

INTERVIEW M11: KAREN MALLON

Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interviewee: Karen Mallon
Interview date: 3rd December 2019
Location: Leeds Irish Health and Homes
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 I'm going to move this closer to you cos it has to pick up your voice. I see there it's down to two bars already.

KM: Is it here, is it—?

BH: It's just that whole thing.

KM: The whole thing.

BH: The whole thing there, but it's, it's quite a good one this, so basically, you know, if you just talk at a normal level from there it should—

KM: Yeah, don't have to go down, you can just talk normally?

BH: Just talk normally, yeah, cos it's, it's, this is a very expensive thing, this.

KM: Yeah, it looks it.

BH: The one I used to use was a wee small kind of handheld Dictaphone kind of thing—

KM: Right, yeah.

BH: But apparently you need this here for this. Okay, so it's the third of December, I'm back in Leeds again this week and I'm sitting here with Karen and we're about to do our interview on the Conflict, Memory and Migration study. Before I begin Karen, can I just say thanks very much for agreeing to do this and taking the time out of your working day to give the interview. Before we get into the actual oral history interview, can I just ask you, how did you find out about the project and why were you interested in taking part?

KM: Found out about the project cos Deirdre, one of the workers here, and Ant Hanlon, they had been to Manchester, is it?

BH: Oh the, yeah, for the general meeting, yeah.

KM: Yeah, the general meeting, from ESP, so they came back and they just said that you'd been there that day and that you were letting everybody know about your project and then Deirdre said well, that she had said what about you coming to Leeds, sent about the information round and then she asked me, you know, do you think I would be interested, and I said no, I would be very interested in, yeah, contributing, cos I thought it was a very worthwhile project to contribute to.

BH: You weren't pressurised into it then.

KM: No [laughs].

BH: You agreed voluntarily.

KM: I agreed voluntarily, yeah, no arm-twisting.

BH: Okay, so I'm going to go now and ask you a bit about growing up in Northern Ireland, so when and where were you born?

KM: I was born in 1972. I was born in Lurgan in County Armagh. I was brought up until the age of eight in a place called Magheralin, which is near Moira, and a few miles from Moira and Lurgan, and I lived there until I was eight and then I moved to a place called Dromore in County Down.

BH: Ah right.

KM: Where my family are to this day.

BH: Right, okay, and where were your parents from?

KM: My parents are from, well, my mum's from Kilwarlin, Kilwarlin is, it's in near Moira, so it's in, I think it's still, yeah, it's County Armagh as well, and it's, it basically was just one street, one lined-up terrace of houses and a couple of shops and as far as I know they've been there for years, and then my grandad built a bungalow and my uncle built a bungalow a few years later, yeah, when they were all kind of grown up, so we used to go back there, and my grandad's house is still there and quite a few of my aunts and uncles still live there, so my mum was from that side. I think my grandad came from Cork, I'm not sure, but they were Rooneys so, they were the Rooneys, and then my father was born in a farmhouse in Dromore, County Down, so there was thirteen of them and our house is actually, they, my dad then built a bungalow near the farmhouse when, and then that's where we moved to when we were eight, so my dad built the house with the help of the other brothers, so they all kind of built houses and bungalows around where my granny lived, and my granny was there until she died in her nineties and, yeah, so I've got about four, five uncles kind of all living round there, so Dromore is the base where I am now, and Kilwarlin, so those two places.

BH: Okay, right, so what did your parents do then?

KM: My parents, right, my dad when I was younger, so his first job was he worked for the Milk Marketing Board, so he drove a tanker lorry, going around the different farms collecting the milk, and then when he came home then he used to go then go, used to, he bought a digger, so then he would go out and then he'd start digging foundations for people building their houses.

BH: Ah right.

KM: So he had two jobs at the time. I think there was lots of building work going on when I was, yeah, when I was very young, so that's always, always what I knew him to do, and dad was great, you know, we used to go out in the lorry with him, back then, you know, in our holidays. The Milk Marketing Board knew the kids were going along with their parents, you wouldn't get that now, but we used to sit in the lorry with my dad and me, even at the weekends, and we'd go to the different farms and dad had a really good, my dad was quite a, you know, kind of funny, humorous man and he got on very well with all the farmers as well, so we used to, yeah, we used to, and I used to love going to the farms with my dad, kind of all round different parts of Northern Ireland, and then my mum, my mum was, she looked after, there was four young children, so there was me, my sister and my two younger brothers, so she looked after them, so she was a housewife, and we lived in an estate in Magheralin, so yeah, estate in Magheralin, so it was kind of a mixed estate, so there was lots of kids and lots of people to play with where we were growing up, until we moved at the age of eight. So that's what their occupations were, housewife and then my mother, later on in life, became a, did home care work, so both were quite, you know, very working class, and then when we moved to Dromore later on my dad then started looking after, he's got a little hobby for him now with cows as well, so he was always was really into his farming as well.

BH: He just enjoyed the—

KM: He enjoyed it cos that's what he was brought up doing you see, yeah, yeah, it's what he was brought up doing, so it's quite, a few of them got little, you know, still got their hand in the yeah, and I used to go and help my granny, granny and my uncle do the hay and the straw, all the cousins all had to get on board every year, kind of help out as well whenever it was har-, came till, you know, time till, get, the harvest time I suppose, yeah.

BH: Yeah, so it sounds like, at least, it's quite a mixed kind of existence then, there was a rural side to it.

KM: Yes, there was.

BH: But also you said you were living in a housing estate in Lurgan, yeah?

KM: Yeah, near Lurgan, yeah.

BH: Near Lurgan, was it in Lurgan or was it outside?

KM: It was outside Lurgan, so it'd probably be about, probably it's only about three miles away, yeah, about a couple of miles away from Lurgan, yeah.

BH: Was it a new postwar built estate?

KM: I th-, well, we moved, yes, I think my mum and dad moved there when they first got married and I think it was a new estate, yeah, so when I was born in '72, so it must've been, yeah, it must have been built kind of in the sixties then, late sixties, so it was quite a new estate actually. I remember my mum saying they were actually quite lucky, they were really pleased about getting this getting this house, so yes, and it was quite a, I wouldn't say it was a big estate, it was probably a fairly good middle-sized estate, but the, it was mixed as well cos I remember there being kind of lots of Protestant families and Catholic families, I think we were the minority actually, but there was a mixture, because we used to know the ones who went to the Protestant primary school which was quite close to the estate, and we had to walk that bit further to go to the Catholic primary school, which was further up, further up the road. There was no high school because it was quite a small little village, so yeah, so then people had to travel further away then to go to the different high schools.

BH: Was it a housing executive estate or was it privately owned?

KM: No, I think it was, well, I, that's a good question, I sh-, I, I can't remember actually. I'm wondering if it was housing executive. I'm not a hundred per cent sure.

BH: Wouldn't be sure, I suppose you were quite young at this time as well.

KM: I was ver-, yeah, cos I left there when I was eight, so we were, yeah, I was very young when I left there then, yeah.

BH: Yeah, and what kind of an estate was it? Was it nice, do you have good memories of it?

KM: Oh I have good memories of it, yeah, no, I have good memories. I remember being able to cut, yeah, I remember going out and playing freely and I remember, I remember walking to school by myself up to the age of eight, I can remember going out and meeting lots of friends. We used to meet in the park, which was, there was like, a communal park area for us all to kind of go and meet. I mean, I always was aware of division and always aware, even at that very young age, you know, I knew who was a Protestant, who, you know, who, you know, who was, who we played with and who we went to school with and, you know, so that was always very apparent, and I don't think we mixed, mixed that, an awful lot with the Protestant children maybe on the estate.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

KM: Yeah, I remember [indecipherable], I can remember my mum and dad were very much like, they were very much go and play with everybody, you know, they would never say keep away from such a family or anything like that, they were, you know, they were very, would have been inclusive, and I remember that for some, there used to be kind of

missionaries I think who used to come, for the Protestant, and they were really geared for the Protestant children, and they would come and actually sit out on the grass and they'd do lots of Bible stories and reading and everything, but it was us Catholic children, we would go along and join in, you know, and looking back on it now, I think we probably weren't meant to be there, but we just joined in anyway, so we did, yeah, we did that anyway. I can remember, I can remember seeing slogans for the first time.

BH: Is that right?

KM: Right, yeah, and I remember, I always remember walking up and down the path which was going towards the Protestant school, and I always remember seeing, I think that's where I saw [indecipherable], you know, pro the IRA and I remember seeing the signs first of all [00:10:00] and I remember asking and questioning about that then, and I probably was, probably only about maybe four or five at the time, so I remember that. I remember when the Pope came over to Knock, that was around about that time as well, when we were in the estate, that was a big thing then. My friends, my good friends on the estate were all Catholic, Catholic girls, the ones I went to school with.

BH: Are these the people that you would've went to school with as well?

KM: They were ones I went to school with, yeah, and I remember we played with the Protestants in the park, but we [pauses], did they ever come over to the house, I remember my next door neighbours were Protestants, on both sides, and their children were there and we would play with each other, you know, and we used to go to their house for parties, birthday parties and they'd come over to ours, and we were friendly, but there was always that we never, you know, never really kind of gone beyond that.

BH: Sure, yeah.

KM: You know, there was always that, you know, still weren't, all that suspicion really, but I think actually looking back on it, with, actually quite, it was quite good for us and I think that's a lot to do with my mum and dad, you know.

BH: Cos I was going to say, you know, when you said Lurgan and I'm thinking of some of these estates around Craigavon and so on where in fact they started out as mixed estates, but actually—

KM: Yes, oh God, yeah.

BH: They became seriously, you know, serious sectarian tensions.

