INTERVIEW G19-SG6: MARY BONNER

Interviewer: Dr Jack Crangle
Interviewee: Mary Bonner
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Location: Virtual
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. The interview was recorded across two audio files, labelled part 1 and part 2.

Audio file part 1

JC: So I've started the interview recording there now, so Mary, thanks for the consent form, as I said, I, I got that today, and just for the purposes of the recording, could I get your verbal consent that you're okay for the recording?

MB: Yeah, it's fine, yeah, yeah.

JC: Great stuff, okay then, do you want to start by telling me when and where you were born?

MB: When I was born, I was born in 1941. I was the, the youngest, in fact my mother was about forty, forty-one when I was born, so I was one of the, I was the last one [laughs], and I grew up in Glasgow. I went to school and, you know, all through, and college in, in Glasgow, and I left about 1967, well, I left in '67 to go for a year to Canada, cos I was teaching, so I went over there to teach, then I came back again to get married and came down to here, to Northampton, because, as my husband said, he'd come from Donegal, he came in 1959 from Donegal, so we got married in '68 and the Troubles weren't really started then, it was only just in '69 I think the Troubles actually started, but I mean, I'd always gone to Ireland on my holidays because my mother's people were still there. She lived, well, they were near, near Strabane, [indecipherable] from Strabane, don't know if you know Strabane?

JC: I do, yes, mm hmm.

MB: Do you, yeah.

JC: I've been once I think, yeah, to Strabane, so.

MB: Yeah, yeah, well, we had, that's where mother came from and her sister and two brothers lived, so every summer we went there on holiday, and although my mother died when I was five, so, but my aunt, her sister, always took us over then after that, and my

daddy never did. He was from, my daddy was from Mayo, in fact I've just got his birth certificate, so as I can apply for an Irish passport [laughs].

JC: [laughs] Nice, so your mum moved from Strabane to Glasgow, then?

MB: Mm hmm, actually I don't actually know, well, because there's nobody to ask these questions now and you don't think of asking questions like that when you're young, you know, when did you come and why did you come and, but I think her and her sister who was my aunt, they nearly always took us on holiday, I think they came together.

JC: Right, okay.

MB: Well, a few of the younger ones I think and they came together and they worked here and she met my father, who had come from Mayo. I think he probably came, he was probably, I should imagine he came after, after the, the First World War, which, I don't know when he came, I think my father maybe came before '21, but that's when Ireland divided up, wasn't it?

JC: Yeah.

MB: And, so I don't know anything about that history, you know.

JC: Right, okay, but you, you think they came, came over for work, then, presumably?

MB: Oh yes, they came over to work and, but as I say, I really, as I say, my father died then when I was fifteen, so even he wasn't around for me to, when you're growing up and you're, you're asking questions, it's too late, you know, and both my sisters and my brother, who are older than I am, they're all dead now too, so I can't even ask them cos they, actually they've, the three older ones went to Ireland on the, they were, in fact, they went and my father sent them straight to Mayo when the Fir-, Second World War broke out and they were registered up in, the book from that school when it was a hundred years old, you know that schools tend to use, and they were registered on the twenty-sixth of September '39, to the–

JC: Right, okay.

MB: Over to his mother.

JC: Yeah, getting in there right away.

MB: But, and my mother used to go, but I think she hated them being, cos there's, it's far to travel from Glasgow to Mayo, whereas going from Glasgow to Strabane's not too bad, so, and anyway I think her sister was going to have to take in evacuees anyway, so my mother brought them up to Strabane, then, up to, well, as I say, about five miles to Strabane they stayed, and they were there for about, I don't, actually I don't even know how long they stayed in, in Ireland, but they went to school there for, and over, at least two or three years,

so there were three, cos my brother and my, the youngest one was, Hannah was five I think when she went there, and I don't know when they came back.

JC: Yeah, cos I was going to say you were–

MB: Because I was only born during the war, so–

JC: Yeah, I was going to say you must have been born in the middle of that process then, yeah?

MB: Uh huh, yeah, uh huh.

JC: But you were born in Glasgow?

MB: I was born in '41, I was born in Glasgow, yes, uh huh.

JC: Right, okay.

MB: Well, we all were, we were all born in Glasgow, and they'd, well, when they, I don't remember them not being there, you know, I suppose I was just little and, so, well, all I can say is I went to school then in Glasgow and as I say, secondary school, college and as I said, I worked there for about six years, teaching, and then went to Canada and then came here, so, we go back to, we still go back, because James comes from Donegal and quite near, quite near the border. I don't know if you know much about Donegal.

JC: I've, I've been a couple of times.

MB: Yeah, he comes from quite, just about six miles from Derry.

JC: Right, okay.

MB: Newtown Cunningham, a little village, Newtown Cunningham, and so because of that it was quite near to, to Ire-, to where, to, to Strabane as well, so we went over to stay in his place in the summer with the children. We used to always go for about three weeks in summertime and so we all went through to Strabane, but then by that time the Troubles had started, cos they started in '69, so although my aunts and my, my uncles lived in the country, there were soldiers stationed just at the top of the road, well, it was a quite a long road, you know what Irish roads are like, so they stayed at the top. It had been a school, but the soldiers stayed there and it really upset my, because they were quite old by that time, and they used to come down in their jeeps or whatever, but very fast, it was a, it's just a country road, they used to go very fast down past the house, you know, other than that I don't think they saw a lot of them, but we, we never went into Derry, like, to shop then because, because of the Troubles, you know, you were just afraid to go in and I don't think any of James's family went much into Derry or that much either, you know, because they were all over, his cousin who lives in, always has lived in Derry, you know, throughout as you've married, and she lived in Derry through all that and she come out of it. I think they, they had stories to tell, you know, the ones who lived there, cos it was right on the border.

JC: Yeah, that border area must have been quite, quite a difficult place to be during the Troubles.

MB: It was. We never really went into the North, you know, to visit my, my aunts and uncles, because, not at night-time, went in during the daytime, they would never go in at night-time and one night, one time we were going through and I think that was, I think that must have been quite late for some reason, but there was soldiers that were all lying at the hedge, you know, sort of, you, you don't really, didn't really see them at first, you know, but it was a bit scary, they were always a bit scared going through, you know.

JC: Do you, do you have any earlier memories of visiting Ireland, like, sort of before the Troubles, during the forties and fifties?

MB: Oh yes, yes, cos we, oh yes, uh huh, I mean, as I say, we went every year, we always went to Ireland every year.

JC: And what, what was it like before, before the Troubles started, was it quite a peaceful place?

MB: It was, it was peaceful, but of course there was always that, you know, the Orange and the Green, always that, you know, and we were green [laughs], but I mean, our neighbours weren't, there was, there was non-Catholic neighbours and they were, they were lovely people, but I guess you hear stories of, at night, what do they call them, the B-Specials, we used to talk about the B-Specials and how they could be your neighbour, you didn't know, you know, there was this, and they could, you know, it was I think a bit intimidating at night-time for them to go out, especially I suppose maybe in towns, well, because the B-Specials could be out and grab you and question you and whatever, you know, but I mean, I never really saw any trouble, but during the, well, before the Troubles started, yeah, I mean, Strabane was a lovely little town, it was a lovely town. I suppose all towns mind you have come down a lot since, in the past, say, fifty, forty years, they've changed a lot, all towns have I suppose, but at that time it was, but they, Strabane was fairly destroyed during the Troubles, you know, they suffered a lot, with bombing and blown up and whatever. It was over the border, we were near the border, we were, you know, Strabane borders Lifford, you know, they're right on the border and, cos we'd been into Strabane when we were little, you know, you like to go into the town on a Saturday, and you used to cross over the bridge into Lifford, I think to buy cigarettes for my uncles, you know, because it was that bit cheaper in the, in the Free State, cos I remember a friend of ours, he was a neighbour, lived down there, and he was very much into history. In fact, he did, he kept enormous notes, in fact, since he died his niece has actually written a book about the area where they were, do you know, and the families and the history of it, so he was always very much into that, and I remember this little girl I used to go out with, cos she lived in the town, but used to come into her aunt in the, in the country, and we used to go into Strabane and because, oh and he gave us a letter to post to Sinn Féin, but it had to be posted in Lifford not in Strabane [laughs], **[00:10:00]** so I suppose there wasn't, of course it was against the law, Sinn Féin was against the law I think then.

JC: Yeah, when, when–?

MB: I think it was banned.

JC: When was this, roughly?

MB: This is, well, this would be in the, the, probably the early fifties, forties, fifties, you know, anything that, I think even an Irish flag I think was banned, maybe in Ireland at that time, in Northern Ireland.

JC: Northern Ire-, yeah, I think you could be right, yeah.

MB: Yeah, and Irish songs, you know, you couldn't sing them in case anybody heard you [laughs], you know, but that was all banned then, so we used to, we posted letters for him to Strab-, to Sinn Féin, from Lifford [laughs].

JC: Right, so would, would your family have, have talked about sort of Irish politics and, and things, do you have any memories of that?

