INTERVIEW L07: RUBY MILLIGAN

Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interviewee: Ruby Milligan [pseudonym]
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Transcriber: Naomi Wells

Textual Note: Annotations and observations appear in square brackets (e.g. [pauses], [laughs]). Partial, interrupted or unfinished utterances are denoted by a dash. False starts, filler words and non-lexical utterances (e.g. 'um', 'hmm') are not generally transcribed. Time codes appear at ten-minute intervals in square brackets in bold type.

FR: It's rolling now, so to start us off if you could just say your name and today's date.

RM: Ruby Milligan, tenth of January 2020.

FR: Okay, great. Well, thanks very much for agreeing to take part Ruby, and the first question that we've been asking everybody I guess is what was it that interested you in the project?

RM: I'd just never, I suppose curiosity in a way, I'd never sort of been involved in anything like this and it's also interesting, you know, if they're trying to, you know, if they're trying to sort of capture a bit more about changes in Northern Ireland and the sort of diaspora as well, cos it's changed enormously in my lifetime, so, and it feels like, especially cos I come from the countryside, that there's a way of life that's sort of disappearing, you know, not because of politics, but because of just changes in economy, technology, things like that, so I think it's good to be able to I suppose keep it for posterity.

FR: Absolutely, that's really interesting, hopefully we'll talk about some of that, and I guess that kind of brings us on to the first question, so where did you grow up in Northern Ireland?

RM: I was brought up on a farm in County Armagh in a, near a place called Loughgall, so, you know, very rural community, most families had lived there for a long time, so everyone knew everyone else and, you know, a very close community.

FR: So farming, a working farm?

RM: Yes, yes, ah, ah, and my dad's still working on it [laughs], even though he's nearly eighty, so it's, you know, sort of still going.

FR: And what was that like growing up on a farm?

RM: I suppose, well, like a lot of people you don't appreciate what it is until you're, you're no longer there, but [pauses], I suppose you just, you don't think, it's how things are, you don't really think about whether it's good or bad, you just sort of get on with it. I think for children it's really good cos you have so much space to explore and play and, but you also learn about sort of taking the ups and downs and good weather, bad weather and, you know, the work as well, so I think it's a, for a child it's a good lesson in life to sort of learn responsibility. I mean, you don't realise at the time, but it's only after that I've, you know, I can see it's really shaped me, so, you know, you learn responsibility, you learn about good years and bad years and, you know, you've got a community around you as well, which is good and it's a, yeah, I mean, I think it's, it was a very good place to grow up, yeah.

FR: Was it a dairy farm or a cattle farm?

RM: Cattle and apples, so it's a famous area for apples, so everybody had [laughs] an orchard including my dad, so it was a bit of everything, yeah.

FR: That's interesting, and there's a kind of a community you said around the farm, so other farmers or other–

RM: Yes, mostly farmers and, you know, just other people who lived in the area or were brought up in the area and stayed there.

FR: So, and your dad was a, worked on the farm, and your mother?

RM: Was a housewife, or well, she did a lot more than just in the house, you know, she helped dad outside sometimes as well.

FR: Of course, yeah, no, I know some farmers' wives in, I'm from Ballymena.

RM: Ah right, yeah, yeah [laughs].

FR: [laughs] It's hard work in itself, isn't it?

RM: It is, it is, yeah, yeah.

FR: And did you go to school then, in primary school, in Loughgall?

RM: Well, it was a little, I went to a little primary school, it wasn't in Loughgall itself, but it was one, it was just sort of the other side of, the other direction, but it was just like, a two-teacher primary school, so–

FR: Oh so really small.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: And what was that like?

RM: Do you know, it was very good. I think I was lucky, I had a really good teacher, especially in the sort of the upper class, the, from P4 onwards I think it was, so the really interesting thing, I don't know if, it doesn't seem to be the case these days, it's done differently, but they were very strict on things like spelling and grammar and, you know, it really taught you the basics, so I think when I went to high school I was well prepared [laughs], you know, with the basics of maths and English and things that, that sort of still, some of the rules that we had like, just silly things, like we were only allowed to have one and in every sentence [laughs] and to this day I can only have one and in every sentence, so yeah, things like that, so it was a good school, definitely.

FR: A good, a good grounding.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: Yeah, and then what about secondary school, was that a change, a bigger school?

RM: Yes, that, I would say that was probably quite a shock for me, so I went from a two-teacher primary school to, well, I passed the eleven-plus and I got into, at that time the local grammar school was a girls' school, so for the first three years we had, I was in this girls' school and I would say I probably struggled a bit because I had, I probably came from, was from one of the smaller schools and I really didn't know anybody, but, you know, I eventually found my feet and I really enjoyed, especially the languages and the English and the history, I really, I just, and I always when I was a child as well I loved reading, so I really enjoyed that side of things, yeah.

FR: And would there have been books around the house?

RM: Yes, lots of books, yeah, yeah, my granny was always [laughs] buying us books and I was always encouraged to read and I had, I think the one thing we always got if we wanted it was a book [laughs], so yeah.

FR: And were your parents keen on education, keen on you–?

RM: Yeah, I mean, they weren't pushy, but, you know, they made sure when you got home that you did your homework before anything else and, you know, I don't think any of us, I've got a brother and a sister and I can't remember any of us ever getting in particular trouble at school and I think if we had probably we would've, we didn't because we knew there would have been very scary consequences like, I mean, they weren't, there's a lot, people I went to school with who had a lot more disciplinarian parents, but, you know, they would've not tolerated really bad behaviour or disruptive behaviour and, you know, they didn't force us or, you know, put too high expectations, but we knew we had to do our best, you had to do, you know, you had to do your homework and, you know, do a reasonable amount of work [laughs], I would say, but without expecting us to be particularly academic or anything like that, or expecting us to become doctors or something, you know, that was beyond [laughs] certainly what I could have done, so, you know, I think, I would say they just wanted us to be happy, but also to know it's important to work and to use whatever talent you have as best you can, without wasting your talent, I think they would say.

FR: Yeah, so this kind of hard work thing again which you've got from the farm, but then also in terms of how you relate to school, yeah.

RM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: What about church, was it a religious family?

RM: Yes, we're not the most religious, because there were some very religious people in our area, so we are Presbyterian, one of my good friends at school, I'm still in contact with her, is from a Brethren background, so really strict, I mean, she still doesn't wear trousers and she still has long, I mean, really, so we weren't anything like that, but, and we were allowed to have the TV on on Sunday, that's, not everyone did, so, but we still had to go to church and then we had Sunday school in the afternoon as well, so, you know, it was a big part of life. So my parents aren't, I mean, they, my dad doesn't really go to church now, my mum still does, but, you know, when I was young, you know, it was non-negotiable, everybody went to church.

FR: Mmm, and did you like it as a kid or how did you feel about it?

RM: Yeah, well, to be honest, I didn't really know anything different like, Sunday was for church and Sunday afternoon was Sunday school, well, actually we had Sunday school as well before church [laughs], so it was quite a, so although we didn't have church on Sunday evening, so, you know, and some people did, so that would have been really hardcore [laughs], but, and it's still, when I was a student I wasn't so practising, I mean a bit, not as much, but now, I mean, now I still go to church and it's still, I would say, a big part of my life.

FR: That's interesting that continuity, but maybe we'll talk about that a wee bit later on I suppose. So you went to the secondary school which was an all-girls', and you were you saying it took a wee while to settle in, but you did settle in.

RM: Yes, yeah, so it wasn't so much the work as suddenly being surrounded by a lot of new people I didn't know and I would say I was probably quite insecure, but then after three years we amalgamated with a local boys' grammar school–

FR: Ah that's interesting.

