

## M07: DEIRDRE QUILL INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Deirdre Quill
Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interview summarisers: Dr Fearghus Roulston and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single audio file with no section breaks

M07: Deirdre Quill	Start time: 00:00	Finish time: 01:39.31	Duration: 01:39.31	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Introduces herself and describes the ‘old-fashioned community social work’ she and her team do at Leeds Irish Health and Homes. Explains how and why she came to be part of this oral history project. Describes how her Kerry father and Cork mother met and married in London, then moved to Belfast, where she was born in 1957. Grew up on the Falls Road in tight-knit Catholic community. Her father was a tailor and her mother a dressmaker. Recalls spending ‘blissful’ summer holidays on the family farm in Cork during the early Troubles, away from ‘all the murder and mayhem’.			
10:00–19:59	Remembers pre-Troubles Belfast as dull and restrictive, which made the advent of violence seem ‘just like being in a film, exciting, exhilarating’. Discusses her teenage volunteering with Corrymeela, an organisation that promotes tolerance and reconciliation, where she met NI Protestants and English people for the first time. Describes her family as republican, but not ‘bitter’ or sectarian. Mentions her two brothers’ emigration to Canada. Recalls the arrival of British troops in 1969 and the reaction of her parents and wider community. Views introduction of internment in 1971 as major turning point in the escalation of the conflict.			
20:00–29:59	Remembers ‘the exhilaration of defending your neighbourhood [...] from the British Army’, while simultaneously being a diligent grammar school pupil. Highlights the toll the conflict took on her family, particularly her mother’s struggle to rear ‘a family of four with murder and mayhem going on round her’. Recalls the constant fear that her brother, who worked on the Shankill Road, would be murdered in this, the era of the Shankill Butchers. Tells of how he and his Protestant wife moved to Rathcoole, a new, mainly Protestant estate, and had a family there, but subsequently left for Canada following loyalist threats and intimidation.			
30:00–39:59	Reveals that she was the first in her family to stay on in school after the age of fourteen. Praises the education she received from the Dominican nuns. Recalls British Army helicopter mistakenly landing in school playing field during lessons. Describes going to Queen’s to study English and French in 1974 and feeling ‘like a fish out of water’ there at first, before becoming happily immersed in student life. Notes that she was also ‘heavily involved with Corrymeela’ as a youth leader during this time. Recalls travelling to Liverpool to stay with a friend, ‘the first of many, many, many ferry boat journeys between Ireland and England’.			
40:00–49:59	Recalls her exhaustion after ‘supporting people through some very, very traumatic times’ at Corrymeela and her decision to leave NI to study social work in Hull, which she found ‘flat in more ways than one, a very deflated place’. Did her placements in Leeds and formed strong connections there, becoming involved with feminist and socialist groups. Favourably contrasts this ‘new kind of politics’ with the inert politics of NI, but says she still saw her future in NI: ‘I had every intention of coming back to Belfast, but there was no jobs’. Gains fresh			

	understanding of her mother and ‘all those big women that were part of my rearing’ as unsung feminists. Unimpressed by Irish emigrant culture in Leeds.
50:00–59:59	Recalls her links with ‘the drinking and having a good time arm’ of the Troops Out movement in Leeds. Speaks of NI migrants being regarded with ‘great suspicion’ by some ROI emigrants in the city during the Troubles. Says that she never experienced any anti-Irish racism personally. Remembers the hunger strikes of the early 1980s as ‘a very hard time’, during which she felt an ‘aching’ need to be back in NI. Recalls the hope inspired by the Good Friday Agreement and the palpable signs that ‘things had really changed’ in NI. Mentions meeting her English female partner, with whom she has two children, who are now in their twenties.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Talks about her partner and their visits to Belfast when their children were young. Reveals her son’s pride in his Irish heritage and his concerted efforts to trace his family history in Cork and Kerry. Discusses the evolution of her feelings about moving back to NI and admits that, while she welcomes the liberal changes that have occurred there, she is unlikely to do so. Reveals her belated awareness, courtesy of her partner, that there was a subterranean gay scene in Belfast in the 1970s and 1980s. Recalls having to adjust, as a social worker, to perceptions of ‘heavy-end offending’ in England, more severe forms of which she encountered growing up in NI.
01:10:00–01:19:59	Reflects on her belated realisation that the NI conflict ‘was war’. Discusses the pervasive lack of understanding of the complexity of NI and the Troubles in English society and the difficulty of explaining such complexity in the face of a hegemonic narrative of sectarian animosity propagated by the mainstream media. Describes using the analogy of the 1984-85 miners’ strike to enlighten people about the multifaceted nature of the divisions in NI and help them understand ‘how easy it is to drive a rift between people’. Expresses her surprise and delight at the power-sharing government led by Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness, and her commensurate dismay at the subsequent tensions and rifts between Sinn Féin and the DUP.
01:20:00–01:29:59	Ascribes her politicised consciousness to being raised on the Falls Road and attributes her continuing interest in developments in NI to that part of her that ‘never really left’. Mentions how her recent viewing of <i>The Wall</i> by David Hare reminded her of the strong parallels between the plight of Palestinians in the West Bank and her own experience of growing up in a heavily surveilled NI. Speaks of her strong dislike of fireworks, another legacy of growing up amid ‘real-life bangs’ in Belfast. Struggles to identify a singly important event in her life, but states that her Corrymeela experiences were ‘very important’ in developing her capacity for independent thought.
01:30:00–01:39:31	Recalls how much she missed the close-knit communality of the Falls when she first moved to England, but insists that her migration has enabled her to do ‘all sorts of really, really interesting, cutting-edge things, which I couldn’t have done if I’d stayed at home’, resulting in a more expansive, varied and fulfilled life. Speaks of having a sense of belonging in two places and of being at ease with this. Ends by suggesting that she has acquired a more nuanced understanding of English people and society over the course of her life in England.