MB: Well, I think my father would have been, but as I say, I was only young when he died as well, so, and, so I, I know he was in that, you know, the rebel side, well, I suppose he was against the partition, I suppose that must have been hard for, for Irish people to, to suffer partition, to see your country divided, you know, must have been, I'm just sorry now that I wasn't old enough to talk to him about such things, you know.

JC: Yeah, well, as you say, you don't really think of those things when you're younger, do you, it just sort of passes you by.

MB: Yeah, you don't think, no, yes, it just goes over your head, doesn't it, you're not really, yeah.

JC: What did your parents do for a living, then, in Glasgow?

MB: My father was a, a maintainer, he worked as a maintenance man in the India rubber factory, which was just a bit away from Glasgow, just outside Glasgow, and my mother never worked cos in those days women, when they got married, they stopped working, oh but my aunt, who as I said, I was very close to her after mum died, she had no children, so during the war she was actually brought in to work I think in the railways or some sort of yard, you know, I suppose, but, but as I say, once people got married, even when I was young, most women when they got married stopped working, you know, so things have changed there too.

JC: Absolutely, yeah, so, so what area of Glasgow did you grow up in, then?

MB: In the Southside of Glasgow.

JC: Southside, yeah.

MB: Which was, you know, it gets a very bad name, always did, Glasgow, but there are some beautiful houses in Glasgow, in ten-, even with the tenement buildings, but, you know, big rooms, you know, actually marble fireplaces, you know, beautiful cornice in the ceiling, big, big rooms and, and they were, they were good houses, you know, but I think some of them were very bad, but the ones I knew sort of thing were, were good houses, you know, with indoor facilities [laughs].

JC: Yeah, and wh–

MB: As opposed to having a, I think a, I, I know a friend of mine lived in a, in a tenement building, but she had what they called an outside toilet, it was used by maybe two or three families, you know, but we had, we had our own [laughs].

JC: Yeah, I'm sure that must have been, that must have been good at the time. What, what about the neighbourhood, then, what, what was that like? Was it, did you sort of, was there a good community, in the, in the area?

MB: Oh yes, yes, you played with all the children, you know, and later on when I grew up and I went to a secondary school, I think I lost my friends from primary school cos I also then went to, well, in those days there was a senior secondary and a junior secondary and then one called a modern for your, your, the children who weren't very bright went to, cos you had a modified one called a modified course, so a lot of my friends I think went to the junior secondary, whereas I went the secondary, senior secondary, and so then I tended to go about with friends from school, you know, that didn't live near me, but when we were young we played with all the children, you know, it was a mixed community as well, you know, and, although in those days, not that I ever actually had to apply for a job in Glasgow, but my sisters did and when you were applying for a job you had to say which school you went to, and often if you went to a Catholic school which was a Saint something or other, you didn't get a job.

JC: Really?

MB: No, and my, my sister, she went for this, she was changing jobs and she went for a job and they said, well, it was only a small office, and they said, well, everyone who works here is Protestant and we don't employ Catholics, but you're [indecipherable] done an exam paper, said, well, yeah, yeah, you know, that's very good, so we'll take you on, but only for, you know, just, just for a pra-, just to see how it goes and if it doesn't work out, you're out, and she stayed then till she got married, but she actually, then she, she got married in 1958 and she stopped working then when she got married cos it was still the sort of custom, you know, you, you had, people used to say are you going to stay on after you get married, are you going to stay on in your job, or are you going to give it up, and, and a lot of women did, whether they had children or not afterwards, they gave up when they got married, whereas by the time I got married that had changed, [indecipherable] about ten years or so that had changed, you know, I think it was maybe [indecipherable] to change then, but.

JC: Yeah, yeah, I suppose those social changes happened quite a lot in the sort of late fifties, sixties time.

MB: Yes, uh huh.

JC: And it's interesting you were saying that, that that sense of discrimination existed in, in Glasgow as well, like, the sort of discrimination in jobs against Catholics and stuff.

MB: In, in things like that, I never really came across it because I always was in the Catholic school, secondary school, Catholic college and then I taught in a Catholic school, so I never really faced that, but I remember my sister in, and she stayed in that job then fine, because she got on fine with the other girls, you know, but, and it was nearly all girls in offices then, you know, the girls did the work, the men were the bosses, you know, nothing changes [laughs], but, but, I remember, and that happened, you know, when you would apply for anything, what school did you go to, cos they, they could tell by what the school you went to whether, because Catholics went to Catholic schools and Protestants went to Protestant schools, cos in Glasgow now there was always, for every area had a Catholic school and a Protestant school, you know, it was something I think they had come to some arrangement with in the forties, I think it was, I think forties, there was some educational thing, you know, sort of government thing, you know.

JC: Yeah, so you went to primary school locally, then?

MB: And then secondary school, yeah, oh locally, my, my, yeah, my primary school was local, every school, every area had the local school, yes.

JC: And do you have good memories of primary school?

MB: Oh I do. I remember my first day because my mother was still living there, then and I remember my first day in school, but I remember, well, I remember my, it seems, it actually seems another age, my primary school, it was just so long ago, but I do remember it well, big classes I suppose, but you, of course very, more strict in those days.

JC: I'm sure, yeah.

MB: Yeah, you know, you sat in your seat all day and you didn't wander about the classroom as they do now, but it was very good, you know, I've got no, I can't say I've got any complaints about my, my primary school at all, but then I suppose I was quite clever anyway, so I never had any trouble with school, never understood really how people couldn't learn because it was easy for me, you know, as you know yourself when you're at school, if you're good at your, your work, you know, you just, you don't really think of other, but you always know that there are other children who don't do well, you know, but, but yeah, I remember, I remember lots of people who went to school with me, you know, and some of them went through to secondary school, but on, as I say, I started more, there was one girl I remember, Isobel Hannan, she went to primary school with me and she was still at secondary school and we were, were friends for a while, and then I sort of drifted to a different class. I think she, at the end of first year, when we went into second year in

secondary school, I think by that time there had been, well, there was quite a lot of classes in the first year, and then there was children who had been born, who, who were born sort of, cos I was born in June, so people born before January of that year weren't in, they were taken in the, the January, if you were born sort of between August and December you were taken into school in January, so they did what was called six months' prep, but we weren't, they still came into our year when, in the following summer, you know, after my, the end of my first year then they joined us as well, so there was maybe about six classes in, in each year, and so I think Isobel must have been not in my class then afterwards because it was such a, I suppose every [indecipherable], so I was always in the A class then, you know, as they were A, B, C, D, I think [indecipherable] the classes, but, but primary school as I say, it came and went and when I was training, when I was doing my teacher training in fact, I ended up being in that school as a, you know, you, you used to go out maybe every term to, even for a few weeks to a school and I was in the class of my, my first teacher **[00:20:00]** who taught me, course I'm going back a bit now.

JC: No, no, it sounds, it sounds like you've got sort of good memories of primary school and as you said, it would, it would have been a Catholic school, so presumably relig-, religion would have been quite a big part of your upbringing as well?

MB: Yes, uh huh, especially, well, maybe I shouldn't say especially, but I, you know, Catholic, Irish people seem to have more of a, although I must say in Glasgow religion was important I suppose to everybody, and some of my best friends from, from secondary school then and college were Glasgow people and had Glasgow parents and they were very religious as well, so I think it was just, but yes, it was a very much a part of our, our world, yeah.

JC: So you would have gone to, to church and stuff weekly, then, yeah.

MB: Yeah, oh yes, yeah, wouldn't have mass, wouldn't have missed it, wouldn't have missed Sunday mass, no.

JC: Yeah [laughs].

MB: No one, in fact, there was devotions at night-time as well that you went to and, which, I don't think they exist anymore.

JC: And did you, did you enjoy that aspect of, of it, did you?

MB: Yes, never, never questioned it, no, never questioned it at all and still don't, you know.

JC: Yeah, sure, was, was there a big Irish community then, sort of surrounding the church in, and in your neighbourhood?

MB: I suppose there was. You never really, there was such a mixture, you know, there was a lot of Scottish people and Ir-, a lot of Irish people as well, yeah, you know, a lot of Irish people in those houses in, in that part, before everyone went, went up a bit and moved out to the suburbs, you know, as everyone sort of hoped to move, and so eventually we moved out to the suburbs as well, you know. I suppose that was everybody's, everybody wanted to

do that, you know, move out and we did, yeah. There was always a, a lot of Irish Catholics about, I suppose, I suppose my parents' friends were mostly Irish, you know, and I suppose that's who came visiting us, although we were very friendly with all the neighbours, I don't think there was another, in our close there was sort of three, there was a bottom close and then there was three levels above that and I think we were maybe the only Catholic family in that close, I'm sure they were, I think they were the only Catholic, but it didn't, it didn't mean anything, we were still very friendly. When my mother died I remember the people in, the, the, the Cummingses, they lived at the bottom, and they used to take us in, there was girls there, well, they were grown up and they took us in and taught us how to embroider and I remember them teaching us how to embroider things and [indecipherable] and, and sort of looked after us, you know.

