INTERVIEW M12-SG1: NIALL GALLAGHER

Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interviewee: Niall Gallagher [pseudonym]
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Location: University of Manchester
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 that were spliced together to create a single audio file.

BH: Okay, that's it running. Okay, so I'm here in Manchester University, it's Friday evening at about half five and it's the sixth of December 2019, and I'm here with Niall. Before we begin Niall, can I just say thanks very much for agreeing to do this and for coming all the way over here tonight, to take time out of your Friday evening to do this interview.

NG: That's no problem.

BH: Really appreciate it. Before we begin, can I just get you to introduce yourself for the tape and say why, something about why you were interested in taking part in the project?

NG: My name is Niall Gallagher, I'm originally from London, now live in Manchester, have a parent from Fermanagh and Donegal. I'm quite interested in the experiences of the Irish community in Britain and I'm also quite interested in the rather unique experiences of people from the North and also the experiences of second-generation from the North. I grew up in school in, went to a Catholic school in north London, which had lots of second-generation Irish people, but the majority of them would have been from Southern counties, particularly Mayo and areas like that, so we often found out about, you know, what it was like in Mayo, what it was like in Tipperary or somewhere like that, but there wasn't an awful lot given over to the experiences of people from the North, even though it probably was one of the most defining, defining experiences of Irish people in Britain through the periods when I was growing up.

BH: Okay, fantastic, so you mentioned there that you grew up in London, but your parents were from Donegal, is that right?

NG: Dad's Donegal, mum, God rest her, she was Fermanagh.

BH: Okay, brilliant, right, so could you tell me a bit about your parents then? So where did they grow up themselves? Your mum first.

NG: Mum would have grown up in, on a farm in a wee village called Derrylin, which is on the Cavan-Fermanagh border. She would've come over here in the late fifties, early sixties, moved to Brixton initially and south London and then moved generally around London. She worked in shops in London, in Oxford Street and around Brixton area and– **[00:02:40]** [The two interview audio files were spliced together here].

BH: Okay, that's us off again [laughs], we're going. Okay, so you were talking there, I think I'd asked you about whether, what your mum was working as when she first came over.

NG: So she come over to work in, I'm not sure she come over to work in it, but she worked at BHS on Oxford Street for quite a long time, she seemed to enjoy that job quite a lot now, and she worked at other shops around there, so that was really what she did initially. Then she would have been, certainly, early memories is she was a stay-at-home mum for a long period of time, and then she worked for, she worked as a cleaner for a long period of time before, for some Jewish families who lived down the road from us, so, as I said, we grew up on Woodberry Down estate in Grand Manor House and about five minutes down the road you'd have Stamford Hill, which is a big Jewish area, so she used to do quite a lot of work for, she started off working with one family and then, you know, she got recommended to other ones and she was obviously quite good at her job because she, you know, she was allowed to go into the bottom of the synagogue to clean it and that was, you know, somewhere women weren't really allowed to go to. It was quite ironic because she was a lifelong fervent supporter of the Palestinians and made her feelings quite well known to her employers, and she'd argue like cat and dog with them, but they seemed to have a great deal of respect for her and she had quite a deal of respect for them as well, so.

BH: So she was even, even, that would have been 1950s, she had, she was aware of the Palestinian situation.

NG: No, so she'd become aware a lot later in life, so it would've been, so she would've started working for Jewish families in the eighties, so that would have been just after the flight from Beirut and that kind of thing, so she was quite a strong, passionate supporter of them then, so yeah.

BH: That's really interesting. Those jobs that she got in London, in particular the earlier jobs, did she work alongside the other two women that she came over with or did they all have separate jobs, do you know that?

NG: I'm not a hundred per cent certain on that actually, no, I couldn't tell you, she never mentioned them anyway, in terms of working with them, and I can't think, I know one of them worked for the Department of Work and Pensions and another woman worked for, I can't remember who the other woman worked for at all now, but certainly one of them worked for DWP for a long period of time, I presume that wasn't something that she just went into, as soon as she got off the boat anyway, so.

BH: Yeah, what would she have done for socialising or for leisure activities outside of working?

NG: She was a great one for going to dancehalls, she really liked going to a dancehall. She was a lifelong pioneer, but she would've gone to, she'd have known all of the, you know, the Buffalo at Round House in Camden, the Gresham in Lon-, in Holloway Road or, trying to think of the other clubs, but London was, had dancehalls pretty much all over the place at that period of time, from Kilburn down to, you know, west London and places like that, so there'd always be somewhere to go and go out, so that would've been her main source of socialising, and so it would've largely been within the Irish community.

BH: Ah right, so that would have been, yeah, with other Irish people from other counties and things or–

NG: Yeah, so, and you probably have come across the, you know, the idea of the dancehall so, you know, it was, even up till I was starting going out it was still a bit of an institution where you would have showbands coming over and showbands playing, sometimes terrible Irish country music and, yeah, the men and women would go there on a Saturday night and that would be their night out.

BH: Yeah, you mentioned there she was a pioneer. Was she devout as well, I mean, was she, was her church important to her?

NG: She's [pauses], yeah, she had a very, I always think it was a very bizarre Northern Catholic outlook on life, particularly post-1969 outlook on life, where they felt a very strong allegiance to the church because the church gave them quite a lot of identity, both at home and when they came over here, it became, you know, a symbol of who they were more than just a religion. However, so she would have, you know, she would have gone, certainly later in life, pretty much everyday.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

NG: She, yeah, yeah, she'd've gone everyday, health allowing her, minimum probably of three times a week. However, she would have had a great distrust of the Catholic hierarchy as well. I think she would have felt that she was, that the nationalist population in the North quite let down by the Catholic hierarchy in the way that they acted, so she would've had a great devotion, but also a great cynicism towards people in the church as well, towards leaders in the church more than people, the local parish priest of course was still quite a important figure, he was someone who was still to be respected and looked up to and listened to. I mean, our old PP in Manor House, he was, he was quite left wing anyway, so it was quite, so he was quite good to listen to and he would've, he would have talked quite a lot of sense in my mum's eyes anyway, so that would have been fine, but yes, she was devout in her own way.

BH: Okay, you said there that she had a degree of cynicism as well about the hierarchy and that she felt in some way let down by the Catholic church in the North in particular. What did that mean, let down, what, what way did she think that they'd let people down?

NG: [pauses] I think that she may well have believed that they didn't support, I'm not saying support republicanism, I'm more saying she didn't, that they didn't support the Catholic

people, there was probably more an element of them looking out for themselves than supporting Catholic people against discrimination or against, or against the excesses of the unionist state, so there's feeling that the Catholic church, as in the organisation, as in the body in itself, was always going to do okay and the people weren't necessarily listened to, that they weren't, that the church didn't do enough to speak out in terms of, you know, in terms of dealing with discrimination, dealing with ideas of why there was discrimination against, even though of course, you know, the juxtaposition is that people were being discriminated against because they were Catholic, yet the church wasn't prepared to, and they were, and because they were Catholic they were probably, and because that was their badge of identity it made them more devout and yet the church wouldn't speak out against the discrimination in any meaningful form, so yeah, I think that there was a deal of, you know, again, not, it's a hard term to define because it's not necessarily disillusionment because there's no, she's not stopping going, she's, but she is certainly saying that they're not doing enough and that they never did enough.

BH: Yeah, that's very interesting. I mean, there's always the argument that, you know, the Catholic church in Northern Ireland benefited to some extent from the divided nature of the society and the discrimination because who else have they got to turn to but the church, a more equal society might actually loosen the bonds between people and the church.

NG: Well, I'm currently re-reading *War and an Irish Town* by Eamonn McCann and that's very much the point that he makes in that, that the Catholic church were certainly beneficiaries of it throughout the history of modern Ireland, of north and south.

BH: Yeah, what about sort of a comparison with your dad's Catholicism and your mum's? Were there differences between how, for example, your dad looked at the world and how your mum looked at the world?

NG: My dad, I don't know about my dad, because my dad simply didn't speak, still doesn't talk a lot actually, so he never really discussed his faith. He would go to mass every Sunday, he'd quite happily go to mass every Sunday, but certainly as he got older and as the others got older he become a lot more devout. He goes most days now actually, but no, I don't know, he just never, I mean, he never, for some reason he never used to go up and take communion, and I don't know why that was, but that's just, that's changed, but certainly since he moved back, and again I don't know whether this was when my mum become quite ill, did he become more devout as a result of that or, you know, what happened, but certainly, you know, the main focus for religion in the house would have been from mum.

BH: Your mum.

NG: Yeah.

BH: Yeah, I'm wondering as well about, I mean, your mum grew up on the border effectively. Sometimes when you speak to Northern Catholics **[00:12:41]** in particular and they move over to England and they interact with other people from the South, from the west of Ireland, and even within the churches where they have Irish priests from the South, they notice a difference or in some way they say that, you know, that maybe they weren't

understood by the Southern people in the way maybe that they were back home. Did your mother ever talk about those distinctions?

NG: I heard her arguing about them with people from the South, yes, there was, I'd say there was certainly some, that she, that whenever she talked about the North, and again, this would be through the eighties, so this would be maybe not, when the Troubles had passed the peak, but still, you know, a very, still a very difficult time, she felt that there was very little understanding, very little insight into why what was happening was happening, you know, she talked about facing discrimination herself when she was younger and she felt that people from the South certainly didn't, did not understand that. I think she, I don't know if she ever articulated that, I think she may have found them a bit hypocritical as well, the fact that [pauses] the South had effectively become an independent country from using very similar methods to what was happening in the North at the time, yet they were happy to take advantage of that and then condemn Northerners for doing what they see, it was effectively what you did in the 1920s, so there is an element of that and certainly there was element of, you know, simply you don't understand what's it's like to be a Northern Catholic, you don't understand what it's like to face this kind of discrimination, to face this, to be belittled, so that was it, yeah.

BH: Yeah, I mean, I've heard this before that many people from the South, west of Ireland, economic migrants were repulsed by the violence once it started in the seventies and so on and couldn't really identify with it, and that from the perspective of lots of Northern people this was a very strange thing, you know.

