INTERVIEW L04: JOHN MITCHELL

Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interviewee: John Mitchell
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Transcriber: Naomi Wells

Textual Note: Annotations and observations appear in square brackets (e.g. [pauses], [laughs]). Partial, interrupted or unfinished utterances are denoted by a dash. False starts, filler words and non-lexical utterances (e.g. 'um', 'hmm') are not generally transcribed. Time codes appear at ten-minute intervals in square brackets in bold type. This transcript has been lightly edited by the interviewee at his request. The interview was recorded across two audio files that have been spliced together to create the audio recording above.

FR: Okay, so just to start off could you say your full name and today's date?

JM: Okay, so it's John Francis Brake Mitchell and it's the fifteenth of November 2019.

FR: Thank you. The first question that we've been asking everyone so far is just what interested you about the project or why did you think to take part in the project?

JM: I suppose a couple of things. One was just having come from Northern Ireland and lived through the period that the investigation was covering, and also I'd done an oral history with the British Museum, not British Museum, British Library and I found that fascinating and I actually have the transcript and I've been going through it trying to make sense so my family can read it. It's not really, it's a history of my career not of my life, which is slightly different, but even so I haven't kept much records of what, of my life, and I've recently been going through my father's war diary which he kept for a year when he was in Burma, plus about three years of letters he wrote, about, at least one a month, to his family and I found I learnt a lot about my father, and so through that oral history I'm hoping if, you know, when I'm dead and gone if they still have it they can go back and learn at least a little bit about my life, the family that is.

FR: That's really interesting, it's interesting that you've done an oral history before, we'll probably touch on some of the same things, but not all of the same things.

JM: No, that's, that's fine.

FR: But that idea of leaving a record makes sense.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: Okay, so there'll be kind of three areas of questions. So I'm going to talk first of all about Northern Ireland, about growing up in Northern Ireland and then about your decision to leave.

JM: Yeah.

FR: And then there'll be some questions about leaving, about the experience of moving to England and then there'll be a kind of final series of questions about how you feel about Northern Ireland now, kind of a more reflective, yeah. Does that make sense? [laughs]

JM: Yeah, no, no, I saw the three areas–

FR: Oh you're aware of, aware of that, right.

JM: I actually just wrote some notes more just to prompt my memory because very often these things, you do the interview and you come back and said, actually that might have been relevant, you know.

FR: Okay, no, well, that's good. Alright, so let's start with where, where were you born?

JM: So I was born in Belfast, my father was English, my mother was originally from Dublin, they'd lived in, my mother went to teach in England, that's how she met my father and then after the war my father realised that there was a young person ahead of him in the office he was in, he was an architect and town planner, and he moved to Belfast to become planning officer for County Down, so moved to Belfast and then down to Downpatrick, so I was born in Belfast, but very soon after that we moved to Downpatrick.

FR: And what did your mother do?

JM: My mother, she was brought up in Dublin, she went to Trinity and unusually for the thirties she and her second eldest sister went to Trinity and did science, she did mathematics and that's how she ended up in England, she went to teach in England in mid-thirties in Birmingham, met my father's sister and hence met my father, so they were married and lived in England, my brother was born in England and so he lived there for seven years and then when they moved across in I guess 1948 to Belfast I was born.

FR: You were born and then shortly afterwards they moved to Downpatrick.

JM: To Downpatrick, cos that was the county town, that's where my father's job was based.

FR: And what do you remember about growing up in Downpatrick?

JM: It was a very happy childhood, I went to Down High School, I went to the preparatory department, and then right through to the end. We lived about a mile outside the town in the country, it was a beautiful area to be, it was friendly, I was bright enough that I enjoyed school, so I'd no problems at school, as I got older I really enjoyed the countryside, we used to go sailing on the Quoile, first of all my father had a boat and then my brother and then

my friend Cecil, who I think you've interviewed, or somebody in the project has interviewed, in fact, it's through him that I came to do this, so sailing then when I was older also climbing the Mournes and just generally being around the countryside, so all those things I loved. I think there's, when I meet people from Northern Ireland there's always a very quick bond because you've got a common heritage. I think I was lucky that my formative years were before the Troubles and so that aspect of it hasn't, you know, it's not, it has influenced me in terms and I'd say, as I will come to later I guess, I didn't leave Northern Ireland because of the Troubles, but it probably meant that we didn't come back at a later time.

FR: Mmm. But as a child or as an adolescent it wasn't the sense of a kind of religious divide or something like that, wasn't really–?

JM: It, there was a definitely a religious divide and in Downpatrick I suppose would have, was mainly Catholic, there was a sizeable Protestant community, but my best friend, who happened to be diagonally opposite where we lived, was a Catholic and we were, you know, until we went to secondary school, you know, we were in and out of each other's houses, we played, we did all sorts of things, we fell in the Quoile and got, did all the things that boys do, and the sad thing was that once we went to secondary school we just stopped seeing each other, it wasn't, you know, a deliberate choice, it just happened because I had things after school, he had things after school and we just lost touch, I mean, we lost touch with each other which I find sad now.

FR: Yeah, it's the separate education system I guess.

JM: That's, that was the problem, yeah.

FR: And were, so your dad was English and your mother was from Dublin originally.

JM: Yeah, her family was Northern Irish, so she, her family came from round Newry and, I mean, she can remember the earlier Troubles, B-Specials being murdered in their beds, so she had quite strong feelings. My father being English, I never heard him expressing strong opinions about the divide. I know we were in the Protestant community, I mean, he was in the Masonic Order, but he wasn't in the Orange Order or in the Black Preceptory, so he, he knew Brian Faulkner, because Brian Faulkner made a sort of cameo appearance at his funeral, so and through his job I guess, you know, being a local government employee, being that he was a county planning officer, and architect, but he, the only thing I heard him expressing an opinion on was insisting, particularly in the Republic, of learning Irish which he felt made people literate in both languages, perhaps it's a bit harsh [laughs].

FR: [laughs] Okay.

JM: But I think that's probably the only sort of overtly, I don't know if political is the right word, thing I heard him say. My mother I think had more stronger feelings, I guess not surprising given her upbringing.

FR: So your father was kind of separate from it I suppose as an English–

JM: In a sense, I mean, I think he was obviously in the establishment, being in government but it wasn't, you know, he's separate, as a I say, from, the Orange Order and the more explicitly sectarian, if you like, aspect of Northern Ireland.

FR: And were you a churchgoing family?

JM: Yes, yeah, I mean, we all, my father's, he was a, we went to the local parish church, Church of Ireland, my father was a parochial nominator I think, which was when they come to move people on or they need to fill posts there's usually, I think there's three people who then sit down and say well, who would we like to have, would they fit and so on, so my mother would certainly go to church every, pretty well every Sunday, so I went as well, yeah, that's, it's interesting that I wouldn't have said I was really a Christian until I came to England.

FR: That's interesting.

JM: We can maybe go into that afterwards, yeah.

FR: Yeah, and so then secondary school, you said you, you enjoyed school.

JM: It was all under one, it's all under one bit.

FR: Oh it's all one, okay, so it's like, yeah, so your–

JM: Yeah, yeah, so I went to the preparatory department, straight on to secondary school and, as I say, I was lucky I was good academically, it came easily to me and so I enjoyed it.

FR: And still sailing and all of that.

JM: Yes [laughs], so yeah, that, so memories of secondary school, played rugby, I was keen on rugby, wasn't as good at cricket, my brother was good at cricket, that was his thing and of course Downpatrick was quite a strong cricketing town. What else did I do, I mean, after-school things, we talked about sailing, cycling round the countryside, exploring, I loved to go off and just go off and walk across the hills. My father had six inch maps of the region and I put them up on **[00:10:00]** the wall in the house and would say right, where can I go now, and so I've always had that fascination with maps, and I love the countryside.

FR: You're well placed I guess in Downpatrick to do all of that.

JM: Yes, yeah, and I think that's what I miss here, that.

FR: So what, when you left school then what was the plan? Did you have a plan?

FR: Originally the plan, well, I suppose my, I was going to do what my brother did, he was very bright, he got a foundation scholarship to Queen's, got first class honours in chemistry, stayed on and did research in chemistry, and I was going to do the same originally, that was the idea, and then in my, I began to realise that sort of the boom in chemistry and I guess

the expansion in universities, part of that had, had, was passing and it occurred to me that mathematics was a much, gave you a much broader scope of what you could end up doing, particularly with computers coming in and digitisation using mathematical models and things like that, although I mightn't have expressed it like that at the time, so that, that was one thing, I think the, I've lost my train of thought now, oh and the other thing was that we had a teacher at school, he was doing a diploma in numbers, but to, I think just as a means of money he spent a year teaching in the school, and happened to be the eldest brother of the girl I eventually married [laughs], but he gave me a great sense of the fun of doing mathematics. We had one guy in the class, this is at A-level, who wasn't that interested in mathematics, but he's very interested in horses and I remember the teacher explaining the odds in the bookies worked and he was really, really interested in that, things like that, we'd do things like hexa-, flexagons, so he gave me a great feel for the fun of mathematics, and then in my last year I had another teacher who was much more methodical and it gave me a bit of discipline, which I needed as well, so I feel I was very fortunate I got them in that order, I think the other way would have been a bit of a disaster [laughs].