JC: And they were a, a Protestant family, were they?

MB: Oh yes, uh huh, yeah.

JC: Yeah, it's interesting you say that because you talked about, like, when you were in Strabane that there was sort of maybe a bit of tension between the, the Orange and Green as you said, whereas was, was that a feature of Glasgow as well?

MB: Well, there, there was in a way, like, you didn't re-, I suppose, I suppose I always had my friend from school that I went about with, you know, and so they were always Catholic of course, so [indecipherable] and there was I suppose always a division, but you were, I mean, as I say, all our friends, all of our, all of our neighbours were fine, you know, I mean, as I say, we, I think we were the only Catholic out of what, it must have been eight families, cos there was two in each, each, each level was two families in each, so that would be eight altogether and I think we were the only Catholic family, but it's, you know, you'd not thought about it, it never really, you know, and we were very friendly with other families. I mean, one of my best friends I suppose when I was little was a girl up the next close and, but they were Protestants, there was maybe, I don't even know if there was a family in that whole close who was Catholic, but, you know, you just played with, you played with everybody, you know, there was no, there was no, you see I think the big difference between Glasgow and between Scotland and Northern Ireland was in, in Northern Ireland there was Catholic areas and there was Protestant areas and I think that's why it was probably so bad there, but in Scotland there wasn't, you know, you weren't, actually we were just, it was, everybody was mixed together, there was no such thing as an area of Catholics and an area of, of Protestants, you know, it was always mixed.

JC: Yeah, that's interesting actually, yeah, and you're right, cos that sort of geographical division doesn't really exist as much.

MB: Yeah, there was no, there was no such division as, as the houses anyway, everybody just mixed, you know.

JC: And I'm wondering, this might be a sort, I don't know if this is, like, a difficult question to answer, but obviously, when you were growing up your family and stuff were all Irish, did you have a sense of yourself as being Irish, was that part of your identity, yeah?

MB: Oh yes, yes, always thought of, we always thought of ourselves as, as being Irish, although when I've came, when I've come to live here in England, I've tended to think of myself more as Scottish [laughs].

JC: That's interesting.

MB: That changed then, you know, but when I, only, when we grew up, yes, we felt that we were Irish, you know, and went to, we were, then when it came to being sort of a teenager growing up, I started going to, started going to, as we had dances in those days, don't have dances anymore, but I don't, you must have heard of them, dances, dancehalls, yeah?

JC: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

MB: And we tended to go to Irish dancehalls, and we, I know we didn't tend to go to the, there was sort of ones in the city, you know, big halls in the city, but we tended not to go to them, we tended more or less to go to the, the Irish halls, because the Irish bands used to come over, especially in Lent, in Lent the Irish bands couldn't play in Ireland, so they all come over to Glasgow, in fact, they went out, all round, and I think in England as well, so we tended to, to go to the Irish, the Irish dances, you know, to meet.

JC: Yeah, that's interesting, yeah, it does sound like there was quite a strong sort of Irish community in, in Scotland.

MB: And there was a lot of people from the North I think and from Donegal who came to Glasgow, you know, rather than, it was mostly Donegal people and Northern Irish people who were in Glasgow rather than, in England now there's people from all counties who live in this town, but in Glasgow it tends to be mostly people from Northern, I suppose it was easier to go to Glasgow than to, you know, and there was so many people, I suppose they'd always gone to Glasgow, so there was always sort of ties, I suppose maybe that's why people came as well, because it was all sort of ties to, but as I say, yeah, that's, that's where I grew, I didn't meet my husband then, but, but that was maybe, well, anybody you met was Irish cos I suppose you wouldn't have gone for a Protestant because, oh that would have been awful [laughs]. It was just, I suppose, just the way we were, you know, that was just, just the thing, although we knew a lot of Protestant people and we were very friendly with them, you know.

JC: I suppose your sort of Irish identity would have been reinforced by the fact that you were, you were going back there every, every year.

MB: Yes, uh huh.

JC: How long would you have gone for, roughly, when you went back to visit?

MB: Well, in the summertime when we were at school we'd probably stay most of the summer holidays and, because my aunt who took us didn't work, so, you know, and my dad

would send money over to keep us going when we were there, cos my daddy never took holidays, daddy worked seven days a week.

JC: Right.

MB: Went to mass at six o'clock on a Sunday morning, so's he couldn't miss it, and he only took off St Patrick's Day and Christmas Day, apart from that my daddy worked. I suppose that's, I suppose after my mother died he couldn't do, all he could do was, he wasn't a sort of a hands-on dad, you know, he wasn't one for rolling on the floor with the kids or anything, but I suppose what he wanted more than anything was to, you know, support us, you know, and, and feed us and clothe us and, you know, so.

JC: And, and your mother died when you were, you were very young, you said.

MB: Yeah, I was only five.

JC: Five, yeah, so, so who would have been, would it have been your aunt who was the person who would've sort of brought you up then, mainly?

MB: Yes, yeah, uh huh, but then when, I suppose I was about twenty-something maybe, twenty, maybe twenty, twenty-one, her sister who'd always looked after her was in Ireland, there was one aunt and two uncles and none of them had married, [indecipherable], one was a disabled ma-, well, one of my uncles was disabled, so my aunt had to do, and about that time had died, in about '61 or so, so my aunt in Glasgow went over then to look after her two brothers, [indecipherable] over them and, but we still went back, oh as I say, we were back then, I still went back then, and then of course I got married, and then we always went round to my, my husband's family, cos they're just over the border.

JC: Yeah, sure. **[00:30:00]**

MB: In Donegal, yeah, yeah.

JC: Yeah, so can you tell me a bit more about what you might have done during those summers when you were in, in Northern Ireland, like, what would you have done for fun and things? Did, presumably you had quite a bit of family there, like cousins and–?

MB: Well, in those days you see people did a lot of visiting, so I would be visiting my mother's relations, would go visiting her, her cousins and in fact, there was a Protestant family that we used to go and visit as well, but they were lovely people, and in fact, one of my uncles used to work for him. They, they had a big farm and, as most of the farmers were, owned by Protestants, you know, probably, I don't know if they still are, but in those days you wouldn't have sold a Pro-, you know, we went to this family, they were lovely and a man who used, who used to take me there, and, but when he got, when his parents died, the one who was unmarried was left, he was of course about as old as my aunt at least and when he was getting old, a Protestant, the Protestants sort of bought his farm, so that if he sudden-, suddenly died, it wouldn't be left, it couldn't have been bought by a Catholic.

JC: Oh okay.

MB: That, that happened a lot there, in those days, I daresay it doesn't happen now, but in those days it did, you know, but they were lovely, and, and then when I got older, well, you know, lots of young people lived round about as well and we, I used to go to dances with them, into Strabane and some of the villages, you know, round about, and, at night-time, other than that, there was always, always people in the house, in our house, you know, so at night-time there was always a crowd come in, and in those days there'd be singing and, and playing cards, not for money or anything, after pennies maybe, you know, you know, but it was good fun just, and my uncle, the one who was disabled, he and his friend who lived just across the field, they played a lot of draughts, you know. In Ireland there was always something going on, you know, in the, always entertainment in Ireland and they used to go and I think, oh travelled all over to play draughts in, I suppose, I think there must have been tables that they went round and, you know, wherever it was. I don't know if it was in houses or if it was in maybe the parish hall or something, you know, I don't really know, but there was always something, and there was, of course there was always bands in Ireland too, wasn't there, and friends of ours, well, the people who lived across the field, they all played in the band, you know, they, they sort of, the, they, village band I suppose it was, it was Glenmornan was where our church was in, that's what they call now, the band was the Glenmornan band but that was something was big in Ireland, I don't know if it happens more, whether they have bands, you know, young people's bands.

JC: Yeah, I don't, I think there is, there is still quite a big sort of traditional music scene in a lot of the, the bars and stuff in, in Ireland, yeah.

MB: Yeah.

JC: It sounds like it was quite a nice contrast to Glasgow in a way, a very sort of, a, a different place for you to get for a change of scene.

MB: Well, well, you'll love going on holidays anywhere when you're little, you know, but, and I used to think it was very strange when we'd come home again, my aunt always said oh it's lovely to go home, I used to think she was crazy [laughs], because kids love being on holidays as you know, they hate coming home again then because, but of course, that's just when you get older you know what it feels like [laughs].

JC: It's interesting you say that as well, cos I mean, obviously, you say going back home to Scotland, but was Ireland kind of, like, a bit of a home as well, did you, would–?