RM: So, and I don't, and I found that actually a lot easier. I don't know if all-girls' schools are maybe, I don't know, I felt a lot less, or I felt a lot more at ease I would say, I'm not sure why, but, you know, but I did, you know, I did okay there and I had friends and I would say I, you know, really enjoyed especially the last, those last few years at school. **[00:10:00]**

FR: What did you study or what did you do for the sort of final–?

RM: I did, my A-levels were French, Latin and Spanish, so, and then I went, at university I did languages, French and Spanish, so I always really enjoyed languages and then as I went up through school I sort of, it was what I really liked, it was my favourite thing, so yeah.

FR: Okay, and what about the kind of social world, as you were getting a bit older there, so is it young farmers' stuff or–?

RM: I was never involved in that, but before I could drive there was a neighbour who on a Saturday night they had like, a little mini-van, and they would take, you know, a mini-van full of us to this sort of like, a Christian meeting, it was not sort of non-denominational, but there'd be a speaker or there'd be a film or something like that, and that was the sort of social life. It doesn't sound very impressive at all [laughs], I mean, I suppose, well, I did after-school clubs, so like, I think I went to badminton and then maybe French club or something as well, so that, and then in the summer time I'd maybe have friends up for a day or two, so, I mean, it doesn't sound very sociable [laughs], but, I mean, I didn't feel, especially living in the country, there wasn't anywhere I could really walk to, so I'm sure my parents must have brought me to people's houses as well maybe, you know, on a, well, probably not on a Saturday, but, I mean, I'm sure it's different now, but you just, you know, Saturdays or at weekends you didn't really see your friends.

FR: No, I mean, I, I, I'm, I'm–

RM: But I saw them during the week, so [laughs] I know that was, yeah, yeah.

FR: I'm from the country as well, so it's not [laughs] an entirely unrecognisable world to me at all. So what, what period are we talking about here when you're finished at school?

RM: I finished school in 1990.

FR: 1990, and what about the Troubles then, did you have any sense of that, was it something that–?

RM: Yeah, I mean, very strongly because in our area there's a, we're one of the last Protestant houses in our area and then it goes into a sort of, Catholic houses, but, I mean, some of those neighbours, especially the one that's nearest us, I mean, they're really close friends of my parents, so, and they've always got on well as, I mean, you would never discuss the Troubles, but, and we knew as well, you know, I suppose you pick up these things as a child that you wouldn't discuss that with anyone, maybe with some of your Protestant friends, but never if there was a Catholic there, you know. I suppose you just didn't want to invite trouble and, you know, you have to get on with people as well, or it's much easier, life's much easier [laughs] if you can get on with people, so, we, I mean, we, from a young age, I remember 1981, was it 1981 was the hunger strikers, the time of the royal wedding, so I would have been nine and I remember vividly all of the posters with the names and the faces of the hunger strikers who died and I remember [laughs] as well memori-, this is ridiculous, but I just remember [laughs] memorising or sort of, cos I'd seen it so often I knew the order they died in and how many days they were on hunger strike, it's a bit bizarre [laughs] when you look back, but it was such a big event really and it was, you know, we weren't anywhere near Belfast, so in that sense, you know, there wasn't trouble on the streets, but I knew well what was going on. I remember as well the day Lord Mountbatten was killed and it was the same day that the soldiers I think were blown up at

Warrenpoint, so, that was 1980 I think, so I was eight, so I remember that very vividly as well, so I knew, and when I was very young I remember when the news came on that we had to be quiet, you know, cos my parents wanted to hear and it's only sort of in recent years when there's been a lot more documentaries and I've seen what Belfast was like in the seventies, you know, it's hard to believe now if you go to Belfast, so, but my dad used to, actually in the seventies, he used to go to Belfast, he would fill up the car with cartons of apples and he would go to Belfast to the fruit shops and sell, you know, car load of apples, and apparently he would take me even when I was a toddler we would just go off for the afternoon or something and, you know, go around Belfast, so, and, I mean, I must've been very young cos I really don't remember it, but I've heard of, that's what he used to do and I assume he stopped cos it was just too, probably not somewhere you would voluntarily go to [laughs], I would say, yeah. So, I mean, the Troubles were there and we knew what to say and what not to say, we knew which of our friends had parents in the police or in the, there's a lot of farmers, thankfully not my dad, but a lot of people he knew who were part-time UDR, so [pauses], yeah, there was one of them, a couple of times they, they were, cos he lived in a farm as well and he lived on his own after his mother died, so he was really a sort of open target I would say, and I think the second time they tried to get him there was, I don't know if it was SAS, but there was basically the people who came to get him were killed, they knew in advance, so they were sort of waiting for them, so, and one of our neighbours just about a mile around the road was a prison officer and he was blown up one morning. I remember it was the summertime and I can still remember like, it must've been really like, seven o'clock in the morning or something, there was this, everyone heard an explosion and we're all wondering what that was and that's what it turned out to be, so, you know, it was around us and, yeah, you sort of grew up with it [laughs], you didn't know any, any more, and my sister's actually in the police, but she started off in Scotland because she's a couple of years younger than me, so when she wanted to join they had just brought in the quotas to try and attract more Catholics, so it was really impossible for her to get in. She actually wanted to join when she was eighteen, but she would've had to start before her A-levels were done and they said no, just do your A-levels and, which is, you know, it's a good thing, so then she went to university in England for a couple of years, but she always knew she wanted to be in the police, so she joined, she worked in Edinburgh for a few years because it was the, you know, she wanted to be in the police, but there's no way she could get into the PSNI, it would've been then I suppose, so, she's now back in Northern Ireland, but she worked in Scotland for maybe four or five years I think, to get some experience before she moved home.

FR: And it's interesting that your sister would have wanted to join the police from that early age. So was it a political family at all, would you have talked about–?

RM: Not really, I mean, definitely a unionist family, but I remember, there's a guy I went to school with and I never really got on with him very well. I went to primary school with him and then, he was always very mouthy [laughs] and to this day I just, you know, yeah [laughs], and I remember him saying to me once, and he ended up in the same high school as me, you know, when we amalgamated, so, and funnily enough he went on to be a Free Presbyterian minister, so [laughs], but he was always, you could, the Free Presbyterians we knew, anyone who was they were generally much more politicised than we were, I don't know if it's the case now, but certainly the people I knew then that was, and I remember

him saying to me once about my dad employing Catholics. I remember thinking really, you know, cos even though like, and my dad's an Orangeman as well, cos when I was growing up it was, I mean, my perception of it was it more like a man's club than anything particularly political, so, because they, I mean, I always felt there was a genuine fear and even like, from my grandmothers that, you know, they wanted Protestants out, so I think if you're living in a rural community and it's, you know, very mixed and you see people getting shot, and actually there's a guy worked for my dad, he was like, in the youth training scheme or something, my dad took him on cos at that time he usually had somebody sort of helping him more or less full-time, so he, his father used to pull apples for my dad and he had a big family, so my dad took on his son, he must've worked with us for a year or two, so, and he actually was shot by the army, and I think it was like, an accidental shooting, and I think he was just drunk or something. I mean, he wasn't, he definitely wasn't in anything in particular, he was probably, he was about eighteen or nineteen at the time, he was probably quite an impressionable sort of a guy, I think that's what my dad would have sort've said, he wasn't, you know, a sort of going to be like, a republican leader or anything like that, and I don't even think his father would have been particularly, I mean, you know, Catholic family, but not particularly political, so, you know, in that sense we've known people on both sides, and about two miles round the road from us there's a family, I think it's not McGlinchey, anyway it's a very well-known republican family and I think there's one or two who were killed on IRA active duty, so, **[00:20:00]** you know, we're in a very mixed area with people being killed and blown up and whatever, so, and my grandmothers remembered as well, I suppose they would have been very young when partition happened, but I think they would have just about remembered it, so, you know, they were brought up with this sort of fear [laughs], so I suppose that went down a bit the generations [pauses], so we might have been in more of a majority in those days, in terms of being Protestant overall, than we were, but we were certainly in an area that we felt like, we weren't like, in the borders of Armagh, but it was still a bit precarious sometimes.

