

## L19: DAMIAN MOORE INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Damian Moore [pseudonym]
Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interview summarisers: Dr Hilary White and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single audio file with no section breaks

L19: Damian Moore	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 01:26:45	Duration: 01:26:45	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	One of six children, he was born in Scotland to Scottish Protestant parents with 'Irish ancestry somewhere along the line'. In 1950, when Damian was nine months old, the family moved to Newcastle in Co. Down where he father worked as a forester in Tollymore Forest Park, which was a 'fairy tale' place to grow up. Attended school in Downpatrick, where 'everybody hit' the pupils, from prefects to teachers. Speaks of having had 'a total British grammar school upbringing'. Describes the NI of his youth as a 'closed society' where 'nobody wanted to stand out' or 'give much away'. Outside of school he became interested in folk music and 'got into playing the fiddle a lot'. Explains that the folk music scene he became part of in the Downpatrick area was religiously mixed.			
10:00–19:59	Believes that by not being taught about Irish culture and music in school, NI Protestants 'were being cheated out of something that was just priceless'. Says that while his family visited Scotland occasionally, they had no family there and 'cut off all ties' when they moved. Despite not being from NI, his parents were 'pretty unionist', but were not sectarian. While he didn't have Catholic friends at school because they 'weren't even allowed to take the same bus', he did 'branch out because of the music', and also through his interest in basketball, which was popular in Catholic schools. Reveals that he 'didn't think that much about politics' until he moved to Belfast in 1969, where he had his 'eyes opened'.			
20:00–29:59	He attended QUB, where he studied botany, and got involved in the Belfast folk music scene, which was 'completely mixed' and quite 'nationalistically minded'. Even though 'the Troubles were at their height', he loved living in the city and describes his five years there as 'a fascinating time'. That Belfast was 'incredibly poor' was an eye-opener; so too was the fact that 'there was a substantial number of people who actually didn't want to be British'. In this regard, his experiences filled in a lot of the gaps left by attending a 'purely British grammar school'. Thinks the folk music boom of that era provided 'an awakening' for both Catholics and Protestants to 'the actual canon of music they were sitting on'.			
30:00–39:59	It was during this time that his interest in journalism developed, as he felt both the horror and the 'terrible' excitement of witnessing 'civil mayhem'. Living in Belfast also attuned him to 'a certain degree of military activity everywhere'. At this time he was mostly 'fixated on the music' and not thinking about other career paths. Found the traditional music circle 'very inclusive' in that anyone who played an instrument could join in. States that 'by 1974 it looked as if the Troubles were going to go on forever', so he moved to London to pursue music and ended up playing full-time in a two-man band for about ten years. London felt 'more Irish' than the place he'd left behind, as at that point there were 'very large' numbers of people from 'western and south-western Ireland' living there.			
40:00–49:59	His parents were sorry to see him emigrate, though by then were used to their children leaving NI. In London he wrote short articles for the <i>Irish Post</i> , but journalism 'didn't really take a hold' until the late 1980s. He thinks that he stayed			

	<p>in London for too long, not leaving until the late 1990s. During this time he mixed mainly with other Irish people, although there was 'quite a cosmopolitan crowd' in pubs and clubs because of the European interest in Irish music. After London he spent two years in Spain and then moved back to Ireland, thinking he had 'closed the door on England'. However, that changed over a decade later when he met his current partner, who is Welsh, and with whom he has been living for the past eight years in a village near Bath in Somerset. Feels that the Irish community in London is not as 'coherent' as it was when he first moved there.</p>
50:00–59:59	<p>Says that he never felt like an outsider in London as a NI Protestant, nor did he encounter anti-Irish racism. Explains that rebel songs had 'almost become part of the national canon' by the 1980s, and that collections for the republican cause in NI were 'part of the fabric' of the folk music scene at that time. Talks about the changing make-up of the Irish community in 1980s London and the dwindling of the 'pub scene' as home entertainment grew in popularity. Discusses writing a regular column for the <i>Irish Post</i> and later editing the newspaper, and finding the latter role unsatisfying.</p>
01:00:00–01:09:59	<p>While in London he kept abreast of NI news and travelled back regularly to see family, who were in Ballymena at this stage. Describes such visits as 'a rest cure' and says he would always try to incorporate a trip to Tollymore. Explains that he moved to Cádiz in Spain mainly to learn Spanish, but found it difficult to become fluent and also struggled to work remotely from there as a journalist in an era when the internet was still in its infancy. Says that when he first moved to London he didn't think of himself as an immigrant, partly because he always thought he would one day go back to live in NI, and also because of the 'ease of getting back to Ireland', especially when air travel became cheaper in the 1990s. Still regards NI as 'a fantastic place to go back to', especially Tollymore.</p>
01:10:00–01:19:59	<p>Describes the end of the Troubles as 'a big, big relief' that brought economic benefits to NI in the form of increased tourism and business investment. States that if he wasn't with his partner he would 'be back home in Ireland'. Comments on the sense of reserve that his English neighbours often exhibit, which 'wouldn't be possible in Ireland'. Says he calls himself Irish 'just purely by default and almost a shorthand', since it is easier than having to explain his background. He later qualifies this by suggesting his 'default' identity might be better expressed as 'European'. Reveals that he voted to stay in the EU in the 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK.</p>
01:20:00–01:26:45	<p>He thinks there are some signs positive change occurring in Belfast, and that 'people do mix', but he also notes that significant levels of poverty still exist. In terms of NI's political future, he suggests that 'a problem that was eight hundred years in the making is probably not going to be solved in twenty years'. He makes it clear that, despite his fondness for rebel songs, he is not a republican. Home to him means Co. Down, to where he hopes to return to live at some point in the future. He ends by marvelling at how such a small place like NI, which has 'the strangest history', can have 'such a grip on people'.</p>