FR: [laughs] I see what you mean, yeah, you get the application first.

JM: So and then I was going to go to Manchester to do computer science, and then because my brother had done this foundation scholarship exam my mother, I think who was very keen that we do well, I think she probably was the person who encouraged us most in terms of academic work, but anyhow they managed to persuade the school to put me in for that, so I managed to squeak, in tenth out of ten, and get a scholarship and because it was quite, it was something like a hundred pounds a year for three or four years, which in 1966 was a lot of money, and I thought okay, maybe I'll go to Queen's and that's how I ended up going to Queen's. I hadn't thought about what I was going to do, I remember going to the advisor of studies and saying, he was saying well, I thought I wanted to maths, physics and chemistry and he said you realise you can also do this, this and this, and you could also with your grades you'd go straight into second year because it was a four years' honours course, sort of three years' pass degree, so in the end I decided, I couldn't make my mind up, so I did maths, physics and chemistry and pure maths that year and then I gradually narrowed it down to applied maths, which is what I did and graduated in. By that stage I had started going out again with my girlfriend.

FR: So did you meet in Downpatrick?

JM: We met at school, so we did actually go out together at school for a while and then we sort of drifted apart in the last year, she, just in the way I was going to go to Manchester, she was going to go to Edinburgh, but the family she was going to stay with, the son I think got divorced and came back to live at home and because of that she didn't have accommodation and by that time it was too late to organise it, so she ended up in Queen's as well, and we actually ended up in Queen's Elms which had just been, the new Queen's, was then the new Queen's Elms, I mean, they've now knocked it down and rebuilt it I think, so we both ended up in that halls of residence and sort of by the end of the year we started going out again. So she stayed on to do, she did a degree in English, but then went to do a diploma in social work, so I stayed on to do research in atomic physics and that lasted three

years, she had a year working then in the Royal Victoria Hospital, I think it was the Royal Victoria Hospital, and then she did a second course in Edinburgh in the third year.

FR: Okay, and what was, what was Belfast like when you, did you move, you moved, so, sorry, you said you moved to Belfast, yeah?

JM: So I stayed in Queen's Elms for four years and then I had a year in digs in Stranmillis and then three of us shared a house on Malone Avenue. I mean, people ask about the Troubles, but when you grew up in the middle it was gradual, I think there were two things, one it was gradual and you learned to live with it and particularly university area was quiet, in fact, it was even quieter living in the country. We lived between Lisburn Road and Malone Road and it really was quiet, and I'd go home to Downpatrick to the country, particularly in the summer, you had dogs barking and donkeys braying and cocks crowing, you know, it was actually, in many ways it was noisier. I think because you grow up with it you just learn to accept it, you learn to know where you go and where you don't go and what you say and what you don't say, and what I found interesting, occasionally I'd go home for the weekend and I would see on the television there'd been a bombing or something and I'd feel quite nervous about coming back in again, you know, on the Sunday night or the Monday morning, to Belfast, and then within about, you know, six hours or something you'd equilibriate again and–

FR: Acclimatised.

JM: You'd be reasonably happy. On the other hand if I stayed in Belfast during the weekend and there was some kind of incident, and I'd ring up my mother and she would say you alright and I'd say why, what's happened, because, I mean, Belfast is a, it's not a big city, but it's not a small city and you can have stuff happening and not be aware of it. I think there were, I mean, I was very fortunate, nobody I knew was killed or injured or anything. A couple of things, two or three things I remember in terms of, and people always ask this and it's, about you weren't, you didn't feel as if you were living in a war zone, which I think some of the press would like to con-, I think there are places where you would have found that, but I wasn't in one of them, so there was one occasion, I think it must've been 1973, driving along the Lisburn Road and somebody had obviously, there was obviously some shooting cos there was a shot that went past, there was a bang and it wasn't a car backfire or anything, I just remember thinking oh [laughs], but you just go on. There was one night I was in the applied maths department and there was a bomb in the Celtic studies department which was across the road, I don't think I was on the same side of it, this was a Protestant bomb, it wasn't an IRA bomb, and the other thing I remember was in the street next to us, Malone Avenue, the next one along, I think there was a British soldier or I think he may even have been an undercover person who was shot, and I just remember walking down the street and seeing they had one of those little robots trying to defuse something, there'd been an incident there, so mercifully I was, did not witness many of the atrocities. I do remember being, was it Bloody Friday, I was actually with my brother sailing on Strangford Lough at the time, but I knew my girlfriend Catriona was in the Royal Victoria Hospital and I think her brother, he would have been still at university at that stage, but I think, you know, what was, what I found worst about living through the Troubles was when

there's an incident and you didn't know if people in your family or who you knew were there, so that was probably the worst side of it.

FR: And it's a slower time than it is now to find out about that kind of thing, so it must have been–

JM: Yeah, that's right, that's right, we don't have social media and so on, but for most of the time I think that's, you just worked with it and I'd have to say it was, apart from the Troubles it was a very, it was a happy time, I played rugby, I played one year for Ballynahinch, and then the difficulty getting down to train as a student, I played for various Queen's sides, sailing with my brother, you know, it was, it's a nice part of the world to live in and–

FR: What was the kind of social life of Queen's like?

JM: It was, I would've thought it was the same as any university, **[00:20:00]** I mean, we went out to things, you know, we had dances and whatever, all the stuff that you do as a student, I don't think it was really that, I don't remember it being curtailed. I think the only thing I did, out of curiosity, when Paisley was released from prison, remember he was put in?

FR: Yeah, yeah.

JM: He went to Stormont, gave a speech and I remember going to that and I think it was just curiosity, I wasn't, certainly, a supporter of Paisley, but it was one of the occasions, you know, an historic occasion that you've been at.

FR: I think I've seen pictures of him on the steps.

JM: That's right, and I just remember the drive up to Stormont and being there, I don't know who I went with, it wasn't out of so much a political interest, but just, just curiosity.

FR: And would you have had any kind of political affiliations or feelings or anything like that at that time?

JM: Not, not really, I mean, I was, probably be, I don't know whether I would have voted unionist or not, I don't know, I don't remember if, did I actually vote. My background is curious because my father was English, so he didn't align directly with, you know, the factions in Northern Ireland, my mother was from, brought up and lived in Dublin, brought up in Dublin, but from a Northern Irish family, so in a sense she had tighter affiliations, but because we went down to her, one of her sisters lived in, still lived in Dublin and we'd go down at least once a year if not more often, I liked Dublin and I felt, you know, I felt part of the area and I think the, the thing that I think would encapsulate how I felt about it was I never understood why people insisted on calling Derry Londonderry because the name was from oak grove, and it just seemed to me that's what it was called. I suppose I had a, my appreciation of history was probably more long term than people who called it Derry.

FR: Yeah.

JM: So I suppose I had a slightly confused background, and when you're like that you, in some ways you never feel you belong totally to one community or the other. I felt part of the local community in terms of, you know, just people around me, but in terms of that particular issue I didn't feel I totally identified with, if you like, the Protestant side cos I could see, you know, there was atrocities on both sides and–

FR: No, that makes sense and a slightly confused or slightly mixed background can kind of–

JM: Ambivalent's too strong a word because I think when push comes to shove you would have to recognise my Protestant background, but not in a political sense I guess.

FR: No, that makes sense, and then you said you started research at Queen's?

JM: Yeah.

FR: In?

JM: In electron atom scattering, so atomic physics, so, which I really enjoyed, I was very lucky to have a very good supervisor, Phil Burke, who seemed to have the knack of, I'd get on, you know, I had, I would set a problem and I'd work on it and occasionally I'd get stuck and we were in, at that stage we were in houses in, round the back of the university, so Victorian houses I guess, big Victorian houses and I, with my colleagues, there were four, three of us, four in a room downstairs then the profs had rooms upstairs, and the houses were joined, so there was a corridor along the top, and if I got stuck I'd go up and talk to him and he would talk, but he wouldn't necessarily talk about the question I'd ask, and he'd do what, half an hour, however long and I'd go back down to my room and I'd think ah yes, I know what to do. Now I don't know whether he knew by talking and leading me back I would see the problem and that was all there was to it, or whether he actually had the insight to say well, this is what he needs to do, if I say that he should be able to work it out, but–

FR: Yeah, that's a good knack from a supervisor.

JM: It is a good knack, and he got his PhD students through in three years, which also was a good thing to do.

