INTERVIEW M07: DEIRDRE QUILL

Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interviewee: Deirdre Quill
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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.

BH: Okay, so that's it going. So I'm back in Leeds Irish Health and Homes [laughs], it's the twenty-sixth of November and I'm here with Deirdre, who also sat in on the interview yesterday.

DQ: I did, yeah.

BH: So Deirdre, just before we begin, could you just introduce yourself for the tape and just say what it is you do here?

DQ: Ah ha, my name is Deirdre Quill and I work here at Leeds Irish Health and Homes. I'm the team leader here, so I'm responsible for basically our community support services, so I have a team that have one-to-one case loads supporting Irish people, a lot of them older Irish people, with hospital visits, health care issues, welfare, benefits issues, befriending, bereavement, all that kind of thing. Some of that support's been over many, many years, so that's one of the lovely things that we can do here, we can support people for years rather than six sessions and you're out, kind of thing.

BH: You get to know people then.

DQ: Get to know people, and my team also runs a lunch club on a Monday and a Friday, up to forty people having their hot dinner. We've got a coffee morning, we've run a painting and for pleasure art group, which is next door, or no, it's the poetry session that's next door, so we have a painting for pleasure group, we've got a writing group, we've got a women's group, we've got an allotment, all sorts of things, it's basically old-fashioned community social work that we do.

BH: And you're busy by the sounds of it.

DQ: Aye, we're busy, it's great, I love it, yeah.

BH: Okay, so I met you at the annual general meeting in Manchester, must have been a month back now at least.

DQ: That's right.

BH: Can you tell me why you were interested in the project?

DQ: Well, it was the first time I'd been to an Irish in Britain AGM, you know, so I was taking a lot in, so then when yourselves stood up and gave the presentation on this research I was, well, coming from the North myself I was immediately interested, and then when you said, you know, initially it's for people from, living in London, Manchester and Glasgow I thought oh excuse me [laughs], you know, cos without even thinking I could think of three people who would be really, really good for this research project, so, you know, I issued a bit of a challenge and you guys rose to it really and said yeah, that you'd be happy to come to Leeds, because, you know, I think this research is very welcome and long overdue, you know, cos I've read loads of research about, you know, Irish migration to England, but what is missing very much so are stories from the North because that's a very particular set of experiences that need recording really and people need to know what life has been like for people from the North, both living there and coming here.

BH: Okay, to that end then what about your own family background? Where were your parents from?

DQ: Both my parents are dead, but my father was very Kerry, from a place near Tralee, my mother was from Cork, a place near Fermoy, and they met in the dancehalls of north London just before the war, and they got together and had my oldest sister there, and then the war started and they thought right, we're getting out of here, and they got on the train and on the boat and they ended up in Belfast [laughs].

BH: How did that happen?

DQ: Talk about out of the frying pan and into the fire. Well, you know, family stories Barry, you're never very sure, but, you know, they said it was the first boat that they could get out of Liverpool, took them to Belfast, but, you know, with hindsight there may have been other family stories as to why they didn't want to go back to either Cork or Kerry or indeed Dublin, but yeah, they went out of the frying pan into the fire and landed in Belfast and lived there for the rest of their lives, had the rest of their children there, myself, so there was four of us, my oldest sister, then two brothers and then myself, all, as I say, my sister born in London, but all the rest of us were all born in Belfast, we're from the Falls Road in Belfast.

BH: So you were you born on the Falls yourself?

DQ: Ah ha, yeah, I was yeah, yeah, born there and lived most of my life there, well, actually no, technically I've lived most of my life now in England.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

DQ: Yeah, I've passed that cusp, you know, that cusp where you're here longer than you were there.

BH: Yeah, I think I have passed that myself.

DQ: Have you passed that cusp?

BH: Yeah, yeah. What did your parents do?

DQ: My father was a tailor and my mother was a dressmaker, and I couldn't run a stitch through a piece of material if you paid me [laughs].

BH: Right, did he have his own shop or what then or–?

DQ: He did, but he also worked, so he did a bit of work for himself, but he also worked for a firm called Parsons and Parsons, it's right in the centre of Belfast. My mother did all her work from the house, so there was always a sewing machine going in the front room, she had a beautiful, beautiful sewing machine, you know, in this gorgeous walnut casing, Singer sewing machine, when she was, as a child, I can still smell it now, I can see it in my mind, I can smell it when you opened the doors, so as a child, you know, you'd open the doors of the sewing machine and you lifted the machine up and then there was all these tins of buttons and zips and, cos you wasted nothing in those days, you know, you wasted nothing, you took the buttons off clothes and you took the zips out of clothes cos you could use them again when you were doing dressmaking, so she used to take in clothes for alterations, she worked from home, yeah.

BH: And did they make a decent living out of that?

DQ: Well, we weren't we weren't rich, so to speak, but we always had a car, the house was my mother's territory and the car was my father's territory, so we didn't have much, but we always had the car and we always had a summer holiday.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: We'd always drive down to Cork.

BH: Well, I was going to ask about, is there where holidays were then?

DQ: That's right, went down to my mother's people cos they were still on the farm, my auntie Eily and my uncle Larry still had the family farm that my mother had been born on and, so actually I had a really lucky childhood really. I was the youngest, so I was the baby and every Sunday we would go out in the car, we'd go to maybe Lough Neagh or we'd go to up Cave Hill or we would go down to Newtownards or Bangor or, you know, see the sea, every Sunday, and every summer we'd pack the car full of clothes and take them down to my mother's people, down on the farm and I'd spend my summer holidays with all the freedom that the farm gave, really lucky.

BH: So you had a partial urban upbringing, but at the same time you could go to the farm.

DQ: Every summer.

BH: Every summer.

DQ: It was wonderful, yeah, so, so even through like, the hard times, you know, even through the Troubles, we'd get the hell out and go down there for two weeks, yeah, yeah, so you'd leave you'd leave all the murder and mayhem behind and have this blissful holiday, you know, on a dairy farm in, by the river Blackwater [laughs].

BH: What did your parents think about Belfast when they came? You know, it was obviously, you know, growing up in the west of Ireland's quite a different thing to Belfast, and they've spent time in north London, but then, you know, Belfast would be a different type of city.

DQ: I, I don't really know because obviously, I mean, they're from right down in the south of Ireland, not the west, because of course I came along quite late in life, so I don't know what they made of it when they first arrived. I suppose their priority was getting work and if you think about it the South of Ireland at that time wasn't an easy place to make a living in, so, and my father I think got work quite quickly in Parsons and Parsons, he worked there all of his life that he was in Belfast, so apart from that I don't really know because I obviously, I was born in 1957, but, you know, they still had vivid memories of the war, although they didn't talk about the Belfast blitz at all, they never talked about that, but, you know, they never ever in my hearing talked about living anywhere else other than Belfast, you know, the Falls Road was quite a tight community and, you know, they clearly must've been happy there.

BH: To stay.

DQ: To stay.

BH: If they stayed they must've been happy, yeah.

DQ: Yeah, to stay.

BH: Well, what are your memories of growing up there then? You said it was a tight community in the Falls Road. What are your memories of growing up in Belfast?

DQ: Well, as I say, I was born 1957 and so I can remember Belfast before the Troubles, so in 1968 then I'd have been eleven, **[00:10:00]** so I have memories of how tedious and boring a place Belfast was, and as you know nothing ever happened, tedious and boring and of course if you were a Catholic life was very restricted, you know, in terms of my brothers finding it hard to get a job and things like that, so, so actually when the Troubles started, you know, for a young teenager it was great [laughs].

BH: That's a really interesting perspective.

DQ: It was, it really and truly was, of course I didn't entirely understand what was going on, but all I knew was all of a sudden things hotted up and, you know, cos if you think about it,

you know, like, a twelve, thirteen-year-old child, what's better, watching *Blue Peter* on the television or joining in a riot or building barricades on your street or, you know.

BH: Right, so up to this point you remember life as being, as you said, restrictive and monotonous, a bit boring, and all of a sudden the Troubles start and some of those restrictions were removed and you're able to do things that you couldn't do.

DQ: Absolutely, it was great, it was like, I have vivid memories of thinking this is just like being in a television programme, you know, just like being in a film, exciting, exhilarating, stuff going on, you know, half of which I didn't really understand, but, you know, yeah, it was great.

BH: Well, just in terms of that then, so you're around about ten or eleven whenever, sort of 1968, 1969.

DQ: Yeah, yeah.