NG: And [indecipherable], and it is, it is a very important point because there's, there is a huge difference between sympathy and empathy, you know, and I'm sure that they, some of them would have said well, you know, we can sympathise, it's not very, it's not right, but equally they couldn't understand, they couldn't really understand what was going on. In some ways that might be a bit of a surprise, equally though because they, you know, discrimination in terms of Irish people in Britain was still happening quite, on a quite widespread basis including, you know, there would be, you know, standard Paddy Irishman jokes on TV were, you know, up until the eighties were regularly Sat-, that was Saturday night fare, but in terms of, you know, in terms of the state that was set-up in order to maintain itself by discrimination, you know, the only way the Northern state had seen its continual existence was via discrimination, that wasn't something that was institutionalised in Britain in the same way that it had been in the North at that time.

BH: Sure, yeah, I mean, it sounds like, you mentioned there about Palestine, although that was much later, that was the 1980s when your mother was working in the synagogue. Did your mother have a politics, did she have a political outlook when she came to England or was this something which kind of developed later?

NG: I would, I'd say she had, she was a fervent supporter of a united Ireland, I think that had always been the case. I don't think that that was something that sprung up just after 1969, I think like, that it had always been the case. My [pauses], she doesn't come from, she wouldn't have come from what was traditionally a republican family.

BH: That was my next question, were her family traditional republicans?

NG: No, so, so my uncle was incredibly anti-republican, he hated, hated the republican movement, disliked republicans. I remember once years ago, '85, our Sinéad broke her leg when we were over, so our sister Sinéad broke her leg when we were over on the farm and it coincided with emergency services, the ambulances, I think they were on strike because of republican violence at the time, and they had to wait ages for, so the army had to come to pick her up and bring her to Enniskillen, and instead of showing any sympathy my uncle was simply standing, roaring about the IRA, you know, this is what happens, so he was incredibly anti-republican. One of the few things that I do know about my grandfather is he would've fought with the Free State army in the Civil War, and now mum says that he wasn't a, that he was never a Free Stater or particularly fervent in believing in a Free State, she said that he was fifteen, sixteen years old at the time and there was, you know, he'd grown up, he was on a farm and there was, and he was poor so there was an army there looking to recruit, so he could, yeah, so he could earn some money and that's why he joined the Free State army. My grandmother, from what mum says, she always, maybe, she always says maybe we got more of a, of a hardline look, of a, more of a republican look.

BH: Yeah, you mentioned a few times there about how maybe in conversation, that people from the South, your mother might have said something along the lines of well, you don't know what it's like for, to be a Catholic in the North. Did she recollect much about sectarianism and discrimination in the North when she was growing up? Is that something that she talked about?

NG: She never talked a major lot about it and I don't know whether, why, what reason that was. She referenced it before, she referenced, she certainly referenced certain things like, you know, she'd say that she'd be out on the, that she'd be out on the farm, helping, she'd be out on neighbours' farms helping them bring in the hay or something like that and then, you know, she'd go home and get changed to go out and she'd be cycling up the road and the same neighbours would be in uniforms, stopping her, saying who are you, where are you going, you know, which, it's that kind of petty, nasty intimidation that she found particularly difficult to come to terms with.

BH: Yeah, I take it from that then that the two other girls that she migrated over with were also from the Catholic community in Northern Ireland?

NG: Yes, that's right, yeah.

BH: I have heard some stories actually where there have been mixed groups and things, moving over. When were you born then?

NG: Born in 1974.

BH: 1974, yeah, and was that in London, yeah?

NG: Yeah, I was born, where was I born [pauses], I can't remember actually, obviously I can't remember where I was born, but yeah, I can't remember the name of the hospital, but it was in Islington.

BH: Islington, yeah, and where did you go to school at then?

NG: Went to school at a school called St Joan of Arc in Highbury, that was my primary school, and then secondary school was St Thomas More's in Wood Green in north London.

BH: Okay, and you mentioned you have a brother or sister there, did you say?

NG: Two sisters.

BH: Two sisters, yeah.

NG: Two sisters, yeah, Siobhán and Sinéad.

BH: And were they before you or after you?

NG: Both of them are older than me.

BH: Both of them older than you, okay, and what are your memories then of growing up in London? Did you, were they good memories or–?

NG: Yeah, yeah, I mean, like, a relatively happy childhood. I, so, my memories are mainly going to watch Arsenal play and, what else did we do [pauses], you know, usual, it's the usual family things, the park, you know, park on Sunday, going to mass on Sunday, going to school, coming home, didn't have a car or anything like that, so wouldn't necessarily be going out to the seaside or anything like that. Summer was always spent in Fermanagh, so it was from the day before school broke up, we went over on the night boat–

BH: Is that right, yeah?

NG: And we'd come back the weekend beforehand, I always think, I always think well, we were just basically slave labour over there, bringing in hay and things like that, but it was, you know, it was relatively enjoyable. I mean, the thing about I suppose Fermanagh was when you get slightly older and, you know, you've very little forms of transportation, you're stuck up on a farm in the middle of nowhere, it does become a bit of a drag, that was a bit of a drag, so yeah, what else did we do when we were young, that was really it.

BH: What about Irishness then? I mean, you've talked about going back on holidays. Did you have a sense of yourself as having a kind of Irish background when you were growing up?

NG: It was a central part of your identity when you were growing up, I mean, so you went to school, pretty much I'd say fifty per cent of the kids were of a similar background to me, and actually, ironically enough, when people talk about mass migration now, we had fifty per cent Irish plus Italians, Spanish and Jamaican and Nigerian kids, and English kids, well, kids

with two English parents were, you know, I can't really remember that many of them being there, being at the school, so that was, so you would have had, you know, you'd have had a six-week summer holiday, you'd have had the Irish festival up in Roundwood Park in Willesden, would be, would be one of the big events that you'd go to in the year, **[00:22:41]** you had, you know, whenever the rugby was on TV you were supporting Ireland over whoever, you supported the Republic of Ireland team, I still do, and the other thing was you supported Glasgow Celtic, so that was, they were the tenets of your identity, and you went to school, and you went to school with people who looked like or very, very similar to you or whose, yeah, whose sense of identity was shaped in a very similar way, yeah.

BH: Similar way, okay, so that's quite interesting, it would have been the Republic of Ireland, but not Northern Ireland you would have supported on TV.

NG: No, although I do remember in '82 mum cheering when the North scored against Spain, I sat there very stony faced [laughs], but yeah, so she, yeah, she was cheering them on then, but, I mean, I've spoken to lads since then from the North and they've said, yeah, we all cheered on the North at the time, and it become, that become a lot more divisive later on, yeah.

BH: Yeah, Celtic's another thing. I mean, that's a very common thing in Northern Ireland, people support Rangers or they support Celtic. I haven't encountered as much amongst kind of second-generation English people in like, Manchester and so on. Was that something that would've been sort of distinctive to your family or would that have been the other second-generation kids as well?

NG: Well, no, it was, it's quite bizarre actually. I was, so, grew up, grew up near Arsenal, I started supporting Arsenal in 1979, Arsenal were playing Man United in the cup final and one of the reasons that we basically supported Arsenal was because they had so many Irish players, so you had the geography, but we all knew, you know, Jennings and Nelson and Rice and O'Leary and Stapleton and Brady, we all knew that they were Irish players and we knew that they would, that we should support Arsenal because of that. Then I was watching *Football Focus* one day and Arsenal were crap at the time and they were showing highlights from the previous week's Scottish football, and I support, I decided I'd be an Aberdeen fan, cos Aberdeen had a really good team, it was, they was Alex Ferguson's side, so yeah, so, and they were, they were beating Celtic, and it's the one of the few times mum ever said anything to me about football, she said no, no, no, no, no, you're supporting Celtic and that's it, so that was it. Other kids, yes, most of my, yeah, pretty much all my mates, whichever part of Ireland they were from, were Celtic fans.

BH: Is that right?

NG: It was, it was, yeah, it was, we looked at it as a genuine part of the identity, it was, you know, you know, was something that was, if we ever seen them on TV, you know, whenever there was, you know, they'd play an English team in Europe like, they played Forest in '84, there was loads of tricolours in the crowds, so we identified with it–

BH: Identified with that, yeah.

NG: Identified with it quite quickly and quite easily. Of course, football coverage being in London, being very English-centric, we didn't know, we knew bits and pieces of what was happening, we didn't know a great deal about it, but yeah, it would, but certainly it's, it's a part of, of, as identity, yeah.

BH: Yeah, what about the church then when you were growing up? I mean, obviously you went to a Catholic school, so there's the contact there, and you said you went to mass. Were these kind of things which were effectively obligatory routines or was there a genuine kind of like, piety, if you get me?

NG: I was, I think I was a mixture of both, I was a mixture of both, yes, there was routine, I still go to mass pretty much every week now, but there was, yeah, so there was, this is Sunday, it's now half eleven, you have to be getting out the house and going to mass, and when you come home there'll be Sunday dinner and that would be, you know, that's your Sunday, however, yeah, I was quite a pious kid actually, I was very, I was a bit of a [indecipherable] when I was young, so yeah, I was an altar boy and I was very, very, I was quite virtuous, I don't know what happened to me in later life, but yeah, so yeah.

BH: Yeah, what about the Troubles itself then, both in Britain and in Northern Ireland? So you mentioned there you spent every summer going to Fermanagh. In those trips, the holiday trips back to Fermanagh, did you encounter anything to do with the Troubles?