FR: And were you family supportive of, of a kind of a research–?

JM: Yeah, I mean, my mother's background in particular, she, her sister, as I say, she did, my mother did mathematics, I think I said, her sister either did physics or chemistry, I'm not sure which, and then she did a year's research in Germany, and then because for women at that age they, in those times, is it working okay?

FR: Yeah [laughs], sorry, the bat-, the battery's quite low, but I'll keep an eye on it.

JM: Yeah, so for a woman, I mean, in the thirties, late thirties, teaching was really the only option, I think she went out, it was a British scheme, government scheme or something, she

taught in Sri Lanka, what is now Sri Lanka, for two years and then she went out to America, America, Jamaica, married a Jamaican doctor and stayed out there the rest of her life. She was a very interesting lady for somebody, you know, you think in the thirties, so I've forgotten where the question's going.

FR: I was asking–

JM: Oh yeah.

FR: How your parents felt about research, yeah.

JM: Oh yeah, about encouragement, so the point of that, I think there was a background in the family of people doing things and academic things and so on and they were very supportive. My father died actually before I finished my honours year, he'd had a series of strokes, so he was only sixty when he died, but my mother was always the one who was very keen on, more explicitly keen on encouraging us in academic things, and I was lucky it was a time when both my degree and my PhD were funded by, you know, the government essentially, not sure it's so easy to do that nowadays and, yeah, so it was encouraged, certainly not discouraged.

FR: Okay, and then after you finished the PhD, did you, again, I suppose that's another one of those points where you have to think okay, what now.

JM: Yeah, I can go back, I mean, before, when I finished my degree I did apply for jobs and they were all in England because that's where the things I wanted to do were based. I think I joined something like ICL, which was a British computer company, I think I applied to Atomic Energy Authority and one other place, I can't remember. When it came to finishing my PhD I'd been going out with my, with Catriona for a long time and I wanted to get married. I could have had a postdoctoral fellowship in Stirling, which would have been a very nice place to be. I think the chances of doing something in Belfast were difficult because at that time people were coming back from the States, the sort of academic opportunities were relatively closing down, and I wanted some money to get married on and so I applied to three places, I think one was again the Atomic Energy Authority, one was the Met Office, because one of the guys who I, in the room next to me doing research had gone there and he said it's good place, and it sounded interesting because if, it did a wide range of things, so if I went to it and I wasn't happy the first time there was a good chance within that organisation I could find something else that I would have been interested in, and the third one was the Transport, was then the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, which one of the, one of my colleagues with, both in the department who I shared a house with, went to, and so, and the Met Office in the end made the best offer and that's where I ended up going, but at the time, as I say, we, Catriona and I, were getting married, because she was a qualified social worker, she could more or less choose in the United Kingdom where she worked and she found a job, so we, where we went to was decided by my job rather than her job, and that's how I ended up there.

FR: So did you and Catriona get married before you left?

JM: It was a busy year [laughs], so in the, so the October 1973 we got married, I finished my PhD and we m-, started my job and moved to England.

FR: All in one.

JM: All in one, but, so yeah, not sure what else I was going to say about that.

FR: How did you feel about leaving? It seems like it had been a possibility at several points.

JM: Yeah, well, I suppose there are a number of things to say, one, I was looking for a job that I would enjoy and I thought I would be reasonably good at, and those two things more or less ruled out Northern Ireland. I mean, I looked at the possibility of staying on in Queen's and I thought yeah, you know, I'm a reasonably good atomic physicist, but I'm not going to star in it, I'd really enjoyed it as a subject, you know, it was a beautiful, some of the mathematics was really beautiful, things like Dirac matrices have a beauty all on their own, but I was lucky to have a good supervisor who sort of guided me through and I felt, as I say, I was not going to make, **[00:30:00]** not going to star in that area, the wasn't a problem because bar was just too high and also the money starting off wasn't great. Moving to England my father's family had been based in Cheshire, we would go across at least every second summer, so, and, I mean, that area of England I quite liked, I liked the people, it's not, Cheshire is a beautiful county, parts of Lancashire obviously not quite so, Atomic Energy Authority was in the middle of Lancashire in the industrial area, but even so, you know, it might have been an interesting job, things like the Pennines not very far away, but, you know, I had a feeling for the people, found them very friendly and I liked the north of England, so I was halfway there in terms of coming down to the south of England, where I think it's probably a bit more difficult to settle because people aren't I think as open, they're a bit more reserved, you know, that was an issue. The Met Office was then the Ministry of Defence, but I have to say I never felt any prejudice, you know, coming from Ireland at the time, I think because particularly the Met Office, cos people are drawn from all round United Kingdom, you know, you've got offices in, you know, still in Aldergrove and so on, so there are a lot of people would come in from Scotland and Ireland and Wales down to the south of England to work in the Met Office, and so you had, they were there already and so just people were used to it and, as I say, I never, I don't think, had anything, but, you know, friendly, it's a very friendly place to work. Meteorology as it turns out is a very collaborative science, you can't do forecasts with just one observation, you have to rely on observations round the world, writing as if, by then they weren't doing this, but writing your programmes to, forecast programmes is a collaborative activity because they're huge complicated programmes and different aspects of it, and it just, and people who are interested in the environment they're not totally motivated by money and it just made for a safer and very pleasant place to work, I mean, I just fell on my feet I think.

FR: Aye, that a sounds like a great work experience.

JM: Yeah, now I was extremely, extremely fortunate. I think it's harder nowadays when there's just so much more pressure on people and so much paring down jobs to, you know, to get more out of people at less cost, but I didn't have that.

FR: And so what about, I assume, did you say you moved in 1970?

JM: Late ’73.

FR: ’73. What was the move itself like beyond the job? You found a house, you–

JM: We found, I came over in the July before we moved over, found a flat in Wokingham to move to. I had the help of my colleague who’d moved to the Met Office the year before, so I had a contact and that was it really. We, I had a little Renault Four and packed that full of stuff and came across in October, went across Larne-Stranraer and all the way down, and mind you that, we didn’t have as much stuff as we have now obviously, and that’s how it went, and then at Christmas we went back home, it’s a bad time to go, to travel because everybody’s busy and you don’t see anybody, but I had a colleague in the department in Belfast, who had a van, who lived down in the south of England, so we flew over, borrowed his van, loaded it up stuffed with everything else, came back down and I drove the van back to where he lived and then he came over, loaded it up and went, took his stuff back to England, so these things work out, I mean, it was a, so it wasn’t difficult.

FR: And I guess helpful to already have a sort of a, someone here, or a network, yeah.

JM: Oh yeah, I mean, that made a big difference, I mean, Alan was from Belfast and his wife was from Limerick, so we still had sort of Irish, we, we, for many years we actually shared Christmas together until the families got too big, so that made it a lot easier, but, as I say, I think in the Met Office because you had people coming from all over the UK that helped a lot, and I think it a lot of the people there are not there for monetary gain, you know, that’s not the prime driver, they have a sense of service, you know, doing the forecast and serving people, you know, working with the environment and so on, so it was a, people were very kind, very helpful, southern English people [laughs], which sort of removes some of your prejudice.

FR: [laughs] So you settled fairly easily, it sounds like.

JM: Fairly easily, yeah, as I say, Catriona, she worked I think initially in Newbury and worked, moved to Bracknell, which was near mine, so yeah.

FR: And did you have, you still had some family in Northern Ireland?

JM: So my mother was still back in Northern Ireland, my brother was at that time a lecturer in Queen’s University, and his wife, so we would go back, and Catriona’s parents were in Ballymena, so we would go back probably at least once a year.

FR: And how did you find it going back? I suppose coming into the seventies the Troubles are–

JM: I don’t ever remember thinking we were going to back, going back I’m quite anxious about this. I may have done, but it certainly wasn’t a strong feeling. Having lived there, and also, I mean, Catriona’s parents were in Ballymena, so that, that was reasonably quiet.

Downpatrick was, you know, compared to some places was quiet as well, so I don't remember being anxious about that. I do remember once coming, we actually [phone rings].

FR: I'll let you get that and I'll change the battery in my tape. **[00:36:30]** [The two interview audio files were spliced together here].

FR: So, sorry, you were saying, coming back.

JM: Yes, coming back the one time I do remember being slightly anxious was we actually came across from Anglesey to the North Wall, drove across, well, not drove across, but put the car on the boat and then drove up to I guess Downpatrick, and by the time we got to the border it was dark, and driving along, just south of Castlewellan, you know, in sort of the wild area there, this red light coming out and you're thinking now is this the army, is it the UDA, or is it someone else, and that probably was the most nervous moment I had. It turned out it was the army and they were, you know, they did their business and we went on, we had three young children in the car, so obviously anxious about that, but that's the only thing I can remember, it's not to say the only thing, time I was anxious, but that's the only thing that stood out. But most of the time, as I say, we were outside Belfast and we, and having, you know, it wasn't that long since we'd lived there, so, as you say, you know the areas where you're likely to have trouble and that sort of mitigates a lot of the anxiety.

