffish you couldn't really understand what it was, what they were, why they were standoffish about [laughs], they wouldn't tell you [laughs].

FR: [laughs] Yeah, they were too standoffish to explain.

KD: Yeah, whereas in Hull you'd go and ask a woman to have a dance at the disco in 1974 and she'd say where are you from, I'm from Ireland, urgh, and you would know immediately [laughs].

FR: It was direct [laughs].

KD: Whereas in London then it wasn't quite the sa-, it didn't, it wasn't quite the same, but I did, I suppose because the nature of London, I suppose, yeah, I suppose that's the difference between the north and the south to some extent is that in the north of England people operate at a neighbourhood level, don't they, I mean, you go down to a pub and it's a neighbourhood pub and there's people there who might be hippies and freaks and there's people there who might be locals from sixty years ago and, you know, there is a sort of a commun-, I'm talking about my experience from the 1980s, okay, I'm sure it's different now, but there's a communality there, yeah, whereas in London it was very much about communities of interest.

FR: That's interesting.

KD: Yeah, you know, there's an Irish community and a community of interest within the Irish community and that, that's how, that's how it tended to, that sort of, so it was finding those networks which were quite, which were quite, was a, which was a bit of a challenge really, you know.

FR: And did you feel like, part of the Irish community then in London, because–?

KD: It was too big, to be honest with you, and there were certain bits of Irish community which frankly, you know, if you go to a St Paddy's Day parade and there was just a Clare Association and the Galway Association and it's all like that and you say well, what's this got to do, where am I, where am I here, you know, might go up to Kilburn and have a drink in the, one of the north London taverns, but this, it didn't necessarily, it didn't necessarily strike a chord with me really, you know, didn't strike a chord with me, although people you came across who may be, particularly who were second-generation Irish were always trying to establish an identity with you.

FR: Yeah, that's interesting.

KD: Yeah, people that you work with, oh my dad was from there, sorry, that's my wife.

FR: That's fine, yeah.

KD: [greets his wife] Hello. So, so they were always trying to, forever trying to establish a, a link with you, but it was only a very, it was only a very brief link as well because once they established the fact that their mother was from Kerry and their dad was from Donegal, that was enough, they'd move on to something else [laughs], and sometimes we'd be there in the pub with my dad on a Sunday afternoon or whatever, you know, that sort of thing, it wasn't as, it wasn't a, yeah, and some of the, I was involved as well with a thing called, involved with the sort of the Haringey Irish Centre, I got involved with that and I made sure my daughter went to Irish dancing lessons. At that stage it was, I was a, I was a single parent, so taking my daughter, who comes from a sort of like, a reasonably liberal background, to these Irish dancing lessons which were predominantly, overwhelmingly female and very much a case of sort of the mothers preening the daughters, I didn't know where to fucking go, you know, with this [laughs], yeah, it was quite, quite strange really, so yeah, and I was involved as well with a thing called Irish Community Care, with Haringey Irish Community Care, which is run by a, one of these wonderful nuns called Sister, I don't know if she's still alive, Sister Joan Kane, and it was a basically a drop-in centre for largely men who were living around Finsbury Park, maybe living rough round Finsbury Park.

FR: Who were kind of isolated.

KD: Isolated, yeah, yeah, so I suppose my misthoughts at that stage, this is sort of like, late eighties, were starting to talk, starting to think about, you know, the sort of thinking about the impact of migration and loneliness on Irish people, particularly Irish men, cos I used to see it in Tottenham particularly, these sort of older men who'd be working on the buildings during the week, so Monday to Friday would be on the buildings, get paid and then they'd be in the pub from, well, would get paid on a Thursday usually, so they'd be in the pub from Thursday through to the Sunday, and they were then at Sunday four o'clock, after the pubs closed they were going home to pretty lonely flats, you know, so that was, that started to prick my mind a little bit, you know, and, yeah.

FR: And so the drop-in was kind of a–

KD: It was a place for holding those people, I was the vice chair of it for a while, yeah, it was successful, it had a good turnover, but like everything else, I mean, there was a clique involved in it, you know, but, you know, that's life, isn't it, little cliques, they, yeah, and sort of, and then there was a couple of other groups around, there was a sort of a, a young Irish housing association, which was established up in Brent, so there was a mushroom of those sorts of things around the sort of, I suppose the early nineties really, those sort of things, and the GLC helped to fund some of those things, which was very positive.