KM: Oh yeah, they did.

BH: This didn't happen on yours?

KM: Not when I was there, maybe when I left, but that was when I was eight, but I can remember, cos I had, did have cousins who lived on the Kilwilkie estate I think, in Lurgan,

that was, I know that, you know, that we always used to know that was a really quite har-, rough, well, we, but it was lots of divisions in there, you know, you were, and I remember going down into that estate and you'd see all the kerbstones painted and you knew, you know, which [laughs] religions were round which area, and I remember visiting my cousins thinking oh God, you know, and we didn't really go there, so I can remember from a young age actually thinking our estate wasn't, but I know my dad wanted to move out, he wanted to move us all out of there as soon as he could.

BH: Well, that was my next question, why did you move when you were eight?

KM: Cos my dad wanted out of there. He wanted to move into the country and to be near where his, yeah, his family was in a house, because I think he thought we were safe. My dad didn't actually have a great time and it's only when I was, in years to come dad would then tell us stories when actually he was doing his milk run and he, they act-, I can remember our cars being stolen about two or three times, cos the IRA would come and take our cars.

BH: The IRA would?

KM: Oh yeah, yeah, they'd come and take the cars and you couldn't say anything because they were just using them for, you know, for their activities, and dad was really cross with them, we were Catholic, but he was really cross with them, so it was almost like a kind of gang mentality, so and, yeah, and either they'd be found and they would be, you know, did we ever get any back, I'd need to ask my dad again, but I can remember at least two were stolen and, and I think, I think either they were just blown up afterwards, but I think that was quite, that could be quite common on the estates, so, and I also remember my dad as well he, when he was doing the milk run once of all I think, he tells a story then of when the IRA stopped him and wanted to use his lorry, so they used his lorry and I think he had a gun to his head.

BH: Is that right?

KM: Yeah, and it's very, even now you'll talk about it and he still, he still finds, you know, he still finds it very traumatic to talk about, so I can't remember all the ins and outs of it, but they wanted to use his lorry and I think he eventually, and I don't know what they did with it, I think he'd actually, he had to get out of the lorry and they took it, for whatever means they needed it for, and then I think my dad reported it to the police, and my dad then was taken by soldiers and he was taken and questioned, but then they started turning it on him.

BH: As if he had something to do with it?

KM: As if he had something to do with it, so I think he was questioned overnight and I think and I think they were quite, I don't think he was tortured as such, but I think they were very, very tough on him, and he's, and I think it was near Belfast where he was doing that particular run at the time, and after that he said I'm never going to set foot near Bel-, I'm never going into Belfast again, I'll never, you know, and he got his run changed, so he was kind of more localised. So I think, I think my dad has, he just did not want anything to do with the Troubles, he was very much, you know, I just want to get on and get a normal life

and, you know, and I don't want no involvement whatsoever, and so I think that was his reason for, you know, that was his reason, he wanted us to get out of there as well.

BH: Yeah, so he must have thought then that if you had have stayed there there was a chance of becoming involved in something.

KM: Yes, yes, yeah, yeah, yeah, and because he just saw that it was an easy target as well, you know, because they were coming into the estate, you know, they would come in and they knew of him, you know, and there was almost like, you know, shut up, you know, we're, we'll, you know, we will take your cars or we'll do, you know, and I don't know what anything else that went on, but I know that he felt we were vulnerable I suppose is the word, he felt we were vulnerable in that estate.

BH: What about your mum then? What did she think about it, like?

KM: I, mum didn't really say anything about it, I think she knew, she knew that dad was unhappy and he was probably worried about us being in there and that she knew that he, we had, yeah, she just supported him then, and she knew that was the right move for us to go to Dromore. So my dad basically was doing two jobs and he built the house as well, you know, he built the house.

BH: This was the new house in Dromore?

KM: The new house in Dromore, over, you know, over so many years, you know, so, you know, he worked extremely hard, you know, four young children to support as well, and I suppose we didn't see an awful lot of our dad unless we went out with him on his jobs, so I've got a lot of admiration for my dad, you know, what he did, and then when we moved to the new house, I think, I think for mum, so I think she missed the social side of it all, because she, there was lots of people around and lots of support for her, especially with young children, and then we went to Dromore I think it was probably a bit more isolated for her.

BH: Right, so this was a rural setting?

KM: It's a rural set-, so we were in the countryside, yeah, you know, just a few houses dotted around and also it's green belt as well where we, in Drom-, the area that we're in Dromore as well, so no other houses were kind of built around us, we were quite lucky to actually get it built at the time, so yeah, I mean, it's beautiful, beautiful setting and everything, so that was really why we went and so that, yeah.

BH: Right, that's really interesting, so whenever you moved then, would you have had to move schools and stuff as well then?

KM: Yeah.

BH: Yeah, what was that like?

KM: It was okay actually, I think I was ready to move, I was quite happy to move.

BH: Is that right?

KM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I wasn't, I was just r-, yeah, I think for me I was just ready for a new, new adventure and like, there's a couple of close friends, one of my best friends in particular, so I remember they said oh she can come over and play. I mean, that didn't really happen, but I think she came over a couple of times, but no, I settled into my new school pretty well, yeah.

BH: And what position were you within the family? Were you eldest?

KM: I was the eldest.

BH: You were the eldest, right, okay.

KM: I was the eldest, then there was eighteen months between me and my sister Sinéad, and then I had a brother Kieran, another two years, and then I think another two years then there was my brother Niall, so we were all quite, you know, quite a young family.

BH: And what did you think then about like, the new rural setting as opposed to like, the more urban context I suppose?

KM: [laughs] I think, it was good and bad. I think I missed the just getting out of the house and lots of people to play, lots of kids to play with, it definitely, well, we had a few cousins around, but they were either a wee bit older or a wee bit younger, so definitely I think, and then definitely as I was getting a older and going through my teenage years I really, you know, I was bored, you know, I'd, yeah, I didn't like the country that much [laughs]. I loved the country all, but it's kind of good and bad, I loved the country as well because I loved the, you know, I loved the house, I loved that we had a huge big garden, we had all the fields nearby, I could actually walk down to my granny's house, I could walk to my cousin's house, so lots of really good things about it as well, yeah, and I quite liked being in the, the town was only about a mile away, so it wasn't too far to actually go into the actual town itself.

BH: Yeah, Dromore's quite small, isn't it, the town, it's like a village, isn't it, like, or is it a bit bigger than that?

KM: It's probably, it's a very small town, it's, yeah, it's like a little market town, so it's got like, a library in the middle, a little square around it and kind of shops and pubs off from it, and I think it was well known for having about, you know, I think it had about twelve pubs, lots of hairdressers, quite a few butchers, you know, but all very, all family-owned businesses.

BH: Sure, yeah, so as you got older then like, a teenager and so on, what was your, well, I suppose first of all who was your friendship group and what did you do, you know, for craic, for fun like, what did you do?

KM: Yeah, in the town, cos the town was a mainly Protestant town, so there was a Catholic primary school in there so, so after, you know, I had a couple of good, really good friends in town, so when I was, and then we, for high school then I moved to Banbridge, so there was no—

BH: Oh right.

KM: It was a, Dromore had a high school, but it was for Protestants only, so we had to go to Banbridge.

BH: Right, and how far away [00:20:00] would that be?

KM: About eight miles away, so we had a bus that took us to St Patrick's High School, so for, by that time I was able to get out and do our own thing really, so for a few, with our friends we'd maybe go up to Dundonald ice rink, we'd go up to, you know, go to Belfast shopping as well, go to Lisburn quite a lot.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

KM: Yeah, go to the cinema, we'd go to Banbridge, there was a swimming pool there, so we used to go there, and then as we got a wee bit older, fourteen, fifteen, we were going into the nightclubs, the Coach in Banbridge.

BH: Oh it was the Coach in Banbridge, I remember hearing about that, yeah.

KM: Yeah, the Coach in Banbridge, and we also went to, now I didn't go to Hilltown, quite a few friends went there, and there was like, buses then would take you up to Portrush as well. But there was a little hall, is it Ballela, Ballela, a little town called the Ballela, it had like, a church hall and it did a disco, you know, like lemonade disco, but that was like, where everybody in our school went to, Ballela on a weekend as well, so that was what we did as a, as a teenager and [pauses] then when I was sixteen then I moved to, I went to Newry, and then I went to Newry College of Further Education there cos I only got about four GCSEs when I was at high school.

BH: Oh this was like, going to, we used to call it the tech.

KM: Yes, yeah, the tech, so we went to Newry tech, yeah, yeah, so I went to Newry tech then and then I stayed there for about three years and then that's when I went to university when I was nineteen in Hull.

BH: Right, Hull, right, okay, that's—

KM: That's a—

BH: Yeah, I'll come on to that.

KM: Oh yeah, later, yeah.

BH: So that wee town then, Dromore, you said was a predominantly Protestant town.

KM: Oh yeah.

BH: Was that a good place to grow up at that stage or was that more difficult?

KM: No, I think it was that was when probably was the most difficult stage, because that's when you actually saw the division, and I think during that time there was a lot of, that's when it was the Anglo-Irish Agreement and everything was going through at that time, Paisley used to come, Ian Paisley used to come into our town, you know, stand in the square and, you know, he would be, you know, Ulster Says No and, you know, there'd be lots of, lots and especially the Twelfth of July in our town was just terrible, you know, it was, that's when you just kept quiet, that's when you kept back, that's when, you know, people who you normally got on well with, friends with, you know, any other, would be shouting, would be, you know, causing problems and trouble in the town as well. I remember the local SDLP leader, her son Liam was in my class and I know that there they were always getting kind of bomb threats and—

BH: Is that right?