MB: Oh yes, yeah, uh huh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I did then start going to, I went to my daddy's place, but I haven't been to my daddy's place since I think I was about fourteen, yes, about fourteen and, cos my daddy had never, he never went home, he never, as I say, he never stopped working, he always worked, but then in 1955, just a year before he died, he said there was just the two of us that are left, two young ones left, me and my bigger sister, and he said we're going to Ireland, so we went over to Mayo, that was the first time I'd been to Mayo and he had a brother there who was married with family, and then for a few years then I used to go to, to Mayo as well. Well, I would go to Tyrone obviously, but I would then

go down to Mayo maybe for a week or two, you know, during the summer, cos I've always had long summer holidays, you know, because once I went out into school and then I went to college, so, so I had long holidays [laughs].

JC: Yeah, was, was Mayo very different to Tyrone, or was it similar?

MB: Oh yes, it was, it was different in the, the landscape was different for a start and yes, it was, and I didn't really, but there was, it was good, they still had dances there and they still did the same thing, you know, so by that time I was at a, well, after, by then, because the following year my daddy died, that was in, in fact, I was in Ireland on holiday when I got word, I [indecipherable] to church on the Sunday morning and I was met by the neighbour across, and he said oh you've, you've got to go home, he said your dad's not well, but I thought my dad was probably dead and they weren't telling me till I got home, but we left there on the Sunday and by that, in those days we used to go by boat, you know, twelve hours going from Derry to Glasgow, so it was awful, but that's the way the journey was. I, I think that's the way we went, I can't actually remember the journey at all, but my dad wasn't dead, but he was in hospital and he died in fact the next morning, he died on the Monday, no, he died on the Monday evening rather. In fact, I was with him when he died cos my other sister had been with him more or less all, my, my oldest sister had just got married a month before that, she got married in the June, and this was the July, and my sister, who was the oldest one in the house then, she had been with my dad in hospital almost every day and even at night-time, you know, she, because he was very bad, aye, but she had come home on the Monday to get a rest I suppose, change her clothes and things, and I and my aunt, and another, her sister-in-law took me up to the hospital to see my dad, and in fact, he died when we were there, so, and it was awful cos I was only, I was only fifteen.

JC: And you, I was going to say you were fifteen, it's, it's such a young age to lose both your parents, it's–

MB: Yeah, yeah, it is, yeah.

JC: It's tragic, yeah.

MB: Yeah, uh huh, yeah. I mean, I suppose I was lucky because my sister, who was the oldest one there, she, she would have got married probably the following year, but she didn't because that wasn't a full year from my dad had died. She wanted to marry in June, and so she waited till the following year to get married, but I always, she always then supported me, you know, even, and I thought, and I probably wouldn't have been able to stay on, you could, I could've left school at fifteen then and I thought I probably would've had to because my dad was dead, but I was allowed, because she supported me, I was able to stay on at school and go through college, you know, so I suppose I was lucky really.

JC: Yeah, I suppose, yeah, it's, it's some kind of consolation that you had a supportive family and, and you weren't completely on your own, but still, I'd, you know, as someone who's, as you say, still in secondary school, it's, it's a lot to deal with.

MB: It is and I, I think it's only now that I realise just how bad it was, how much I've probably been affected by it, you know, you didn't think that you were affected by it, but I'm sure it must have been, you know, I think I was, you know, badly affected by it, it's, I think it made me, maybe, sort of a bit, a bit bashful, you know, and not wanting to take the first step in a friendship, you know, I would wait till people came to me rather than, than open a friendship with somebody, you know, and I suppose it's that you're frightened in case of being rejected, because I must have been, so I was just a, because of what happened, you know, you had that feeling inside you, you know, but I mean, I wasn't traumatised all that badly. I mean, I think there is a bit of woe, these days, when people get all traumatised by anything, you know, just there was no such thing as counselling or the suggestion of it even, you know, you just got on with things and, and I think religion helped in that way because we'd always been sort of taught to accept God's will, if it was God's will, that was it, you know, you didn't argue with it, you accepted it, and I suppose that helped in a way because you just did accept things, you know, because you thought well, that's God will. I mean, you must have heard that, people saying that, you know, it's God's will, but in those days I think it was maybe said more often and more, you know, you sort of just grew up with that feeling, you know, so if anything happened, your mother died, your father died, well, it was God's will and that was it, you know.

JC: And so you were at secondary school and, and you said you, you obviously decided to stay on. Was, was that something you'd always intended to do, to sort of stay on and–?

MB: Yes, yes, I'd always wanted to, uh huh, but in fact, my daddy would have liked us all to stay on at school, but the older ones hadn't, but he would have liked to have seen, he was very much into education and he was a man who'd left school I think early himself. He used to say that he only went to school when they were having exams, so that he could come up top [laughs], I don't know how true that was, but he was a clever man, and he **[00:40:00]** read a lot and was interested in learning, you know.

JC: And it sounds like you were quite a good student as well?

MB: Sorry?

JC: It sounds like you were quite a good student as well.

MB: Well, yes, yes, uh huh, yeah, not brilliant, but yeah, I was, I'd never any troubles at, you know.

JC: And outside of school you said it would, it would have been mainly for leisure, it would have been things like going to dances and things like, tell me a bit more about, about the sort of social scene at the time.

MB: When I was older or still at school?

JC: Well, yeah, just sort of that sort of adolescent sort of young adult period, I guess.

MB: Yeah, well, at school we did have dances now and again, you know, but there wasn't a lot for us to do except yous went out with your friends, walking and things, and maybe went to a café for an ice cream and, you know, but that was, but very, very innocent life for me, you know, really. It's started to snow here I see here outside now, did you have any snow?

JC: A little bit, not, not, nothing that's settled on the ground, to be honest.

MB: No, we had some this morning, but I see it's just starting now, but then, then when we were older, sort of, like, sixteen, seventeen, thinking you were all grown up, there was, there was dances that we used to go to, where it was all young people and it was mostly in, I can remember being there, but I can't remember what halls they were. There was a lot of council-run halls in Glasgow as well where people, you know, used to go and have, there was dances in them and there was a lot of council, I don't know if they still have any, Glasgow, but there was a lot of halls in Glasgow and good halls too, you know, well run and good facilities, you know, you went to, there were sort of, like, dances in those sort of places too, and then once you got that bit older, sort of eighteen, or seventeen even, well, well, no, eighteen I think, I say, well, by that time I was in college and we had to live in, in college, although it was in Glasgow we had to live in, first two years anyway, so when I would be going to, back to college on the subway, my older sister, the one next to me, she'd be going to a dance which was quite near where the college was, so she'd be going to that and I'd be going to college at nine o'clock, to, back to, cos we had to be in on a Saturday night at nine o'clock.

JC: Really, wow.

MB: Yeah [laughs], then in our second year of college the principle told us that we were to be out till ten o'clock on a Saturday night and we could go out on a Tuesday night till ten o'clock as well. Well, we nearly took the roof off [laughs], but that's how innocent life was then, you know, it was, different age definitely, yeah.

JC: What, what was the name of the college you were at?

MB: Notre Dame.

JC: Right, okay, and that was, was that teacher–?

MB: It was teacher training, teacher training.

JC: Teacher training, yeah, yeah.

MB: You know, it was called teacher training, but when we went there, by that time it'd changed to college of education.

JC: Right, okay.

MB: Previously called a training college, but then it became a, a college of education, so.

JC: And was that hard, was there a lot of hard work?

MB: It is affiliated with the, it is affiliated with Glasgow University–

JC: Oh okay, yeah.

MB: Which was near where the college was, but then after I left, or a few years after I, it moved out, to move, quite, in fact, I don't think it exists anymore, maybe, but there was another training college as well where I went later on when I started teaching, and my infant mistress who'd asked me to go down to the infants, cos I'd started with the older ones, and she act-, she told me to go and train as an infant mistress, cos that was the first step up the ladder, and so that was to Jordanhill, which was quite close as well, but it was, it was non-denominational training college, whereas Notre Dame was a Catholic college, run by nuns, you know, but that system I think, you know, they've all gone now, but there was another, the other training college was Jordanhill and it's still there, Jordanhill College. I don't know if it's part of the university and it is probably is affiliated with a university now, but I don't know which one, whether it's Glasgow or, well, there's a few now in Glasgow, I think there's a couple more.

JC: So how long did your training last overall?

MB: About three years.

JC: Three years, yeah, so you would have started teaching when you were about sort of twenty-one.

MB: I was twenty.

JC: Oh twenty, yeah, mm hmm, tell me about–

MB: In Glasgow you could stay, you could, we took what was probably, our Highers at seventeen and then if you wanted you stayed on for another year, for the sixth year, but I left in the fifth year cos I'd got enough to go to [indecipherable], so, so yeah, but that was quite young.

JC: Yeah, it sounds it, tell me about your first school. What was, what was the experience of becoming a teacher, and, and did you enjoy it?