FR: And the recognition of Irish as a category on the census?

KD: Yeah, and, and I found at that stage that the sort of, the main, you know, I knew lots of, I mean, I was active in the Labour Party in Tottenham and lots of the councillors were Irish, so the, that perspective was embedded in what we done, I didn't, I didn't need to, I didn't

need to stand up and punch, punch a table saying we need to be recognised, it was a case of was, it was mainstreamed, I felt it was mainstream, maybe that's, maybe now that's, maybe it could've been more mainstream, but we, whether it was a Jewish councillor, she knew that, that the Irish had special needs which needed to be met, whether in housing or social care or whatever, it wa-, I think it was, I wouldn't say it was adequately dealt with, but it, people were aware of it, yeah.

FR: And what about in terms of Northern Ireland then? We're talking the early nineties here. Do you remember the beginnings of the peace process, do you remember how you felt about that?

KD: How I felt about the peace process [sighs].

FR: That's kind of a big question.

KD: Hmm, how I feel about it now or how I felt about it at the time?

FR: Either one.

KD: I mean, it was, it was, I suppose when I think, when I think back on it, I mean, the best thing that ever happened to Northern Ireland was, I mean, and you may well disagree with me completely on this one, but is, is Tony Blair. I mean, I was, I have, I, in political terms, I'll be honest about it, I'm a Blairite, yeah, he, to me, you know, he had the ability to gain power, there's lots of things which he did which people mightn't like, but he had the ability to gain power and he, in the context of Northern Ireland, he used that power in an extremely, extremely positive way. Now you may say in terms of economic and welfare issues over this side of the water he didn't use his power, but in terms of Northern Ireland he did use his power. I was very sceptical about the peace process, I didn't know what was going on, I probably didn't, I wasn't too much bothered about it, I was only bothered about it in the context of going back home and seeing how my family were getting on with it and stuff like that. I was aware of, one of the things, interesting things I was, I was aware of, I mean, there was, just before the peace process started or as, coincided with the peace process there was a number of sort of very large bombs went off in London.

FR: Of course, yeah, Canary Wharf and–

KD: Canary Wharf and a couple of other ones as well, and when I was living in, where I lived in Tottenham the guy next door to me was, well, I suppose what I was conscious of, you know, I come from, I came from Derry, I came from a generation which was, **[01:30:00]** grew up, or what, came from a generation which was of the Troubles. There was maybe, what, a million of us or less, half a million of us, a very small percentage of us were of that age range, but when it comes to, to the peace process, the stuff that, the stuff that was happening in London and whatever, it was actually being perpetuated by people, not perpetuated, it was being, the operators tended to be from the South of Ireland, yeah, and I remember like, even within the Irish community like, there'd be people saying oh you, there's another bomb going off, that's your lot, so there was still that very much a case of,

from the South of Ireland people would be pointing their finger towards Northerners and saying you're doing this.

FR: That's interesting.

KD: Yeah, you're doing this, it's a bit like, people wanted to keep, people, a lot of the Irish I came across, the more settled Irish, wanted to keep their heads down.

FR: Some people have said that to me, about the desire to not really get involved in politics, not really make themselves visible amongst that kind of generation of Irish–

KD: Yeah, and, and as a consequence of that, when people are keeping their heads down and that's cos if anything happened which they didn't like, well, there was the sort of the bomb in Deal barracks or bombs in Kensington or whatever, it was, you lot are doing it, fuck, I've been living here for, at that stage I was living in England for twenty-five years, I had my daughter, ba, ba, ba, ba, ba, ba, why are you blaming me for it, you know what I mean, I haven't fucking done it, but there was still within the Irish community a sense that some Irish community members would say you done it, and we never had, that, those discussions were never had, and that's possibly why I, I suppose when I think back on it that's possibly why I didn't like the sort of traditional Irish community, Irish organisations in the, in the UK, you know, the Clare Association and the Galway Association, cos they never really took those matters up, they never, you know, and you'd never seen a Derry Association or a Belfast Association or an Antrim Association, you never saw those, those things were never, you know, so people didn't have, yeah, and, yeah, that said, my next door neighbour in Tottenham was from Mayo, you lot are doing that, no we're not, Brendan, we're not, you know.

FR: It's very, it's strange in the South where you have, on the one hand, a kind of–

KD: There's that racism, isn't there, it was almost like a racism, you know, sorry, what were you going to say?