KM: Yeah, and I remember always in our church around about the eleventh, and I always remember them coming up and marching deliberately up by the church, there was a lot of antagonism, a lot of name-calling, you know, you Fenian bastards and you're, you know, we'd be shouting over at them as well, and then after that it would all die down again, die down again and then it would just all fire up again, you know, once they got all the pro-, all the signs up in the town, and and I think around Dromore as well there was a lot of Orange Orders, a lot of Orange Orders and my God, they marched, they marched for weeks before, you know, every, you know, and that's and that used to rile us, you know, cos it was just all the time, you know, and it was very disruptive as well, so yeah, I remember, I remember that being a really difficult time going through it, you know, going through—

BH: When you're an adolescent basically.

KM: Yes, and I was an adolescent, you know, I was, this is when we were going to high school, I remember they used to throw eggs at the bus as well, you know, we'd be going on the bus and they'd be throwing it, Fenian bastard, and them throwing eggs at the bus, you know, as well.

BH: So what did you feel—?

KM: Or they'd be sticking their fingers up [laughs], it was all very, it was, there was never, I never heard fights or anything like that, but it was all very, you know, yeah.

BH: Yeah, and how did it make you feel like, did it, it sounded like when you were growing up on the estate in Lurgan that you were pretty much apathetic?

KM: I think I was.

BH: And not really aware, but this sounds, you say this would rile you up.

KM: Oh God, yeah.

BH: So how did that change your perception of things?

KM: Yeah, I just, yeah, I think because at that stage you're kind of more aware of what was going on in the news and, you know, you could just pick up things a lot easier and quicker then, but yes, you were very much, it was very much us, you know, us and them, you know, it was that huge division and, yeah, constantly on the news about ceasefires, about the IRA, about the, you know, the so, and bomb, and so it was just constant, you know, all the time, so yes, it was very much, I think I kept out of the town, there was people who used to, I think me and my sister, we took a conscious effort to actually stay away from the town cos we didn't like the town. Some of them would actually, I know my brother went in and he kind of mixed with the, we've got, you know, the other community, and he had some friends, but I'd, we didn't, you know, I didn't, I think because I was quite, I never, I wouldn't say I was a goody-goody, but, you know, I didn't want to get, I didn't want to get into trouble, I just, you know, I didn't want a confrontation, so, and I remember they used to call us the snobby Mallon girls, me and my sister, cos I wouldn't go in, I wouldn't go in to the arcades, I wouldn't, you know, sit in cars with the boys and, you know, and go to the park and all that business, smoking, so yeah, I didn't and I think may, yeah, so I think I kept myself away from that. I know like, a friend of mine, I remember she dated a one of the Protestant boys and it was just like a big scandal [laughs], cos her, and wh-, I remember ca-, I remember having to keep it quiet, she said my mother can never know, you know, so I used to almost like, kind of help cover up, you know, and she said right, just say I'm at your house, but I'm going out with so and so, you know, so I used to and I'm thinking oh my God, I would never do that, I'd never go out with a Protestant boy, wouldn't do that, I just wouldn't, so I thought that was really being, you know, rebellious, so no, if a Protestant boy talked to me I'd probably be like, you know, I would just, what I had to say, I mean, I knew, we knew of them and we had talked to them and there was some lovely, lovely, you know, people, you know, Protestants that we would have a chat and talk to, but I, I, I was too scared really, I think I was just too scared, you know, I wasn't willing to take it any further.

BH: So what did your parents think about having moved to Dromore, obviously to really escape what they saw as emerging problems where they were? What did they come to think about Dromore then whenever you went there?

KM: It probably was, I think my dad was probably happier because he was closer to his family, and I think that's maybe what it was, you know, family and friends were together, so it's very supportive of one another and I think that community, yes, we were in a predominantly Protestant town, but I think because my dad had known so many people and they knew of him, everybody knew because we had been there for God, I don't know, decades and decades, everybody knew the Mallons, everybody knew my dad, everybody knew they were a good family, you know, good family, so I think my dad was, and he was content and happier, definitely, and as long, and I think he would say, you know, just, you

know, keep, get on and do your, you know, do your best, do your, get on with your jobs, try to ignore what's going on, you know, and that's and that's it, and he was a very hard-working man and a good man and, but I think being in Dromore and being with his, round his family and the community kept him happier and he, and yes, we, we knew what was going on and, but I think on the Twelfth we would just escape, so we were like so many other Catholic families, put, load us in the car and go off on holiday.

BH: Go on holiday for those two weeks?

KM: Oh yeah, so we would, Killarney was always a favourite, two weeks in Killarney, Donegal, off for, you know, off on a caravan holiday somewhere, you know, so, so he was and that's what we did, can't, you know, we're not staying around here and all them drums and trouble going on, so that's what we did, we escaped. I remember one year my uncle, we had quite a lot of fields in the area, and I think he actually hired it out to the, for them to have their Twelfth of July parade [laughs], actually it was just next door to our house and I remember we actually, we thought well, it's in our uncle's field, we're going to go and we must've been there that year actually, we're going to go and see what's all about, and I remember us walking around and watching them all doing the parades and I thought actually it looked really good fun, you know, there was food stalls and, you know, and so I remember us doing that, but I don't think we stayed around too long, but yeah.

BH: Yeah, I mean, it sounds like the way you're talking about your dad, he wasn't a particularly political person.

KM: No, he wasn't, no.

BH: He wasn't involved in any activism or anything like that.

KM: No, no, no, and I don't think any of my, it's very hard to tell, you know, it's very hard when you're looking back now, but I'm, I know they were all very, they were all very, they were all, they were very much for SDLP, they were very, you know, they admired Gerry Adams and they, you know, they were definitely, if I ever heard them talking it was very much, they were, you know, definitely were republican in their viewpoints, but not, you know—

BH: Not militant.

KM: Not militant, no, no, definitely not militant, you know, I think they were always upset when they saw, you know, when the bombings happened and they just, you know, and I think they just despaired of politicians really, you know, so, but I think they were very much well, let's get on, and I know my dad just, he got, he just, he was the [00:30:00] type who just wanted to get on with everybody, you know, he felt everybody should get on with everybody, so he was, that was very good, and I think, I think both sides of my family were very much like that, very hard-working people who just kind of just got their heads down and got on with it, none of my family were involved in any of the military side of things as far as I'm aware.

BH: What about the church then when you were growing up? Was the church important or not important?

KM: Oh no, the church was very important, it was very important to my family, particularly my mum, my mum's very religious, so yes, we would have to go to mass every week, we had confessions and, so yes, it was very important to her, probably wasn't as important to us as children, you know [laughs], we started maybe skipping mass when we were, you know, teenagers and I think that, when I was, and I remember I was so glad when I came over here, I thought [indecipherable] I don't have to go to mass every week, I was going just to keep my mum happy.

BH: Right, that's interesting.

KM: Because I hated the lectures from the priests, you know, being told what to do and very money driven, but my mum, the church, it still is, it's a real comfort to her.

BH: Yeah, what about school then? In school, was it an all-girls' school or—?

KM: No, it was a mixed school. So I went to St Patrick's, I didn't pass my eleven-plus, I was desperate to pass my eleven-plus, but I didn't, cos I wanted to go to a good school, I wanted to go to a grammar school.

BH: Oh is that right, yeah?

KM: Oh yeah, I really did, but my headteacher he was, looking back, he wasn't a very good headteacher, but he had particular people who he wanted to concentrate on doing the eleven-plus and it wasn't me, you know, he obviously, he, and so I wasn't really pushed and my family weren't very much, they weren't academ-, from an academic background either, so I suppose I didn't really get supported or really kind of pushed, so I didn't get my eleven-plus and I went to St Patrick's, but quite a few, you know, even very clever people I thought would have passed the eleven-plus actually went to St Patrick's as well, and it was, it was a vocational high school, so girls were, we were, we did secretarial courses, we did cooking courses, we did book-keeping, you know, of course your, a few of your GCSEs, but, and boys they'd have, there was a car mechanic area, woodwork, tech drawing, so it was very much the boys are going off to do, you know, an apprentice of some type and the girls either going to go into nursing or caring work or secretarial work, and that's how it was geared, you know, and then I thought right, I'll be a, you know, I'll be a nurse, I'll go off and I'll be a nurse, and I got about two or three GCSEs, I think, I got, I had a boyfriend for the last two or three years and I think, and I remember my teacher saying, you know, he's going to hold you back.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

KM: [laughs] And I think that's, you know, and I don't think I pushed, and again, I didn't really get any encouragement from home, so I got about three GCSEs, yeah, two Bs and a C and I thought no, if I'm going to be a nurse I need to put my head down, so I went to Newry

tech and I think in one year I got, I got another six, six, no nine, six Bs and three Cs, so I got nine in one year.

BH: Nine in one year?

KM: Yeah, because I just, you know, cos I knew I had the potential, I just, and we had, our teacher [laughs], to be honest, the teachers in our high school weren't, there was a couple of really good teachers, dedicated teachers—

BH: Well, that's what I was going to ask, what kind of school was it?

KM: Oh they were terrible, it was terrible, it was a terrible school, me and my sister laugh at it now, you know, we just look back and go oh my God, what a rubbish school that really was, it really was, you had, you know, we had some of the teachers who would just basically read a newspaper, right, get on with it, we [laughs] had, honestly, they, you felt, you felt that you were just, you know, the, you, it definitely wasn't an academic school, you felt that you just went there and you just kind of coasted along.

BH: That's very interesting.