NG: I mean [pauses], when you, I'd say when you go to a border area, it was very strange because everything is shaped by the Troubles, everything is shaped by where you go, what you do, but because of the nature of the border area, you seldom seen troops. So we seen, we seen troops going over the border when we're going into Ballyconnell or if we're going down to Cavan. It limited us to some extent because we could only go down the approved roads in the end, the rest of them were all blown up, so you couldn't, so there were certain towns that were just too difficult to get to, so you couldn't, yeah, you couldn't easily go to somewhere like Swanlinbar because the backroads were, were, you couldn't go through there [pauses]. I remember mum being seething once actually when we were, I was, what was I doing, I was actually playing soldiers, I was [laughs], not the right area to do it, but yeah, we were, so I was sitting in my bunker with all these sandbags that I'd made, cos we had a sandpit and plastic bags, and then the next thing you know is a big helicopter arrived on the horizon, troops were very, you know, personable, but all in the house, everyone had to go in the house and just sit there and wait and wait and wait and wait till they'd searched the entire farm, and mum wasn't very happy about that, we were quite nervous as well becau-, well, because this seemed to like, feel like a bit of petty intimidation. They would've, you would have thought that they'd known my uncle's politics and, you know, that he wouldn't have had anything around the farm or anything like that. So in terms of that it was, it was shaped and, you know, you'd be a bit more wary about going out and going out around marching season, as I say, you know, we were over there for marching season and the rest of it, so, but around, certainly around the seventh to the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, even though there wasn't really anything in Derrylin as far as I know, there'd be quite a wariness about that.

BH: I mean, that's quite an interesting sort of memory there, you're playing at being soldiers, sandbags and things and a helicopter's coming down [laughs]. What did you think about that? Like, did you like, I suppose I can remember soldiers when I was growing up and I was probably quite fascinated by like, the guns and things like that and thought this was, you know, curious about this. What did you think of these kind of events, like?

NG: I think, because there're just always helicopters overhead, it was just, you know, a constant noise around, there was always helicopters, so actually seeing, yeah, you're more, when one lands right next to you, cos you're so used to seeing them in the sky you're just more used to them, and the troops normally, you know, whenever, whenever they heard an accent, our accents going over the border, they were actually quite, you know, quite pleased to hear an English accent, you know.

BH: That's very interesting, yeah.

NG: They would want to sit and talk, to stop and talk for a bit, even though mum wouldn't necessarily want to talk to them. She always hated, well, she hated them, disliked them. She always said that when I was young one of them did stick a gun up near my head when we were stopped at a checkpoint.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

NG: So yeah, I was on her knee in the front of the old Hillman Hunter. I was too young to remember that now, but, I wasn't so old, about three or four or something like that and that did really scar her afterwards.

BH: I mean, that's a very interesting idea that after that, when they would hear, as you got older, they hear your English accents and to the soldiers that's actually a sign of familiarity like, in this environment where they're in, where they probably feel quite displaced, but this was a sign of home almost, like.

NG: Exactly, yeah, there was something, you know, there was someone who sounded familiar, who wasn't, you know, get out the car, take everything out the car, you know, that kind of, you know, everything is a confrontation to, because of, you know, because you're in this country with people who speak slightly different and different ways and then you hear someone who has a London accent, particularly, you know, if you're someone from East End of London and you hear some kids talking in the back, you know, that's, that's going to spark something off.

BH: What about in Fermanagh, what about your accent then within Fermanagh more generally? Because obviously those borderlands, well, they've been seen as being highly politicised, in fact, areas where, you know, there have been republican strongholds to some extent, so I'm just wondering, did you have interactions with other locals, other kids, cousins, things like that?

NG: Yeah, we never really had any problems like that, that is actually something I heard a bit more in Donegal than I ever did in the North.

BH: Oh is that right?

NG: Yeah, I tended to go to Donegal when I was, when I was a bit older because dad would just always work throughout the summer, so it started, so we started going back about 1990, so they had a bit of gyp from people about the accent over there, but I can't really remember anything, so you're seven, eight years old, you're out with kids, running round the field or doing something like that, they're just, you know, they're just happy, you're a bit of a novelty. Having said that though, and I've, you know, carrying that on, I have, **[00:32:41]** when I go and watch Ireland play I, you often hear from people from the Republic, you know, a wee bit of talk about your accent, a wee bit of talk about plastics, something like that, it's not something I've ever really encountered from people from the North.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

NG: They seem to be a lot more open, a lot more accepting of, you know, of where you're from, that kind of thing, you know, you just sit down and talk about football with them, whereas people from the South would always seem to have a bit of a chip on their shoulder.

BH: That's interesting, yeah, what about then the Troubles in London? Because obviously London, you know, was really the most bombed city in England and from what I've read about it it did generate hostility and things like that. Did you have any sense when you were growing up of the Troubles having an impact on your childhood, on your adolescence?

NG: I can't remember anything major when I was growing up, but again that may be because we were in quite a sealed society. We were, you know, we went from, you know, we went from home to school and I suppose as you get older, when you're seven or eight, when the worst of it was happening, when Harrods or Hyde Park would happen, it was, we'd have been too young really to know or really to understand. When you were older and things like Enniskillen happened, even though that wasn't in London, that seemed to probably have more of a mark, an effect on, you know, people, people talking about it, people asking about it all, people wanting to know why it happened, people saying, you know, you know, people coming out openly against it, but, and that would be, and that would be in school, but there was never really any bullying or intimidation or, you know, anything like that, but again you're in that kind of closed society where it'd be very difficult for other Irish kids to start bullying Irish kids about it or having a go about it, and I don't know if it was that people just didn't know about the North, they, other kids at school didn't really know about it and they didn't [pauses], they didn't ask about it particularly, I don't think that a lot of them necessarily wanted to know about it. There'd be a bit of curiosity there occasionally, but that would be it now, and if, but then if you started talking about, you know, if you started talking about, you know, discrimination towards this, that and the other, then they didn't really want to know about it, yeah.

BH: Well, that was going to be my next question, you know, obviously growing up with a mother from the North and spending summer holidays in Fermanagh, it sounds like you had some understanding of the politics of the North.

NG: Yeah, my family, I mean, my earliest memories I think are probably the hunger strikes, so, you know, I would've understood to a certain extent that there was people who were refusing food. I didn't necessarily know, you know, I didn't necessarily understand the five demands or anything like that, but I understood that they were, that they were in favour of a united Ireland, so, you know, you know, you're just five or six years old it's a pretty basic understanding, but it's, so that's, and I look at my kids now and I keep on thinking why don't you, you know, why don't you understand something about politics, this, you know, because I was, I was, but I was always interested in politics anyway.

BH: Well, you see that was my, that was my question. Did you sort of, you know, did you ask your mother about, what's this about, kind of thing, like?

NG: She talked about, we asked about it [pauses], no, because it would have, it's quite difficult because I was at, my grandmother died around the time that, might've been she died two days before or two days after Bobby Sands died, and that was in Enniskillen, so, you know, his constituency, so there would have been quite a lot of strong feeling around there at the time and that would've been brought up and that would have been brought back, that would've been certainly mentioned and commented on, but because of that the news was always on as well, you know, because it was such an important moment in modern Irish history, the news was always on and we were sitting watching it, we would take this kind of stuff in and we would have began to develop an understanding of what was going on and maybe formed embryonic opinions at the time on what, you know, what do we think is right, what do we think is wrong. Now we wouldn't necessarily be able to say, you know, I support the IRA or I don't support the IRA or anything like that, but we would have sort of, we'd come to an early conclusion about, you know, I support a united Ireland to this day, that would have been, that would have, something I would've understood at that time, but any, of course there wouldn't be any more sophisticated political ideas than that, but I think what that gave me was like, maybe an early start on, you know, looking at things and reading things and trying to understand what was going on, and then what, you know, we're going to, you know, we're going to Ballyconnell for, on August the fifteenth, you know, why is there such a big queue, why are all the Catholics having to go over the border to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption, you know, why isn't it something that happens somewhere else, why are they, why do they sort of appear to be stopping so many more cars than they normally would, that kind of thing, so then, you know, you've, so because you, because you're, because something's coming into your life at a relatively early age it just gives you a head start on other people I suppose, more than anything else.

BH: Was there anything else? So you're gradually becoming aware of things in a sense and you had those set of connections. Was there any particular event or a particular publication or anything like that which kind of really, you know, spurred you on in trying to learn more about it as you got older?

NG: Hmm, was there any events [pauses], no, I think I, I think the events that probably most affected me in terms of politics would have been the miners' strike after that.

BH: It's funny, somebody else said that. Say a bit about that, the miners' strike.

NG: Because it was, I mean, you know, so we grew up in a huge housing estate, right, so although my dad did, you know, a job that's not necessarily long term, there's always work for him to do, so you'd have relatively secure employment, so we've never been particularly poor, but we grew up on a housing estate, so we knew what, so we understood that there was a difference between rich and poor, which, you know, and with Ireland as well we understood that there was power structures and ways that society was structured, and we understood that what this normally meant was that the powerful would kind, would always look to profit and always look to make as much money as they could irrelevant of who they harmed in the process, and then the miners' strike comes along and this seems to be the crystallisation of this exact idea where you have people who are, you know, who essentially just want to do a day's work, who want to earn money for their family, to keep their family afloat, and you have a government that is deliberately, is deliberately looking to end those people's livelihoods, so this more than anything becomes a crystallisation of an idea to say right, do you know, there's something rotten about the way this society's structured in that it, in that it, in that it takes away rights and dignity of working people or of the poorest in society and simply gives them rights and dignity to the richest in society, so that they can perpetuate the system over and over again.

BH: That's really interesting. So that kind of way of understanding the miners' strike, why it was happening and the power imbalances in that, in some way merges into the understanding about Irish politics too.

NG: Yeah, it does becau-, well, it's probably in some ways quite a naïve understanding of Irish politics because there is, you know, the more you read about, the more you find out about it, the more you understand that them power structures are, exist in completely different ways in Ireland, they existed to a certain extent in the way I've described, however, there's also differences in the way that we talked about before, the power of the Catholic church and how the Catholic church maintain that power. But certainly it reflected in our understanding of what was, what was, what had occurred in the North or what was occurring in the North, what was occurring in the North, I wouldn't have said that I would've had a great deal of understanding of 1922 up to 1969 at the time, but, you know, we would've been aware of things like gerrymandering in Derry and the, and we would've been aware that Catholics didn't have the same voting rights for a long period of time and that the state was set up in a certain way, so we understood, yeah, we were taught in a relatively young way to understand power structures and we were taught and we, my dad never expressed political opinions, my mum would have been very anti-Thatcher, but in truth I don't think she **[00:42:41]** needed to be anti-Thatcher for us to be anti-Thatcher in the house.