FR: I was just going to say there's a kind of a nationalism where they talk about the thirty-two counties and blah, blah, blah, but then there's also this thing where the North is a different place, they don't, you know, the black North they used to say in Dublin and all that.

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and that was, I found, I mean, I didn't, I suppose [pauses] from a personal point of view, whenever, when I was in like, in the north of England, because you were operating within a smaller group of communists or Labour Party people or whatever, they were more respectful of, of you as a, more respectful of you, whereas when you walk, when you went into a bigger community people didn't seem to be as respectful, you know, that respect got lost basically, you know.

FR: So is this in, in London or is this in–?

KD: This is in London, yeah, yeah, that respect got lost, so you, you found yourself, you were more open to abuse and as you say the English people themselves probably didn't abuse

you as, my experience was that often the abuse was, was from, from Irish people, you know, yeah.

FR: But you remember, so we've got, there's kind of two things, so around the peace process there are the, the bombings that happened in London, which you remember, and you remember that kind of hostility from other Irish people, and then in terms of the peace process, what, so you were saying you were interested in how your family in, in Derry felt.

KD: I think that was a, that was a primar-, primary, yeah.

FR: And do you remember them being, being happy, were they, or were they kind of suspicious or unsure or–?

KD: Well, I think they were relieved, I think they were relieved when it happened, I think that they were relieved that it was all over, but, as I say, they're not, they're not Sinn Féiners, so I think there was a degree of scepticism about what, what was, what was going on, and to be honest with you, from my own point of view, personal point of view, I was sceptical about it, you know what I mean.

FR: Sceptical about the, sceptical that it would last, or sceptical about the motivations of–?

KD: Sceptical I suppose primarily, I suppose in the first instance about the motivations. Now I can look back on it and see why people like Adams and McGuinness dragged it on for as long as they did because they had to sort of, they had to bring their foot soldiers along with them, I understand that now in retrospect, but at the time it didn't, it felt quite sort of prolonged, well, why, why, why can you not just stop it, you know, but, as I say, on, on retrospect, you know, they had to bring their hardmen along, you now, and that, that takes time.

FR: Yeah, I think that, that was maybe some of the anger about those last few bombings was that idea that, come on, it's almost–

KD: It's almost over, why.

FR: Why do you need to–

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: No, that's interesting, and then, I suppose moving into the sort of third section of the interview, just a few more kind of reflective questions I guess, so did you ever think about moving back to Northern Ireland?

KD: Not to Northern Ireland.

FR: To Ireland.

KD: We'd move back maybe to Donegal. I've got a place, a little apartment in Donegal.

FR: Ah we talked, we talked about that–

KD: Yeah, so I use, I use that, I mean, but, I suppose, you know, there is, I am, I am here, my family is, my roots are here, my networks are here, so I don't, you know, unless something traumatic happened I don't see there's any reason why I should give up what I, I should give up and go. There's certain things I miss about Ireland, no doubt about it, you know, the holding together of things is, is probably the most, the biggest part, you know.

FR: As in the–?

KD: The community, the communal things, yeah, yeah, certain things about that [pauses], but I suppose there's, there's also still a bit of the, of the young lad who likes to see the big wide world, which I haven't, which I haven't lost. So I'm sixty-four, so the prospect sometime, when this bloody coronavirus stuff is out of the way, of just getting on a train once again and, you know, going in to central London and meeting a couple of people for a drink and stuff like that, it's still there, I still like that, and having a wee wander round parts of London which, you know, and not being afraid of where you're going, anyth-, not, well, I wouldn't be afraid of going round Belfast or Derry now, but, but you know what I'm saying, it's a different type of atmosphere, yeah.

FR: You, you feel a wee bit more, I think it's really interesting, you were saying this thing about community holding, which is the positive side in some ways of what I think the negative you're describing is, which is that you can feel surveilled, you can feel watched, still in Belfast and I don't know Derry so well, but still in Belfast there's that feeling that–

KD: You can feel watched, yeah.

FR: Yeah, I think so.

KD: Did you ever read that book *Watching the Door*?

FR: Yes [laughs]. I don't know if you, Anna Burns's book *The Milkman*.

KD: I haven't read, I started reading it.

FR: And it's the description of how surveilled they, she felt–

KD: She felt surveilled, yeah.

FR: In the Ardoyne, yeah, I think is a very good description of it, yeah.