KM: There was quite a few pupils there as well, you know, quite, you could see from very quite disruptive backgrounds as well, quite a lot of bullying going on when I look back at it now, and I never had really great memories of that high school at all, and I was always really glad to leave. I wouldn't say it was a terrible experience, you know, and there was some amazing teachers there, you know, probably knew about two or three teachers who were really good, but yeah, I didn't really get an awful lot, a lot from it and I only really recognised that later on, you know, when I went to Newry tech and when I went to university and when I actually met teachers who were really inspirational, yeah.

BH: Yeah, that's really interesting because I was actually interviewing somebody yesterday and their experience was, you know, they, I don't know if they went to a grammar school or what, I think it might've grammar school, but it was kind of a Catholic girls' grammar and taught by nuns, and in fact it was very strict, but also trying to transmit the message, you know, you're Catholics in this country and you need to work very hard to get a job and you need to kind of, you know, have a different role in the world compared to your mother, this kind of thing, and they said, you know, it was intensive, but it sounds like this school wasn't—

KM: Oh no.

BH: Wasn't promoting that, like.

KM: No, no, it was not promoting that whatsoever, yes, cos I had some friends then who then, who went to, there was Our Lady's and there was Sacred Heart, and I know that they were run by the nuns and I remember them, you know, they were saying oh, and there was also St Colman's as well I think, the boys' school in Newry, and I remember them saying oh my God, you don't know how lucky you are, you know, like, we have to, you know, we have to walk in a certain line, we can't talk, we can't, you know, and it was very, and they

were saying oh no, it's terr-, you know, terrible, so I suppose in a way it was probably [laughs] just too relaxed, you know, too, far too relaxed, and I don't think that many people actually came out with an awful lot of really good grades as what I did as well. What else can I say about that high school [pauses], I mean, they taught Irish in it and I remember that was, that was good, we had a good Irish teacher there and he actually brought us to the Gaeltacht and that was good, you know, and that was actually nice to find a little bit about your, you know, your Irish history and about the Irish language, so that probably was the first time really, so kind of, being in that school again, you know, that, that was good.

BH: That's interesting, I haven't asked about that, I mean, did you have a sense of Irishness when you were growing up, like?

KM: Probably not until I was in high school, because I now speak to some of my, you know, especially I've got a friend who lives in Armagh and they were brought up with the GAA and the Irish traditional music, while we weren't, you know, where we were, where we were, or maybe the family I was brought up, you know, was very much kind of country and western and, you know, Downtown radio and, but we never played, I didn't know anybody who played any Irish sports, there were no GAA club near, as far as I was aware, and nobody I knew played Irish instruments and it was only then when I went to high school that yeah, we did, you know, the Irish dancing and we did the set dancing and that was fun, and then I remember going to the Gaeltacht and hearing the language and I thought oh, you know, it's great, and it's kind of finding a bit, and I remember we had one brilliant teacher, he was lovely and he used to tell us all the stories about Cuchulain and, you know, the kind of the Irish folklore and that was, he was amazing and that was, so that was probably the, yeah-

BH: The first-

KM: The first time I kind of really, yeah, really, really kind of, kind of under-, trying to understand a bit about the history side of things, and then history, talking about history, in history we did, yeah, we learned about the Easter Rising then as well.

BH: Is that right?

KM: Yeah, so, you know, we didn't do, we didn't do about English history, you know, we didn't do about the monarchy, we did about the Easter Rising as well, so learnt all about, you know, so you started getting a bit more political then when you're kind of actually thinking oh God, yeah, you know, you know, what happened then, so I suppose that was when you start analysing actually what has actually, you know, what has actually gone on and thinking actually, you know, we were all like, oh we're the ones who're in the right, you know [laughs], and I suppose they were taught that, you know, what, but that's, yeah, that kind of all kind of started then.

BH: And did you, you know, were you interested in that at the time or was it kind of later you went oh actually I should have been more interested in that?

KM: Oh God no, yeah, yeah, afterwards I think, I was interested, but after that, yeah, thinking oh God, I wish I'd been more interested, but yeah, yeah, cos I didn't pursue the

Irish classes and I remember my Irish teacher going you'll regret it, he says I teach your, you know, I teach so many, mothers who come to me now and teach them classes, he must do, he must have done some private teaching, he said and they all regret it, and he says I know you are all going to regret it, you know, that you don't, cos he really wanted me to go on and do GCSE and, but I didn't in the end, but yeah, so I can remember him saying, but yeah, no, afterwards I did think oh God, I wish I, I wish I'd gone to the Gaeltacht and wish I'd have gone to, done my, you know, GCSE and A-level like one of my friends had, you know, so, but I didn't.

BH: So then you went to the tech in Newry and you done more GCSEs and the plan in your head was that [00:40:00] you were going to do nursing, is that right, yeah?

KM: Yeah, I was going to do nursing and that was it, I did a pre-nursing course, one year and I got the GCSEs I wanted, and I think it was a teacher called Mrs Connolly and she, she was our sociology teacher, lovely lady, and I remember her saying to our class now then are you wanting to go to university, oh no, no, no, no, I'm just going to go to, you know, and I remember I went to an interview at the Royal hospital after I got my, that's right, I signed up to doing A-levels, only to get me through because I was going for interviews and I thought right, as soon as I get my interviews I'll go and I'll start my training in Belfast, and so I just started my A-levels anyway, and I picked I think sociology and politics, and I remember starting my A-level course and I remember Mrs Connolly saying she, and I think she picked me aside and she says do you want, are you wanting to go to university, I don't know really, nobody's ever said I could go to university, and she said but, you know, you did really well in your GCSEs and, you know, you've got potential, and I don't think anybody had ever said that to me, I'd never even thought I could get to university, I said oh right, and she says well, and she arranged a trip for us all to go down to Queen's. I'd never been to a university before, so we went down to Queen's and had a tour. She says this is where I went to university, so she brought us around, she brought us into the student union and she brought us round all the like, and she says no, any you that if you want to go to university you all got potential, you know, she was, this is why I talk about the inspirational teacher, you know, and like, no, maybe I could do, and then of course when you do your sociology, you learn about, you learn about people being conditioned and, you know, and about inequality and you're thinking oh actually, you know, I could do, you know, there's a reason why I probably haven't gone through the education system and, you know, the reason why I probably am where I am now, so and then I decided actually, you know, nursing's not really for me.

BH: Right, so you began to change your mind.

KM: I changed my mind, and then of course and then I thought right, I want to be a social worker, so I wanted to be a social worker, and then, and I wanted to do like, a social work course, so I suppose I wanted to be social w-, so I applied for social work courses then, I think in Jordanstown, so that's what I was wanting to do, or criminology, criminology, sociology, something like that, and then I did politics as well, politics I quite enjoyed, so-

BH: This was A-level, was it?

KM: This was A-level, but I only did that in one year, so I did one year of that and I did two years of sociology. The reason I didn't do three was because, it was to do with the benefits I needed, if you [laughs], I think, what was it, if you did two A-levels, it must have been to do with part-time hours or whatever, you were able to get a certain amount of benefits.

BH: Is that right?

KM: Yeah, yeah, so I think that was the reason why I did two. Looking back on it, I think why did I not do three, you know, why did I not do two years, because I didn't re-, oh that's right, I did start doing biology and I hated biology and that's, yeah, so I, I did that one year, hated it, failed miserably and that's right, then I did politics then for the second year and I did sociology for the two years, so, and I didn't really work that hard, and I didn't really know how to study, to be honest, it was, there was no tuition or no help really, I mean, so I think I got a C and a D and I remember going, and I thought well, I'm not going to be able to, I didn't get the grades I needed to go to Jordanstown or Queen's and so I remember just going down to clearing and I think they just went through the alphabet and said Hull, yeah, you could do a social science course over there, and I went Hull, where's Hull, Hull, never heard of Hull [laughs], and I ended up going to Hull.

BH: I've actually interviewed a few people who went to Hull. Is there some connection between Hull and Northern Ireland?

KM: No, I don't know.

BH: Quite a few people seem to have went to Hull and done—

KM: Maybe they've just lots of spaces and maybe there was just you got all those poor, because to get into Jordanstown and get into Queen's was very difficult then. I don't know if the spaces have increased over the years or anything, but I remember it was extremely hard to get into, and so yeah, there was loads of people who were going over to England to study.

BH: Is that right?

KM: Oh God, yeah.

BH: From your school or other people as well?

KM: No, from other people as well, nobody from my, from Newry tech.

BH: Cos this was Newry tech, nobody from Newry tech went to Hull?

KM: Yeah, no, nobody, well, nobody on the courses I was doing or nobody I knew of went there. I think quite, Manchester and Salford were very popular, and Liverpool were very popular, I didn't, never applied, well, I didn't apply to any England, I wasn't expecting to go to England.

BH: Sure.

KM: So, and I wonder, I probably did try Liverpool, I can't even remember the conversation when I went to clearing, maybe, maybe I did ask for Liverpool and Manchester, I probably imagine I probably did ask, they mustn't have had anything, and then she mentioned Hull, said there was quite a few places available on the Hull course, and I said okay, right, I'll go for that one.

BH: And did you go on your own?

KM: Yeah.

BH: No friends or no, nobody, no?

KM: No, no, completely on my own, and I was nineteen at the time, and I remember a big fuss cos mum and dad didn't have the money till, to get me over there and I think they had to go and borrow the money from the bank, I think it must have been only about a hundred pounds or something then to get me the plane fare. I'd been on a plane once before, cos me and my friend had been to Guernsey on a working holiday that summer, so this would be my second time on a plane, but yeah, so this time I went on my own, and I'd never been on a train and I knew I had to get off the plane to get on a train to get to Hull, all by myself with one rucksack at the age of nineteen [laughs]. I look back and I think wow, but I think there always was a part of me that was quite adventurous anyway, you know, wanted to go off and travel and see different parts of the world, so I think I, you know, that's always been in me, I do love travelling, I love seeing different—

BH: What did your parents say about you going?