BH: Before that, what was everyday life like? So, for example, in terms of mixing with Protestants and things like that, did that happen?

DQ: No, no. I would have been probably [pauses], wait'll we see, I'd have probably been fourteen or fifteen before I knowingly met my first Protestant.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

DQ: Or knowingly met my first English person who wasn't a British soldier, and that was through an organisation called Corrymeela.

BH: Oh I know it, yeah.

DQ: Do you know Corrymeela, yes, well, when the Falls was burning there was a group of us children, and I don't even quite understand how this happened, but there was a group of us children who were taken up to Ballycastle, which is where there Corrymeela community has its residential area and, I suppose for respite thinking back on it, that'll have been what it was, and that's where I met my first middle-class person and my first Protestants because Corrymeela, and first English person, cos Corrymeela is an organisation, it's an ecumenical organisation, non-denominational, and its sole purpose is to build bridges between people, and so it was beavering away in the background trying to repair some of the damage being done by the Troubles even from the very early days, so yeah, so by great fortune I got involved with Corrymeela and it really saved me I suppose.

BH: When did you go on that trip to Corrymeela? Was that when you were a teenager or was that much later?

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, I'd have been, I was still at school, I'd probably be doing my O-levels, so I'd be about sixteen, something like that, sixteen.

BH: When you were growing up before that in Belfast were you aware that there was, it was a divided city? Was that something that you were conscious of?

DQ: Not really. I mean, my parents, obviously from Cork and Kerry, were republicans, you know, so I was raised in a republican household, you know, with, so we had the radiogram record player and the records beside it, so there'd be, you know, Elvis LP, there'd be the Val Doonican LP, and then there'd be rebel songs, stack of rebel songs and, you know, so we were, it was all, the republican outlook was just in my DNA, but my parents never raised us to be bitter at all, you know, that's a Belfast phrase, yeah, yeah, weren't reared to be bitter, so we weren't reared to think negatively about Protestants at all. We were reared with great suspicion about the English for obvious reasons, but not Protestants and in fact, in fact, my eldest brother married a Protestant girl, and that's another story. They had to get out in the end, they had to get out and, they emigrated to Canada.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: Mm hmm, in fact, both my brothers had to get out and emigrated.

BH: Both went to Canada?

DQ: No, interestingly my eldest brother went to Canada and the brother next to me went to Papua New Guinea, can you believe, cos he'd had a job with Philips at the time.

BH: The electronics company?

DQ: Electronics company, and somehow or other this opportunity arrived arose with Philips in Papua New Guinea, so he married, he and his girlfriend got married and off they want to Papua New Guinea, by a long circuitous route via Rhodesia. Papua New Guinea, then Australia, then Rhodesia and then when the Troubles started in Rhodesia they moved over to Canada to stay with my other brother, so they're all in Canada now, the boys, yeah.

BH: That's some journey.

DQ: The boys, the boys went to Canada, yeah.

BH: So you said your parents were republicans. Now would they be the same type of republicans as Belfast republicans? For example, how did they react when the Troubles began?

DQ: [pauses] I can remember the British Army arriving in the streets, in the house, in the garden, you know, you'd get up to go to school in the morning there'd be a British soldier sitting, crouched down by the, they'd have opened the garden gate and they'd be sitting down in behind the wall, so vivid memories of that. My father really didn't like this at all, but my mother felt sorry for them, so I was one of those children who took them cups of tea out initially, you know, just, here take 'em those biscuits out, cos of course she had two sons of her own, that was her outlook on it, you know, they're some mother's son, but my father just kept his mouth shut and said nothing really, and then, and again, I don't know why this

happened cos as a child people don't explain things to you do they, then it turned and, you know, all of a sudden you weren't taking, you weren't being sent out with tea and biscuits and, you know, the whole, I can remember the whole atmosphere changing and hostility being in the air and the raids starting, you know, the British Army raiding your houses and dragging the men out cos of internment, I mean, that was the clincher, that was the absolute real turning point when internment was brought in.

BH: And you can recall that?

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, pfff, you know, I can remember as a child there being a visible lack of men in the area, you know, older than sixteen and younger than sixty, cos they were being lifted, and I know that sounds like an exaggeration, but it's the truth. My father never was because he was older, and by this stage both my brothers were spending as much time away from the Falls as they possibly could.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: With their, they'd be staying over with their girlfriends' families you see.

BH: And why was that? So that they wouldn't be–

DQ: So you wouldn't get lifted, you wouldn't get lifted by the army cos they were prime age group you see, yeah, so yeah, so, we, I was one of those children banging the bin lids when the army was coming into the area, you know.

BH: So that sounds like another change happens then, initially when it begins to happen it was like a liberation from the boredom of–

DQ: Ah ha, yes [laughs].

BH: The monotonous lifestyle, but it sounds like, you know, as it escalates and internment comes in like, the atmosphere changes again then.

DQ: It absolutely did, it absolutely did **[00:20:00]** and it was like, oh my God, they're the enemy cos they're doing this to us, they're doing this to us, and then oh right, well, we'll have to keep them out, okay, so we'd all get rallied up to, you know, help build the barricades, lifting the flagstones, I mean, it's terrible now when you think about it, but, you know, but again you see, as a child this is great fun, as a teenager, as a teenager can you imagine the exhilaration of defending your neighbourhood, you know, from the British Army, with stones, this is why to this day, you know, I look at places like Palestine and I can feel for them, I really can feel for those young people, yeah, so lifting the flagstones up and putting them on the trolley, on the trolley thing and wheeling them up so that the fellas could build the barricades and at the top of the street to keep the Saracen armoured tanks out and, bringing the tea, but this time bringing the tea up to the men on the barricades and making the petrol bombs, collecting the milk bottles and the lemonade bottles for the petrol bombs and all that kind of stuff, was fabulous [laughs]. Does that sound terrible?

BH: No, not at all, not at all.

DQ: You know, and if you think about it for, you know, someone who at the stage was, you know, a young adolescent, you know, to give somebody a cause to kind of fight and die for at that stage in their life, you know, focuses your attention, it really does focus your attention and give you something to put your energy into.

BH: So you're an adolescent at this stage. What about school then, in the midst of all this?

DQ: School.

BH: Does that continue on or is that becoming–

DQ: Actually it does.

BH Less of a focus?

DQ: Oh no, my mother made absolutely sure no matter what had happened the night before, you know, whether we'd been raided by the army or the street had been, we'd been all out in the street until two o'clock in the morning, she made absolutely sure that I was washed and dressed and ready to go to school. School wasn't far away, I could walk to school. I went to St Dominic's, I passed the eleven-plus and I went to St Dominic's High School.

BH: Is that a grammar?

DQ: It was a grammar school, yeah, and it was probably, it was on the Falls Road, and probably like, a fifteen minute walk for me, so I used to walk home for my dinner and then walk for the afternoon classes and that, but yeah, I mean, she made absolutely sure that school and my homework, I was never allowed to leave the house till I had my homework done.

BH: And then after the homework [indecipherable; laughs].

DQ: [laughs] So I'd be drawing my maps, tracing my maps of Africa [laughs], doing my quadratic equations [laughs], have you finished, right out you go then [laughs], God bless her, you know, God bless her, she made sure, you know.

BH: Did this cause your parents, or at least your mum anyway, was she worried about this, what was happening on the doorstep?

DQ: I mean, my poor mother, you know, she was rearing a family of four with murder and mayhem going on round her, you know, and the boys in particular she was very worried about, particularly my brother who, not only did he marry a Protestant girl, but he worked on the Shankill Road, which was, Shankill Road runs parallel to the Falls Road, but the Falls Road is the Catholic area and the Shankill Road is a Protestant area, so he used to work in the furniture shop on the Shankill Road and he would still be coming home to his mummy

for his dinner, every day of the week, and he used to have to change his route for fear anybody was following him, but he still would come home to his mummy, for his dinner, you know, but she was, you know, she was, well, her mental health, you know, the strain. I used to think, you know, Barry, I used to think that being bad with your nerves was a normal thing because there were so many women who were bad with their nerves, I thought it was something like having your period, you know, that it was a normal thing, and it took me a long time, looking back, to realise it wasn't normal, well, it was normal for them, for that situation, but in actual fact it was the nervous strain that particularly the women were under because of course they were trying to hold it all together weren't they, with all the stuff going on all around them.

