

## L11 JULIE MARCHMONT INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Julie Marchmont [pseudonym]
Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interview summarisers: Dr Jack Crangle and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded across two audio files that were spliced together to create a single audio file.

L11 Julie Marchmont	Start time: 00:00:00	Finish time: 02:29:00	Duration: 02:29:00	Brief description of content:
00:00–09:59	Born in Belfast in 1949 and lived in Finaghy until her family moved to a rural area near Lisburn in the early 1950s. Recalls her early memories of each of these two places, where she lived with her father, who was a civil servant, and her mother, a teacher. Describes her first awareness of sectarianism when, aged about nine, she joined an older Protestant boy in calling Catholic schoolgirls ‘dirty Taigs’ and was ‘severely admonished’ by her primary school headteacher. Says sectarianism was rarely discussed within her Presbyterian family, which she describes as ‘very middle of the road in terms of religious beliefs’.			
10:00–19:59	Remembers attending Sunday school and becoming increasingly aware of religious difference and division, which she would ‘challenge and discuss’ with her Protestant and Catholic friends. Recalls hearing stories about Catholics’ fear of authoritarian priests and nuns and her mother’s unease at her having Catholic friends as a teenager, especially boyfriends. Her mother was raised in Armagh and told Julie about Catholic priests’ vehement opposition to mixed marriages there. Speaks of living in ‘a very, very mixed up society’ and deplores the lack of sex education, especially in Catholic schools, which meant that there were ‘girls in my generation who [...] got raped without knowing’.			
20:00–29:59	States that ‘we felt great compassion for our Catholic friends’ owing to the strictness of their church. Attests to a similar censoriousness in her Presbyterian culture, which made her adjustment to a more liberal England ‘very hard’ at first, yet also claims that she and her ‘Irish friends were generally speaking more aesthetically orientated’ and ‘modern’ than her English friends. Praises the NI grammar school system for facilitating social mixing across class and religious divides and laments the loss of this ‘huge opportunity’ to create a more equitable society in NI. Says that her family ‘felt very strongly Irish, Northern Irish’ when she was young and that her parents were ‘wary of the extremes on both sides’.			
30:00–39:59	She attended an all-girls’ grammar school, which styled itself as ‘a school for young ladies’. Recalls discussing Ian Paisley with peers and teachers when he emerged as a political force in the 1960s. Remembers seeing fractious debates about NI on TV, but felt protected from the sharp edges of bigotry by the ‘social envelope’ of her parents’ liberalism. Mentions some of her teenage social activities, including joining that RAF Cadets and attending church socials. Bemoans English people’s inability to see beyond the Troubles to an earlier era when NI Catholics and Protestants lived in relatively peaceful coexistence.			
40:00–49:59	After achieving ‘lousy’ A-level results she got a job in a bank in Belfast and rented a shared flat in the city, which her father regarded as ‘the worst thing’ because ‘women didn’t do that unless they were slightly suspect’. Recalls the liberation of living independently in Belfast, meeting her first Catholic boyfriend and having ‘a whole social network there of Catholic and Protestant friends’.			