KM: Oh they didn't want me to go.

BH: They didn't want you to go.

KM: No, no, mum particularly didn't want me to go.

BH: What did they say, like?

KM: They just said, they just said oh what do you want to go over there for, you know, you're better, you know, stay here, try to get a course here, you know, and then I said no, you know, I'm nineteen now, I've already repeated my GCSEs, you know, I just I need to, I need to go up and, oh I remember, my dad said why don't you go and work down the factory down the road where your, your, the knick-, well, we ca-, it's the knicker factory, the knicker and bra factory, that's where your cousin Paula works, and I was like, oh no, I don't want to work in a factory, daddy, you know, and I think he was like, oh, you know, isn't that good enough for you, you know, that's where your mum, your, my mum had worked in a factory before she had us and, you know, it's not good enough for you, and I was going I want to do more with my life than go down to a factory, so yeah, so it was a bit of that, you know, they couldn't understand why I wanted to go off and study.

BH: You would have been the first person in your family obviously to go to university.

KM: Oh yeah, yeah, and looking back on it, I didn't do it well or, you know, I kind of, kind of fell into it really, but yeah, so I was the very first one, yeah.

BH: It sounds like you were determined that you were going to go then, you know, like.

KM: I was determined, yeah, and I suppose maybe the more they were saying for me not to do it I probably I was quite stubborn, I thought oh actually no, I'm going to go and do it, what's the worst can happen, if it doesn't work out I'll just come back again, you know, and then when I went over I met, I went into halls of residence, so that was quite good because then that was just, there was so many Northern Irish.

BH: Oh there was, right.

KM: Oh loads of Northern Irish girls in there, and then that's, I, I naturally gravitated towards them, and a friend, Aileen, was from Armagh, there was another Protestant girl called, now actually this is probably where I met more Protestants—

BH: Ah this is interesting, right.

KM: Than I ever did, yeah, there was a Protestant girl called Louise there, Louise Wellwood who was from Newtownards, and we ended up being best friends for years and then she went to ju-jitsu class in Hull University, I went to the Humberside Polytechnic, so there was Hull, ne-, it was right next door to Hull University, our halls of residence, and then there was Hull, so we went over to Hull University tra-, union quite a lot, and then there was Graham who was, he was from Northern Ireland as well, he was from, was he from Belfast, but he was a very staunch Protestant, his family were, I think his family were well into the Orange Order and so I remember we used to have really heated debates with him.

BH: Is that right?

KM: Oh yeah, and I remember lots of the students, and I think at the time, I remember we, and I remember my God, everybody, students were kind of more for our side, the republican side, I remember going ooh yous are more for us cos they used to be kind of arguing about, to Graham, you know, Graham and Louise about, you know, about Irish history and there's, you know, some of our friends and people, especially our friends in the student houses, were really up on politics and really interested in and knew a lot about the Irish history as well. I would challenge him and, but there were lots of heated, I mean, he's a very intel-, clever guy, he went on to do a PhD in physics, so he was very clever, Graham, but he, even though he's very, very clever, he was [indecipherable] very, very much, you know, his side, [00:50:00] very, and you could always tell, there was, there was me and Aileen and a few Catholic girls, and then there was the Protestant girls, and he was always, he always came—

BH: Were you all living in the same house or what?

KM: We all lived in, we, we, I lived in the halls of residence for the first year and then in the second year, his second year, no, there was, there was only, no, he, we were just very friendly with him and one of our friends lived in his house, we were always going out together, so we were always in and out of each other's houses for a few years and we spent summers together as well and working in Hull, so this is when we kind of mixed with lots of Protestants and Catholics together, but they, and so yeah, me and Louise got on brilliantly and it was great cos I used to go to her house in Newtownards when I came back and then she'd come over to my house, and that's the first time I actually really had a Protestant friend, you know, a real Protestant friend.

BH: Oh right, and this came through going to university?

KM: This came from going to university, yeah, and this is the time, you know, there was bombing campaigns in London, you know, there was lots of antagonism.

BH: Well, when, when was this, was this the 1990s?

KM: This was the 1990s, probably 1991 when I went over, and actually in Hull itself we used to get, and I think we used to get a lot of gyp as well, you know, because we had, you know, really broad Irish accents as well—

BH: Oh is that right, yeah?

KM: There was lots of bombs, you know, the bomb, lots of bombing campaigns at the time as well, so yeah, I remember going into shops and people were saying, you know, why, you know, you know, there's, why, why are yous doing this, you know, and your lot and that and, you know, doing this to our country, and you should go back to your country, so it definitely was, you know—

BH: So this, you encountered this?

KM: Oh I encountered this, yeah, I encountered this in shops and I encountered this when I worked in factories and shops, and you did, and you did that get sense of you needed to keep, you know, keep your mouth sh-, tried to keep quiet or keep in the background because it was a lot of anti-, anti-Irish, Irishness going on at the time. I mean, I could understand how people were so angry because of what was going on over there at the time, so I think we all kind of kept, we kept together really to, you know.

BH: Well, that was kind of my next question, did you have many English friends?

KM: Yes, I did, yeah, yeah, good mix of English friends as well, yeah.

BH: Would these have been students?

KM: All students.

BH: All students, right.

KM: All students, yeah.

BH: So I'm guessing students, you know, in general, as a class, are a bit more open-minded I suppose.

KM: Oh yeah, absolutely, yeah, yeah, yeah.

BH: You said, mentioned there working in a factory or something. Did you ever work, interact with other English people who weren't students?

KM: Yes, yes, yeah.

BH: Yes, and what were they like?

KM: Yes, I remember working in a fish factory, cos we were in Hull, it was the worst, one of the worst jobs I've ever done in my life and, yeah, and I remember I went with my boyfriend, who's my husband now, Dave, and my friend Rick and, who's still really good friends with now, and I remember we went to work there, yeah, and we used to get, yeah, I used to get lots of questions and lots of, you know, they were very, people, very inquisitive, you know, what's going on and why you're doing that and, you know, why's the bombing going on, and, you know, so we'd kind of explain, but I had, you know, Dave and Rick, who were very, you know, very kind of intelligent, always kind of stuck up for me and always kind of, you know, said this is the reason why dat da da, so we had all, but yeah, used to get a lot of antagonism from particularly very working-class people who di-, you know, who didn't understand the history of Ireland or what was going on.

BH: Were Dave and Rick, are they from Northern Ireland?

KM: No, Dave's from Leeds and Rick's from, no, Weston-super-Mare, so no, they didn't, no, no.

BH: But yet they would on your behalf would try and explain.

KM: Oh yeah.

BH: Right, that's interesting.

KM: Yes, they would do, yeah, because I think, as you said, you're work-, you know, you're mixing with students and people are very inquisitive, people are very kind of gen-, want to know, want to learn, want to understand, come from a different perspective as well, so that was kind of good for me as well because, and I think it was really good for Graham and Louise, you know, for the Protestants as well because, and I think I certainly saw things probably more from their side, I think [indecipherable], I suppose I, you see them more as human beings, I think that's the word.

BH: Right, that's interesting, yes.

KM: Because I think it really was that us and them and I never really, I, I, I never, I knew I never would be friendly with, real friends with Graham, you know, because he really did have that barrier up, and I remember when in particular times he would get quite nasty and I don't think, and I think he did say once, I think something happened, I think they had, something had happened to them obviously in their family.

BH: You mean they had like, violence or something like that, yeah?

KM: Something, yes, so I don't think he felt he could ever be, have close friendships with Catholics, and you came across that, you know, I've always come, you know, I came across, I've come across that quite a few times over the years and you're kind of right, okay, like, back off, you know, and just know that there's, I'll be friendly, but I'll just know that we're never ever going to be, going to be friends, and a couple of occasions I've done that. I remember going to a disco once and I got really friendly with this guy, and I knew he was a Protestant and he knew I was Catholic, when I was at the Coach, I think it was at the Coach, and as soon as he found out I was a Catholic he'd, he didn't particularly like it, but then, he then told me then he was a policeman and then, I think after a couple of dates he said no, you know, I can't, we can't, it can't go any further than this, he says, you know, I like you, but he said I just can't get over, you know, I'm a policeman, but also, you know, I've witnessed troubles in my life and, you know, I think he had a friend or something who had got killed, so he's, you know, and I was like, fine [laughs], so there was, there was, you know, there was always kind of occasions like that, and the thing is because I'd never gone through that, I've never had any problems in my family or anybody close to me who had died or been part of the conflict, so I, I could—

BH: You didn't carry that around with you, yeah.

KM: I didn't carry that around with me, so, but I could see why people obviously they probably were traumatised, so you were always kind of aware that, you know, when you met somebody from the other side, you know, how close can you get to them, how close can you get to them, cos sometimes people have a real hatred against you and you could feel that from some Protestants, and then other times, you know, and then other occasions you'd think oh no, actually they could, you know, we can get on well, and then sometimes, very rarely, like with Louise actually, we can get a really good, close friendship, so yes, it just probably made life more difficult, it's probably easier really just to be with your lot, I think that's what it is, yeah, because you just don't know what was going on in the background.

BH: Sure, yeah, all the same it sounds like this was quite a, you know, what's the word I'm looking for, quite an enlightening place to actually kind of—

KM: Yes, I think it was, yes.

BH: To grow up, in the sense that if you had've stayed I guess in Dromore or wherever, none of these things would've happened, none of these reflections about things would have happened.

KM: Yes, yes, no, no, no, no, no, I don't think, yeah, so it definitely made me, made me think broader and gave me better, you know, more experience, so I was, I think for me it was very good, yeah, yeah.