BH: It's funny that phrase as well, bad with your nerves like, I always heard that growing up, and I never hear it, well, it's definitely a Northern Irish phrase, bad with your nerves, where, you know, nobody would say bad with your nerves I think, English people, you know, it's a particular kind of phrase.

DQ: No, it is, she's bad with her nerves, meaning, I suppose nowadays we'd say suffering extreme stress [laughs].

BH: I mean, I remember interviewing somebody else and actually they were, similar kind of situation, but based in kind of west Tyrone, and it was a tightly knit republican area, and the worry was that actually the sons would become, you know, involved in the republican movement.

DQ: Exactly.

BH: And then they would get hurt.

DQ: Yes.

BH: The other thing they worried about, they wanted their sons and daughters to go to university, to do well, and that they maybe become involved in these things and that they would take them off that pathway, kind of out. Was that something that your parents would've been worried about?

DQ: Oh yeah, I mean, to say my mother and father were both republican sympathisers, they wouldn't have wanted any of us, you know, just saying for instance got involved with the IRA, because, well, for obvious reasons, you know, they would have been mortified and so when my two brothers left, not exactly at the same time, couple of years between the two of them, I mean, she was, my mother was absolutely bereft, but she knew it was the right thing, you know, get out, just get out, get out of here.

BH: Yeah, could you say a bit more about that actually, the case of your brother, marrying the Protestant girl and why he had to leave? What happened around that?

DQ: Well, my brother's a very gregarious sort of a fella, you know, and he would get on with anybody, absolutely anybody, you know, he doesn't have a bigoted bone in his body, and in

a sense he was quite naïve. I suppose he was also at an age where he thought he was pretty invincible, you know, kind of nothing would, you know, like, ach mummy stop annoying me and I'll be fine, I'll be fine, I'll go back to work a different way, but the thing is of course we would have the news on, we would have the radio on all the time and we'd be listening to the news on the hour, every hour, partly because we'd be terrified there'd be another body found cos, well, that was happening all the time.

BH: And you were seeing this on the news?

DQ: Oh the radio, we'd have the radio on and, you know, another body would be found in such and such a back street and, you know, my mother would be terrified, literally every time that would happen she'd be terrified that it would be one or other of my brothers because of course you didn't actually have to be involved in anything in those days, you know, to be picked off, particularly during the period of the time of the Shankill Butchers, the Shankill Butchers, he worked on the Shankill Road, you know, for God's sake, you literally didn't know when the next body was going to be found and who it was going to be, it was all quite random, they'd just pick off people walking through the Catholic areas. I forget your question, what was your question?

BH: Asking the reasons that lay behind him eventually having to migrate out of Northern Ireland.

DQ: So they moved to, they got married and they had two kids and they were living in an area called Rathcoole–

BH: Oh yeah.

DQ: Which was predominantly a Protestant area, but in those days it was a new housing estate, so although it was predominantly Protestant it had that kind of new feel to it, new council estate, and everything was fine for a while and then one day they got visited by the parish priest, I think it was when the, my niece was born and of course the neigh-, I mean, it's such a stupid thing to do, and of course people would see, you know, the Catholic priest coming into the area and which house is he going to, and that's when, you know, the threatening letters started and, you know, stuff getting put through the letterbox and that, and that's when they said we've got to get out of here.

BH: So like, loyalist paramilitaries and things, effectively saying get out?

DQ: Yeah, we know who you are, you know, and it's only a matter of time then, isn't it, before something terrible happens.

BH: So at that stage then could he have if he wanted moved back to the Falls or something like that or was that out of the question?

DQ: No, I think that would be out of the question, I think by this stage by this stage things you could see things were not going to get better, and of course they had two small children, do we want to rear our children in this, so my sister-in-law had by that stage two

sisters already in Canada, so they contacted them and they claimed my brother and his family, so they went over to stay with her people who were already in Canada and they were there, they're still there to this day.

BH: There to this day.

DQ: Yeah, yeah.

BH: I suppose as well you were saying they had two young children, there's a whole set of questions would attach to that, what church do you bring them up in, what school you send them to, that would be an ongoing hassle, the whole way.

DQ: Absolutely, the whole way through, the whole way through, whereas in Canada it's just not an issue at all. **[00:30:00]**

BH: You mentioned about your other brother as well, Papua New Guinea, Rhodesia. So what motivated him to move?

DQ: Better life.

BH: Better life.

DQ: Better life. They, he married a Catholic girl, they're very religious and, but yeah, it was to move for a better life and both their children were born abroad, but, as I say, they are all together now in Canada.

BH: Okay, so you done your GCSEs there you said.

DQ: I did, yeah.

BH: After that did you do, stay on to do A-levels or what?

DQ: Uh huh.

BH: So what subjects did you study?

DQ: Well, I was the first person in our family ever to stay on in school, past fourteen, so and that was quite that was a very important thing for me and I have to say that the education that the Dominican nuns gave us through the Troubles was just brilliant, and how they held it together, literally, once you walked through those gates, there could be riots going on on the Falls Road, but just get your head down girls, they'd say and just carry on, I remember one time there was a helicopter [laughs], landed in the playing field because, right, so, so on the Falls Road you've got on one side the education establishments, so on the one side you've got the church, the primary school, the secondary school, the grammar school and then the teaching training college, so it wa-, I know, I know people who were baptised in the church, went to St Catherine's primary school, passed their eleven-plus, went to St Dominic's Grammar School and then went on to teacher training, then went back to the

church to get married and teach in the primary school, right, so when I say it was a close-knit–

BH: Community, it was literally within that space, like.

DQ: You know, there were people could live their whole lives doing that. So that was on one side of the road and on the other side of the road there was the health estate I suppose you could call it, which was the Royal Victoria Hospital, which was big even in those days, it had really good children's hospital, but anyway, during one particular incident, I can't even remember what it was, a helicopter, a British Army helicopter was, tried to drop people, presumably injured people, into the Royal Victoria Hospital, but they misjudged it and they landed on our playing field, so we were sitting doing, I can't even remember what the subject was, and we looked out the window and this helicopter landing out of the sky [laughs], and the nuns are going, come on girls, pay attention [laughs], pay attention, get on with your work now [laughs], ah dear, so yeah, so what subject, you asked me about subjects I did, English, French and geography.

BH: Right, and did you at that time, did you have an idea in your mind about what it was you wanted to do?

DQ: No, because, no, I didn't, because my experience of life was really quite restricted at that stage, but, you know, the nuns had an expectation that their girls would go on to university. Now, as I say, I knew nobody who had even stayed on at school let alone go to university, but I had good friends at school and they all were quite clear that they were going on to university, so I thought well, I'll do the same, my friends came to England and Scotland to go to university, but I–

BH: Is that right?

DQ: Yeah, so, but I stayed at Queen's, I applied to go to Queen's. I actually applied, I applied to go to St Mary's teacher training college, following that well-trodden path, cos I could still go home for my lunch [laughs], but I was too young, they wouldn't let me in cos I did my eleven-plus a year early and they rejected me, which I consider to be a very close shave.

BH: Yes, cos you would have ended up there.

DQ: Yeah, yeah, who knows, but Queen's University of course did, they'd no age restrictions, so as long as you've got the qualifications that's needed that's fine, so I went to Queen's to study English and French.

BH: Right, and when was that, when did you go?

DQ: So I would have been eighteen, seventeen, eighteen. I was born in nineteen fifty–

BH: '58, '57?

DQ: '57 I was born in, so that's, what's that, '74, '74.

BH: Right, so this really is the height of the Troubles.

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, but you see I'd gotten heavily involved with Corrymeela then, as youth leader, so all through all of this story I had been involved with the Corrymeela youth group, it's called an encounter group.

BH: Okay, yeah.

DQ: Where you would get to go away you see, you would get to go away once a month, up to Ballycastle, fantastic sea air, right on top of the cliffs, for basically an encounter weekend, where, you know, you'd be in a group which would be half Protestant and half Catholic, and I kept that all the way, up that, all the way through my A-levels, and then by the time I went to university I became a youth leader for Corrymeela, so we were running, I helped to run some of the youth groups, which kind of helped me with the university experience, you know, it helped me because I was socialising with people for whom university was a normal thing.

BH: Sure, yeah.

DQ: Even though I still lived at home, I still lived on the Falls Road. I moved out in my third year.

BH: Into what, like a, like a–?

DQ: Just a student house.

BH: Student house.

DQ: Over in the holy land, it's called.

BH: Oh I know about it [laughs].

DQ: [laughs] Yeah, Carmel Street.