FR: And did you follow the news from Northern Ireland?

JM: Oh yes, yeah, I mean, I can remember sitting in the house that I had when, no, that was when we were still in Belfast then, but yes, we did basically, always have had an interest, I mean, I watch the recent series, for example, *Secret History of the Troubles* and, I mean, I, it's interesting talking to friends who have gone, some people just couldn't get out of Northern Ireland quick enough, others didn't want to leave, well, as you'll know from the project there's a wide, a wide spectrum of interest, I mean, there were things that obviously I didn't like, I didn't like the sectarianism, and that's it really, I mean, you make it, I don't think any place is perfect, there's things I don't like about here, there are attitudes I don't like, but they, for me I guess my attitude is that I don't look for the difficulties, I look for the things that, you know, I enjoy, I approve of and you try and live your life, you know, setting that example and encouraging people and that's what I was doing.

FR: Yeah. It's really interesting that the Met Office, it sounds like was a really nice place to work as a Northern Irish person and you didn't encounter any kind of hostility or–

JM: Not at all, and I think I remember going to the archive building, which was set apart, it was, the Met Office was in Bracknell, it was another part of Bracknell, and I remember our, my car had a Northern Irish registration, so this is 1973, perhaps 1974, and I had to go and get some stuff from the archive and I remember parking outside and saying by the way I've got a Northern Ireland registered car outside, and they didn't even twig that that was an issue [laughs]. I think it would be different now, but people, a lot of people either weren't aware of it or just weren't, didn't think it was an issue, so.

FR: And what about outside of work?

JM: Never really.

FR: No?

JM: No, I remember once going into, I think it was the first year we arrived, going into a car park in, it was either Winchester or Salisbury, and it was very busy, so I said to Catriona I'll go and stand at the place and you can bring the car round, because by the time you'd found a place another car would've got, so I was standing there, that's the only time I thought, and of course I was, at that stage I was still aware I had an Northern Ireland accent, I mean, now I've just totally forgotten, and I didn't get abuse, but I just wondered was that the sort of somebody who, but, as I say, it might have been just somebody annoyed because I'd taken the car parking place.

FR: So you just got a bit of a look or a bit of a–?

JM: Yeah, yeah, but that's, I think that's the only time I remember, the only time, I remember once we were on holiday in the States in, it was either, it was on the west coast somewhere and Catriona hearing an American talking about the hostility of the Troubles and the lack of people getting on, and Catriona's sister-in-law Virginia was with us and she said that she was pretty sure that that person had come from the southern part of the States, where, you know, the colour problem was a big issue, and so she was certainly being hypocritical, but that's an aside, it's probably not, but it, yeah.

FR: And you had, so you had children then in England.

JM: Yeah, so our son was born in '76, we had three children, they, I mean, they, I mean, it's interesting, just to go back a bit, when my father moved to England my brother, who is seven years older than me, would support England at sports and he still does at cricket, I think a lot, I mean, Irish cricket has come on a lot since then, and he supported England at rugby, but by the time he'd gone through Queen's, the peer pressure, he became an Irish rugby supporter and I would say at the end he was perhaps even a more raving Irish supporter than I was, so yeah, and I don't know if my children, how they'd explain, how they would express themselves, but they're all–

FR: Yeah, those kind of affiliations are interesting.

JM: Yeah, yeah, I mean, I know my son will support Ireland, I don't know what he does, well, when Ireland play England, but, and I suppose they all have Irish or Scottish names, and that maintains with them, that–

FR: And you would have taken them back with you to Northern Ireland.

JM: Oh yes, yeah, yeah, yeah [pauses]. I probably shouldn't say what their opinions are cos they probably, you're not asking that [laughs].

FR: [laughs] You don't need to express their opinions, but it's, it's interesting to think if they had a sense of themselves as Irish or English.

JM: They certainly have a, I think the French say a sympathy, a sympathetic, empathetic, you know.

FR: Mmm, and just thinking about the period around when you moved over, so did you keep up the kind of rugby or the climbing or did you have a kind of social world outside of work?

JM: So I still played rugby, I joined Bracknell rugby club and played for about, it was a year before I joined them, then I put on weight and then I went back and played with them for about five years. The mountain climbing, at that time Catriona, one of her brothers was living in north Wales, so we'd often go down particularly Easter, springtime and I'd have a day climbing around Snowdonia, which was great, and we, because of Catriona's Scottish heritage we spent quite a few holidays, particularly early on, in Scotland, and Catriona would either come with me or she'd find something to do if I was doing something a bit more, you know, there was more rock climbing or stuff involved in it, so I always kept it going and I went back home, I'd try and get down to the Mournes and climb there, so, and then, I need to complete the story I suppose, couple of things, one, I help with the local Scout troop and they used to go down to south Wales and climb the Brecon Beacons, so, and I discovered actually they're the closest decent mountains that you can get to and back in a day, in fact, you can get from here to the mountains with dual carriageway all the way, except for about the last five miles. So after that started I don't know how soon after we, I went with the Scout troop, I started going down, I'd take my son down and particularly around Christmas time, and that goes back to when my brother took me up to the Mournes, first we'd go up every Boxing Day if the weather was in any way decent to work off the Christmas turkey, and it was always interesting cos there was very often snow or ice on it, so we started doing that in the Brecon Beacons, but then going down in the summer and I now have a group of friends, every May we go down to the Brecon Beacons, it started off, I don't know if this is digressing too much.

FR: Please digress as much as you want.

JM: No, the church that we go to had a group with special needs, which in fact my wife was instrumental in setting up, and there were, this was largely respite, organising a group, **[00:46:30]** so to give parents who had children with special needs a break, so they could go shopping or just have some time together, and I wanted to do something for the guys and it, I don't know how came about, a couple of the guys who were involved with that group expressed an interest in going up the Brecon Beacons, said why, would you go down, and we used to choose the Saturday of the first bank holiday in May, so that the women who usually take the brunt of these things would then, the deal was that the guys would then look after the children on the Monday, the bank holiday Monday, because I'd take guys away for a day at the weekend, a normal weekend, we'd obviously, you know, wouldn't be very helpful to the family, and that's how it started and since then other people have come, so we've had up to and over a dozen people going down at once. In fact, a couple of years ago it all got quite unwieldy and as a result of that there are a group of four or five of us now who every, just later in May go up to Scotland or somewhere, in fact, this year we're

going to Ireland, we've done that for over ten years, so whenever, I mean, coming, having an interest in sailing and climbing, and coming down to Berkshire is not very clever [laughs].

FR: [laughs] That's true.

JM: So we just make a special effort to compensate for that.

FR: But you found a way to–

JM: Yeah, found a way to do it, yeah.

FR: You mentioned the church, so you would still have been going to church after you moved over here.

JM: Yeah, I think the first year we hardly went at all, and then we moved to, from Wokingham, we had six months in Wokingham, then we moved to Bracknell to, we got a Bracknell Development Council flat and we were there for eighteen months and we went to United Reform Church, and that was an eye-opener for me because having been in a, you know, community where it's assumed you go to church, and it's a badge in the sense of your allegiance, so everybody belongs to church whether it's belief or whether it's, you know, this is who I belong to, and they had things, they did house groups where they, you know, people would meet, small groups would meet and they could talk about their faith and what they believed and didn't believe, and that's not something I'd experienced, I'm not saying it didn't occur in Ulster, but it's not something I experienced, and it made me think about why do I believe, what do I believe, and I guess I can only, I suppose the simplest way of expressing it, and this isn't my, my phrase, but it changed from a Christian being something you had to do to win God's approval to accepting something that Jesus had done for you, and that is something that I'd been beginning to glimpse I think, but I would have said I was probably quite legalistic, and that's probably the stereotype I would guess of evangelical Protestantism in Northern Ireland, it's not totally true, but it's a picture I think people have, and there are many lovely Christians, you know, Protestant, Catholic, in Ireland, but the thing that people see, they tend to pick out extremes.

FR: Yeah, yeah, I think you mentioned at the start of the interview that you wouldn't have really thought about yourself as Christian or you wouldn't have thought about it in those terms before you moved to England.

JM: I wouldn't have thought about what it means to be a Christian.

FR: I see, I see.

JM: And I think that's, you know, what it was because in some ways I'm quite accepting until somebody, you know, I start to ask the questions and, I mean, for somebody who's spent their life doing research, sometimes I think I've been very slow to ask the questions [laughs], and then I, in a few years, we had, about eight years of church in Wokingham, then we moved to another one in Bracknell, which are probably more strongly evangelical, and people would ask me about how can you believe in God if you're a scientist and that made

me start looking, there's a lot of literature and a lot of thought on that, and I actually did a, at one stage the church was doing a series of courses on different things, and I did something on science and faith, that in itself was interesting, you know, belief is a reasonable and a rational thing to do.