BH: At that time when you were living there, did you miss home?

KM: Yes, yes, yeah, I did. I wasn't as homesick as some of my friends who would be on the phone crying, and I was actually, no, I'm actually enjoying myself.

BH: Right, so you actually liked being there?

KM: I loved the student life and I loved, I just loved meeting new people and a new experience. I was doing a social science course as well which was really interesting. I've got a real love of sociology, I loved politics, we had a Northern Irish, we had a part of criminology where we had a Northern Irish teacher, learnt a bit more about the, his name was Liam, I can't remember his surname, but, so we learnt a bit more about Northern Irish history as well, I remember doing, you know, some assignments on that as well, so I was able to get more, more reading and more awareness of what was going on in Northern Ireland, even though you were living in it you didn't really have an underst-, too much, limited understanding.

BH: Sure, yeah.

KM: So that, I actually did more reading and more kind of research into conflict back home, so that was enlightening and no, I, no, I thoroughly did enjoy my whole student life, loved Hull, and people—

BH: There's not that many people say that [laughs].

KM: [laughs] No, not many people say, I wouldn't live there, but I think because we had such a close, good, really good friendships, the social life at the time was amazing, lots of pubs, lots of things going on. I think it's completely changed because I think as we were leaving University of Lincoln then bought it over, so quite a bit of the polytechnic side went over to Lincoln, so, and I think Hull then, university then, bought the land that our campus was on, so, and I think there was lots of landlords then ended up going out of business as well, pubs started shutting down because they'd lost so many students.

BH: Sure, yeah.

KM: But I think at that time we were very lucky, it was a very vibrant, and I remember we went back years later thinking oh my God, I wouldn't want to be a student there now, but I think at the time it was really good, really good fun, and then my husband is, was, when I met him in Hull he was from Leeds, so that was the reason why we decided to—

BH: Ah so that's what brought you here, right.

KM: That's what brought me to Leeds.

BH: In Hull itself, cos I don't know a huge amount about it, was there like, an Irish community in Hull, the same way as there is one Leeds or anything like that?

KM: No, I didn't know any. [01:00:00]

BH: Well, that's, my next question was going to be, did you gravitate towards that, but there wasn't one there, there was nothing to gravitate towards.

KM: No, no, no, just Irish people I suppose. One of our English friends was crazy about the Saw Doctors, we used to go and travel and see the Saw Doctors everywhere, they came to Hull, you know, that was probably my only kind of Irish connection [laughs]. There was no Irish club, there was no Irish society, as far as I'm aware, I can't remember, there might've been one at Hull University, but I can't remember ever hearing of it, so no, there wasn't.

BH: Did you ever encounter people from the South in Hull?

KM: Yes, yes, I did, not that many, mainly people from the North, to be honest, yeah. I remember St Patrick's, yeah, that's what always got me every year, St Patrick's, it was great, used to celebrate St Patrick's, in the pub, in the union and go crazy, never celebrated St Patrick's ever once—

BH: Is that right, yeah?

KM: When I was in Northern Ireland, never, you wouldn't do it, it was too, nobody, cos—

BH: That's very interesting.

KM: It was, unless you went down to the South of Ireland, but it was always, it was never celebrated, but just the Catholics were too scared.

BH: Yes, you couldn't have celebrated St Patrick's in Dromore, like.

KM: You couldn't celebrate it, God no, God no, you'd be—

BH: So your first St Patrick's Day happened in Hull, in England.

KM: Yeah, yes, that was my first St Patrick's Day, it was like, wow, and I'm thinking, the people I look at, why are they celebrating St Patrick's Day, and I think it really surprised me, but pleasantly as well, but yeah, it was yeah, I'm thinking oh God [laughs], you know, I've got an Irish accent, you know, I'm properly Irish [laughs].

BH: That's interesting, so you would have identified, you would have been identified as Irish whenever you were over there I suppose, yeah?

KM: Yeah, yeah, and I think within the student community, you know, being Irish was different, quite cool, you know, especially yeah, so it was, it was interest-, I think people were fascinated by people from Ireland, you know, especially when the conflict and everything that was going on. I remember everybody wanted to know why and how and who, you know, so-

BH: So this was actually something which could be a positive in terms of experience?

KM: I think, yes, I think in terms of a positive, within the student community, but in the community in Hull itself, that's where you knew you were going to be questioned and, yeah, and you could get some antagonism, yeah.

BH: Sure, during that time did you become involved in any political movements or activisms whenever you were in Hull, no?

KM: No, nothing, nothing, no.

BH: What about British politics itself? Were you interested in that?

KM: [pauses] To a little degree, I mean, I know Margaret Thatcher was, she was, no, she had gone hadn't she by the time, but I remember, well, the course I was doing was a very left-wing course, so it was a lot about Thatcher, you know, what had happened before and when Thatcher was in government and so yes, I suppose as part of my course it was and, you know, and I, you know, I always had left-wing views and I suppose that carried on since then, but I was never involved in anything, in any societies or anything, but I had a real, yeah, no, I had definitely had a real interest in justice I suppose, justice for people and social action.

BH: What about going back then to Northern Ireland? Did you go back during that time for holidays and things like that?

KM: Yeah, yeah, oh no, I always went, yeah, I always went back, me and Louise and a few friends we used to go, you know, we used to travel up in the, from Hull, I think up to Newcastle, train right across to Stranraer and get over the boat over, long, long journey, but yeah, we used to-

BH: You got the boat, yeah?

KM: We got the boat, yes, we used to do, yeah, and it took all day just to travel, travel over. So we used to do that at Christmas, used to go over, definitely for the first year, definitely went over in the summer, the other two years I usually stayed over in Hull, yeah, we went over for holidays, term times, and my sister as well lived in Ireland as well, she lives in Leeds now, but at the time, so I was very close to my sister as well, so I used to go over and stay with her, she was married at the time, yeah, like, we used to go home, used to love, loved going up to Belfast, started going out socially in Belfast then, but then my sister she was, she started working in Belfast, so used to go up there. I mean, I was up there once when a bomb went off and I remember, always remember that, you know, always remember that eerie

sound and the, you, and I always remember going up and, you know, there was bomb scares, you know, there'd usually be bomb scares in Lisburn, bomb scares in Bel-, and you'd, and you look back and I remember we used to be standing outside, you know, bomb scare, bomb scare [laughs], in Castlecourt. I remember we were just hanging around waiting, almost waiting for it to go off, and I think because there was so many bomb scares–

BH: Yeah, people got used to them.

KM: You kind of get, you get complacent, you're in Top Shop going oh God, I have to get out of the dressing room, you know, you know, I'm not leaving, you know, and lots of bag searching, so yeah, always, you know, and always rem-, but it never put me off from going to Belfast, I loved going to Belfast, loved going out in Belfast and all the pubs and clubs and so I started to kind of doing that, you know, used to go to concerts in Queen's.

BH: And that was because what, your sister had moved there at this stage?

KM: Yeah, cos she'd moved there, yeah.

BH: And she had a house or a flat or something?

KM: She had a flat, yeah, just outside it as well, yeah, well, she separated from her husband as well when she was, later on in life when she was about thirty as well, so even as the years went on, yeah, so yeah, used to continue going out in Belfast, so yeah, yeah, so yeah.

BH: Did you ever think of moving back?

KM: I did, I think at some certain stages, I think I thought no, actually I wanted to move back, probably when I was in my early twenties I thought actually, and even my husband, he said if you want to go over, he said he'll go over with me.

BH: Is that right? He would have agreed to do that?

KM: Yeah, he would agree, would have agreed to have gone over with me, and I was really, was contemplating it and then I think my best friend, I think that she was kind of contemplating it as well, she decided to stay in the end, and then I think, I think I ended up just getting work and then you end up getting settled then in Leeds, and then once you got a job, then you thought right, I'll stay on a bit longer and then next, you know, next minute, you know, you're well settled in and you know, you're, you've got a house and a mortgage and then right, you know, and then next minute you're at the kids, so yeah, so I, you know, I've been over here longer than, so at this stage, you know, it's not on the cards at all, you know, so even when the kids were young I thought, but then my sister ended up, broke up from her husband, she went travelling and then she came back to, and she came to Leeds to settle, and that was lovely having her, so I think cos I had a bit of home here and then she's now, a husband and two kids later, so and then I've got, so we do, we take, we go over and see my mum and dad and, he's got, and I think it's harder now in a way because my mum and dad are getting older and I think that's, it's been okay now the kids being younger, but now I think my mum and dad are getting older and I think that's when me and my sister are

kind of going oh, you know, this is the difficult time, especially when things are, health problems, and my brother, you know, my brother's had, it's a difficult, he's had problems with the law in Ireland as well. He's actually in prison now at the moment, which has been a huge stress in our family, so having to go back and forth recently to support my family has been, it's been tough and I think that's tough cos you think they want us there, you know, and they'll say to us, I wish you had, you know, my mum'll say–

BH: She'll actually say that to you, like?

KM: Oh she'll say that to me now, you know, I wish you hadn't have moved away, I wish you were here, you know, I wish I could just call you up, you know, and when you are here, you are great help, all the boys are great, you know, the boys, but you know what the boys are like, you know, and I can see from my other relatives, and they've got all their girls and they all go out with the girls and their mother, and I feel some terrible guilt, you know, as well that I did that, and I think did I do the right thing, you know, cos I know my mum misses me, misses me and my sister desperately and that does fill me with a bit of sadness really and guilt because me and my sister, my sister's got mixed race children and my sister said I would never move back, she said, because I just wouldn't, you know, that wouldn't be fair on my children or my husband, she said, because of the racism in Northern Ireland or in Ireland, she said I wouldn't do that to them, so I know that my sister wouldn't move over.