BH: Right, so what was university like then in 1974 in Belfast?

DQ: Well [sighs], I was like a fish out of water really, I didn't really understand the rules at all, I couldn't get a handle on this at all [pauses]. It was very hands off, well, I know university is, but nobody'd prepared me for this, very hands off and, but I loved it, I loved the student life, you know, all the student life opening up for me, absolutely loved it, you know, going to the bars and the students' union, spent a lot of my time in the students' union, music, opening up, you know, a whole world of music opening up. I didn't get involved in politics at all.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: No, didn't get involved in politics at all, and, you know, most of my spare time I was a Corrymeela volunteer.

BH: Right, okay, in terms of socialising then, I mean, the Falls Road has lots of bars and clubs and things like that. What, who would have been your main friendship group and where would you have socialised at as you were growing up?

DQ: My friendship group would be my school friends and the kids in the street, cos we would play in the street as children, so neighbours.

BH: Neighbours, and did that change when you went to university, did you meet–?

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. By the time I went to university all the kids that I would have played with in the street had all gone off and, you know, gone their own way, so I had some friends who went from St Dominic's to Queen's and some who didn't that I still stayed friends with, and I'm still friends with them to this day, you know.

BH: You mentioned some of the other people who did A-levels went off to England and Scotland to university. Why did they do that, given that Queen's is so close, on your doorstep what was the–?

DQ: [pauses] I, well, my best friend Grainne had her, she had an aunt who lived in Liverpool and her cousin was at Lancaster University so she chose Lancaster University. In fact, the first time I ever came to England, first time I ever left Ireland, was with Grainne, in the summer to come over and stay with her auntie in a place called Hunt's Cross in Liverpool, her auntie and their, all their family, and to go with her cousin to visit Lancaster University from, to prepare her for admission in the September, that was the first time I ever left Ireland.

BH: What did you think of that?

DQ: I loved it, I had a great time, her family were lovely to me, you know, but, you know, it opened my eyes, you know, and the boat journey, I loved the boat journey, it was exciting, you know, to see, it was quite an emotional thing, you know, to see your homeland disappear as you're going out, you know, the boat's taking you out, and that was the first of many, many, many ferry boat journeys between Ireland and England, but that was my first one.

BH: So when then, yourself, did you decide to move over here?

DQ: Well, when I finished Queen's I had to decide what to do, so I had an honours English degree by then and one option was to do the youth and community work course in Jordanstown, what was then Jordanstown college, it's now part of New University of Ulster. The fella that I was going out with at the time, his father taught on the course and I thought, and they were all involved in Corrymeela you see, and I thought–

BH: As well, right, okay. **[00:40:00]**

DQ: I thought that's a bit, that's a bit narrow, so I decided instead of doing youth and community work I would do social work, I'd do a social work course and so, but I just knew I didn't want to do social work in, I was exhausted, to be honest with you. The voluntary work that I was doing with Corrymeela was actually more than a full-time job and, you know, we were dealing with all sorts of, you know, we were dealing with all sorts of things and, you know, supporting people through some very, very traumatic times and, you know, doing work with prisoners' wives, prisoners' families, you know, we used to drive the minibus into, literally through burning streets, it sounds a bit dramatic, but you'd be literally driving the minibus round the barricades to take the kids out to go away for the weekend, you know, that kind of thing, and it all got very, and I was exhausted, so I thought I'll go away for a year, I'll go away with no intentions of staying, so I came to a place called Hull, right, and I chose Hull to do my social work degree because they had no exams and I had my fill of exams at Queen's University, and you could do it in a year. I thought right, I'll do that, so I got the boat and came over and got off in Liverpool and I'd never been to Hull before, I'd never visited the, so, you know, I can still to this day remember the train journey through Yorkshire, you know, through Lanc-, from Liverpool through the mountains, and I thought God this is gorgeous, this is really, really nice, and I came to Hull and did my social work degree there, so, and degree and diploma in applied social studies there. Didn't like Hull very much at all, very flat, very, you know, literally you'd get excited climbing the stairs, you know, and also it had had the, you know, the shipyards had been closed down, and, you know, it was a very deflated, it was flat in more ways than one, a very deflated place and of course having come from Belfast where people had fight in them, it was like, these people have no fight in them, this has happened to them and they've no fight in them, and I was also quite clear that I wanted to do community-based social work and Hull couldn't get me any placements doing community social work, they were all very straight, you know, child protection, court work, which I really didn't want to do, so they had to arrange for me to have my placements in Leeds, which is how come I ended up in Leeds, to do my social work placements, cos they had, Leeds had a fine tradition of community-based social work then, so yeah, all my three placements I had in Leeds, so my relationship with Hull was very tenuous, but my relationship with Leeds was getting stronger and stronger, and of course that was in the time of the Yorkshire Ripper and the whole Women Against Violence Against Women movement and I got involved in all that, you know, the Reclaim the Night marches, so I'd come from, you know [laughs], from marches up and down the Falls Road to Reclaim the Night marches, so my whole, how I understood the world was changing.

BH: Yes, so just to go back to that there, who did you go to Hull with? Did you go on your own?

SC: Yeah, completely, knew nobody.

BH: Knew nobody.

DQ: Knew nobody.

BH: And was that not quite an extraordinary thing to do, as in you just decided oh I'll go there and you went?

DQ: Yes, but it wasn't for long you see, it was only for a year and I'd be home every holidays, which I was.

BH: Were you planning at that time on coming back to Belfast at the end of it?

DQ: Oh yes, absolutely and I did, you know, I applied for jobs back in Belfast, I had every intention of coming back to Belfast, but there was no jobs.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: There was no jobs, and any of the ones that were advertised everybody knew who was going to get them, so the economy had just completely shut down, yeah, and there was no jobs to be had so, so I ended up applying for a job in Leeds as well, and got it and got a job and–

BH: Were you happy enough with that at the time?

DQ: Yeah, because I had very quickly developed friendship networks here, I mean, I think Leeds is a fantastic place and it certainly was then. It was a very political place, but in a different sense to politics at home, you know, socialism, feminism, Rock Against Racism, all of that stuff was very vibrant here, trade union movement was very active, anti-apartheid movement was very active, so I just threw myself into all that.

BH: See that's interesting because when I asked you about were you involved in any politics at Queen's University, you weren't interested at all.

DQ: No, no.

BH: So what changed do you think then?

DQ: It was a new kind of politics to me, to me, it was a new way of seeing the world because the politics at home was like, have you ever seen that Goya painting?

BH: Ah ha.

DQ: Francisco de Goya has painted this fantastic picture of two men standing in a bog, beating each other over the head, so what they're doing is just basically beating each other into the ground, and that's what politics in the North of Ireland to this day is like, and I knew I didn't want to have anything to do with that because it wasn't getting us anywhere, it was getting none of us anywhere, I was putting my energy into Corrymeela, whereas here I could I see that politics was different. I didn't get into party politics, for the same reason, it's two men standing in a bog beating each other over the head, but I got involved, and I suppose you would say in movements, different kind of, feminist movement, women's movement, very involved in that.

BH: And did these movements change your perception of things–

DQ: Absolutely.

BH: Or did you already have the perceptions and it, and it–?

DQ: Yeah, you see my mother was a very big influence on me and so when I started reading about feminism and going to these consciousness-raising groups and things like that, I realised I understood my mother a lot better and my aunties and the neighbours and all that, those big women that were part of my rearing, I understood them better and realised actually my mother was probably a feminist, you know, except in a different time, in a different place, so it all made sense to me, even though the discourse was different, if that makes sense.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

DQ: And the anti-apartheid movement and the, you know, the Palestinian movement and all that, it all made sense to me, but it was on a broader canvas, if that makes sense.

BH: Yeah, as part of these movements who were your main friendship groups? What I'm asking about I suppose really is did you know many Irish people in either Hull or Leeds at that time?

DQ: No, no, I didn't.

BH: No, from the South or from the North?

DQ: No, no. I did start going to the White Stag, I think I kind of made, was it a deliberate thing, I don't know if it was deliberate or not, so like, I think I went to the Irish centre once, I thought this isn't for me, you know, a load of people from Mayo reminiscing about, and I'd think no, this isn't for me, and then I did have one friend from Derry and she dragged me along to the White Stag one night and I had a ball, so I'd started going to the White Stag, which is just down the road here, regularly on a Tuesday night, because the Troops Out movement had a quiz on a Tuesday night and this quiz was the most anarchic experience, it was a surreal, Monty Pythonesque thing, not the kind quizzes, you wouldn't know it, you know, so yeah, so that's when I really started to get involved with the sort of pub, the Irish pub scene in Leeds, but that was quite, you know, that was quite late on, it wasn't where I went, I was too busy making a life, if you know what I mean, I was too busy working and getting my career sorted and focusing on that, but yeah, the White Stag on a Tuesday night, fantastic.