FR: Still a kind of an insecurity.

RM: Yeah.

FR: Or an anxiety.

RM: Yeah, definitely, definitely.

FR: That's really interesting. Would you have gone to Orange marches and things as well then? You said your dad was in–

RM: Yeah, so I went to the Twelfth and then sometimes there was church parades in June, July before the Twelfth, so we'd go to see dad sort of coming home out of the church whatever and pick him up, so it was like a part of life. I mean, it sounds a bit strange now, but it didn't feel, I mean, obviously it's only [laughs] Protestant, a Protestant organisation, but it was more of, had for us more of a religious bent because it was associated with like, church parades and things. I, from what I've seen I think in Belfast it's a bit looser, you know, but, I mean, in theory the Orange Order is a sort of religious organisation, so, and he's also in the Black as well, which is definitely much more religious [laughs] than the Orange,

so and Loughgall is where the Orange Order started as well, so it's very much, it's a big organisation in like, the Armagh area and a bit of, well, at that time I thought a bit of a boys club, so I was a bit mystified, to be honest, I really didn't understand, and maybe it's a bit naïve, but I never understood why, even then, why the republican movement was really trying to demonise Orangemen cos to me these were just like ordinary people and my dad, most of the people my dad ever had pulling apples or working for him, nearly all of them were Catholic, you know, he's never, he would never, I, I really can't think of a time when he would ever have, I can't imagine him discriminating or, you know, not treating somebody fairly, so I never really understood that, to be honest, I mean, that's not to say there can't be some sort of nasty sectarian behaviour, but for me that wasn't what I had seen.

FR: And mixed friendships, you said your parents with neighbours and things like that as well.

RM: Yeah, definitely, definitely.

FR: Well, there is definitely this thing, there's a difference between the rural Orange Order and the Orange Order in the two big cities, in Belfast and Derry, I, I, I think anyway.

RM: Cos I know there, when I was, well, it was actually the Twelfth, was it last year, no, it was the year before, cos it was in Loughgall so, I've forgotten it is such a, you know, it's such a big day out and, you know, there's a lot of people there [laughs], so it's a big parade and, you know, it's quite orderly as well and I know my dad said, you know, occasionally he was master of the lodge for a few years like, he had to basically send people home if, cos you're not supposed to be drunk, or you're not really supposed to drink, but, you know, some people might take, take something, but I think Belfast is probably quite a different scenario, yeah.

FR: Yeah, I believe so.

RM: And I never really knew Belfast very well cos we never went there very often, maybe not even once a year I would say, we might go to a shop, but it wasn't somewhere we would ever really go.

FR: That's interesting.

RM: So Belfast was never somewhere I knew [laughs] particularly well at all.

FR: So what about, so you did your A-levels, French, Spanish and Latin [laughs], and then what was the plan after that, did you think university or–?

RM: Yeah, definitely, so I ended up then in Strathclyde in Glasgow, so, and I think probably, I'm sure at least half the people in my year would've, from the people who, and a lot of us went to university, so I'm sure half would've gone somewhere in England or Scotland. A lot of people went to Scotland just cos it, you know, there's a lot of ties and it wasn't cos it was sort of close, but I just sort of ended up there, I didn't really, you know, I didn't have a specific, you know, university I really, really wanted to go to, so I just really felt I wanted to

get out of Northern Ireland just to see a bit of the world because one of the, the one thing I wanted to do when I was growing up and I never did with my family, I always wanted to travel a bit, and of course we never really went on holiday cos summertime was a busy time on the farm, so I was always, I always wanted to sort of go and see a bit more of the world and I thought well, if I go across the water to study that's at least, you know, that's a bit of a step, and I think I assumed for a long time I would go back to Northern Ireland to work, but it, just the way things worked out it didn't, you know, and there wasn't as much work, well, there wasn't much work at all I think when I graduated, but I definitely, at that time even if I had found something, I really wanted to I suppose see a bit more of the world, do something a bit different.

FR: With the languages as well I suppose is–

RM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: So what did your parents think about Strathclyde, about university?

RM: Fine, I mean, they were fine, they didn't, you know, they sorted of expected me to go somewhere else to study really, so yeah.

FR: Yeah, normal thing I suppose.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: And do you remember leaving? Do you remember, how would you have got to Strathclyde, is it ferry or–?

RM: Yeah, ferry, yeah.

FR: Yeah, and do you remember doing that or–?

RM: Yes, well, funny one of my friends ended up going to Strathclyde as well, so her dad, so they had just about space in the car for me, so I went with them, so that was good, yeah.

FR: And what did you make of Glasgow? Had you been before?

RM: No [laughs], well, it, I, do you know, I can't really remember, I was more, I was really excited about, cos I've always loved especially Spanish and I've always got on well with Spanish people and I was especially excited about learning Spanish and, you know, just experiencing more of the world really, so, I mean, I really enjoyed, but I was really lucky, I mean, I always had the idea that you should really do something in life and study something that you really enjoy cos, you know, life's too short and even though I wasn't, it wasn't like, a career path to doing something like, sort of glamorous or very well paid or whatever, but I just thought I'll do what I enjoy and, you know, that's, so, no, I really liked what I studied and I got to know some nice people and I got to study in Spain for a year, which was really, really good, and then I also worked in France as an, cos I went, basically you had to do one year abroad, your fourth year, but I managed to get my third year studying in Spain and

then I did, I was an English assistant in France for a year, so I got to do two years abroad, so that was just amazing, that was just [laughs], I really enjoyed that, that was really great experience. I mean, I, looking back I'm sure it had its ups and downs, but, you know, overall it was a great opportunity. It doesn't sound like, that exciting now, but in those days before you had, you know, all the sort of cheap travel and internet and things, it was very exciting [laughs], yeah.

FR: Yeah, and a big step into a different world I guess from a quite small childhood in Northern Ireland.

RM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and I remember in Spain as well, I did actually, I knew somebody in Belfast who put me or gave me the address of a church in, a Protestant church in, it was a Baptist church in the city I was in in Spain, which was a big city, but not, it was like an industrial city in the middle, it wasn't anywhere where you get tourists or whatever, so it was really very Spanish, and I knew some exchange students who were there as well, but in the end I, who was I talking, I was talking to someone the other day and I was saying about when I went to Spain, so I had somewhere to stay for like, the first week in this university residence, but I knew when I went I'd have to like, get somewhere to live and [laughs], and I was saying yeah, I've just went with a backpack and like, I didn't have a credit card, you know, cos students had no credit cards in those days, no mobile phones, I was just like, I told my mum, I'll phone you whenever I get somewhere [laughs], and you think now, nobody would let their child go off like that, it just wouldn't happen, but, you know, that was what everyone did in those days, it was very different, you know, but no, it was a very good experience.

FR: It sounds exciting.

RM: It was, I mean, this is like, completely, I don't think I'd ever been to Spain before, so, but when I got to the, it was a bit, I mean, it's a very interesting country because it has had, a bit like Ireland like, conflict that they really haven't resolved, but I've always got on really well with Spanish people and I don't really know why, but I always do, and French people, I really, **[00:30:00]** it's not I can't get on with them, but I don't feel the warmth from them that I do from Spanish people, I think they're just a completely different nation, but I just really liked, I got to know a lot of people there and sort of found my feet eventually and, you know, it's a very different culture like, people are much more forthright, but, you know, I suppose it was a big learning experience as well, so that was a very good year [laughs].