BH: Sure, yeah, well, that, my next question was going to be, you kept saying we, who was the we that you were referring to? Is that your family we or are you talking about other people outside of that?

NG: I probably, well, my, just trying to think, it probably would be [pauses], it probably would've been myself and, yeah, no, myself and my two sisters, myself and my two sisters.

BH: Yeah, I should've asked you more about your sisters, you know, were they an influence in terms of these things we're talking about? Were they interested in Irish politics and the miners' strikes and these things?

NG: They would have a certain interest in Irish politics, but I don't think a great deal of interest, not as much as me. I don't think they would have been as interested as I was, but they were certainly very interested in politics, both, still to this day quite left wing in their views, but, no they would've had strong views around the miners' strike, very similar to my views. What would their views have been on the North, they would have, yeah, they would've said that they would've, again, believed in a united Ireland, believed the way society was set up was wrong and, yeah, it had been discriminatory, so, you know, yeah.

BH: Okay, you would've been quite young in the miners' strike, wouldn't you?

NG: Miners' strike was '84, '85, so ten to eleven.

BH: Ten to eleven, yeah, and you were already thinking about politics at that age, as in, why do you think you were more interested than, for example, your sisters?

NG: I wouldn't say I was more interested in politics, I was more interested in Irish politics than politics in general. They were quite interested in politics, particularly my older sister Siobhán. Why was I more interested in Irish politics, I don't know, I actually don't know, did they [pauses], was the violence difficult for them to deal with, it wasn't easy for anyone of any age to deal with, I just don't think it fascinated them as much as it fascinated me. I mean, you know, Irish history is quite fascinating, I just find Irish history fascinating anyway, I find the American Civil War history fascinating, I find general bits of history fascinating, so I possibly just found it to be something that stimulated my mind more than they would have done. They, you know, my sister, certainly my older sister Siobhán would have been interested in, you know, feminist politics, things like that. At quite a young age I remember her writing an article for her school newsletter about it. In my mum's bizarre way she used to have to say she would have been quite left wing, but she, equally in her Catholic ways she would have tut tutted about the article [laughs].

BH: Sure, yeah, a social conservatism, associated with the religion as well, like.

NG: Yes, yes, exactly.

BH: Lots of second-generation people I know, perhaps maybe who were born a bit before you, you know, themselves, their route into kind of to some extent reflecting about their Irish heritage was the Troubles, in the sense that they joined groups like Troops Out and they became involved in the Irish in Britain Representation Group, these kinds of things. Were you involved in any activisms or things like that whenever you were growing up?

NG: No, no, I just liked to shout at my mum quite a lot [laughs]. No, my first, the first thing I did with the Irish community was to volunteer for the Irish centre in Camden Town, actually, sorry, just to rewind a wee bit, so let's talk about one of my earliest memories, one of my formative memories about politics, this wouldn't necessarily be a formative memory about

politics, but certainly it struck me a lot later about my parents' politics is that when I was five I think it was I remember being brought to the Camden Irish Centre and my mum and dad were quite looking forward to going, and it was a political talk, so of course me and my sisters were bored after about two minutes, but it was, as I say, it was, so it was Peadar O'Donnell who was speaking there, so that and that would, you know, I have no idea why someone like Peadar O'Donnell stuck in my mind, but it's probably just the amount of smoke that was in the room at the time that, that I really remember, but yeah, it would be kind of that they had to go to this, that this was really important that they went to see this man speaking and, yeah, so and, yeah, so, I mean, Peadar O'Donnell would've, he would've taught on Arranmore as well, so my dad would've known his politics, so I presume that, I know we've not talked about dad's politics at all, he's never really talked, doesn't really talk about them either, but, you know, that, that indicates a certain left-wing ideology.

BH: Yeah, a socialist republican.

NG: Exactly, yeah, yeah, so mum would've sort of certainly looked forward to seeing someone like that.

BH: So, I mean, that does kind of suggest that your parents were quite politically engaged or at least your mum was anyway. I can imagine there would be a lot of, a lot of Irish people [interrupted by phone ringtone]. Is that you? [ringtone continues for several seconds]. Is that an alarm or something?

NG: I do not know, I just turned it off, sorry [laughs], someone's trying to ring me, I don't know, it's my work phone, so don't know–

BH: Don't know anybody who's ringing you at this time.

NG: Exactly, yeah.

BH: No, I was just saying that I can imagine like, you know, just to go back to that kind of social conservatism of a lot of Irish Catholics in England, who may not have went to a political talk by Peadar O'Donnell in the Irish centre, you know, but your parents were interested in that.

NG: Yeah, yeah, I mean, I think mum was always, veered on a weekly or daily basis between a social conservatism and radical socialism. My dad, as I say, my dad on the other hand never, I can't remember him ever expressing an interest in it. Much to my annoyance now be buys the *Irish Independent* on a daily basis, but, so that indicates, you know, complete conservatism to me anyway, but yeah, so at a certain time that, you know, that's the kind of thing that they would have [pauses], whether it was because of Peadar O'Donnell views or whether it was because he had taken part in the Easter Rising or whatever it was that, you know, that, you know, that, they never really said what–

BH: What attracted them to him.

NG: Exactly, yeah, yeah.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

NG: I suppose for dad it was, he was from Donegal and that was, you know, sort of–

BH: Sure, as you got older then were you interested in school? Like, was education something you were interested in?

NG: Yeah, yeah, I suppose as, like most boys I liked, you know, I liked football and music and I did okayish, no, I did well at school, I very much veered towards humanities rather than maths and stuff like that.

BH: Well, that was my next question, which subjects were you interested in?

NG: History, so, very much history, sociology, politics, stuff like that, I was very much interested in that, I'm still quite interested in to this day, but that would have been it. I would have been, I suppose my politics haven't drifted that much since I was at school, you know, Mohammad Ali has that phrase about, what's it, someone who believes the same thing at fifty that they believe at twenty hasn't lived, and I just think no, I got there a lot earlier than anyone else, so I knew, you know, I had ideas about social justice and things like that and I've not found anything in the world really to make me reassess my values that much.

BH: Okay, where do you think those social justice values came from at such an early age? I mean, you sort of suggested that maybe your friends and things weren't necessarily as, you know, they weren't that interested in Northern Ireland whenever, you know, you tried to talk to them about this kind of thing.

NG: No, as I say, they weren't, a lot of my mates in the early half of secondary school would have been quite conservative, quite right wing. It's only in later in school that I met mates who were equally, you know, equally left wing as me, and certainly then when I left school I was, you know, pretty much all my friends would be, you know, trade union members, they would be socialists, they would share very similar views to myself, but my, yeah, but I'd certainly stand my ground and I would think about what I believed in when I was at school and, you know, that sense of social justice, well, it probably did come from partly my upbringing. I think our parish priest was quite left wing, so it would have come from my Catholicism as well, from that, from that strand of Catholicism, you know, and [pauses] yeah, the way you see the world round you, so effectively, you know, if you're the child of people who are immigrants and you're growing up where I'm growing up, I find it hard to believe that, you know, people could be anything but left wing in their outlook, it's, you know, you're a product in some ways of your society, there's a reason that people who go to Eton believe what they do because, you know, that's their, that's the outlook they've been brought up with and the outlook I've been brought up with **[00:52:41]** is something, it's a mirror image to that and it's made me interested in what happens round the world.

BH: As you got older then did you continue to go back to Northern Ireland, to Fermanagh?

NG: For a while, for a while I stopped, actually for a good long while I stopped, but that was more to do with, as I've said before, it's, you know, I still can't drive to this day, so, you know, we had no mode of transport and we're stuck on that farm halfway up a hill, it was yeah, it's like, about three, four miles into Derrylin and five, six miles from Ballyconnell, so, you know, there was effectively nothing to do, so it was more boredom than anything else that stopped me. When I started going back to Ireland it was to go back to Arranmore. I hadn't been there in years and it was 1990, so it was just after the 1990 World Cup and it was up, so it was up where my dad's from, it's up near where Packie Bonner's from, who was of course the big hero of 1990, and I was fifteen and I was discovering girls and beer, and Arranmore was the perfect place to discover girls and beer at the time, so that, so that, I'd never not been interested in Ireland during that time, but I just hadn't, you know, we just hadn't gone back, and after that, you know, I started going, that triggered me into going back regularly. I didn't start going back to Fermanagh for a good few years after that, although I would have gone to the North a bit more, I knew people from Sixmilecross.

BH: Oh yeah.

NG: So yeah, people from there, yeah, so I'd gone there a couple of times as well.

BH: You knew people from there?

NG: From Sixmilecross, yeah.

BH: And how do you, were they relatives?

NG: One of them was a trainee priest at our, in our parish, so we're really good friends with him, so I went there a few times to discover the delights of [indecipherable] and a night out in Omagh and places like that, so yeah, it, so I really enjoyed it. I'm trying to think whether I've gone to other places in the North, no, so I knew Sixmilecross for a while and then the next time I went to the North would have been, and this would have been well after the Troubles had finished, it would have been, I was finally going back to Fermanagh and I went up to Belfast for a day to have a nosey around and go to a Gaelic football match and that was, and, you know, from then I started, I've gone back to the North, yeah, I've gone back to the North regularly.

BH: Yeah, what were you doing at this, during those years, later on in the nineties and so on, after you left school what did you do? Did you get a job, go to university, college or–?

NG: Yeah, so, went to university and flunked that cos I couldn't stand it.

BH: Where did you go, by the way? I'll just bring this close enough to you.