BH: Well, that's interesting because what I was going to ask you was, what was it like the first time you brought your boyfriend back? How did they react to this guy with an English accent?

KM: Probably suspiciously, yes, yes, they [pauses], I think probably, looking back, they were thinking oh I hope this doesn't last, you could tell.

BH: Is that right?

KM: Yeah, oh definitely, yeah, because I think always, they probably always wanted me to come back and settle, yeah, to have me back in Ireland I think, but again, they were very good, they never said anything, you know, they were very supportive and, you know, they were very nice to him, yeah. But it's only kind of maybe recently I kind of found out, I suppose I always ignored things as well because I'm quite stubborn, you know, this is what I want to do with my life, dat, da, da, da, and it's only kind of now when you get older, you know, I'm forty-seven now [laughs], you can look back on it and you're thinking oh actually, you know, I can see now probably how they felt and how that was for them, but I wasn't very intuned or I didn't want to talk about [01:10:00] it or I kind of just batted it off, so yeah, yeah, yeah, I think it was hard for them actually.

BH: What about, you've got children now, is that right?

KM: Mmm, I've got three children now.

BH: Do you bring them back?

KM: Yeah, yeah, and they've actually got, funny, they've got Irish, all Irish names as well, I've got an Aoife, a Ciara and an Orla.

BH: Is that right?

KM: And that's very funny, you know, and also I think, and I look myself and I think three girls with three Irish names, and I work for an Irish organisation, I've been here for twenty-two years, and I think what does that say about me, you know, the fact that even in Ireland I, you know, I wouldn't say I'm a very Irish Irish person, you know, not really into, you know, Irish culture or Irish, you know, I meet people here who I feel are more Irish than I am, but because I'm over here I think if I lived in Ireland I don't think I would have called my children Irish names, I've done that for a reason, you know, obviously I want people to, I want to keep that identity, you know, for my children as well.

BH: You want to keep that identity—

KM: Yes, I think, yeah.

BH: And I wonder is there another thing, whereby actually you appear more Irish over here—

KM: Yes, absolutely.

BH: As in like, everybody identifies as you as Irish here, whereas if you were in Northern Ireland you're just like everybody, like.

KM: I'm just like everybody else, yeah, yeah, and I'm wondering if that is, you know, if I was over there I'd just kind of, you just blend, while I suppose over here you're, yeah, you're, as you said, you're, you're, you stand out, don't you.

BH: You stand out.

KM: You stand out, yeah, so, you know, they go to a Catholic school, you know, they've all had their holy communion, and I always remember growing up going, my children, you know, they're, you know, they're go, they're not going to go to a Catholic school, they're going to go to an integrated school, you know, if I was in Northern Ireland that's what I'd have done, you know, and I was always very sure, you know, that was the case, while over here [laughs] I'm thinking I'm just doing exactly what my [laughs], but my sister, my sister's probably a bit more, I mean, she married a black man, I mean, that was like, that was—

BH: She's really crossed the threshold, like.

KM: She really crossed the threshold, you know, she's, she, she got divorced as well, bloomin' hell [laughs], she done two biggies, but she's a very strong person, oh my God, and they love her husband, he's like, one of the nicest men you could ever meet, you know, he's [laughs] a teacher, he's, you know, he's such a lovely man and, you know, they love him to bits, but I think that was the very first t-, I mean, me and my sister laugh cos I think the first thing my mum said when my sister said right, mum like, you need to sit down, I'm just

telling you I'm going out with a black man, okay, I'm going to bring him over to Ireland and she said oh right, and the first thing she said is, she said right, how black is he [laughs] and we laugh about that now like, what do you want me to say like, light black black [laughs], you know, which, you know, so she said mum, he's just black, that's all you need to know, and I remember he went over and they went to mass, she brought him, the first probably black man who ever went to mass, you know, brought him into mass, but he's one of those, you know, everybody loves him, you know, and, but I think it was very good for my mum and dad as well, you know, to see the different, you know, different side, difference, yeah, cos I don't think, I remember growing up, we never saw, we never saw anybody with, of race, you know, I think there was one mixed race boy in my class and that was it, but yeah, you didn't, so no, no.

BH: Presumably then, I was going to ask about like, your own kids when they go back there. Do they find it hard to mix with the other kids there or is there no issue with it?

KM: Oh no issue, no, no, they're, no. My daughters are very [pauses], when we go back, when they're with their cousin Molly, and they've got a good friend back home, Siobhán, and they'll go over to visit her three children and they mix really well, you know, they love going to their house, they love, you know, the big houses back in Ireland, oh they're massive, you know, mixing with other kids, they're fine, they're actually very proud of their Irish roots I think.

BH: Well, I was going to ask next, you gave them Irish names, do they themselves have a sense of themselves as being from—?

KM: Yes, yes, yes, yeah, and I think because they went to a Catholic, maybe that's the reason I wanted them to go to a Catholic school, to meet other children whose parents were from Ireland or from an Irish background, because I wanted, I thought it'd be easier for them and I think it is. I mean, I never went down the whole Irish dancing route and, you know, Irish music route, they just, I haven't done that. I've just, I think I wanted them to, cos I knew the school would be able to provide some kind of Irish identity for them or, you know, they could identify with other people, and that has worked, you know, they meet up, there's lots of other people there with Irish backgrounds or children with Irish names as well, and they're in a Catholic high school now as well in Harrogate, so then they don't feel too different, and also they love Ireland, they absolutely love Ireland, they love going back home, they love, you know, they would go over all the time, they can't wait to go over at Christmas, I'd say they prefer Christmas in Ireland, yeah, they love it.

BH: Your husband's from England, from Leeds, is that right?

KM: Yes, mm hmm.

BH: So, do, would they identify themselves as having both kind of identities, English and Irish, or would they say no, no, I'm this or I'm that, like?

KM: They would probably say, no, they'd probably say half and half, I think they would say, you know, half Irish and half English, yeah. My middle daughter thinks she's got a bit of an

Irish accent, she says all my friends say I've got a bit of an Irish, you know, Irish, cos I say, you know, she maybe picks up a few things I say, you know, she says, you know, I do sound really Irish, and she can do a really brilliant Irish accent as well, but yeah, she, yeah, but they do say about their names, why did you call me Aoife, you know, Aoife, you know, nobody can ever pronounce my name and I go oh I know, popsy, I'm sorry about that, you know, and it is that very much of, people don't know about Irish names, you know, and it's like, Aofee or, you know, like, Sierra, and they can kind of laugh about it, they say why could you not just call me, you know, Lily or, you know, things like that, and they used, they went through a stage of that and I think kind of now they're like, oh right, yes, it's nice to be a bit, to have something a bit different, you know, so, but they do kind of go what were you thinking of [laughs].

BH: What about the religion then? Cos you said that whenever you left and went to Hull that was it, you'd stopped going to mass.

KM: Oh God yeah, oh I loved it, yeah [laughs].

BH: So did that continue or did you go back to religion?

KM: Oh no, oh I did not, no. I don't go to mass, I don't think I'm particularly religious, I'm probably deep down an atheist. I want to believe, but I think I'm, I think I've always been like, I'm quite scientific and quite, you know, matter of fact and it, a lot of it doesn't really make sense and if it doesn't make sense I'm not, you know, I'm not sure. I can understand why people, you know, I love the idea of religion, the comfort it can bring and, you know, the direction, the rules and, you know, and there's a lot about the Catholic faith that I like, a lot about it I hate, so, and, but I made that decision then for my children going to Catholic school, which was I think my husband was a bit baffled by, you know, he didn't-

BH: Is he a Catholic, is he?

KM: He is Catholic, but he was Catholic brought up in Leeds and, but he was a bit, cos, well, we did start, we did look at other schools, primary schools, and we didn't even go and see the Catholic primary school. I went by myself to see it, didn't tell him, and I came out and I thought no, they're going go to a Catholic school and-

BH: Yeah, and is that about an Irish heritage thing more than a, than piety, like?

KM: Yeah, yes, it wasn't about piety, I think it was an Irish, I think it was an Irish heritage thing, and I think it's because it was what I knew, you know, I did the holy communion, it's what I knew, and I think it was an Irish heritage thing as well, and it's what was familiar to me, so yes, and then we didn't get our first choice, second choice was the Catholic school, so I was like, yes, so that was kind of taken out of his hands really. He's really pleased now cos it worked out, it was a really good school and it was a good decision and, but yes, it probably surprised me a little bit, things like that do surprise, you're thinking if I was in Ireland I don't think I would have gone down that road, yeah, it does make you question why you do things, and they're not particularly religious, been to Catholic sch-, but I think that's because I don't take them to mass every week, we went to mass whenever I thought

we had to go to mass. I've never ever said to them I don't believe in God, you know, we always talked about God, we did the prayers and everything, but I suppose I didn't, I wasn't, I suppose I wasn't reinforcing it all the time, but I think I like, didn't, I think it was because, you know, it's really good for telling like, what's right and what's wrong and I think it's very, it's a good grounding for kids and I think that's why I wanted them to go to a religious school, and I think it's been, yeah, I think it has been good for them and I'm glad I went down that route, [01:20:00] yes, but it did surprise me, I think, yeah, when I look back and the student side of me [laughs], you know what I mean, would be really cross with me, but I think you do, I think when you're a student and when you're, especially when you're in your early twenties and look at me looking back then, you're very idealistic and, but when you start having your children and you start getting comfortable and you have your job, you do, it's very easy to kind of start doing what you've been brought up doing, it's very, and I look at my sister, my sister's probably very, much stronger than me, she was very, well, like, no, you know, I'll do what I want to do and I know that's right, you know, while I probably go oh no, I'm probably a bit more scared, yeah, but that's probably a personality thing as well I think.