MB: I did, I loved it, yes, loved and used to look forward to a Monday, yes, I did, I loved it, but we were, you were sort of allocated a school, the, the council told you what school you were going to, you know, you didn't apply for it, you didn't go for an interview or anything, there was no, you didn't apply, you just were told what school you were going to, so in fact, when I arrived, the headmaster didn't even know I was coming [laughs]. He had, I think he had a temporary teacher there, and so that teacher I think had to go because I had arrived and, but see that's, that's what it was, you didn't have any interviews and you were just allocated a coll-, a school and it was quite close, it was quite close to where I lived and oh yes, I loved it, you know. It was a very mixed, mixed intake of children, you know, a lot of

them were still Irish, you know, of Irish descent, Irish parents and, but a lot weren't, and we, they were good-natured with, oh yes, I loved it, I loved teaching.

JC: Yeah, and where were you living at this stage?

MB: Sorry?

JC: Where were you living at this stage?

MB: I was still living in the, when I started I was still living where I'd been born, brought up, yeah.

JC: Right, okay, yeah, mm hmm.

MB: So I hadn't moved then, so of course, well, my parents are both dead, so we went on living in the house we were in, and it was then when my sister was married, then we moved out then later on to, she moved out to the suburbs, you know, but we still, no, we still lived in the same house that we'd lived in, in the tenement building.

JC: Yeah.

MB: But yes, it was lovely, it was a lovely school, yeah.

JC: How, how long were you at the school for, then?

MB: I taught in that school for six years.

JC: Six years, yeah, mm hmm.

MB: And then I went to Canada.

JC: Yeah, yeah, so tell me about, a bit about how that came about, the, the move to Canada.

MB: Well, another girl who had been in the school had gone to Canada and she came back then in the summer holidays and told us about it and I thought oh, I wouldn't like doing that, you know, she said had to write a day book everyday and write all this, oh no, can't be bothered with that, and then I had just bought myself a car, second-hand car, and this second-hand car there was always bits and pieces going wrong and I thought, I thought, do you know, I think I will go to Canada for a year, save up, come home and buy a brand new car and then it won't be breaking down the whole time [laughs], so I thought right, signed up to go and a girl who was working beside me said I'd love to go as well, because although she had been en-, she was engaged, but her boyfriend had come home, he was in the army and he came home and he said I want to get married right away, we must get married and she said no, I'm not getting married right away, but I'm the only girl in my family, my mum and dad want to see me getting, having the big wedding, and she said no, and I think maybe he'd met somebody and this was his sort of, if I get married now that'll be sorted, so anyway, it was more or less, the engagement was more or less, well, it wasn't off then, but

she wasn't, well, so we went to Canada. In fact, when I, one Saturday night before I went, I was in the shower, or maybe it was a bath in those days, it probably was a bath, anyway, that night there was a phone call for me, for me, from Canada, another school somewhere, oh somewhere way, way down in big Canada, but somewhere, I was going to Toronto, but this was somewhere far away, would I come and teach in their school, and of course they can't, Canadians actually came home, came over to Scotland, interviewers, and more or less they beg you to go and we were given, we were given our, I think our flight was paid for, although I think we had to pay that back and then when we arrived they gave us either, I think it was a hundred dollars they gave us just to, to live on till we, we sort of get our first wages sort of thing, so they were very anxious for Scottish teachers actually, used to advertise for Scottish teachers to, to go to Canada, so I went there for a year and I loved it, but just before I went, a friend of mine, I used to meet her at dances, a girl she would, had been the year above me in college and she said a cousin of mine, she said, well, he's not really a cousin, but he's married to my cousin, well, his brother's married to my cousin, she said he's going to be there, then she said at least you'll have a dance from him anyway, so, and it was to this hall, it was called the [indecipherable; laughs], and I, we'd been in, I'd be there, there the month before with a boyfriend, we'd gone one time and we thought it was hilarious because it was Catholics with pretensions.

JC: Right.

MB: You, you know the type, kind of with pretensions, you know, wanted to be better than **[00:50:00]** they were, and I said oh alright we'll go again, but I was meeting him there. I was stood outside the hall when I got there, cos I was driving my, I had my car by that time, which was unusual for women to have cars, in fact, I suppose, then, but I had a car, and I saw my friend and her friend of her cousin come across the road and I thought, that's him, that's the one I'm going to marry, but he knew I was going away, so he never really, we never really, he danced with me, but that was about it, cos he knew I was going away to Canada, so he didn't bother asking me out or anything, which was a great disappointment, but, and it was about six weeks I suppose, then it must have been about the beginning of June, and then I had to sell my car because I was going to, I was going to Canada and then before I was going I had to go to Ireland to say goodbye to my aunt and my uncles and I wanted to hire a car, so, and when I went there the car wasn't ready, so I think I got there about the Wednesday and I'd been [indecipherable], went into town on the We-, on the Thursday, the car wasn't ready, then the Friday it still wasn't ready, so by then it was Saturday morning, so I went in Saturday morning and it still wasn't ready, come back at twelve o'clock, so I had my, I'd brought my niece with me as well, and we're walking through Strabane and then we're coming back to go up the road to get the, the car, [indecipherable] up the end of the road, and who was standing at the corner but James. He was standing there with his brother because his sister was getting married, I think the next weekend, and he had brought his mother to buy her a coat or something for the wedding, so they were in this beautiful shop in, in, it was a big shop, Wrights it was called, in Strabane, and it was the whole, almost the whole block, you know, there was a shoe shop and a ladies' shop and a man's shop and, and I saw him and I hadn't the nerve to go up and talk to him, so I thought I'll stand here and look in the shop window, the shoe shop, until I see him turn around, cos I could see his reflection in the mirror, in the, in the window, and I waited there till he turned round and he saw me and that, oh hello [laughs], so then he

asked me to go to a dance in Letterkenny on the Monday, a dance in Letterkenny, do you know Letterkenny?

JC: Yeah, yeah.

MB: The Fiesta Ballroom was there, and so I went to meet him and that, that was it. We started going with each other then, but that was in Ireland, but I was going through, I had my niece with me, my sister's little one, and her husband was from Donegal as well, but I had two other sisters actually who'd married men from Donegal [laughs].

JC: Must be, yeah, some sort of attraction there [laughs].

MB: So, I was taking Anna through to see her granny then in Donegal, on the Monday I think, no, that was the Monday we were dancing, it must have been the Tuesday, I went till the Friday, so come back from Donegal on the Friday, I was seeing James then on the Friday and his sister was getting married the next day, so I was invited then to the wedding and [laughs], and that was that, but I was still going to, that was, I came back from Glasgow, I come back to Glasgow then, but I was still going to, to Canada of course now, everything was booked for Canada, so I went to Canada and the courtship was letters, so I went to, I did love Canada, Canada's a beautiful country.

JC: Yeah, I was going to ask you, like, how did you find the experience of moving?

MB: Well, when I got there I was terribly homesick. I just felt as if I was on the moon, you know, just felt so far away now, I really felt, but then somebody told us about a dancehall there, an Irish dancehall [laughs], the Maple Leaf hall it was called and the band there, do you remember, did you ever hear of the Clipper Carlton show-, showband, no?

JC: No.

MB: Well, they were a very big showband, you know, they were one of the showbands from Ireland, you know, Ireland had some wonderful showbands and, but the Clipper Carlton was one of the best and [indecipherable] I knew, he was in fact, they were all the boys in this, they were calling themselves the, the Carlton showband after the Clipper Carlton and, cos they were from the North, they were from Strabane I think they were, and so one of the boys I knew in the band and his brother was, was at the dance, so, and I, I knew him, know him so well from, from, you know, being in Tyrone.

JC: Wow, yeah, that's, that's quite a coincidence.

MB: So it was such a, there was, I suppose that made things easier too, you know, knowing somebody.

JC: I was going to say, yeah, what, was it Toronto you were in, did you–?

MB: In Toronto.

JC: Toronto, yeah, was there a big, was there a big Irish or Scottish community there?

MB: An awful lot of Italians, it was mostly an awful lot of Italians out there, so in the, in the school I taught in, a lot of children were Italian and a lot of the teachers were Italian as well, so there was an awful, big Italian contingent in, in Toronto, but there must have been I suppose a fair few Irish people, but I really only knew that family, didn't really mix with the family there, and I used to see him then, but the girl I went with, she had, some of her friends were coming over, they'd been coming over, some boy she knew that she'd, I think she had been in a, a sort of walking group that she'd been in before she left Glasgow, and some of those boys were coming across on the boat because they had tools and things with them, so they were coming across to work, so in fact we, we met them and then we, we seemed to meet, you know, I suppose everybody was new, so everybody wanted to meet friends, so we had quite a large amount of friends that we knew and there was parties here and there and, you know, so, it was really good, it was lovely and it was a beautiful country as well, so [indecipherable] enjoyed it.

JC: And you kept–

MB: If I hadn't met James I probably wouldn't have come back, I should imagine I'd probably, because my friend is still there, my friend, the girl that I went out with, she's still there.

JC: Oh right, okay, so you, you came back for love, then, I suppose, yeah.

MB: I came back, that was in '68, and I got, we got married in September and came down to live in Northampton.

JC: Okay, where did you get married, was that in, in Scotland or Ire–?

MB: In Glasgow, married in Glasgow, yes, uh huh, yeah.