NG: That's alright. Queen Mary and Westfield down in, down east, down the East End, and, so I did history there for a bit. I'd done history, politics and sociology as A-levels and then went Queen Mary and Westfield. I'd been working part-time at Sainsbury's for a while and then I [interrupted by ringing phone] started volunteering at the London Irish Centre up in Camden Town for a while, and I think it was strange, I went to, what did I do, so [pauses]

this, so the father of an ex-girlfriend of mine passed away and I went up to the funeral, and on the way back from the funeral I bought the *Irish Post* and I stopped in for a pint, and I was reading the *Post* and there was a bit about, at the funeral there was the gospel saying, you know, you know, when, that, when I was in prison did you come and visit me, that one, so I was sitting there having a pint and reading the *Irish Post* and there was a bit about the London Irish Centre in it and saying like, that they, you know, it was an interview with the person who's managing it saying that they need volunteers, so this gospel was ringing in my ears so I just started volunteering with them for a while, for a very short while cos then I shortly after that I got a job working at a hostel in Kilburn that was run by a charity called Irish Centre Housing.

BH: Oh yes, yeah.

NG: Yeah, so that was to and that was set up to, initially set up to support just Irish lads coming off the boat and landing into Euston station, so initially it was based up at the London Irish Centre and then they moved up to Quex Road in Kilburn for a, I think it's, well, I think the hostel's still there, but the company's name's changed now.

BH: Yeah, why did you leave university then? Why did you not, you know, enjoy it?

NG: I, I don't know, I just couldn't, I couldn't get to grips with doing it. I found some of the subjects were quite dull and I couldn't stand doing Tudor history and stuff like that. I think as well, I think freedom, I couldn't, because of, because school's quite regimented, this sudden thing about having freedom and, you know, turning up when you need to turn up to and, you know, as long as your, as long your essays are in and of good quality then that's fine, so I couldn't, I just couldn't do that, I found that quite difficult, yeah.

BH: Did you continue both then and then afterwards when you started to volunteer at the Irish centre, were you still engaging with what was happening in Northern Ireland or were your politics moving in different pathways at this stage?

NG: No, I suppose it's always been quite a central part because even, so, I mean, even when I'm not going to Ireland, in that period I'm not going to Ireland, I'm still going to places like the, so you start going out, where do you start going out to, you start going out to the Gresham ballroom and that's an old Irish dancehall, so, so even though you're not physically being in Ireland a lot of your life revolves around Irish culture, it's where your mates go to, that kind of thing, so that's–

BH: Would most of your mates have also been second-generation Irish?

NG: Oh pretty, yeah, to this day pretty much, yeah, pretty much all of them are now, I ended up, you change, you have different mates at school and at work and things like that, but the lads who I've gone out with for a pint and that they're pretty much all second-generation Irish, so yeah, so that kind, so you still had an interest in the Irish identity and at that time it was difficult not to, if you were from our background it was very difficult not to have an interest in it because it probably moved to the period of the end game of the Troubles, so it moved to probably the most, not the most violent, but the most, some of the

most shocking incidents, so your Shankill bombings, your Warringtons, Greysteels and things like that were occurring at the time, so it was difficult not to maintain an interest in it and not to maintain a, you know, a view on what was going on at the time, so it was, so yeah, so it wouldn't, that wouldn't change, in fact, if anything I've become more interested because the more desperately you see that some form of solution needs to be found, the more interested you become into it. I'm trying to think if you could get the *Irish News* over here at that time as well, I think probably yeah, you could've got the *Irish News*, so I probably was reading the *Irish News* quite a bit as well, so I was probably actually, probably a bit better informed from reading the *Irish News*, if it makes you better informed about anything, but yeah, that's–

BH: And this interest which was kind of enhanced to some extent by the sort of, you know, tit-for-tat murders and things coming up towards the peace process, was that something specific to you, as in, were you personally very interested in it or would this have been something that when you're working in the Irish centre or going out with your friends, would everybody have been talking about it or is it more just you're thinking about it?

NG: I'd certainly talk to some of my friends about it because you couldn't, you know, you couldn't not, I remember going out the day after the Shankill bombing and when, and sitting in a pub with, that's right, cos we'd gone out to watch Donegal playing Derry in a national league match and it had to be called off because they were so worried about the threat of retaliation, so me and my mate were sitting in the pub and, you know, you couldn't not talk about it, it was, you know, it was one of the most central things, it's the country where, you know, where my roots are, where his roots are so, you know, the, the, like I say, it would be almost farcical, even though we had lots of other things in common, you know, it's like, you know, music and football and things like that, we'd still, you know, like, because his culture, his identity is, you know, very similar to mine, and the way that he looks at Ireland's very similar to the way I look at Ireland, yeah, it would have been ridiculous to ignore it.

BH: Sure, I mean, you used the word there, roots, and that you and your friend would have had your roots in Northern Ireland or Irish culture. To some extent, you have roots in English culture as well, in the sense that you've grown up there. Was there ever any situ-, context in which those two things came into conflict in the sense of, you know, being forced into a situation where you have to reconcile Englishness with, in particular, politicised Irishness in the North, you know, anything like that?

NG: No, no, no, no, I'm a Catholic communist, the one thing I believe in is certainty [laughs], so no, **[01:02:41]** I mean, you know, we'd, you know, you'd had this path of like, this was your identity, therefore, I've never really felt any sort of English identity, and why it might, you know, my identity has been pretty much defined by, you know, where my parents are from and a romanticisation, you know, and I'm well aware it's a romanticisation, of Ireland, but because of, you know, because of the way then you're brought up, because of the mates that you have, you know, because of the pubs you go to, because of the clubs you go to English is actually, despite the fact you're living here, bizarrely enough it doesn't really, really impinge on you that much, and then, so then when you start, I suppose branching out, so when you go to, you stop going to dancehalls and you go to nightclubs and them nightclubs are, you know, generally indie music nightclubs and things like that. Now it was

probably [pauses], it was the music that was playing, there's probably very little English culture about it, you know, I mean, say, they might have played the Smiths, the Smiths are probably a quintessentially British band, but, you know, you look at Morrissey, Marr, Rourke and Joyce, you know, they're all second-generation Irish, so that's, that element of culture still remains in it. In terms of things like, you know, Ireland playing England at football, you know, one of the happiest days of my life was when we beat them one-nil in Euro '88, that kind of thing, so there was, you know, in terms of Englishness, you know, I suppose the only thing that people ever say is, you know, people try and take the rise and say, you know, you know, you are English, but other people don't really get to define who I am and what I am, so no.

BH: Yeah, I mean, you know, there's always these stories, there are stories about, you know, second-generation Irish kids like, in Glasgow, but also English background as well, you know, who join the British Army in, you know, the seventies and they were sent to Northern Ireland, so they've maybe parents from the North living in England and they're standing, you know, in Belfast with a gun, in west Belfast, you know, and you think what did that person do with that situation kind of thing, like, how did they–?

NG: I mean, there's a famous story about, do you remember the, so Ireland played England in '95, it was a famous game at Lansdowne Road, and one of the lads who was prosecuted for that, for rioting, left, left the courthouse in Dublin, went straight, got on a train to Waterford to see his folks, you know, it was that kind of, yeah, some people do, some people do absorb that, that identity. I often wonder if it is actually a reflection of a left-wing view as well, because I suppose it makes you less [pauses], less nationalistic in terms of, it's probably quite difficult for some English left-wing people to reconcile their politics and their nationality because of the effects of empire, you know, that makes it quite difficult, although, you know, I do understand the kind of Billy Bragg, Tony Benn, you know, this, noblest of the English working-class is a great idea and a great, you know, great identity, the foundations of the trade union movements are all quite, are all very important, but I think in terms of me, as well as, you know, everything else, being left wing made it slightly more easy for me to not have to worry about an English identity.

BH: That's a fantastic insight, I've never actually thought about that, so something like, you know, a British soldier dies in Northern Ireland, who was shot by somebody in Fermanagh or something like that, on the one hand, your sympathies could lie on the Irish side because of your Irish heritage, but even taking that out of the equation, because of an attitude towards, a left-wing attitude towards militarism and the state, already, irrespective of Irishness, that would militate against identifying with the British Army or anything like that.

NG: I don't think it's a particularly uncommon thing, you know, if you speak to, you know, left-wing people in general I think that, you know, in certain circumstances Irish republicanism was very overly romanticised in terms of like, you know, they would have viewed it as standing up against the state and of course because of their history, Germany, the German left, very anti-, very anti-nationalistic, so they wouldn't have necessarily viewed republicanism in terms of a nationalist idea, they would have viewed it very much in terms of anti-imperialism as being the first thing, so that, so I think that does happen on the left quite a lot, that people do shrug when a British soldier dies, you know, unfortunately I think

that it's, that I just have the view that it's a tragedy for the gunman and obviously a bigger tragedy for the soldier that, you know, that someone felt that there was no alternative in life but to join the army and go out to someone else's country, which is generally the history of the British Army.

BH: Yeah, sure, where you lived like, you said you, is it an estate you grew up on, is that right, yeah?

NG: Yeah.

BH: You would have been interacting obviously with lots of other second-generation Irish people in school. What about on the estate? Was it more mixed, as in, would there have been, I suppose, Protestant English kids, Protestant English families living in the area?

NG: I suppose there would be, there would've been folk from Protestant English families living in the area and, you know, I mean, you know, people at the end, living at the end of our landing was an old couple and they were absolutely lovely, you know, I would sit and chat to them and they'd always treat us. There was a few Irish kids on the estate, few kids from, second-generation Jamaican kids on the estate, but in truth I didn't really actually mix with too many people on the estate, now occasionally we used to go out and play, in terms of that I don't think I'd hardly ever come up to it, you know.

BH: Yeah, I was just going to ask, was there ever any kind of like, discussion between neighbours about these kind of things? I've heard stories before on previous projects where you've literally had, you know, Irish people living in this house and then in the house next door there are neighbours and quite good friends, but their son has joined the army and went to Northern Ireland and this creates real problems, you know. Was there ever anything like that, you know?