FR: Yeah, I mean, it's interesting I think in England as well because certainly something that I felt when I moved to England is that even people in Northern Ireland who aren't religious have a kind of a religious language, everyone's read the Bible, if you refer to a Bible story people know what you mean, whereas what I find in England sometimes–

JM: They don't.

FR: Is that I'll say that to people and they just look at me blankly [laughs].

JM: And, and it's interesting cos occasionally we had, on one or two occasions we'd done door knocking, I'm not sure it's a particularly effective form of evangelism or something I'm particularly comfortable with, but we went down to Wales. Now Wales is actually quite like Northern Ireland, it's a very strong religious, Christian, religious, evangelical background, and like Northern Ire-, like you said, people will know the language, and so when you come they will say what you want to hear, or you feel that, I shouldn't judge people, but you get that impression [laughs], whether, and even they're not interested. In England it's quite different and it's different in different areas. In Wokingham people would be very polite, but not necessarily engage with you. In Bracknell they'll either tell you to get lost or, you know, they would be genuinely interested and in some ways that's, it seems harder, but it's more rewarding cos you–

FR: I see what you mean, yeah, and so that must have been quite a big part of your life then, that.

JM: Yeah, it, yes, and still is, and I think, I mean, I've learnt things, learnt things through the church and sometimes things you don't expect. I did a course on leadership when, this is early on in church, and the churches we've been to have small groups which people lead and this is a group of training leaders, it actually helped me a lot at work in dealing with people in a group and things like that. I think one of the most valuable things, I still remember one of the ministers we had, he would say choose not to be offended, which in the Ulster context is actually quite relevant, and I suppose you can get quite wound up about something when somebody has done something silly or bad and, yeah, and put your blood pressure up and so on, but I still remember that phrase, choose not to get offended.

FR: It's good advice.

JM: It is, it is, it's very good advice.

FR: Did you meet, were there other Northern Irish people in the churches that you attended?

JM: There were–

FR: Because there is a kind of, there is an evangelical stand to Northern Irish–

JM: Yeah, there is, not, not particularly, the church we were in in Wokingham was very south of England, the church in Bracknell is more cosmopolitan, a much wider range of nationality, I think we got–

FR: Other migrant groups as well?

JM: Other?

FR: Other people who have migrated.

JM: Yeah, yeah, so anything, you know, from, I guess we're close to Sandhurst, so you've got a lot of Nepalese, I think they're the biggest, you know, immigrant community in this area.

FR: Why because of Sandhurst?

JM: The army.

FR: Oh of course, yeah.

JM: So Gurkhas.

FR: Of course, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JM: I mean, I, Woking is quite white Anglo-Saxon I guess, and Bracknell's much more, I'd say much more mixed. I mean, that's the thing, I think my, in my upbringing, perhaps not quite so relevant to this, but in Ireland I think the first black person I saw was probably my uncle, my aunt's husband.

FR: Jamaican–

JM: So I, I had an acceptance of that, but, you know, you don't see many people round Downpatrick who are [indecipherable].

FR: It's, it's something that everyone I've spoken to so far has talked about actually.

JM: Yeah, so Wokingham is not that much different, Bracknell is very much more different, so a much bigger Afro-Caribbean community, in the church we've people from Nigeria and Ghana, who are often actually quite well off, to come, directly come, you know, they, so there's a whole spectrum of people in the church, which is brilliant.

FR: Yeah, no, that's part of the experience I suppose.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: So I'm thinking now, moving into the sort of eighties and the nineties, as I mentioned to you before about the Troubles in Britain, the various kind of bombing campaigns in Britain. Do you have any memory of those? I suppose Bracknell I think is just on the very edge of London.

JM: Yeah, so–

FR: I looked it up before I came.

JM: There was nothing locally, obviously London's probably the closest, and yes, it did seem ironic to have moved from Northern Ireland, with the Troubles in Northern Ireland, to England and I think the thing about England **[00:56:30]** that probably would have concerned me is where in Northern Ireland they had these control zones in the middle of towns, so if you went into, I don't know, say, Ballymena, you'd park outside, you couldn't leave your car inside a control zone unless there's somebody in it, which was quite a deterrent for people, you know, putting a bomb in a car [laughs], so I would, and I noticed that when I first came over I'd got used to walking down the street checking the cars had people in them, and when I first came over going into an English town and seeing all these empty cars, it did slightly freak me out at first, it took me a while just to adjust to that, and that was the issue, there were certain, you could be unlucky in Northern Ireland and a lot of people were, but there were certain areas, certain things that you could probably be reasonably sure of, that you were in the control zone, you would be extremely unlucky to be walking past a bomb, a car with a bomb in it, and you didn't have that in England, but on the other hand, although it seemed when you look at the country as a whole there was a lot going on, in one area the chance of that, something happening was, was very unusual. I suppose the other thing, selfishly you'd wonder would people, with your accent, would people start to react against that, but I'm never aware of that happening.

FR: That's interesting, that even during the kind of bombings in London–

JM: I don't think, I don't know, I mean, if, perhaps other people have, but it's not, it wasn't, it's nothing I can remember, if it was it was minor.

FR: Did people ask you to explain to them like, what's going on? Sometimes people have a sense that because you have a Northern Irish accent you have a sort of insight into–

JM: I mean, I'm sure people did and I'm sure we would've talked with people. I think we would have probably explained it wasn't primarily a religious war, it was a political war. I mean, without getting into a whole digression on the Irish Troubles, but it is very complex, it's not a simple Catholic-Protestant thing, a lot of the early Irish nationalists were Protestant and actually, you know, Free Church rather than Anglican because the Catholic church from its teachings wouldn't go against the state and the Church of Ireland was the state, so it was the Methodists and the Presbyterians ironically who were, you know, very much leading a lot of the Ir-, the early Irish rebellions.

FR: Yeah, Wolfe Tone.

JM: Wolfe Tone and so on, yeah, and also I think the, my, my, my feeling is on the Protestant side there's more of a religious element in it, whereas in the Catholic side it's more an anti-British element, but the, all these simplifications are, you know, you have to be careful of.

FR: It's very hard to, it's very hard to explain.

JM: It is, all the nuances. We used to help, I helped for a little while in, there was a university youth club and it drew its, the children who came to it came from largely from the Market areas, so they would have brothers, elder brothers who are probably in Crumlin Road for armed possession and things like that, and the guy who led the club, the club leader, came from Newry, lovely guy, and he tried to explain to them, you know, that a lot of this, just what I said, a lot of the original leaders of Irish nationalism were Protestant, and they just couldn't, they just couldn't hack it, they couldn't believe it.

FR: [laughs] They were not convinced.

JM: Yeah, yeah, so in terms of, yeah, you'd have conversations, but it, people are very polite, I think English people, particularly southern English people, are probably more wary of getting involved in private things, whereas I think further north or in Ireland, you know, well, in Ireland, you say, you know, well, whatever you say, say nothing [laughs], but there are always ways, you know, what school did you go, what's your name, you can somehow work out, try and work out what somebody's allegiance is.

FR: That kind of telling process, yeah.

JM: Yeah, yeah, so you're careful of that, so yeah, I'm sure we did have conversations, but we were probably careful how we did it to make sure that, and they would be wary of asking us.

FR: There is that kind of south of England politeness.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: You don't really ask anyone anything about anything.

JM: Yeah, or anything that's uncomfortable.

FR: That might be personal or unsuitable.

JM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: And what about your children, would you have talked to them about it or would they have been–?

JM: Not specifically, obviously we, you know, we'd talk about our childhood and so forth. I'd have to ask them actually, cos I, they would remember more than me, they'd obviously

been to Northern Ireland, I mean, they would have been in the eighties, nineties, so and they would have been aware of it through the news.

FR: They must have had some sense, yeah.

JM: Yeah, but I must admit I've never asked them what do you think of it, are you scared going, we just went [laughs], they didn't get a choice, and I think because again, the areas we're in, the chance of anything happening was, you know, there's stuff goes on in London that's nothing to do with Troubles, shootings and so on, there are dangerous places in the world, and I did, I suppose one thing about being brought up in Northern Ireland, we've been to places like, we went recently to Bolivia, we have a couple who are associated with our church, went out as, to set up a Christian drug rehabilitation centre, and going out there we, because of our experience you know how to deal with things like that, another time we went to friends in, who'd moved to Uganda, and I don't know whether you remember or not the Kony rebels?

FR: I do.

