

M02 CECIL LOWRY INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Cecil Lowry
Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interview summariser: Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single track with no section breaks

M02: Cecil Lowry	Start time: 00:00	Finish time: 01:54:39	Duration: 01:54:39	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born 1948 in Downpatrick, Co. Down. An only child. Recalls family background, including his father's experiences in Second World War. Recalls his work at RAF Bishops Court near Downpatrick and working as a steward at local British Legion club. Early memories of going to Protestant grammar school in the town.			
10:00–19:59	Describes growing up in Downpatrick as 'idyllic' but also expresses his 'love-hate' relationship with it because of its claustrophobia. Intense dislike of secondary school. Developed a love of sport, particularly cross-country running and sailing. Became NI junior sailing champion at 16. Recalls being one of the first Protestants to play table tennis in a Catholic league. Recalls his 'hatred' of religion and how having religion 'rammed down my throat' influenced his becoming an atheist.			
20:00–29:59	Recalls postwar integrated housing scheme in Downpatrick and harmonious Catholic-Protestant relations. 'I don't recall any sectarian tensions amongst the community that I lived in up until 1966, which is the year I left'. Describes an occasion in his late teens when his mother reproached him for taking Protestant neighbour's daughter for a drive as 'one of the trigger points in my life where I thought there's something not right about this place'.			
30:00–39:59	Recalls events that led to him moving to Sunderland aged 18 to train as a PE teacher. 'I was one of the very, very few to leave, in fact I can't think of anybody else from own particular class of 1966 who didn't stay'.			
40:00–49:59	Recalls being made welcome in Sunderland but also being homesick during his first term. Sporting activities helped, so that 'by the end of year one I'd been inculcated into the culture and made lots and lots and lots of friends, never felt isolated because I'm Northern Irish, didn't feel any different to anyone else, other than my accent'. Few memories of civil rights protests back in NI: 'it's not something that I thought too much about [...] when I went back in those years I don't, like I say, I don't recall ever being frightened'. Met his wife in Sunderland.			
50:00–59:59	Describes NI as home but admits he could not live there owing to prevailing sense of claustrophobia. Recalls teaching in schools in Sunderland and Bishop Auckland, then changing to a career in sports centre management. Moved to Forfar for five years, then to North Allerton, then Durham, then Saudi Arabia for three years, where his wife and family joined him after the first year.			
01:00:00–01:09:59	Appointed manager of Armitage Centre, University of Manchester in June 1986. Settled in Stockport, to where his elderly parents in NI moved to be near him and his family. Both parents died within two years of relocating.			
01:10:00–01:19:59	Discusses his sons' attitude towards their cultural identity and NI heritage. Few memories of the effect of the Troubles in GB and no personal experience of hostility in England. No interest in politics. Recalls how childhood trips to the Republic evoked 'the feeling of going into a foreign country', which he attributes to 'being brought up in a Protestant culture'.			

01:20:00–01:29:59	Recalls his solo cycling tour of Ireland in aid of local charity shortly after his retirement in the early 2000s. Notes how ‘the people in the Republic were much friendlier towards me than the people in the north’. Admits to having no contact with Irish community associations or centres in England: ‘I guess that I felt they were all Catholic-based’. Averse to ‘Irishism’ in England but ‘could live with a united Ireland’ provided it was a secular state. Keen fan of Irish rugby team.
01:30:00–01:39:59	Speculates about applying for an Irish passport and purchasing holiday home in Ireland. Recalls doing distance-learning course at University of Leicester, then publishing a book on his father’s military history in the East Surrey regiment, which led to his writing two more books, one on NI physician Frank Pantridge.
01:40:00–01:49:59	Expresses no regret at having left NI when young and his continuing affection for it. Admits to identifying as both British and Irish in GB: ‘I say I’m Irish but I say I’m from that funny part of the world, the funny part of Ireland, that top bit, and that’s the one where [...] a lot of us are not quite sure what we are’. Distinguishes between home being ‘where I live just down the road in Stockport’ and the ‘family home’ in Downpatrick: ‘as you’re approaching Downpatrick you come through the hills and the cathedral is straight in front of you, up on the hill, and [...] it always tugs at me as soon as I drive down there, that, that’s home’.
01:50:00–01:54:39	Mentions other family members who might be interested in being interviewed for the project. Recalls tracking down cousins in Germany on his father’s side and meeting one of them during her visit to NI.