FR: So a year in Spain, and then a year in France.

RM: Yes, which was, actually ended up in the middle of the countryside in Brittany in this sort of town, so yeah, it was very rural and, so when I went to Spain I at least found a little Baptist church I went to a few times, but in France it was, there was nothing, there was no church or anything, I really, there was an English assistant there, but I hardly knew anyb-, met anybody that year. There was an English assistant in another town who I got on with well, so we would sort of meet up at weekends, but there was hardly any transport cos it was so rural [laughs], so it was quite a difference from Spain, but, you know, still good.

FR: More isolated.

RM: Yeah, definitely, definitely, and the people are a lot more distant.

FR: Reserved.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: Yeah, especially in the north of France, and would you have been going back home throughout this period as well or–?

RM: Yes, well, I was going home for Christmas and then when I was in Spain I don't think I went home, I wasn't home between Christmas, and I went home in the end in August cos I had to, well, actually I went home, I would've stayed for a bit longer, maybe until September, cos I was giving English classes over the summer, but it was my parents' silver wedding, so I had to go home for that, and then I went to France in mid-September I think, so.

FR: Yeah, and is this before emails, I can't quite–?

RM: Yeah, yeah, so it was all letters and, yeah, that was–

FR: Letters and phone calls or–?

RM: Yeah, yeah, so I'd always call home about once a week, something like that and then, yeah, it was just letters otherwise [laughs], yeah.

FR: And were you ever homesick or did you miss Ireland?

RM: Well, not really, but then I always knew it was there and I could go back if I needed to, but I was determined to like, cos I think, I'm sure I had times when I thought this is really, you know, a bit of a struggle cos it's all new and you have to find your feet, but you just sort of get on with it really and, I mean, it's like, western Europe is never going to be, as long as you get somewhere to live, you know, it's never, how bad can it be, really [laughs], you know, it's all a new experience, you can, if you're really bored you could, I don't know, go somewhere, go to a town for the weekend and see somewhere new, travel somewhere, it's, I do remember actually when I was in France there was the other assistant who was in school with me, she got to know some assistants in other towns, I didn't really know, and there was one girl from Belfast who was there and she just hated it, really, really hated it, cos her boyfriend was in Belfast and she was an only child and she was very close to her parents, so she really missed them. I mean, I would say I'm close to my parents, but I can, I could still be distant and I wouldn't [laughs], I would survive, and she just complained all the time about how she hated it and she wanted to go home and, but she had to do the year in France to be able to finish her degree, so I remember thinking it's just like, you know, this is the only time when you have to be away from Belfast, you could at least make an effort, you know.

FR: Enjoy it for a year.

RM: Because, I mean, every, I don't know, we had holidays, we had school holidays, so we never went more than six or seven weeks without a week off really and, you know, it didn't start until, we didn't start work until end of September and we finished at the end of May, so really it was quite a short year really, so, I remember just getting irritated by her, and she also made a comment once about how she voted Alliance because she wasn't sectarian. I remember thinking really, you know, thinking, cos I remember she was, her dad I think was a bank manager and I think she had quite a privileged life in Belfast, I remember thinking you have no idea what life is like for most people [laughs], and I didn't comment anything or ever say anything that would've, or talk about Northern Ireland in fact in general, even now, I don't really talk much about Northern Ireland or the Troubles.

FR: I was going to ask actually if people in France and Spain would have been curious about Northern Ireland, would they have asked you about it?

RM: Yeah, they did, because they didn't really, a lot of them didn't know much about, they knew there was problems somewhere in Ireland, didn't know much about, they didn't really understand the fact I consider myself British and not Irish and what, is Northern Ireland just like, the north bit of Ireland [laughs], they just didn't get it, and they still wouldn't, which is understandable, but [pauses], I don't know, I think it's just something, you know, I think in general people, well, I prefer, certainly myself, I'd prefer not to talk about things that can be divisive like politics or Brexit [laughs] or whatever, I mean, you just don't bring those up unless you know somebody very well, and actually even, I mean, there's some people I've worked with here for a long time and if they ever bring up the Troubles, unless they really ask me something directly I would never really talk about them, because there's a couple of people here who are, either their parents are like, Irish Catholics, and there's one girl who's from Cork who I thought I knew quite well, but we're out for drinks one night and she, this is a few years ago, and she said something about how she'd heard there's, in Cork when she was growing up they said that the British Army was using Northern Ireland, they were orchestrating all of the Troubles cos they needed somewhere to train their soldiers, I remember, I was saying to her, really do you think that's, I don't often get annoyed, but I remember saying to her that's just, I don't think that's the case [laughs], and I think everybody who was there at the time was just mortified that she'd said something that to them, not being involved, sounded really quite stupid, so, so, for those reasons, it's not something I'd ever really bring up at all.

FR: Unless it's kind of brought up, politely.

RM: And unless I really know somebody cos you don't know what people's opinions are and, you know, I don't, certainly with people I work with I don't want to get into disagreements over stuff that's like, you know, I'm not going to change their opinion, they're not going to change mine and, you know, it's like Brexit, why would you start talking to colleagues about Brexit, it's like, just leave [laughs], don't mention the war sort of thing, so yeah.

FR: No, that makes sense. So you spent a year in Spain and then a year in France, in Brittany, and then you got your degree.

RM: Yeah, so I did my final year and then I did another course, I went to Napier in Edinburgh and did like, a business course.

FR: Ah I also went to Napier.

RM: Ah yeah, yeah, so it was out in, I don't where it was, Sighthill, that's what it was called–

FR: Ah I know exactly–

RM: That lovely building [laughs].

FR: Yes, yes, exactly, yeah, yeah, yeah.

RM: So I did the marketing and languages course cos I knew I needed to have some sort of commercial thing and I managed to save up, when I was in Spain I gave a lot of classes, English classes, cos there was a very big engineering school and they all wanted to learn English, so I spent quite a few evenings in bars giving English classes [laughs], so between that and then, when I was in France, I had a room in the school cos it had like, a boarding department. It was a normal state school, but because it was a rural area some of the children stayed, well, they weren't children, some of them were actually older than me [laughs], but they had like a, sort of rooms for them to stay, so they didn't have to go home during the week and there was a little corridor of rooms for the sort of, they had university students who would take turns, who were like, the invigilators or whatever, the, like, the boarding masters or whatever the term for it is, so we had a little room on that corridor to live in, so I didn't have to pay rent, so I was able to save up and then I was able to work over the summer as well and I then could fund my masters which was good, and it, I mean, it wasn't [pauses], it, well, I'd never done sort of commercial stuff and I was a bit worried it was going to be really difficult, but it wasn't, it was a lot easier than having to read like medieval French [laughs], so completely different, so that opened my eyes to sort of marketing and work and helped me get my first job, so yeah, and then I worked in Edinburgh for four years and I ended up getting a job with this company in Holland.

FR: And so at this stage are you, you had thought that you might go back to Northern Ireland and then you, because of the economy or because there's no jobs or–

RM: Well, sort of the, well, I think I still wanted to see a bit of the world and Northern Ireland seemed like quite a small place and there wasn't that many opportunities, I mean, this is like, '95, **[00:40:00]** '96, so things still weren't great, I mean, they were probably a bit better, but, you know, there's just not so many opportunities at all. So I stayed in Edinburgh for a while and I liked life there and I had friends and whatever, but in the end, I couldn't, well, I couldn't really get a job that interested me and I ended up in a job which was, it was okay, but it felt like a bit of a dead end and then out of the blue I got offered a job in Holland, which, I didn't really want to leave, but, you know, sometimes these opportunities come up and you just think oh I have to go with it, and I was only like, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-seven and, you know, when you're young it's like, it's easy to [laughs]

make these moves, so I just went over to work there and I didn't expect to stay that long, but I ended up staying there for seven years, so that was a good experience.