BH: Yeah, well, that leads me into nicely the last few set of questions which are sort of summative, reflective questions. So looking back then over your life, do you think moving to England has changed you? Has it had an important impact on your life?

KM: Oh yeah, I think it's had a massive, part of my life. I, it's hard to know, hard to know, was it the, would I have had a better life back in Northern Ireland, I really don't know. I know that I was a happier person being in England than I was in Ireland. I think being away from the Troubles and the negativity was definitely something that I was glad to get away with and come to England, to be away with, and even though I had, you got the negativity, I think that was probably balanced by being in a supportive student community and also because you're with people who were, yeah, they were very supportive in wanting to know about you, and I suppose maybe that, being that bit different as well, standing out, and so yeah, that, that was, I really hate, I really didn't, I really hated the antagonism and the feeling, especially around the Twelfth, I hate, you know, I hated all that about Northern Ireland, I hated it. I loved the people, I loved my family, but I just couldn't wait to be away. I think I just find, I just remember being really happy to be away from Ireland at that time, and I think it's, as the years have gone on probably been more drawn to go back, but that's probably because more concern about my family, but my life's been lovely, you know, I've got, still married, got three lovely kids, I've been in this job for twenty-two years, got some good friends, I've travelled, I've, you know, I'm quite comfortable now, so, you know, I think I've made a really good decision, you know. I think I'm very happy, I probably would be this happy back home I would imagine, I don't know, but I think because I'm a hard worker, you know, and I love working with people and I want to get, I think I would definitely would have done some sort of work similar to this, I think I always would have done, I always would have done social work or worked with homeless or done some or caring work, not nursing, definitely not nursing, I'd be a rubbish nurse, but I think I would have done something like that back in Ireland, yeah.

BH: Okay, it sounds like England was a place where you could grow a bit.

KM: Yes, I think it was, yeah, yeah, I think it was, and I don't know if I'd have got, I might have got that when I went to university, if I'd have went to university in Ireland, Northern Ireland, I do-, I think if I had've gone to university in Northern Ireland it might've been different.

BH: Yeah, I think it might've been, yeah.

KM: I think it might've been, cos I think I might've ended up doing, I don't think I'd have pushed myself and I probably would've ended up doing care work or factory work or, I think going to England really helped me, it broadened my horizons, I had people saying right, no, you can go, well, you know, you can go to university, you can study, you can travel, you know, I've been to America and Australia and Europe and, you know, I've skied, I've done lots of things I don't think I would have done if I'd have stayed in Ireland, I really don't.

BH: I mean, the way you described it as well, with a group of Northern Irish friends in Hull, that to me sounds quite a distinctive thing as in, you know, if you were in Queen's or Coleraine or wherever it is, you wouldn't just have a group of Northern Irish friends cos everybody would be Northern Irish, this was in that context, it could only happen in that context.

KM: Yes, it could only happen in that context, yeah, yeah, yeah, and of course in Coleraine, Belfast it, predominantly, isn't it, it's predominantly Catholics there or predominantly Protestants, isn't it, you know.

BH: Yes, exactly.

KM: And it would have been back then, cos I know Queen's was, was Queen's predominantly, yeah, Catholic, wasn't it, was Queen's Catholic or Protestant?

BH: I think by that stage probably fairly mixed.

KM: Was it mixed, yeah?

BH: Like, knowing from our friends who have went to Queen's and things like that like, I think people kind of, you know, you know, you'll go to, if you go to study history in Queen's you'll know people from your class and then you'll get into a flat with those people, so the segregation that's there at the start carries right through.

KM: Yes, it carries right through, yeah, yeah.

BH: Whereas if you coming to England I think is it a very different thing, like.

KM: I think a very different, yeah, yeah, because I don't think I would ever have experienced meeting, yeah, Graham and Louise and maybe some of the other Protestants I met as well and kind of hearing their stories as well, yeah, definitely.

BH: [pauses] Where or what does home mean to you now?

KM: Ireland. Home to me, means to me, is my, where my family are, my mum, my dad and my brother and sister, and home is, it's a happy place. I love going back home, it's peaceful, I love the country now, now I'm older, it's not boring anymore [laughs]. I love going back, I love going back with my children, you know, my children love going back there, so yeah, it's a happy place, and actually because it's, because we haven't, because it's peaceful now, you know, you can go back, you know, since the Good Friday Agreement, you know, it's always been a, you know, a place I look forward to going back to now.

BH: Right, okay, it's interesting when I asked you, said where's home now, you immediately said it's back there. You would never say it's Leeds?

KM: No, it's funny that. Home is Leeds, but it's like, almost like I've got two homes.

BH: Two homes, right, okay.

KM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's, the tie back to Ireland is, yeah, it's really strong, yeah, the pull back to Ireland is really strong, yeah, definitely, yeah, and it surprises me because I probably don't go over there, you know, maybe two, three, you know, two, three times a year. I don't talk to my mum and dad an awful lot, maybe about once a month, we text and, but it's never been a really good, you know, we're not great communicators, so yeah, it does surprise me, but yeah, I would always say Ireland's my home, yeah, even though Leeds and England have been my home for probably longer than I was in Ireland, yeah.

BH: So would you say when you came to England you became more or less Irish or more or less British or English?

KM: Ooh that's a good question [pauses]. Did I become more British, don't think I became more, don't think I became more, I'm not sure, I really don't know. I don't think I became more Irish. I became more aware of my Irishness and my history, but I don't think I did, I think I've, I think I assimilated pretty well, but I'm just, but when I look at the school I put my kids to and the work I've gone into [laughs] I have become more Irish, I have become more Irish, yeah.

BH: Yeah, yeah, no, it's a complicated thing.

KM: It's very complicated.

BH: It's, when you put it in the form of a dichotomy it's almost impossible to answer, but—

KM: But when you look at the evidence, yeah.

BH: Well, two things can happen at the same time. You can become, you can identify more as Irish, but at the same time integrate yourself culturally into another place, so the two things aren't necessarily opposed, you know.

KM: Yeah, yeah.

BH: I think I've asked most of my questions.

KM: Great.

BH: So the last thing that I always ask is, is there anything that I haven't asked about which you think's important and that I need to know about?

KM: I don't think so [pauses], no, I think that's probably my life up in a, in a nutshell [laughs].

BH: Is that right? [laughs]

KM: But it's, you know, I know I'm very lucky, I, looking back, I think my mum and dad did protect us very well. We're very lucky that we didn't get caught up in the, you know, and I've heard so many stories and especially, particularly when I went to Newry, that's when I think I saw for the first time soldiers on the street and I heard people's stories about actually what happened to their families and actual, you know, real trauma that [01:30:00] they'd gone through, so, you know, I think I've been very lucky that I haven't witnessed or been part of very traumatic experiences, growing up in the Troubles, so yeah, I'm very lucky that way.

BH: Yeah, and you think not having experienced any of that direct trauma meant that when you met new people and so on you were open to new things?

KM: Yeah, definitely, yeah, I do think yeah, because yeah, as I said before, I could always see when people had been through trauma and could understand, you know, when I heard their stories why they were. I suppose it made me see, and I'm probably more sympathetic now to the Protestant history, for what they're going through, you know, and even now when I see what's happening now in Northern Ireland, I'm, I can, I'm probably more sympathetic, I am sympathetic now to the Protestants cos I can see them feeling their, because when I was growing up I've seen how protective they are of their culture, their way of life, and I can see how staunch and how entrenched it is, and how, and how particularly with all the Brexit conversation and everything is going at the moment—

BH: Defensiveness.

KM: How defens-, yeah, that defensiveness, you know, I never, it always made me really angry when I was growing up, I couldn't quite, but you can see why people, why that community, why our communities are so entrenched and so, for all the history, for all that, and I always knew it was going to be, it would take generations and generations and generations for it till, for the Troubles to, you know, for us to, not forget about the Troubles, but to move on and to integrate better, you know, and I think it's amazing, I think it's absolutely fantastic the way Northern Ireland is. I know it's got it's still got lots of problems and trouble, things going on, but how it is to, what it is now to what it was, you know. I see Belfast and I see, I see so much more integration back in Belfast, in Northern Ireland, and it's great compared to when I was growing up, you know, it's really come on so, so, you know, so much, and it's amazing, you know, what can be done, you know, like, people like Mo

Mowlam, you know, she was amazing, you know, when I was growing up seeing how she negotiated with both sides and, you know, and Trimble and, so yeah, it's, you know, it's been fascinating to think I've actually gone through that, you know, from being right through from the seventies, from a little girl, you know, been through that, been over here when all the campaigns were going on and, yeah, it's fascinating really, it's fascinating, yeah.

BH: It is, yeah, yeah, and I think that's the thing as well, I mean, there's something distinctive about, you know, partially growing up in that, but then moving over here and then looking back at it.

KM: Yes, you're looking back at it.

BH: That's a different angle from if you had have just stayed there, you know, it's a different perspective on it, like.

KM: Oh God, yeah, different perspective, yeah, totally, yeah, yeah, definitely. I can see it from, I can probably see more their side, I think when you're over there, probably you'd be more, you know, I just see it only from my side, but you can see, I can definitely see it from both sides, probably a bit more impartial [pauses]. Okay, that's great, thank you.

BH: Okay, that's everything. Can I just say again Karen, thanks very, very much for doing that.

KM: Yes, you're welcome.

BH: It was fantastic, yeah, cheers.

KM: Thank you very much.

BH: Thanks very much, that was fantastic. The batteries didn't stop either.

INTERVIEW ENDS