BH: So were you involved in groups like Troops Out and things then?

DQ: Not really. I mean, I had a I had a lot of friends, I would say my friendship network was in Troops Out, but I didn't actually put much work into, if you know what I mean, so I wasn't in the campaigning arm of it, I was more in the drinking and having a good time arm of it [laughs]. **[00:50:00]**

BH: [laughs] Okay, in terms of Troops Out, what was the composition like? Was it Irish people or was it mostly English people?

DQ: Mostly English people, some Irish people, but mostly English people, but English people, you know, who were who were very political and wanting to, I suppose that's the other thing, you know, I felt accepted by them and they would be quite curious about my experience and genuinely interested in where I've come from. [whispers] Just about the time.

BH: Okay, sure, what time do you need to finish at?

DQ: Well, I'm just thinking, Karen was supposed to be with you at half, was it half–

BH: Half twelve, have I got down here.

DQ: Is it half twelve?

BH: Twelve thirty.

DQ: Oh we're alright then.

BH: Or sorry, for Sinéad Cregan.

DQ: Oh Sinéad's, when's Karen?

BH: Karen is two thirty.

DQ: Oh you're alright then, sorry, you're alright, that's fine.

BH: Okay, yeah. Did you, at that time did you meet any other Irish people in Leeds–

DQ: Yeah.

BH: Like, whether from the South or from the North?

DQ: Not many, I have to say, oh through the Stag, through the White Stag I would've done because at that time, you know, it was a great place to go for music, so you, the Irish musicians would be there, used to be a place where men used to be able to go, you know, to get work. In those days, you know, they'd put the word out, they'd arrive and they'd put the word out and somebody would set them up for Friday or whatever, so you would get a lot of Irish people in there, yeah.

BH: I'm wondering about, cos you said, you know, you'd meet in the odd Irish centre or Irish club and that was, you know, sort of guys from Mayo reminiscing about home, this kind of thing. I wonder, you know, being somebody from the North, did the migrant community that was already here from the South, how did they look at the Troubles, what did they think about it, you know?

DQ: With great suspicion and, I mean, this may have just been my paranoia, but would look at you with great suspicion, you know, like, don't you be bringing any trouble in here, you know, we don't want any trouble in here now, kind of thing.

BH: Irrespective of whether that was Catholic or Protestant, they would just–

DQ: It was the voice, the accent, the accent gives it away, so as soon as you'd speak with an Irish accent, you know, with Irish people it's all quite, it can be quite subtle, the kind of look, this kind of suspicious look, oh they're from the North, they're going to bring trouble, we'll have to watch them, kind of thing.

BH: Yeah, right, what about wider English society at the time? Obviously you were involved with your own activisms and groups and so on.

DQ: Yeah.

BH: What was the perception of the Troubles in England? Did you get any sense of that?

DQ: Well, I have to say that I have never experienced directly any anti-Irish racism here in Leeds, never ever, and I've experienced nothing but, you know, acceptance and, and [pauses] curiosity. The time of the Canary Wharf bomb, bombing was a bit hard because of course, or when the bombs would go off in Birmingham.

BH: Yeah, I heard that was a–

DQ: That was a tough time where you kind of kept your head down and your mouth shut as much as you could, not because of anything anyone had said or done, but just because you kind of, you know, as my mother taught me, keep your head down, your mouth shut and your eyes open. So that was a hard time, nothing actually happened to me, but I was just aware of, you know, the feeling in the air. The other really hard time for me personally was during the hunger strikers because I found it so hard being here when that was going on at home, so very, very hard, you know, I was aching for the weekend to come, so I could go back home again, you know, just to be there.

BH: So you went home during that time?

DQ: Oh for weekends, I used to go back, yeah.

BH: For weekends, over the course of that whole year?

DQ: No, not over the whole year, but as often as I could, you know, get home I would through that period because it was like, kind of going back to the beginning of the story, you know, about the tight-knit community and this happening and I wasn't there, even though I knew I didn't want to live there, but there's a real pull, there's real pull to go back and just be there and be part of it really. That was a very hard time, you know, I really struggled through that time as to whether I should move back or not.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: Yeah.

BH: You felt guilty?

DQ: Yeah.

BH: That you weren't there?

DQ: I did, I felt guilty, that's exactly it.

BH: Yeah, up until that point, had you maintained sort of close relationships with people back in Belfast?

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, family, Corrymeela, I was still involved with Corrymeela, friends I made at university who'd stayed, yeah, and I still to this day have got good friendship, family network there.

BH: And was that phone calls or writing letters or was it–?

DQ: Writing letters, phone calls, although not so much phone calls cos there wasn't mobile phones then, and going home as often as I could.

BH: Yeah, and did your parents ever come over here?

DQ: Yes, my God, that was a big thing, you know, getting on a plane for the first time in their lives in their seventies.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: I know, because by that stage of course I had, I had my son, did they come over before Conor was born [pauses], no, I think they might have came over when he was born, that was the kind of pull, right, we have to go, we have to go now, I can hear my mother saying right, we have to go, we have to go, and that was the start of it, then they came over every year for their summer holidays.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: Yeah, after they got on the plane, getting on the plane was hard for them, but yes, one they'd done it the once they came over every year.

BH: Sure, whenever you went back, you know, even from, you know, the first time you moved over here and afterwards up to the hunger strikes and after, what was it like going back? Did you notice any changes or was it so frequent that, you know, it didn't have a huge kind of impact on you?

DQ: Didn't have a huge impact on me because it felt like I had a foot there and a foot here.

BH: Sure, right, that's interesting, so you're almost in two places, almost you're living in two places.

DQ: Yeah, except of course when the Good Friday Agreement happened, that was, that was, that felt really different, through all of that period, you could feel it getting different.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

DQ: Yeah, no, that was palpable in the air.

BH: Say a bit more about that. What did you notice that was changing?

DQ: People feeling relaxed, there was a bit more of a relaxed feel in the air and people daring almost to feel hope, more so than when there'd been the ceasefires before, you know, and people were kind of driving up and down the street and waving their flags and everything else going yeah, yeah, yeah, there's a ceasefire, there was something fragile about that, you know, people still on edge, but the Good Friday Agreement, all that process was a lot more, it's a bit hard to describe. On the one hand it was kind of glacial, you know, so people weren't jumping up and down in the streets and waving flags, subtle, even though it was very concentrated it was a subtle, subtle sort of thing, but it felt different, it felt different, you kind of knew things had really changed and I never ever, ever thought I'd live to see the day that it would happen, you know, really and truly.

BH: Presumably something like the peace process, Good Friday Agreement, it's going to have the most noticeable effects on places like the Falls Road.

DQ: Yeah.

BH: Like, you could live in, you know, a small town in Tyrone and not really notice that much difference, but it would make a difference there.

DQ: Absolutely, absolutely, and the whole kind of peace dividend thing, the money then started to flow into areas where literally people's qualities of life improved, you know.

BH: Yeah, you just mentioned there you have son, so at some point you had a partner or you got married or something like that. When did that happen?

DQ: Right, so no, I'm not married, and my partner's female.

BH: Right.

DQ: And we've got a son who's twenty-eight.

BH: Twenty-eight, right.

DQ: And a daughter who is twenty-three, no twenty-four, and two grandchildren, one aged five and one aged eight weeks.

BH: Right, my goodness, so where did you meet your partner?

DQ: I met my partner [pauses] when I was in Leeds on placement, no, actually I met her in Belfast first, because she was a social worker over there, she was an English woman doing, being a social worker, I know, get your head round that, on the Shankill Road, for God's sake, then she had come back to Leeds as well, so we met up again when she was back in Leeds and I was here on placement, **[01:00:00]** having met at a party in north Belfast, yeah.

BH: [laughs] You met at a party in north Belfast?

DQ: We met at a party in north Belfast, yeah.

BH: And then you met up again back in Leeds.

DQ: Back in Leeds, because she was coming back to Leeds and I said oh I'm going back to Leeds for my placement, starting in such and such a time, and she says oh right, well, you know, here's my address, you know, if you're, have you got somewhere to stay, yes, I've got somewhere to stay, but, well, we'll maybe go out for a drink or something, and that was beginning of that.