KD: So her point was that this guy, the, well, whatever it was, that she was, yeah.

FR: She's kind of being harassed by this IRA guy, but he's not quite harassing her enough that she can tell anyone about it, he's just kind of following her and asking her out like, he doesn't, he doesn't beat her up, he doesn't do anything like that, so she kind of, she, she

feels like she can't tell anyone about it because it's not serious enough, but at the same time it is, and then kind of as the book goes on it gets more serious, but I think just as a description of the sort of constantly being watched by everyone like, not just by this guy, but by her mum and by her friends and their neighbours and by her brother and sister and this kind of oppressive thing, it's interesting cos it seems like the community thing and the oppressive thing are kind of connected, right.

KD: I think the, one of the things I sort of like, thought about, I mean, Northern Ireland as you know is still very much a place where people stake their little, their ownership of places, you know, you know, flags or whatever, painting their kerbstones, and I suppose there's still a, I mean, you go through the Bogside and you get the tourists coming off the bus, Free Derry corner, taking photographs of it, the Bogside murals, you know, Annette McGavigan up the side of the road, you know, the IRA shot, killed her, you know, and Free Derry corner, you know, Cherry Mallett, my da used to deliver coal, they lived in the house next door to that, you know, I know the areas intimately, but it's almost like, it's, it's sixty years ago, it's getting on, well, getting on for sixty, fifty, fifty years ago, and it's still there and people haven't left it behind, and I suppose that's, to me is the, is **[01:40:00]** the great thing about England that people leave, I mean, leave things behind and move on to the next thing, you know, in a way which Irish people, particularly in places like Derry, find really difficult, you know, to leave things behind, they're still holding on to something, whether it's the legacy still for whatever, they still hold–

FR: Well, I was going to ask you actually, so did you follow, for instance, the Bloody Sunday tribunal, things like that? This kind of like, the way in which the, that past has been sort of returned to in the last, since the peace process I suppose.

KD: To me and, I mean, this is, maybe you would call me a reformist or whatever, but, I mean, you know, when David Cameron stood up and says I'm sorry, and then in the next breath said you can have a city of culture, I think those were, I think we, I think to me that was a point to draw a line underneath it and then to have moved on from it, that was my, that's my view of it, you know. I had, I lost, I know people who died in Bloody Sunday, no doubt about it, you know, it was a traumatic event, but I found, we found it difficult, people in, people in Derry particularly find it difficult to move on.

FR: I, yeah, yeah, I mean, I, it's, it's really difficult.

KD: Yes, I haven't lost anybody directly, so I don't feel their pain directly, but maybe there's a different way of handling that pain.

FR: That isn't about returning.

KD: Yeah, yeah, maybe I, you know, I have not been affected nor my family were, there, a relative or whatever has been shot dead or killed or whatever, and so I don't understand that, the pain then that family must feel and must be tremendous, and looking for the truth and stuff like that, but in terms of them coming to terms with it like, there should be another way of, of solving it rather than keeping, yeah, it must be, must be another way of dealing with it, you know.

FR: And do you, do you find Derry, you mentioned the city of culture there, do you find Derry changed?

KD: Yeah, it is, yeah.

FR: As well as, so you, I know you're saying it's fifty years ago, they've still got the mural, they've still got Free Derry corner or whatever, but apart from that do you find it, do you find it different?

KD: [pauses] Yeah, I mean, it is probably a bit more socially liberal place to be. The whole sort of thing about moving like, I've got two of my brothers live over in Donegal, so, you know, they don't, you know, where they live is basically a suburb of Derry, one's in Fahan and another one's down just beyond Muff a wee bit, you know, so yeah, Derry is a different place, but I suppose the overwhelming thing is that Derry has produced some fantastic brains and stuff like that, but most of them are ex-, still exported, you know, still exported, to, to, to, so there's nothing to hold people there.

FR: Well, people still, people still leave Northern Ireland, right, it's still, still happening.

KD: Yeah, it's, that's and I, I can't, unless the border situation's resolved, there's still, and, and not just the border situation, but things like transport links and motorways and railway connections and stuff like that, unless those are improved, Derry's always going to be on the periphery, you know.

FR: And what, I suppose to finish, we don't need to talk about Brexit [laughs], but what have you made of the sort of politics in Northern Ireland recently? I mean, in terms of Derry for instance, the idea that there might be a united Ireland would probably have some sort of effect on Derry.