JC: Would, would you have had family come over from, from Ireland to the wedding?

MB: No, no, my aunt, because they were all older, they were all old, you know, so no, they never came over, but I would have loved my aunt to be there, but she was, she was the only one who was looking after her two brothers, you know, so I think she felt she couldn't have come over.

JC: Yeah, and so this was '68, did you say?

MB: That was '68, well, mind you James's mother came over, she came over.

JC: Right, mm hmm.

MB: I think that was her first time in fact, that she'd ever left home, aye, so she came over.

JC: And what brought you then down to Northampton?

MB: Well, James had, he had always, he'd, he'd come to Glasgow, he came to Glasgow in '59, coming from the countryside cos it was only, he came from a small village, and I think he found Glasgow just too bewildering, so he stayed there about three or four months and he came down, he had a brother here in Northampton and he wrote to his mother and said oh I can't stay [indecipherable], I'm coming, I'm coming home, so she wrote to the son in, in Northampton and said write to James and tell to come down to you, so he did, he came down here and at that time this was a much smaller town and he felt more, he, he sort of took to it, so, but a lot of time we'd go up to Glasgow, you know, for, when we got fed up down here and we'd go up to Glasgow for a couple of months, so when I met him he had been up in Glasgow for a few months and, but then I, when I went back to, when I went to Canada, he said, well, felt at a loose end then, so he came back down to Northampton, so he was working here still and I've never questioned it, you know, I thought yeah, yeah, so I came down as well, so otherwise we'd probably have still been in Glasgow [laughs].

JC: Yeah, and you were, you were still visiting Ireland regularly at this stage?

MB: Yes, yeah, mm hmm, we did, we, in fact, we went there on our honeymoon then to Ireland, we went to Dublin and then [indecipherable] for a few nights and I'd been going to get, go to I think the Channel Islands, but I think maybe you needed a passport or something, anyway, I think we needed a passport and I thought, well, that'd be too much, but I had a passport, but James didn't have a passport and I thought, no, it's too complicated, so when we came to it we stayed in Dublin for about three or four nights and then we were to head off to Cork cos we hired a car cos I was the driver and, and we weren't too far along the road when James said oh there's nothing in Cork, so we [laughs], we went to Galway, stayed a night in Galway and then straight up to Donegal, cos he was dying to get home to Donegal [laughs], so, but that was alright because it was so near Tyrone, you know.

JC: Yeah, and I'm wondering, we, we kind of touched on this a little bit earlier, but around this time was obviously the sta-, the start of the Troubles as well, and I'm wondering if you noticed any, any sort of changes in the atmosphere in, or in society in–?

MB: Well, because I wasn't living there and I wasn't living in Strabane then cos I was still living in, in well, as I say, I was living in James's place, but then there was, I think it was intimidating for them to have the soldiers at the top of the road, you know, and driving down fast through their little country, flying past the house, you know, and I suppose they were a bit afraid really, and when my aunt actually died in 1980 and we were over, well, my sister, my oldest **[01:00:00]** sister that I'd always lived with, she, she'd go and stay with her while she was bad because she, she actually thought she'd taken a stroke, but she didn't, she actually had a brain tumour, but she was at home and then she went into the hospital and then my other sister went over and she had a couple of weeks, and then she had to get back and she had a young family too, so I went over with my youngest and, and stayed there until my aunt died, and then she was, we were having the, you know, they have a reception afterwards, and we were having that, although we didn't really know where to go, but a home help had been there, we went to somewhere in Lifford I think for a meal, or just outside Lifford, and we were coming through again, in those days it was, everybody had a

black leather, a black velvet jacket, it seemed to be the in thing, a black velvet jacket, so I think the three of us had black velvet jackets on, they were very in and, but I think the IRA women wore black velvet jackets, or black jackets anyway, and when we were coming through Lifford, through the customs, rather, into Strabane, there was soldiers placed there and our Catherine saw them, they was, what happened, my sister who was there must have been driving, anyway, so four in the car, there was me and my other two sisters and this woman who had been a home help to my aunts, the soldiers brought us into the, you know, they used to have those sort of tin huts beside when they, she went in there, and questioned us, but I think they thought maybe that we were, but we told them then that we were coming for a funeral and, so we just, well, it was alright, but there was, I mean, you heard some terrible stories, you know, about people coming through and maybe not seeing a car, a soldier tell you stop and drive on and, and, you know, lots of people were shot I think in cars. I remember hearing about, cos there had been one woman, and I think it was at the Strabane border as well, they were coming through and for some reason, well, the woman sitting in the back was shot, you know, there was a, there was a lot of, and I think what happened was that they'd sent, I think probably caused a lot of the trouble there, a lot of Scottish regiments were going, were, were sent to Ireland and of course probably mostly, mostly Protestant soldiers, who had I suppose come from Glasgow, had that very, you know, them and us, you know, as it, well, it is I suppose still in, in Northern Ireland, isn't it, and, where was I in that story, I think that these Scottish soldiers when they got there and because they went over, they were welcomed by the Irish community I think, or the Catholic community, when they went, because they were protecting them, because they were being burned out of their houses, and these Scottish ones went into the house, saw pictures of the Sacred Heart and the holy pictures and the holy statues and ripped the places apart, I think a lot of houses were destroyed, and you heard these stories, so it made you sort of scared, you know, and even when we were driving through Glas-, through North-, Northern Ireland, you know, in those days, early on, you were sort of scared.

JC: Yeah, yeah, I think that's, that's completely natural, right, it just, when you see sort of soldiers on the streets and things it just, it, it makes you anxious, yeah.

MB: Uh huh, yeah, especially with the big guns that they, that they, you know, the big rifle things that they have, and it was very intimidating, I was aware of it, as I say. We never spent a lot of time there, we just went to visit our, our, my home place, but we didn't, we never went into Strabane or, I mean, we went to Strabane, through Strabane obviously, but we didn't really hang about too much in Strabane, although it wasn't too bad, you know, [indecipherable], I says even, we didn't go in at night time. Never had been to Derry, and Derry's a lovely little town too, but I'd never really been to Derry much at all, cos when we were young, Derry just seemed too far away, we all went into Strabane and if we were going to town we went into Strabane, yeah, so I didn't really know Derry, and I love Derry now, but we never, ever went to it through the, during the Troubles. It was out of bounds, you know, you just would be too frightened to go, you know.

JC: And this was obviously a very sort of politicised time. Did you or your family have sort of strong political views regarding the situation in Northern Ireland?

MB: Well, I suppose there is always that, yes, I think you did always, you're always on the, the Catholic side of things, you know, and there just seemed to be, you know, it was just if you remember seeing pictures of that first march when it was a peaceful, I suppose, well, it was a peaceful march going through and then in fact, I think it was a, an inspector, a police inspector I think who started waving his baton about and hitting the people, you know, and I think you had that anger, that it had started, you know, and see people being, being treated really badly and, you know, and there are all, and there definitely was gerrymandering as far as councils or, or elections went, there was always gerrymandering in Northern Ireland, wasn't there, and there was no, I mean, it's amazing now that there are actually Sinn Féin politicians because it wouldn't have been allowed, you know, early on, it just wouldn't, but, and you do think that, that there wasn't a free vote, you know, everyone didn't have the vote. I mean, it just seems so ridiculous now to think that not everyone had a vote, but some people could have eight votes, you know, if you owned eight houses you had eight votes, but if you didn't own, if you were only, rented a house, you didn't, you didn't have it, you didn't have a vote, which seems ridiculous, you know, to have that happen and if they, if this government had changed right away, had, had told them right away, right, one man, one vote, you know, if that had happened right away it would probably have, have cooled it, there'd be nothing to fight for, cos that's what they were fighting for, one man, one vote, and if they'd given them that right away it probably wouldn't have come to what it, I mean, it was awful the, the, there was always trouble, it was always customs houses getting blown up in Ireland, you always heard about customs houses getting blown up in, in Northern Ireland and it was just a big joke, you know, cos they never, the IRA, there was always an IRA, but they never killed and they tried not to kill people, they had never ki-, it was only the new, the, you know, the, the, what do they call them now, the IRA?

JC: They've got a lot of different offshoots I think.

MB: Uh huh, but, you know, originally it had been just a joke to blow up a customs house, but I mean, they would be careful not to, make sure, you know, nobody would be injured in it, and then to hear people on, blowing up people and it just was awful, you know, then became, it was a just completely different thing then, I mean, you couldn't have, it was awful the way they were blowing up people and, you know, everywhere too, it was, you know, well, well, they became terrorists, didn't they, it wasn't, it wasn't a sort of political thing really anymore was it, it was just a terrorist organisation really wasn't it, and nobody I don't think approved of killing anybody, you know.

JC: Yeah, so would you have followed the news from Northern Ireland very closely, then?

MB: No, well, yes, uh huh, oh yes, because as I say, James, because James lived so close to it that we were, you know, yeah, you would, still, still would be interested in it, you know.