BH: So she's a very tangible connection to home then, in the sense that you met her there, but does she have any family connections there or anything like that?

DQ: No, grandparents were Irish, but you see significantly she had lived and worked in Belfast, so she understood, all that stuff that English people don't really understand, she understood because she had been, for heaven's sake, a social worker on the Shankill Road.

BH: Right, yeah, and with your children and things then, did you take them back to Belfast?

DQ: Yeah, yeah, frequently.

BH: Yeah, and what did they think?

DQ: [pauses] Well, for them it was just family, you know, for them it was, you know, staying with their nana and their granda or staying with their auntie or, they were at an age I think where it's only in later years that they would start asking questions about, well, what's this and what does that mean and why's that there, when they were children they just took–

BH: Took it for granted.

DQ: Took it for granted, just threw themselves into it.

BH: Yeah, that's kind of what I'm getting at, were they interested in their Irish heritage I suppose, or their Northern Irish heritage or whatever you want to call it, like?

DQ: Well, interestingly my son is, has recently in the last twelve months picked up on work that I've started on the family trees, and he has completely thrown himself into this *Who Do You Think You Are?* thing, and he spent eight weeks literally traipsing round Tralee and traipsing round Fermoy, digging up all these connections and gravestones and church archives and baptismal lines and collecting all this magnificent material about the Quill and the Magner family history that I never even knew about, so, you know, it filters through, it does filter through and he's very proud of his Irish heritage, very, very proud, but interestingly he travels the world a lot, whereas my daughter's a homebird, I mean, she still lives with us.

BH: In Leeds?

DQ: In Leeds, yeah, although she works here, she volunteers with Irish Health and Homes.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: Yeah.

BH: So she must have some connection with the place?

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, and, you know, obviously she gets it, she understands the Irish ways, so, you know, she's she handles all the kind of situations that we have here and helps out at the lunch clubs and the parties and the events and that, and they all love her, you know.

BH: Yeah, so would they understand Northern Irish politics, would they have an idea about it, like or is it just, like–?

DQ: A broad idea, again, my son, cos he's that bit older as well, is a bit more interested in the detail, whereas my daughter's, you know, she likes, she can handle the broad brush stuff, but if you get into too much of it she goes oh that's stupid.

BH: [laughs] What about your partner's family then? Cos it's a question I always ask, particularly if somebody has, you know, met an English person or a Scottish person, how do they perceive the Northern Irish partner, what did they think about that back at that time, you know?

DQ: They accepted me with open arms.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: Absolutely accepted me with open arms, yeah, no problem there whatsoever.

BH: Yeah, weren't suspicious or anything like that?

DQ: No, they weren't, no, no.

BH: Yeah, did you ever think about moving back there? Was that ever something that came up?

DQ: Well, through the hunger strike, I really, really, really thought about it, but once I had my kids the thought never crossed my head about moving back permanently. Now of course when they're all up and gone, maybe that'll be a different matter, but I've spoken to so many people here in Irish Health and Homes who've, you know, thought well, maybe I'll move back, but you don't, you don't, it's, I guess it's where your primary ties are and of course with children and grandchildren now my primary ties and are here, even though I still have family and friends over there.

BH: Okay, did the peace process make any difference that, in terms of actually thinking about moving back, did that change?

DQ: Well, it released the thought, it released the thought oh it's possible, and then of course through the chicaneries that are going on with Brexit and the fact that they've now, the Westminster government has now passed the laws, so that you can have marriage equality in the North of Ireland and women reproduction rights in the North of Ireland, again, it opens a little window thinking oh my goodness, the North of Ireland's getting dragged into the twenty-first century, you know, but really would I do it, probably not.

BH: Yeah, yeah, what about queer politics and things like that, you know, in terms of courtships and things when you were growing up? Is this something that you knew early on and thought you needed to move?

DQ: No, no, this is all part of my awakening I suppose you'd say, when I came to Leeds, you know, opening up all sorts of things, I didn't know anything about any of that.

BH: Is that right? So this was post-migration then?

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

BH: Okay, and presumably, and I'm assuming that there was no gay scene in Belfast.

DQ: Oh there was.

BH: Oh there was a gay scene?

DQ: Oh there was, oh I, oh I now know there was because my partner was telling me about it, and I'd be nooo, really, oh yeah, but it was very, very underground.

BH: Underground, yeah.

DQ: Very underground, very male.

BH: Yeah, cos, I mean, that would be a very interesting thing for somebody to write a social history of.

DQ: Yes.

BH: During the Troubles in Belfast.

DQ: Yes.

BH: And I'm just wondering about the interactions between that, those gay cultures and maybe in places like Leeds or Manchester, whether there are connections between these places, you know.

DQ: Well, you might find that your next interviewee may also have something to say about that.

BH: Okay, fantastic.

DQ: But I didn't, I wasn't aware of any of that at the time, but there were certain bars, you know, that were that were kind of safe places for gay people to meet, mostly men, and there was an organisation called Cara-Friend, interestingly we've got a project here called Cara which is a [laughs], which is a different thing altogether, that's befriending for older people, but back in the North of Ireland there was, this is in the dark time of the Gay Liberation Movement, there was, the Northern Ireland version was called Cara, Cara-Friend, a thing which I didn't really know anything about until much later on, but, you know, they worked very hard on the anti-discrimination against gay people over there at the time, but I wasn't part of any of that then.

BH: Yeah, yeah, so you can't say it was anything that motivated you at all, cos it happened afterwards.

DQ: No, yeah, happened after, yeah.

BH: Moving towards, oh we're only at twelve, so if you're happy to talk for another wee bit, yeah?

DQ: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BH: I'll just ask you a bit more about kind of like, English society at the time, and actually what you've said it resonates with what most other people have said, which is actually, you know, English people didn't, I never encountered any racism or anything like that, of course that's because we're not interviewing people maybe who were there after the Birmingham bomb or something like that.

DQ: Yes, yes.

BH: But the general impression I'm getting from a lot of people is that actually by comparison England was okay. If you grew up in Belfast and you had to deal with a lot of that stuff, by comparison England was–

DQ: That's right.

BH: It wasn't that bad, you know, easy to get on with.

DQ: Honestly, easy to get on with, so one of the jobs that I had here was to set up an alternatives to custody programme in the days of the short, sharp, shock, you know, where young hooligans, football hooligans were thrown into detention centres and of course came out harder than they went in, so part of what I was involved with was helping magistrates trust community-based disposals, so at least these lads could live at home and not lose their family ties and all the rest of it, and I'll never forget, one of the adjustments I had to make was like, these, these, you know, heavy-end offenders, and I was thinking to myself these people have no idea what heavy-end offending's like, these, you know, they're overreacting against this young male behaviour when, you know, what I've come from this was nothing, you know, they said oh God, how can you possibly work with those young thugs, and I'm thinking you've no idea, it's just different standards.

BH: Different standards, yeah. **[01:10:00]**

DQ: Different standards of expectations, different standards of behaviour, different tolerances of what's going on, but yes it is, I don't know how I got onto that, but it is true that all the colleagues that I worked with, all the friends I made, people I bumped into, not one incident can I think of.

BH: Yeah, no, I've heard the same thing. I mean, the one thing I did hear was that English people didn't understand anything about the Troubles–

DQ: That's right, yeah.

BH: That in fact they simply had no conception of what it was actually about.

DQ: That's true, that is absolutely true, and so you would get a bit of a dissonance thing going on where, you know, you're mixing with all these people and you're working with all these people and you know that they have no idea of what you've been through and, you know, the older I get the more I realise that what we went through was war, you know, that if you talked to the kind of people who went through the Second World War, you know, they experience a similar thing where, you know, where would you being to tell somebody, you know, if somebody sat you down and said well, what's it like, or what was it like being brought up on the Falls or living on the Falls, you think well, where do you start, where would you start, and that's what a lot of people from the Second World War would say, where would you start, you know, so you would get some, you know, people would ask you kind of innocent kind of stroke naïve questions that you would do your best to answer in a way that didn't sound overdramatising, and that's the other thing like, God, if you told them

[laughs], if you really told them, you know, they probably wouldn't believe you, so you kind of just gloss it a bit, you know, or turn it into a funny story or something like that.