KD: [pauses] Well, Derry's extremely divided–

FR: Still, yeah.

KD: The river's down the middle. I'm not saying it's all Protestants and all Catholics, but, you know, it's not, it's, I, I don't see those divisions changing [pauses], you know. I'm digressing a wee bit, but I think, I think Sinn Féin and the republicans have to apologise for what they did. I mean, they may say they were shooting British soldiers, but there was a fucking sectarian war, when they went up to the Glen or the Fountain or somewhere like that and assassinated UDR men, that was telling people get the fuck out of here, so I think until those, those, until those things are sort of addressed in a meaningful way, then I think the divisions will remain and people will still feel aggrieved, so the coming together of people will be more, much more, much more difficult, yeah, yeah, I mean, we can have legacies about, you know, what the RUC done or what the British Army done, of course it need to, but, you know, when I see, think of why guys round the corner, going back to the story, why the guys round the corner from me, who I went to school with, not, didn't go to school with, who I grew up with, and played, yeah, yeah, they were, they may have been thinking

sectarianly, in sectarian terms, at the beginning of each July, but, you know, they did flee across the river for a reason, and there were, so yeah, they did flee across the river, and so somebody's got to stand up and say we, we're sorry for making that happen, you know.

FR: Which hasn't, which hasn't happened.

KD: It hasn't happened, yeah, and that's to me is the biggest stumbling block in it, you know, to me it, well, it's not one of the biggest, but it's certainly one of, it's certainly a major stumbling block in it, you know, I go up my mum's street, right, and Bishop Street and there's a wee estate called the Fountain, which has maybe about a thousand people in it, and it's got the wall round it still.

FR: The sort of like, an interface, an interface–

KD: It's an interface in that, I mean, up until four or five years ago, little bastards used to come up from the Bog with petrol bombs sometimes and throw them over, so, and I am, I'm not, I'm not, I'm not a hundred per cent optimistic, let's put it that way, and I think a lot of the Derry middle classes have fled across the border to, if you go down, I mean, Derry, Derry middle classes are, I mean, people have, have established their own communities in all sorts of places, but you, you, a lot of people still think of, you know, getting across the border, living across the border, my experience anyway. They wouldn't go down as far as Culdaff though [laughs].

FR: [laughs] It's a long drive from Ballymena, I can tell you.

KD: Do you go to the pub there, what's the, the music pub?

FR: McGrory's.

KD: McGrory's, aye, my brother had his wedding reception in there.

FR: My parents go down every New Year.

KD: Do they?

FR: And I don't, I, I try to go now and again. It's a beautiful part of the world.

KD: Och aye, beach is lovely.

FR: The beach is lovely, aye.

KD; My brother goes swim-, well, another brother goes swimming up there on New Year's Day.

FR: Yeah, we, oh we, we do that as well.

KD: Do you?

FR: [laughs] Funnily enough, aye, we do.

KD: Yeah, Rory, I've got a photograph of Rory and his, his daughter jumping in there on New Year's Day. He's mad for that sort of stuff anyway.

FR: My parents, my parents were still doing it up until a couple of years ago, I think now they're not–

KD: Oh they were jumping in there, yeah?

FR: They're not fit for it anymore, but [laughs], I think that's probably, we're probably reaching an end, but before I, the first question I guess is is there anything we haven't talked about that you would have liked to have talked about or–?

KD: I can't, I can't think of anything at the moment Fearghus [pauses], no. I mean, I suppose the other, the other thing about being over here as opposed to being over there is the multiculturalism of being over here.

FR: That's interesting.

KD: Yeah, I mean, my wife's Jewish, my daughter, my granddaughter is mixed race Sri Lankan, and I've got other mixtures, yeah, that, that wouldn't happen in Derry, or you'd be, you'd be struggling for that to happen in Derry. I had a, a friend of mine's whom I lived, who I stayed with in Liverpool, and she ended up, and she was Jewish, a Jewish family, and one of her daughters is a, she's a Labour councillor up in the Wirral, but she went over to Derry for a couple of years, and one of the things that Joanne, Joanne Bird is her name, and she lived with, I can't remember, some guy runs a Hollywell centre in Derry or something like that, she lived with him for a couple of years, but one of the things she said to me was Derry's wonderful, it's wonderfully, wonderfully welcoming and things like that, but it's only at a surface level. She says getting below, beyond, below that, there's still networks, and if you're not part of the network or if you're external to that network you won't get into it **[01:50:00]** [pauses], and I think that's still true.