FR: So where in Holland?

RM: Leiden.

FR: Leiden, oh yeah, it's a university town, right, yeah.

RM: Yeah, yeah, it's a really, I think it's the oldest university, so it's a really, really nice old town, lovely place to live, you can cycle everywhere, it's very nice.

FR: Yeah, and you stayed for seven years.

RM: Seven years, yeah.

FR: And what was it, so what was it like, what did you–?

RM: Well, Dutch people are very, very forthright indeed [laughs], so I had an awful lot of holidays cos we had to work weekends sometimes and you had extra time off, so I was able to travel a bit more around Europe, which I'd always wanted to do, but never really had the money to do, so I could, because I did Italian at university for two years, I'd never been to Italy, so I remember I managed to have my first trip to Italy and it was, that was one of my best trips ever [laughs], so yeah, and just, I had to travel sometimes for work and it all seemed, well, it wasn't a glamorous job, but, you know, it was just like, the novelty of it I suppose, so yeah, I got to know the Netherlands quite a bit and I still have some friends, when I go back for work, I catch up with them as well, so yeah, it was just sort of life continuing and it was good.

FR: Yeah, and are you still going back to Northern Ireland, back and forth?

RM: Oh yes, yes, yeah, always, at that time I was probably home maybe two or three times a year.

FR: What about your brother and sister? Did they leave or did they stay in Northern Ireland?

RM: They're both there. So my sister's in the police and my brother's actually a minister, so very diverse careers [laughs], but they're still in Northern Ireland and I imagine they'll both stay there.

FR: So still kind of quite strong family connections in Northern Ireland.

RM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: So would you have been living in Holland when the peace process was happening then?

RM: So I went to–

FR: I'm trying to think, 1998ish.

RM: Yeah, I went there in '99, so I think the key years of the peace process I was still in Edinburgh.

FR: Do you have any memories of that?

RM: Yes, I remember being at home when the government sent out this sort of booklet to all the houses, to everybody about the Agreement and why they were recommending it, and I remember at the same time my mum got this sort of, there was a, not a communication, but a sort of letter drafted by the Presbyterian church which, it's not that they were recommending anything, but they were just taking in points to consider, you know, for the referendum, I remember reading that as well, so, and I, the one point I remember about that was that they were saying that, you know, victims as well have to be, have to be considered in all of this.

FR: Yeah, and what, I should have asked this before actually, but, what about the kind of Troubles in Britain? So I suppose in the early nineties, for instance, there were some bombings in [interrupted by works noise; laughs]–

RM: Sorry, they're doing a bit of work [laughs].

FR: There were some bombings in London and was that something that you were aware of, living in Scotland or–?

RM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but because Scotland was never touched it was a bit remote really, so, but we knew it was quite dark times [pauses], yeah, I mean, it just seemed to be, I remember the, cos the first two years I was in Glasgow it just seemed to be a constant stream of bad news and, you know, yeah, just, it never really seemed to stop.

FR: Yeah, and so, did the peace process feel like a, I don't know, did you feel relieved or did you feel–?

RM: Not, not particularly, I mean, I think it was certainly good that people weren't dying, you know, that's always important, but [pauses], I mean, maybe, well, it's maybe not [laughs] a very charitable thing, but I do still struggle when I hear Sinn Féin talking about equality of victims and, I mean, to me, someone who voluntarily goes out to bomb somebody and gets shot before, I don't know like, our neighbour, the men who went to shoot him, to me they're not victims, they chose to do that, they knew the risks, so, you know, it's the innocent people, I don't know, in a shop or something that gets blown up when they're just out doing their Saturday shopping like, to me those are victims or like, police who are trying to uphold law and order, you know, and also the really thuggish elements of, you know, if you were living in west Belfast, you know, say, you know, your husband beats you up, you know, I don't even, those people I would imagine in the eighties, early nineties, they wouldn't have been able to go to the police, you know, you'd have had to go to your local Sinn Féin organiser and, yeah, so to me it, people shouldn't have to live

like that, you know, law and order's really fundamental and, I know there's wrongs on both sides, but I still have difficulty [laughs] listening to Sinn Féin leadership talking about being very progressive because what I saw when I was growing up was anything but progressive, and I would say I'm generally quite left leaning, so I'm not a sort of Jeremy Corbyn Labour supporter, but I would definitely be, I would say a sort of centre left, but I cannot abide anybody who will make excuses for violence cos I've, I mean, I've seen, I've grown up with what, seeing the consequences of it like, there's a lot of people I went to school with like, from the south Armagh area, things were very tough for them, they were, I think some of them really felt under siege and I can understand why they felt that. There's a good friend of my sister's who, his father was killed in Kingsmills, you know, it was just, terrible things happened, you know, on both sides, it just happens to be I know more about the Protestant because I knew more of it, but, you know, a lot of people suffer on both sides and I, yeah, I [laughs], I have to admit I still have great difficulty in, I mean, people vote for Sinn Féin, so they have a democratic mandate, but they seem oblivious to anyone else really.

FR: Mmm, no, I can understand that, so it's a complicated–

RM: Yeah, and I don't think, I mean, at this stage of my life [laughs] if I'm still thinking like this I don't think I'm ever going to think differently, to be quite honest.

FR: That's fair enough [laughs].

RM: Yeah.

FR: So I'm trying to get a kind of chronology in my head, so you lived in Holland for six or seven years.

RM: Yeah.

FR: And that's sort of just after the peace process in Northern Ireland, so the nineties, late nineties, and then when did you move to London?

RM: 2006.

FR: Okay.

RM: So I got a transfer from the company, so that made it very easy cos they moved everything across and I had a job waiting for me, so it was a very easy move [laughs], I was very lucky. So I've always felt welcome here like, in Scotland, I never felt anyone was looking at me aside cos I was from Northern Ireland or, you know, and London, I suppose cities tend to be more welcoming cos people come from everywhere to live in cities and, you know, London especially being so diverse.

FR: So you never felt any kind of anti-Irish sentiment or anti-Northern Irish sentiment or anything like that?

RM: No, no, no, not at all, not at all.

FR: And was London a big change from Leiden? Obviously a bigger city and–

RM: Yeah, yeah [laughs], much bigger, so, and it's still, you know, it's still big, but I think even people who've lived here all their lives sometimes need to get out and get a bit of space [laughs] around them [extended pause]. But, I mean, I really enjoy London and it sort of feels like home now, I've been here thirteen years, so in a few years' time I'll have been here longer than [laughs] I lived in Northern Ireland.

FR: Sure, that's interesting to think, isn't it?

RM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: What part of London do you live in?

RM: East London, but like, suburbs east London, not sort of Shoreditch **[00:50:00]** or somewhere trendy, yeah, cos actually, well, my aunt and uncle live there, so my uncle has been here since I think probably about nine-, late sixties, so he was a teacher and he's retired now, and my aunt is from Manchester, so, and, yeah, I think, I mean, they've always loved it and, you know, had their family here and enjoy life here [laughs], so and then some, I've cousins as well, their daughters are here, but also one of my other cousins is, lives round the corner from me, so I have some family here as well, which is nice.

FR: Ah that must make it easier to settle.