JC: I suppose it was all over the news, so you couldn't really avoid it, even if you, even if you wanted to.

MB: Sorry?

JC: I suppose it was all over the news during the seventies anyway, so you couldn't really avoid it.

MB: Oh yes, mm hmm, yes, it was all in, and, you know, you always felt that they were doing, that, that the government was doing the wrong thing, you know. Margaret Thatcher wouldn't let, and I mean, that was ridiculous, she wouldn't let the, the people at the top sort of be, you know, the, the IRA men or the Sinn Féin, she wouldn't let them talk at all, they were, you could see them and actively be speaking their, their words, but they couldn't, and it was so ridiculous, you know, maybe, what good was that, and you could still hear the words, you could still see them, but they weren't allowed to, they weren't allowed to sort of, let them say the words, you know, hear them, so it just seemed a bit, you know, if Margaret Thatcher had been a bit easier, it might have helped things a lot sooner, you know, instead of being so intransigent in their ways and then, and what she's saying and–

JC: And do you remember any of the, we were sort of talking about the IRA there, do you remember any of the, the bombings that happened in Britain? I'm thinking things like the, maybe the Birmingham bombings and things, yeah.

MB: Oh yes, uh huh, yeah, but I mean, what happened in that case was another thing that made you angry because, I mean, they picked up those, was it six men they picked up, and one, one was a father who'd only just come over when he heard that his son had been taken up, and they arrested him and said he was part of it and yet he hadn't even been in the country at the time, you know, and yeah, in fact, he died in prison I think, that father, so if they hadn't, if they'd done things sort of in a justifiable way, you know, if they'd gone and got the men who'd actually committed the crime, that'd be fair enough, but just to pick somebody just to have people, mind you, I'm sure that didn't just happen, just in those circles, it's always, I'm sure they arrest people for crimes that, you know, I think the police have a lot to answer for as well, you know, some forces I think are badly run and they wanted a, they wanted somebody, so I think they, I think that happens.

JC: Yeah, well, from I've read there was just a lot of suspicion surrounding Irish people in general and that's– **[01:10:00]**

MB: Yeah.

JC: They were sort of associated with the IRA even if, as you say, they completely disapproved of them.

MB: Yes, yeah, and even now, some of these old programmes on television, you know, like, is it *Columbo*, I think it was *Columbo*, and I think even, I know in one that there's sort of, Irishmen are brought in and you know they're going to be baddies, you know, and there's that, you know, and they're killing people, and so there was that, even then there was that sort of thing about Irish, you know, as if they're, they must be bad.

JC: And that, how did you, how did that feel, coming from an Irish family?

MB: Well, we always thought we were the good side [laughs], you always have that, do you know what I mean, you just think it's unfair because you never really knew anybody bad, you know, you didn't know, nobody that we knew was ever in trouble, or, you know, so it just seemed wrong to simply, you know, but there was an awful, there was an anti-Irish feeling about I think in England, but then probably there always was because, not that I ever saw it, but apparently years ago they had, you know, no dogs, no blacks, no Irish, but I mean, I'd never heard of it, I'd never seen that, but I mean, you, but that was I suppose from, well, I should imagine that was early in the last century, although I've heard people saying that we saw it London, but I can't imagine it being as late as that.

JC: Yeah, well, supposedly I think those signs did exist in, like, the fifties and sixties I think, but, yeah, no, as you say, it's, it's difficult to even imagine nowadays just that that would happen.

MB: Yeah, I mean, I can imagine that at the time of the Famine when people had come across and [indecipherable] in Liverpool and I suppose Glasgow as well at that time, but you can imagine they had nothing, I mean, they actually came with nothing and they probably by that time were more or less in rags, so, and I suppose when anybody saw them coming to look for, for rooms to rent they said, you know, you can imagine it then saying, oh but of course there was no blacks at that time coming over, so there'd be sort of no dogs, no Irish, you can imagine because they'd, they'd look at them and think they were complete tramps, but it was because they, that, that was, that was them protecting themselves as they're coming across I suppose, but.

JC: Tell me a bit more about your life after you moved to Northampton, then. Were you, were you teaching, still teaching at that stage?

MB: Yes, I came, yes, I did, and I came and again I didn't have an interview, but I think James told the priest here and there was a, there was Catholic schools of course in Northampton, there was only one, I think there was only one primary school then, but I was, I came and talked to him then, and yes, but I had a baby within a year, so I, I gave up then, but then I was asked to go back when somebody else became pregnant then, so I went and then, I just had, well, worked there around round about six months and again I was pregnant with my second baby, so, and then I took time off then for about twelve years, because I had another two children after that, and I did go back to teaching, in fact, I went back to teaching in a Church of England school at first, and then I had, then I changed to a Catholic school and taught in a Catholic school.

JC: And was there a local Catholic church in Northampton as well that you could have gone to?

MB: Yes, and there was a big Irish, there was a lot of Irish people in Northampton, and of course I knew them because James had known them, so I got to know his friends, you know, and, and a few, not so many people on the road now, in fact, I can't think of, I can't, there was one who lived up the road a while ago, a long time ago, she moved away, but she only went to church on an Easter Sunday, Christmas Day, you know, that type [laughs], and, but very few, very few really round about, but, [indecipherable] but there is a big Irish

community in, and there was an Irish, there was a, a little, beside the cathedral in, in Northampton there was a sort of hut, you know, one of these Nissen huts and they had dances in there and, and then they actually built, they built, the George [indecipherable] hall there and they had dances. It wasn't, it wasn't supposed to be, it wasn't an Irish hall, but in fact it was mostly Irish people who went there to dance and things, you know, although now the church that I go to there, the cathedral, there's an awful lot of Indian Catholics go there, you know, from, from Kerala, you know, from the [indecipherable] and, an awful lot of them, a lot of the black community as well, so, and the Irish community I suppose is less than it used to be, you know.

JC: Yeah, well, I suppose a lot of, a lot of the Irish community would've, would have had children and their children would now, you know, have English accents and stuff, so they might not quite be seen as Irish in the same way.

MB: No, no, cos you see I always thought of myself as Irish, but I suppose that's because we went every year as well and I suppose if you didn't do that, if your parents never sort of took you much, then you would have, you wouldn't feel the same.

JC: Did you, did you do that with your children, then, did you take them to Ireland?

MB: Oh yes, yes, uh huh, oh yeah, always when they were young we went every year, so we used to go for three weeks at a time, but we always, we always, James's sister lives in the, the old house, you know, the original house, and she had four children and then another sister of his who lived in Northampton, she also went over the summer holidays as well, she went for the full summer holidays and, so, well, they loved it over there cos they'd all these other children to play with and it was more or less, it's a village, but it was, you know, surrounded by fields, you know, so it was, it was nice for them to, to have that feeling and then of course we all went through to see my aunt and uncles as well, so.

JC: And was it important for you to sort of instil a sense of Irish culture in their upbringing?

MB: Yeah, well, they do, they, they do love Ireland. In fact, my son who's married with four children now, he's been to, he's taken a house out in, in Donegal a couple of times, beautiful house, in fact near, you know Buncrana?

JC: Yeah.

MB: You know Buncrana, and there's a little village just up, further out, Fahan, there's beautiful beaches round there, and he's taken, he's been there twice now and in fact he was for a fortnight as well, but, and they love it, absolutely love it, you know, do you know Grianán, have you heard of Grianán of Aileach, have you heard of Grianán?

JC: No, I–

MB: An old, old fort.

JC: Oh right, okay, in, in Donegal?

MB: In Donegal.

JC: Yeah.

MB: Cos that's only a couple of miles from James's place.

JC: Right.

MB: And they, they loved it, in fact, they just loved it being there, you know, especially being in their own house then because they hired a house out and they just loved it same as their own house then, and they didn't sort of need to go any places, you know, except maybe out for dinner and out during the day and, but they loved it, they love it there.

JC: And would you have ever talked to them about the Troubles when they were growing up or anything? I mean, presumably it would have been on the news and stuff.

MB: We probably did, because our children were, well, the oldest was just born in '69.

JC: Yeah.

MB: So I suppose by the time we started talking to him it was nearly, when did it, when did it, when did we get peace there?

JC: Sort of in the nineties that the peace process–

MB: Uh huh, yeah, well, I mean, Nicola, Nicola, were you talking to Nicola?

JC: Yeah, yeah, she was the one who emailed me first, yeah.

MB: Yeah, well, see she lived in, she went to university in Derry.

JC: Right, okay.

MB: And, so that was still in the Troubles, that was, when did she go to uni, when was that now, goodness me, when did she go to, going on '96, I suppose it would have, middle, have been middle of the nineties she would be there, yeah.

JC: Did you say it was when President Clinton was there?

MB: Uh huh, yeah, she was, she was still there at university when he came, yeah, so, and she wanted to go there, to Derry.

JC: I was going to say, yeah, I wonder why she chose to, to go to Derry?