NG: No, even at the height of the problems, there was, there was no problems, there was a lad two doors down who'd served with the British Army, probably in the First World War, First or Second I can't remember, I presume by his age it probably would have been the First, and, you know, there was never any problems with him, he was an old Welsh lad, so no, I can't remember certainly any problems on the estate. There used to be a few, I remember after Enniskillen there was barbed comments just made loudly in general by some old dears on the bus and things like that, but, that was, you know, I heard anti-Irish sentiment and, you know, being, received a smack in the chops for having a tricolour occasionally, but that was, you know, but in terms of other kids on the estate, even, it wouldn't really come up in conversation, I suppose the thing about going to school is because you spend a lot more time with people, you know, and eventually it gets round to that kind of conversation, then as you grow older and you go onto secondary school it becomes, you know, as you forma-, as your ideas become a lot more formulated, you know, you talk about them with other kids.

BH: Yeah, yeah, and presumably in that environment it's reasonably receptive, as in like, if it's a Catholic school and there's other kids of Irish background then it's reasonably safe to sort of talk about this kind of politics there?

NG: Nah, well, actually my best mate of many years at school was, was extremely right wing, I'd probably–

BH: Really?

NG: Say, say he's a fascist actually and, yeah, and I don't think he would've, he would particularly deny that either, and he knew what my–

BH: And he was of Irish background?

NG: No, he would have been Scottish, Scottish Turkish, yeah, yeah, I think he was Scottish and Turkish, or Scottish and Turkish Cypriot, but yeah, so he was my best friend and we would argue regularly about Ireland and things like that because he was incredibly pro-British and, yeah, I was quite fervently in favour of a united Ireland, you know, I was, you know, couldn't stand the, couldn't stand, you know, the, I wouldn't say I couldn't stand America, but, you know, didn't, you know, didn't like a lot of American politics, I couldn't stand Reagan, I hated Thatcher, he would have liked, as I say, he would have liked all these people, so we argued constantly about it, but, you know, we'd still go to football together, see each other on Saturday afternoon, yeah [laughs], you know, we still, we'd still, when we got to about fifteen, sixteen, we'd still go out and have a pint together, you know, that was, it's absolutely fine, we wouldn't box each other's ears off about it.

BH: Sure, **[01:12:41]** what about work then? Cos you went to university and then you said you were part-time at Sainsbury's and then volunteering at the Irish centre. In terms of kind of your career and the places that you've worked, has this been predominantly with other people of Irish extraction or have you been sort of in workforces where you're the only kind of Irish guy there kind of thing?

NG: No, no, I mean, no, working in north London, particularly around Camden Town, there would always be lots of first- and second-generation Irish, so first job, and you'd all kind of drift together as well, there was a couple of, there was, I think it was three lads from Down, then there was a couple of second-generation from Limerick and places like that, and we'd generally like, kind of, kind of mix together, although, you know, with, you know, when you have things like, you know, common interests, football, you'd chat away to everyone with common interests, you'd chat away to everyone. I actually met my wife when I was working at Sainsbury's, she was going to, she was going to [indecipherable] at the time, so, and she's, yeah, she's, her parents are from Stoke, she's got no–

BH: Oh is that right?

NG: No, none, no, non-Irish background at all, no, sorry, no non-English background at all, so [pauses] you'd, as I say, you'd have that commonality and bond with people, and you'd have that, you'd have the craic with them and you'd, you know, you'd talk in, what's the phrase, you, you, the, the, you'd have your own, you know, in-jokes and own, you know, language and things, things left unsaid and everyone knew what it meant, but you'd, you know, you wouldn't be exclusive in it. I suppose what happens is, you know, as you go through work

because there's that commonality, when I started working in my last job, you know, I would tend to be, you know, get on quite well with second-generation Irish and we'd talk about common experiences, not just common experiences from like, you know, sort of like, things we knew about Ireland, but because there's Irish pubs in Manchester, so we generally speak about pubs, speak about this, that and the other or we'd [indecipherable] that kind of thing, so there'd be, yeah, there'd be commonality that way.

BH: Cos you're working now for Irish Community Care in Manchester, is that right?

NG: Yes, that's right, yeah.

BH: Have all your jobs since then had some relationship to Irish issues or–?

NG: No, so I worked for Irish Centre Housing for, '98 to 2005, so the first hostel I worked in, so I worked, so I started working with Conway House, which is a big Irish hostel all set up for Irish people in Kilburn, at the time it probably would have been about fifty per cent Irish, fifty per cent from a variety of backgrounds, so, you know, quite a lot of Kosovan refugees, it was the time of the Kosovan war, and then refugees, some refugees from Somalia, English lads, that kind of thing. It was a direct access hostel so we were quite handy for Irish lads to come across and access it straight off the boat. However, moved on from there and started working as an employment, was it employment advisor, that kind of thing, it was still in Irish Centre Housing there that they had like, a, not a job club, but, you know, someone who's to encourage employment, people to get employed, help them get into employment. I was absolutely crap at it, I hated it, so, and it's a real shame because the manager was lovely and people I worked with were lovely, but I was just rubbish at the job, and then I moved on, then that, because of the nature of it, it still had a Irish bent to it because it was a company or charity, working for like, anyone could come into it and because it wasn't, you know, Conway House, because it wasn't this, you know, Irish people know to go there, people, things, we had a lot of people from different backgrounds, then I worked again with Irish Centre Housing as a life skills worker, which I was actually quite good at, and that was at a hostel in Islington, and because the charity had recently taken over it had no Irish background to it, so it was just pretty much, you know, it was a big mixture of, it was big mixture of women who lived, it was a hundred and two-bed female hostel, so it was a great job, I absolutely loved doing it, and then my wife, or my partner as she was at the time, moved up here, moved up to Manchester and I came along tail between my legs about a year afterwards because I had to come up here, so I had to get a job and I started working for Stockport Homes and that was in a Homes Families hostel in Stockport, yeah, so.

BH: Yeah, but now you have gravitated towards Irish Community Care?

NG: Yes, that's right, I mean, I've always retained that interest in Irish culture a lot and understand that they are people like, you know, you know, people who would have worked on sites like my dad, like, you know, my uncle, like many, many other lads who I've met in life, and who would probably need a helping hand, so it's something I've always got an interest in doing, you know, giving advice and helping tackle people's problems or helping people tackle their own issues, you know, it's like, you know, being there for someone, so being there for someone to con-, sit down, come in and say I've got a problem with my

pension or I've got a problem with my housing, and by the way, Galway were rubbish at the weekend, that kind of thing, so that, so you know, when people come in they can have a sense that they can sit down and the person who they're sitting across from understands them.

BH: Understands where they're coming from, like?

NG: Exactly, yeah, so makes them feel, sort of makes them feel a bit more comfortable rather than someone who's just sitting there filling out forms and processing them.

BH: Right, so it sounds like your Irishness has had an enduring importance in your life, not just as something, you know, which is kind of symbolic, but is it actually on a daily basis shapes what you do, in terms of actually how you act in the world, like.

NG: As someone who's left wing and nominally anti-nationalistic it shouldn't, but it does, and it's been and it's been, yeah, it has definitely been a central part to my life because it has given me quite a lot, you know, given me quite a lot in terms of friendships, my football, you know, my nights out, my entertainment, it's given me a sense of identity, a sense of, to a certain extent, right and wrong, even though that changes all the time and that's something that I, that I review and think about on a regular basis. It certainly helps to shape my politics, which is my other big things in life, you know, my interests are beer, football, politics, music and *Star Wars*, and of course my family [laughs], but yeah, so, so that, you know, so all them things that, you know, it does, it does help shape cos, you know, you know, if you're out with your mates, going to a concert and you go and watch a Celtic game in O'Shea's beforehand that's pretty much, you know, that's pretty much my identity summed up in that, in a night out.

BH: Sure, so within that sort of Irish identity, is the word Irish or is there a distinction between that and Northern Irish? Is there any distinction made, or is it an Irish, or is it an Irish diasporic identity?

NG: Oh no, very much, there's very much, it's very much from the diaspora, very much from the diaspora. I'm probably equally as proud to come from London, I love London, I think it's a cracking place, I think it's a brilliant city to go to and a great city to go out in [pauses], and that has, and that's had a real seminal effect on me, on my, probably my outlook on the world as much as anything else, so it brings up, so, so after such a long time, but yeah, even in terms of growing up in areas where, say, you know, on my estate there was lots of kids from Jamaica, in my school there was kids from Nigeria and Italy, it gave me, you know, that sense of Londonness gave me an identity in terms of the way I look at the world, the way I look at things like immigration and the positive effects that immigration can have, and being a child of immigrants that also has that effect on it. What I kind of expect in the world is very much shaped by London, that fact that, you know, I've wandered round Manchester and keep on thinking well, there must be more, there must be something I've not seen, whereas, you know, when I first come up to Stockport, just thinking this place is really white, this is really white round here and being quite shocked and being, you know, thinking that, you know, where's the, where's the every-, where's the diversity, where's the differences that you can enjoy, so that's, so lots of London has definitely impacted on me in that kind of

way, but also because London has absorbed so much **[01:22:41]** Irish culture as well, and when it kind of absorbs it it also then radiates it, so, you know, have bands like the Pogues and, you know, so the Pogues come, they do their thing and when Shane MacGowan leaves Joe Strummer takes over, so, you know, you're talking about, you know, you know, London absorbing all that culture and then probably the greatest lead man of all time joining them after the other greatest lead man of all time has left, so that makes a huge difference, that's why being London and being London Irish is such a big thing for me, more than, you know, the identity of, you know, lads who come from Westport or [indecipherable], somewhere like that, yeah.

BH: Yeah, what about the North in particular then? Has the Troubles in any particular way had an influence on your sense of yourself, growing up?