RM: Yeah, yeah, I didn't see them that much for the first few years because I was living in a different part of London, and it took, well, it seems like it takes forever to get there, I mean, I did see them like, a few times a year, but now, you know, I see them more cos I'm just in the same area, but yeah, I mean, I don't think any of us have ever felt like we're treated any differently. I don't know what it was like for my uncle when he arrived cos that would've been the time when you had signs saying no dogs, no blacks, no Irish sort of thing, but I don't think, I mean, he was a teacher, so educated and I assume he would have been hopefully treated okay, but I think he always liked life here and he trained, he was a, went to Stranmillis I think, so I think he wanted to get out of Northern Ireland and just see a bit of the world as well at that point, and in the sixties it was a lot more difficult than it was, you know, in the eighties or nineties for me, cos that was, you know, just, it was just completely different [laughs], no communication. I think probably like, my grandparents and my parents wouldn't have had a phone in those days, because I think my mum said once that, I remember her saying about having to go to the village in the middle of the night to call a vet or something when she was expecting my sister–

FR: Okay, so this is like, one phone–

RM: So I think it was mid-seventies they probably got a phone, and they would have got one earlier because they were a farm, so, you know, communication was just [laughs] very difficult, compared to now certainly.

FR: Yeah, much easier now, and the church has continued to be something that's part of your life in London as well.

RM: Yes, yeah.

FR: Cos that's how we got in touch, isn't it?

RM: Yes, yeah, yeah, ah ha, ah ha.

FR: So what's, what's that like, the church in–?

RM: It's actually, Church of-, it's the Free Church of Scotland.

FR: Is it? Okay, yeah.

RM: So the sort of original Presbyterians [laughs] that my dad would have probably recognised when he was growing up, but it's actually an interesting congregation because there's people from everywhere, so there's a lot of Brazilians, South Africans, there's quite a few South Americans as well and [pauses], some Dutch people, so, I mean, it's really, it's really a mixture of people, quite a few Nigerians, so it's [laughs], it's not what you'd expect from, when you sort of hear about Presbyterian church, it's not at all like [laughs] anything you do, I remember from growing up, yeah, and a lot of young people as well, quite a few Americans, so it's very diverse indeed.

FR: And a lot of migrants I suppose, which is interesting.

RM: Well, probably most of us are like, I don't think there's many people there who would have been born in London like, our minister's Scottish, well, there's a few Scottish as well, but not so many as there used to be, so our minister's a young Scottish guy with a young family, but, you know, there's people from everywhere.

FR: And that sounds, that sounds really interesting actually, that sounds really interesting. It's a really nice church as well, nice building.

RM: Yeah, very welcoming and, oh you've been there, have you?

FR: I went, I've walked around it, I haven't, I couldn't get inside, trying to meet someone to ask, so are there other Northern Irish people at the church?

RM: Yes, yes, there's a few of us, yeah.

FR: And that's kind of part of your social world as well.

RM: Well, it is sort of at weekends, but occasionally I might see someone during the week, but everyone lives in different areas of London, so it's probably more of a Sunday thing, cos, well, up until now I've been travelling a lot for work, so I haven't been around for some of the things during the week, but sometimes I would catch up with people, yeah.

FR: Okay [pauses]. I'm trying to think what else, what else is there to talk about. I suppose there's some questions now that are kind of more a reflective section, in terms of what you think about Northern Ireland now. So I was interested, I think you said earlier that you wouldn't move back now.

RM: Well–

FR: Or that you–

RM: It's just, it's not really, I mean, maybe, maybe when I retire or maybe when I'm sort of close to retirement, I quite like what I do here and there's just not jobs, this sort of organisation is, well, I'm a bit institutionalised now in Swift, I've been here twenty years, so it's quite–

FR: Oh wow, that's a long time, yeah.

RM: Quite a while, and it's a bit niche, so I don't even know, well, I might be able to get, I know there's lots of IT jo-, or, well, there's some IT jobs anyway in Belfast, so, cos I'd probably realistically be living in Belfast or it would be like, Cork or Dublin. I mean, I wouldn't mind living in Cork or Dublin, but maybe, I don't know if I'd want to live there for a long time [laughs], and I don't know Cork at all and I used to go to Dublin for work a bit, so, you know, it's very expensive, probably worse than London [laughs], and would be probably a lot of travel, so whether or not at this stage I want to uproot and go somewhere different is, I'm not sure, it gets harder I think as you get older, just it's more hassle and, yeah, and also here I can get home within a few hours, there's flights every hour of the day, so, and as my parents get older I certainly wouldn't want to go off to the US or something, but, you know, I don't want to be too far from them, but I don't sort of feel the need to be living round the corner.

FR: Mmm, which probably would be impossible in terms of doing the job that you do anyway.

RM: Yeah, it would be, I'd have to give it all up and [laughs] go and do something different, so yeah.

FR: And what have you made of, so we were, you were saying that you prefer not to, to try to not talk really about Northern Ireland as much as possible in England, but I suppose it seems to me living in England that suddenly Northern Ireland is kind of in the news again and English people are slightly more curious or slightly more–

RM: Yeah, well, a few people here have asked me about it, and I remember cos my dad used to go to Dublin with his apples for many years, he had a lorry and he used to pack it on Wednesday night and go to Dublin wholesale market which opened early on Thursday, so I remember getting, you know, packing the apples and putting all the boxes on the lorry and I had to do the docket for him with the carbon paper and, you know, the real old style [laughs], cos you had to, the reason I mention that is that you had to go through customs

with it, but you didn't, even in like, 1985, before any sort of electronic methods were available, you had to go to a customs agent, but it was in Armagh, it wasn't on the border, and I think he had to stop at the border and there's a little hut and somebody had to stamp something, but I cannot imagine in this day and age that that is done now. I would, I'm not a trade expert, I know nothing about trade, but I'd have thought if you think about all the lorries coming in to Dover or wherever, that must all be done electronically, and maybe they do some checks, you know, security checks on lorries coming in, but surely that's all done electronically these days. I mean, apart from getting your passport stamped I'm not aware of any sort of, anything that isn't, and even now with the electronic gates for your passport, that's, you know, probably you don't get your passport stamped at all anymore, so I don't, I cannot imagine that the border has to be such an issue with Brexit. I hesitate to say it cos I really am not an expert, but I just have a feeling this is all, the whole border question is being made more than it has to be. I can't imagine in this day and age it can't be worked out, and as for these people saying they're going to blow up all the border posts, well, really, are they really, you know, well, do they have the means to, maybe they do, I don't know, but are they actually going to do that. I think in Ireland there'll always be a very, very hardcore dissident, a very small number who can maybe, unfortunately have the means to, you know, shoot a few people, but probably not more than that, you know, I can't imagine there's enough arms or whatever for a full campaign, and I would say in this day and age there's probably not support that you would have had in the eighties to, that you'd need to sort of hide these people and the arms and stuff, so, you know, there's not really sympathy in the way, I mean, there's a few, **[01:00:00]** but I would imagine it's pretty limited.

FR: Yeah, I think that question of support is really important as well, it's hard to imagine that people in Northern Ireland would support a kind of sustained violent campaign from either–

RM: No, no, I mean, just, there's just not, there's a very, very few hardcore that are always going to be there and have always been there for like, I don't know, two hundred years or something, but I think it's very limited, very limited, and I'm sure with intelligence as well they probably could disrupt it quite easily as well, with advances in technology and so on, you know, it's, if they can do that for the likes of ISIS I'm sure they can [laughs] do it for those sort of vestiges of republicanism.

FR: And what do you make of Northern Ire-, politics in Northern Ireland in general at the minute, Stormont being shut down for two years and all of the–?