FR: This is a kind of a–

KD: This is a Jewish woman coming to Derry, spent two years in Derry, she was involved with politics, I mean, she's a political animal and, yeah, she, she struggled to settle there.

FR: There's a kind of a politeness or a friendliness in Northern Ireland which doesn't necessarily, a politeness and a friendliness and that kind of thing, where people say hello to you in the street or whatever–

KD: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: But it doesn't necessarily translate into–

KD: Into empathy.

FR: Or like, what, it, like, actual connections, you can still be, very much be on the surface of things.

KD: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: No, that makes sense, but no, the, quite a few of the people that I've interviewed so far have talked about the multiculturalism of England being–

KD: The, oh the multiculturalism, yeah, it's much yeah, yeah, yeah. yeah.

FR: As being something that they–

KD: I wouldn't, I wouldn't want to lose it, yeah, yeah, if I go back to Derry actually, after a while, you know, you do notice it, particularly around the south east of England, you know, you have cases, maybe a middle-class village on the outskirts of London or whatever, but at the same time, you know, it's still, it's still multicultural, St Albans is multicultural or whatever, you know.

FR: And you talked about the excitement of going to, to London still–

KD: Yeah, of course, yeah.

FR: Which I, I recognise myself as well, even though I've been living in the south east now for five or six years.

KD: Yeah, you get a train, I get a train, you know, coronavirus permitting, get a train into London, go to Ronnie Scott's and I'm there in an hour, you know, it's, you can't do that in Derry [laughs].

FR: [laughs] No, I know what you mean [laughs], and then the other question that I've been asking everyone, although I haven't quite found a form for this question I'm happy with, but sort of looking back over that whole period, and especially having left Northern Ireland, are there any kind of moments or periods or events that you remember as especially important, looking back now?

KD: When I left, for, over the, over the–?

FR: Since you've left, in kind of settling here or in kind of–

KD: In settling here, well, the biggest event for me was the birth of my grand-, of my daughter, yeah, it was the birth of my daughter was the sort of, it was the, it was, it was the, yeah, the biggest, the biggest event in terms of, of settling and deciding to stay here, and I remember, I mean, it's really interesting you say that, again, this is anecdotal, but it coincided with the first hunger strike, and this is, well, it's just be careful how you use this bit of information, but I was still involved with Clann, and I was telling you about the sort of

the ambiguity about sort of republicans and Stickies and Provos and stuff like that, and Raymond McCartney, who was the guy that I went to the, to, I went to primary school with him and secondary school and grew up with him and stuff like that, and he was a hunger striker on the first hunger strike–

FR: Was he?

KD Yeah, and he was, a pretty rough time he was going through, and there was another friend of mine, so he was up in Leeds at the time, and he came down and he said to me, he says we need to do something now, me, me and you, we know him, we grew up with him, and it was an invitation, you know, to get involved in something heavily, heavy, and I remember turning, saying then John, I can't do that, I've got a daughter, I've just had a wee daughter, wee girl, I can't do that, and I suppose that's, it was a, was a point at which I decided I can't do it, you know.

FR: That's really interesting, that's like, the, the moment where–

KD: I realised where I was in a sense, you know, I can't, I cannot do that, cos I was mid-twenties at the time, and I did feel for Bugsy, he was a friend of mine's and all the rest of it, his path of jail, but, you know, John Cummins, another guy, another friend, John came along and says we need, he came down from part of Yorkshire, down near Hull, he said we have to do something, and I said listen, I can't, and in a sense I was, I felt I was betraying, but on the other hand it was the right thing to do as well I think, you know, so we settled, so family in that sense, family settles you, is what I'm saying, what I mean, yeah.

FR: Absolutely, and it's interesting you were saying your daughter likes Derry and still is kind of affectionate about Derry.

KD: Hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, fam-, but family settles, family settles and those sort of things.

FR: That makes sense, alright, well, thank you so much.

KD: No problem, no prob–

FR: That, well, I was going to, I was going to say your name [laughs].

KD: What?

FR: I was going to say your name there, which I won't do, but thank you so much, that was, that was, that was great, that was really, really interesting, thank you so much.

KD: Okay, good.

FR: I'll just, I'm always worried when I stop this it's going to–

INTERVIEW ENDS