NG: [pauses] Yeah, yes, it has. I would have, I mean, at one stage I would have viewed myself as very much a republican. I view myself less so now and I view myself much more of a socialist. I view a united Ireland as being quite an important thing in terms of dealing with the toxicity of sectarianism. I view, but, I was listening to an interview with Eamon McCann the other day and, you know, he was saying, you know, do I support a united Ireland, yes, do I support a united Ireland without an NHS, no, you know, in terms of, you know, the Troubles [pauses] I think it can be quite a transient view that the more you read, the more you educate yourself, the more you change, I don't think it's necessarily changed, I don't know if it's changed with age, because I don't think, the usual criticism is you become more conservative and I don't think I have become more conservative, in fact, I think I've become, you know, in some ways a lot more radically left wing in my outlook on life [pauses]. Has it affected, did it affect the way in grew up in any other way [pauses], I was never necessarily a kind of keep-your-head-down-Paddy, that kind of view [pauses].

BH: I'm just wondering if in particular was your mother influential, in terms of the person you became and her connection with the North, or maybe your father was more important maybe, I don't know.

NG: In, I, in terms of politics mum, yeah, mum would have had an influence, I don't think she couldn't have had an influence [pauses]. I find it really diff-, to flip it on its head, I find it really difficult to reconcile how someone whose parents come from the North or who grew up from the late sixties onwards couldn't of both held a view like, that held a view, or more importantly had it shape their lives because of the extent that people travel back and forth for holidays and things like that then, like I say, people must have known one way or another what was going on and they must have, and block that out and not allow that to, not have that kind of thought process about, you know, do I think X is right, do I think y is wrong, where do I stand on this from, you know, did you, you know, people must have taken, I can't believe that people wouldn't have necessarily taken a view on the hunger strikes or, you know, earlier internment or shoot-to-kill or anything like that, I can't believe that people wouldn't have necessarily taken a view of that or had that influence their lives, or I find it quite surprising and very difficult to reconcile. But in terms of quite a lot of, you know, my mum was very, I guess, you know, cynically devout in my view, and probably a lot more devout than I am, she tended to view it, I think she tended to view very much a united Ireland as an end, whereas I would view it as a means to an end, to create, I'd view it as an

idea to create a better society, that's, that's, if you, you know, if you get rid of the border and just live with Fine Gael in charge quite frankly, you know, you're not, not really going to make a better life for anyone in Ballyfermot or in Carrick or anywhere like that so, you know, you need to improve people's lives, so yeah.

BH: Yeah, okay, so I think I've asked most of my main questions, but before we finish, I want to ask you is there anything that I haven't asked about which is important, that you think needs to be talked about?

NG: Oh jeez, I've got headache now from talking too much [laughs]. No, I don't, I think you've pretty much covered everything of my, yeah, of the way that I grew up and had my views formed, it's stuff, it's stuff that I probably haven't really thought about in some ways myself, and certainly, certainly before I come here I was actually thinking about that, you know, the difference between, say, my mate Mick whose folks would be Mayo and Kerry, or my mate Sylvo whose folks would be down from Kildare, and me whose family's very much, you know, very much Ulster-orientated, whose parents would both have been I suppose in some ways affected by the border in very different ways, you know, mum with, you know, what she would have experienced and seen growing up and my dad living in, come from a county that has effectively been, you know, been strangled by partition, by the fact that you don't have properties and transport networks, links going over there, it's very much an outlier for the Dublin government as well, so I think my view of the, yeah, so, so I as thinking of the way they would have viewed the North and my view, you know, I would've had more experience than them, up until they got older and they decided that they wanted to travel and see, and so because, you know, I think the thing is that [pauses] what the second-generation people do a lot more is they do tend to travel to different parts of Ireland, so a lot of them when they've got older have been to Belfast, have been to Derry, have been, you know, to other places and gone seen it.

BH: Yeah, of course, the transport links are more advanced now and also, I guess, it is more in the culture of younger people to travel around maybe.

NG: Certainly it is, it's yeah, it is the kind of want to see what has happened, this has shaped, you know, this has effectively shaped the way it, you know, whether you're from the N-, whether your folks are from the North or from the South, a lot of people in Britain wouldn't have made a distinction, so because they were viewed through a certain prism I think a lot of them wanted to go and see what it was like, wanted to go and have a look at, you know, go and look at the murals on the Falls and the murals on the Shankill, would, you know, would want to go and drink in Kelly's Cellars or, you know, or do what, do whatever, so that's, that is quite, so I think that people have, people, the second-generation have certainly experienced it in a different way to people from the South, see my dad, thinking about, my dad would have experienced it quite a bit because he'd have worked in Belfast for a bit as well.

BH: Well, that's, yeah, I was wondering had he ever done that, you know?

NG: Yeah, he didn't say a lot about it actually, I must, but again that's not, I don't think that was because of a bad experience, it's just he doesn't really talk about anything. I was

watching a Celtic game once and Celtic were playing Hearts and he came in and said is that at Tynecastle, I said yeah, he said I remember going there, and that was the end of the story [laughs]. Right, that's a great punchline dad, thank you very much for that, but yeah, so, so that, but that's, that's just the old fella. I'm trying to think is there anything else I want to say about the North [pauses], my experience of it is [pauses], I'm just wondering actually has it been more, has it been more shaped by, you know, or has it been shaped by Glasgow equally as much as it has been by, you know, people's views of [pauses], you know, people's views when you go to Celtic games, has it been shaped by that, actually it has, I, I, just, I was thinking about this the other day, I was coming home from a game last season, and I was coming down with my son who's, he would've been nine at the time, and there was these two lads who I know who were on the train and they were, they were rotten drunk and they were singing republican songs on the train, and that's fair enough, I know my fair share of republican songs, that's just, you know, that's what happens if you go up on the Celtic bus, you'll know what they're like, or if you grew up in an Irish household you'll know all the Wolfe Tone songs, but I was thinking, you know, this isn't how I want Dylan to find out about what happened, in fact, d'you know what, I want him to have, I want him to go without having them, them experiences of the, of what, **[01:32:41]** of growing up in a house with someone's mother, or things like the hunger strikes, which being, being at such an early age–

BH: That's very interesting, yeah.

NG: You want him to find, you want him to find, you want him to make, you want him to make up his own mind rather than think that there might, rather than, yeah.

BH: That's very interesting, right, so something that I could've asked you, I mean, have you tried to, you know, impart a sense of Irish heritage to your son and how have you tried to do that?

NG: Yeah, so, I mean, we go to, we go to Ireland in the summer, to, we go to Ireland cos we go over to see the old fella and we go over at Christmas as well and see him then, so he's come to Ireland games with me and he has come to see Celtic with me, so, you know, again, as I said earlier, that two of the main, main facets of my, of expressing Irish identity when you're our age was the Irish football team and Celtic, so he's had that, and he very much enjoys Ireland, but he enjoys it in a very different way to what I would've enjoyed it because he's, actually, sorry I've got two sons, I've got him and I've got another young one called Ciarán and, I mean, they would love going over because they're not half way up a mountain, they, they, where, where my dad lives is in the centre of the village and there's kids their age and, you know, as I say, they're, I noticed, was it, a couple of years ago Dylan was very enthusiastic to go up every single morning to, with my dad, to visit mum's grave, and I was thinking oh that's lovely, that's lovely, and then I found out, then I noticed one day when he come home he had his mouth covered in ice-cream, so [laughs], so kind of, we kind of figured out what that was, but yeah, no, he, so he would, he very much, you know, would regard being, as I say, he'd very much be aware there would be an Irish background, an Irish identity to him, but very much aware there'd be an English identity. I think, but I think because in a way, again, you know, I go back to, you know, English identity, in some ways it's quite difficult to define what English identity is, possibly cos English identity is, has been

so much wrapped up in empire and then once it ended, you know, so it's quite difficult to say this is it, you know, whereas Irish identity, you know, tends to be easier to say, you know, you watch Celtic football club, this is why the football club was set up, it was set up because X, Y and Z reasons, so, so, you know, if he watches Man United, Man United is quintessentially not an English club, you know, it defines itself effectively as a world club because that's where it wants to get money, so yeah, so, so in some ways it can be quite difficult to establish.

BH: I mean, that's a very interesting set of stories there. First of all the one about the ice-cream and also the story about coming back on the bus or the train from a Celtic game and seeing two drunk Celtic supporters presumably singing republican songs and you were kind of like, I don't really want them to learn about Irishness that way. Perhaps one of the differences between, you know, your son growing up in England now and you yourself growing up in England is is that you did grow up with the backdrop of the Troubles to some extent, and in a sense that, you know, thinking about things like republicanism, a politicised Irishness or the politics of Irishness were something which was much more available to you, whereas, you know, your sons, you know, luckily are growing up at a time when actually to some extent, at least so far, is if not resolved, at least not something with is constantly protruding into people's consciousness all the time politically, so Irishness can be about, you know, going to gravestones and having ice-creams or going to watch football, it's a different way of embodying Irishness.

NG: It, it, and, and it, you know, it couldn't, as I say, it couldn't not define people's identity, as I said before, it couldn't not define your identity to a certain extent when, you know, when there is a nail bomb going off at Hyde Park, and that's people who say that they represent a certain idea of your identity, you know, as I say, it can't not make you reflect on it in certain ways and, you know, I think, you know, what I did to a certain extent was reflect on it, positives a bit, maybe I'm bigging myself up a bit, but I think it at lea-, it's made me look into it more and made me interested in it a wee bit more, and it made me shape my own view of my identity in a way that probably Dylan will and Ciarán will come to a bit more organically, a bit more, you know, sort of and it will be, you know, will part of them but it probably won't define them in exactly the same way that it defines me, and it's partly that, I suppose, fifty per cent of it is that their mother is English and so she, so her influence will be quite big on the whole, I hope so anyway, but yeah, so there is, but certainly in terms of the way that they'll define that part of their identity, it's far better they, no, I wouldn't say it's far better, I think it's different and it has pluses and minuses that they come at it in a different way. I don't regret kind of following and shaping my political philosophy, I think it's, which I think has been the biggest legacy of an Irish identity, and particularly a North of Ireland identity, I don't think that that, I think that is the biggest thing that is, that has shaped a worldview like that. So I think it's a shame that, you know, it doesn't get that kind of view in a lot of ways, there's positives with it, that it's not forced on him at a young age, so it's not being forced on him and, you know, ultimately his view of Ireland will not be dominated by men with balaclava or British soldiers, which essentially does, would've happened, at, it, by 1985 that would've happened.