RM: Well, I don't know, I mean, I think it, it's difficult, cos at the minute they have like, the likes of the DUP have their core voters who are like, conservative and like, socially and also politically, well, politically to some extent, but they're also probably a bit centre left because they also rely on public services and, you know, they have to be maintained, but, you know, the Orange chord is still there, so they're doing a very difficult balancing act, I would say, and then you have Sinn Féin who are supposedly progressive and, you know, bringing things like abortion, which a lot of DUP supporters are not very happy with, and gay marriage, so, I mean, it's not that I'm against any of those things, but it's, it does seem a bit [sighs], well, I don't know if counterproductive is the word, but if they are going to hopefully get Stormont back, you know, I think that should have waited, although I'm not an expert, but, you know, things like the petition of concern at Stormont, is that something that they should still have

cos that can also block a lot of things, so I think it feels like they're on the cusp of real change also because, you know, the sort of Protestant majority is not something you can rely on anymore. It was very interesting in the last election that the Alliance did so well, so, you know, I think things were changing quite a bit [pauses]. I don't know if in my life we'll see a united Ireland in terms of, what you'd say is a proper united Ireland with like, one parliament and so on, but maybe slowly the South will have more involvement in Stormont, I mean, who knows, who really knows what's going to happen, and maybe there's a new generation that doesn't even really care as much, cos when I was growing up there was very, very few mixed marriages, very few, but certainly in our area [pauses], also cos it was difficult when it came to kids, cos, I mean, people would ask me if I went to a Protestant school or Catholic school, and for me like, I went to a state school, because Catholics nearly all went to the Catholic-run schools, so, you know, you can't expect a Protestant to send their child to a school run by a different faith, I don't think you could force people, but we always every year had maybe five or six Catholics in it simply because, even in somewhere like Armagh, because their parents maybe thought it's a better school or for whatever reason, and I remember, well, maybe not five or six, two or three, but I know there's two or three in my year, and as far as I could see they, you know, they got on well with everyone, they weren't, certainly weren't ostracised or anything like that, so maybe schools are where, I'm a bit, I don't know if I'm really into this integrated schooling, from the point of view of integrated schools seem to be very sort of like, middle class, and a bit like, sort of west London-type, cos one of my friends, she's a nice girl, but she sent her son to an integrated school and was all very, yeah, just very middle class, and actually an interesting point is that when I was growing up, certainly in the country, there wasn't this idea of sort of middle class, working class, which is–

FR: That's interesting.

RM: Yeah, so, it was a, you know, cos most people were farmers, so everybody was having the same sort of struggles and challenges and probably when you went to high school you saw a bit more cos you had people whose parents were, you know, in professions or working, and then when you come over here it's like, everywhere [laughs], you know, and everyone's sort of classified without meaning to be [laughs], you know, it's just part of life here, but that was something very new to me, so to me the integrated schools, because, I don't know much about them, but I just have the impression that it's a very sort of middle-class education, whereas I prefer, I would prefer schools that were like the grammar school that I went to and just everyone went there, or you had, you know, you certainly had more Catholics going there, cos I can imagine if you're a Catholic you might want to send your children to a Catholic school, you know, that's, I think that's fair enough, but it would be good if it was just like, state schools, cos it wasn't anything we did like, in, when we did RE it was like, generic stuff, it wasn't, it certainly wasn't like, learning about Presbyterianism [laughs] in depth or something, so, you know, I don't think RE has to be a blocking factor at all. I suppose it's a bit more of a concern probably about Irish and trying to enforce that, not so much, I don't have a particular objection to learning Irish, it's more if you're going to start doling out government jobs only to people who speak Irish, cos of course most of us never had the chance, certainly, I don't think, there's no Protestant school I ever heard of [laughs] where you could learn Irish in those days, so that would be potentially very discriminatory.

FR: Yeah, that's a big debate at the minute, the Irish language thing.

RM: Yeah, yeah, so, you know, it's a shame if you're politicising a language, but that's, you know, I hope they can work it out, but I think it's [pauses], I mean, you, I don't even know if in the South of Ireland you have to, I know you've got to do Irish at school, but do you have to learn Irish in order to graduate university or get a job as a civil servant, I mean, I assume most people in the South, well, they might learn a bit at school, but I assume most of them aren't fluent, so yeah, I don't know, I mean, I hope they do manage to get Stormont back and running, but I know, talking to my sister, she was saying she would not be upset if they just brought back direct rule because in fact, like, the health service is quite a mess, so if my parents, getting older and having more appointments, they sometimes have to wait literally months and months for even a basic scan, and my dad actually at one point he had, he had an X-ray and it literally took them two months to come back with the results whereas normally you'd expect, you know, the day later or something, or they'd even be reviewed the same day, so I was talking to a friend of mine who's like, a hospital administrator here and he was like, no, it's done like, instantly now cos it's all electronic, and I think it's things like the health service that really are falling apart because they need some sort of direction, so hopefully they'll get things sorted soon, just from the point of view of people's daily life.

FR: Absolutely. I was thinking as you were talking there, is it, do you think it's frustrating that people in England don't really grasp the complexity of–?

RM: Well, I'll tell you what's almost quite worrying, some of the younger people I was talking to. There's a guy I know from volunteering, he is maybe twenty-five or so, and I was talking to him, it was last summer I think, and he knew a lot less than I, and this is a guy, a bright guy with a degree, you'd think he'd be a bit aware of things, but he had no idea about Northern Ireland or really awareness of, he knew the Troubles happened, but he'd no idea what it was actually, how bad it actually was even over here, so I think there's a new generation here that just has no awareness of it at all and they probably wonder why, what Britain is doing in Northern Ireland really cos they just have not any historical perspective. They've certainly never really been to Ireland, apart from maybe a stag weekend in Dublin [laughs], you know, so there's a, I think younger people here have really no idea, no idea whatsoever, and funny, I was watching on iPlayer a couple of sort of, well, it, was it *Spotlight* did this series on the Troubles–

FR: A secret history of them, yeah.

RM: Oh my goodness, I mean, some of, that was really, it brought back a lot of memories, and there's some new things you learned and you were like, really, that's quite extraordinary like, there was a big bomb in Loughgall that was the first time they really used the SAS, yeah, and I remember that night vividly, it was like, a Friday night and it was like, May and it was a really nice sort of spring, late spring evening, **[01:10:00]** and I remember all of a sudden there was this sound like a really loud sewing machine and then there was an explosion and, you know, yeah, and one of our neighbours came up and said he heard there was like, six people dead and we were like, there couldn't be, there's no way, you know, this doesn't, cos Loughgall's a very sleepy little village like, nothing really ever happens there [laughs], it's so quiet, I mean, really, and there was a bit about the background to that and

they have discovered that they actually, the bomb was built somewhere around Lough Neagh and it was actually transported by river most of the way to, towards Loughgall. I was like, how on earth did they, that's just extraordinary that, yeah, amazing to hear what had happened in the background really.

FR: Yeah, it's interesting how that programme has kind of bring up memories from back then.

RM: Yeah [pauses], and even taught us a lot more and given a bit more understanding as well.

FR: Yeah, a wider view maybe of what was going on, yeah. So a couple of questions to finish I guess. So first of all having lived in Scotland and then in Europe for quite a long time, different parts of Europe, and now London for fifteen years, would you call yourself British, do you think of yourself as British or–?

RM: Well, I would say, I usually will say I'm Northern Irish.

FR: Northern Irish, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's interesting. I think that's what I say as well, I think a lot of younger people say Northern Irish, but it's a–

RM: Cos a lot of, funny, when I was, I've spent most of the week in our headquarters in Belgium and I was talking to a new colleague and she was saying, yeah, she didn't really understand Wales and Scotland and are they separate coun-, and what's re-, Britain and England and, you know [laughs], so it is quite confusing, you know, for people from abroad, very confusing, yeah [laughs].

FR: Yeah, I'm just back from Paris and still French people are not entirely clear on the fact that there's a Northern Ireland and an Ireland and that they're distinct.

RM: Yeah, and really if they don't know by now I don't think they're [laughs] ever going to really learn, so I can understand when it comes to Brexit and they talk about the border, probably people are thinking, what is this about, you know, really.