JM: Who came down from the Sudan, they came into Uganda and then they went back, but they were left a lot, they're not, they didn't call them refugees, they were more displaced peoples, they, because I think they're in their own country, but they've been displaced, and I remember there I got quite keen on bird photography and the place we were staying was by the airfield where Idi Amin left, so this is a huge airfield in the middle of a flat area in grass, and going round and taking photographs of birds and suddenly aware of this big black African soldier training, well, he wasn't actually training his gun on me, but situations like that you actually, you learn to deal with, surprisingly [laughs].

FR: And you feel like, having grown up in Northern Ireland, it's, in the sixties and seventies, that's slightly less–

JM: It's not as shocking, it's not, the initial shock isn't as great, some of the other stories I could tell, but–

FR: You're used to checkpoints I suppose and you're used to seeing guns.

JM: I wouldn't say I wasn't scared, but–

FR: No, no, no.

JM: You sort of, well, hold on a minute, I've been here before.

FR: [laughs] And then what about the peace process? Do you remember that?

JM: I remember, I mean, watching it and just praying that something good would come out of it, being delighted when, you know, eventually it was successful to the extent that anything has been successful, no, I must admit it was great, so that I think, you know, in terms of my interest in Northern Ireland was a highpoint.

FR: Watching the news a lot, I imagine.

JM: Hm?

FR: Watching the news quite a lot, I would imagine.

JM: Yeah, that, I mean, normally watching saying oh no, not again [laughs]. For me the other really big thing was the Queen going over to Dublin.

FR: Ah yeah, I was in Dublin, I can't remember, was it about seven or eight years ago?

JM: Ah ha, and she went to the Garden, just sat quietly and I think cos, and in a way she's a symbol of British rule, I just, that made me feel quite emotional really.

FR: Mmm, and shook hands with Gerry Adams.

JM: Yeah, that goes back to choose not to be offended, that's not to say you forget about, you know, the suffering and so on that these people have caused, and that's, that's the difficult thing, I mean, as I say, my mother says she could remember B-Specials being murdered in their beds, and that's understanding, but, you know [pauses], it must be incredibly hard to forgive people something like that, but as somebody once put it, lack of forgiveness is like taking rat poison and waiting for the rat to die, it's more harmful to the person who's being rightly wronged and rightfully feels hurt and annoyed and so forth.

FR: Yeah, it's, that's a powerful way of thinking about it actually.

JM: I mean, I, you know, on a different topic, you see one of the things, one of my friend's is a, so I suppose he just retired and he works in mediation, but one of the saddest things is when people get into boundary disputes and go **[01:06:30]** to litigation.

FR: So a boundary dispute is where properties cross.

JM: Yeah, you've got, you've got, you know, it might be a fence and somebody's accused you of moving it six inches or whatever and things like that, I mean, there are more blatant things and, you know, I can see I would be very annoyed, you know, and feel very strongly about–

FR: No, sure, somebody builds a big hedge or something.

JM: But, you know, the bitterness that people have, the lack of forgiveness, it just destroys them and, yeah, they may be right, but then it's sometimes it just, you know, you've got to say well, actually this is doing me more harm than it's doing me good, but I don't judge people on that because I haven't been in that position.

FR: And it's the ongoing thing in Northern Ireland really.

JM: Yeah, yeah, sorry, I feel we're digressing [interview paused when someone enters the room to offer tea and coffee].

FR: Okay, that's going now [laughs], complicated equipment. In terms of your work then we didn't really finish that strand.

JM: Okay.

FR: So what were you doing exactly when you first started working at the–?

JM: So I, the first year at the Met Office I was actually supernumerary and I did what they called a variational analysis scheme, so this is meteorological analysis, so it's taking raw data and feeding them into a computer model, and you can't just dump observations in because you'll set all sorts of stuff going off, so this is just a mathematical scheme to make sure that when you put the data in the forecast it behaves sensibly, that's probably–

FR: That's in terms that I'll understand, yeah.

JM: And then I went, had a year at the college, or more or less a year at the college where they train people, because obviously atomic physics is fine, but it's not meteorology and I came back and it just happened I went into a branch which was called dynamical climatology, which basically means using mathematical models of weather and climate to understand climate, and I spent about two years in that doing various bits and pieces. I then went forecasting because they had a policy at that time of taking research scientists and giving them some forecasting experience, so when they were then developing numerical models they'd have some idea of what they were actually being used for, so they wouldn't end up just doing things that looked fine, you know, numerically and mathematically, but had no practical use in terms of the forecast, and then I came back to climate modelling and that was in 1978 and they, there's an interesting history to that, and I won't go into it, just to say it was the time that the government started thinking about environmental problems for a number of reasons, and there was then pressure on the Met Office to do something and Sir John Mason, who was the director general then, was under pressure from I guess what was then the, became the Department of Environment at that time, but these questions were coming up, you know, in America they're saying what about climate change and other things and I think John, Sir John, John Mason as he was then, wanted to make sure that whatever was done was good science and there were people suggesting ways of looking at climate change, which he felt weren't good science, so he's under pressure for the Met Office to do something and as a result of that somebody had to start it and I was the person [laughs] that, so we already had models, I didn't develop models, but I and my team augmented the models so we could start using them for real climate change experiments, that was 1978.

FR: That's right at the start really.

JM: That's right at the start, and I was lucky in that I did some very crude experiments, which were all we could do at the time, there was a group in America in particular which had, was much better set up to do this, and then the US Department of Energy organised a

review of the effect of carbon dioxide on climate, so this was around the early 1980s, and they invited me out, it was more to I think just to, not arbitrate, but I ended up chairing a session between the three main American modelling centres because I was not American I guess. The reason that happened, I should go back a bit, 1970 I did those early experiments and just wrote up a technical note and the National Academy of Sciences did a review and they contacted the Met Office and my boss sent that note and it appeared in a thing called, I think *Carbon Dioxide and Climate*, so it was a very little booklet in 1979, which set, it was a, they came out with the doubling of CO_2 would be between one and half and a four and a half degrees, I can give you the, you know, if you're interested I think I still have a copy somewhere, so my name appeared in that, even though none of the science really got in, it's just one of the quotes and because of that, that's how I got invited to the Department of Energy. I then went out, we had the meeting, I chaired the conf-, that session cos I think they wanted somebody outside the country to do it, my boss didn't want to go, the EU paid for it and I didn't get the money through until the day before I left [laughs], to go and book it, on the last day, and because of that at the end of the meeting they wanted to write up the report and the chapter on climate modelling, there's a guy from Oregon they found and they were looking for volunteers and everybody else had gone home, so I got in that chapter and that sort of got me, my name known, then we wrote a review which went into *Reviews of Geophysics*, so I ended up probably being more, better known in the States than I was here and that was the start of my career. Forward to 1988, Margaret Thatcher at the end of her spell as prime minister, she was interested in I think leaving a legacy and she chose the environment and as a result of that the Met Office got a considerable sum of money to set up a climate centre, which is called the Hadley Centre, with a new computer and much increased staff, and of course I'd done about ten years research at that stage, we were far behind the States in what we could do, but actually in retrospect those ten years I learnt a lot about what models could and couldn't do, we couldn't do some of the experiments, more relevant experiments that they did, so this was a, you know, God-given gift to me, suddenly I've got resources, I've got people, so the next ten years we really caught up and were leading in terms, particularly of anthropogenic climate change and, you know, the political use and the political, what's the word, government use, you know, using models to try and guide policy, so I was very, very lucky, I had resources, I had very good people, and I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

FR: But really interesting work.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: As a kind of a new field, as a new experiment.

JM: Yeah, well, I was just at that stage where you, you know, you could use one computer model, run, and you could learn from it, nowadays you have to have, you know, because it's not an exact science, so there are sort of twenty to forty models round the world and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which assesses these things, you know, it's become a huge exercise and it's very hard for one, any one person to make an advance, but at that stage it was new, it was in its infancy, there was a lot of simple physics that you could apply and you'd get a basic understanding of what was going on, so you know what's going to happen, greenhouse gases, which carbon dioxide is one, trap heat and that's going to

warm the climate, it's probably going to get, because it gets warmer the atmosphere can hold more water vapour, so you're going to have all the water vapour you feedback, cos water vapour is actually the main greenhouse gas, and then, you know, if you start melting land ice and sea ice you're going to absorb more solar radiation, so all these things we understand, the question is just exactly what the size of the warming is, and the biggest problem is clouds because clouds both reflect solar radiation and they trap long wave radiation and those properties depend on different properties of the clouds, where they are, how high they are, how, whether it's ice or water, how many, what size the particles are and so on, and as you could imagine that's a fairly **[01:16:30]** complicated problem, and that's where the uncertainty comes, but it's within a range, it's not, the uncertainty isn't whether it'll happen or not, it'll happen, it's what size it is, will it be, you know, moderately big or very big, and so the biggest problems I've had is between (a) those people who are total sceptics and say it's not going to happen, it's not going to matter, and those people who are over the top and say it's Armageddon and, you know, the Earth is going to go. The Earth'll survive, but it may not be good for humans, particularly animals and, just a couple of, so you've got me on a hobby horse [laughs].