BH: And I suppose the thing is as well, you know, there is a narrative about the Troubles in England which the media has kind of generated and the state's generated, which tells it as kind of, you know, a religious, ethno-religious war between these two countries.

DQ: Catholics and Protestants.

BH: Catholics and Protestants kind of thing, and if people living over here don't have any other narrative to think about it through, it's hard for you to translate your experience for them into that narrative.

DQ: That's right, so an example would be, you know, you'd be relaxing with somebody over a drink or a cup of tea or whatever and, you know, they'd be kind of mellowing and they'd say why can't the Catholics and Protestants get on, right, and that would be people genuinely trying to understand what it's about, that would be a very common thing, why can't the Catholics and Protestants just get on, you know, aren't they all Christians and you just have to say well, it isn't actually, I know it looks like it might be Catholic versus Protestant, but that's not actually what it's about, and they ooh, and I'd think right, okay, just take this one wee step at a time [laughs], but, you know, and it is, it does make you aware of how powerful the media is, but then you see what happened very shortly after that was the miners' strike, which was very, very helpful Barry, because this project I was working in, creating alternatives to custody, one of the methodologies that we had was what you would now call intense supervision of these young men who we were kind of escaping from the clutches of prison to stay in the community on the basis of them having what was called a tracker who would see them everyday, everyday, you know, so that they would have a focus, they knew I can't do anything, I have to meet my tracker at ten o'clock or twelve o'clock or whatever. So these trackers, we recruited these people called trackers, and half of them were either ex-police officers or married to police officers, and the other half of them were kind of socialists, you know, hardened socialists who were united because they were focused on helping young people not get into the justice system, helping young people who were having a hard time kind of get a grip on life, but then the miners' strike happened, right, and they go whoosh, you get this division, cos people would say to me well, how come the Protestants and Catholics just can't get on and I'd say well, you see how easy it is to drive a rift between people, right, how easy it is to drive a rift between people, and it's not because you two can't get on, but this thing is not happening in the background, where you're being separated from each other and treating each other with suspicion and being careful what you say in front of each other, you know, because we've got police officers who are getting beaten up and you've got, you know, miners getting thrown in prison cells, police cells, and it can happen anywhere.

BH: That's very interesting, so you used that as an analogy then–

DQ: I did, it was the first–

BH: To translate–

DQ: It was the first opportunity that came to me and it was just so obvious to me what was going on, and how, and it was a salutary lesson in how quickly you can divide people.

BH: Yeah, funny, I've said the same thing about Brexit.

DQ: Yes.

BH: To people in the pub, explaining it the same way.

DQ: Yes, exactly.

BH: Yeah.

DQ: As indeed have I in recent times.

BH: Yeah, what about your political views over the years? Since moving to England, do you think your views on Northern Ireland changed or had they already changed?

DQ: [pauses] Well, the big change for me, like I said, happened with the Good Friday Agreement cos that gave me hope, hope that we weren't stuck in this nightmare Goya picture, and then [pauses], so, so the power-sharing in Stormont was a big, big breakthrough, you know, Paisley and McGuinness sharing power was just extraordinary, I never thought I'd live to see it.

BH: Symbolically important?

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, cos, you know, I lived through the days when Paisley was the firebrand, he was the devil incarnate and of course he would've seen McGuinness as the devil incarnate and here they are, you know, the Chuckle Brothers, you know, sharing power, but [pauses], and they did a great job I have to say, they did, they really did do a great job, but since, basically since Paisley stood down, died, it's got worse, and my own view is that I've no idea how Martin McGuinness lasted as long as he did, with Robinson and then Arlene Foster, and what he had to swallow and just until it got to the renewable heat thing, scandal, and when he said Arlene I can't cover for you on this anymore, and I do wonder if the strain of all that's what killed Martin McGuinness in the end, you know. My current view on it is that it's deeply, deeply worrying, deeply, deeply worrying, and my hope is that in these elections coming up, in this general election coming up that the DUP have fewer seats and I know that there's a lot of activity going on to try and, for the non-DUP parties to, to [pauses] behave strategically, to kind of reduce their stranglehold really, so that's a little bit, a sliver of hope that I hold on to, so that we get some, so that we can get some constructive political discourse going again. Deeply worried about the border issue, I can't believe that it'll happen, I can't believe that they'll put the border up again, I just can't, I just cannot let my head go there, I can't believe it'll happen, because I know what it was like when it was there, but Brexit is a disaster, it's just a completely, unmitigated, deceitful, malevolent disaster, **[01:20:00]** not just for the North of Ireland, but for this country too. Bizarrely, I think there could be positive outcomes for the

North of Ireland if Boris's plan goes through and there is no border and that the border happens down the Irish Sea, in as much as the people in the North of Ireland will effectively be staying in the European Union and therefore business will flourish, whereas business here won't.

BH: Well, all of that tells me that you're still engaged with what's going on in Northern Ireland politically.

DQ: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

BH: And you've maintained that over the course of, since moving over here you've continued to watch what's happened in Northern Ireland. Not everybody does, some people come over and they never look at it again, kind of thing.

DQ: Yeah, yeah, well, I can kind of understand that.

BH: Yeah, so I suppose my question is why do you think you have stayed kind of, you know, tuned into it?

DQ: [extended pause] I think it's because, I mean, it wasn't always like that, I mean, there was periods in my life here when I'd go oh, but I'd still be, and I'd still, even if I'd go oh for God's sake, I'd still be interested and engaged, I think partly because I never really left, there's a bit of me's never really left, and because, you know, I am, I'm kind of a political person anyway, I'm not a party political person, but I'm, you know, even if you go on to like, to the women's movement, one of the things I learnt was how much the person is political, you are political even if you think you're not, as soon as you turn the switch on you're making a political act cos you've decided who your energy supplier is, that's a political act, you know.

BH: Yeah, what do you think made you a political person, or at least conscious of yourself as a political person?

DQ: Being brought up on the Falls Road.

BH: Right, could you say a bit more about that? What do you think, you know?

DQ: Well, because you hit your head on it every day [laughs], you know, my brother having to put my sister's address on a job application, why do you have to do that.

BH: So that's been a defining experience, in terms of who you are, effectively.

DQ: Yeah, absolutely, you know, knowing from experience what it's like to not be a member of the elite, in fact, knowing from experience what it's like [pauses] to be whatever the opposite of that is, and knowing what, you know, having that lived experience. I suppose there's two ways of dealing with that, one is to kind of move on, leave it all behind you and don't think about it again, or you realise actually this is how the world works, you know, you look at those people in Palestine and you think, there but for the grace of God, you know.

That's in my head because I went to see a film last night called *The Wall* by David Hare, which was really good, it's an animated film about the wall, and of course we've got a wall in Belfast.

BH: Yeah, of course, yeah, yeah, a lot of talk about that at the moment actually.

DQ: Yeah, and this is an animated film all about the wall that the Israelis have built, and I'm sitting there watching this going yeah, I know it yeah [laughs], yeah, I know this, I know this, you know, they're talking about how they build the settlements on the top of the hill, really big, ugly settlements as ugly as you can make them to intimidate Palestinians who are down below and, you know, at the bottom of my street there was a block of flats which was the nurses' quarters for the Royal Victoria Hospital and on top of that the army built their sentry posts, so that they could watch us, they would literally be watching us going up and down.

BH: Yeah, surveillance.

DQ: Surveillance towers, yeah, just literally over the street, you'd go out the door and there it is, you know, yeah.

BH: Yeah, do you think, has the Troubles had any other effect on you, in terms of settling over here?

DQ: It's made me a news addict.

BH: News addict [laughs], so you read a lot of news, you watch a lot of news?

DQ: I actually gave it up for Lent last year [laughs], just to see what it was like [laughs].

BH: [laughs] And how did that go?

DQ: [laughs] It went very well thank you [laughs], I started reading books again. No, it hasn't had and I'm not the only one, you know, I know other people from the North who are news addicts, you know, just that think turn the radio on, see what's happened, but as a consequence, you know, I think I'm quite well informed about what's going on and I am interested in what's going on, you know. What was your question again?

BH: I was just asking about any other effects of the Troubles.

DQ: Oh fireworks, cannot stand fireworks.

BH: At Halloween?