FR: And then the sort of final question we've been asking everyone is are there any kind of moments that you remember, that seem particularly important in terms of leaving Northern Ireland, settling here, anything that–?

RM: [extended pause] Well, I think when I left, I mean, a lot of people left on both sides, you know, just cos there's more opportunities, you know, to see a bit more of the world cos Northern Ireland's a very small place, so it was almost seen for a lot of us as sort of inevitable you would end up in England or somewhere else, and it's funny, it's only in the last couple of years that I've sort of realised that it's really shaped me more than I ever realised, you know, being brought up on a farm and, you know, the sort of Presbyterian view of life [laughs], which is very black and white. I sometimes find myself in work being very black and white about things and as, and it's only sort of in the last four or five years as you get a bit older, you sort of look back and say oh that's probably why I'm like that

[laughs], so I think it's shaped me a lot more and I'm sort of realising it now than I had ever appreciated. But it also I would say is quite a good start in life cos it makes you much more sensitive to people, and I think you pick up, I think you're, probably as well you learn, you have an ability, you learn how to get on with people that you don't really agree with, which is very useful in the workplace [laughs], so I think it's a very good training for life in many ways, you know, they talk about the snowflake generation and they get everything their own way and that was completely the opposite. I mean, I didn't at all, I was very lucky in my childhood, but, you know, some things your parents can't shield you from and I think, you know, you can learn, you know, take lessons from that you can apply to life which are very useful, and I don't think there was any big moments cos I think I knew from quite early on I wanted to go to university and I wanted to sort of see the world a bit, it wasn't that I wanted to specifically leave Northern Ireland cos I didn't like it cos I, you know, I still enjoy going back, but it was just sort of the path of life for an awful lot of people at that point.

FR: How do you find Loughgall now when you go back, has it changed or–?

RM: It has, they [laughs], they have a very nice sort of country park, it was an estate that used to be part of the Ministry of Agriculture and the council bought it and they have a very nice golf course, not that I play golf, but it looks very nice when you walk around it, and a really nice country park, so the village has a lot of people, especially at weekends and in the summer, you know, with their kids out in the park. They have opened about two years ago an Orange, a little Orange museum, so there is that and there's a coffee shop, so there used to be only a little shop in the village and now there's, you could nearly spend a day there, so it has changed a lot in that, and I suppose that reflects how Northern Ireland changes, that there's a lot more prosperity, there is work now for people, so there's certainly a much better life materially than there was years ago, definitely, and it's thankfully, you know, the Troubles are, well, I mean, they haven't, the Troubles haven't disappeared, but they have sort of, they are no longer happening which is, well, I suppose the most important thing, yeah.

FR: I think it's really interesting that thing about how the, is it you were saying, a good preparation for life, is that the kind of habits of caution and of–?

RM: Yeah, I would say, yeah, caution's probably a good word for it, but just being sensitive to people and their, where they're coming from or something and people with different opinions, getting on with people who have got a completely different view of life than you do and just, you know, getting on with it. It's, I don't know if it's a very Presbyterian or Northern Irish or British habit, but just sort of, even when things are really crap just getting on with things, getting on with life and eventually you come through on the other side, so I don't know if that comes, maybe it comes from the Troubles, things were bad, but you just got on with life, which is, you know, what most people in the world do [laughs] rather than, you know, being obsessed with yourself and, you know, where you are at a particular moment. I think it's better just to, it's healthier I think in many ways just to, it might be bad but, you know, you've got ups and downs and you just get on with it and eventually you'll come out the other side, so yeah.

FR: That makes sense.

RM: Well, yes, but especially with a lot of the younger people I work with, I think they grew up in a completely different era and I don't know that that's a widely held view [laughs], so maybe it's me showing my age, but I would say, well, when I'm talking about the years I was in Europe, you know, I know there was times when I found it difficult, even though it was a new experience and it was very exciting, there's some things you find difficult cos you've got a lot of adjustment to make, but, you know, it's part of life and you learn, maybe that's partly where I picked it up, but you just go through the new experiences and when I look back now the only things I remember are the good times, or most [laughs], so, you know, I feel really privileged that I was able to like, have those experiences abroad, cos in those days it wasn't, you didn't have all the exchanges and so on that you do now, so I really felt lucky to have that opportunity and, you know, I just really enjoyed it, so I'm not sure where it comes from, I would like to think it probably comes from, well, not like to think, but I would say it probably comes from my very young childhood when things weren't great and you knew they weren't great, but you just saw your parents getting on with life, yeah.

FR: It's really interesting to think that, although you were quite young in that kind of early Troubles period, it does leave a, a trace or a mark, or it's something that you–

RM: It definitely has because I still have, as I was saying earlier, I really still have difficulty listening to, not, I mean, not all of them, but a lot of the Sinn Féin politicians when they, they know, I think they know how to go for the most hurtful topics and twist the knife to really irritate people like, when they talk about equality of victims what they really mean is like, IRA men are victims as well, and from my point of view they're not cos they chose to do that, they weren't blameless [laughs], but, you know, their point of view is entirely different to mine and they're entitled to it, but, you know, we all have to live together and get on with things, so I wouldn't engage in conversation [laughs] with any of them on politics, but, you know, **[01:20:00]** there's some Irish people working here, so I don't, I certainly wouldn't want to [laughs] engage in that discussion with them, but, you know, I get on with them fine for work and they're nice people and, you know, sometimes we have like, social occasions and, you know, a good chat and it's fine, but like, with a lot of things like Brexit as well, I'm sure there's lots of people disagree, but you just get on with the more important things really.

FR: You just have to have different, different boxes in work.

RM: Yeah, yeah, so I think it has given me really good lessons for life that have helped me probably work with people from lots of different countries, yeah.

FR: And then the final thing is just to say, is there anything that you haven't talked about that you wanted to talk about, or is there anything that–?

RM: I don't, something just occurred to me to mention that my great-aunt's father was actually a policeman who was shot in 1922, so in our family, in that sense, it goes back a very long way.

FR: So the kind of the early, the first Troubles they sometimes call it, the, 1921, 1922.

RM: Yeah, so like, that made a big mark on her family and she was very close to our family, so I think there was always that [pauses] feeling, I don't know if it's the siege mentality, but it was always present.

FR: And you mentioned your grandparents remembering partition as well, even stretching back to that.

RM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: Well, that's, that's really interesting, and then your sister's a policewoman I suppose in Northern Ireland now.

RM: Mm hmm, she was actually in Crossmaglen for many years–

FR: Ah yeah.

RM: She actually wanted to go to the border [laughs], she volunteered, so for a long time, you know, she was being flown into Crossmaglen cos they couldn't drive in and that was like, ten years ago maybe, something like that. I remember when they stopped, I think it's closed now, but, cos the army was there too, but they had, it was I think when the army moved out they decided they weren't going to helicopter them in anymore, so it was like, she always wanted to be really on the frontline and, yeah, and one thing she cannot tolerate, she cannot tolerate any sort of deception or lies. I think because she hears sort of half-truths a lot in her job [laughs] and she just has this sort of instinct for them and she will, she just like, she will not tolerate it at all, hates it, so [laughs] yeah, she's much more tolerant or, I'm much more tolerant on this than her, but then I'm not dealing with it day in day out, so, no, she's always been very much sort of action person.

FR: No, it still must be a stressful job to be in the police.

RM: Although it's a lot less, at least a lot less dangerous than it was.

FR: Yes, absolutely.

RM: So yeah.

FR: Okay, no, that's great, unless there's anything else that you want to add.

RM: I don't think so, no, no, I think that's–

FR: Okay, well, thank you, thank you so much for, that was great, that was really interesting.

INTERVIEW ENDS