FR: No, it's interesting, yeah.

JM: Yeah, I mean, I think the thing that annoys me is that people, often people, and America's probably the worst country for this, is that they say well, technology can deal with it, well, that's if you're rich, but you've parts of the world that are already struggling with their climate and this is going to make it worse, and I think the second question they say well, climate's always changed, we've always coped with this, but this is a faster and bigger change, you know, an ice age took, you know, a couple of thousand more years to go for a five degree change, this is likely to happen in, you know, a hundred, two hundred years.

FR: It's completely, completely different.

JM: Yeah, so it, for most people it's not Armageddon, but, you know, it'll definitely cost.

FR: And for people in parts of the world where infrastructure is already insufficient.

JM: Yeah, but I'll stay away from Brexit [laughs], or what this country's doing.

FR: So I was going to ask when did you stop working at the Met Office?

JM: So I, in two thousand and, end of 2003 I became Chief Scientist, we'd just moved down to Exeter.

FR: Oh yeah, we were talking about this.

JM: Yeah, I think I wouldn't have been Chief Scientist if we'd stayed here, they'd probably have got somebody who was, I would say better suited to the job. So I was left, I first, I was surprised to be, what's the word, appointed and I think I did wonder because I'm not really an administrator, I love science and I wanted to do science, so it was a difficult decision, but one of the things that persuaded me was if somebody came in and sort of messed up how I

did science [laughs], like that, so a slightly screwball way of making a decision, but I did that, so I was Chief Scientist until about, about 2008, 2009, and then I started slowly to retire and my successor, who I knew very well, Julia Slingo now Dame Julia Slingo made me principal research fellow, so we have research fellows, I think they were called, used to be called individual merit promotions in the civil service, so these were people who were given lighter administrative duties running a group, so they could concentrate on science and I think this was a way to keep me out of trouble, and I did that virtually till I, till I retired, so it gave me a chance to do science, I didn't do a lot of science cos I didn't have my own group anymore, but there's such a wealth of things that are done in the Met Office, you know, forecasting, climate, environmental air quality, just this whole range of stuff, science stuff, it's a fascinating place to be and see what other people are doing, so it was a nice way to finish the job.

FR: And did you ever think about going back to Northern Ireland? Was it ever something that–?

JM: I suppose the only time I really seriously considered it, actually it might have been Ireland rather than Northern Ireland, when I was first promoted to group leader I asked my previous boss who I'd be working with, would I have the same, he was promoted as well, would I have the same freedom as he had and he said no, which I, don't know whether that was, anyway that's the way, that was my perception of what he said, and so I just went, you know, I'm not going to do this and I seriously started looking at the Irish Met Service, which I think would have been a disaster actually, but I did seriously think of going over to Ireland.

FR: That's interesting, why do you think it would have been a disaster?

JM: Just, it's a small organisation and the people who are, they already had people, good scientists, you know, they had a few good scientists and enough good scientists, you know, that, at least as many as the organisation could support because it wasn't it's not a big met service, and it just didn't have the resources to do the sort of thing I was doing, I mean, it didn't have the computing resources and the skills of the people there, there were some very bright people there, but–

FR: Not quite the same structure which you have in the Met here?

JM: No, no, it's much smaller service, I mean, what is nice to see is the collaboration between the North and the South, in meteorology and again, as Chief Scientist I then met some of the senior officers in the met services around the world, so it was quite, quite interesting. The other thing, which I don't know if you saw last night was a programme on Climategate, can you remember Climategate?

FR: Don't think so.

JM: So this is when I think about nineteen, 2009, coming up there was a big climate conference in Copenhagen.

FR: Ah yes.

JM: And before that there, the Climate Research Unit in, this is probably irrelevant to know, but the Climate Research Unit in East Anglia was hacked, with a whole load of emails between a colleague of mine, Phil Jones, and two other colleagues, which purported, I think the phrase that came out was we'll use Mike's trick to, what was it, decline, something decline.

FR: So I do remember this actually.

JM: Yeah, yeah, to hide the decline I think it was, and this referred to, they were using data from things like tree rings and pollen and so on to extend the temperature record back a thousand, two thousand years, and so they have to calibrate those methods against the instrumental record over the last hundred and twenty, hundred and thirty years, which is a lot to do, but what they found is from about 1960 onwards the paleo-reconstructed temperatures didn't rise as fast as the instrumental record, so there's obviously something different going on. Now this curve, which, this so called hockey stick, so they showed a fairly, not steady but, you know, it's fairly level within limits and then a warming up to the forties, a little step and then a further warming up to the future, so that last warming didn't come up, so they'd published this graph in a World Meteorological Organization tech note or something and they'd said how, you know, how do we show this on the map and they'd found some, the trick was a mathematical device, it wasn't a trick in a sense, you know, you say in mathematics if you want to solve it there's a trick to do this, solve this problem, it was that sort of trick, not it's a trick which, you know, like a conjuror's trick showing something that wasn't there, and because it was only confusing it wasn't, obviously it wasn't right, but that got seized around the world and, you know, the whole thing, and I don't think the science community handled it as well as they did, I don't know how, but it would be different. But I actually had problems with FOI with somebody else on, and it was related to this, it was the next IPC report, there was also a paleo chapter and there were questions on that and it became much more controversial, and I was actually what you call a review editor, now paleo climate isn't my speciality, I was more there in terms to look at the modelling bit, but because I was the, what they call a review editor, I had to sort of prove the changes and there was a lot of question over that, so that was quite stressful, with people chasing an FOI. The reason that's relevant is that in 2009 somebody hacked the University of East Anglia, in fact, the Climate Research Unit server, and thousands of emails came out including this one on this discussion on the thing, and it was seized on by sceptics, as you know there's a conspiracy, these scientists are all in it together, and actually some of my emails are in there, which actually I think was good for me, but ironically because I think it showed me, I was portrayed in a certain light and it showed that that wasn't my view so, you know. **[01:26:30]** It was sort of a pre-runner of fake news I guess, you know.

FR: And the sort myth of that still exists.

JM: Yeah, oh yeah, there's still people, I mean, we're digressing a bit, but it is, I mean, I guess you're a sociologist, I guess would you call yourself?

FR: I'm a historian.

JM: A historian, yeah.

FR: I mean, you know [laughs], I'm not–

JM: But you have an interest in social history though?

FR: Yes, yeah.

JM: That, I think one of things the internet has done, and particularly blogging, is that it gives people an opportunity to see what they want to see, and it polarises opinion, and so there are people out there today will believe, you know, the whole thing's a scam, and, I mean, the last American election, this election, it'll be interesting to see what happens.

FR: [pauses] Northern Ireland onto climate change.

JM: [laughs] I did go to Stormont once.

FR: Oh really?

JM: Yeah.

FR: To speak about?

JM: Just to talk to one or two people about it, I remember being up, I mean, Stormont holds memories for me because my father would, the, cos he was County Planning Officer they often had meetings in Stormont, so I can remember sitting in the car outside, you know, walking around the outside waiting for him to have the meeting, then going off and having lunch in Belfast or something, so it's not totally this sort of horrific building that some people I think would see it as, understandably.

FR: The architecture is fairly daunting.

JM: Yes, yeah, it's not pretty, is it, it's a great site, but it's not–

FR: I mean, I think one of the frustrations of Northern Ireland sometimes is that the capacity to talk about things like climate change, for instance, is so delineated by–

JM: Because, yeah, it's like, Brexiteer, yeah.

FR: Kind of, it's so loud it fills up all the space.

JM: Yeah.

FR: [pauses] So that's interesting that you were at Stormont to talk about that.

JM: Yeah, yeah, I think I, in the end I managed four meetings in Ireland, which is disappointing, there was a meeting in the, I think it was somewhere around the Titanic

Centre on climate change. I went to a meeting, one of the IPCC meetings, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, met in the, what do you call the, where, the priests' seminary outside Dublin?

FR: I know, I know where you mean.

JM: You know where I mean?

FR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JM: Begins with M, what's it called, anyhow, we had a meeting there, which I thought was an [laughs] interesting experience, and then for some obscure reason there was a group on observations and at, it was cos I was on one of these, one of these World Meteorological Organisation committees on modelling, and then they had won an observations, so there was a meeting on observations, and they wanted a modeller to make sure that things tied up, held in Galway, only two or three days, but and then, yeah, sorry, we digress.

FR: Okay, so come back round I suppose to the end of the interview, you mentioned Brexit.

JM: Yes.

FR: We won't talk too much about Brexit.

JM: No, no, cos it's a rabbit, big rabbit hole [laughs].