BH: Yeah, no, I understand the dilemma that you're expressing. On the one hand, you don't want your children to have to confront that kind of antagonistic relationship with Irishness,

but on the other hand, confronting that kind of antagonistic relationship forces you to think about things like justice, which is a good thing, and I suppose the alternative is is that Irishness itself could become just a leisure activity, it just becomes about the consumption of heritage as against actually thinking about politics, which is what it sounds like you were engaged in whenever you were growing up.

NG: And, yeah, I mean, it does tend to, because definitely that has happened since, since the second ceasefire and since then Ireland became cool and, you know, there was the opening up of Irish pubs all over the place, dare I say, Irish pubs weren't just in, you know, I use the term advisedly, but Irish ghettos in, you know, Kilburn or Levy or places like that, that they were in the centre of town and they were places to be, you know, to be seen and Guinness was a great drink and, you know, Ronan Keating was on TV, you know [laughs], but, you know, and that kind of, and it's, you know, it's an attitude that I've quite happily connived in as well because a, it wanted that in the past, it wanted, it wanted, it wanted '69 to '94 in the past, it wanted that gone and also it, you know, it could see that it could sell, sell, sell by doing that, it could get tourists in, it could, you know, if you go to an Irish pub in the centre of Manchester, well, d'you know what, why not next time let's go to Dublin and pay ten euros in Temple Bar or something like that, you know, it's, so yeah, I can't, I can't remember what the original point was.

BH: No, no, that was it, it's just yeah, you, I mean, you elaborated it. It is, there is a sense in which that kind of branding of Irishness has been sort of accelerated since the ceasefires and since the Good Friday Agreement, but it became really prominent then, yeah, that's definitely right.

NG: Yeah, I read a bit about, but, you know, that, you know, the North's trying to do it as well and it's doing it in a very strange way because it's had this, you know, it's had the tourist culture for several years based on, for want of a better phrase, paramilitary porn–

BH: Yes, yeah, yeah.

NG: You know, that was going, and then and, you know, I always look at, it's the most bizarre thing in the world is that it's, what can we do, what is unique about us, what's unique about us that's not paramilitary, the Titanic, and you think yeah, because that ended equally as well [laughs].

BH: [laughs] I know, I always wondered about that, you're celebrating this, it sank [laughs].

NG: [laughs] Well, what's the alternative, it's Johnny Adair [laughs].

BH: [laughs] Yeah, what is strange is nobody notices the irony of that, you know, like, that you're celebrating a ship, a ship that sank like, the ship of state like, it's bizarre.

NG: [laughs] But yeah, **[01:42:41]** I shouldn't think there was anything else I need to, need to elucidate about. I've, ju-, again, just one other thing to go back, football, what has also tied me to, a lot more to the North than anywhere else is, you know, I've watched Cliftonville on a quite a regular basis as well, so, you know, and one of the reasons is, was

the first times I was in Belfast I went and watched them play, and it wasn't necessarily the nationalist identity, but it was just the craic around the ground, and I had such a lovely time that, you know, I've gone back and I've, you know, you know, the, it's, and then you become more and more aware of the identity that Cliftonville fans portray, and then, you know, so it is quite fervent nationalist, but also when you talk to their fans it's quite openly and virulently left wing, so it's also something that, you know, so, you know, so kind of chimes with me and, you know, it's something that I enjoy doing because I'm with people of a similar, not just Irish view, but worldview to me.

BH: Yeah, sure, yeah, I suppose one thing that I haven't asked is, your wife is from an English background in the sense that both her, neither of her parents have anything to do with Ireland.

NG: No, grandparents no, going back further no.

BH: Whenever you, obviously you met her and, you know, you went round to meet her parents and things like that. Did they have any views about Irishness, or I suppose what I'm getting at really is did you encounter any strangeness around kind of the interaction between English and Irishness?

NG: No, but they were very, I mean, they're very much parents of their time, so, you know, Paddy Irishman jokes would be still very central to them, yeah, and, you know, you just, even when you sat there and just stared at them they didn't really get the hint that we didn't particularly appreciate this, so, but in terms of Irishness it would have been, so, first ceasefire in '94, would've started courting Diane in '94, it probably would've been just after the first ceasefire, so it wouldn't have really been anything that would come up necessarily in conversation, and I don't think it's ever really come up in conversation since now.

BH: Yeah, they don't talk about the Troubles or anything like that?

NG: No, no, no, we had an argument about, what did we have an argument about, Cuba once.

BH: Cuba, right [laughs].

NG: And, well, me, me and her dad, and Diane just said you're not allowed to talk about politics anymore, yeah. He said it would've been better off if it became a state like Panama, that it was under American influence, but, you know, it has its own independence, which I surprisingly enough took the huff with, but as he was laying some flooring in our loft at the time, some insulating flooring in our loft, I couldn't really go to town [laughs]. If he'd mentioned it after he'd have finished I'd have been happy to argue away, but that's it, so no, they've, they haven't really, they've never really asked about it or talked about it, you know, they just ask how was your dad getting on and that kind of thing, and just sort of very civil family stuff.

BH: I mean, the impression that I get when I've spoken to other people, even people from Northern Ireland who have migrated over and, you know, maybe their wife or their

husband's English or something like that, is that lots of English people seem to be oblivious to the Troubles or, as in like, it wasn't that they were hostile, it was kind of like, weren't really aware [laughs] this has actually gone on like, that seemed to be kind of the response a lot of them seemed to have [laughs].

NG: [laughs] Actually they, they would've, well, they read the *Telegraph* now, I can't remember what they read at the time, but it certainly wasn't *Morning Star* anyway.

BH: Right, yeah.

NG: So they couldn't have not been aware of it and they've always took a paper as well, so they couldn't have not been aware of it, and, you know, as we know, views are very much shaped, or can be very much shaped by media perception, if that's the kind of paper you're reading you would have a certain view of it.

BH: Sure, yeah.

NG: So probably better that it wasn't discussed cos, you know, it wouldn't have been, wouldn't necessarily have ended up particularly well. As for herself she's, you know, she always just says she finds it quite bizarre that, you know, you know, that she, that there's these places, like I say, Enniskillen that she would have heard about on the news, you know, and she would have heard about the bombing and she's, you know, she wouldn't have thought that thirty years later that she's wandering round, getting a loaf of bread and a pack of nappies for the kids in the, you know, so it's, you know, it's just the way of it, you know, for her it's just the way that life's evolved in a very strange way, but of course she would have viewed it as quite a strange and terrifying place at the time where bombs go off and people get massacred, whereas I would have viewed it as, I wouldn't have viewed it in that way because–

BH: Sure, yeah, you've been there, you're familiar with it.

NG: Exactly, yeah, and then she goes there and she finds it's just a normal sleepy market town that's slightly dull, although she's not been out on a Saturday night in Enniskillen, she'd find it anything but [laughs].

BH: [laughs] So that was interesting, so you say her parents read the *Telegraph*, that would have a particular depiction of the Troubles or Northern Ireland. You think there was kind of like, an implicit sort of contract not to sort of air views about Irish politics?

NG: I, I think [pauses] that first off you probably don't do it in polite company, and then as you get more and more familiar and [pauses], her father I think is quite, quite Victorian.

BH: Oh really, right.

NG: Yeah, would have been quite, would've worked out my views on, on the world, so I think there's probably been a blessed contract just not to talk about politics–

BH: Politics in general, right.

NG: Whatsoever, yeah, we had two big arguments, one was that Cuba/Panama debate and one was about the Three Tenors on *X Factor* or something like that, so I just, I was [laughs], so, and her mum told me off for that.

BH: Yeah, so in fact, this isn't, to the extent that there is a kind of an unwritten contract, it potentially covers politics in general, as against anything particularly about Britishness and Irishness.

NG: Yeah, I mean, I mean, he's, her dad's quite interested in history, but it's very much of a British history, so the Second World War is seen solely through the prism of Britishness now, Lenin, Stalingrad, I don't think he even looked at it, Antony Beevorbrook's book on Stalingrad, because, you know, because, you know, certain, there's a certain comfort in nationalism than thinking that you've, that, that this is the way that the world works and this is what happened in the Second World War, and we beat the Germans, we stood there alone and all that kind of thing that is historically inaccurate. I mean, he wouldn't necessarily, he's not necessarily outwardly virulently nationalist, it's quite, you know, he loves going abroad and he loves experiencing other cultures and he's not, you know, I wouldn't, yeah, but in turn it's very, but in turn it's very, I think it's more of an old-fashioned worldview rather than a, other views that are sometimes associated with Stoke.

BH: Yeah, yeah, of course Stoke, yeah, yeah, that's right, that was a heavily Brexit voting areas, wasn't it?

NG: It is, and I remember one of my mates, Ray, my mate, he always said that Stoke's just one of them places where they pick up this huge racist Labour vote, the people vote Labour because they always have, but their views are quite obnoxious, in terms of immigration and things like that or, you know, it's very broad sweep, but, you know, while I have my own dubious views about the European Union, it's more from a view of their ideas towards immigration. I don't think the European Union's views on immigration are particularly helping themselves, I think they're, you know, quite morally corrupt when they, you know, when they have, you know, what happened at Lampedusa and you have people from the African Union calling the European Union immigration policy a modern-day slave trade, it's, well, that's, but that's, but I digress on the EU.

BH: Sure, sure. Listen, I think I've asked everything I'm going to ask. I've asked you is there anything else that you think's important. I think, I think we've arrived at the idea that there isn't, yeah?

NG: No, I am, as they say, dead on.

BH: Dead on, okay, great, well, just before we end can I say again thanks very much Niall for taking the time to do this. I really appreciate this, really grateful that you've taken this time out of your Friday night to come and sit here in an empty building, so cheers, thanks very much.

NG: No, it was brilliant, thanks very much, cheers.

INTERVIEW ENDS