50:00–59:59	Describes the burgeoning folk music scene in 1960s Belfast, remembering it as a ‘melting pot’ of Catholics, Protestants and international students. Recalls hearing about a civil rights meeting where student activist Bernadette Devlin agreed to stand for election as an MP. Voices her dismay at the outbreak of the Troubles, which definitively altered the course of her life: ‘I was free, and I was sitting there with bombs going off thinking how dare you, you have ruined my life’. Speaks of leaving NI because she ‘couldn’t stand the religious bigotry and all the things associated with it’, and of feeling ‘that this wasn’t going to be a year or two, I just knew that [...] this is the end, this is the end of Northern Ireland’.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Reiterates her view that the Troubles ended the prospect of a more liberal and egalitarian civil society taking shape in NI. Describes the impact of the conflict on her younger sister, who moved away from Belfast due to repeated bomb scares, and her father, whose work as a government solicitor led to him being intimidated and threatened by paramilitaries and, latterly, by local thugs. Recalls attending her Catholic best friend’s wedding, despite being warned not to by her mother. Describes some encounters with British soldiers and paramilitaries, stating that the Troubles ‘affected everybody to some degree’.
01:10:00–01:19:59	States that the Troubles ‘started on my birthday in 1969’ and made her feel that she had ‘just woken up basically in a war zone and lived through it that year’. Recalls her social life in Belfast at this time, which centred on the folk music scene, but notes the exodus that was steadily growing: ‘the tragedy was that [...] we left, many, many of us left, hundreds of us’. Explains the widespread perception among her peers that English teacher training colleges were inferior to those in NI. Describes how her decision to move to England in 1970 was partly influenced by her then boyfriend being at a teacher training college in Leeds.
01:20:00–01:29:59	Insists that the Troubles and sectarianism were key factors in her leaving NI, as was her desire to undertake her teacher training in England. Explains that her parents supported her until they learned she was attending a Catholic college. Remarks that being in England made her realise she ‘was Irish, not just Northern Irish’. Recalls being patronised by a tutor who suggested that ‘you might need to change your accent and you might need to be aware it’s very liberal’ in England. Cites several further such comments, including being asked if her family kept ‘pigs in the kitchen’ and being told ‘you must be really clever to get into an English college’, which was ‘probably the biggest insult amongst a fair few’.
01:30:00–01:39:59	Recalls seeing ‘no blacks, no dogs, no Irish’ signs in London and sometimes offending English people with her humour and ‘sarcastic Ulster way of speaking’. She graduated from teacher training college in Exeter in 1974 and briefly worked in a school in Sussex before securing a job in London, where it was easy to blend into the city’s ‘melting pot’. The ongoing violence ruled out a return to work in NI, where friends of hers had already died in the conflict. Reveals that she never called herself a loyalist or unionist and never voted. Contrasts her apoliticism with her mother’s trade union and women’s rights activism.
01:40:00–01:44:25	Remembers being interviewed for teaching jobs in London and finding a post in ‘one of the toughest schools in west London’, where she remained for ten years. Recalls befriending other Irish and Northern Irish people in London, adding: ‘we almost sought each other out to a certain extent as a subculture’. The two interview audio files were spliced together here.
01:44:26–01:54:25	Describes the challenges of working in schools in deprived areas of inner London, where she taught music and drama and directed school plays. States that her Irishness was never an issue during her teaching career. Says that she learned a

	lot about the culture of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in London and comments on how often they and Irish people were 'meeting and marrying and getting on'.
01:54:26–02:04:25	Reflects that, despite having 'escaped' NI, the Troubles have followed her in many forms, including media reports of atrocities and deaths. Says she likes living in England and finds it 'a tremendously tolerant nation', yet goes on to reveal that the sense she had when growing up 'that England would look after you, [...] that the Empire would care' was rudely shattered on moving to England and 'realising actually they're not going to take care of me, I've got to find my own way and I've got to find my own identity and there's parts of my identity I've got to repress and that's going to be hard work'. Provides further examples of encountering anti-Irish condescension from people of different nationalities.
02:04:26–02:14:25	Remembers reactions to IRA bombs in England and expresses her revulsion of the IRA and Sinn Féin: 'I couldn't bear to listen, I couldn't bear to see them'. Recalls some friends being antagonistic and asking simplistic or uninformed questions about the conflict 'because they couldn't understand why a part of the British Isles contained people who were killing each other'. Speaks of being 'in this uncomfortable place where people didn't exactly blame you, but they looked at you sometimes as if you'd got two heads'. Says she has occasionally been perceived as an IRA sympathiser and prejudged because of her accent, adding: 'I don't suppose it ever leaves you really'.
02:14:26–02:24:25	Suggests that 'what we ought to do is take Northern Ireland and attach it, attach it to England at least, so people mix with others, [...] they're not mixing, [...] they're little tribes'. Says that the peace process left her feeling relieved, but still mistrustful and pessimistic about NI's future. Expresses dismay at the influence of 'fundamentalist religious people' in narrowing the curricula of faith schools in NI and opposing marriage equality for same-sex couples. She also despairs at 'the whole polarisation of society, it's just so damn polarised'. Briefly discusses her memories of the BBC's coverage of the Troubles in the early 1970s.
02:24:26–02:29:00	Airs her views on the use of genetic information for historical investigation, particularly in relation to family ancestry. Says she would like to see 'a history that makes the Northern Irish feel valued for what they are instead of what they are not', and remarks that 'the English did a terrible thing in Ireland, but actually some of the migrants who came in contributed a good deal as well'.