MB: Well, she got [indecipherable], she was, I'd say she didn't, I don't think she got all that homesick, but she [indecipherable] out at James's place, so at first I think first few weekends

she went out there, you know, and so she felt at home there, you know, she felt quite at home being in and she loved it there and she made good friends there.

JC: Yeah, that must have been nice for her, to have that family connection.

MB: Yeah, yeah, hmm, yeah, so I think they all feel Irish, but English as well, like, Martin, the one who, who's gone to Ireland to, his wife is English, and my other daughter is, in fact, Nicola as well, Nicola's married to a man whose, whose father was actually born in Ireland, born in, born in Dublin, but he was, he, I think he came to England when he was only about three or so, he was very young, but they knew his parents had lived here as well, so, so he was sort of, I'd known him, I don't think he'd ever been to Ire-, he'd never been to Ireland though, he's been since [laughs], because one time with, with Nicola and Brendan, they went to one of their cousins' weddings in, in Donegal, the other daughter, she's married an Englishman, **[01:20:00]** so they don't, they'd never really been back to Ireland, you know, but they still feel I think that, they still feel very close to Ireland and, cos I know when, when my oldest daughter, when she finished at school at eighteen her and her friend went all round Ireland, cos her friend's parents were Irish as well and, and the two of them travelled all round Ireland, do you know when, where, well, I suppose it was all that summer, you know, after the term date, after they'd finished school.

JC: And do you still visit regularly as well, when, obviously at the moment it's not really possible, but–?

MB: That's right, well, we were there two years ago.

JC: Right, yeah.

MB: Although before that it had been three years, that was the longest we'd ever not been there, we'd, we'd missed for three years for, I think we had a wedding one, one summer, was it Nicola's wedding one summer, no, couldn't have been that, it wasn't as recently as that, I can't remember now, but there was one year I wasn't well, that was in 1918, 2018, I wasn't well, that's a whole year the medicine had been on, so I didn't go that year and the year before that for some reason we hadn't been, and the year before that for some, I can't remember now, funny, but anyway, there wa-, cos that was long for us, three years, so we were over, right, so we were, two years ago this summer we'd gone over, as I say, we went, nearly every year we've been, even if we were going other places, cos we've been away, we do like to travel a bit, and we still always go to Ireland.

JC: And is it mainly Donegal that you go to, or do you go to Strabane and stuff as well?

MB: Well, I still, we go through to, I know the girl I used to go around, went about with when I was little, that used to come out to her aunt's in the country, she's actually, she's now home in Strabane because she had a stroke a number of years ago, so I do like to go and see her, and then there was another, another neighbour who lived just a couple of fields over, and we always went to visit [extended pause].

Audio file part 1 ends here at 01:22:01.

Audio file part 2 begins here at 00:00:00.

JC: We're recording again there now, so, sorry, we, we were talking about you, when you go back to Northern Ireland and, and you said you still like to visit Strabane, when you can.

MB: Oh I do, yeah, we, we do, as I say, we, we go through and we go into Derry now and Derry's a lovely little town, but we always went to wander through Derry and of course now you can go to, you know, we go through to the Giant's Causeway sometimes, especially if there's anybody there who hasn't been, you know, and it's, it's, you feel, I mean, you can, you feel you can go anywhere now, you know, it doesn't bother you.

JC: Yeah, I was going to ask, like, how, how is Northern Ireland changed since you used to go, like, years ago? I mean, presumably the border area especially is, is very different.

MB: Well, you know, that is lovely that there is no border, that is wonderful since now, unless it happ-, oh gosh, I'd hate it to start again, but it's lovely that there's no border there now because there was always a border before and it was al-, I mean, when we were going, it wasn't all that bad when we were going, it was more or less when, when the Troubles were on, it was more the soldiers you went through, you passed through rather than the border, you know, the border didn't seem to, so much, it was just that with the soldiers there and the roads were blocked with huge, big concrete blocks, you know the way they used to be, it, it's so much nicer when you didn't have that, you know, when it was just, when you were able to just go through, drive through and there's nobody stopping you, just all one, it was lovely, and of course it still is at the moment.

JC: Yeah, I was going to say, yeah, what, what do you think about the whole Brexit situation, and–?

MB: Oh gosh, it's awful, and I don't know who vo-, well, actually I do know a couple of people voted for it and I can't believe it, even one Irishman who voted for it and I said to him why did you vote for Leave and he said oh well, we want to get our country back, such a load of rubbish, as it's proved [laughs], but it's a shame, there was something I saw on Facebook and it said if there was no border in Ireland and there is a border in Kent, he said I'll never stop laughing, and of course it has all come to pass.

JC: Yeah, yeah, for sure, and you said you're getting your Irish passport.

MB: I'm se-, I'm going to send away for my Irish passport, but there, it just came, yesterday I think it was, no, Monday it came I think, my, cos I didn't have my father's, and I needed my father's birth certificate. I thought and how on earth can I have, my father was born in 1902, so, and I'd looked before and I couldn't get into it, but, and, but I thought I must really do something about this because if we go away anywhere, even going to Ireland now, we'll probably need a passport and James would've been through one door and I'd have to go through a different door, so I thought, well, if I'd h-, and you know what, if you're boarding now you put your boarding pass on your phone, and the two boarding passes are on my phone cos he doesn't use a phone, a smartphone, so if, it would be ridiculous if his

boarding, you know, if he had to go through one, one door and I was going through another door, you know, it wouldn't work, so I actually, I went in, in somewhere and I thought I wonder if I'll find it cos I wasn't sure when my father was born, you know, the date of his, his actual date of birth. I knew the year, but I wasn't, you know, I thought it was May he was born, it was ac-, because, you know, people of that age didn't bother with birthdays, you know, they never really bothered about birthdays, and, but it came on Monday, I couldn't believe it, [indecipherable], but I can't send away for my passport because my son, who actually married an Irish girl, he was the only one who married a Catholic Irish girl and they're divorced, so his family in fact are in Ireland still, his children, his wife and his children went to Ireland and he applied for an Irish passport, so he actually borrowed our marriage certificate, so I think I need my marriage certificate to send away as well, so he borrowed, he had to have my marriage certificate and he's still got it because his hasn't, although he applied a couple of months ago, because of the, the lockdown, it hasn't come back yet, and probably won't, cos I daresay that's a hands-on thing and they're probably all furloughed, those people who were working in passport offices, so I'll have to wait till he gets his back, till he gets his documents back before I can send away for mine [laughs].

JC: What was it like to see your father's birth certificate?

MB: Oh it was lovely, I was really delighted to see it cos I didn't know when he was born. He was born actually the April, he was born on the fourteenth April, but he wasn't registered for about, he wasn't registered until a couple, a few weeks after that, because he had to be registered. I mean, it was so difficult in those days because nobody had cars obviously and no, probably a lot of people didn't even have bikes, and for the father, and father had to register the baby, and for the father to go to a registration which would be in another town was very difficult, in fact, it was, he had been registered by, now it wasn't a different town where he was registered, but it was by some, probably the midwife I should imagine because it was, I think it was some woman who had actually registered him, but it was, it was just lovely to get it.

JC: I bet, yeah.

MB: And just to know all his, I knew where he was born, although it said he wasn't born there in fact, she must have been maybe taken somewhere to have the baby. I thought that in those days everybody would have had their baby at home, but, because it gave the address as where I know that they live, but the, the place where he was born was some other place, unless that was a sort of nursing home, or maybe it was something they had, I don't know, and of course I've nobody to ask, but it was, it was lovely, it was lovely to have it, it was special.

JC: And just as a sort of final, like, rounding up question, then. I suppose we talked a bit about this earlier, but if, if someone were to ask you what your sort of identity was, in terms of your national identity, would you describe yourself as Scottish or Irish or, or something else, I don't know?

MB: Well, when I write it in my passport if I'm, when I was applying for my British passport I just said I was British, you know, because I never, when I lived in Scotland I never really truly

felt Scottish because I always felt, you know, we just felt we were Irish. I mean, you couldn't say you were Irish when you spoke with a Glasgow accent [laughs], so I just think of myself as, I mean, now I, I love all things Scottish now, I think because I'm away, and of course it's still, you still have that, where you were born does mean something to you, you know, so, but I, I've always felt Irish, I think always I have felt Irish, you know, Irish music, Irish people, you know, you just felt that affinity for them.

JC: And where, where would you call home, then, where's home for you now?

MB: Well, my home is here because my children are here and that's, that's, so home is here now, you never, we can never go anywhere to live, because our children are, our four children are here, so.

JC: Yeah.

MB: That's it.

JC: That makes a lot of sense, yeah.

MB: Yeah, yeah.

JC: That's great. I think I've kind of come to the end of the list of, of questions that I had, but I don't know if there's anything that you, you wanted to add, or that you think's important that we–

MB: No, I don't think so.

JC: Haven't covered.

MB: No, just as long as I've answered anything you, you wanted to know.

JC: Absolutely, yeah, right, I, I will stop the recording there.

INTERVIEW ENDS