FR: [laughs] But one of the things that certainly I have noticed as a Northern Irish person living in England is that the whole Brexit debate has made Northern Ireland kind of visible again.

JM: Yeah, yeah, oh very much so.

FR: Much more discussed, much more–

JM: Yeah.

FR: Which is strange.

JM: Yes [laughs].

FR: So what, how do you feel about Northern Ireland now?

JM: I mean, I'm just, I don't, I'm just puzzled by the DUP, I mean, they, they're almost a bit like Labour in a way, I mean, they want to hold on to the Union and that's understandable, and I think that seems to be their key thing, but it's not good for business in Northern Ireland and it's, and the whole thing of the peace process, I mean, hopefully it won't inflame things again, but, you know, the idea of having British officials on the border is inflammatory, you know, you may not follow the logic of it, and people who, you may not,

but it's not a good idea, so, I mean, I find it sad in a way, it's sort of conflated with, you know, the old divide, but there are other issues, I mean, I suppose on Brexit, I mean, I don't really follow sort of the European, what's the word, the European, what's the word they have for it?

FR: The project?

JM: The project, the European project, and I suppose my, I would like to have seen David Cameron fighting a bit harder for us to, you know, to deal with some of the issues without coming out of the thing, but that's just, you know, it's a dangerous, let's not go down there, I'll say too much, but in terms of its visibility and unfortunately it brings out the No Surrender picture of Ireland which, not, you know, it's a good, Protestants I suppose that's, you know, there's something behind that, but it just doesn't come out in a way that's helpful or, you know–

FR: It's not the image that you would have of–

JM: No, it doesn't make people look to Jesus if you look at it that way, you just think well, what is this thing that's so, I don't think it reflects what Jesus would have done.

FR: No, no, there is a very kind of, it's a strange combination of quite a vocal form of Christianity–

JM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: And a very kind of visible form of Christianity–

JM: Yeah.

FR: Coupled with lots of stuff that maybe doesn't seem to be very Christian.

JM: No, no, no [laughs].

FR: [laughs] In a general sense I suppose.

JM: It leaves me in an odd position because we're told not to judge people and you can underst-, as I say, you can understand where people are coming from.

FR: Oh sure.

JM: But it doesn't stop me having an opinion on it I guess.

FR: No, of course.

JM: In terms, I mean, I mean, there's another issue in the sort of Irish politics in terms of how people in the Republic would think if, you know, if you had a united Ireland. Now there are obviously some parties would like that, and others thinking, you know, what are they

going to do with, whatever it is, a million dissident Protestants. It's one of the things that annoyed me I think in the past with the claim of the Free State, as it was, the Irish Republic, on Northern Ireland as a territory, which always seemed to me inflammatory and unhelpful.

FR: Given that there was a, either a kind of majority or a slight minority now maybe of people who would not–

JM: Be happy [laughs].

FR: Be happy or comfortable, or who would feel concerned about that idea.

JM: Yeah, and, I mean, I think the European Union was, certainly contributed to the peace process because suddenly I think it helped people, particularly nationalists, in Northern Ireland feel less isolated I guess, which I thought wasn't a bad thing. I mean, I always thought that the problem would go away when there's a bigger threat from outside.

FR: [laughs] Yeah, that's a way–

JM: It might not be what you want to wish on people, but yeah.

FR: I see what you mean.

JM: I mean, my other view on it, I mean, knowing Irish people both sides of the border, whatever happens they will work their way round it, particularly on the, particularly on the trade side, but–

FR: Well, that was always the way with the border I suppose.

JM: I mean, I've, one of my, my sister-in-laws used to live in Derry and they have a, I don't know if you can stop the tape for that actually cos–

FR: Is this?

JM: Oh it's just so I don't embarrass, yeah.

FR: Yeah, I'll stop the tape.

FR: [recording resumed] There's sort of two wrapping up questions. The first one is just to say is there anything that we haven't talked about that you think you wanted to?

JM: I'll have a quick look through I think [extended pause]. I think we've actually covered most things [pauses]. I think we've probably covered it.

FR: Okay.

JM: I mean, I'm, as you know, it's just such a complicated question, it's not a thing you can simplify in any way, you might give a broad brush, probably the best you can do and

everybody's experience is different. I mean, if you were to ask my late brother he would have a different story, I, a lot of people I think who came to England couldn't get out of Northern Ireland quick enough, I didn't feel that way about it. I think if I'd found a job we might have gone back early on, I think once we had children it became more difficult and now because our children and grandchildren are settled round the south of England I don't think we would go back, but, you know, I love the place, I love the people, despite all its, you know, its faults, I love the countryside **[01:36:30]** and it's still, you know, as with yourself, you know, you meet somebody from Northern Ireland, you have that immediate, you know, you know things, you just talk about things and you understand, you don't have to explain it.

FR: That's the strange thing. I always feel like I really wanted to leave Northern Ireland, but then it's strange that when I meet a Northern Irish person, just in a pub or something, I want to speak to them.

JM: Yeah, yeah, because you have that common heritage and across both sides of the, and I think the dilemma for me is, you know, it's, the peace process is good, in that you're allowing to be British and Irish, and that for some people is something that's very hard to get round. I don't know whether you saw, Brian O'Driscoll did a programme on, I think it was BT Sport, where he talked about rugby through the Troubles.

FR: Oh I haven't seen that.

JM: I think I've still got it on tape, I mean, if you can get to see it it's very interesting because he, I think he, cos he was through, so when did Brian play, he stopped–

FR: He could have started in the, not the late eighties, he's too–

JM: No, it's about–

FR: Nineties.

JM: Anyhow he, I mean, there's a book by is it somebody English on rugby through the Troubles, if you ever get a chance, if you're interested in rugby and interested in the Troubles it's well worth getting, if I can find it I can send you, because of course through the Troubles the Northern Irish players had to travel down across the border, to travel, and of course three of them were involved in an incident, they were crossing the border and it just so happened that a judge and his wife were coming back and the IRA had planted a bomb and it killed the judge and his wife and it injured quite badly, I don't know if any of them ever played international rugby again, in fact, rugby, let alone rugby, I'm trying to remember them now, as I'm getting older I forget.

FR: I think I know, I know the story, yeah.

JM: Yeah, and I think, you know, thinking about that made Brian think well, actually these guys, you know, they earned their place in the Irish team, you know, bit about that alone, I think there is that, you know, why do we have to make the Irish players, you know, the

Northern Irish players to come down and so on, so there was a little bit of that, was it, was it Ciaran, who was it, there was a player, one of the forwards, it might, who either worked in the army or the police in England and he had to have a special, he had a Garda escort.

FR: Just to get across the border?

JM: Yeah, and to do, to play and to train and so on, so there was that and those nuances in the background, which I think it brought home to the players and the public that, you know, there was an issue, but Brian went round and he went to, it's one of the towns along the border in south Armagh, and it may even have been an Orange parade and he was asked, you know, what nationality are, thinking about British and Irish, what team do you support, and he said, you know, for him it was simple, he was Irish, it was the Irish team and he couldn't understand this, you know, British and Irish thing, but I think afterwards he got a bit of an insight into it and of course these were hardy Protestant guys who, you know, they weren't softies or, what do they call them, pink-hearted liberals or whatever the phrase is [laughs], these were serious guys and yet they had a great admiration for Brian, they wanted his autograph and so on, and it really summed up the, what's the word, the paradox that is Ireland, but just going through that was interesting and the book also was interesting.

FR: I must, I must check that out.

JM: Yeah, I mean, before you go I can, I probably find, but I've got your email address, I could send you that.

FR: And I guess the other question, which I still haven't quite worked out a form for this question, are there any kind of moments or is there anything in particular that stands out as being important for you, in terms of the journey of migration, of leaving?

JM: [pauses] I don't, I mean, I think there were a couple of moments I described to you about, well, obviously the peace process and the Queen going over, was important and also Paisley and, what do you call him?

FR: McGuinness.

JM: McGuinness together, I didn't know quite what to think of that, you know, it just seemed unreal [laughs], unreal.

FR: Yeah, the pictures.

JM: But it, it, it worked so well when it was there, I could, you know, I could understand people on both sides thinking, you know, what is this, you know, I can't, I really don't think this is right, but I felt that was progress. What was significant, I don't–

FR: And for you personally in settling or–?

JM: Not for me personally, I mean, my journey is, in once sense has been smooth. I've come over, I've found a job, it's been an interesting job, we settled, we found community and so

on, and although I miss, as I say, the friendliness of Ulster people and the countryside, you know, I'm, there are other things here which compensate and there are some things that I don't miss, if I think I'll email you, but I don't think so.

FR: Okay. Well, that's great, thank you very much.

JM: Yeah, yeah, I hope that's useful.

FR: Really useful, really useful, thank you so much.

JM: Yeah.

INTERVIEW ENDS