DQ: Yeah, well, here you see we have it from Halloween right through to Diwali, right the way through, there's a whole like, a month and then there's bonfire night, so there's basically the best part of a month. When I first came over I really, really, really didn't like it at all, it took me, it took my partner years to get me to a bonfire.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: Ah ha, I'm not going to that, I'm not going to that, and if fireworks'd go off I'd, you know, close the curtains, close the doors, stay in, and it took me decades, seriously, it took me decades to, you know, go to a fireworks display and even now, you know, I go, but inside me I'm going I don't really want to do this, but, you know, I know it's perfectly normal, this is what normal people do, and when, it's not so much the fireworks display, it's when the bangs are going off all around you, it makes, I'll tell you what it is, it makes me angry, it makes me really angry. I think this isn't funny, you think this is funny, this actually isn't funny, you know, if you were, if you had experienced any real-life bangs you wouldn't think this is funny, and I now think people, you know, living here from, you know, places like Syria and places like that, I think God almighty how do they cope, you know, when it's more, much more recent, you know.

BH: Sure, yeah, yeah, I'd never thought of that actually, you know, but I can understand how the noise would just be completely jarring now.

DQ: Oh just get it over with, you know.

BH: So I'll come down to the last few set of questions now basically, and these are kind of like, summing-up type questions as opposed to detailed questions about different things that have happened. Looking back over your life, what do you think's been the most important thing that's happened to you?

DQ: Whoooh [laughs].

BH: [laughs] Could be anything.

DQ: [extended pause] I honestly couldn't say there is any one most important thing at all, I mean, I'm still here, you know, I've, I have actually, you know, lived to tell the tale. I live a rich and varied life. I have benefited hugely from education, I've benefited hugely from, you know, having been reared in a close-knit community and having moved out. I have, Corrymeela was a big, big influence on my life, you know, broadening my perspective at a very influential age, helping me, helping me, do you know when I first went to Corrymeela and we'd be having these discussions and they'd be talking about stuff and then someone would turn to me and say and what do you think, and I'd realise I have no idea, and I'd realise that actually I hadn't been encouraged to think for myself at all, you know, in my family, in my education, in the church, you know, you learn your catech-, you learn what you're supposed to believe, you learn what you're supposed to do, what's your opinion, opinion, I'm supposed to have an opinion, and I'd be listening to all the other people have their opinion and think ooh, so I had to activate a different part of my brain which took a while, so that was a very important thing.

BH: And that was Corrymeela that encouraged that?

DQ: That was Corrymeela encouraged that. **[01:30:00]**

BH: Okay, something else you mentioned there was something I should've asked about, growing up in such a close-knit community, where, you know, it's face-to-face interpersonal relationships on a daily basis. How did moving to England, which is quite a differently structured society in terms of, you know, people's relationships, how did that affect you?

DQ: It was hard.

BH: It was hard.

DQ: It was hard, I found it hard, I found English people very cold initially, very pleasant and very, you know, courteous, but quite cold, it was a bit hard to find, find a way in [pauses], yeah, things like, you couldn't just turn up at somebody's house, you'd have to ring them first, you couldn't just walk into somebody's house, you'd have to knock the door.

BH: Yeah, was that close-knittedness something that you missed?

DQ: Yeah, absolutely, I really, really did, yeah, I found it hard, yeah, I'd say that's the thing I found hardest.

BH: Right, did you, were you able to recover any of that through any of your political activisms or anything like that?

DQ: Yeah, you know, it comes with time, doesn't it, I mean, there is still the thing that you wouldn't turn up at somebody's house and just walk in, you would always have to get permission first, which isn't the case, you know, at home, but yeah, the more you get involved with people and do things with them and develop shared experiences together of course it, you know, you develop relationships, don't you, and I have, you know, I've got strong relationships here, got a good friendship network.

BH: And these would be things that would anchor you here now?

DQ: Yeah, work, work, friendships, family, you know.

BH: Okay, was moving over here an important decision in your life, looking back?

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, and it was something I was very clear I was going to do, but I was also clear when I did it that it was a temporary thing, and of course it turned out to not be a temporary thing.

BH: My next question was going to be, are you glad you moved over here?

DQ: Yes, without a doubt.

BH: Why is that, in general?

DQ: In actual fact, the quality of my life is much better than I think it would have been if I'd stayed at home, my range of experiences are much better than they would have been at

home. I think my sexuality would have been repressed if I'd stayed at home, well, it would have been repressed, you know, if I'd, and God alone knows what that would have been like, but it, you know, hey, it happens to lots of people, doesn't it. My career, I've had a fantastic career here, you know, worked my way up to be director of a national company, worked for the civil service, worked in the voluntary sector, done all sorts of really, really interesting, cutting-edge things, which I couldn't have done if I'd stayed at home, you know, yeah.

BH: Do you think moving over here has changed you?

DQ: Oh yeah, without a doubt it's changed me, how could it not, how could all these things happen to you and not change you. You going to ask me how it's changed me?

BH: I was going to ask you how and whether they're good or not.

DQ: Oh well, of course I think it's for the better, I think I have a much broader outlook on life [pauses]. I understand much more [pauses], yeah.

BH: Okay, final question, what does home mean to you now, or where is home?

DQ: Hmm, that's a very, very good question. Well, I still would refer to Belfast or Ireland as home, going home, but my home is also here, I have two homes, I have a foot in each home, I'm really, really lucky.

BH: Yeah, so it sounds like you you're a hybrid kind of identity now, in terms of where you belong in two places, is that right?

DQ: Yeah, yeah, I belong in two places, yeah.

BH: Okay, okay, so I've asked all the questions that I've got down here.

DQ: Very good.

BH: But before we finish, is there anything I haven't asked about which is important and that you think that I need to hear about, but I haven't asked about?

DQ: [extended pause] No, I don't think so. There is a thing about English people, you know, and how my attitude to English people has changed as well from my first experience as being of British soldiers.

BH: Yes.

DQ: Through to meeting English people at Corrymeela, through to meeting English people then at university, and meeting English people obviously when I came to live in England, you know, so I've moved from thinking well, I would have nothing to do with them, or you kind of can't really trust them, to actually understanding that English people, you know, have their own issues as well and, you know, seeing that getting played out now, particularly with

Brexit, and seeing the torture they're going through, you know, we've our own issues obviously, Irish people with Brexit, but, you know, seeing English friends, you know, absolutely tortured over it and thinking, you know, almost feeling sorry for them, God.

BH: I mean, it sounds like you've went on a journey, you know, that these changes happen through, you know, small bits of exposure. You're exposed in Corrymeela to meeting English there, and then you moved to England obviously and you've more contact again, and gradually you're getting more and more contact with English people, is that right, like?

DQ: Oh yeah, yeah, that's what happened over–

BH: And that's changed your, the way you think about–?

DQ: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, and thinking, you know, and the thing about the English establishment as well, you know, my attitude to that has changed, particularly in the last three years, you know, from this kind of oh yeah, they think they're God's gift and they're not and, you know, there's all of this palaver and all this, this, you know, this perfidious Albion business and, you know, the monarchy and regalia and the protocols and all the rest of it, and then you watched them over the last three years, and all that falling away, and realising that actually underneath all of that it's deeply, deeply divided and deeply, deeply ghettoised, and what has held it together has been this performance, you know, this performance which Brexit has, you know, shot to bits, but they'll pull it back together again.

BH: Yeah, I mean, I don't suppose through your work, over here in social work, that you ever encounter, for example, army veterans or anything like that?

DQ: No, I actually haven't, no.

BH: Yeah, something that I'm kind of wondering about, you know, there's two hundred and fifty thousand of them [laughs], you know, what kind of, you know, what happened to them after they came back from Belfast, where did they go, what did they do, like.

DQ: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I did actually come across them, kind of vicariously cos I was involved in a oral history project called Queer Stories.

BH: Ah right, okay.

DQ: And I got training in doing what you're doing, by this woman who was an oral history specialist, and she had been doing a project with veterans.

BH: Is that right?

DQ: Gathering their stories and so with their permission she'd use some of that material to train us into doing what you're doing, so vicariously I got these little insights into some of their personal stories, which was really quite something.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

DQ: Really quite something.

BH: Yeah, cos a lot of those, I suppose they were kids that went to Belfast, you know, were coming from places like Hull, where industry had collapsed and they were joining that army, like.

DQ: Absolutely, as my mother said, some mother's son.

BH: Yeah, yeah, okay, listen–

DQ: Right Barry, thank you.

BH: Can I say thanks very much for that.

DQ: Ah ha.

BH: That was fantastic and again, thanks for taking the time for doing that, really appreciate it.

DQ: No, it's been great, it's felt very indulgent actually [laughs].

INTERVIEW ENDS